

OBSTACLES

A Talk given by Ajahn Brahmavamso at Bodhinyana Monastery
on the 8th of August 2001

As we practise during a period of retreat we will always come across difficulties and obstacles. That is as they say 'par for the course'. We can expect obstacles to arise and it's important to know them so that we not only anticipate them but we also side step them. The path¹ to Enlightenment is very well mapped out for us. It seems so clear but very often we make little progress. We don't gain the deep states of meditation and the great insights that are based on those states. We really need to find out why it's like that.

It's not so much your fault because there is 'no one' inside. It's a fault of not understanding what the obstacles are and neglecting to mindfully recollect that path throughout the day. Because of this we waste so much time, we can waste all of the retreat period, all of our lives. We can waste many lives thinking that we are practising, when in fact we are not doing that which creates the causes for the path to immerge. So it's important to actually know what the obstacles are. The obstacles are too much concern for the body, the senses, and for thinking. These are three major obstacles that I want to deal with.

The Body – Simply a Vehicle for This Life

First of all is the concern for the body. This is concern about sleeping, eating and exercising enough or whatever else is involved in looking after this thing we call the body. Part of the practice that I learnt under the forest teachers of Thailand is to sometimes test the body. Go without sleep or sleep too much, just to see what happens. Go without food or eat too much food, to see what happens. Find out exactly what this body can contribute to the practise of the path, and also see how it can hinder the practise of the path.

This body is the vehicle for this lifetime. That's the whole purpose of having a body, and it should be used properly. Having birth in this human realm is to provide a

means to practise and realize the *Dhamma*², but only if we use this body properly. To be able to use this body properly we should always remember the middle way, not to over indulge the body and not to torture it. How can one really define the middle way? It can be described by the simile of the lute in the story of Sona (Vinaya Pitaka, Mahācagga Chap.5). It's only when the lute's strings are tightened just enough, not too much, not too little, that it makes a good sound. And what does it mean by making a good sound? It means that one can gain peace, inner happiness, mindfulness, and wakefulness throughout the day for as long as possible. That sound is not felt so much in the body. It is felt much more in the mind, a mind that is not so concerned with the demands of the body. If you ignore those demands too much, then the demands increase. If you indulge those demands, they increase, but if you find just that right balance, then the demands of the body are not so many.

One has to be careful because this body can demand even more than just comforts. It can make all sorts of plans about how to improve your hut, improve the robes that cover this body, how to get new shoes for the feet, a new chair, a new heater, or how to get a new whatever. Really, what are all these external possessions and things about? One should realize that the more things one seeks in the world the more obstacles one is creating. I've just had the great misfortune to have a birthday, and people have laden me with cards and presents. Now I have to find ways of getting rid of them by giving them away. It seems the more I try to empty my hut, the more things actually come into it, and then I have to empty it out again, and more things come in. That seems to be part of my life as a senior monk. I can understand why as a senior monk, that happens but as a junior monk or an *anagārika*³, see how empty you can make the area surrounding you.

When I was a teacher I was told that one should develop an aura of authority, an area around you of about two or three metres, that's your authority area. So when any child comes into that area they feel that you are in charge, you are in control. But in the *Dhamma* we are taught to have an aura of emptiness stretching even more than two metres around us, so that you don't own whatever is outside of you. If you go into a crowded office or *Dhamma* Hall, or if you go on alms round and there are a lot of people around you, especially when it's a birthday celebration, you develop that

aura of emptiness around you. You think, ‘These things don’t concern me, they’re nothing to do with me, they’re not ‘me’, they’re ‘not mine’”.

If you can develop that sense of emptiness around you, you are letting go of the stickiness of the material world. There are many ways of overcoming this stickiness of the material world, and the concern for the body. You can if you wish do the body contemplations or you can do other contemplations. In my life as a monk, I’ve found these other contemplations work. That’s why I always teach the emptiness perception, and the not ‘me’ and ‘not mine’ perception. All the concerns that are beyond this physical body of mine, such as other peoples bodies, other peoples things, your things, your concerns, I can let go of these very easily, they are not mine.

You can disentangle yourself from the physical body in the same way. It’s so clear that this physical body is ‘not mine’. It is just a shell in which what you call ‘the mind’ lives temporarily. You have seen so many deaths, so many people getting sick, the results of road accidents, and it’s so clear these are nothing to do with you. These sorts of contemplations get rid of concern for the physical body. The whole purpose of overcoming this concern for your own physical body, and for other physical bodies, is so that you’re not really interested in attracting another body, in fact you’re not even concerned about your own body.

When you see the truth of bodies it should give rise to *nibbidā*⁴, which is revulsion, repulsion, and lack of concern. It’s the same as a birthday celebration that you go through with reluctance or even giving interviews and talks, you do it reluctantly. You would rather just be alone, in your hut. You are doing abbot’s business reluctantly. It’s a duty and you can’t get out of it if you have to do it. Make the most of it. This is having *nibbidā* towards all these things.

Nibbidā can come through faith. Faith that this is the way taught by the *Ariyas*⁵, that this is what you read in the *suttas*⁶. We just chanted the *Anattalakkhana Sutta*, which

states that the person, who sees things as they truly are, feels *nibbidā* towards them. This refers to the five *khandhas*⁷, including the senses, the sense objects, that which experiences those sense objects, the sense bases, and the consciousness, which comes up as a result of their coming together. One sees them as nothing to do with oneself. They're like a thorn, a boil or a red hot iron that torturers use, they're just disturbing you. It is one of the things that you should be able to see with even just a little bit of *samādhi*⁸. The great thing about the practice of *samādhi* is that it is a great experiment, which proves that these teachings are true. *Samādhi* is the way of letting go of these burdens, and seeing what happens when they are not there, that is when the sense bases and the *khandhas* start to disappear. It is a great experiment that actually proves the teachings of the Buddha through your own experience. In particular it teaches you that this body is nothing to do with you.

You can go through the *asubha*⁹ practice, but that won't fulfil the release of the mind from the body. It will only weaken the attraction for other bodies. I've known monks who have done the *asubha* practice for many years, and then met a woman, fallen in love, disrobed and married. It's my experience there needs to be more than that if you really wish to affirm the commitment to monastic life and reach the truth. *Asubha* practice weakens the attachment to the body, but to get past that body fully one has to know what is beyond it.

This is where *jhānas*¹⁰ provide the experience and the material which lets you fully know that this body has nothing to do with the 'self'. Theory and faith can give a great push along the way, but insight or wisdom is what is necessary. The *jhānas* are stages where the mind has been released from the body, that's why the Buddha called them *vimokkha*,¹¹ which is the state of freedom, release, and liberation. I think it is the term that Bhikkhu Bodhi uses, and he's a wonderful translator. Liberation from what? It's not liberation from suffering yet, that's the experience of *maggaphala* (the fruit of the path). It's the liberation from the body and the five senses. When one experiences that liberation from this body is possible, one can overcome this great hindrance and obstacle of the body. That is one of the reasons why many other monks and I teach all of this in various ways to encourage and sometimes even trick a person into getting *samādhi*, so that they can see these experiences for themselves.

The Process Just Happens

One of the other obstacles to come up is the obstacle of thought. You can describe these experiences of *jhānas* for hours or years, but the actual experience itself, will always be different. So all conjecture, speculation, and argument about what are *jhānas*, and what's at the other side, is a waste of time. The only thing you can do is inspire a person by your descriptions. You can't tell them what it's like but you can give them some clues on how to get there. Everyone has to go inside that door themselves. Using a simile from Ajahn Chah, 'you cannot describe in words the sweetness of an apple, not even a poet can do that. You just have to give a person an apple, and say 'bite it', and let that experience show them the truth'. So many obstacles in monastic life come from thinking when it's not the right time to think and from having views, arguments and discussions about things before getting *samādhi*. *Samādhi* first, then comes wisdom!

So the obstacle of the body is something that we need to overcome, and with it the obstacle of the five senses. The five senses are so intricately entwined in this body that you can say the body is the five senses, and the five senses are the body. The two go together so strongly and powerfully, which might be one of the reasons why there are different contemplations that lead to the same thing. One can contemplate the six senses and the six sense bases, or one can contemplate the five *khandhas*. You have all these different paths that are coming to the same point of gaining *samādhi*, and then you see things as they truly are. Throughout the teachings of the Buddha and throughout the experiences of the Kruba Ajahns¹², one finds a common thread; a style in the process, which once begun is irreversible.

The meditator when he or she gets to a certain point is just the observer of this whole process. The process itself just happens. The problem is getting to that point to start the process off. You've heard about that process from me so many times and you've read about it in the books. From *pīti*¹³ comes *passaddhi*, from *passaddhi* comes *sukha*, from *sukha* comes *samādhi*, from *samādhi* comes *yathā bhūta ñānadassana*, from *yathā bhūta ñānadassana* comes *nibbidā*, from *nibbidā* comes *virāga*, and from *virāga* comes *nirodha*. This is the way of *vimutti*. This is the way that is described by

the Buddha. *Pīti* is what is usually called rapture. *Passaddhi* is tranquillity of body and mind, which leads to the inner happiness called *sukha*. This leads to *samādhi*, which means *jhāna*, which leads to *yathā bhūta nānadassana*, seeing things as they truly are, or insight, which leads to *nibbidā*, repulsion. *Nibbidā* leads to things fading away and disappearing, leading to freedom, *nirodha*, *Nibbāna*¹⁴. This is the path. It's a natural cause and effect process that just happens. The problem is getting to the starting point, and then letting it all happen. One is just a witness to it.

In developing the contemplation of this body or the senses, and that which sees the body, and other things in the world, we see how uncertain and unpredictable it is. You see a person one day, and think they're beautiful. Another day you think they are ugly. You hear someone teach one day, and think that teacher is inspiring. The next day you think that same person is a fool. Through the sense of sound you hear praise, and you hear blame. This is just sound, that's all. Don't make a big thing about it. What do you expect? We hear praise and blame all the time. Even the Buddha experienced that.

In my position as a teacher, I stand up and take responsibility. As they say in the English language, 'I put my head on the chopping block'. I sit up here and you criticize me, or you praise me. All the Kruba Ajahns get praise and blame, as did Ajahn Chah and the Buddha. Everybody experiences these things. How do you deal with that? It's just praise and blame, that's all. It's just the sounds that you hear, you're just there. It's all *vedanā*¹⁵ and it's all impermanent.

Whatever arises there are just three types of *vedanā*. It's pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. You can't have just pleasant feelings without the others. What that shows you is that in this body, what's agreeable and what's disagreeable to the senses of touch, sight, sound, smell, and taste, is all beyond your control. If you're born you are going to hear many things you don't like and many things that inspire you. Please don't be excited by either. These are obstacles. The point is that on this path, we should not just be encouraging what we like to hear, or discouraging what we don't want to hear, we should be letting go of both.

Letting go means disengaging, having *nibbidā* towards all the five senses. It means that whatever we hear, see, taste, or smell, it never lingers. In the words of the *suttas*, it never invades the mind and remains. It means is that we don't carry around with us the experiences of the day. You don't carry what happened in the *Dhamma* Hall back to your huts. You don't even carry it outside the door. You see this entire five-sense world as it truly is, and that gives the equivalent result as the contemplation of the body. It allows the mind to be released from all this, and by doing that contemplation one realizes that when one sits down to meditate, or one walks on the path, the mind inclines away from that world of the five senses.

You all know that in Buddhism the *tiloka*, the three worlds are *kāmaloka*, *rūpaloka* and *arūpaloka*. *Kāmaloka* is the world of the body and the five senses. It embraces the hell realms and the *peta*¹⁶ realms. It embraces the world of human beings and animals, and it embraces the world of *devas*¹⁷. For most beings that is all they know and all they aspire to, just to travel to the higher levels of *kāmaloka* never even knowing that there are two more worlds. Why did the Buddha split these up in this way? Because *rūpaloka*, the world of the *jhānas* is just so different to the realm of the five senses and *arūpaloka* is so different again. It is a different universe. The types of consciousness are completely different.

The experience is so different that there is a huge gap between these worlds and so to actually get to those worlds we have to leave behind everything we've known, understood, and thought about. That's why thinking becomes an obstacle to our emergence from one world into another. Thinking is an obstacle to gaining the *samādhi* which can know those worlds. All these thoughts are obstacles, not only the thoughts that are intricately concerned with the body and the five senses, but also the attachment to this body and the five senses. If you contemplate what the thoughts are, even those which you conceive of as *Dhamma*, a lot of those *Dhammas* are just worldly things. They are concerned with ideas, thoughts, and names, which are really just part of this five sense world and the body. Even the language that we use is built up of the experiences of this world of *kāmaloka*, and because we're not just attached to the world but to the language as well, we can't move beyond that language. That's one of the reasons why we can't gain the passage into the *jhānas*.

Abandon All Your Theories

So often along the way we are indulging in a commentary. We believe and trust in that commentary which hasn't the language to allow us to go deeper. It literally stops us. Beware of the thoughts. We struggle for understanding of where we are at in these deeper stages of the meditation, but that actually hinders us. That's why I encourage the practise of meditation to be done without contemplation at the beginning, and in the middle. Leave all contemplation to the very end, the last few minutes when one emerges from whatever state one has been in, and is about to come out of the meditation. Spend those last few minutes in contemplation. I was taught in science that whenever one does an experiment, one should not make conclusions until all the data is in, and until you've had a look at all the readings and you've put all the dots on the graph. Don't extrapolate until then. Extrapolating only half the readings gives you this nice curve, or straight line, then you either discard as anomalies or fudge all the other readings that don't fit in. You bend the results to fit your theory. So much bad science and bad practice happens that way. You are fitting your experiences to the theory, rather than being willing to abandon all your theories.

You need to abandon so much. This practise of *samādhi* is so powerful, because it requires you to do this. It tests your willingness 'to abandon'. It tests your skill in 'letting go'. And no matter what your stand point, or view is, everyone should at least agree that the path includes *jhānas*. The only reason a person cannot get into a *jhāna* is because of a defilement of the mind, a craving, an *upādāna*, not seeing clearly, an *āsava*¹⁸, a doing, or because of a wrong view. Whatever the reason is, one knows that if one cannot get into *jhānas* there must be a problem there. Passage into *jhānas* is a test for you, a test of what's really true and really false, not through thinking but through practise, seeing what actually works.

If we go through these practices, we can do body contemplation, sense contemplation, and contemplation of thoughts, and we see that they are just a more refined way of being attached to this world. That's all the thoughts are. They are made up of language, based on old experiences of the five senses and the body. When we contemplate these things and see them for what they are we should be able to develop

nibbidā towards them, towards the body, the five senses and thought. If it truly is *nibbidā*, the next stage should be *virāga*. *Virāga* does not just mean absence of desire, it means dispassion, and whatever you lose passion for, disappears. If you lose passion for a particular type of food you don't put it in your bowl any more. If you lose passion for music you don't listen to it any more. If you lose your passion for the monastic life you disrobe. Dispassion is another way of fading away, which is my preferred translation for *virāga*.

When you have dispassion towards the body, the five senses, and thoughts – which are basically made up of the echoes and reverberations of the five senses and the body – they tend to fade away. The body spends more time being absent from your consciousness so you can be with your meditation object. The five senses tend to disappear because you are less interested in them. You're not looking, listening, smelling, tasting, and not or even feeling the body so much. The body can look after the body, the nose can look after the nose, the tongue can look after the tongue, the ear can look after the ear, the eyes can look after the eyes and the mind disengages. As these things fade away in your meditation they also fade away in ordinary life. It means your concern for the things around you starts to dissipate. You're not so concerned with the buildings or whether you are in Australia, Thailand, or New Zealand. That's just the world outside. You're not concerned with other people or other monks unless it is your duty. You don't have a fault-finding mind towards the world outside of you, so why have a fault finding-mind towards other monks, or the food, or the huts. Why have a fault-finding mind, when it has nothing to do with you? When you know that, you see that they're just perceptions that see those faults. This is *dukkha*¹⁹. What do you expect?

The fault-finding mind is just looking for faults. You know there are faults so you don't need to go looking for them. The faults mean that you can never find perfection. You can never find permanent happiness in the world of the body or in the world of the five senses, or in the world of thought. So with that fault-finding mind, if I see someone and a fault comes up, I just abandon it and develop *nibbidā* towards it. In your early years as a monk did you look at other monks and think, "That's a bad monk, he does this, and that's not right"? After a while you get so

much *nibbidā* towards all this critical thinking, and critical talk about other monks that it just fades away. Whatever another monk does or teaches is his business, unless he is my disciple, and then I try my best to guide him. Whether he responds or not, that's his problem. I've done my duty so I just detach, and through that detachment things fade away.

I always notice that the further you go into the retreat period the more you disengage. The longer the retreat goes on; I become less of an Abbot, and more of a recluse. Sometimes when one gets into deep *samādhi*, one has no concern for the monastery, the Buddhist Society, or the other monks. Everything disappears, fades away and that's where you let go of the world of the five senses, the world of the body, and the world of thought. When you're watching the breath everything else disappears. Breath meditation is easy. Why? Because there is nothing else disturbing you. You're not thinking about the conversation that you had a few moments ago, especially when you are on retreat. You're not thinking about the food that you got or didn't get in your bowl. You're not thinking about the weather, sounds, heat and cold, or about the time, that's all worldly business.

So we just watch the breath, and these other concerns don't come and disturb us. Too many people have commentaries, thoughts about what they are supposed to be doing, while they are meditating. "What does this mean? What should I do next? Should I do it this way, or that way? What did this teacher say? He's right; the other person is wrong, blah, blah, blah." Let go of all those thoughts that go on in the mind and just watch the breath. I guarantee if that's all you do, if you just watch the breath and nothing else, the breath will become very still, and very beautiful. It's the nature of these things.

That beauty is *pīti* coming up, tranquillity coming up, and *sukha* coming up. You are starting the process. It's something which happens, that's all. Once you start getting into the beautiful breath just leave it alone, don't do anything. Don't start thinking, or analysing, just allow the process to happen. Press the letting go button. If you can press that letting go button, after a while, the whole process just flows on. If it doesn't flow on, if you are holding onto the doing lever, the lever of control, the lever

of ‘me’ and ‘mine’, my meditation, my ideas, my body, my thoughts, my senses, that’s what stops you getting into *jhāna*. Concern for *kāmaloka*, the world of the five senses, the world of the body, other people’s bodies, the world of *kuṭṭis*²⁰, the world of letters, sounds, and ideas, that’s all *kāmaloka* business. So just watch the breath, and if any of these obstacles come up, know them as obstacles, know they’re dangers. They stop you being released!

You Can’t Trust Any of It

If you don’t know the dangers yet, how much time do you want to waste on all this? How much time do you waste on this body, and on these five senses? Worrying and complaining about sight, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches, being concerned with them, spending hours, days, lifetimes, trying to get a nice taste, a nice touch, trying to get to hear only what you want to hear. All this striving for the world! Where has it ever got you? Just abandon that world completely. See its danger, and remember some of the dangers can be very tricky. They are like con artists. They can dress themselves up as *Dhamma*, and you think it is *Dhamma*. You think you should follow it. This is important, be careful there, because that’s Māra’s²¹ last trick.

If fault-finding arises in the mind, not allowing you to let go and be released, see through that. Say, “Māra I know you!” If you can really see it, then you just go back to the breath, and that’s the end of the problem. Allow the process to happen. When that happens it’s amazing. It will happen for each one of you sooner or later, and then you will find that it has always been possible. It was always *you* that was holding it back. You were the problem, the ‘me’, the ‘mine’, the ‘doer’, the ‘thinker’, the ‘controller’, the ‘arguer’, the ‘fault-finder’, the ‘builder’ and whatever else it is that you do. Stop it! With just one experience of *jhāna* and the reflection afterwards, you will see why the process happens. You will see why it is a natural process once *you* get out of the way. This will give you a greater opportunity to go through that process again, but it will also give you huge insights. These are insights that are based on experience, not just thoughts. They’re not based on what somebody else has done, what you have read or heard from the Kruba Ajahns, what you hear from me, or what you read in the *suttas*.

It's well known that when you hear a talk from someone, you only hear what you want to hear. What you don't want to hear you filter out. Sometimes it doesn't even go to the consciousness. When you see what you don't want to see, you don't even recognize it, it just doesn't register. At Ajahn Chah's funeral, a lot of monks who were there talked about what Ajahn Chah had taught, and every monk had their own ideas about what that was. It was quite fascinating to see that. It was Ajahn Jagaro who 'hit the nail on the head', when he said, "Yes, everyone has got their own Ajahn Chah". It's amazing you could be listening to the same talk and yet hear different things. You'd see and hear two different Ajahn Chahs. That's what perception is like. One of the beautiful things that I found in the teachings of the Buddha is the fantastic teaching of *vipallāsas*²², which shows you that your every sense has already been bent by the defilements. You don't hear what's there, you hear what you want to hear, see what you want to see, and experience what you want to experience. Whatever possibilities are there, you actually seek out what conforms to your views, cravings, desires, emotions and predilections in order to justify them. When I first saw that it was just mind blowing and so frightening. How could you trust what you saw, or heard? How could you trust what you read, tasted, smelt, or felt in the body? The point was that you couldn't. You can't trust any of it. Even what you saw of the mind, and what the mind thought, you couldn't even trust that, because you couldn't see the hidden hand of the defilements working. That's what delusion is, that's *avijjā*²³, or *moha*²⁴. Everyone thinks they are right because they can't see the *vipallāsas* working, that's why there are arguments in the world. It is called conceit. The only way past those *vipallāsas* is actually through the *jhānas*.

The *vipallāsas* are based on the hindrances, defilements, desire, ill will, and views. It's only when those things are temporarily overcome, that you can get past the *vipallāsas*. After emerging from the *jhānas* you have no views, desires, ill will, or fear. Those *jhāna* states give you that power, and they give you fearlessness. As a young monk I remember my teacher, my *upajjhāya* (preceptor) Somdet Buddhajahn, had practised meditation in the south of Thailand, with a monk who was very famous in the area at that time. I think he told me that he was actually sitting in a charnel ground, and he said that when he came out of his meditation he felt something on his lap. It was a big snake. He said that the amazing thing was that when he opened his

eyes and saw this snake and realized that it was very venomous, he never felt any fear at all, and in fact he was very peaceful. Fearlessness is just one of the results of *samādhi*, and that fearlessness is not just towards wild animals, its fearlessness basically because you've given up concern for the body. And that lack of concern for the body, or for other people's bodies remains for a long time.

The lack of concern because of fearlessness and the lack of desire, give you the opportunity to see what you don't want to see. You can experience what you never expected to experience. The denial mechanisms of the mind are not working. All the defilements are temporarily subdued so you have a chance to see and look beyond them. It's at that point where wisdom arises, not through thinking, speculating, listening or reading, those things just help to get you to that point. Once one is there then one has an opportunity to have a clear look, free from of the hindrances and defilements, and free from the *vipallāsas*. You have the chance to have a look at what this body and mind are. It's only at that point after *jhānas*, with the quietness, clarity and the power that's there, that all these arguments end. That's where all of the insights arise, that's where freedom comes from. That's where people are free, and there is a sense of release and lightness for them.

The result of actually seeing the *Dhamma* is the release of the mind and the body, the letting go, the liberation and release of everything. So please test out the monks you know, and the teachers you know, test them out to see if they have that release. If you see the monk getting angry or having craving, it doesn't matter what their reputation is, it doesn't matter if they say they are Enlightened or they say they are this or that, *Enlightened monks or nuns do not get angry*. *Dosa*, anger, is a defilement. So test them out and test yourself out as well, have a bit of humility. If one hasn't got to the *jhānas* yet, don't think you know. Keep all the opinions and ideas on the back burner, just leave them there, and see what happens when you get to the state beyond *jhānas*.

Conclusion

So this is what one needs to do in this practice to avoid the obstacles. It's not a place for debating or for filling the mind up with too much knowledge. Just have sufficient

knowledge of what you need to do. The path is very clear. It's the eightfold path and it culminates in *samādhi*, in *jhānas*. That leads to the ninth and the tenth factors of the path, *sammā vimutti*, pure liberation and freedom, and *sammā vimutti ñāna*, the knowledge that you're liberated. These two are as the ninth and tenth factors, the last factors, the results. So please actually follow this path. Make *samādhi* the main thing in this monastery. Whatever you do in this monastery see that it is supportive of *samādhi*. And if it is supportive of *samādhi* follow it, if it is hindering *samādhi* leave it alone for a while. And so that *samādhi* can grow, find out what the obstacles are. Find out why it is that the path doesn't happen. What are you doing? What are you lingering on? If it is on the body, the five senses, or the thoughts, just contemplate those in whichever way you wish, but contemplate them for the purpose of freeing the mind from those things. Free all concern for those things and know that your contemplation practice is working by how these things cease to bother you so much.

When these things stop bothering you, then the path towards *jhānas* is clear. So please liberate yourself from these obstacles. May you all obtain *jhāna* on this retreat. You all have the ability to do so, so stop messing around, and see if you can get the *jhānas* and the liberation that comes from them. Don't linger on this side of *jhānas*. If something has to be done, please do it.

¹ Eightfold Path, The:

1. Right View or Understanding.
2. Right Thoughts or Intentions.
3. Right Speech.
4. Right Action.
5. Right Livelihood.
6. Right Effort.
7. Right Mindfulness.
8. Right Concentration, i.e. *jhāna*.

² *Dhamma*: The teachings of the Buddha; the truth; the Norm.

³ *Anagārika*: Literally: "Homeless One". In Western Theravāda Monasteries this is taken to mean someone who keeps the eight precepts and is in training to ordain as a novice monk.

⁴ *Nibbidā*: Aversion, revulsion or wearisomeness towards (esp.) the round of existence. This is a consequence of deep insight, and has nothing to do with unwholesome states.

⁵ *Ariya*: A Noble One, a person who has attained to one of the four stages of Enlightenment.

⁶ *Sutta*: Discourse of the Lord Buddha, or one of his chief disciples, as recorded in the Pāli Canon.

⁷ *Khandhas* - Aggregates: The 5 groups into which the Buddha has summed up all the physical and mental phenomena of existence (modified from “Buddhist Dictionary”).

1. body, *rūpa*;
2. feeling, *vedanā*;
3. perception, *saññā*;
4. mental formations, *saṅkhāras*;
5. and consciousness, *viññāṇa*.

⁸ *Samādhi*: Sustained attention on one thing.

⁹ *Asubha*: Not-beautiful (sometimes translated as repulsiveness, or loathsomeness). The perception of impurity, loathsomeness, and foulness. The contemplation of the 32 parts of the body.

¹⁰ *Jhāna*: The deep meditation states of letting go.

¹¹ *Vimokkha*: Real freedom, being an epithet for Full Enlightenment.

¹² Kruba Ajahn: Meditation masters in the Thai ‘Forest Tradition’.

¹³ *Pītisukha*: Joy and happiness born of letting go. Factors of the first two *jhānas*.

¹⁴ *Nibbāna*: Literally; “Extinction” (as in the going out of a flame). The supreme goal for Buddhists – it is the destruction of greed, hatred, and delusion – thus, the end of all suffering.

¹⁵ *Vedanā*: That quality of every conscious experience – whether through sight, sound, smell, taste, touch or mind – which is either pleasant, unpleasant, or somewhere in between. The English word “feeling” is not all that accurate as a translation.

¹⁶ *Peta*: Afflicted spirit, ‘hungry ghost’.

¹⁷ *Deva*: Literally: ‘shining one’, i.e. god, deity, or celestial being.

¹⁸ *Āsava*: Literally: “outflowings”, that is, outflowings of the mind. Usually classified as three types:

1. *kāmāsava* (involving sensual desire).
2. *bhavāsava* (involving “being” or craving for existence).
3. *avijjāsava* (involving delusion).

¹⁹ *Dukkha*: Suffering, and unsatisfactoriness.

²⁰ *Kuṭi*: Monks hut or dwelling.

²¹ *Māra*: Literally, ‘the killer’; often called ‘the Evil One’, is a tempter figure who seeks to keep beings bound to the round of rebirth.

²² *Vipallāsa*: Perversion or distortion of perception, thought and view – taking what is impermanent to be permanent; what is suffering to be happiness; what is empty of a self to be a self; and what is not beautiful (*asubha*) to be beautiful (cognitive distortion).

²³ *Avijjā*: Ignorance of the Four Noble Truths.

Noble Truths, The Four

The truth of:

1. Suffering
2. The cause of suffering
3. The cessation of suffering
4. The path leading to the cessation of suffering

²⁴ *Moha*: Delusion. Synonymous with *avijjā*.