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by Bhikkhu Dhammadharo

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Edited and revised by Nina van Gorkom

(PART I)

This is a conversation in Adelaide between Bhikkhu Dhammadharo (Alan Driver) and others on account of a letter about Dhamma.

The writer of that letter thought that mindfulness is to be with what you are doing, for instance, when cycling be with your cycling and enjoy nature, the birds. When you lie down on the floor feel your whole body on the floor.

Bhikkhu Dhammadharo: --

If you try to concentrate on your feet going around no awareness of anything. It is just a self who is trying to direct awareness, an idea of what you think awareness is, to some place or other of the body, because we want to know this, we want to know that. It is not natural. It is not getting rid of attachment, it is increasing it.

Questioner: Attachment to what?

Bhikkhu: To the object, whatever it is. If we are attached to watching our feet going around or to the feeling we get when we are lying prostrate on the floor, then that is attachment to those objects which appear. And attachment to the idea of a self who can take something and direct it to this point and be "aware". It is not really awareness, it is not detachment. It is increasing the idea of a controller who can direct and induce awareness. There is so much concentration involved; it is not natural at all.

When one is cycling normally what happens? There is attachment, there is aversion, there is ignorance. Because that is what there is now and that is what there is time and again. Day in, day out. It does not stop when you get on your bicycle. It keeps going, attachment, aversion and ignorance. Sometimes there can be a moment of awareness which is aware of whatever appears through any doorway, no choosing. Not concentrating on the bodysense in order to be aware of movement. Not concentrating through the eyes in order to be aware of visible object. Not concentrating on any particular doorway, looking for something or trying to direct awareness but just letting awareness arise naturally. We should realize that awareness only arises by conditions and that you can't make it happen here or there for a long time. You can't keep it somewhere. The whole point of developing awareness is to see that nothing can be kept anywhere. So, how can you keep awareness? It is just as much anatta, not self, as anything else. If you try to keep awareness, concentrating on a particular spot of the body you are certainly not being aware, but there is a self who is trying hard to make something the way he wants it to be.

Can you be aware now? Yes, if you want to develop insight you have to be aware now. We have no other opportunity. And what will you be aware of? Sitting is not a reality. But there is seeing now. Why go past the eye. So we see. Seeing is not sitting, seeing sees. And there is visible object, which makes it possible for seeing to arise. So there is visible object to be aware of too. And how do you know you are sitting? Because you do not see what you call your body, in the position that you conventionally label "sitting posture" You also have experiences of hardness here and there, there are tangible objects being experienced in different places where there is bodysense. Then, when you think about all that information, you have the idea of a

person or someone as a “whole”. That is what you call “sitting”. But the whole purpose of the Buddha's teachings is to destroy that wrong idea of a “whole” through seeing the truth of the different realities. They are not a “whole”. Seeing is not sitting. The experience of hardness at this point does not sit. The experience of coolness at that point does not sit. The coolness itself does not sit. “Sitting” is a conventional idea which enables us to communicate. It is not a reality.

Wisdom, panna, gets beyond words, beyond thinking about states, positions, ideas about a self or a whole, and it sees reality without thinking. Because the function of panna is not thinking, its function is to see clearly, to penetrate that which we mistake for “sitting”. We mistakenly think that a person is sitting. We have the wrong idea of “I am sitting”. Anatta is the core of the Buddha's teaching, not atta, self.

We read in the “Satipatthana Sutta” that, when sitting, one should know “I am sitting”. We cannot take just one sentence out of the context. This is only one sentence out of the 84,000 sentences which compose the teachings of the Buddha. There can be right understanding when we have studied and learnt many other areas of the teachings. Then we will see how these all point in the same direction: to be aware of the different characteristics appearing one at a time through different doorways, right at this moment, whatever you may be doing. If you are sitting, be aware. Don't try to change things. Because if you want to try and change something you are not being aware at this moment. Here we are, we are sitting, why would we want to change? Do we think we will have more awareness if we do so? We have attachment to the idea of a self who is going to get more awareness if he does so. But there is no awareness of the realities now, there is no awareness which will destroy the illusion of a self sitting or lying or doing anything else. It is attachment.

Q.: Maybe we need to change things. It is so difficult to start anywhere with awareness.

Bhikkhu: Difficult? But if we start in the right way it is truly a start, and no matter how slow it will be, one day we can reach the right end. But if we are going fast the wrong way, it is frightening.

Q.: I do not think it is the wrong way when one is selecting simply in the way that one is with what one is doing.

Bhikkhu: At the moment of selecting is there awareness of a reality? Is it right or wrong if we are at that moment not being aware of what appears?

Q.: I think we are aware of what appears.

Bhikkhu: What is it that appears?

Q.: We see the scene that appears.

Bhikkhu: You have an idea of a self who is aware of something. Seeing is not something, colour is not something. Hardness here, it really is not something at all. We change the name from “my knee on the floor” to “hardness” and then we might think that we are being aware. But we still have an idea of some hardness that is here, that is maybe circular-shaped down here, covering a certain area of my body. We still have an idea of something lasting there. But hardness is not something at all. It is not a knee and not the floor, it is even not a little patch of something down there where your knee touches the floor. Hardness is not something, the experience of hardness is not something. They don't last for a moment, for a second.

Q.: So, it is not proper to direct awareness?

Bhikkhu: Absolutely not. When we begin to develop awareness we have so much accumulated wrong understanding that we cannot help trying to direct the show. But we have to begin to understand that the directing is not awareness. If there is any awareness it is not self that is aware and it cannot be directed. It arises, wherever it arises, by conditions at that moment. Not because somebody wanted to have awareness at that point, or “took” his awareness and put it there. Awareness arises because of conditions and then it falls away immediately. Prior to the moment of its arising there is not any awareness one can put somewhere. And

now we still have an idea in our minds of “my awareness” but it is gone. We can't help being full of the idea of self. But the more we understand, the more we will see that really awareness too is anatta. Not just the colour, the seeing, the sound and the hearing, but also awareness is anatta.

Q.: But can't awareness be directed without introducing a self?

Bhikkhu: By whom, by what? Why bother? If it arises, isn't that good enough? Why do we have to have any idea of somebody or something taking it and putting it there?

Q.: It is because we have the intention of being aware of certain things.

Bhikkhu: Why not be aware without intention because in fact, you cannot be aware, nor can you do anything, just by intention. Intention is anatta, not self. The condition for the arising of awareness is not an intention to be aware, but the right understanding. If we would like to change conditions, we can do so in our thinking, but in reality, we can't. If it seems to us that we have awareness when we intend to have it, then that is our thinking. And that is another subject - a very fit one- for awareness to realize that it is not self who is thinking wrongly at that moment either. Just another reality. There is no intention in the eightfold Path, none whatsoever. Intention is not among the eight factors of the eightfold Path.

Q.: Is there any concentration involved?

Bhikkhu: Yes, there is always concentration. There is concentration with each moment of consciousness. There is right concentration if there is no intention to take awareness which does not last anyway and put it somewhere. Just a moment of awareness and then be aware again of another object. You can't keep your awareness here or there. That is wrong concentration. Remember, the whole aim is to see anatta, uncontrollability. Not to see controllability. So much patience is required to start straight and to keep going right. We have to let go of all our ideas of having awareness. We have to drop all our ideas that we are going to do it right this time, we are going to do it straight, we are going to have it now, we are going to be aware of this or that. At those moments there is no awareness. One moment of real awareness in one lifetime- very rich man because it is right and it will condition more of the same. Countless moments of wrong awareness and you are not only not wealthy, you are getting poorer every moment, because you are accumulating more and more wrong understanding. This will make it more likely to have more wrong understanding in the future. So, right understanding, not intention, is the condition for awareness to arise. Right understanding is not only one of the factors of the eightfold Path, it is the first factor.

Q.: Is it possible to have directed awareness?

Bhikkhu: There really isn't any directed awareness. We only have the illusion that it is directed because of our wrong understanding. Awareness must arise because of conditions. Awareness is wholesome. It does not arise because of attachment. It arises because of right understanding. It cannot arise otherwise.

If we develop samatha and we have not developed the eightfold Path at all, then we could not possibly have any idea of the true nature of reality. So there is bound to be a wrong understanding of self who does it, time and again. There is also awareness in the development of calm, but it is not right awareness of the eightfold Path. It only arises in the development of calm because there are the right conditions for it, and one of them is right understanding of the way to develop calm. There is understanding in samatha but it is different from right understanding of the eightfold Path. The object of right understanding in samatha is a meditation subject and the object of right understanding of the eightfold Path is any reality which appears now through one of the six doors.

If we have the idea of being able to direct our awareness or our concentration it is only an idea. Because there is absolutely no lasting quality to stay around, that can do any directing of any kind. At each moment there are different mental factors (cetasikas) which perform different functions, and intention or volition is one of them. In a way, it directs the accompanying cetasikas, in the sense of being like a “supervisor”, but it cannot direct the arising of any mental factor such as panna. It cannot say, “Now panna, arise and do your

work.” But when panna has already arisen because of all the conditions necessary for its arising, then the volition which has also arisen because of conditions at that moment is directing the task of panna. Intention or volition only directs at the moment it has arisen and it only directs the other mental phenomena which have arisen together with it. It cannot at this moment direct something which has not yet arisen to arise and to do something. So here are all the different mental factors at this moment. They are being urged to perform their task by this mental factor which is intention. But only those mental factors which are present at that moment and no others. Intention cannot make other mental factors arise which have not arisen, or stop other mental factors from arising, because there is nothing that carries on. The intention arises and falls away completely.

So, if you have not got as much awareness as you would like there is nothing that you can do about it. Do you want more? You can't have more because of your wish. There may be more, but this depends on the level of one's understanding, and we may not know what understanding we have yet. We may have wrong understanding about our understanding and take it for true understanding.

Q.: The problem is that there is so much distraction.

Bhikkhu: What does this indicate? We don't like to be distracted, do we? We would prefer to be able to go about our business calmly, peacefully and in an organized way. We want to get on with the practice, be aware and understand. Is it self or not-self who thinks like that? It is a misunderstanding based on our dislike of the way things are at the moment. We don't have the understanding, the calmness, the steadiness we would like to have. Very often our aim is not really to understand whatever appears right now, but to get rid of distraction, to be calmer, to be steadier, to be more organised, to be somehow other than we are. What is that, if it is not attachment?

Q.: Distraction is just the opposite of what we want.

Bhikkhu: So, be aware of distraction.

Q.: It is the main thing that makes awareness impossible.

Bhikkhu: No. The main thing that makes awareness impossible is misunderstanding. There is always restlessness with wrong understanding. At the moment we don't like our distraction are we then not distracted by our distraction? Why can't we just be aware of distraction? But, oh no, we don't like distraction and there we are, thoroughly distracted from awareness. This happens because of our attachment to a self who does not want to be distracted.

Q.: We know that it is not a skillful state.

Bhikkhu: But at what level do we realize that? What about the state that is distracted by distraction? That is equally unskillful and we don't even know we have it. Instead of learning to be aware of whatever appears we are being choosy. We don't want to be aware of distraction. We want to get on with being aware of breath, of body, of feeling, of citta (consciousness), or of this or that. What about distraction? Is distraction not included in the four satipatthanas, the objects of mindfulness? The Buddha did not say, whatever you do, don't be aware of distraction. What choice do you have? You can't be aware of seeing at the moment of distraction, because then there is no seeing, there is distraction. You can't be aware of calm at the moment of distraction, because there is no calm. Ask yourself, do you really want to be aware or do you just want calm? Just get rid of the distraction and get on with whatever we are doing. But what is the point of getting on with whatever we are doing when it is “we” who are doing it all the time? There is no awareness, no detachment. What is the point? We are just perpetuating the illusion of a self who has got a job to do, who wants to do it and does not like distraction which gets in the way of doing the job. Then there is no right understanding at all. If there really is awareness, you are not upset by distraction, because it has just arisen because of conditions, it is not self. You are aware of it and then you can be aware of whatever appears next. There can be awareness and right understanding of what has already appeared because of conditions, only for one moment though. And then there may be a whole lot of distraction. You can't do anything about it, anatta. If

there is awareness at that moment something has been done already. Anatta. You can't stop awareness from arising - it has already arisen.

Developing awareness. I don't think it is what we really want to do at all. We don't have the intention deep down. We are not really interested very often. Only at a moment of right understanding is there any interest, right interest in the object which appears, to see it as it really is. We are always looking for some other object, trying to change it or make it last. That is attachment, not detachment.

We may be worried, because we have not got enough awareness. We are comparing ourselves with others, because they know more than us, they are always aware, always calm. Then there is no awareness, no detachment. There is just an idea of self at the center of the world. We may think of what different teachers say, about ways and methods to develop the path, but then there is no awareness. Because at the moment of awareness there is no teacher, no person, no name, no address. There is just the characteristic of nama (mental phenomena) or the characteristic of rupa (material phenomena). Nama is not a person, a teacher, a method, a way. Rupa is not a name or address, a date, a self. So, if we realize that perhaps we have not had very much awareness yet, that is good, that is right understanding, if it is true. And that is the way to develop more of it. That is the right way. But we may find it depressing when we are attached to wanting to be further ahead than we are.

One moment there can be attachment, the next moment, if we have got enough right understanding accumulated, there can be awareness. The next moment there can be depression or aversion, because there is not as much awareness as we wanted, or it did not last as long as we thought it should, or we had doubt about what we were aware of. We have to be honest, we have to know the truth. If we don't have much understanding we should realize that, and then, if we realize that, there is some understanding, and we can start.

It is hard to admit our lack of awareness and understanding. It is hard to be honest and face the truth. Even if one has some amount of right understanding that does not mean that one doesn't ever have any wrong understanding. One may, for example, mistake thinking about a reality for awareness. There may be wholesome thinking, but that is different from awareness of realities. We may, for example, be angry and realise that anger is unwholesome. That is different from awareness and understanding of anger as just a reality, not "my unwholesomeness". Anger is a type of nama which arises and then falls away, it is not self. Even if one has a basic theoretical understanding one may still practice in the wrong way.

Q: The difficulty seems to me that awareness is just being aware, and that there is not any directing. Should one not start by directing?

Bhikkhu: That is not satipatthana, that is someone, a self who wants to direct. The only way to develop satipatthana is to start satipatthana, and that is not someone directing something. When you say start, what do you mean by starting? Do you mean understanding nama and rupa now, is that starting? Panna may be so weak, so ephemeral, so fleeting, that you have no idea whether you understand anything or not. That is beginning. Beginning is to be overwhelmed with all sorts of doubts, misgivings and wrong ideas. When you have been practising in the wrong way and have been trying to direct sati you cannot suddenly change. It is not so that you can start at once to practise in the right way and then immediately realize different characteristics of nama and rupa. Let us talk about beginning. I think we have a rather odd idea of what a beginning is like. In the beginning, one cannot be full of confidence. One cannot expect natural awareness and one cannot expect that there will be no directing. That can only be when awareness has already been developed.

When satipatthana has been developed it can arise anywhere and at any time. It can also arise when you are with friends and are having a good time. But if one is a beginner one cannot expect sati to arise very often. You cannot force yourself not to have a good time, and, when you are alone, will there be more awareness? Sati can arise when right understanding of nama and rupa has been accumulated. It arises because of conditions, it is beyond control.

BE HERE NOW (PART II)

by Bhikkhu Dhammadharo

Q.: Awareness is anatta, not self, but can we do anything to make it arise? Is all we can do just listening and studying?

Bhikkhu Dhammadharo: Can “we” listen, can “we” study? Can you in reality force yourself to study or to understand what is being said now? We are here in an environment now where Dhamma is being discussed, but aren't there moments when there is distraction, when we are misunderstanding what we have heard anyway? We may take it the way we want to take it, or we may want to make it fit with what we think is the right way.

You can't even say “we” can listen, because there will be listening in the right way as much as conditions will allow. There will be studying of Dhamma in the right way as much as conditions will allow, no more. It is not self. Hearing now is not self. Studying is not self. Right attention is not self. So, if we think that we can study and we can listen we are misleading ourselves. We can be aware while studying and listening, in order to learn that such moments are not self. The more we listen in the right way, if there are conditions for it, the more will we understand the difference between just thinking and being aware. We will understand the difference between trying to control realities and just letting awareness arise naturally and being aware of what appears for one brief moment.

Right understanding only develops little by little. Some of us have been here with this Dhamma group for two or three years. But this is nothing compared with the number of lives we might have to carry on. Because we could die today and we don't know where we will be born, and we don't know whether there will be any conditions for a Dhamma group in a next life. Look how many years it has taken us to find out what we are finding out now. Who knows how long we will live. We may worry that understanding develops so slowly. What is the use of worrying and thinking, I did not find out soon enough “, or “I am not going to have long enough to study”, or, “I have got to find out faster.” That is all attachment. We are not developing detachment. In a next life conditions may be better or worse, we do not know. Why not develop understanding in this life?

We should listen more and study realities more. We may be clinging to the image of a self who should not be like this or like that. We cannot face up to the realities which are really us. We wish to deny that we have wrong understanding, that we are selfish or jealous. How can we know jealousy as it really is if we are struggling and trying to pretend that there isn't any? We may try to hide from it, to push it away, to give it another name, but that is useless. Do we consider ourselves as “somebody”? We may refrain from unwholesome deeds because we want to be “the nice person”, the “holy person”, and receive all the nice compliments we are so attached to. Or do we refrain from akusala because there is right understanding which truly sees akusala as akusala?

Why do we want to be with what we are doing? Doesn't it make us feel comfortable and secure when we feel that we are with what we are doing? It is all attachment. It is not awareness, it is not detachment, it is not wisdom. It causes us more suffering. We go on trying to be attached. If we are not attached to what appears through the ears we are attached to what appears through the eyes. If there is the development of right understanding we are not searching for... comfort or security, we are not upset, not looking for something that has not appeared. We are not searching for an object to be aware of, we are just aware of whatever object appears.

Q.: I don't think that it is possible to be aware without being with what you are doing.

Bhikkhu: We certainly cannot be aware of the past. We cannot be aware of the future. So, it is only the present, that which appears right now, that can be the object of awareness. But if you call that “being here now”, or “being with what you are doing”, we have to clarify that. We have to explain how to be here now with awareness, this is very different from being here now with any form of attachment, no matter how subtle.

What are we attached to now? When we look around here, can we avoid being attached to what we see here? We are attached immediately to colour appearing through the eyedoor. That is being here now with attachment. We have attachment time and again, we have no need to practise it. It arises because there are conditions for its arising.

Be here now with awareness, and this means that we do not try to have a feeling of comfort or security. There can be awareness just for a moment and then after that who knows which reality arises, it can be attachment, aversion or ignorance again.

The nama and rupa which arise right now we mistake for something that can stay, that can continue. That illusion can be destroyed through awareness and right understanding. When there is no awareness there is the illusion of things carrying on, because there are conditions which make things appear as they are not. How can we destroy the illusion when there are conditions for wrong understanding, and not for right understanding?

When we want to be here now with attachment it is very hard to know what is going on in reality, and we don't see the characteristic of awareness at all. It is mixed up in our own idea of a self who wants to be here now and who wants to be aware.

We have conditions for the arising of attachment and to be with it without having to do much about it. We want to enjoy colour, sound, smell, taste and touch. That is the second noble Truth, tanha, clinging or thirst. We have a thirst for sights, sounds, odours, flavours and touches. What does it do for us? It brings us misery. It brings as result unpleasant sights, sounds or touches. It separates us from touches that are pleasant. It causes us to be ill and to experience pain. In trying to be here now with attachment one could perform unwholesome deeds. One may kill or steal. One may do all sorts of things in order to have pleasant experiences. What does one kill for? For sights, sounds, smells, flavours and touches that one can enjoy. What concern is there at such moments for other people's happiness? There is thorough forgetfulness on all levels. There is no generosity, no restraint, there is no helping of other people. Let alone awareness. We are thoroughly distracted by colour or sound.

We are attached to nature, to hearing birds. One may think that there is no attachment if one does not want to get something for oneself. There are many degrees of attachment, it can be coarse or more subtle. As soon as we like nature or the sound of birds there is attachment. If one is aware of sound and realizes it as just a kind of rupa appearing through the ears, there is no bird in the sound. There are many kinds of sounds, loud or soft, high or low, but sound can be known as just sound. This is the way to develop understanding which will lead to detachment.

When one sees realities as they are who would want to be here now. Realities arise and fall away, they are dukkha, suffering. We have a thirst for nature, for this or for that. Even for a certain kind of practice which is “having awareness now”. Instead of being aware of whatever appears we are trying to make something come which we don't even fully understand. One may perhaps think that understanding will make one enjoy life more. One does not see how much attachment one has and how one is actually trying to get more.

When there is the idea of a person, the whole body, a thing, thus, a “whole” there is an idea of “self” or “mine”. When there is awareness of now this element then that element, there will be the disintegration of the self. Now this element, now that. Not a dog, a man, a woman, a house or a place. Not a whole body. Not nature. Nature is odour, sound, smell, visible object and touch. Different rupas through different sense-doors. There is no nature which is a whole, which is desirable. Dukkha, unsatisfactory is not sukha, pleasant. Different elements can be known one at a time through the six doorways. This will lead to detachment.

Things are not as we would like them to be and they never will. They are as they are. They arise and then fall away again. We should see the truth of disintegration. There are moments of consciousness, citta, and accompanying mental factors, cetasikas, which arise and fall away, no self.

Q.: What does attachment aim at?

Bhikkhu: To keep the object.

Q.: What is the main reason why it is no good?

Bhikkhu: Attachment is the condition for suffering. You cannot possibly have aversion if you don't have attachment. There is nobody who wants aversion. Nobody likes to dislike, to hate, to be angry they want to be happy. But aversion is conditioned by attachment which we believe makes us happy. We are fighting a losing battle the whole time, trying to be happy through attachment. We try to avoid misery through attachment. But this is the cause of more misery, again and again. Attachment can cause one to kill, steal or to perform other unwholesome deeds, which can condition rebirth in lower planes and the experience of unpleasant objects also in the human plane.

One would not want to steal, take and keep something if one did not have the wrong view that there was something there to keep. Attachment to wrong view conditions many kinds of unwholesomeness. One may believe that there is something there that can be kept and enjoyed. And someone to enjoy it. One may think, "I get it now, and I enjoy it now". One may believe that something has carried on from the moment of getting it to the moment of enjoying it. However, there are only different realities which arise and then fall away. Also understanding arises and falls away. There is no self who has understanding. Understanding today is not the understanding of yesterday, which fell away as soon as it arose. Also understanding today falls away.

Who wants to be aware now? Would we rather wait until we are in a better mood or until it is quiet: One may find that there are too many people around, one wants to think first. There is always something else to do instead of being aware of the reality which appears now. If there is no awareness now how can there be any conditions for awareness tonight, tomorrow or next year? The only way that there can be awareness in the future is awareness now, without selecting the object of awareness, or the time for awareness. One may think that it is not the time for awareness when one enjoys oneself. Or one may set a certain time for awareness, for example, one hour a day. There can be awareness when there are conditions for it. There will never be conditions for it so long as we are trying to control it, to direct it, to do certain things first in order to have more awareness. One may be inclined to think, "If I could only get rid of this pain in my back, if people would turn the radio down first, if I could be alone, then I could be aware." Can't one be aware of sound, be it loud or soft? It is the reality which can be heard. So long as you are not aware you have the idea of "somebody" putting on the music too loud. And then you have just aversion. There is no awareness of sound, of thinking, of aversion, because one is full of an idea of "self" who is upset by what other "selves" are doing. The aim of right understanding is not to avoid being upset. If we believe that we should be aware in order not to be unhappy, not to have aversion, then there is still an impure motivation. Happiness and unhappiness should be known as they are: conditioned realities, not self.

One may have one's own idea of what awareness is. One may consider it as a means to control, to have less unpleasant feeling. One's real aim may be just to be peaceful, relaxed, undisturbed, undistracted. One's aim may not be understanding whatever appears, be it the reality of happiness or the reality of visible object. If it is a pleasant object, does one want to be aware of it? Does one want it to last, or does one want to see that one can never have more of the same, that it does not last?

Q.: Can one be enjoying something and be aware at the same time?

Bhikkhu: These are different moments. Visible object can be seen, and when right understanding is being developed we will know that there is no "it" to be enjoyed. Visible object is not something, not a flower. We may say, "I know that it is not a flower, only visible object or colour". We may say that, but there may still

be an idea of “something”. We may believe that colour is something lasting. You can't really enjoy it, because it falls away. If you were to see that visible object falls away there would be detachment eventually. Do we really want detachment? We should be honest with ourselves. If we realize that what we mainly want is enjoyment, happiness, there is understanding at that moment. We are facing up to the truth that we are not people who are full of awareness and right understanding all day long. It is better to know that than not to know that.

Detachment should be sobering. I like the word sobering as a description of the development of the eightfold Path. Are we really interested in this? Don't we prefer to be intoxicated with colour, sound, smell, flavour and tangible object? However, awareness and right understanding of what appears now should sober us up really. It is the purpose of the development of the eightfold Path. Arahats are incapable of any kind of laughter that would make their bodies shake, they could not make loud, unpleasant sounds. They can only smile in a refined manner, in a sober way.

When we are enjoying ourselves why should we not be aware, or learn to begin to be aware? In order to know pleasant feeling as it is there has to be awareness of it. Sooner or later we have to be aware of visible object. We should not worry about its pleasantness or unpleasantness, we should not be so interested in that. We should just see it as that which appears through the eyes, not a thing or a person. Through awareness one will be less concerned about the objects which are experienced.

Do we know sound and hearing as they really are? They appear at this moment. Hearing is not sound, and sound is not hearing, they are different realities. At the moment of seeing, there can't be hearing or thinking. One cannot see and hear at the same time. Seeing experiences an object different from hearing. Although cittas arise and fall away so fast that it seems that there can be seeing and hearing at the same time, in reality they are different moments of citta. We can distinguish seeing from hearing, we know that they are different experiences, but we know this through intellectual understanding. When direct understanding has been developed their different characteristics can be realized more clearly.

Hearing is different from thinking of the meaning of the sound. Thinking can only arise because hearing has fallen away. Hearing falls away and then there are other realities to follow in its train. There can be awareness of one reality at a time, either a nama or rupa.

Although we cannot have awareness because of our wish, awareness can arise now, depending on conditions. It does not depend on us, not on intention, but on many conditions the chief of which is right understanding. Through listening to the Dhamma and studying it, considering it carefully, intellectual understanding is being accumulated. In this way conditions are being built up for the arising of right awareness of one reality at a time. We cannot induce the arising of right awareness, it all depends on the understanding which has been accumulated. At the moment of awareness of a nama or rupa understanding of its true characteristic can gradually be developed. This is a kind of study, not the study of the level of intellectual understanding, but study of realities while there is awareness.

There cannot be awareness all the time of every object, there cannot be many moments in succession. Nobody knows in advance of what object there will be awareness and when there will be awareness. This can be very conducive to detachment. Studying and listening is an essential condition for awareness. One should consider what one hears and apply it, and be aware.

Q.: I still have doubts whether one can do anything to be aware.

Bhikkhu: We cannot control anything. You cannot control seeing or hearing. You don't know what you are going to hear next, or whether you are even going to hear. Could one become blind and deaf now? We can't control anything in life. Could one make oneself angry now? If so, it is because there are conditions for it. If somebody would tell others that they should be angry now, perhaps not everybody could be angry. They might try, but it might not be possible. Some people may just laugh, others may be aware. It is not only awareness you can't control. We cannot even control wrong practice. One may take wrong practice for the right practice, and one would like to have more of it than conditions allow. We can't control anything. But

with right understanding there can be more awareness. If we listen to true Dhamma in the right way, over and over again, with right attention, and learn to be aware little by little, right understanding develops.

There are ways for everything to happen by conditions. We are more familiar with attachment or anger. But who is familiar with awareness yet? It has to be developed. It is easy to have attachment, but it is difficult to be aware, awareness is not the object of attachment. .

Whenever awareness arises it is being developed. Right understanding develops little by little, when there is infinite patience. You can't be patient because you want to be, but with right understanding patience will take care of itself, when the right conditions are present, and not when the right conditions are not present. If there are not the right conditions for awareness that explains why we do not have awareness. And if there are the right conditions that explains why there is awareness. We should never forget that awareness is not self, we should not take the credit for it. If we are attached to awareness and think that we made it arise, then there is no end to our troubles, no end to the cycle of birth and death. Awareness is anatta. It is of no use to be attached to it, cling to it or to be proud of ourselves for having awareness. One has to be aware of awareness too.