

## The World Buddhist University Sunday Forum

### MINDFUL MEDITATION ON THE FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS



**Speaker :** Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro (Formerly Dr. Barton Sensenig, USA)

**Moderator:** Dr. Chris A. Stanford

**Rapporteur :** Mrs. Suttinee Yavaprapas

On the First Sunday of the Month of March, Sunday, **March 1, 2552 (2009)** between 12:00 – 13.30, Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro is a guest speaker of WBU Sunday Forum. Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro is Secretary to the Abbot for International Affairs and Programme Manager of the Wat Luang Phor Sodh Buddhist Meditation Institute (BMI), an Associated Institution of the World Buddhist University. As a layman, Dr. Barton Sensenig was a Professor of Sociology, Social Psychology, and Research Methodology in the United States and a Professor of Agricultural Extension in Tanzania, as well as an International Development and Management Specialist on various USAID Projects in 24 countries around the world.

More and more, individuals worldwide, caught up in the pressure and emptiness of modern consumerism, are turning to meditation for reduction of stress, or for personal development, or in search of meaning – learning more about themselves and exploring the eternal questions of life. Meditation is objective scientific observation, turned inward. It does not require blind faith or belief in Buddhism; participants “see for themselves.” It is a method for **training the mind to become concentrated and keenly aware, polishing the lens to see more clearly.** Skill in meditation develops the ability to perceive experience directly, without the distortions implicit in conceptualization. The greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness (*Mahasatipatthana Sutta*) is the heart of the *Tipitaka*. It presents Lord Buddha’s detailed teachings on how to “See for yourself.” Modern readers have often puzzled over Lord Buddha’s teachings to see “the body-in-the-body”, “feelings-in-the-feelings”, “mind-in-the-mind” and “mind-objects-in-the mind-objects.”

Reliable and valid data from numerous current-day meditators confirm that a literal interpretation of these phrases opens a super highway to direct personal experience of Nirvana during meditation. Dhammakaya meditation is one of the most efficient ways to ascend directly

from mundane mentality to transcendental insight (Vipassana), purifying defilements and actually seeing heaven and hell. This meditation retreat is for all who seek **inner peace and happiness** or **self-purification**, as well as for those who seek to **understand reality** or **the meaning of life**. Wisdom and virtue develop hand-in-hand. As the meditator progresses beyond the distortions of the passions, insight sharpens and understanding deepens.

The Meditation practice combines four methods: (1) Focusing on a visual object, a luminous sphere (aloka-kasina), (2) Repetition of a mantra (samma arahang) recollecting Lord Buddha's virtues (buddhanussati), (3) Mindfulness of breathing (anapanasati), and (4) Focusing at the centre of the body. Meditation proceeds to successively higher levels by **always focusing at the centre of the centre**.

Wat Luang Phor Sodh is named after the late Abbot of Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen, the Venerable Chao Khun Phra Mongkol-Thepmuni, affectionately known as Luang Phor Wat Paknam or Luang Phor Sodh. In 1917, he rediscovered the meditation method used to reach Dhammakaya states of internal transcendence, in accordance with the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. Dhammakaya is a high concentration method of meditation which some people can become very skilled at. It involves using a light kasina to develop high concentration to purify and brighten the mind, preparing it for vipassana insight. The Buddha often taught that concentration should be developed, and then used for vipassana insight.

Wat Luang Phor Sodh is a temple that specializes in this method of meditation, and is located in Rajaburi province. Note that this temple is not affiliated in any way with Wat Dhammakaya.

Phra Khru Baitika Dr. Barton Yanathiro 's lecture appears as follows:

### **I Personal Introduction .**

- 1.1 A Buddhist Monk – a seeker – in quest of Truth: “What is reality really like?”
- 1.2 A Scientist with 3 assumptions revised: (1) Reality is inside; (2) Relax skepticism to neutrality; (3) Remove the requirement for replication by untrained minds.
- 1.3 A Social Psychologist – The universe is psychological; mind underlies all.
- 1.4 A Professor of Research Methodology – Teaching the way to collect valid data.
- 1.5 A Meditator – Foundations of Mindfulness Meditation IS the Right Methodology.

### **2. The Greater Discourse on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Satipatthana)**

2.1 Lord Buddha began: “There is, monks, this one way to attain purity, overcome sorrow, eliminate grief and suffering, transcend to the Truth, and realize Nirvana. It is the Four Foundations of Mindfulness: Mindfulness of body, feelings, mind, and *Dhamma*.” These four match the four common types of worldly behavior: (1) weak craving stuck on the body, (2) strong craving stuck on feelings, (3) weak wrong view stuck on mind, and (4) strong wrong view stuck on mental objects. Lord Buddha clearly instructs meditators to concentrate on contemplating successive bodies-in-the-body both externally and internally, and then feelings-in-the feelings, mind-in-the-Dhamma. Practitioners must maintain purification effort, awareness of the body, and mindfulness. They must eliminate sensual enchantment and ill-will.

2.2 **Contemplation of the body** both inside and outside: (1) **Breathing** (out, in, long, short) – for both the breath and the physical body; (2) **Posture** (standing, walking, sitting, lying or other), (3) **Bodily Awareness** (going forward, going back, turning, kneeling, stretching, etc., (4)

Repulsiveness (the 32 body parts), (5) **Body as just elements** (earth, water, fire, wind), (6) **The 9 graveyard contemplations.**

2.3 **Contemplation of Feelings and Mind:** The mind is less well understood than the body because it is not visible. It consists of four aggregates which perform different functions regarding environmental or mental phenomena, but are very closely integrated: (1) Vedana-feeling or sensing the surroundings; (2) Sanna-labeling or perception uses volition via thinking manipulates data and creates conceptual constructs and intentional actions; and (4) Vinnana-consciousness knows and recognizes phenomena.

2.4 **Mindfulness of Dhamma:** Contemplating mental phenomena is for the practitioner to recognize good, evil and neutral phenomena so as to know what to abandon and what to nourish. These are all defined in the Buddhist Scriptures. Ultimately, this leads to Right View: understanding Suffering, the cause of Suffering, the existence of Nirvana, without suffering, due to extinction of the causes, and the Eight-fold Path, the practice leading to Nirvana.

### 3. **Empirical Findings with Meditation Students**

3.1 **Meditators see and become inner refined bodies, experiencing their feelings, minds and mental objects.** Since 2005, BMI has taught a total of 254 meditators from over 20 countries. Half of these (50%) were able to see and become some refined inner body, beginning with their own refined human body and angel body. Almost none came seeking this or thought it was possible.

3.2 **Meditators see and become transcendent “Noble Disciple” *Dhammakaya*.** Three out of eight meditators (38%) were able to transcend to seeing and becoming at least the first *Dhammakaya* body.

3.3 **Meditators see and experience Nibbana temporarily during meditation.** Two out of nine meditation students (22%) were able to visit Nirvana temporarily during meditation, seeing and sometimes talking with Lord Buddha’s enlightened *Dhammakaya*. This is possible due to temporary transcendence via suppression of hindrances during meditation by the strength of *Jhana – Vikkhambhana Vimutti* – วิชฌมกน วิมุตติ (Cf. Naktham Chan Tho นักธรรมชั้นโท, BE 2536, pg.174, Vimutti 5 – วิมุตติ 5.) The most important immediate benefit from visiting *Nibbana* is attainment of the supra-mundane telescope and microscope which facilitate seeing the whole universe and infinitesimally small particles as well as internal organs.

### 4. **Lessons Learned**

4.1 **Lord Buddha’s instruction to see the body-in-the-body should be taken literally.** The astounding essence of Lord Buddha’s Four Foundation of Mindfulness Meditation is that we each have an inner chain of more and more refined bodies stretching from this coarse outer body through Celestial and Brahman worldly bodies to the transcendent *Dhammakaya* level, where they continue to rise through the Noble Disciple states to *Nibbana*.

4.2 **Anupassana is best translated as “perceiving again and again”** in the refrain “*Kaye kayanupassana*” repeated for each Foundation of Mindfulness. The prefix, “*Anu,*” has many meanings (after, under, under, less than, for, according to, along, again, and in consequence of), but “again and again” best fits this case. The translation becomes “He dwells observing again and again the body in the body.” More broadly, Anupassana means penetrating the Three Common Characteristics of all compound phenomena. This is “preliminary” to penetrating the Four Noble Truths.

4.3 **Comparing Nibbana with compound phenomena penetrates the “Three Characteristics”** of this world’s ephemeral, illusory, and hollow phenomena. There are four steps: (1) Concentration into *Jhana* to eliminate the Five Hindrances; (2) Focusing on the body, feelings, mind, and Dhamma of the /crude Human Body; (3) Rising through successive inner

bodies and experiencing the feelings, mind and Dhamma of each; and (4) Finally becoming *Dhammakaya Arahant* and experiencing *Nibbana*, permitting direct comparison with this compound world.

4.4 Lord Buddha prescribes contemplating five key teachings or Dhamma, not all mind objects: (1) The Five Hindrances, (2) The Five Aggregates, (3) The Six Internal and External Sense Bases, (4) The Seven Factors of Enlightenment, and (5) The Four Noble Truths. *Dhamma*, however, is not just external teachings, it is inside us. A Dhamma Sphere nucleus gives rise to each successively more refined inner body. We must penetrate to clear comprehension of Dhamma internally.

4.5 “Observing internally and externally” can also mean examining each new inner body internally and externally. One first sees the body externally and then becomes it, experiencing the feelings, mind and Dhamma directly.

4.6 “Contemplating arising and vanishing” can refer to inner bodies and minds as well as to phenomena in the body. This is forward and backward contemplation of conditional genesis (*Paticcasamupada*) [Ignorance Karmic Formations Consciousness Mind & Matter Six Sense Bases Contact Feeling Craving Clinging Becoming Birth Decay and Death. This contemplation can lead to clear comprehension of birth and death.

## 5. Summary and Conclusion

### 5.1 Summary:

- The *Mahasatipattana Sutta* is Lord Buddha's major treatise on methodology – how to see for yourself.
- It states: “See the body in the body, ...feelings in the feelings, ...mind in the mind... and *Dhamma* in the *Dhamma*.”
- Our experience in teaching meditation confirms that this instruction should be understood literally. The meditator should see, become, experience and contemplate successively more and more refined bodies, feelings, minds and *Dhamma*.
- This technique permits becoming transcendental *Dhammakaya* Noble Disciples and ultimately visiting *Nibbana*.
- Visiting *Nibbana* permits attaining supra-mundane tools that facilitate further *Vipassana* Insight meditation.
- Experiencing *Nibbana* permits comparison with compound phenomena to penetrate the 3 characteristics.

### 5.2 Conclusion:

- Lord Buddha concludes theatrically by saying: “Whoever, monks, should practice these Four Foundations of Mindfulness for just 7 years can expect one of two results either Arahantship in this life or, if there should be some substrate left, the state of a Non-returner. Let alone 7 years, whoever should practice them for just 6 years – 5 years – 4 years – 3 years – 2 years- 1 year – can expect one of two results... Let alone one year – whoever should practice them for just... 7 months – 6 months – 5 months – 4 months – 3 months – 2 months – 1 month – half a month can expect one of two results... Let alone half a month, whoever should practice these Four Foundations of Mindfulness for just 1 week can expect one of two results either Arahantship in this life or, if there should be some substrate left, the state of a Non-returner. (Anagami)”
- Lord Buddha concludes theatrically by saying: “Whoever, monks, should practice these Four Foundations of Mindfulness for just 7 years can expect one of two results either Arahantship in this life or, if there should be some substrate left, the state of a Non-returner. Let alone 7 years, whoever should practice them for just 6 years – 5 years – 4 years – 3 years – 2 years- 1 year – can expect one of two results... Let alone one year – whoever should practice them for just... 7 months – 6 months – 5

months – 4 months – 3 months – 2 months – 1 month – half a month can expect one of two results... Let alone half a month, whoever should practice these Four Foundations of Mindfulness for just 1 week can expect one of two results either Arahantship in this life or, if there should be some substrate left, the state of a Non-returner. (Anagami)”

- Finally, Lord Buddha terminates by declaring: “There is, monks, this one way to the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and distress, for the disappearance of pain and sadness, for the gaining of the right path, and for the realization of Nirvana – that is to say the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.”
- I conclude: Four Foundations of Mindfulness Meditation is THE RIGHT research methodology for obtaining relevant, comprehensive, reliable, and valid data on “What is reality really like?”.

