

A Journey with Dhamma for Young Readers

Twelve chapters from *A Journey with Dhamma in Egypt and Turkey* by Nina van Gorkom (Zolag), with the talks of Acharn Sujin on the way



"Gabi, Alan and I had opportunities for Dhamma discussions with Acharn Sujin while we were walking along the pyramids of Gizeh"

Every Pali word is followed by its English in brackets. A quiz follows every two chapters; the answers are at the back.

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How to use this book

This book follows a journey. Some years ago a small party of travellers went round Egypt and Turkey with a teacher of the Buddha's teaching, Acharn Sujin of Thailand. They saw the pyramids, the tombs of the Egyptian kings, golden treasures in museums, and the waters of the Bosphorus at Istanbul. They also lost their luggage, grew tired and hungry, waited for hours at airports, and fell ill before a flight. All the way, in the bus, in a horse coach, on a boat and on the plane, they talked about the Buddha's teaching, and one of them, Nina van Gorkom, wrote the talks down. Her book is called *A Journey with Dhamma in Egypt and Turkey*. This book retells it for young readers in twelve chapters.

Pali words. The Buddha's teaching was written down in a language called Pali. You will meet Pali words all through this book. Every time one appears, its English meaning sits right next to it in brackets, like this: *citta* (consciousness), *paññā* (understanding). You never have to remember a Pali word to understand the page. But if you do remember a few, you will be able to read the ancient texts one day.

Saying the words. A line over a letter makes it long: *ā* sounds like the "a" in "father", *ī* like the "ee" in "see", *ū* like the "oo" in "moon". A dot under a letter (*ṭ*, *ḍ*, *ṇ*) means you curl your tongue back a little. *ṇ* sounds like the "ny" in "canyon". *ṇ* sounds like "ng". So *paññā* is said "pan-nyaa" and *satipaṭṭhāna* is said "sa-ti-pat-thaa-na".

Who is speaking. Nina wrote her book in the first person: "we walked", "I was so impatient". This book tells the story in the third person, so it says "Nina" and "the travellers". But whenever words stand in quotation marks, they are the exact words of Nina's book, or of Acharn Sujin, Gabi, Alan or Ms Tuna as Nina wrote them down, or of the ancient texts she quotes. Nothing in quotation marks has been changed.

Quizzes. After every two chapters there is a short quiz.

Where it comes from. The book this one follows was published by Zolag and may be freely copied, so long as its contents are not changed. Nina made the journey, she says, "some twenty years ago", long before she wrote the book. The pictures of the journey keep to that time, and the pictures of stories from the ancient texts keep to the Buddha's time.

Introduction: the travellers and the road



"Gabi, Alan and I had opportunities for Dhamma discussions with Acharn Sujin while we were walking along the pyramids of Gizeh"

The teacher. Acharn Sujin is a teacher of the Buddha's teaching who lives in Bangkok, in Thailand.

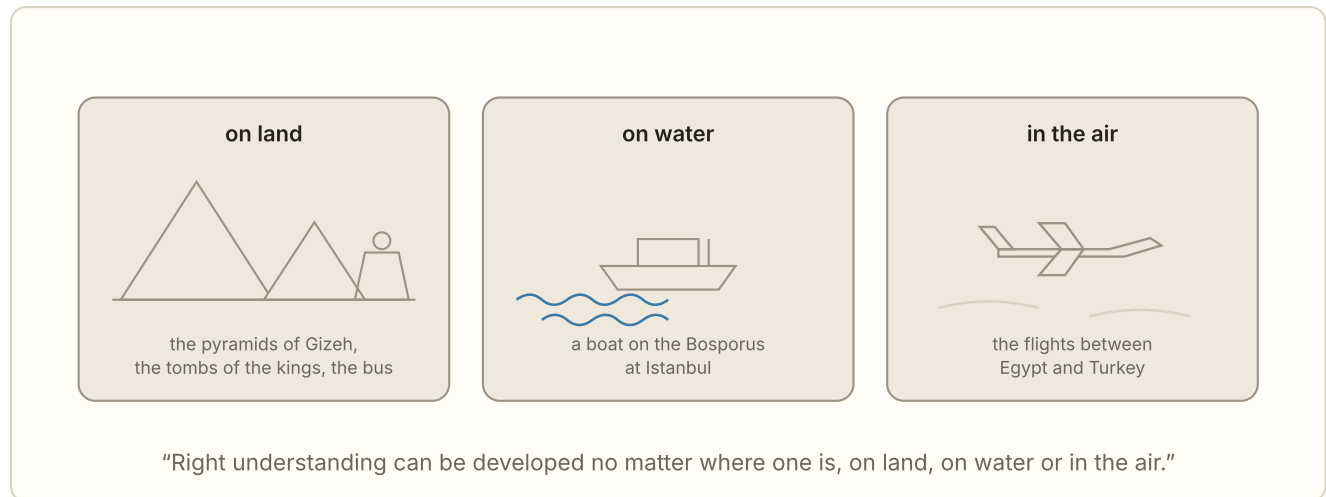
"Acharn" is the Thai word for teacher. For many years people have come from all over the world to listen to her, and she has travelled with them to India, to Sri Lanka and, on this journey, to Egypt and Turkey. She does not teach from a book. She asks questions about what is happening right now: "Do you like it to be tired?" She reminds people, again and again, that the Buddha's teaching is about this very moment.

The writer. Nina van Gorkom comes from Holland. She has written many books that explain the Buddha's teaching in plain words, and she has listened to Acharn Sujin for many years. Her husband is called Lodewijk. In the book he is mostly at home, but he comes into the talks more than once, because Nina says that she lets herself go more easily when she is with him, and because Acharn uses him to make a point: "You assume that there is Lodewijk, but you just enjoy paññatti, a concept."

The friends. Two other friends had joined the tour: "Gabi from Germany and Alan from England". Gabi reads the *Jātakas* (the stories of the Buddha's former births) and finds herself in them. Alan has to travel a long way on his own to hear the teaching; his family and friends are not interested. On the plane the three of them, Gabi, Alan and Nina, interviewed one another about the Buddha's teaching, and two chapters of the book are their questions and answers. The tour itself "was organised by friends from Thailand".

The guide. In Turkey the party had a guide, Ms Tuna. She was a Muslim and believed in God and in a soul. On a boat on the Bosphorus, Acharn Sujin talked with her about seeing and hearing, about sleeping and dreaming, and about what a soul might be. That talk is Chapter 9.

The places. In Egypt the travellers walked “along the pyramids of Gizeh”, went round “the tombs of the Egyptian kings”, looked at golden treasures in museums and palaces, and sat for long hours in the bus and at Cairo airport. In Turkey they visited Istanbul and took a boat on the Bosphorus. Nina lists the places where the talks happened: “in papyrus shops, in handicraft shops, in restaurants, in the bus, in a horse coach, on a boat or on the plane”. The scenery changed all the time. The subject did not.



What the book is about. It is not a guidebook, and it says almost nothing about the pyramids. It is about what happened in the minds of the travellers while they looked at the pyramids, waited for their luggage and felt tired. Acharn Sujin’s reminder, which runs through the whole book, is that “everything is just “dhamma”, a reality that is conditioned, in whatever situation one may be”. The chapters that follow take her reminders one by one: patience, the present moment, the wish to be mindful, what a soul is, and what the Buddha’s teaching has to say to someone who asks about it for the first time.

Chapter 1: Everything is dhamma

Nina's book begins with a sentence that could stand over the whole journey: "Right understanding can be developed no matter where one is, on land, on water or in the air." The travellers were on land when they walked along the pyramids of Gizeh, on water when they took a boat on the Bosphorus, and in the air when they flew between Egypt and Turkey. In all three places they talked with Acharn Sujin about the Buddha's teaching.



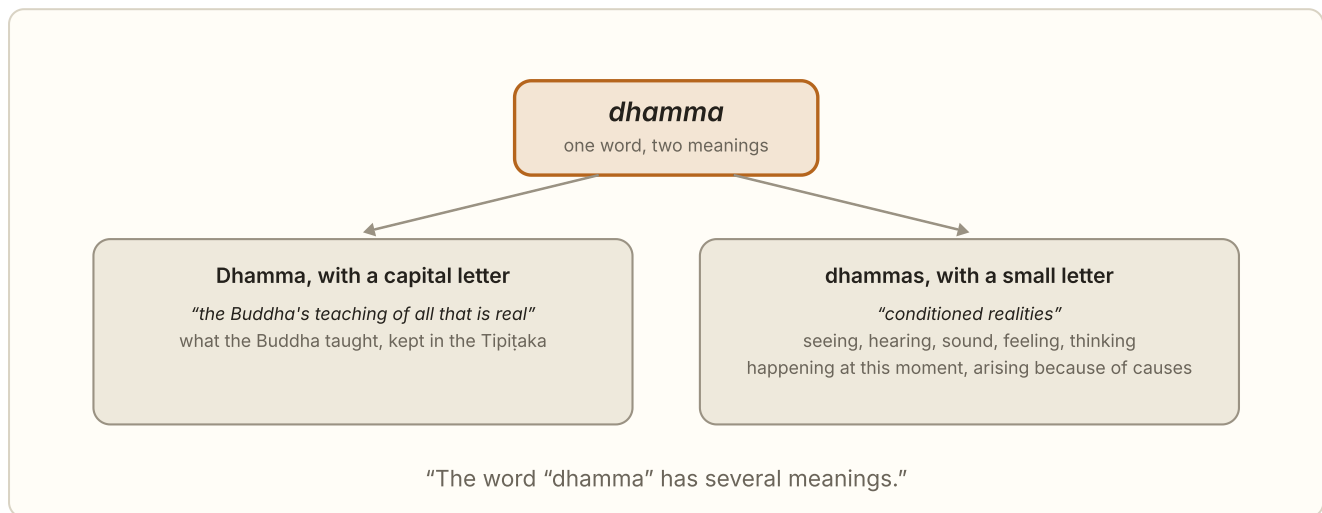
Different sights, the same seeing. Nina writes: "The scenery changed all the time, but we were reminded that everything that appears is a dhamma, a conditioned reality." A traveller sees a pyramid, then a shop full of papyrus, then the inside of a bus. These are very different sights. But in each case there is seeing, and seeing is the same kind of reality wherever it happens. Nina puts it like this: "Seeing sees visible object now, and also aeons ago there was seeing of visible object, and there will be seeing in the future, for aeons to come." An aeon is a stretch of time too long to count.

Pleasant and unpleasant. The travellers had pleasant feeling and unpleasant feeling, like any travellers. "We experienced pleasant feeling when we were seeing objects of art and unpleasant feeling when we were tired or when the luggage was lost." Acharn Sujin's answer to both was the same. She "explained to us that everything is just "dhamma", a reality that is conditioned, in whatever situation one may be". Pleasant feeling is a *dhamma* (reality). Unpleasant feeling is a *dhamma* (reality). Neither lasts, and neither belongs to anyone.

The word *dhamma*. The Pali word *dhamma* (reality) is the most important word in the book, and it has more than one meaning. Nina explains:

“When we speak about the “Dhamma” we mean the Buddha’s teaching of all that is real. The phenomena that occur at this moment and that can be experienced through the senses and the mind can be called “dhammas”, conditioned realities.”

So with a capital letter, the *Dhamma* (the teaching) is what the Buddha taught. With a small letter, a *dhamma* (reality) is anything that is real and can be experienced right now: seeing, hearing, a sound, hardness, a feeling, a thought. A *dhamma* (reality) is “conditioned”, which means that it arises because of causes and cannot arise without them.

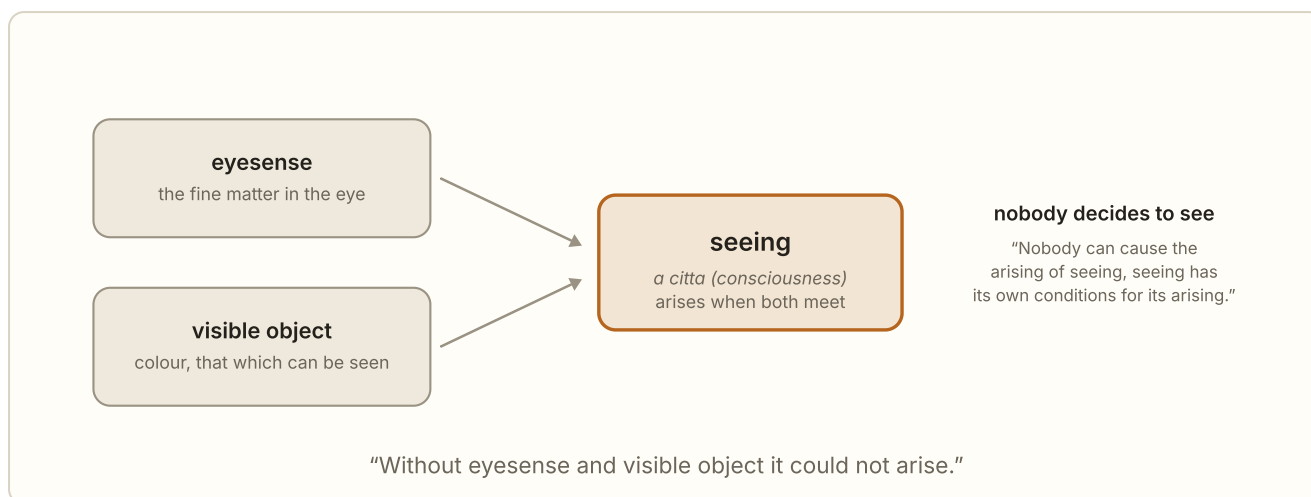


Mind and body are not what they seem. Most people think of their mind and their body as two things that last. Nina writes: “We cling to ideas of mind and body that exist, but in reality, what we take for the body or the mind are ever changing dhammas that fall away immediately and that are not owned by a self.” What is called “my mind” is really one moment of experiencing after another. What is called “my body” is really hardness, heat, motion and the other qualities of matter, arising and falling away. There is no owner behind them.

Conditions. The Buddha taught the conditions for everything that happens. Nina gives seeing as the example:

“Nobody can cause the arising of seeing, seeing has its own conditions for its arising. Without eyesense and visible object it could not arise.”

Eyesense is the fine matter in the eye that can receive colour. Visible object is colour, that which can be seen. When the two meet, seeing arises. Nobody decides to see. In the same way, when a person likes or dislikes what is seen, that liking or disliking is conditioned too: “they arise because of attachment and aversion that arose in the past”. A person who has been attached to pretty things a thousand times before will be attached again when a golden necklace appears in a museum case. The attachment is not chosen; it is conditioned by what came before.



Not theory. Nina and her friends had read many books about the Buddha’s teaching before this journey. They had read about *rūpa* (matter) and *nāma* (mind), and they had listened to tapes of talks. But Nina says that reading was not enough: “we also need to be reminded of realities in the different situations of our daily life. Then we can see more clearly that everything we learn is not mere theory, that it is all about daily realities.” That is why a journey makes a good school. Nobody can plan what will happen on a journey. The luggage is lost, the bus is late, the shower in the hotel does not work. Each of these is a moment to find out what the mind is doing.

The three baskets. The Buddha’s teachings are kept in the *Tipiṭaka* (the Three Baskets). Nina names the three: “the Vinaya or Book of Discipline for the monks, the Suttanta or Discourses and the Abhidhamma which is an exposition of all realities in detail.” The *Abhidhamma* (the higher teaching) is the part that takes everything apart and names each piece: each kind of consciousness, each mental factor, each kind of matter. It can sound like a book for scholars. Nina says it is not: “The Abhidhamma deals with whatever is experienced in daily life; it deals with what is pleasant or unpleasant, wholesome or unwholesome.” And she gives Acharn Sujin’s own saying about it: ““The Abhidhamma is not in the book”, as Acharn said.” The book describes seeing; seeing itself is happening now, and that is where the *Abhidhamma* (the higher teaching) is to be found.

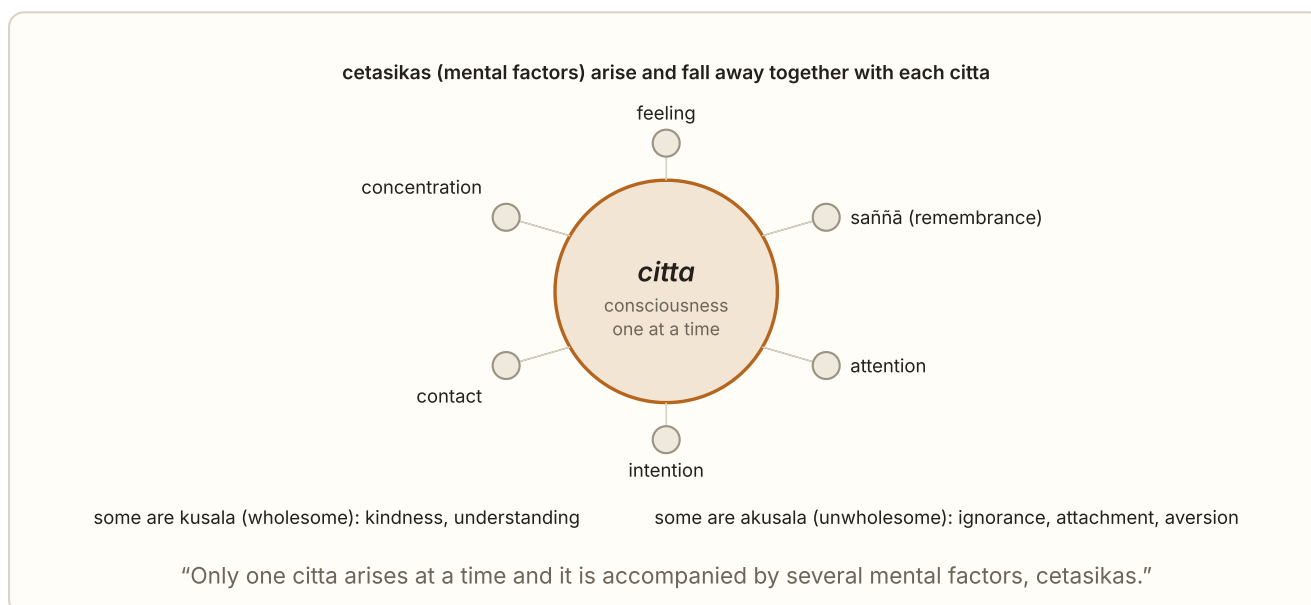
What the next chapter does. Before the story of the journey can go on, a few of the Pali words that Acharn Sujin used need explaining: *citta* (consciousness), *cetasika* (mental factor), *nāma* (mind), *rūpa* (matter), *kusala* (wholesome), *akusala* (unwholesome) and *vipāka* (result). Chapter 2 explains them in Nina’s own words. After that the story of the journey goes on.

Chapter 2: What a person really is

In Turkey the travellers' guide believed that each person has a soul that lasts. Nina writes: "Very gently Acharn explained to her that what she called soul was in fact a mental state or *citta* that changes all the time and that arises because of conditions. This is the teaching of the Abhidhamma." That talk comes later in the book. Here are the words Acharn Sujin used, explained one at a time.

Citta. A *citta* (consciousness) is a moment of experiencing something. Seeing is a *citta* (consciousness); so is hearing; so is thinking. Nina writes: "Citta is a reality and it arises throughout our life. Only one *citta* arises at a time and it is accompanied by several mental factors, *cetasikas*." One at a time: there is never seeing and hearing in the same moment, however quickly they seem to follow one another.

Cetasika. Each *citta* (consciousness) does not arise alone. It is accompanied by *cetasikas* (mental factors) that arise and fall away with it. "Cetasikas such as feeling or remembrance accompany each type of *citta*." Feeling is a *cetasika* (mental factor): every moment of consciousness has some feeling, pleasant, unpleasant or neither. Remembrance, *saññā* (remembrance), is another: it marks what is experienced so that it can be recognised again.



Wholesome, unwholesome, and neither. Nina writes:

"Citta and its accompanying cetasikas can be good or wholesome, kusala, they can be evil or unwholesome, akusala, or they can be neither kusala nor akusala. Akusala cetasikas such as ignorance, attachment and aversion accompany akusala citta. Wholesome cetasikas such as kindness or understanding accompany kusala citta."

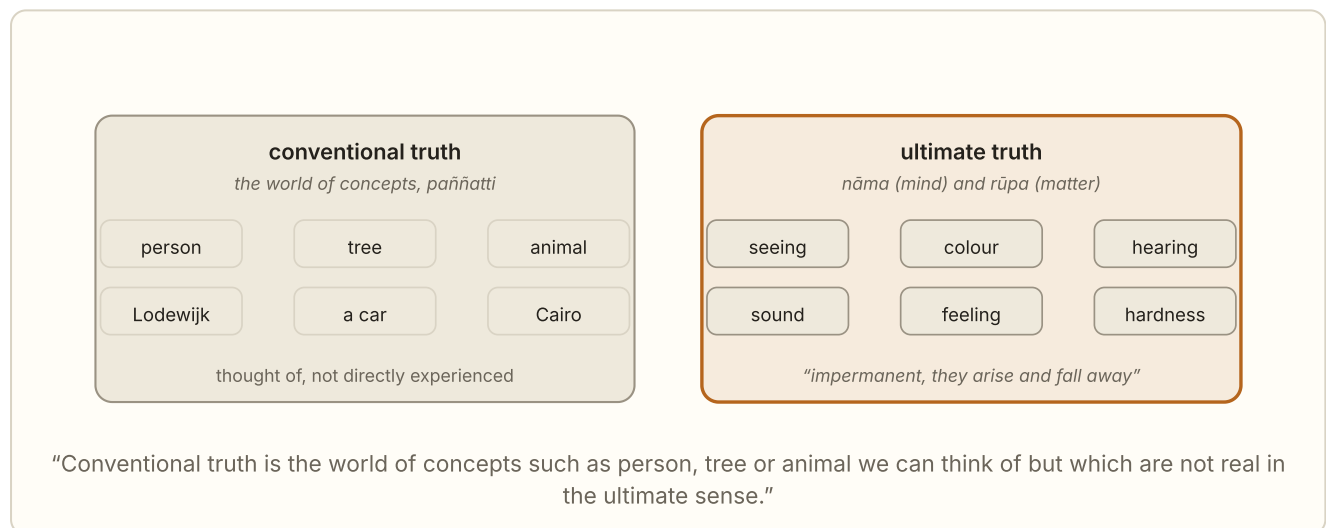
So *kusala* (wholesome) means good and skilful: a moment of kindness, of generosity, of understanding. *Akusala* (unwholesome) means bad and harmful: a moment of *lobha* (attachment), of *dosa* (aversion), of *moha* (ignorance). These three are the roots of all that is unwholesome, and they will come up again and again in the book. A moment of seeing or hearing is neither *kusala* (wholesome) nor *akusala* (unwholesome); it is simply the experience of what is there.

Nāma (mind) and rūpa (matter). Everything real is one of two kinds. Nina writes: “Citta and cetasika are mental phenomena, nāma. Mental phenomena experience an object. Physical phenomena or rūpa do not experience any object.” *Nāma* (mind) experiences: seeing experiences colour, hearing experiences sound, feeling feels. *Rūpa* (matter) experiences nothing: colour does not know that it is seen, sound does not know that it is heard, the hardness of a chair knows nothing at all. The test is simple. Does it experience something? Then it is *nāma* (mind). Does it experience nothing? Then it is *rūpa* (matter).

Two kinds of truth. This is the hardest idea in the chapter and the one Acharn Sujin returned to most often.

“We should know the difference between ultimate truth and conventional truth. Conventional truth is the world of concepts such as person, tree or animal we can think of but which are not real in the ultimate sense. Ultimate realities, nāma and rūpa, are impermanent, they arise and fall away.”

A tree is a concept, *paññatti* (concept): a name for colours that are seen, hardness that is touched, and a memory that puts them together. Nobody says that the word “tree” is useless. But the tree is not what is directly experienced; colour and hardness are. The same goes for “person”. When the travellers looked at one another, what was seen was colour, and the rest was thinking. Nina writes: “If the difference between concepts and ultimate realities is not known, the eightfold Path cannot be developed.” The eightfold Path is the Buddha’s way to the end of suffering, and its purpose is “seeing ultimate realities as impermanent, suffering and non-self”.

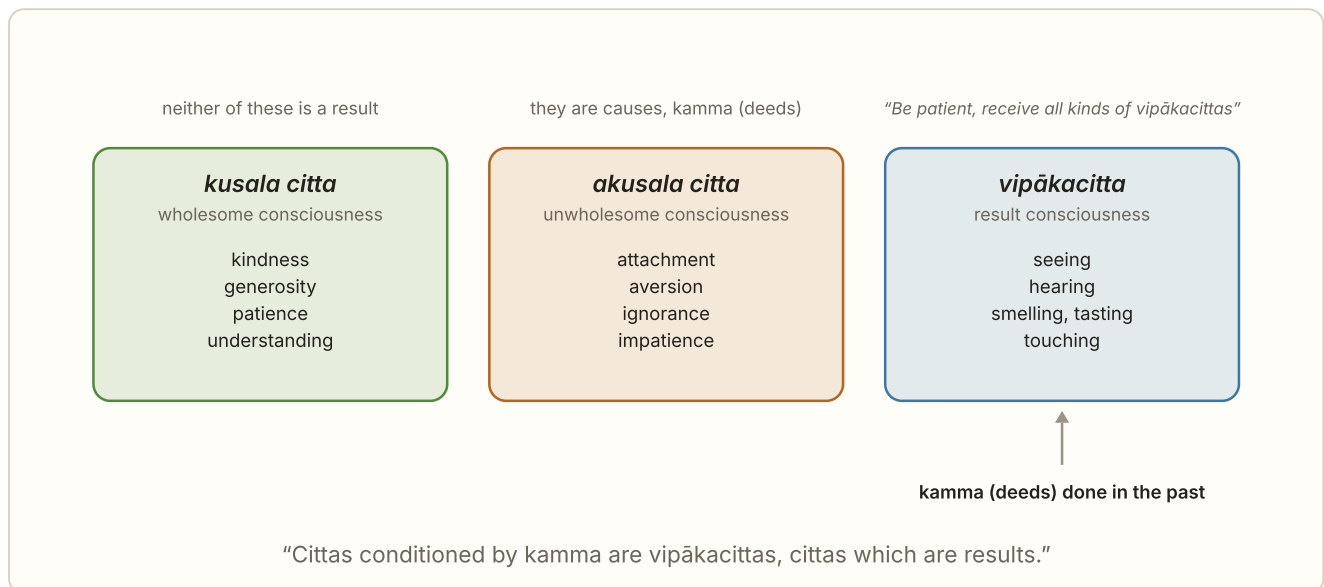


One object at a time. Right understanding, Nina says, “is developed through direct awareness of nāma and rūpa”. When there is awareness of one reality as it appears, through the eyes or the ears or the mind, there is no thought of a whole person or a whole thing at that moment: “we do not think of a concept of a “whole”, of a person or thing, at that moment.”

Kamma (deed) and vipāka (result). Why does one traveller hear harsh words and another kind ones? Why is the luggage lost? Nina writes: “Whatever we experience through the senses, be it pleasant or unpleasant, is conditioned by kamma, wholesome or unwholesome action committed in the past. Cittas conditioned by kamma are vipākacittas, cittas which are results.” So a *kamma* (deed) done in the past

brings a *vipāka* (result) now: seeing something pleasant or unpleasant, hearing something pleasant or unpleasant. A *vipākacitta* (result consciousness) is neither wholesome nor unwholesome in itself. It is the result of what was done before. The travellers found this a great help when things went wrong:

“When others behave towards us in a disagreeable way or speak harshly, we may react to this with akusala cittas rooted in aversion. However, when we remember that unpleasant experiences through the senses are vipākacittas conditioned by our own kamma, not by another person, we shall be less inclined to blame others.”

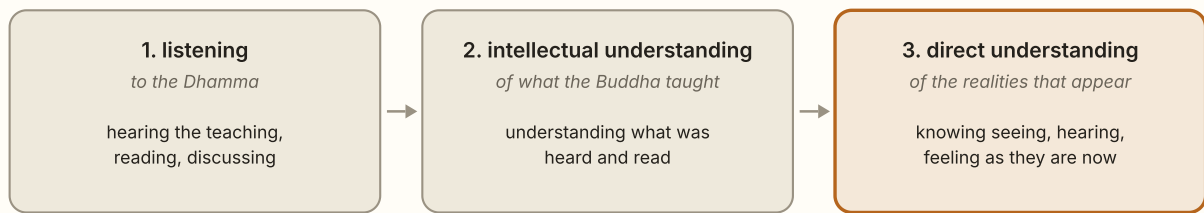


Thinking of oneself. Acharn Sujin “would emphasize that we should not think of ourselves, and that we become less selfish by paying more attention to the needs of others.” Nina writes: “This is a simple advice, but it is very basic.” She noticed how often the thought of “I” came in, even into good things: “Even when we want to have more understanding of realities, we are bound to think of a “self” who desires this. When kusala citta arises, there is no clinging, but very shortly after kusala citta has fallen away we are likely to cling to an idea of “my kusala”.” A moment of kindness is *kusala* (wholesome). The thought of “my kusala” that follows it is not.

Three steps. How does anyone come to understand all this? Nina describes three steps:

“Because of listening to the Dhamma, we acquire intellectual understanding of what the Buddha taught and then we gradually learn to verify in our life the truth of the phenomena that occur so that there can be direct understanding.”

First, listening. Second, understanding what was heard, which is called intellectual understanding. Third, direct understanding, when the reality itself is known as it appears, not just thought about. The second step is not the last. Nina says that even studying is conditioned: “We listened to the Dhamma in the past and this conditions our interest today.”



"we gradually learn to verify in our life the truth of the phenomena that occur"

"Because of listening to the Dhamma, we acquire intellectual understanding of what the Buddha taught and then we gradually learn to verify in our life the truth of the phenomena that occur so that there can be direct understanding."

From the very beginning. The chapter ends with a warning that Acharn Sujin repeated throughout the journey. The Path "should be developed with detachment from the idea of self at the very beginning." A person who sets out to become "somebody with sati" has taken a wrong turning at the first step. Understanding grows when it is not anybody's.

Quiz 1 (chapters 1 and 2)

The answers are at the back.

1. Nina's book begins by saying where right understanding can be developed. Where?
 - (a) only in a quiet room
 - (b) no matter where one is, on land, on water or in the air
 - (c) only in a temple
 - (d) only when one is not tired
2. In the book, what does *dhamma* (reality) mean when it is written with a small letter?
 - (a) a rule for monks
 - (b) a conditioned reality that can be experienced at this moment
 - (c) a holy book
 - (d) a kind of prayer
3. Name the two conditions without which seeing could not arise.
4. True or false: two *cittas* (moments of consciousness) can arise at the same moment.
5. Which of these is *rūpa* (matter)?
 - (a) hearing a bell
 - (b) the sound of the bell
 - (c) liking the sound
 - (d) remembering the bell
6. Name the three parts of the *Tipiṭaka* (the Three Baskets) as Nina names them.
7. What did Acharn Sujin say about the *Abhidhamma* (the higher teaching)?
 - (a) The Abhidhamma is only for monks
 - (b) The Abhidhamma is not in the book
 - (c) The Abhidhamma is too difficult
 - (d) The Abhidhamma is the oldest book
8. A person, a tree, an animal: what kind of truth are these, according to the book?
 - (a) ultimate truth
 - (b) conventional truth, the world of concepts
 - (c) no truth at all
 - (d) *vipāka* (result)
9. Why does remembering *vipāka* (result) make a person less inclined to blame others?
10. Put Nina's three steps in order, from the first to the last.
 - intellectual understanding of what the Buddha taught
 - listening to the Dhamma
 - direct understanding of the realities that appear
11. True or false: Acharn Sujin said that people become less selfish by paying more attention to the needs of others.

12. Which three *akusala cetasikas* (unwholesome mental factors) does Nina name as accompanying *akusala citta* (unwholesome consciousness)?
- (a) feeling, remembrance and attention
 - (b) ignorance, attachment and aversion
 - (c) kindness, understanding and patience
 - (d) seeing, hearing and thinking

Chapter 3: Patience first

Nina asks a question near the start of her first chapter: “We have read inspiring texts about patience, but do we realize when there is an opportunity to develop it in our daily life?” The journey gave the travellers plenty of opportunities. Before the story of those opportunities, this chapter looks at what Acharn Sujin taught about patience itself.

The verses. Nina quotes two verses from the *Dhammapada* (the Buddha’s verses on the teaching), numbers 183 and 184:

“To abstain from evil, to cultivate wholesomeness, to purify the mind, - this is the teaching of the Buddhas.

Forbearing patience is the highest ascetism, nibbāna is the supreme, say the Buddhas; he, verily is not a recluse who harms another; nor is he an ascetic who oppresses others.”

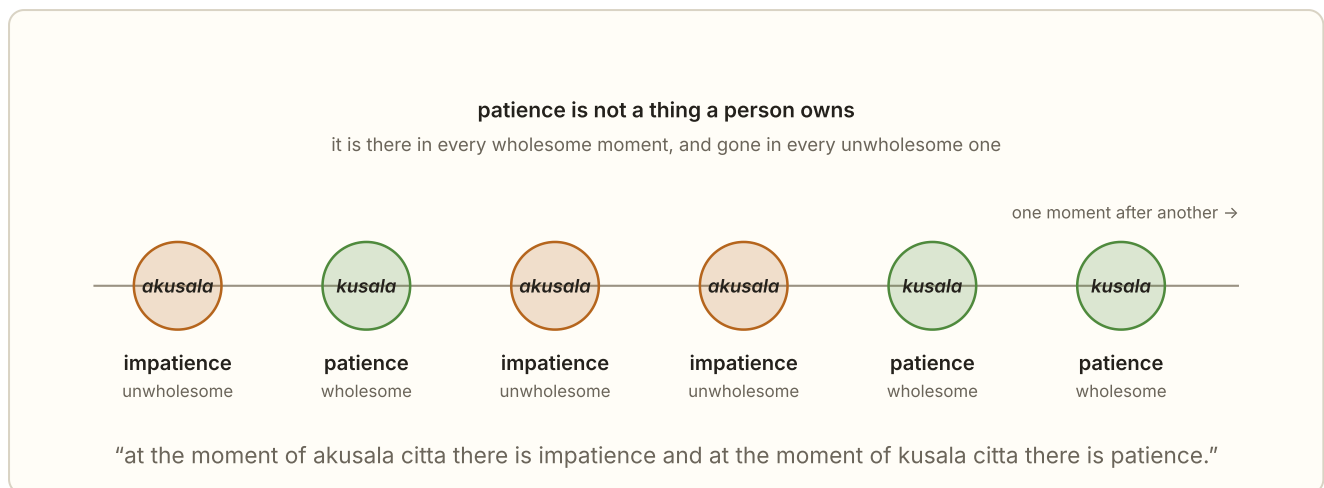
Nibbāna (the end of all troubles) is the goal of the whole teaching, and the verse puts patience right beside it. Nina writes: “It is said that one should abstain from evil, develop wholesomeness and purify the mind. However, we forget that patience is most essential.” And she gives Acharn Sujin’s blunt saying: ““Without patience one cannot attain enlightenment”, Acharn said.”

Patience comes first. The same teaching is found in another ancient text, the *Ovāda Pāṭimokkha* (the Exhortation to the Pāṭimokkha), which the Buddhas of the past gave to their monks. Nina points out one difference: there, “the order is different: patience is mentioned first, and this is very appropriate.” Patience is needed before anything else can be developed, because developing understanding takes a very long time. “We need great patience to develop understanding of all realities of our daily life.”

Patience and loving-kindness. People like the idea of *mettā* (loving-kindness). But Nina writes that it “cannot be developed if one does not see the danger of *dosa* and the benefit of patience”. *Dosa* (aversion) is the opposite of patience. A person who does not see that *dosa* (aversion) is harmful will not see why patience matters, and will not have real *mettā* (loving-kindness) either. Nina refers to the *Visuddhimagga* (the Path of Purity), the great ancient manual of the teaching, chapter IX, for this.

Not a concept of patience. Here is the first thing Acharn Sujin showed the travellers. It is easy to think about patience in a general way, as a fine quality that a person has or lacks. Nina writes: “We may be inclined to think about patience in a general, conventional sense, thus, about a concept of patience, instead of developing patience in daily life, whenever there is an opportunity for it.” Acharn Sujin brought it down to single moments:

“Acharn showed us very clearly during this journey that at the moment of akusala citta there is impatience and at the moment of kusala citta there is patience.”

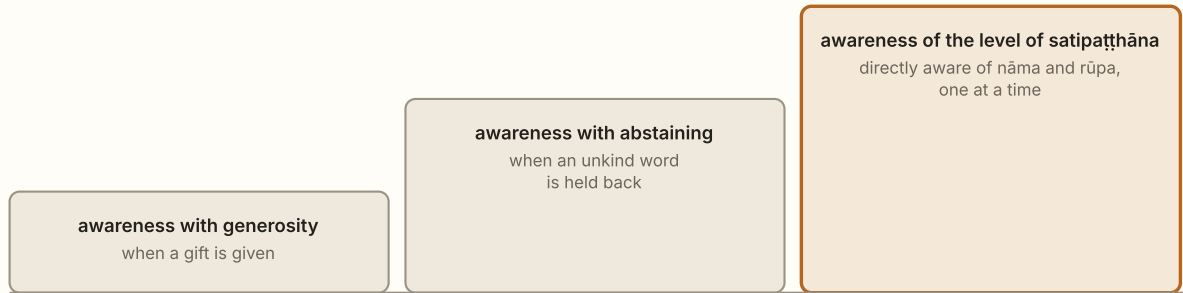


So patience is not a thing a person owns. It is there whenever the *citta* (consciousness) is *kusala* (wholesome), and it is gone whenever the *citta* (consciousness) is *akusala* (unwholesome). “When there is awareness of akusala we can see that it is ugly and we can understand more clearly its disadvantage. Seeing the benefit of kusala is a condition for the arising of kusala citta and at that moment there is patience.”

Patience with pleasant things too. Most people think patience is only for unpleasant things: waiting, pain, bad weather. Acharn Sujin said it is needed for pleasant things as well. “When a pleasant object presents itself, usually lobha arises and in that case there is no patience. When, instead of lobha, kusala citta arises there is patience.” *Lobha* (attachment) grabs at what is pleasant. A person who sees a shop full of beautiful things and wants them all has no patience at that moment, though nothing unpleasant is happening.

Levels of awareness. The travellers talked about *sati* (awareness), and about the fact that it has levels. Nina writes: “Awareness is non-forgetfulness of what is wholesome, kusala. Awareness accompanies generosity, it accompanies kusala citta that is abstaining from ill deeds, it accompanies each kusala citta.” There is *sati* (awareness) when someone gives a gift, and when someone holds back an unkind word. Then there is a higher level: “Awareness of the level of satipaṭṭhāna is directly aware of mental phenomena, nāma, and physical phenomena, rūpa, as they appear one at a time through one of the six doors.” *Satipaṭṭhāna* (direct awareness of realities) is aware of seeing as seeing, of sound as sound, of anger as anger, without a person in it. Its aim, Nina says, “is to see realities as they are: as impermanent, dukkha (suffering) and non-self”.

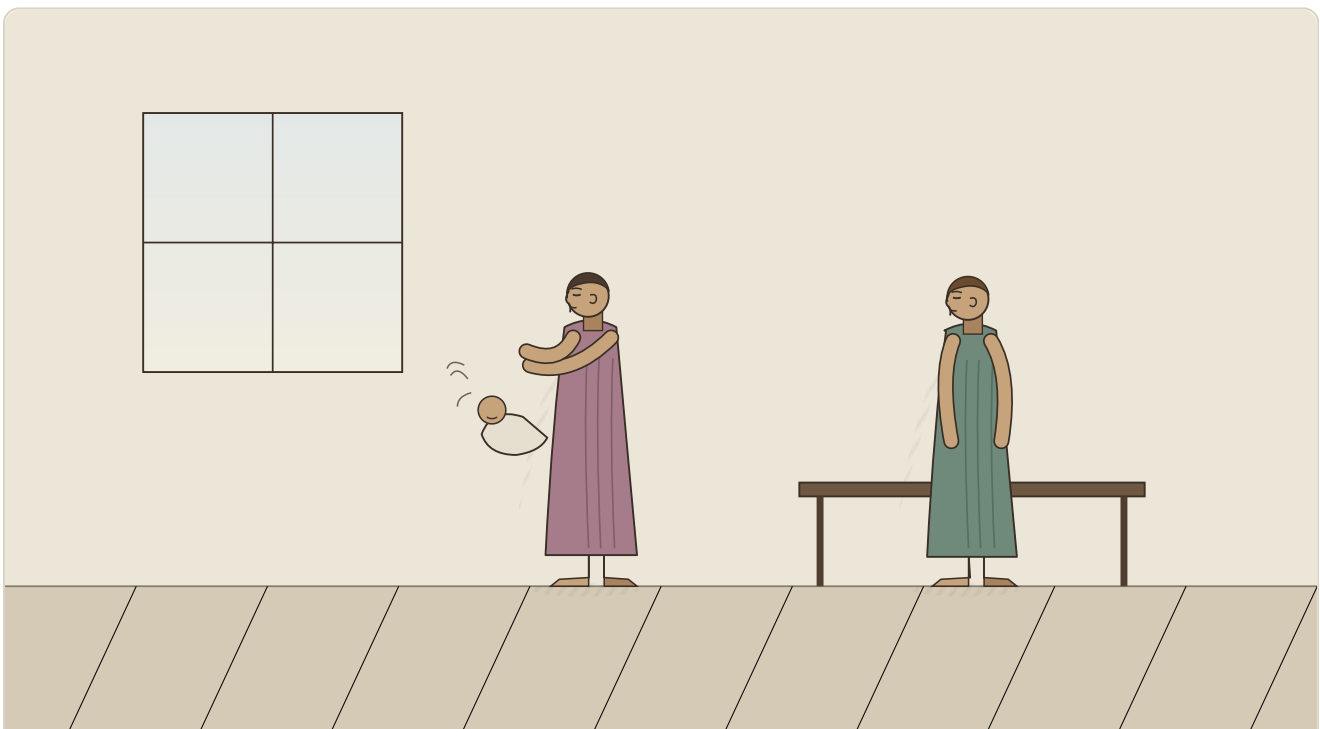
"Awareness is non-forgetfulness of what is wholesome, kusala."
it accompanies each kusala citta (wholesome consciousness)



"There can be awareness of realities at different levels."

Gabi and the crying baby. Gabi told Acharn Sujin that she was not yet directly aware of *nāma* (mind) and *rūpa* (matter), but that she could be aware of *akusala citta* (unwholesome consciousness) in her daily life. Nina tells the story:

"She reads Jātakas (the Buddha's Birth stories) and she finds that she often is in the same situation as described in the Jātakas. She read in a Jātaka story that one should not speak when one is angry and she could apply this in her daily life. When someone's baby was crying she understood the ugliness of aversion and that was a condition for kusala citta: she would not say anything about the baby's crying."



"When someone's baby was crying she understood the ugliness of aversion and that was a condition for kusala citta: she would not say anything about the baby's crying."

Acharn Sujin's answer was short: "This shows progress in the development of right understanding". Nina explains why this was encouraging. Nobody can expect many moments of *satipaṭṭhāna* (direct awareness of realities). "We cannot expect many moments of satipaṭṭhāna, right understanding and awareness of nāma and rūpa, but awareness of other levels can arise." Even the Buddha, in the lives before he became the Buddha, "developed the perfections (pāramīs) with awareness and right understanding of different levels". Nina writes: "We found it very encouraging to hear this."

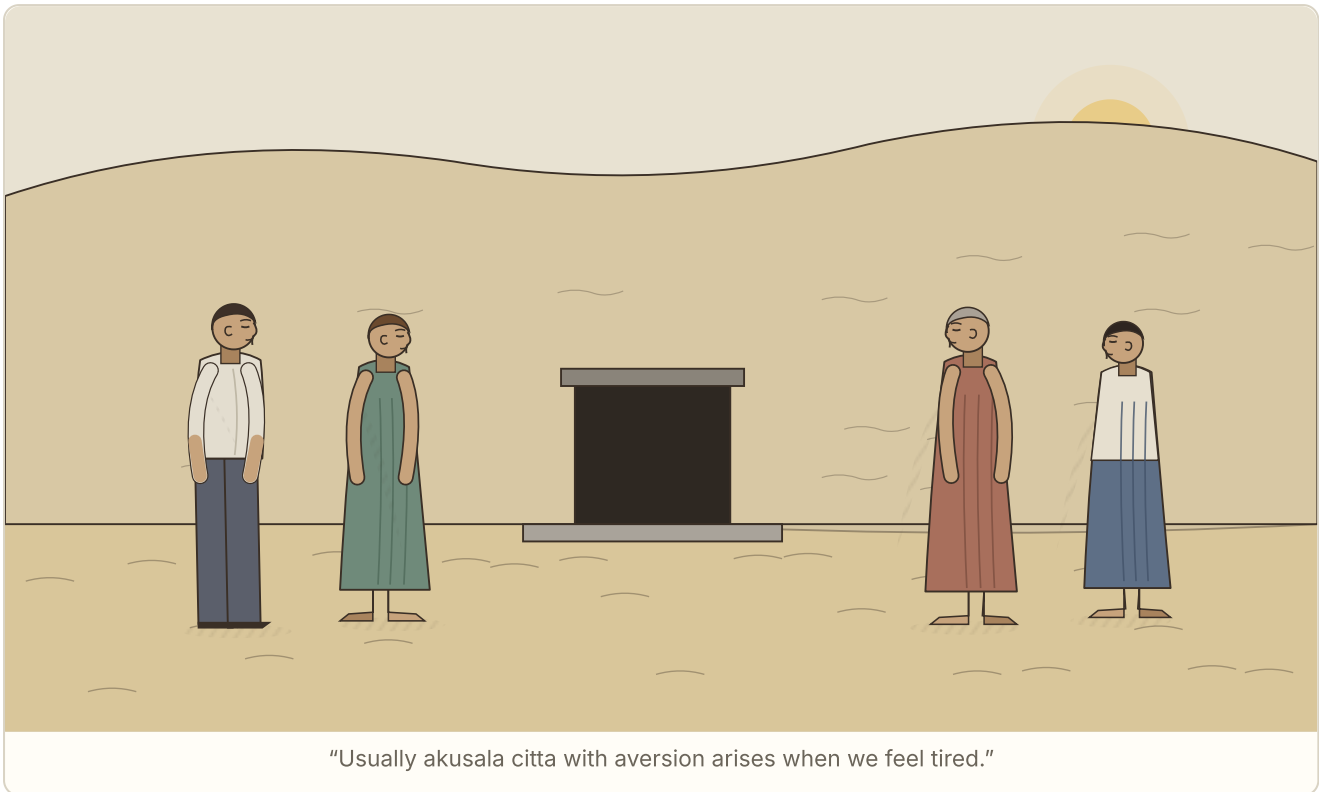
All kinds of kusala. Acharn Sujin had said many times "that all kinds of kusala should be cultivated so that sati and the other sobhana cetasikas (beautiful mental factors) can develop". Generosity, good conduct, kindness, patience: each *kusala citta* (wholesome consciousness) adds to the conditions for understanding. She also warned against a trap. A person may be "merely thinking of the Dhamma" and never notice the *akusala cetasikas* (unwholesome mental factors) that arise all day. "Acharn said that people want to have great patience, but forget to develop patience at this moment."

Look at akusala as akusala. Nina ends this part with the Buddha's words from the *Itivuttaka* (As It Was Said):

"'Look at akusala as akusala' is the first dhamma-teaching. 'Seeing akusala as akusala, be disgusted with it, be cleansed of it, be freed of it' is the second dhamma-teaching."

First see the unwholesome for what it is. Then turn away from it. Nina writes that after Acharn's explanation "we see more clearly that what is stated in this text occurs in daily life." The next chapter shows how it occurred: at the tombs of the kings, in the bus, at Cairo airport, and in a hotel room after one o'clock at night, waiting for suitcases.

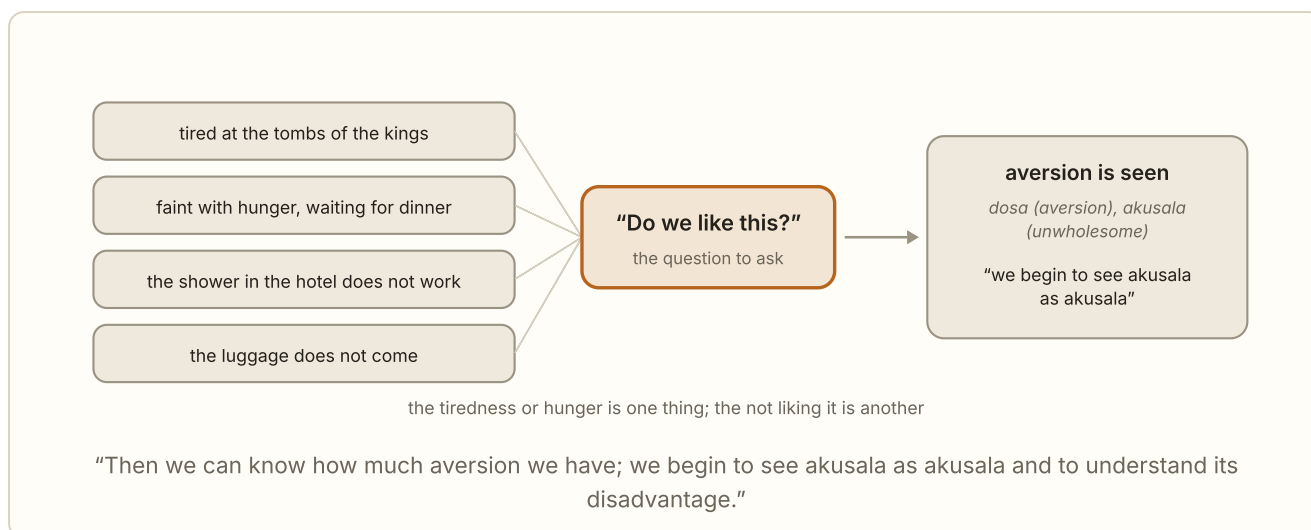
Chapter 4: Tired, hungry and waiting



“Do you like it to be tired?” Sightseeing is tiring. Nina writes: “While we walked around the tombs of the Egyptian kings, or while we had to sit for a long time in the bus or at the airport we became tired.” Alan wondered whether tiredness is something in the body or something in the mind. Acharn Sujin did not answer with a theory. “Acharn asked him, “Do you like it to be tired?” Alan answered that he did not like it and then it became clear that he had aversion.” The tiredness itself was one thing. The not liking it was another: a moment of *dosa* (aversion), which is *akusala* (unwholesome).

Most people treat tiredness as a good excuse. Nina writes: “We use tiredness as an excuse not to develop kusala at such a moment but, Acharn said, it is no excuse.” She gives more examples, all from the journey:

“When we have to wait a long time for dinner and we become faint with hunger, or the shower in the hotel room does not work, we can ask ourselves, “Do we like this?” Then we can know how much aversion we have; we begin to see akusala as akusala and to understand its disadvantage.”



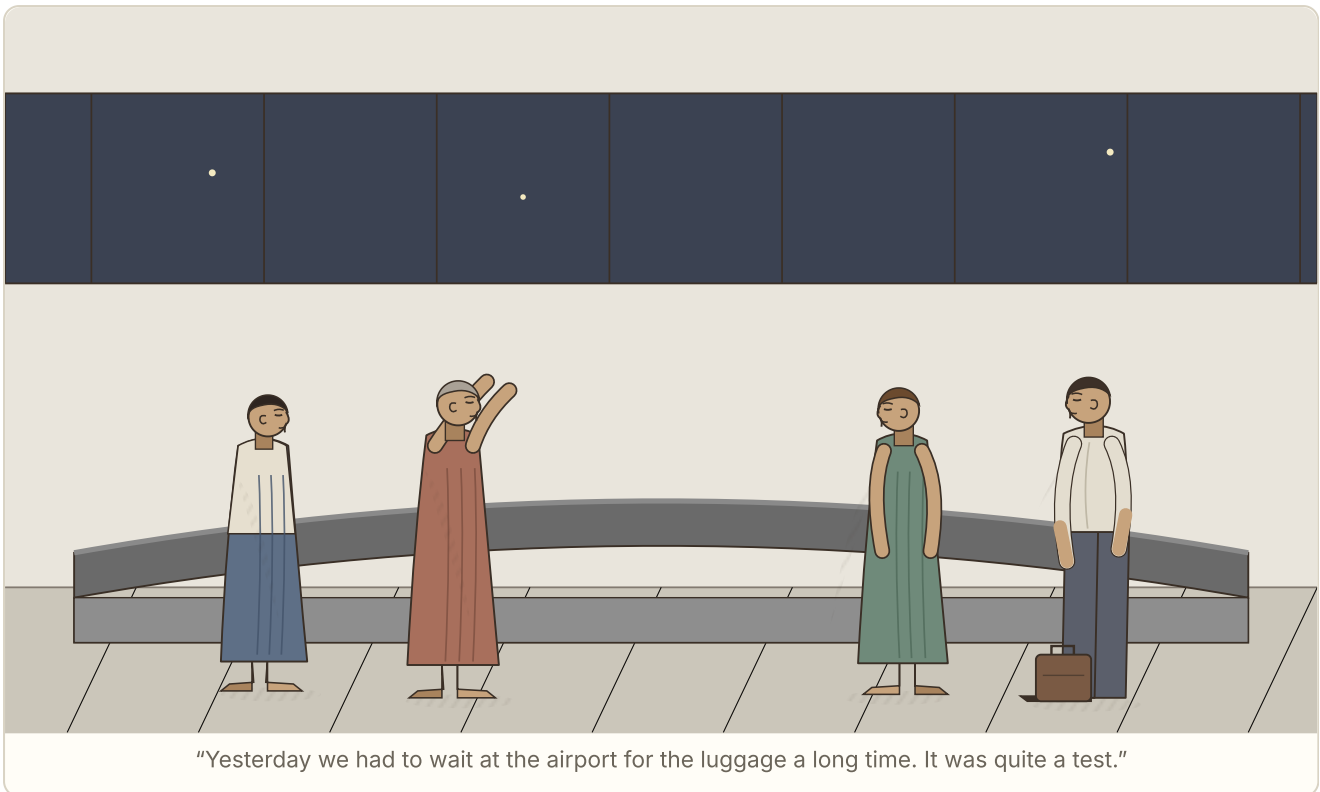
The question “Do we like this?” is a tool. It does not make the hunger go away or mend the shower. It shows the aversion that was hiding behind the hunger. “When we give in to aversion we only think of ourselves. Whereas when we think of others kusala citta with patience arises.” Acharn Sujin said “that we should forget ourselves, our own body; we should ‘belittle’ ourselves with understanding.”

Nina’s disappointment. Nina had come on the journey for the Dhamma talks, and sometimes there was no time for them. “There was not always an opportunity for Dhamma discussions during this journey and then I was disappointed.” Acharn Sujin’s reply to her is one of the longest speeches in the book. Here is part of it:

“When aversion arises it is evident that it is caused by something you want to have but which you do not obtain. We should trace the cause of aversion, otherwise we cannot get rid of the cause. You cling to the time for dinner or breakfast. You cling to Dhamma talk. Everything is dhamma, and it depends on your considering and understanding whether you can see this.”

Even wanting a Dhamma talk is clinging, and the disappointment when it does not come is *dosa* (aversion). Acharn went on: “We should remember that kusala is always pleasant. If you see the advantage of all kinds of kusala you know that it is time to develop patience, kindness or generosity. We should develop all kinds of kusala, not only the kusala that is listening to the Dhamma.” And at the end: “Be patient, receive all kinds of vipākacittas that are conditioned by previous kamma. Just let go of the things you are used to or you would like to have.” A *vipākacitta* (result consciousness), as Chapter 2 explained, is the result of a past deed. Whatever arrives through the senses, pleasant or not, is to be received. “One can be calm and happy, even when facing difficult situations.”

The lost luggage. The travellers flew back from Turkey to Cairo. At the airport they “had to be patient, waiting for one hour for a piece of luggage which was lost and then found again”. Then, at the hotel, they had to wait in their room for the suitcases until after one o’clock at night. The next day Nina told Acharn Sujin what she had felt.



Nina: “My luggage did not come. Patience has a certain limit, after that there is no more patience.”

Acharn: “What is the use of being impatient? Only right understanding can see that it is useless. When there is impatience there is no right understanding which sees the benefit of patience. We need right understanding in any situation.”

Nina tried again: “There can be patience to a certain degree and then one forgets about it.” Acharn answered: “That is why sati is necessary in any situation.” Nina: “Even if you lose your suitcase?” Acharn: “If you see the benefit of higher understanding it is time to develop all kusala dhammas.”

Nina then said something that many people think: that moments of impatience are just ordinary moments of *akusala* (unwholesome) that are bound to come anyway. Acharn agreed that they come when there are conditions, “but it depends on the development of *paññā* whether one continues to accumulate more *akusala*”. *Paññā* (understanding) is what makes the difference, not between having and not having impatience, but between piling up more of it and not.

*Nina: “I did not realize that the moments of impatience really hinder *paññā*.”*

*Acharn: “Nothing can hinder *paññā*. However, if you do not understand the disadvantage of *akusala* you will have more *akusala*. People desire great *paññā*, but is there *paññā* that sees the uselessness of *akusala* at this moment?”*

Nina admitted the small thing she had done at the airport: “When the luggage did not come I was so impatient, I lifted my hands. That was conditioned by impatience. There was no awareness.” Acharn said that patience can also show in body and speech: “Patience can condition one to refrain from speaking certain words or from doing what is *akusala*.” And she called the long wait a test:

“Yesterday we had to wait at the airport for the luggage a long time. It was quite a test. In this way we can develop more wholesome cetasikas. Only reading and writing about the Dhamma is not enough, one should consider precisely the reality of this moment.”

Nina draws the lesson: “when akusala arises there is ignorance at that very moment. At the moment of ignorance we do not develop paññā and we are going downhill.”

Pain. Nina had backache while waiting at the airport. Acharn Sujin said: “If you do not think much of the pain, it does not appear. Other things appear as objects, such as sound and hearing. One should forget about oneself, otherwise one is self-centered all the time.” Pain is a feeling that comes with what the body experiences. Sound is a different object, experienced through the ear, and hearing is a different *citta* (consciousness). When the mind returns to the pain all the time, the pain seems to be everything.

Alan is ill. Just before the flight to Turkey, “Alan was very sick and he did not want to continue traveling. He was afraid of being sick on the plane.” Acharn Sujin said to him:

“Do not think of it, let it go. Everything just arises because of conditions. It is of no use to try to control your body. Awareness is aware naturally, this is the way. Develop understanding at any time, also when you cannot control your stomach.”

Nina adds one sentence: “Alan came along on the plane and he was not sick anymore.”

Parties. The last talk in this part was about Nina’s life at home. She found her social life tiring, “always receiving guests or going out to parties”, and said so, with aversion, every week when the programme arrived. Acharn Sujin said: “Sometimes it looks as if you think of yourself first.” Nina agreed: “It is the self that is in the way.” Acharn’s answer turned the whole thing round:

“If you think of making other people happy by entertaining them and going out to their parties, you will have the energy to do this, instead of thinking that it is too much. You can think: ‘It is my time to help’, and then kusala citta can arise. Everything can be changed by right understanding.”

The guests were the same guests. The parties were the same parties. What changed was the *citta* (consciousness): from thinking that it is too much to thinking “It is my time to help”.

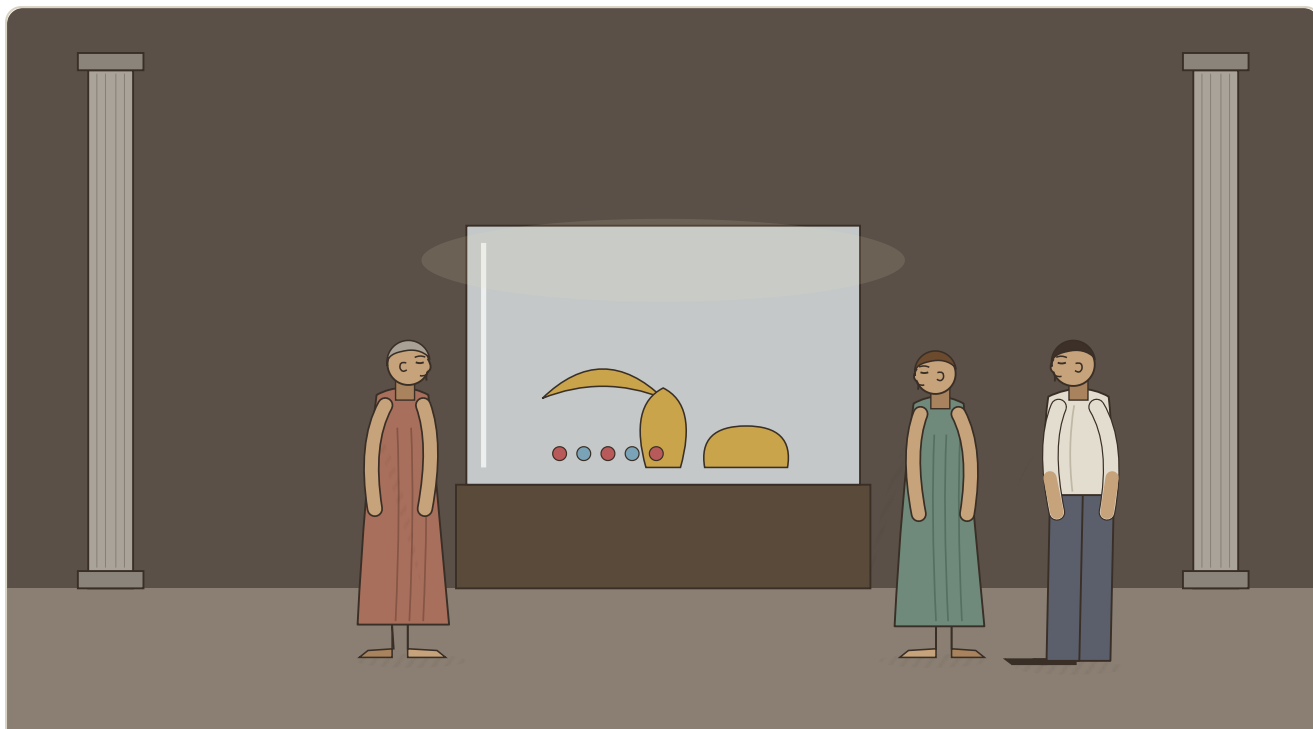
Quiz 2 (chapters 3 and 4)

The answers are at the back.

1. In the *Ovāda Pāṭimokkha* (the Exhortation to the Pāṭimokkha), which quality is mentioned first?
 - (a) generosity
 - (b) patience
 - (c) wisdom
 - (d) concentration
2. What did Acharn Sujin say about patience and enlightenment?
3. True or false: patience is only needed when something unpleasant happens.
4. Complete the sentence from the book: “at the moment of akusala citta there is ...”
 - (a) patience
 - (b) impatience
 - (c) awareness
 - (d) loving-kindness
5. What is *sati* (awareness), in Nina’s words, and what is awareness of the level of *satipaṭṭhāna* (direct awareness of realities) aware of?
6. What did Gabi do when someone’s baby was crying?
 - (a) she asked the mother to take the baby away
 - (b) she understood the ugliness of aversion and said nothing about the crying
 - (c) she went to another room
 - (d) she gave the baby a sweet
7. When Alan wondered whether tiredness is bodily or mental, what did Acharn Sujin ask him?
 - (a) Did you sleep well?
 - (b) Do you like it to be tired?
 - (c) Why are you tired?
 - (d) Would you like to rest?
8. True or false: Acharn Sujin said that tiredness is a good excuse for not developing *kusala* (wholesome) at that moment.
9. What did Nina do when the luggage did not come, and what did she say it was conditioned by?
10. Complete Acharn Sujin’s words: “Nothing can hinder paññā. However, ...”
 - (a) if you do not understand the disadvantage of akusala you will have more akusala.
 - (b) you must first sit very still.
 - (c) a quiet place is needed.
 - (d) the luggage must not be lost.
11. What did Acharn Sujin say to Alan when he was sick and did not want to board the plane?
12. What thought did Acharn Sujin suggest to Nina about receiving guests and going to parties?
 - (a) It is too much for me
 - (b) It is my time to help

- (c) I would rather stay at home
- (d) They should come less often

Chapter 5: This moment



"In Egypt and Turkey we saw golden treasures, jewelry and objects decorated with glittering precious stones, which have been collected in olden times and are unique in the world."

Golden treasures. Nina writes: "In Egypt and Turkey we saw golden treasures, jewelry and objects decorated with glittering precious stones, which have been collected in olden times and are unique in the world." The travellers stood in front of museum cases and palace rooms and looked at every detail. Nina noticed what the looking did to the mind: "Most of the time clinging arises after seeing, and when we are absorbed in the details of what we see our clinging becomes more obvious." The seeing lasts a moment. What comes after it is *saññā* (remembrance), which "remembers what is seen and citta think of it for a long time".

Nina draws a hard conclusion from this. Whenever a person is not giving, or keeping good conduct, or developing the mind, the *citta* (consciousness) is *akusala* (unwholesome): "Even when we believe that our thinking is harmless the *citta* is likely to be *akusala citta*. We often think with *akusala citta* about people."

"Where is that being?" Acharn Sujin said:

"Where is that being? It is only a story in your mind. Previous experiences condition the thought of a being. Gradually we can come to understand what is meant by "being alone" with visible object at the moment of seeing, because there is nobody in the visible object. One can be alone at the moment of hearing sound, because there is no idea of anyone at that moment."

What is seen is colour. The person is thought of afterwards, from memory. Nina writes: "When awareness arises of the visible object which appears, one is alone, there is no person there." And: "We should often consider that we see visible object, no husband or wife, friend or relative."

Lodewijk. Acharn Sujin used Nina's own husband as the example. "Acharn said to me: "You assume that there is Lodewijk, but you just enjoy paññatti, a concept. What is more beneficial: understanding that there is a reality, not Lodewijk, or thinking that he is Lodewijk?" A *paññatti* (concept) is an idea put together by thinking. Lodewijk is dear to Nina, and nobody told her not to love him. Acharn asked only what was more beneficial to understand.

Death. The travellers spoke about the death of someone dear. Nina asked what she could do if her husband died. Acharn Sujin said: "When he dies and you would feel lonely, you cling to just air, to nothing. Where is he after death? You cling to your own memory. We should often consider this." Nina said that one has to be prepared. "When I said that we have to be prepared, she said: "Now you are preparing."" There is no other time to prepare than now, by understanding this moment. "We can only prepare ourselves for a great loss by understanding the present moment more clearly."

This moment. Acharn Sujin said it in many ways on the journey. "We should not worry about enlightenment, but what about the understanding of this moment? Understanding can develop from one moment to a following moment. There is no other way but the understanding of the reality of this moment." Once she was yawning, and Nina asked whether she was tired. The answer was: "It is just this moment."

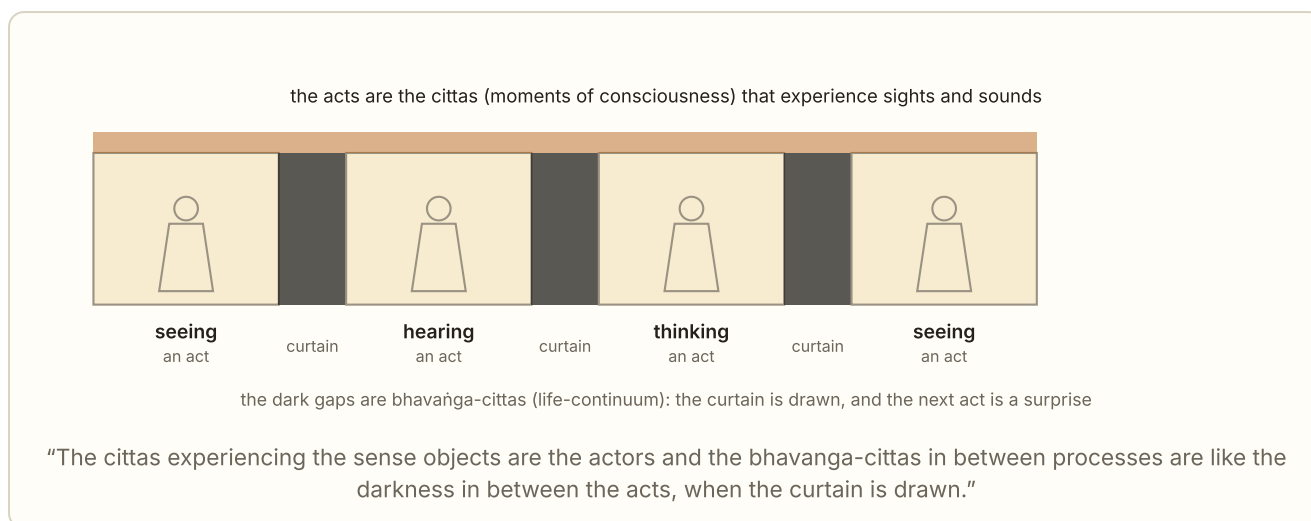
Thinking. Nina wondered whether paying less attention to details would help her to know what seeing is. Acharn answered:

"You do not have to try to prevent thinking. When thinking thinks a great deal, it is time to understand thinking. Develop understanding now, that is better than waiting to see the precise distinction between nāma and rūpa, or the rapidity of their arising and falling away. That is beyond our understanding at this moment. One studies in order to have more understanding of realities, we have to go stage by stage. There should be no expectation of result."

Nobody has to stop thinking. Thinking is a *nāma* (mind) like any other, and when it is going on, it is the reality to be understood.

The actors on the stage. To remind the travellers of "this moment", Acharn Sujin spoke about the processes of *cittas* (moments of consciousness). Seeing happens in a short process of *cittas* (moments of consciousness) through the eye-door; hearing in another process through the ear-door; thinking through the mind-door. In between the processes come *bhavaṅga-cittas* (life-continuum consciousness), which do not experience the sights and sounds of the world at all. "When we are fast asleep and not dreaming, *bhavaṅga-cittas* arise and fall away, succeeding one another." Acharn Sujin compared it all to a play:

"The cittas experiencing the sense objects are the actors and the bhavaṅga-cittas in between processes are like the darkness in between the acts, when the curtain is drawn. Each time when the curtain opens there is a new act going to be played. One never knows beforehand what kind of act will be played, it is a surprise. The acts change with great rapidity: seeing arises, then hearing, then thinking. They seem to occur all at the same time, but in reality there are different "acts" separated by bhavaṅga-cittas. They have no connection with each other."



Nina adds: "Each act is so short, it is already over before we realize it. This reminds us that there is no self who could direct the drama of life."



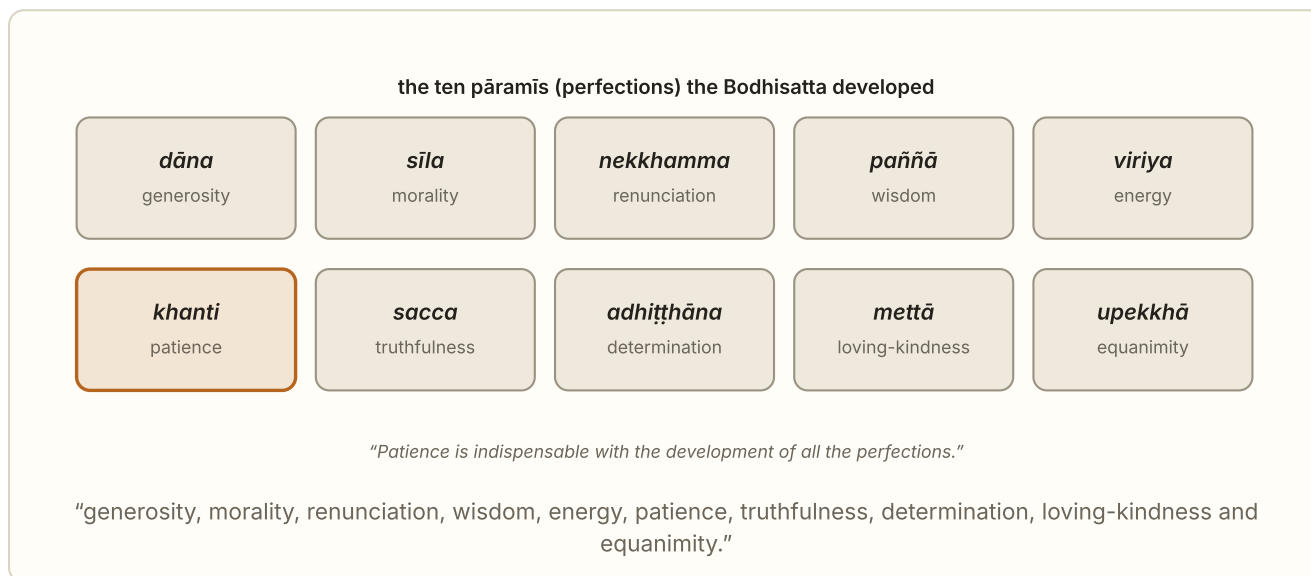
Praise. Even on holiday, people care what others think of them. Acharn Sujin spoke about praise and honour:

"One may cling to praise and fame, but that is very dangerous. People become infatuated with these insignificant things. Praise is called an axe that falls from heaven. It wounds if one does not know how to receive it. We should learn to receive both blame and praise. We should get rid of the idea of rank, it destroys kusala. It is more beneficial to be "nobody"; to get rid of the idea of my body, of the idea of self, of rank or praise."

Praise, she said, is “only words people will forget immediately after they have been spoken. The person who clings to praise wants more.” The lesson is the same as in the museum: what appears lasts a moment, and the clinging to it lasts much longer. “We attach great importance to what we experience, but it only lasts for a moment.”

Chapter 6: The perfections on the road

Ten good qualities. Nina writes: “We have to continue to develop right understanding and all the wholesome qualities which are the “perfections”, *pāramīs*.” The *pāramīs* (perfections) are the ten qualities that the Buddha developed in the lives before his last one, when he was still the Bodhisatta, the being on the way to becoming a Buddha. Nina lists them: “generosity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, energy, patience, truthfulness, determination, loving-kindness and equanimity.” He developed them “to the highest degree since they were the necessary conditions for his attainment of Buddhahood”. Everyone else needs them too: “We also should develop the perfections together with *satipaṭṭhāna* so that eventually enlightenment can be attained.”



No hurry. The travellers asked which perfections a person should develop most. Acharn Sujin’s answers took away the hurry. First: “One reads the teachings and considers them, and one knows that this conditions right understanding, but one should not expect it to be fully developed tonight or tomorrow. Is the development of understanding at this moment not enough? We should let go of all expectations.” Then, about choosing: “It seems that ‘we’ can develop them, but it depends on conditions which type of kusala arises at a particular moment. When we learn about the ten perfections we are encouraged to develop all of them.”

Loving-kindness. People read about boundless *mettā* (loving-kindness) and think about it. Acharn Sujin said something more down to earth: “My goal is not infinite *mettā*, but to extend *mettā* to different people at any time, and not to particular people.” Nina writes: “This reminded us again that the perfections should be developed naturally, when the opportunity arises, and that this is different from mere thinking about them.”

Patience and aeons. Nina writes: “When we see the extent of our defilements more clearly we can understand that it takes a long time, even innumerable lives, to eradicate them. It should not disturb us that we cannot attain enlightenment soon, that it takes aeons.” Gabi had a short way of saying it: “Thinking of aeons will make patience grow.”

Morality. *Sīla* (morality) is one of the perfections. It is made of the *cetasikas* (mental factors) that hold back from wrong speech and wrong action, which are called *virati* (abstention). Nina says that nobody can simply decide “I have *sīla*”; what is needed is “a precise knowledge of the different moments of kusala citta and of akusala citta”. Acharn Sujin said that abstention can act fast: “the *cetasika* that is abstention can stop angry words, even if one has opened one’s mouth already”. Nina confessed that she complained to her husband when she was tired or hungry, and let herself go more easily with him than with others. Acharn answered:

“We should develop wholesomeness. Nobody likes to hear unpleasant words. We can change our habits little by little. When someone is complaining he is thinking of himself first, whereas when he thinks of the other person’s feelings he forgets about himself.”

Energy. Right effort, *virīya* (energy), is another perfection. Alan spoke about the effort it takes to come on a journey like this one, and about his life at home:

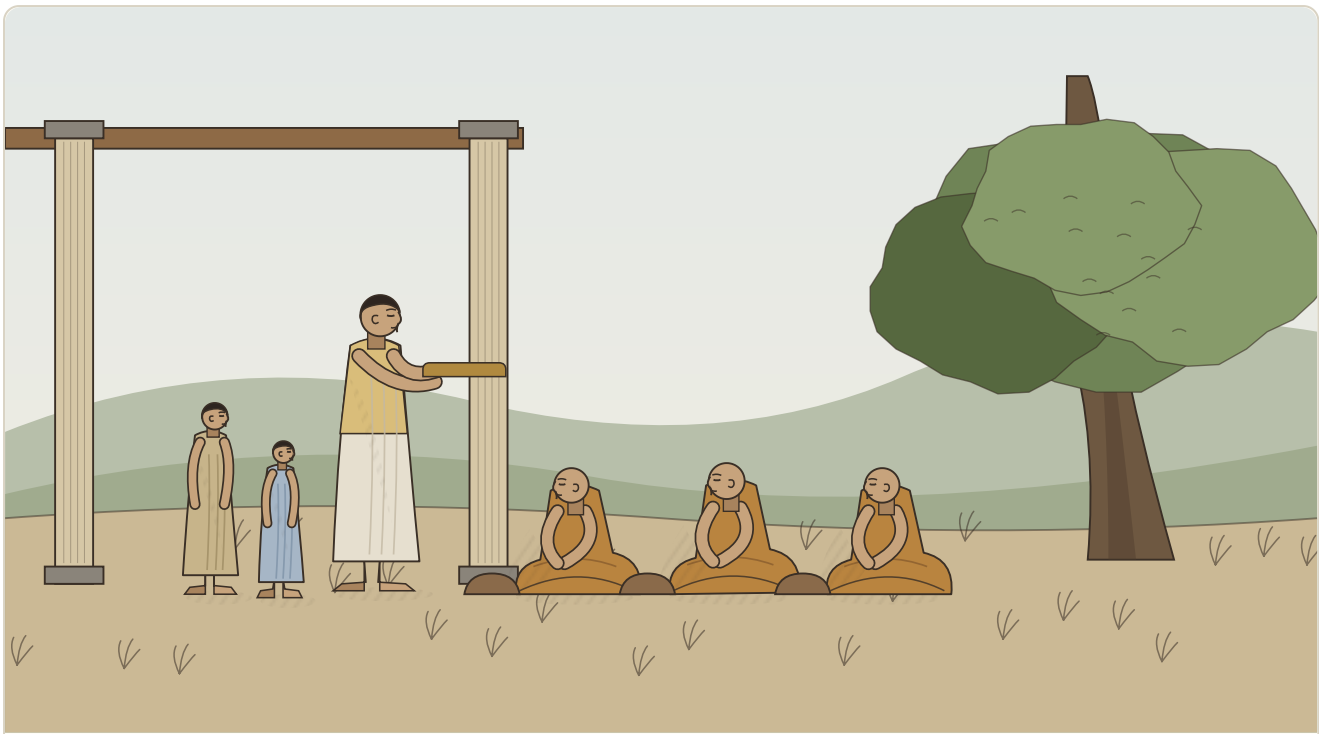
“In many ways the Dhamma is not easy for me. I have to take long trips on my own to see Acharn. My family and friends are not interested at all, so one has to go against the stream. It takes quite an effort to turn away from what most people follow and to go your own way. It is important to accumulate right effort; without it one could not develop right understanding at all.”

Nina writes that effort made for the Dhamma is never wasted: “It can condition us to make an effort in the future to listen to the Dhamma again.”

Renunciation. *Nekkhamma* (renunciation) means giving up. Nina writes: “Not only monks but also laypeople can develop this perfection. Right understanding of *nāma* and *rūpa* can condition renunciation.” Giving up here does not mean leaving home. It means seeing what appears as it is: “There can be understanding of visible object as just visible object, not the dear person we love.” Acharn Sujin said to Nina: “It is very difficult to realize that visible object is just visible object, not *Lodewijk*”.

Visākhā. Nina tells of a woman at the Buddha’s time who lived in the world and still practised letting go:

“At the age of seven she became a sotāpanna, after she heard the Buddha preach. Later on she married and she had ten sons and ten daughters. She had perfect generosity and she was always attending to the needs of the Sangha. She was called the laydisciple who was foremost in ministering to the Sangha. She was attached to her husband, children and grandchildren, but she was aware of all that naturally arose in her daily life. She understood her clinging as a conditioned reality, not self.”



"She was called the laydisciple who was foremost in ministering to the Sangha."

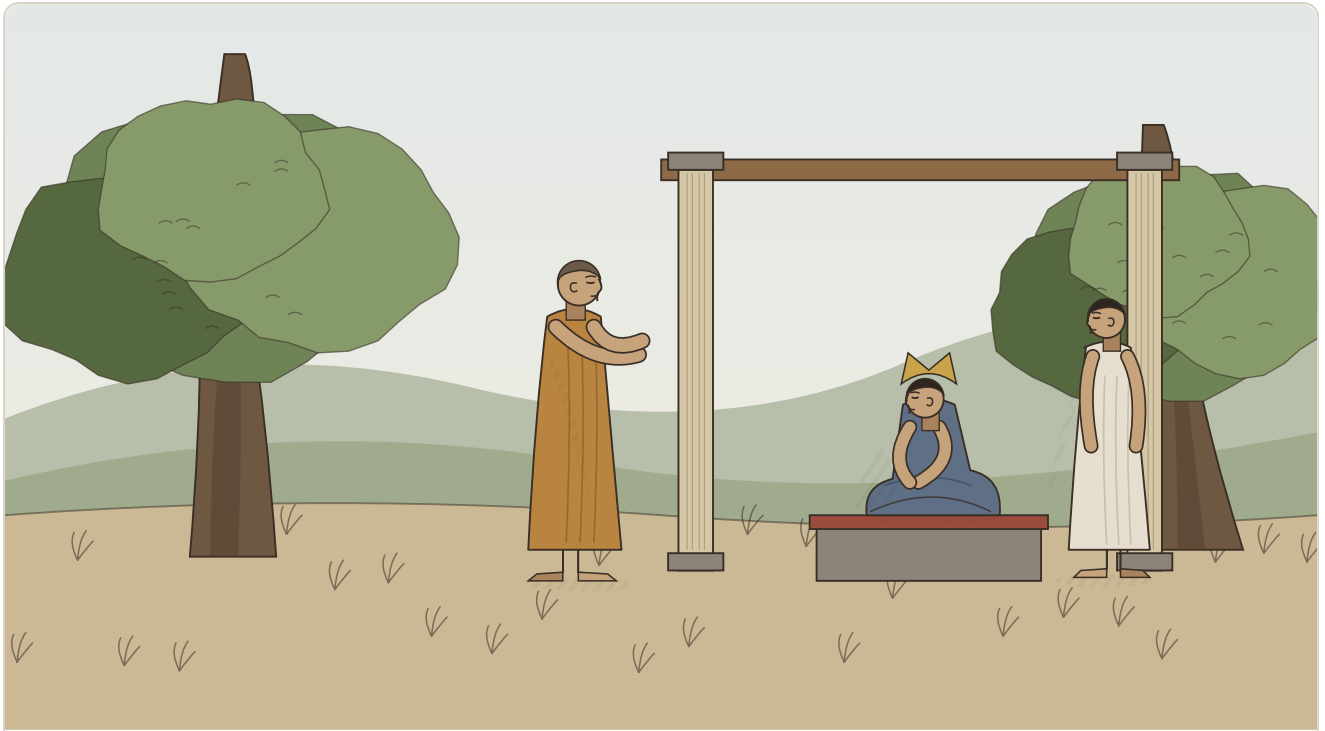
A *sotāpanna* (stream-enterer) is a person who has reached the first stage of enlightenment. The *Saṅgha* (the order) is the community of monks. Visākhā's example "teaches us not to ignore attachment when it arises, but to be aware of it. It is natural to have attachment, but *paññā* (wisdom) can understand it, no matter how strong it is." Acharn Sujin said about *lobha* (attachment):

"It is just a reality, don't worry about it. Follow it with understanding. You can see how it changes. It is most important to understand it as not self. Whatever arises is conditioned. The "self" tries so much to control lobha, to change it, but that is wrong. We should understand it as it is and then the idea of self will gradually be eliminated."

Truthfulness. Visākhā also had *sacca* (truthfulness). Nina explains: "Truthfulness means not deluding oneself about the realities which naturally arise, including defilements." A person who believes that he can stop himself from clinging is not being truthful. "'That is only make belief, not truthfulness", Acharn said."

The ascetic who told the truth. Nina ends with a story from the *Harita Jātaka* (the birth story of Harita), number 431. The Bodhisatta lived as an ascetic in the royal park near the palace, and the King gave him food every day. Once, when the King had to go away because of trouble at the frontier, the ascetic's old defilements rose up "like a poisonous snake lying in a box", and he broke his good conduct. When the King came back, he asked the ascetic whether the bad rumours about him were true. The ascetic thought:

"If I say that I did not indulge in sin, the King would believe me, but in this world there is no surer foundation than truthful speech. Someone who forsakes the truth cannot attain Buddhahood, even if he sits in the sacred enclosure of the Bodhi Tree. Hence I should only speak the truth."



"Thus, he spoke the truth to the King."

"Thus, he spoke the truth to the King." He saw the misery of what he had done, went back to the forest, and developed *samatha* (calm) again until he could again attain *jhāna* (deep calm of mind). At the end of his life he was reborn in the plane of the *Brahmās* (highest heavenly beings). Nina writes: "We should be truthful, we should see our clinging which has been accumulated for aeons and not ignore it. We should neither delude ourselves nor other people." And she takes courage from the story: "Although we have accumulated many kinds of defilements for aeons, right understanding of whatever appears can be developed so that eventually enlightenment can be attained."

Quiz 3 (chapters 5 and 6)

The answers are at the back.

1. After seeing the golden treasures, what does *saññā* (remembrance) do?
 - (a) it falls away at once and leaves nothing
 - (b) it remembers what is seen, and cittas think of it for a long time
 - (c) it makes the treasures disappear
 - (d) it sees the treasures again
2. Acharn Sujin asked: “Where is that being?” What did she say a being is?
3. When Nina said that one has to be prepared for the death of someone dear, what did Acharn Sujin say?
 - (a) There is plenty of time.
 - (b) Now you are preparing.
 - (c) Do not think about it.
 - (d) Nobody can prepare.
4. True or false: Acharn Sujin said that one must try to prevent thinking.
5. In the simile of the actors on the stage, what are the *bhavaṅga-cittas* (life-continuum consciousness)?
 - (a) the actors
 - (b) the darkness in between the acts, when the curtain is drawn
 - (c) the audience
 - (d) the stage itself
6. What is praise called, and why is it dangerous?
7. Name the ten perfections as Nina lists them.
8. What did Acharn Sujin say her goal with *mettā* (loving-kindness) was?
 - (a) infinite mettā
 - (b) to extend mettā to different people at any time, and not to particular people
 - (c) mettā only for her friends
 - (d) mettā only on special days
9. True or false: Gabi said: “Thinking of aeons will make patience grow.”
10. Who said that the Dhamma was not easy, because family and friends were not interested and “one has to go against the stream”?
 - (a) Nina
 - (b) Gabi
 - (c) Alan
 - (d) Ms Tuna
11. Who was Visākhā, and what does the book say she understood about her clinging?
12. In the *Harita Jātaka* (the birth story of Harita), why did the ascetic tell the King the truth?
 - (a) because the King already knew
 - (b) because there is no surer foundation than truthful speech, and one who forsakes the truth cannot attain Buddhahood

- (c) because he was afraid
- (d) because the Queen told him to

Chapter 7: Nobody with sati

What is in the way? Nina's third chapter opens with a question the travellers kept coming back to: "What hinders the development of satipaṭṭhāna?" Her answer is short. "The idea of self is in the way." People want *sati* (awareness), and the wanting itself is the trouble: "instead of attending to what appears at the present moment we continue to think of a concept of sati "we" wish to have."

"Why do you want it?" Alan asked Acharn Sujin: "Why does understanding not arise often?" She answered: "Why do you want it? Develop it." Nina calls this "a short but pointed reminder; it helped us to know our clinging to understanding." Then she writes: "We want to be "somebody with sati", but it is more beneficial to remember that we are "nobody". That is in accordance with the truth. There is no self who could plan to have sati."

Not planning. Acharn Sujin said: "The right Path is not planning when and where sati will arise. We should not have any idea of "I will develop right understanding". There are conditions for its arising, and this is not because of anyone's will." Nina said that clear understanding is not possible until *vipassanā ñāṇa* (insight knowledge) has arisen. Insight knowledge is a stage at which realities are seen directly as they are. Acharn turned her back to the present:

"We do not have to think of insight knowledge, what about understanding of this moment? If we can understand this moment as it is with awareness, then understanding will continue to develop. We will have no doubt what seeing and visible object are, no doubt about hearing and sound and the realities appearing through the other doorways. Then there are conditions for the arising of insight knowledge, vipassanā ñāṇa."

Then came a very short exchange.

Acharn: "Are you wishing for that stage?"

Nina: "Yes."

Acharn: "If you don't wish but you develop it, it is more beneficial."

Nina: "But I cannot help wishing for it."

Acharn: "If you understand that wishing is of no use, there is a condition for awareness."

Acharn added: "When insight knowledge arises it is not Nina who has attained it; there is at that very moment nobody." The Buddha taught *paramattha dhammas* (ultimate realities) "so that one can understand the meaning of no being, no person, no self. It is citta which knows an object, not a person."

Seeing is conditioned now. Alan put it in his own way: "Seeing is conditioned now, we do not have to try to see. Hearing is conditioned now, we do not have to try to hear. Vipassanā ñāṇa, insight knowledge, is anattā, it is beyond control." *Anattā* (non-self) means that nothing is anyone's and nothing obeys anyone. Acharn agreed: "No matter how much you would like the arising of awareness, it cannot arise at will, by one's wish. But whenever a moment of awareness arises, it is developing. That is why it takes aeons. When we do not expect any result, there will be result, because of the right cause."

Nina confessed: “When there is a short moment of considering realities, I cling to it, I spoil it again.” Acharn: “There are conditions for such moments. There is no you in reality. Understanding must be very refined to know the moments of clinging.” And: “Only paññā can know when lobha arises. There is no other way to eradicate lobha but right understanding.”

“You can’t prevent it.” Another of Acharn Sujin’s remarks was this: “When there are conditions for awareness, you can’t prevent it from arising”. Nina explains: “When the conditions are right it must arise and we do not have to do anything to cause its arising.” Some people think they must first sit down and concentrate on their breathing in order to be calm. Nina says that true calm “is freedom from akusala”, and that a person concentrating on breath may not notice when *lobha* (attachment) is behind it. “The reality appearing at this moment has to be understood.”

No fixed order. Some people read the *Visuddhimagga* (the Path of Purity) and think that it lays down a rule: first *sīla* (morality), then *samādhi* (concentration), then *paññā* (understanding). Nina writes that Buddhaghosa, its author, “collected the ancient texts and arranged them in a systematic way”, and that he was describing the different levels of each, not a timetable: “There is no rule with regard to a specific order of the development of the different types of kusala.” *Jhāna* (deep calm of mind) is not needed first. Its aim is calm, “not the understanding of *nāma* and *rūpa* as *dukkha*, impermanent and *anattā*”.

Never lost. Nina writes: “All the moments of studying and considering the Dhamma and all the other kinds of kusala are never lost, they are accumulated from one moment to the next moment so that they can arise again, later on.” The opposite is also true. Acharn Sujin “helped us to see that moments of akusala are wasted moments of our life, that they delay the development of *paññā*.”

Be considerate first. A person who wants *sati* (awareness) and does nothing else is still thinking of himself. Acharn Sujin said: “Instead of wanting to develop *satipaṭṭhāna*, one should develop kusala, being considerate for others.” Nina writes: “Kindness, considerateness, patience, all wholesome *cetasikas* are conditions for the arising of different levels of *sati* and *paññā*.” Then she describes three levels of *paññā* (understanding):

“One level of *paññā* is seeing the disadvantage of *akusala*, another level of *paññā* is studying and considering the Dhamma, and another level again is *paññā* developed in *satipaṭṭhāna*.”

level 1 **seeing the disadvantage of akusala**
noticing that impatience is useless, that aversion is ugly

level 2 **studying and considering the Dhamma**
reading, listening, discussing, thinking it over

level 3 **paññā developed in satipaṭṭhāna**
directly knowing seeing as seeing, sound as sound, not self

all three are *paññā* (understanding); kindness, considerateness and patience are conditions for all of them

“One level of *paññā* is seeing the disadvantage of *akusala*, another level of *paññā* is studying and considering the Dhamma, and another level again is *paññā* developed in *satipaṭṭhāna*.”

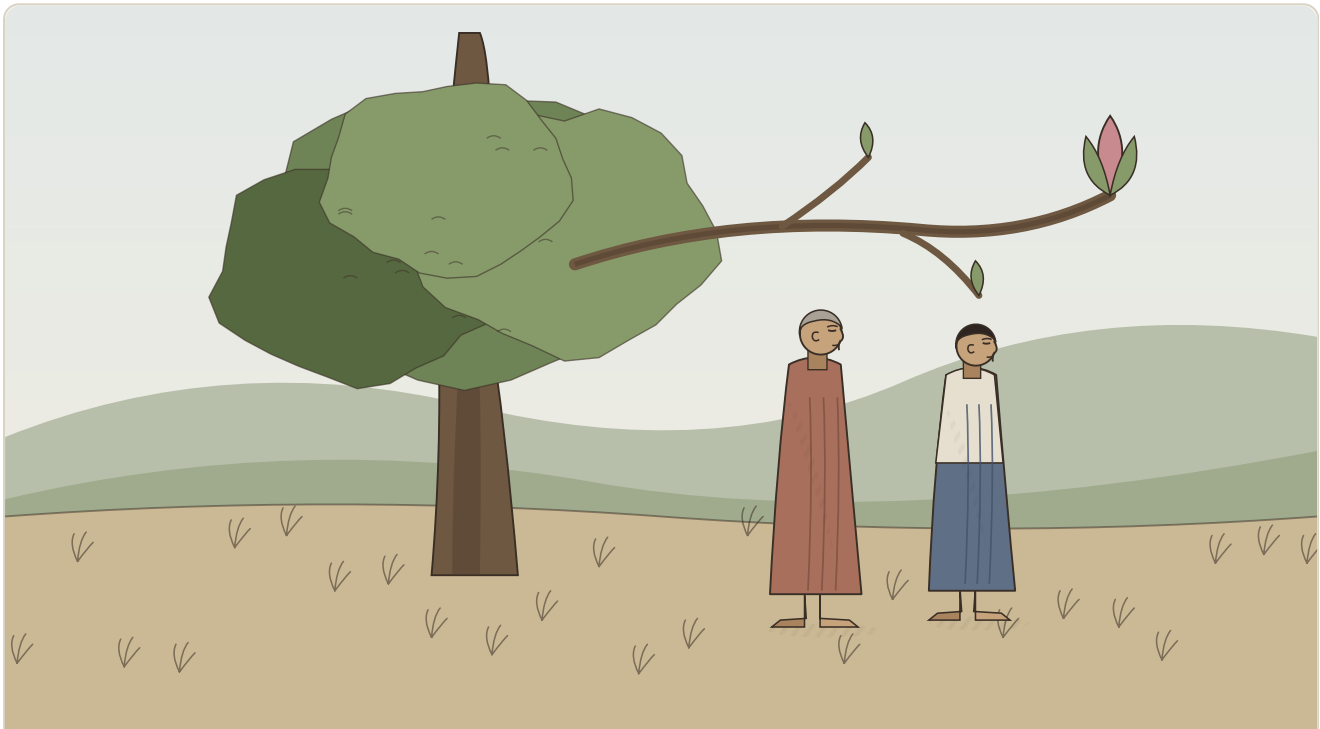
Do not give up. Some people give up because they think they cannot reach enlightenment in this life. Nina says that this too is the self in the way: “they have an idea of “I want to try”.” Acharn Sujin’s answer was always the same: ““Develop it now, be aware now”, Acharn often said.” And: ““Just begin again and again, so that there is more understanding of realities”, Acharn said.”

Not like scholars. Acharn Sujin warned against learning the teaching the wrong way:

“All realities are described in the texts, but how many times does sati arise? Develop it. The book is there, but the moment understanding develops is the most important. People learn Abhidhamma without knowing its real purpose, namely, the development of understanding of realities. They want to learn like scholars.”

The bud on the tree. Then she gave the travellers a picture to keep:

“Paññā is like a bud which will appear on a tree. One does not know where and when it will appear. We should not care when it will appear; what about the understanding of this moment? If there is no understanding of this moment, develop it now.”



“Paññā is like a bud which will appear on a tree.”

Nina writes: “It is like the bud on a tree, when it is the right time nobody can stop it from appearing and then it will bloom.” When insight knowledge does arise, “There is no self and no world at that moment.” But it passes “very quickly”, like a flash, and “Just a flash is not enough, all daily realities have to be fully understood.” After it, “the world full of people appears again”, and the work goes on, moment by moment.

Chapter 8: Colours, sounds and the stream

Two worlds. Nina writes: “When we are not aware of ultimate realities, we live in the conventional world. When visible object appears we think immediately of “something” or “someone”, we are thinking of concepts. Thinking of concepts conceals the characteristic of visible object.” People think they see cars and houses and friends. “We usually think of people and things, but seeing sees only different colours.” Acharn Sujin found a way of saying this that stayed with the travellers: “When we look at somebody it is exactly the same as looking at a painting, Acharn said.”

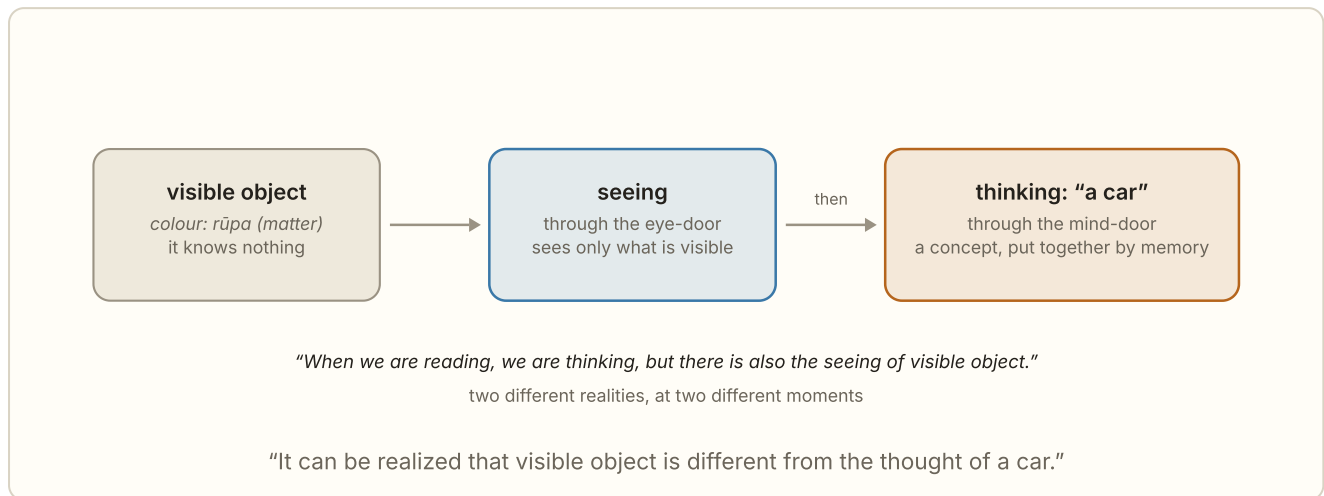


Colours. The travellers had a long talk about what seeing really sees. Alan began: “When we see, we can think of many colours, like red, green or yellow. That is thinking. Visible object is not many colours, it is only one colour.” Acharn asked him what visible object meant. “It is seen through the eyesense.” She went on: “Do we have to name it red, green or yellow? The reality which appears is not yet understood as a mere dhamma.” Alan: “Even without thinking in words we have an idea of green or red, and that is not seeing.” Then Acharn corrected the idea of one colour:

“Not only one colour appears, there are conditions for different colours to appear. Nobody can change the conditions for each different colour. You cannot change the colour of Gabi’s eyes. Colour is just a kind of rūpa which can be seen through the eyes. We do not have to name colour blue, black or green. It is the same in the case of sound, there are many different sounds. Nobody can change the conditions for each different sound. Sound is just a reality and it is not self who experiences it. There is nobody. If awareness does not arise it is always ‘I’ who hears.”

Cars and houses. Nina said: “We look at cars and houses all the time, it seems that we see them.” Acharn: “It can be realized that visible object is different from the thought of a car.” Nina: “Seeing sees details, but it does not know the meaning of them.” Acharn: “It sees everything that is visible. When we are reading,

we are thinking, but there is also the seeing of visible object.” Reading is a good example. The black marks on the page are seen; the words and the meaning are thought. Nina said: “If these would not appear through the eyes, we could not read.”



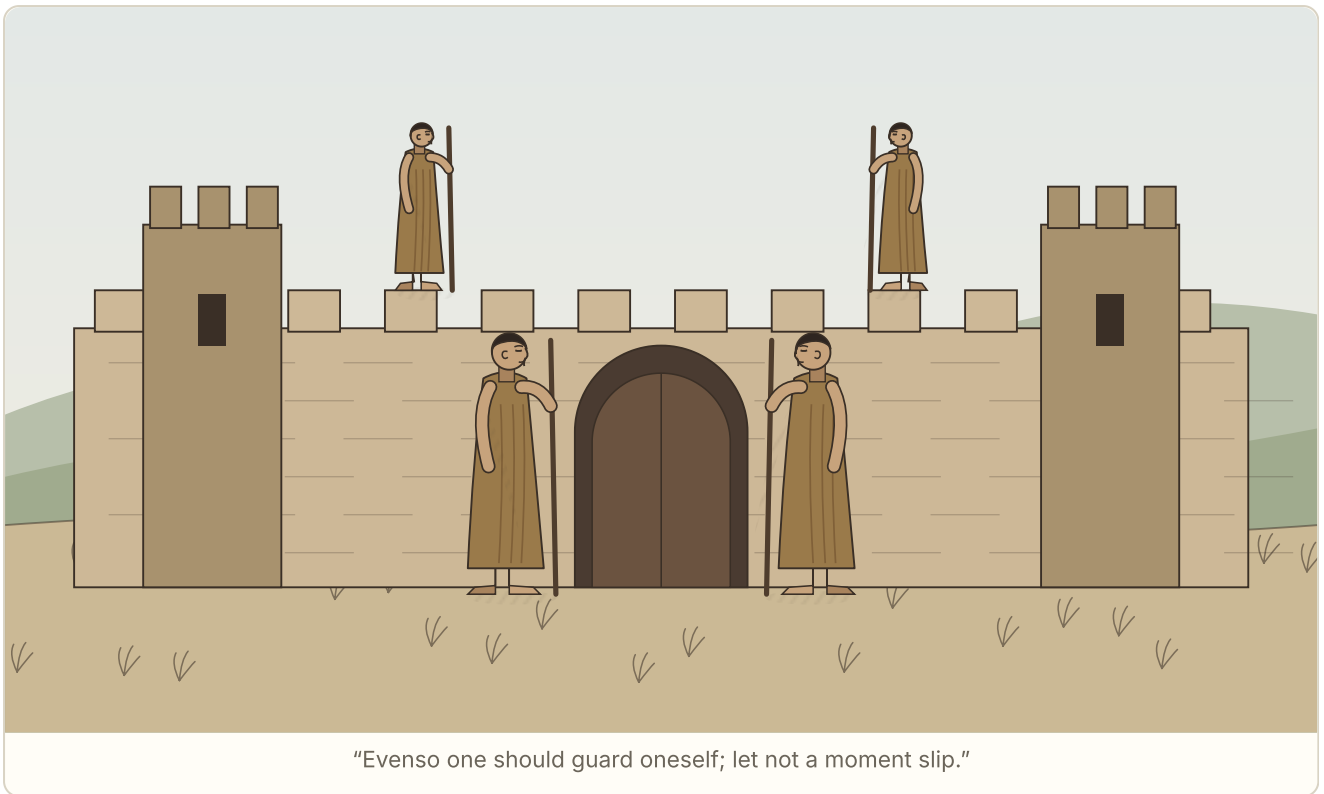
Acharn Sujin then said what the whole journey was for: “We will understand our task in life: the development of understanding of realities. Even when there is a little more understanding of realities it means that we are on the right way.”

A noisy room. Nina had slept in a noisy hotel room and heard people walking past and talking. “However, it helps to remember that hearing is only vipāka, that it is impossible to control it.” Hearing is *vipāka* (result): the result of past *kamma* (deed), not something anyone chooses. Acharn Sujin said: “We can realize that it is only a moment that is conditioned. All dhammas in a day appear as just dhammas when there is awareness and right understanding.”

“I always follow the stream.” In Istanbul a show had been planned, and Nina worried that it would end very late. Acharn Sujin “said that she would not worry once she happened to be there. She said: “I always follow the stream”. Nina still remembers it when she is at a party and cannot leave when she wants to. “When we try to change events we are bound to have aversion and we have no patience. When we “follow the stream” we can understand that all events are only conditioned dhammas.”

The frontier city. Nina ends her chapter with verse 315 of the *Dhammapada* (the Buddha’s verses on the teaching):

*“Even as a frontier city is well guarded both within and without,
 Evenso one should guard oneself; let not a moment slip.
 For they who let the moments slip, mourn, delivered over to Hell.”*



A frontier city stands at the edge of a kingdom. Its walls are guarded day and night, inside and out, because the enemy may come at any hour. Nina applies the verse to moments of the mind: "When we do not act, speak or think with kusala cittas, there are akusala cittas and we let the moments of our life slip. We should "guard ourselves", but without any idea of "self". The guard is *sati* (awareness), not a person.

Her last words on this part of the journey are these: "There are opportunities for the development of right understanding in any situation and this conditions more patience. Our journey with Dhamma was most beneficial."

Quiz 4 (chapters 7 and 8)

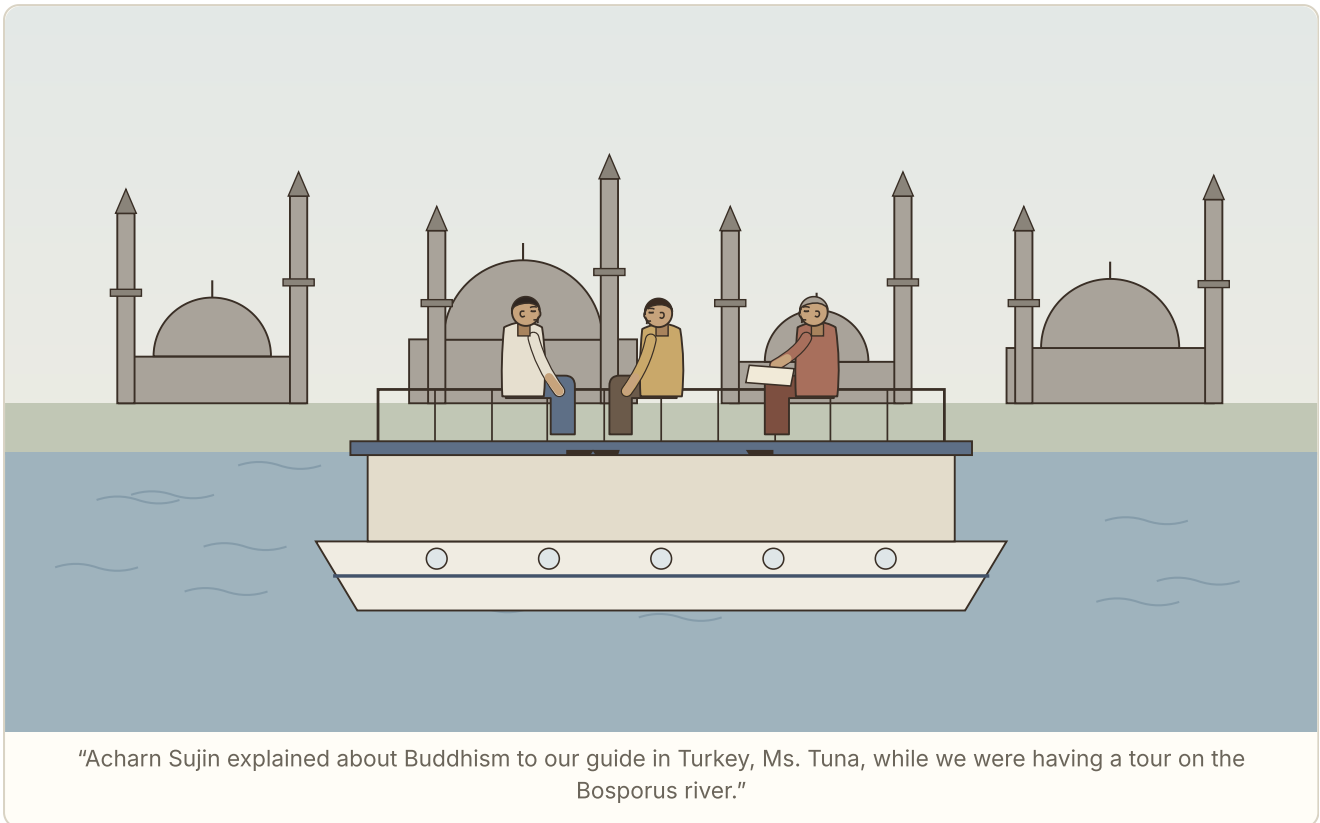
The answers are at the back.

1. Alan asked: “Why does understanding not arise often?” What did Acharn Sujin answer?
 - (a) Because you do not try hard enough.
 - (b) Why do you want it? Develop it.
 - (c) It will come in time.
 - (d) Read more books.
2. True or false: Nina writes that it is more beneficial to be “somebody with sati” than to be “nobody”.
3. Acharn asked Nina: “Are you wishing for that stage?” Nina said yes. What did Acharn say was more beneficial?
4. Complete Acharn Sujin’s words: “It is citta which knows an object, not ...”
 - (a) a person.
 - (b) a cetasika.
 - (c) a rūpa.
 - (d) a book.
5. What did Acharn Sujin say happens when there are conditions for awareness?
 - (a) one must sit down first
 - (b) you can’t prevent it from arising
 - (c) it will arise tomorrow
 - (d) it must be planned
6. True or false: the *Visuddhimagga* (the Path of Purity) lays down a rule that *sīla* (morality) must be developed first, then *samādhi* (concentration), then *paññā* (understanding).
7. Name the three levels of *paññā* (understanding) that Nina describes.
8. Acharn Sujin said that *paññā* (understanding) is like ...
 - (a) a river
 - (b) a bud which will appear on a tree
 - (c) a lamp
 - (d) a suitcase
9. Acharn Sujin said that looking at somebody is exactly the same as ...
 - (a) looking in a mirror
 - (b) looking at a painting
 - (c) reading a book
 - (d) hearing a sound
10. What did Acharn Sujin say about the colour of Gabi’s eyes, and what was her point?
11. In Istanbul, when Nina worried that a show would end very late, what did Acharn Sujin say?
 - (a) We will leave early.
 - (b) I always follow the stream
 - (c) Shows are a waste of time.

- (d) Do not go.

12. In *Dhammapada* (the Buddha's verses on the teaching) verse 315, what should one guard, and what should one not let slip? What does Nina add about the "self"?

Chapter 9: On the Bosphorus



"Acharn Sujin explained about Buddhism to our guide in Turkey, Ms. Tuna, while we were having a tour on the Bosphorus river."

The guide. Nina writes: "Acharn Sujin explained about Buddhism to our guide in Turkey, Ms. Tuna, while we were having a tour on the Bosphorus river." The Bosphorus is the strait of water that runs through Istanbul. Ms Tuna had grown up in another religion. She said: "I am a Moslem, I believe in God. When I am in a very bad mood I pray to Him and then I feel better." Acharn Sujin did not ask her to give up her faith. She asked her about things that can be known right now, by anybody, whatever they believe.

Feelings. Acharn began with feeling, because everybody has it:

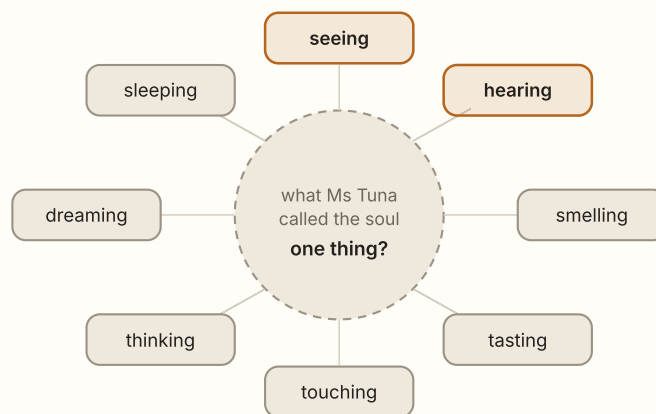
"We would like to have pleasant feeling all the time, but this is not possible. If we can understand the causes of our different feelings it will help us to have less unpleasant feeling. Life is so uncontrollable because each moment is conditioned."

And: "In order to understand our life from moment to moment we do not have to think in terms of a particular religion. Realities such as seeing, hearing or feeling are true for everybody, no matter which language we use in order to name them. Don't we all have pleasant and unpleasant feelings? Can you control your feelings?"

Rich and poor. Ms Tuna said that some people work hard and never become rich, while others have everything without working, and that this is what is called in Arabic "kismet", or destiny. Acharn asked: "Can the poor be happy and the rich be unhappy?" Ms Tuna agreed that they can: "There are very rich people who are not happy and there are poor people who are very happy; they are rich in heart. They do not attach importance to material things." Acharn asked: "Is happiness caused by God or by yourself? Do you have the ability to condition your own feelings?" Ms Tuna said: "Yes, I can."

Where is the soul when one sleeps? Ms Tuna said that the soul never dies: “We think that the soul is in the body. When one dies, the soul goes away.” Acharn asked a question nobody had asked her before: “When one is sleeping where is the soul?” Ms Tuna did not know. Acharn went on, one question at a time. When a person wakes up in the morning there is seeing. “Is it the soul which sees?” Ms Tuna thought so. “At the moment of hearing, is it the soul which hears?” “Sure.” Then Acharn summed up:

“So, the soul has many functions in a day. Seeing is one function, hearing is another function. Besides these, there are the functions of smelling, tasting, touching and thinking. I believe that the soul sleeps too.”



“I think that seeing is different from hearing. Seeing and hearing occur at different moments and experience different objects.”

“So, the soul has many functions in a day. Seeing is one function, hearing is another function.”

Ms Tuna asked about dreams. Acharn: “Everyone dreams. So, the soul is dreaming. The body cannot dream.” She agreed with Ms Tuna that what sees, hears, likes, dislikes and dreams is not the body: “The body cannot see, but the soul is seeing. The body cannot think, but the soul is thinking.” Then she asked: “How many souls do you have?” Ms Tuna: “Only one, of course.” Acharn: “I think that seeing is different from hearing. Seeing and hearing occur at different moments and experience different objects.” Ms Tuna said: “All this is deep in meaning, difficult to understand. It is beyond my thinking.”

Light and darkness. Acharn explained why she kept to what can be experienced:

“It is beneficial to talk about what we can experience right now because we can understand that. When we talk about what we cannot experience directly we are in darkness. When we understand the characteristics and functions of the realities which can be directly experienced there is light. I would like to understand more and more the realities of my life.”

Ms Tuna said that to be happy one should be a good Muslim: say one’s prayers, read the Quran, keep the fast of Ramadan, and give money to the poor. Acharn did not argue. She spoke about wisdom: “Ignorance is the opposite of wisdom or understanding. Wisdom is to be considered more valuable than any kind of property; it is the most beneficial thing in life. I think that wisdom can develop.” Ms Tuna said: “I agree with you.”

Consciousness instead of soul. Acharn Sujin then said why she preferred another word:

“I think that there are many different kinds of consciousness. We can use the word consciousness instead of soul. The word soul can give rise to misunderstandings, it is not precise enough. If we use the word soul it implies something permanent. Consciousness experiences one object at a time and it is not permanent; it changes all the time.”

Seeing, she said, is one kind of consciousness. “Seeing is seeing for everyone, it does not belong to any race or nationality. Also animals see. Seeing is the same no matter what you call it. Thus, it is an absolute truth for everyone, it is an absolute or ultimate reality.” And she asked Ms Tuna a question that is worth trying out: “Can you touch visible object? Do you see me? You can only see visible object.” A person is thought of after seeing: “A person cannot be seen, there can only be thinking about a person.”

Why are people different? Ms Tuna asked why people have different characters from birth. Her mother, she said, had loving care for everybody, while some people never want to help anyone. Acharn answered:

“People are different, they do not have wholesome moments all the time. There are wholesome realities and unwholesome realities. Kindness and compassion are wholesome, cruelty, hatred and jealousy are unwholesome. There are for everybody conditions for wholesome moments as well as for unwholesome moments. The arising of wholesomeness or unwholesomeness depends on what has been accumulated.”

To become a good person, Acharn said, “you have to develop wholesomeness, you have to train yourself. Just as when you want to be skillful in cooking you have to train yourself so that one day you will be a good cook.”



“Just as when you want to be skillful in cooking you have to train yourself so that one day you will be a good cook.”

Ms Tuna said that some people do not want to be good. Acharn: “You can help them to understand the benefit of being wholesome so that they will be kind to others.” People like pleasant results, she said, but do not know the causes: “If you tell them that good and bad results come from the appropriate causes they

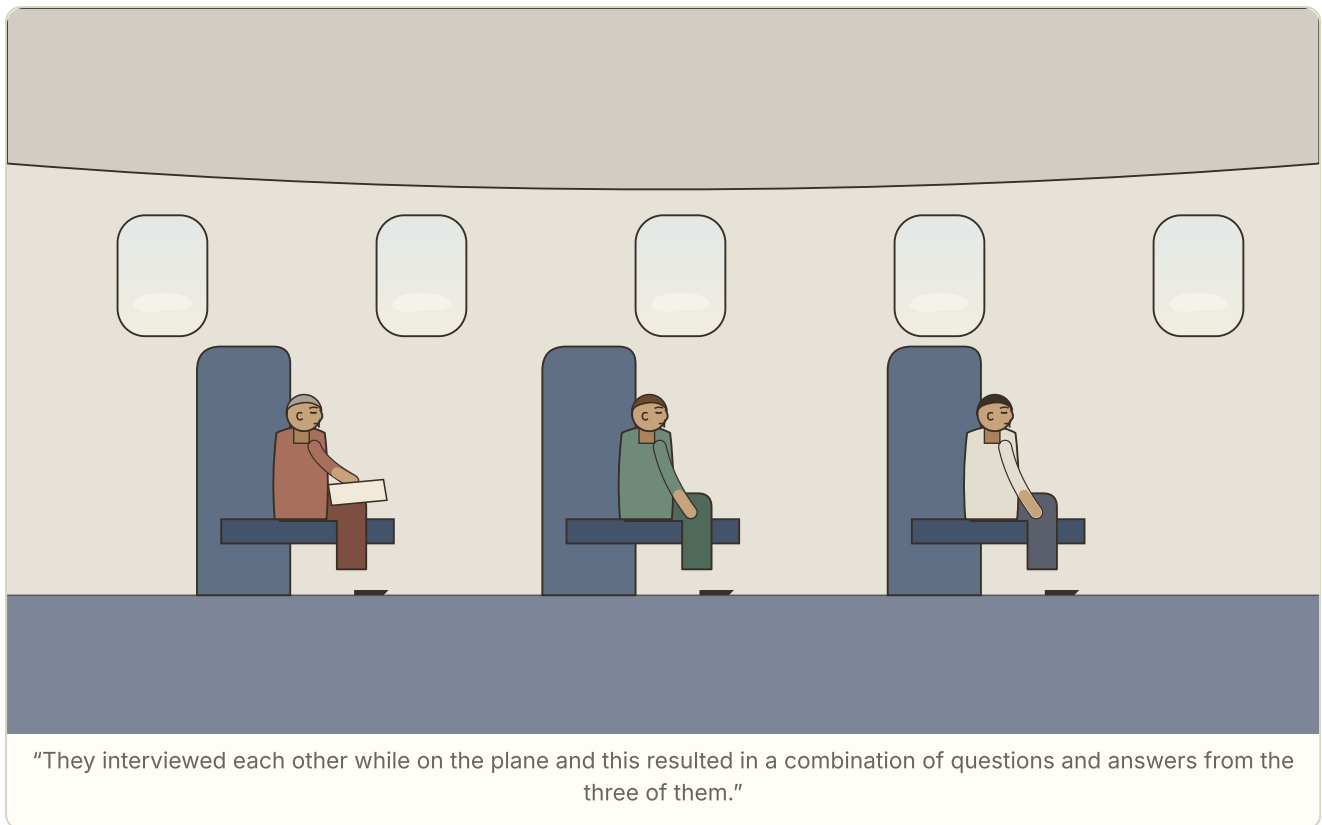
will have more understanding.” And: “If you are friendly to others they will be friendly to you. If you do not like other people they will not like you.”

One moment, then gone. Acharn ended with words that go beyond any one religion:

“Religion is only a term which stands for what one believes in. But if we don’t label anything we can understand realities as they are. We can understand realities which are true for everybody, no matter what religion he professes, no matter what nationality he is.”

“Life goes on from moment to moment, until death. Life is only one moment of experiencing an object and then it is gone, forever.”

Chapter 10: Questions on the plane



"They interviewed each other while on the plane and this resulted in a combination of questions and answers from the three of them."

Nina writes: "What follows is an interview between Gabi, Alan and Nina, while travelling in Egypt together with Acharn Sujin. They interviewed each other while on the plane and this resulted in a combination of questions and answers from the three of them." The questions are the kind that anyone might ask who has just heard of the Buddha's teaching. The answers are the three friends' own, made from what they had learnt.

Is Buddhism different? The first question was what the Buddha's teaching has that is found nowhere else. The answer: "Through Buddhism we learn to understand realities which can be directly experienced. Buddhism does not teach particular concepts we have to believe in, but it teaches the development of understanding of all realities within and around ourselves. Thus, we can verify the truth." It teaches "the real cause of all that happens in our life, such as gain and loss, praise and blame, honour and dishonour, misery and well-being."

Faith. Does a good Buddhist have to have faith in what the Buddha taught? "We don't have to follow the Buddha's teachings blindly. We learn what he teaches and then we have to verify it ourselves; we have to consider it carefully. Through the practice we can prove that he taught the truth."

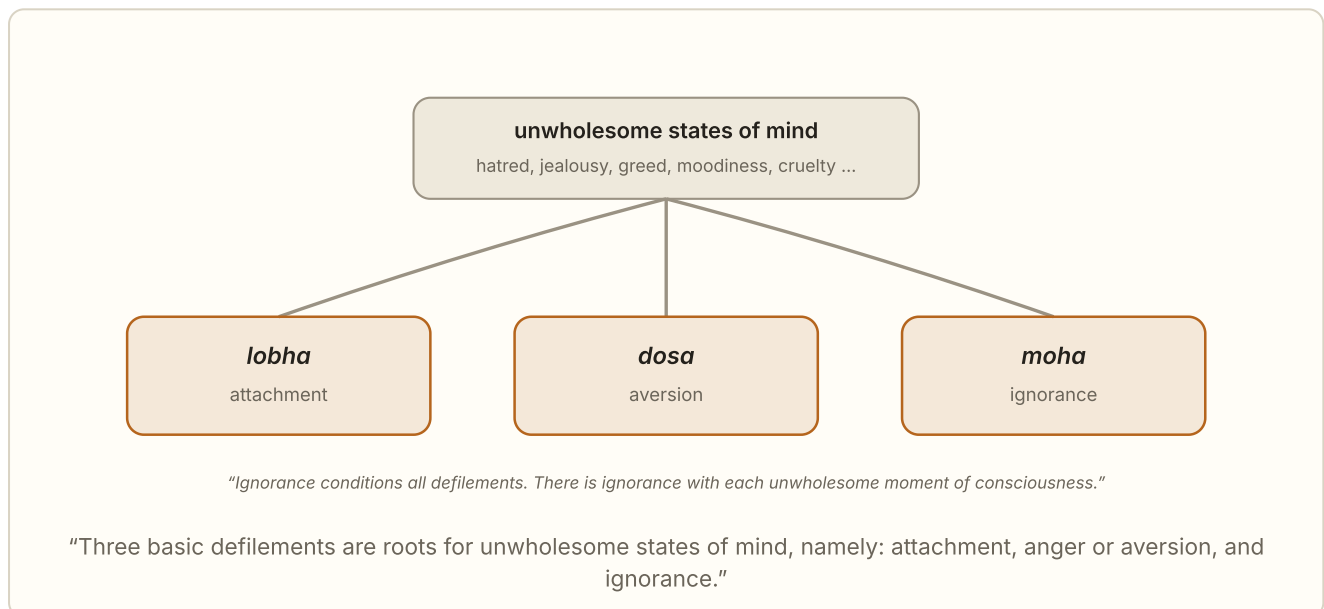
"I am quite happy." The next question came from someone who said that he was quite happy, had very few problems, and wondered why anyone needs Buddhism in order to be happy. The answer: "I am not satisfied with the explanations about life which are given by science, biology or chemistry. Through Buddhism I learn what life really is: one moment of experiencing an object." Seeing, then thinking about it; hearing, then thinking about it. And when a person looks closely at these moments, "one realizes one's faults and vices".

Defilements. What are defilements? “These are unwholesome states of mind which are not beneficial. They cause harm to us or to others sooner or later. Hatred, for example, is an unskillful state of mind. When hatred arises we harm ourselves and others. At such moments there is no peace of mind.” How does hatred harm the person who has it? “At those moments there is agitation and recklessness. When people become angry, they are inclined to do something they may regret later on.”

Rightful anger? History books say that kings had rightful anger. Is there such a thing? The answer was firm:

“Anger is always unwholesome, no matter what the cause is. It harms yourself and others. This does not mean that you cannot be firm with others when it is necessary for people’s benefit, but hatred and anger are always unwholesome. At such moments you have no balance of mind, you are not sane.”

Three roots. Are there other defilements besides anger? “There are many kinds of defilements. Three basic defilements are roots for unwholesome states of mind, namely: attachment, anger or aversion, and ignorance.” These are *lobha* (attachment), *dosa* (aversion) and *moha* (ignorance), the three that Chapter 2 named.

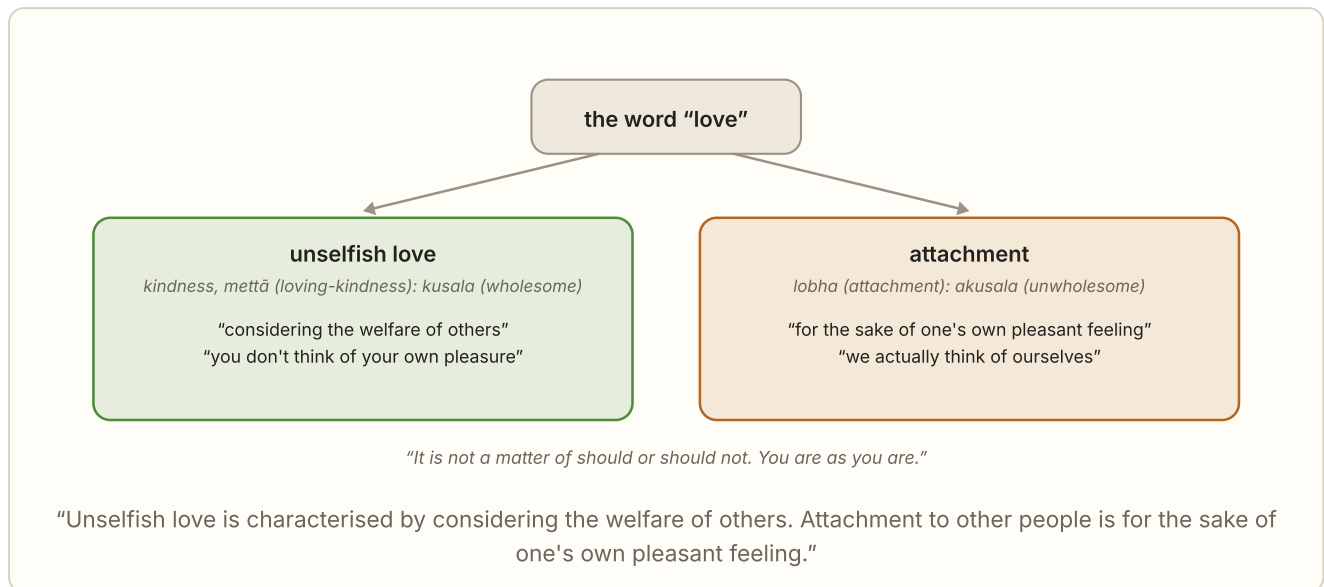


Love. Is love wholesome or unwholesome? The friends answered that the one word stands for two different realities:

“Love can represent the reality which is kindness towards other people. It arises when we consider their welfare. However, love can also represent an unwholesome reality. When we are attached to a person we actually think of ourselves and that is an unwholesome reality. When we have to be separated from that person, attachment conditions aversion and displeasure. When unselfish loving-kindness arises you don’t think of your own pleasure.”

Should there be no attachment, then, between husband and wife, or parents and children? “It is not a matter of should or should not. You are as you are. However, there can be a more precise understanding of what is unselfish love, or true considerateness for others and what is attachment, selfish love.” The difference:

“Unselfish love is characterised by considering the welfare of others. Attachment to other people is for the sake of one’s own pleasant feeling.”



The joys of life. Must a Buddhist give up music, dancing, books, laughing with friends and shopping? No. “We should live our daily life naturally, in order to understand our inclinations, our defilements. We should understand our attachment and aversion as they naturally arise. We can enjoy all the pleasant things but we should at the same time develop more understanding of the realities of our life.” The answer ends: “A wise person can live with pleasure and with understanding.”

Small likes and dislikes. Like and dislike do not always lead to bad deeds. Are they still unwholesome? Yes, in all their degrees. “One may like something to the degree that one wants to take it away and then it is obvious that there is unwholesomeness. But also, when like is of a lesser degree it is not beneficial, not wholesome.” As for dislike: “When it is of a lesser degree there is uneasiness or moodiness; we have no peace of mind. Whenever we have unpleasant feeling, the reality of aversion has arisen.”

Why is ignorance unwholesome? “Ignorance conditions all defilements. There is ignorance with each unwholesome moment of consciousness. Because of ignorance we live in darkness, we do not know what is wholesome and beneficial and what is unwholesome.” Ignorance also conditions wrong view: “When we believe that body and mind can stay, that they are permanent, there is wrong view. What we call mind is, in reality, only fleeting moments of consciousness which cannot stay. What we call body is ever-changing elements, which cannot stay.”

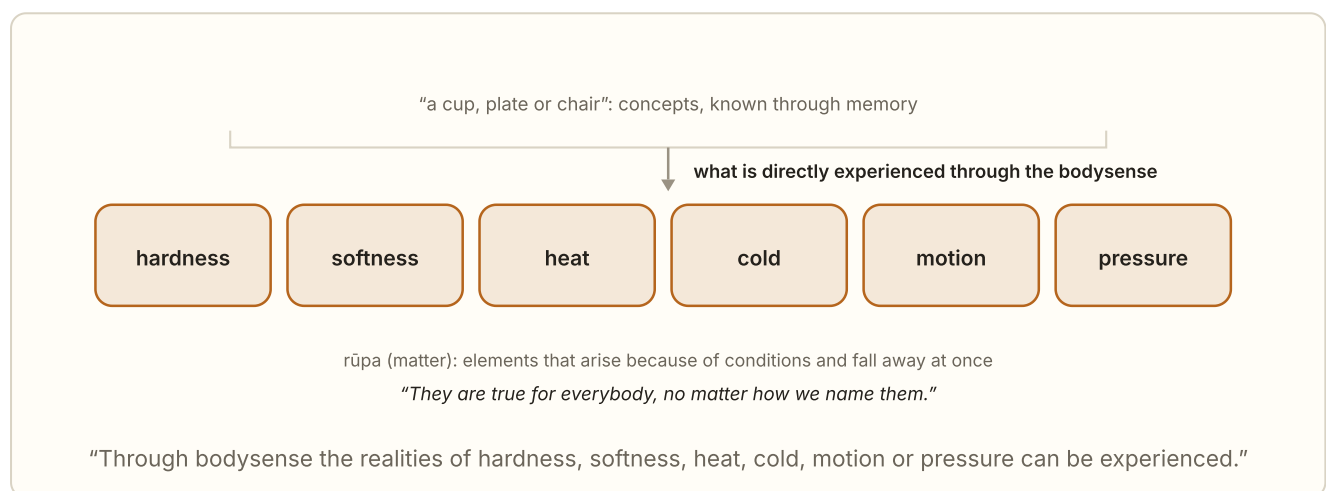
Happiness. How does one find happiness in Buddhism? “Through knowing realities as they are.” Why does that bring happiness? “Right understanding can eliminate ignorance and wrong view. Through right understanding there will be less clinging, and that means more freedom.”

Other kinds of Buddhism. Asked whether other schools of Buddhism are wrong, the friends did not condemn anyone: “I would not say that they are right or wrong. Any teaching which helps us to understand the reality of this moment is right. We should find out for ourselves which teaching is right and which is wrong.” And how should a person begin? “One can read and consider what one reads and one should find the right person who can explain the teachings”.

Heat. One question insisted that touching is already understood by everyone: “I know when I touch my ear or the chair. Everyone knows that. I know when I touch something which is hot.” The answer separated the reality from the story about it:

“We say, for instance, that Cairo is hot or that a fire is hot. Heat itself is a reality which can be directly experienced through the bodysense without there being the need to name it. Heat is a reality which is true for everybody, it is absolute truth. When you think about Cairo or a fire you think long stories but there is no direct experience of a reality.”

Tangible object. What can be experienced through the body? “Throughout the day we touch things which are hard. We believe that we touch a cup, plate or chair which are hard. In reality, it is hardness which is experienced through the bodysense, not a cup, plate or chair.” The full list: “Through bodysense the realities of hardness, softness, heat, cold, motion or pressure can be experienced. They are true for everybody, no matter how we name them.”



Visible object. Is a car or a television a visible object? “Visible object is that which seeing sees. It appears through eyesense. When we perceive a car we are already thinking of a concept, an idea.” Then the friends summed up the two kinds of reality: “Seeing is mental, it experiences something. Visible object, that which is visible, is physical, it does not know anything. Hearing is mental, it experiences sound. Sound is physical, it does not know anything.”

No self. The last questions were the hardest. How can anyone learn that there is no self? “The truth of non-self cannot be realized in the beginning. We have accumulated so much ignorance and wrong view. Through reading, considering and discussing there can gradually be more intellectual understanding of realities.” And how can one be aware of realities? “There is seeing now. It can be realized that it is a reality which experiences visible object, just for a moment. It is not self which sees, seeing sees. You don’t have to do anything special in order to see.”

What does it mean to understand seeing as “only a reality”? “One begins to understand that there is not my seeing which can stay on and which is so important.” Realities “are beyond control, they cannot arise because of anyone’s wish. Also awareness and understanding are realities which can only arise when there are the right conditions, they are beyond control. Beyond control is another way of saying that there is “only a reality”. The realities of our life are momentary and insignificant. They arise and then disappear forever.”

Quiz 5 (chapters 9 and 10)

The answers are at the back.

1. Where did Acharn Sujin's talk with Ms Tuna take place?
 - (a) in a papyrus shop
 - (b) on a boat on the Bosphorus
 - (c) at Cairo airport
 - (d) by the pyramids
2. What question did Acharn Sujin ask Ms Tuna about the soul and sleep?
3. "So, the soul has many functions in a day." Which functions did Acharn Sujin list?
 - (a) praying, fasting and giving
 - (b) seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking
 - (c) walking, running and sleeping
 - (d) reading, writing and counting
4. Which word did Acharn Sujin prefer to "soul", and why?
 - (a) spirit, because it is older
 - (b) consciousness, because soul implies something permanent
 - (c) mind, because it is shorter
 - (d) heart, because everyone has one
5. True or false: Acharn Sujin said that seeing belongs to a particular race or nationality.
6. Acharn Sujin compared becoming a good person to learning a skill. Which skill, and what did she say?
7. Which three defilements are the roots of unwholesome states of mind?
 - (a) pride, envy and fear
 - (b) attachment, aversion and ignorance
 - (c) hunger, tiredness and pain
 - (d) doubt, worry and sleepiness
8. True or false: the friends agreed that kings in history had rightful anger.
9. What is the difference between unselfish love and attachment, according to the interview?
10. Complete the sentence: "A wise person can live with ... and with ..."
 - (a) silence; fasting
 - (b) pleasure; understanding
 - (c) books; teachers
 - (d) patience; sleep
11. When a person touches a chair, what is directly experienced through the bodysense?
 - (a) the chair
 - (b) hardness
 - (c) the idea of sitting
 - (d) the colour of the chair

12. Which realities can be experienced through the bodysense?
13. True or false: the interview says that through right understanding there will be less clinging, and that means more freedom.

Chapter 11: More questions in Egypt

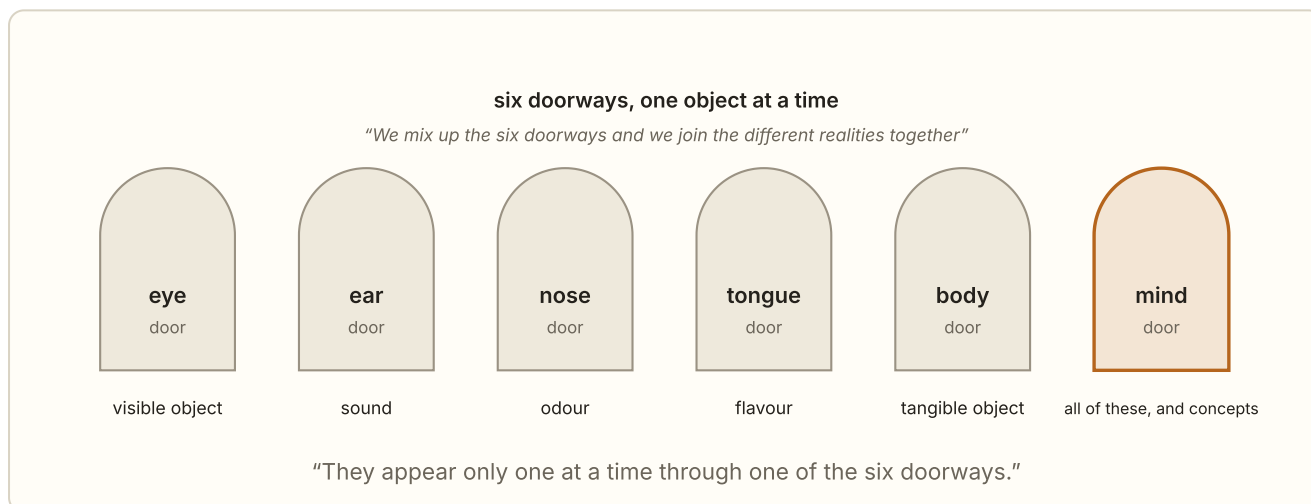
The three friends went on with their questions in Egypt. Nina's last chapter is called "Further Interviews between Gabi, Alan and Nina in Egypt". Here are the questions and the answers they gave one another.

How should one live? "One should develop right understanding of the teachings by reading, considering and discussion. One should apply the teachings in one's life as best as one can."

Is it selfish? Is a person who develops understanding only thinking about his own progress? "No, one develops more understanding of the world in and around oneself. The self is not a reality. As understanding develops there will be less concern about the self." When ignorance grows less, "there will be less unwholesomeness and this is beneficial for oneself and for the people around oneself."

"I do not feel that I have a great deal of ignorance." One question put it this way: "I know how to do my work, how to drive a car or how to cook." The answer was that this is not the ignorance that matters:

"We have ignorance of realities such as seeing, visible object, hearing, sound, of all the realities which can be experienced through the five senses and through the mind-door. They appear only one at a time through one of the six doorways. They appear only for one moment and then they disappear. We are deluded about these fleeting realities and we take them for the world or the self."



"We mix up the six doorways and we join the different realities together instead of understanding realities as they are". The six doorways are the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. Then the answer ended with a question of its own: "Would you like to understand that there is no self? Nothing belongs to you in reality."

Who decides? Is it not the self that performs deeds and makes the effort? "Intention is a mental reality; it arises when there are the appropriate conditions. However, there is nobody who owns intention. It is the same with effort. It is a mental reality which arises because of conditions. There is nobody who can make effort arise, who owns effort."

Meditation. "Do you apply yourself to meditation?" The friends were careful with the word:

“I avoid using the word meditation because different people have different ideas about it. Our goal should be the development of right understanding of the realities which appear now. We can begin to notice and consider one reality at a time and then there is no need to name it or to think about it. Understanding can be developed in any situation, one does not have to change one’s life or do anything special.”

This development of understanding is called *vipassanā* (insight), and “is a kind of mental development which can be done no matter where you are.”

A quiet place? Is a quiet place not needed for concentration? “Not at all, because the purpose of the Buddha’s teachings is to understand the realities which arise naturally, in daily life.” Sound is a reality in a quiet room and in a noisy one: “Sound is a reality, no matter where you are, whether it is quiet or whether there is a lot of noise. If we are in a noisy place and we have aversion towards that noise, aversion can be realized as just a conditioned reality, not “my aversion”.”



“Sound is a reality, no matter where you are, whether it is quiet or whether there is a lot of noise.”

How to begin. It seemed strange to one of the three that sound could be studied without going somewhere quiet. The answer: “Do you have to try now in order to see, to hear or to touch? These are realities which naturally arise in your life. When there are conditions for their arising, you cannot help but see, hear or touch.” And: “we cannot fix the time for the arising of right understanding; it may arise now or later on. There is nobody who can force the arising of right understanding, it is conditioned by many factors.”

Beginners. For a beginner it is difficult. “There must be intellectual understanding of the mental phenomena and physical phenomena which are the objects of understanding. One should know how to develop understanding.” Many people “just want to sit and concentrate on breathing, but they have to

consider for themselves whether this is the way to know the realities of one's daily life." Understanding "can be accumulated little by little if one develops it naturally, without trying to make particular realities arise, without trying to control realities."

Results. A beginner wants to see some result. "The result cannot be noticed immediately, it cannot be measured. However, as understanding develops there will be more confidence. There will be more understanding of why you feel bad or why you feel happy. You will face unpleasant situations with more understanding and you will be more tolerant towards other people".

Dull? Is it not dull to study seeing and hearing? "If you just read about different realities it seems dull, but you should remember that they are the phenomena of your daily life. If you develop understanding of them when they appear, it is not boring but interesting." And why study seeing and hardness at all, rather than one's attachment and aversion? "It is only by understanding all these different realities that there can be detachment from the idea of a self which conditions many defilements. We should come to understand that there is nobody who sees, nobody who hears, that there are only different conditioned realities."

A hidden virus. One of the three said that when he is seeing or hearing he has no idea of a self at all, so why must it be eradicated? The answer:

"We cannot say that there is an idea of self every time seeing or hearing arises. However, the idea of self is deeply accumulated. When it does not appear there is still the latent tendency of wrong view. This is like a virus which is latent in the body but which can become active at any time."

Wrong view "can only be eradicated when enlightenment has been attained", and it "must be eradicated first before attachment to sense objects can be eradicated".

Seeing and thinking. It is hard to separate seeing from thinking about what is seen. "It is important to have right understanding about seeing: it sees only what appears through the eyes, nothing else. When you pay attention to shape and form and when you perceive people and things there is remembrance of concepts, there is thinking, not seeing. Seeing conditions thinking of concepts." Would it be better not to think? "No. We should understand thinking as thinking, seeing as seeing, feeling as feeling; they are different realities."

A better person? Will a person become better by understanding all this? "If there is more direct understanding of realities there will be less clinging to the idea of self. We shall think less of ourselves as a good person or a bad person. There are wholesome realities and unwholesome realities which arise because of conditions."

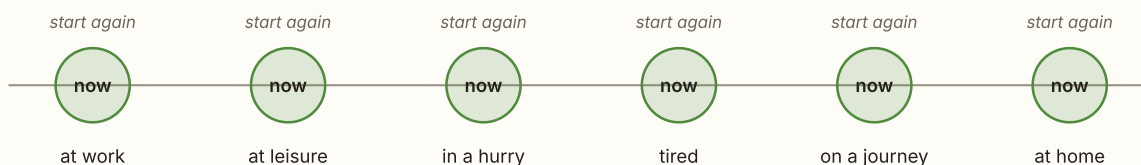
Fatalism. If there is no self who can do anything, does that not lead to fatalism, the belief that nothing one does matters? "There is no predestined fate ruling over our life. However, the different moments of our life are conditioned by the past and by the present." "It is essential to know and understand the present moment as conditioned." Understanding, the answer says, leads in the end to liberation and enlightenment, and a person who sees its value has "less inclination to laziness or to fatalism".

Confidence. Must a person's confidence be very strong to keep going when realities do not yet appear as they are? "We don't have to wait for realities to appear as they are; we can still have confidence. There is confidence with each wholesome moment of consciousness, for example, when we help someone else or when we study the teachings and consider them."

Backsliding. The ancient texts speak of monks who fell away from the teaching. When is a person backsliding? “When one is no longer interested in developing understanding.” Does that happen when people are discouraged? The answer:

“Even if it is difficult to develop understanding there are so many moments for you to start again. You can start again at every moment, whether you work or you don’t work, whether you are in a hurry or at leisure, it is the same. You always have an opportunity to start again. You may regret your lack of understanding, your forgetfulness, but what about this moment now?”

every moment is a moment to begin



“You may regret your lack of understanding, your forgetfulness, but what about this moment now?”

“You can start again at every moment, whether you work or you don’t work, whether you are in a hurry or at leisure, it is the same.”

Work and free time. Is work more distracting? “There is no difference between your working situation and your free time. We have problems when we work and when we don’t work; we still have to make decisions. Our problems are caused by attachment, aversion and ignorance and these arise no matter where we are.”

Wanting awareness. The last question of the book was Nina’s own problem from Chapter 7: regretting the lack of awareness, and wanting it. Can a person tell himself not to want? The last answer:

“When you understand that desire counteracts progress there will be conditions to stop wishing for results. Only intellectual understanding of the teachings, acquired by reading, considering and discussing can condition the arising of direct understanding, now or later on. There will be more patience when we remember that awareness and understanding do not belong to a self which can make them arise. Then, we can have the courage to begin again and again to find out more about the reality appearing at this moment.”

Chapter 12: Sayings from the journey

Acharn Sujin did not give long lectures on the journey. She asked questions and said short things, and Nina wrote them down. Here are twelve of her sayings, each with the place in the journey where it was said and what it was about. They make a short way back through the book.



1. "The Abhidhamma is not in the book". Said about the *Abhidhamma* (the higher teaching), the part of the *Tipiṭaka* (the Three Baskets) that describes every reality in detail. The description is in the book. The realities it describes, seeing, hearing, feeling, liking and disliking, are happening now, and that is where they have to be understood.

2. "Without patience one cannot attain enlightenment". Said about the verses of the *Dhammapada* (the Buddha's verses on the teaching) and the *Ovāda Pāṭimokkha* (the Exhortation to the Pāṭimokkha), where patience is named first. Nina writes: "We need great patience to develop understanding of all realities of our daily life."

3. "Do you like it to be tired?" Asked of Alan at the tombs of the kings. He did not like it, "and then it became clear that he had aversion." The question works for hunger, a broken shower, a late bus and a lost suitcase. It shows the *dosa* (aversion) behind the tiredness.

4. "What is the use of being impatient?" Said to Nina after the night when the luggage was lost. "Only right understanding can see that it is useless." Impatience does not bring the suitcase any faster, and it adds more *akusala* (unwholesome) to what has already been accumulated.

5. "Where is that being? It is only a story in your mind." Said about thinking of people. What is seen is colour; the person is thought of afterwards, from memory. "One can be alone at the moment of hearing sound, because there is no idea of anyone at that moment."

6. “Now you are preparing.” Said when Nina asked how to prepare for the death of someone dear. There is no preparation apart from understanding this moment. “We can only prepare ourselves for a great loss by understanding the present moment more clearly.”

7. “It is just this moment.” Said when Nina asked Acharn Sujin whether she was tired, because she was yawning. Tiredness, like everything else, is one conditioned reality appearing now.

8. “Why do you want it? Develop it.” Said to Alan when he asked why understanding does not arise often. Wanting *sati* (awareness) is *lobha* (attachment), and the idea of “somebody with sati” is the self in the way. “There is no self who could plan to have sati.”

9. “When there are conditions for awareness, you can’t prevent it from arising”. Said to explain that *sati* (awareness) is *anattā* (non-self). Nina writes: “When the conditions are right it must arise and we do not have to do anything to cause its arising.”

10. “Instead of wanting to develop satipaṭṭhāna, one should develop kusala, being considerate for others.” Said about people who want *satipaṭṭhāna* (direct awareness of realities) and forget everything else. “Kindness, considerateness, patience, all wholesome cetasikas are conditions for the arising of different levels of sati and pañña.”

11. “I always follow the stream”. Said in Istanbul, when Nina worried that a show would end late. Trying to change events brings aversion and takes away patience. “When we “follow the stream” we can understand that all events are only conditioned dhammas.”

12. “Develop it now, be aware now”. Nina writes that Acharn “often said” this, to people who thought that they could not attain enlightenment in this life and were ready to give up. “The understanding of this moment leads to the goal.” Seeing is now, hearing is now, and the only understanding that can be developed is understanding of what appears now.

What Nina took home. At the end of her introduction Nina thanks her teacher: “I am most grateful to Acharn for pointing out to us time and again that we should understand our life at this very moment. What she explained is completely in conformity with the Buddha’s teachings.” And at the end of her account of the journey she writes: “There are opportunities for the development of right understanding in any situation and this conditions more patience. Our journey with Dhamma was most beneficial.”

The pyramids are still standing in Egypt, and the Bosphorus still runs through Istanbul. The travellers’ seeing of them lasted a moment each time, and fell away. What was accumulated on the journey was not a store of sights but something that Nina says is “never lost”: the moments of listening, considering and understanding, “accumulated from one moment to the next moment so that they can arise again, later on.”

Quiz 6 (chapters 11 and 12)

The answers are at the back.

1. Which word did the friends avoid, because different people have different ideas about it?
 - (a) understanding
 - (b) meditation
 - (c) kindness
 - (d) patience
2. True or false: the friends said that a quiet place is needed in order to develop understanding.
3. When the idea of self does not appear, what is it like, according to the interview?
4. Complete the sentence: “You can start again at ...”
 - (a) the weekend.
 - (b) every moment, whether you work or you don’t work
 - (c) the end of the journey.
 - (d) the next full moon.
5. What are the six doorways?
 - (a) six doors of a temple
 - (b) the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind
 - (c) the six chapters of Nina’s book
 - (d) six kinds of feeling
6. “Would it not be better not to think, in order to know realities?” What was the answer?
7. True or false: the friends said that there is a predestined fate ruling over our life.
8. When is a person backsliding, according to the interview?
 - (a) when one travels too much
 - (b) when one is no longer interested in developing understanding
 - (c) when one is tired
 - (d) when one forgets a Pali word
9. Which saying did Acharn Sujin give when Nina asked whether she was tired, because she was yawning?
 - (a) Now you are preparing.
 - (b) It is just this moment.
 - (c) I always follow the stream
 - (d) Why do you want it?
10. What did Nina thank Acharn Sujin for at the end of her introduction?
11. What does Nina say is “never lost”?
 - (a) the luggage
 - (b) all the moments of studying and considering the Dhamma and all the other kinds of kusala
 - (c) the golden treasures
 - (d) the photographs of the journey

12. Acharn Sujin said: “The Abhidhamma is not in the book”. What does Nina say the *Abhidhamma* (the higher teaching) deals with?
13. To whom did Nina say Acharn Sujin often said “Develop it now, be aware now”?
- (a) to monks only
 - (b) to people who thought they could not attain enlightenment in this life and gave up
 - (c) to children
 - (d) to the guide in Turkey

The journey on one page

The teacher	Acharn Sujin, from Bangkok in Thailand
The writer	Nina van Gorkom, from Holland; her husband is Lodewijk
The friends	Gabi from Germany and Alan from England
The guide	Ms Tuna, in Turkey
The places	Egypt: the pyramids of Gizeh, the tombs of the Egyptian kings, museums, Cairo airport. Turkey: Istanbul and the Bosphorus
The book	<i>A Journey with Dhamma in Egypt and Turkey</i> by Nina van Gorkom, published by Zolag

The words.

Pali	English	What it means in the book
<i>dhamma</i>	reality	anything real that can be experienced now; with a capital letter, the Buddha's teaching
<i>citta</i>	consciousness	one moment of experiencing an object; only one at a time
<i>cetasika</i>	mental factor	arises with each <i>citta</i> (consciousness): feeling, remembrance, attachment, kindness and others
<i>nāma</i>	mind	what experiences something
<i>rūpa</i>	matter	what experiences nothing
<i>kusala</i>	wholesome	good: kindness, generosity, patience, understanding
<i>akusala</i>	unwholesome	bad: attachment, aversion, ignorance
<i>vipāka</i>	result	seeing, hearing and the other sense experiences, the results of past deeds
<i>sati</i>	awareness	non-forgetfulness of what is wholesome; at its highest level, direct awareness of <i>nāma</i> (mind) and <i>rūpa</i> (matter)
<i>paññā</i>	understanding	knowing realities as they are
<i>paññatti</i>	concept	an idea put together by thinking: person, tree, car, Lodewijk
<i>anattā</i>	non-self	nothing belongs to anyone and nothing obeys anyone

The lessons, in the book's words.

1. "everything is just "dhamma", a reality that is conditioned, in whatever situation one may be"
2. "at the moment of akusala citta there is impatience and at the moment of kusala citta there is patience"
3. "Do you like it to be tired?"
4. "Be patient, receive all kinds of vipākacittas that are conditioned by previous kamma."
5. "We should often consider that we see visible object, no husband or wife, friend or relative."

6. “Now you are preparing.”
7. “the perfections should be developed naturally, when the opportunity arises”
8. “Why do you want it? Develop it.”
9. “Instead of wanting to develop satipaṭṭhāna, one should develop kusala, being considerate for others.”
10. “I always follow the stream”
11. “We can use the word consciousness instead of soul.”
12. “A wise person can live with pleasure and with understanding.”
13. “You can start again at every moment”
14. “Develop it now, be aware now”

Word list

Every Pali word in this book, with the English used for it. The words are in the order of the English alphabet, ignoring the marks on the letters.

Pali	English
<i>Abhidhamma</i>	the higher teaching
<i>akusala</i>	unwholesome
<i>akusala cetasika</i>	unwholesome mental factor
<i>akusala citta</i>	unwholesome consciousness
<i>anattā</i>	non-self
<i>bhavaṅga-citta</i>	life-continuum consciousness
<i>Brahmā</i>	highest heavenly being
<i>cetasika</i>	mental factor
<i>citta</i>	consciousness
<i>Dhamma</i>	the teaching
<i>dhamma</i>	reality
<i>Dhammapada</i>	the Buddha's verses on the teaching
<i>dosa</i>	aversion
<i>Harita Jātaka</i>	the birth story of Harita
<i>Itivuttaka</i>	As It Was Said
<i>Jātaka</i>	a story of the Buddha's former births
<i>jhāna</i>	deep calm of mind
<i>kamma</i>	deed
<i>kusala</i>	wholesome
<i>kusala citta</i>	wholesome consciousness
<i>lobha</i>	attachment
<i>mettā</i>	loving-kindness
<i>moha</i>	ignorance
<i>nāma</i>	mind
<i>nekkhamma</i>	renunciation
<i>nibbāna</i>	the end of all troubles
<i>Ovāda Pāṭimokkha</i>	the Exhortation to the Pāṭimokkha
<i>paññā</i>	understanding

Pali	English
<i>paññatti</i>	concept
<i>paramattha dhamma</i>	ultimate reality
<i>pāramī</i>	perfection
<i>rūpa</i>	matter
<i>sacca</i>	truthfulness
<i>samādhi</i>	concentration
<i>samatha</i>	calm
<i>Saṅgha</i>	the order
<i>saññā</i>	remembrance
<i>sati</i>	awareness
<i>satipaṭṭhāna</i>	direct awareness of realities
<i>sīla</i>	morality
<i>sotāpanna</i>	stream-enterer
<i>Tipiṭaka</i>	the Three Baskets
<i>vipāka</i>	result
<i>vipākacitta</i>	result consciousness
<i>vipassanā</i>	insight
<i>vipassanā ñāṇa</i>	insight knowledge
<i>virati</i>	abstention
<i>viriya</i>	energy
<i>Visuddhimagga</i>	the Path of Purity

Where it comes from

This book follows *A Journey with Dhamma in Egypt and Turkey* by Nina van Gorkom, published by Zolag (www.zolag.co.uk) under a Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivs licence: the book “may be freely copied and distributed, but its contents must not be changed.” Nina’s book has an introduction and six chapters: Patience; Understanding the Present Moment; Clinging to Mindfulness; Conversations on Buddhism; An Interview on Buddhism; and Further Interviews between Gabi, Alan and Nina in Egypt. Chapters 1 and 2 of this book follow her introduction; Chapters 3 and 4 her first chapter; Chapters 5 and 6 her second; Chapters 7 and 8 her third; Chapter 9 her fourth; Chapters 10 and 11 her fifth and sixth. Chapter 12 gathers sayings from the whole book.

Where this book quotes a sentence in quotation marks, the words are Nina’s, or the words of Acharn Sujin, Gabi, Alan or Ms Tuna as Nina wrote them down, or the words of the ancient texts in the translations she uses. Nothing in quotation marks has been changed, with one exception: in the book’s quotation of *Dhammapada* (the Buddha’s verses on the teaching) verse 315 the word “without” is misprinted as “wihout”, and this book prints it correctly. The book’s spelling of Pali words is kept inside quotations (for example “bhavanga”, “Vipaakacittas”); outside quotations this book uses the usual spelling with the marks on the letters.

The ancient texts quoted in Nina’s book, and so in this one, are:

- The *Dhammapada* (the Buddha’s verses on the teaching), verses 183, 184 and 315.
- The *Ovāda Pāṭimokkha* (the Exhortation to the Pāṭimokkha), the verses in which the Buddhas of the past gave the heart of their teaching to the monks, where patience is named first.
- The *Itivuttaka* (As It Was Said), The Twos, Chapter II, § 2, on looking at *akusala* (unwholesome) as *akusala* (unwholesome).
- The *Visuddhimagga* (the Path of Purity) by Buddhaghosa, Chapter IX, on loving-kindness, the danger of *dosa* (aversion) and the benefit of patience; and the question of the order of *sīla* (morality), *samādhi* (concentration) and *paññā* (understanding).
- The *Harita Jātaka* (the birth story of Harita), number 431, on truthfulness.
- The story of Visākhā, the lay disciple foremost in ministering to the *Saṅgha* (the order), told in the commentaries.

Where the ancient texts and modern scholars differ, this book follows the ancient texts, as Nina’s book does. Nothing has been added to the teaching that is not in her book. A few things have been left out as unsuited to young readers; in the *Harita Jātaka* (the birth story of Harita), this book says only that the ascetic broke his good conduct.

Nina van Gorkom’s books, including this one, can be read free of charge on abhidhamma.org and at zolag.co.uk.

Answers

Quiz 1 (chapters 1 and 2)

1. (b) no matter where one is, on land, on water or in the air. “Right understanding can be developed no matter where one is, on land, on water or in the air.” The travellers talked about the Dhamma by the pyramids, on a boat and on the plane.
2. (b) a conditioned reality that can be experienced at this moment. “The phenomena that occur at this moment and that can be experienced through the senses and the mind can be called “dhammas”, conditioned realities.” With a capital letter, the *Dhamma* (the teaching) is “the Buddha’s teaching of all that is real”.
3. Eyesense and visible object. “Nobody can cause the arising of seeing, seeing has its own conditions for its arising. Without eyesense and visible object it could not arise.”
4. False. “Only one citta arises at a time and it is accompanied by several mental factors, cetasikas.” Seeing and hearing never happen in the same moment, however quickly they follow one another.
5. (b) the sound of the bell. Sound experiences nothing: “Physical phenomena or rūpa do not experience any object.” Hearing, liking and remembering all experience something, so they are *nāma* (mind).
6. “the Vinaya or Book of Discipline for the monks, the Suttanta or Discourses and the Abhidhamma which is an exposition of all realities in detail.”
7. (b) The Abhidhamma is not in the book. ““The Abhidhamma is not in the book”, as Acharn said.” Nina explains: “The Abhidhamma deals with whatever is experienced in daily life; it deals with what is pleasant or unpleasant, wholesome or unwholesome.”
8. (b) conventional truth, the world of concepts. “Conventional truth is the world of concepts such as person, tree or animal we can think of but which are not real in the ultimate sense. Ultimate realities, *nāma* and *rūpa*, are impermanent, they arise and fall away.”
9. “when we remember that unpleasant experiences through the senses are vipākacittas conditioned by our own kamma, not by another person, we shall be less inclined to blame others.” What is heard is the result of one’s own past *kamma* (deed).
10. 1. listening to the Dhamma; 2. intellectual understanding of what the Buddha taught; 3. direct understanding of the realities that appear. “Because of listening to the Dhamma, we acquire intellectual understanding of what the Buddha taught and then we gradually learn to verify in our life the truth of the phenomena that occur so that there can be direct understanding.”
11. True. Acharn “would emphasize that we should not think of ourselves, and that we become less selfish by paying more attention to the needs of others.” Nina calls it “a simple advice, but it is very basic.”
12. (b) ignorance, attachment and aversion. “Akusala cetasikas such as ignorance, attachment and aversion accompany akusala citta. Wholesome cetasikas such as kindness or understanding accompany kusala citta.”

Quiz 2 (chapters 3 and 4)

1. (b) patience. “patience is mentioned first, and this is very appropriate.” In the *Dhammapada* (the Buddha’s verses on the teaching) the same teaching is given, but the order is different.

2. “Without patience one cannot attain enlightenment”. Nina adds: “We need great patience to develop understanding of all realities of our daily life.”
3. False. “Patience should be developed not only when the object is unpleasant but also when it is pleasant. When a pleasant object presents itself, usually lobha arises and in that case there is no patience.”
4. (b) impatience. “at the moment of akusala citta there is impatience and at the moment of kusala citta there is patience.” Patience is not something a person owns; it is there whenever the *citta* (consciousness) is *kusala* (wholesome).
5. “Awareness is non-forgetfulness of what is wholesome, kusala.” Awareness of the level of *satipaṭṭhāna* (direct awareness of realities) “is directly aware of mental phenomena, *nāma*, and physical phenomena, *rūpa*, as they appear one at a time through one of the six doors.”
6. (b) she understood the ugliness of aversion and said nothing about the crying. “When someone’s baby was crying she understood the ugliness of aversion and that was a condition for kusala citta: she would not say anything about the baby’s crying.” Acharn said: “This shows progress in the development of right understanding”.
7. (b) Do you like it to be tired?. “Acharn asked him, “Do you like it to be tired?” Alan answered that he did not like it and then it became clear that he had aversion.”
8. False. “We use tiredness as an excuse not to develop kusala at such a moment but, Acharn said, it is no excuse.”
9. “When the luggage did not come I was so impatient, I lifted my hands. That was conditioned by impatience. There was no awareness.”
10. (a) if you do not understand the disadvantage of akusala you will have more akusala.. “Nothing can hinder paññā. However, if you do not understand the disadvantage of akusala you will have more akusala. People desire great paññā, but is there paññā that sees the uselessness of akusala at this moment?”
11. “Do not think of it, let it go. Everything just arises because of conditions. It is of no use to try to control your body. Awareness is aware naturally, this is the way. Develop understanding at any time, also when you cannot control your stomach.” Alan came along on the plane and was not sick any more.
12. (b) It is my time to help. “You can think: ‘It is my time to help’, and then kusala citta can arise. Everything can be changed by right understanding.”

Quiz 3 (chapters 5 and 6)

1. (b) it remembers what is seen, and cittas think of it for a long time. “The cetasika saññā, remembrance or perception, remembers what is seen and cittas think of it for a long time.” The seeing lasts a moment; the thinking about it lasts much longer.
2. “It is only a story in your mind. Previous experiences condition the thought of a being.” What is seen is colour; “there is nobody in the visible object.”
3. (b) Now you are preparing.. “When I said that we have to be prepared, she said: “Now you are preparing.”” Nina writes: “We can only prepare ourselves for a great loss by understanding the present moment more clearly.”

4. False. "You do not have to try to prevent thinking. When thinking thinks a great deal, it is time to understand thinking."
5. (b) the darkness in between the acts, when the curtain is drawn. "The cittas experiencing the sense objects are the actors and the bhavanga-cittas in between processes are like the darkness in between the acts, when the curtain is drawn."
6. "Praise is called an axe that falls from heaven. It wounds if one does not know how to receive it." Acharn said: "We should learn to receive both blame and praise."
7. "generosity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, energy, patience, truthfulness, determination, loving-kindness and equanimity."
8. (b) to extend mettā to different people at any time, and not to particular people. "My goal is not infinite mettā, but to extend mettā to different people at any time, and not to particular people."
9. True. Nina writes: "It should not disturb us that we cannot attain enlightenment soon, that it takes aeons. Gabi said: "Thinking of aeons will make patience grow.""
10. (c) Alan. Alan said: "My family and friends are not interested at all, so one has to go against the stream. It takes quite an effort to turn away from what most people follow and to go your own way."
11. A lay disciple at the Buddha's time. "At the age of seven she became a sotāpanna, after she heard the Buddha preach. Later on she married and she had ten sons and ten daughters." She was "foremost in ministering to the Sangha". "She understood her clinging as a conditioned reality, not self."
12. (b) because there is no surer foundation than truthful speech, and one who forsakes the truth cannot attain Buddhahood. "in this world there is no surer foundation than truthful speech. Someone who forsakes the truth cannot attain Buddhahood, even if he sits in the sacred enclosure of the Bodhi Tree. Hence I should only speak the truth."

Quiz 4 (chapters 7 and 8)

1. (b) Why do you want it? Develop it.. "Why do you want it? Develop it." Nina calls this "a short but pointed reminder; it helped us to know our clinging to understanding."
2. False. "We want to be "somebody with sati", but it is more beneficial to remember that we are "nobody". That is in accordance with the truth. There is no self who could plan to have sati."
3. "If you don't wish but you develop it, it is more beneficial." And when Nina said she could not help wishing: "If you understand that wishing is of no use, there is a condition for awareness."
4. (a) a person.. "The Buddha taught ultimate realities, paramatṭha dhammas, so that one can understand the meaning of no being, no person, no self. It is citta which knows an object, not a person."
5. (b) you can't prevent it from arising. "When there are conditions for awareness, you can't prevent it from arising". Nina explains: "When the conditions are right it must arise and we do not have to do anything to cause its arising."
6. False. Buddhaghosa classified the levels of each; "There is no rule with regard to a specific order of the development of the different types of kusala."
7. "One level of paññā is seeing the disadvantage of akusala, another level of paññā is studying and considering the Dhamma, and another level again is paññā developed in satipaṭṭhāna."
8. (b) a bud which will appear on a tree. "Paññā is like a bud which will appear on a tree. One does not know where and when it will appear. We should not care when it will appear; what about the

understanding of this moment?”

9. (b) looking at a painting. “When we look at somebody it is exactly the same as looking at a painting, Acharn said.” What is seen is colour; the person is thought of afterwards.
10. “Nobody can change the conditions for each different colour. You cannot change the colour of Gabi’s eyes. Colour is just a kind of rūpa which can be seen through the eyes.” Colours do not have to be named; they appear because of conditions, and nobody can change them.
11. (b) I always follow the stream. “She said: “I always follow the stream”.” Nina writes: “When we try to change events we are bound to have aversion and we have no patience.”
12. “Evenso one should guard oneself; let not a moment slip.” Nina writes: “We should “guard ourselves”, but without any idea of “self”.” The guard is *sati* (awareness), not a person.

Quiz 5 (chapters 9 and 10)

1. (b) on a boat on the Bosphorus. “Acharn Sujin explained about Buddhism to our guide in Turkey, Ms. Tuna, while we were having a tour on the Bosphorus river.”
2. “When one is sleeping where is the soul?” Ms Tuna did not know. Acharn went on to ask whether it is the soul which sees and the soul which hears.
3. (b) seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking. “Seeing is one function, hearing is another function. Besides these, there are the functions of smelling, tasting, touching and thinking. I believe that the soul sleeps too.”
4. (b) consciousness, because soul implies something permanent. “We can use the word consciousness instead of soul. The word soul can give rise to misunderstandings, it is not precise enough. If we use the word soul it implies something permanent. Consciousness experiences one object at a time and it is not permanent; it changes all the time.”
5. False. “Seeing is seeing for everyone, it does not belong to any race or nationality. Also animals see. Seeing is the same no matter what you call it.”
6. Cooking. “In order to be a good person you have to develop wholesomeness, you have to train yourself. Just as when you want to be skillful in cooking you have to train yourself so that one day you will be a good cook.”
7. (b) attachment, aversion and ignorance. “Three basic defilements are roots for unwholesome states of mind, namely: attachment, anger or aversion, and ignorance.” In Pali: *lobha* (attachment), *dosa* (aversion), *moha* (ignorance).
8. False. “Anger is always unwholesome, no matter what the cause is. It harms yourself and others. This does not mean that you cannot be firm with others when it is necessary for people’s benefit, but hatred and anger are always unwholesome.”
9. “Unselfish love is characterised by considering the welfare of others. Attachment to other people is for the sake of one’s own pleasant feeling.”
10. (b) pleasure; understanding. “We can enjoy all the pleasant things but we should at the same time develop more understanding of the realities of our life. ... A wise person can live with pleasure and with understanding.”
11. (b) hardness. “In reality, it is hardness which is experienced through the bodysense, not a cup, plate or chair. When hardness is experienced we know through memory that there is a cup, plate or chair”.

12. “Through bodysense the realities of hardness, softness, heat, cold, motion or pressure can be experienced. They are true for everybody, no matter how we name them.”
13. True. “Right understanding can eliminate ignorance and wrong view. Through right understanding there will be less clinging, and that means more freedom.”

Quiz 6 (chapters 11 and 12)

1. (b) meditation. “I avoid using the word meditation because different people have different ideas about it. Our goal should be the development of right understanding of the realities which appear now.”
2. False. “Not at all, because the purpose of the Buddha’s teachings is to understand the realities which arise naturally, in daily life.” “Sound is a reality, no matter where you are, whether it is quiet or whether there is a lot of noise.”
3. “When it does not appear there is still the latent tendency of wrong view. This is like a virus which is latent in the body but which can become active at any time.”
4. (b) every moment, whether you work or you don’t work. “You can start again at every moment, whether you work or you don’t work, whether you are in a hurry or at leisure, it is the same. You always have an opportunity to start again.”
5. (b) the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind. Realities “appear only one at a time through one of the six doorways”: the five senses and the mind-door.
6. “No. We should understand thinking as thinking, seeing as seeing, feeling as feeling; they are different realities.”
7. False. “There is no predestined fate ruling over our life. However, the different moments of our life are conditioned by the past and by the present.”
8. (b) when one is no longer interested in developing understanding. “When one is no longer interested in developing understanding.” And: “Even if it is difficult to develop understanding there are so many moments for you to start again.”
9. (b) It is just this moment.. “Sometimes she was yawning and when I asked her whether she was tired she answered: ”It is just this moment.””
10. “I am most grateful to Acharn for pointing out to us time and again that we should understand our life at this very moment. What she explained is completely in conformity with the Buddha’s teachings.”
11. (b) all the moments of studying and considering the Dhamma and all the other kinds of kusala. “All the moments of studying and considering the Dhamma and all the other kinds of kusala are never lost, they are accumulated from one moment to the next moment so that they can arise again, later on.”
12. “The Abhidhamma deals with whatever is experienced in daily life; it deals with what is pleasant or unpleasant, wholesome or unwholesome.”
13. (b) to people who thought they could not attain enlightenment in this life and gave up. “Some people become discouraged when they think that they cannot attain enlightenment in this life, and then they give up the development of satipaṭṭhāna. ... The understanding of this moment leads to the goal. “Develop it now, be aware now”, Acharn often said.”