

Acquiring a Mind Like Pure Gold



18

Light of Nilambe

Upul Nishantha Gamage

Pure gold obtained by removing any contaminant metals is flexible, valuable, smooth, durable, and sparkling. We need a mind like pure gold to see the truth. Our mind is contaminated with the wrong thoughts known as hindrances. A clever meditator can recognise these contaminants, which are obstacles for everything a person does. These hindrances are actions performed by us. The prime task in meditation is to identify these hindrances and let go of them. As a result, one can acquire a mind, which is sparkling, luminous, shiny, smooth and malleable, like pure gold.

The pure mind devoid of hindrances understands how things are truly happening. The pure mind creates a person with wisdom, who cannot be deceived by life and death. Such a person can live freely without being deceived by anything or anybody. Meditation is the only method which helps us to acquire a mind like pure gold.



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Acquiring a Mind Like Pure Gold

Talk given by

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1. Bodily needs and demands

Dear Dhamma Friends, meditation makes the mind and the body calm. Meditation cools down the mind and the body immensely. Meditation makes a person inwardly calm, cool, peaceful and quiet. All of us may have experienced all this to some extent. Though these results of meditation are so exquisite, valuable and delightful, it is not that easy to meditate, because when a person sits for meditation, s/he has to face diverse difficulties and inconveniences. On the one hand, the body does not allow us to meditate freely with ease. Just think about how much your body has been bothering you during this short meditation sitting. There were aches and pains in the body. Also, you experienced numbness in the body caused by reduced blood flow. On the other hand, there were many requests in respect of the different needs of the body; wanting to drink some water, to use the toilet and so on.

When a person meditates, s/he has to face all these demands, agitations and warnings of the body. These things are not caused by the world. We also encounter some obstacles posed by the world. For instance, the world may say that there is no point in meditation. As a result, you may get discouraged and become hesitant to meditate. Such influences may crop up

from the world. However, it is easy to face these obstacles posed by the world. We can also ignore these obstacles. However, when we meditate, we are compelled to face the inconveniences caused by the body. We cannot ignore these inconveniences. We accept that meditation is so important. We read books written on meditation. We write books on meditation. We listen to talks about meditation. We talk about meditation. Regardless of all this, we do not incline to meditate, because we find it difficult and inconvenient to meditate.

2. Developing patience

Meditation requires a lot of patience. It is difficult to meditate in a state of agitation. It is also difficult to meditate if we expect instant results. Therefore, *Dear Dhamma Friends*, we need a lot of patience for meditation. The more we meditate the more we become patient. Someone's ability to meditate depends on the level of patience developed by him/her. A mutual relationship exists between meditation and patience. Therefore, if you are new to meditation, first start meditating for a short while. There is no competition. First sit for some time and see whether it is possible to be in that posture for the short time period chosen by you. Within the limits of your ability, try your

best to meditate. Once you realize that it is possible to meditate for that time period, then you can try to meditate for a little longer.

3. The body on the mind

When we meditate, we experience all kinds of problems; aches and pains in the body, thirst, hunger, and so on. During meditation, these problems seem endless. However, all these problems are temporary. We don't need to take them seriously. When we meditate for some time, we feel that these problems are so big. There are reasons for feeling that way. **Our mind keeps our body on its head. Therefore, everything about our body is a burden for our mind.**

Actually, the body is not something to be kept on the mind. The body can stand on its own two feet. However, a person suffers a lot by keeping the body, which is able to stand on its own two feet, on his/her head and carrying it, like carrying a person who is able to walk. That is a heavy burden. If you keep the body on the floor it will walk. The body will go wherever it wants to go. We can accompany the body. However, **the mind is not used to releasing the body like that.** We are not used to doing that. We cling onto the body. **We have made the body**

our life and our world. We think that there is no life and world beyond our body. **You face more problems when you cling onto your own body than to someone else's body.** As a result, you have to suffer.

4. Haunting fear

Sometimes, what we do during the short time of meditating is very amusing on the one hand and pathetic on the other hand. We are so scared of being thirsty, falling sick, getting messy hair and so on. There is no real thirst but we are scared about it. Therefore, we bring a bottle of water, medicine etc. into the meditation hall. We bring salon appliances. We bring a beauty salon, a snack bar and a pharmacy into the meditation hall. How do you mediate with all these things? There is no problem with any of this, but our fear is the problem. We are so scared because we have become a servant of our body. As our body is the boss, we are scared. Therefore, we need to be ready to fulfil the needs of the body as soon as it requests. Even before the body requests something, we are ready to fulfil those requests, because we are scared of punishment. Because of this fear, we have been maintaining and serving the body throughout saṃsāra or throughout our life. This is how we spend our life.

Performing duties for the body is one thing. Working like a slave for the body is something else. A servant can never get released. A servant has no freedom. However, a person who fulfils his/her duties can be free afterwards. **Meditation makes you free from slavery. Don't be a slave of anybody, even of your own body.** Being a slave of another person is something obvious. Sometimes, agreements are signed before becoming a slave. However, **becoming a slave of your own body is not obvious.** Though not obvious, it is difficult to escape when you become a slave of your own body because such slavery is subtle and strong.

You need to get used to the body. You need to understand the body, its value and its limits. What does my body need from me? Understand the responsibilities and duties that you need to fulfil. Fulfilling responsibilities and duties is one thing. Serving like a slave is something else. A slave has no free time, no rest, no freedom and no independent life. A slave has to live in fear of things that may possibly happen to the body, though nothing has happened to the body yet. Even if something happens, there is no big issue. However, **fear haunts the mind of a slave of the body:** “Am I going to feel hungry? Am I going

to feel thirsty? Am I going to fall sick? Am I going to die? Am I going to get old? Are my teeth going to fall out? Is my hair going to turn grey? Am I going to go bald?" There is no end to these thoughts. We pleadingly invite in unending and unlimited worries and fears. We need to free ourselves from these things. Otherwise, it is impossible to continue with meditation. We have to meditate while being stuck inside our body. Therefore, practise. Once you sit your body down, it will stay like that. See how long your body can stay seated. Suppose it is 20 minutes. Let your body stay seated for 20 minutes. You need to sit your body in a posture that is comfortable/suitable for sitting for 20 minutes. Then, don't ask the body whether it is thirsty or hungry or needs to use the toilet or not. Don't question the body. The body makes unnecessary requests when you question it. As meditation is a methodical and a gentle practice, there is no need to go to extremes.

5. Losing to the body

Dear Dhamma Friends, this is one aspect. The body is one among many things to be conquered. We need to conquer the body. We have lost to the body. We have lost to each and every hunger pang that arises. We have lost to each and every moment of thirst that arises. We have lost not only to the

hunger and thirst that we actually experience, but also to those that we anticipate. How many types of hunger do we anticipate? If you count, you can see that there are endless types of hunger. As we don't know when we are going to die, and we don't even want to think about it, there are endless types of hunger. We look for solutions for the limitless hunger, limitless thirst and limitless illnesses that we anticipate. If we can be free from all of them, we can experience ease and peace beyond all measure at that moment. We are free not by starving the body as we have not yet become hungry for lunch or breakfast or tomorrow's breakfast or tomorrow's evening tea. We are free not from an existing problem but from problems that we anticipate. We keep these problems in and on our head. All these things are heavy. If a person can put aside anticipated problems, s/he will experience an immense peace. "Am I hungry now?" If the answer is 'no,' that is all. What a relief that is. It is not necessary to think whether we are going to be hungry tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. We cannot solve that problem. If we try to solve that problem, then the whole world will have to face a food crisis, which can never be solved. This is a very simple state of ease, not a state of ease to be acquired with difficulty.

Unnecessary thoughts have messed up your head. Just make the messy head clear. Then your head feels ease and freedom. When a person experiences ease and freedom for the first time in life as his/her own experience, s/he becomes overwhelmingly happy. Such happiness cannot be compared with the happiness caused by a full stomach. A person who is hungry feels happy after making his/her stomach full. A person who is thirsty feels happy after drinking something. However, such happiness is not comparable with the freedom felt by a person as a result of letting go of confusion in the head caused by thoughts associated with potential hunger and thirst to be encountered later. **This is not about living with hunger, but about living with freedom.**

6. Mastering the body

You need to master your own body. Don't let the body defeat you. Don't punish the body either. Letting the body defeat you and punishing the body are two extremes. Nobody has tamed/conquered the body by punishing it. Nobody has won by being hungry. Nobody has attained enlightenment by keeping the stomach empty. That is one extreme.

Punishing the body is one extreme known as self-mortification (*attakilamathānuयोग*). Pandering to all the whims/demands of the body is another extreme known as self-indulgence (*kāmasukhallikānuयोग*). **Conquer the body without going to either of these two extremes.** A person can experience enormous happiness and freedom by mastering the body. We have deprived ourselves of such happiness. Meditation gives back the physical ease and pleasure that we have lost as a result of giving in to the trivial requests of the body as a huge demand. We need patience to conquer our body.

7. Conquering the mind

Similarly, conquer/master the mind too. **It is more difficult to conquer/master the mind than the body, because the mind uses all the tactics known to us to defeat us.** Therefore, we keep on fighting every day. **We do not fight with the mind because it never fights face to face with a person.** The mind directs us to fight with others. Just see, if you have ever fought with outsiders, your mind enticed you into all those fights; quarrelling, scolding, hitting, getting angry, and so on. It is the mind that always says that we should fight with so-and-so:

neighbours, parents, children, spouse, in-laws, boss, servants, workers, and so on.

We accept what our mind says as the absolute truth, as if there is no other truth. Therefore, a person sees the whole world their enemy. Your own mind makes the whole world your enemy. The Mind shows these enemies to us or we see the whole world as enemies through the mind. Those who we see as enemies are not the real enemies. **None of them are your enemies.** Children are not the enemies of parents. Parents are not the enemies of children. A mother-in-law and a father-in-law are not the enemies of a daughter-in-law or a son-in-law. A husband is not an enemy of a wife. Friends and neighbours are not enemies of each other. However, we don't directly look at them. **We don't see a clear picture of them because we look at them through our mind. The mind stays between the world and us. We see them through the mind like seeing the world through a prism, which distorts the world. Therefore, we don't have a direct or sincere experience about anything/anybody. A distorted world is seen.** The mind says: "We need to fight." Therefore, we fight throughout life, from birth till death. We fight at present. We fought yesterday. We'll fight tomorrow. This is life. The mind creates new

fighters, new opponents, and enemies for us. We willingly start fighting with them. Truly, there is no fight here. There are no enemies here, like those we come across when playing computer games. A person who is addicted to computer games keeps on fighting with an imaginary opponent. Just look at those who are addicted to computer games. They feel the stress and fear associated with a real war. That stress and fear is a lie. Fighting with another is an even bigger lie than that. Our mind has cheated us. Not only that, our mind has put us in the wrong. Therefore, a person does not look at his/her mind. There is no time to do that anyway, because a person has to engage in unending fights in life.

The real fight is with the mind. We have to win the battle of the mind. As we have lost to the mind, we fight with the world. We fight to cover the inner defeat with an outer victory. Don't let your mind entice you into any fight. There are challenges in life. There are challenges in life that we need to face and win. However, there are no enemies. **Don't make challenges your enemies.** So, win the battle of the mind.

8. Pure gold vs alloys

Gold is a valuable metal in the world. In the past, it was the most valuable metal. At present, though there are more valuable metals than gold, it is so valuable for ordinary people like us. According to the Dhamma, no matter how valuable gold is, if it becomes adulterated, its value is lost. Poor quality gold or low karat gold is not as suitable as good quality gold for making jewellery, because the former is less shiny, less durable and less flexible than the latter. When gold is adulterated with metals such as iron, white lead, black lead, copper and silver, it is no longer pure gold. These alloys do not have the shine, durability, smoothness and flexibility of pure gold. Therefore, these alloys need to be purified by a mechanical process and a chemical process requiring melting, filtering, and mixing with some chemicals. A clever goldsmith can do that. Afterwards, the gold regains its shine, flexibility, smoothness and value.

9. Pure mind vs adulterated mind

The Dhamma presents this simile and compares the mind to gold. Our mind is like pure gold. **The human mind is like pure gold. It shines and glitters. It is smooth. It can do unlimited things. It has unlimited uses. It is so valuable.** However, our

mind is not pure, because it is adulterated like an alloy. An adulterated mind is not capable of doing things that a pure mind can. A contaminated mind shatters easily, gets discoloured and dark, is rough, and easily gets decayed. Therefore, the mind needs to be purified. Like the five types of metals that adulterate gold, the Dhamma presents 5 ways of contaminating the mind.

These five contaminants are known as the five hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇāni*). Though we often talk, hear, think about and explore these five hindrances, we don't let go of them. The luminous nature of the mind is covered by them. **Only a clever meditator can recognize these hindrances, just as a clever goldsmith can differentiate pure gold from alloys.** We need to develop such cleverness. It is difficult to walk a long way with the mind without acquiring such cleverness. It is not possible to develop the mind because it is adulterated. Therefore, we need to get rid of contaminants. We know the five hindrances by heart, starting from sensory desire (*kāmacchanda*) and ending with doubt (*vicikicchā*).

Though five names are given in books for the five hindrances, these five are not things, because we cannot see them. We cannot see 'sensory desire' anywhere. We cannot see

something called 'doubt'. These names can only be seen in books, nowhere else. **These five hindrances function in a human mind. Therefore, if you want to recognize the five hindrances, you need to recognize the mind. When we look at the mind, first we see the five hindrances, because the mind is covered with them.** When we look at something, we first see its outer cover/s. For instance, when we look at a mango, we first see its outer cover or peel, with a book we first see its cover, and with milk powder we first see the outer package. Similarly, we first see the five hindrances, because the mind is covered with them.

10. The worst obstacles in life

You need to recognize these five hindrances because they are obstacles for everything you do. There are certain things that obstruct attaining Enlightenment but help our day-to-day life. However, the five hindrances are obstacles for everything we do; retaining and comprehending information, doing a job, falling asleep, waking up, maintaining health, and so on. Therefore, recognize the five hindrances, which are not objects or things but actions. Sensory desire is not an object. Don't search for an object called sensory desire. **Sensory desire is an act that we perform. Understand clearly that the five**

hindrances are actions. Who performs these five actions? A person himself/herself performs these five actions. **Sensory desire refers to thinking greedily about any physical pleasure we have felt, in the past, are now feeling or would like to feel in the future.** So, sensory desire is associated with the past, the present and the future; physical pleasure felt, being felt and to be felt.

There are five ways of feeling physical pleasure, i.e. through the five senses of sight, sound, smell, taste and physical touch/feeling. Similarly, we experience suffering through these five senses. Just put aside suffering. We can experience physical pleasure through other ways too, but we don't know how. Therefore, we think that these five senses are the only means of pleasure. So we keep on seeing, hearing, smelling, eating and drinking, and touching/feeling. We did all that in the past. Even if we don't experience any pleasure in the present, we keep on thinking about the pleasure experienced in the past. For instance, **when we remember the things that we have seen, eaten and so on, we enter a dream world or rather a shadow world.** So we again experience pleasure while thinking about the past. This is one action of sensory pleasure. Therefore, we think greedily about the pleasure experienced in the past. This

action of thinking greedily is called sensory desire. Similarly, we plan ahead: What are we going to eat for dinner? What are we going to cook? Are we going to cook something tasty? Which restaurant are we going to go to for dinner? Which film or drama are we going to watch tonight? In this manner, we plan greedily about the pleasures to be felt in the future.

11. Five by three

All these are actions of sensory desire, not something present in a certain type of food or on a tongue. There is no sensory desire in a piece of chocolate, a tongue, a teledrama or an eye. However, **the mind combines the eye and the teledrama, and creates sensory desire.** We keep thinking about pleasures felt in the past, expected to be felt in the future and being felt in the present through the five senses. We keep thinking greedily about these 15 types of pleasures. Our thoughts are rarely associated with things beyond these 15 types of pleasures.

12. Paying debts, interest and compound interest

We pay a big debt, though we don't realize it. We pay debts and also interest on the debt with regard to greediness. We also pay compound interest on the interest. If we take out a

loan once in life, we have to repay it throughout our life. But we repay a debt in every moment that we remember pleasures felt in the past, being felt and to be felt. Therefore, sensory desire is compared to taking out a loan. We have to pay off interest monthly, quarterly and yearly on the loan. If we remember daily, we have to pay off interest daily. If we remember every minute, we have to pay off every minute. See clearly. When we remember a tasty food that we had in the past, the present pays off the debts. **The present is a debtor of the pleasures felt in the past.** Therefore, **we pay off debts using the present time.** We spend time on paying debts while thinking about the pleasures experienced in the past. We waste the present moment in vain. While paying off debts associated with the past, we create more debts associated with the future. We waste time by thinking of the pleasures to be experienced in the future. We need energy for thinking. We pay off debts using our energy. There is no end to the repaying.

Therefore, **let go of sensory desire.** This is not about letting go of something, but about letting go of greedy thoughts about pleasures. We don't have to let go of eating, but the greedy thoughts associated with eating. We don't need to let go of the present, the past or the future, but the present action.

Suppose a person who had been deep in debt throughout his/her life without being able to pay it off was completely relieved of that debt. The Dhamma says that letting go of sensory desire makes us experience enormous freedom and ease like a person who is relieved of debt.

13. Incurable illnesses with a remedy

Ill-will (*vyāpāda*), the second hindrance, is also not a thing but an action. On the one hand, **ill-will is like the mirror image of sensory desire**. Ill-will and sensory desire are like twin brothers/sisters. Ill-will refers to all kinds of thoughts related to feelings of hostility and resentment associated with suffering experienced in the past, suffering caused by fear of experiencing suffering in the future and physical suffering experienced in the present. Ill-will refers to being resentful of the suffering we experience. Suppose your body aches. As a result, your mind gets angry. When you experience a little hunger, your mind gets angry. When you sweat, your mind gets angry. **Ill-will refers to being resentful of the physical suffering experienced by us**. We like so much to be quiet. However, we find it difficult to be quiet because there are vehicles moving, people coughing, doors being opened and closed, loudspeakers and radios being played, and so on. How is it possible to be

quiet? Therefore, we get angry over these noises. Ill-will is an action, not a thing. Who performs this action? We do. Therefore, let go of ill-will. This moment is not to be resentful, to have conflicts or to be angry. Let go of resentments. Use this present moment to be calm and peaceful. Recognize ill-will and let it go. Overcome thoughts associated with ill-will.

Ill-will is compared to being sick or to an aggravating illness. Just see how the arising of anger makes the whole body sick. We experience difficulties when we fall sick. A toothache causes many difficulties. It is the same with headaches, fever, stomach-aches etc. These difficulties are restricted to a particular illness. However, a person who is angry experiences difficulties related not just to one illness but to so many illnesses, like a whole ward or-hospital. A whole ward can be seen in an angry person. A whole hospital can be seen in an angry person. So, **ill-will is an illness that we afflict ourselves with.** Don't get afflicted with that illness. **There is no medicine for that illness, other than letting go of ill-will.**

There is no medicine for anger. Let go of being angry. Just accept the difficulties. Life is not about ease. There are difficulties in life. The world is not merely about quietness, because there are noises. Accept these two sides. A mind that

accepts these two sides doesn't get angry and resentful. Just accept the past. If you experienced difficulties in the past, just accept them. What can we do about difficulties experienced in the past? When you remember such difficulties, just accept them. **Don't clash with the incidents that happened and those who troubled you in the past. Don't suffer in the present by making plans to punish them. Don't project future enemies and anticipate possible troubles.** The present moment is not for these two activities, but for letting go. Let go of ill-will.

Mistake (*dosha*) is another word used to refer to ill-will. According to ayurvedic medicine (traditional medicine), a person falls sick as a result of an imbalance of *dosha*. Anger is indeed an illness. Look at anger as an illness. Look at ill-will as an illness, not as a characteristic of health, power and personality. Look at ill-will as a characteristic of a weakness, of being a patient and of becoming ill, and let it go. We are responsible for letting go of ill-will. We are responsible for letting go of anger, not for keeping anger.

14. Creating our own prison

Sleepiness or laziness or sluggishness or sloth-torpor, the 3rd hindrance, is also not a thing but an action. As many nouns are used, we think that there may be a thing called sleepiness or laziness or sloth-torpor. We think lazily; I cannot do it, I cannot do it today, and so on. There is no difference whether we think: “I cannot do it,” or “I cannot do it today,” as both the thoughts are associated with sloth-torpor. We need a transformation in the way we think. We ought to think: “I can do it,” or “I can do it now,” instead of thinking the other way round. At the moment we think that we can do something or we are able to do something, we feel elated, blossomed and awakened. Laziness arises with the thought: “I cannot do it or I am unable to do it.”

Sloth-torpor is compared to a prisoner who is inside the prison called laziness, sluggishness and sleepiness. **We are stuck inside a prison created by us.** We don't know when we are going to be released. Nobody comes to release us from the prison. Who is going to come? Nobody; no god, no Brahman, no friend and no teacher comes because none of them has created this prison for us. **We are stuck inside our own thoughts, contemplations, and wrong attitudes.** As a result, we feel: “I

cannot, I am unable.” **Such thoughts make us feel lazy.** Therefore, we tend to postpone our meditation; maybe until the next full-moon day. When a person lets go of sloth-torpor, s/he feels the freedom felt by a prisoner who gets rereleased after being imprisoned for so long.

See how simple, practical and beautiful these similes are. We need to let go of these hindrances. We have to let go of the way we think. Let go of stress. Let go of doing things in agitation. Nothing in life can be done in agitation. We make mistakes when we do things in agitation; we may have to re-do, re-correct, erase, and so on. It is not possible to do things when we are in agitation and stress. It is also not possible to do things when you are hesitant.

15. Be realistic in reasoning things out

Dear Dhamma Friends, give some rest to the mind that reasons. Using logical reasoning is a good weapon and an instrument. However, we have stranded ourselves by improperly using this instrument. Therefore, use logic correctly. A beautiful example is given in Apanaka Jathaka (Stories of Buddha's previous births) in this regard. The story unfolds: A group of people travels on business in carts through a desert. As it takes a long

time, enough water and food need to be carried. As they are going on business, carrying water and food add considerably to the total load. They will have to die if they do not take enough water and food with them.

They stopped at a place to rest. A man coming from the opposite direction enquired where they were heading towards and what they were carrying in their carts. When the visitor got to know that they were taking water with them, he said: “Why do you take water? I am coming from a place where there are nice ponds. There is enough water for you to bathe and drink. What is the point in carrying water? You are carrying water in vain.” Having heard the visitor, some carters threw the water away thinking of relieving the animals of the weight. However, there was no water at that place. It was a lie, a trap and a robbery. This is called blind faith. They unthinkingly believed what they were told.

The Bodhisattva (The One who was destined to be the Buddha) was also told these things. Having heard what the visitor said, the other carters wanted to throw the water away. The Bodhisattva said: “Wait a minute. Do you feel any coolness in the wind blowing from the direction where the ponds are expected to be?” Then, the carters said: “No, we don’t feel any.

The wind is as dry and harsh as the winds coming from the other directions.” The Bodhisattva further said: “Look at those who are coming from that direction. Do they look like those who have taken baths? Do they look fresh?” The carters said: “No, they don’t seem so.” The Bodhisattva said: “Have you ever heard of there being ponds at those places?” The answer was: “No, we have not heard such a thing.” The Bodhisattva said: “If that is so, don’t throw away the water.” According to the story, only the lives of the carters who were with the Bodhisattva were saved.

When we reason out in this manner, it is obvious that there is no basis for the logic presented by that visitor. Apanaka Jathaka shows us how to reason things out. Be realistic in reasoning. Logic is an instrument. Someone can use this instrument in a manner that cuts him/herself. Such an instrument is useless. Logic can harm a person. Logic is not about suspecting everything. Let go of suspicion.

It is alright to investigate/enquire about/be wary of a doctor before taking medicine. It is alright to investigate a doctor’s reputation before deciding whether to consult him/her or not. We first enquire about the doctor. We try to find out whether the patients of that particular doctor have recovered. When

you use reason in this manner, you can see that there are patients who have recovered. Then, trust develops. Trust in the doctor arose based on reasoning, not on experience. That reasoning had a basis. Afterwards, let go of reasoning. Let go of suspicion. Don't reveal your illness while being suspicious about the doctor. Don't seek advice while suspecting the doctor. Don't take medicine while suspecting the doctor. Suspicion does not let you take the medicine. Suspicion does not let you follow the advice. Suspicion never lets you recover. Suspicion wants you to be ill all the time. Therefore, first enquire about and go to the doctor without suspecting him/her.

We use a map or geographic information system (GIS) to go to an unknown place. We need to use an accepted method, whether it is a map or GIS. We don't consider a sheet of paper with some lines drawn on it by somebody a map. We accept an atlas prepared by an expert in the field. When we look for an atlas, we need to first find out whether the publishers have produced it for the first time, whether there are travellers who were able to reach the destinations based on the information given in that atlas, and so on. Afterwards, once you develop some trust in that atlas, don't suspect it anymore. If you do, you won't be able to reach the destination. **You need to**

enquire and reason before referring to the atlas. Afterwards, if you are convinced about its accuracy, if you know that this atlas has been useful for many, and if there are people who have crossed this desert with the help of this atlas, then you know that you'll be able to cross the desert by following this atlas. In the middle of your journey, don't waste time suspecting and reasoning over the atlas. Continue the journey. Doubt (*vicikicchā*) is compared to a person who is lost in a desert. Such a person does not know the direction s/he should be heading. Such a person would walk a couple of feet towards one direction, then turn back and walk towards another direction. **Only a person who lets go of doubt sees the right direction for crossing the desert.**

16. Never-ending slavery

Restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*) is compared to being a slave. A person who has been a slave throughout his/her life gets to be freed from slavery. Restlessness and worry are two types of thought associated with slavery, like stress and depression. **Stress is a result of agitation for accomplishing things. A stressed person wants to do about 10 jobs at a time.** *Uddhacca* refers to thoughts associated with doing many jobs at a time. Someone may start doing 10 jobs

because s/he thinks that it is possible. However, before finishing the 10th job, s/he starts doing the 11th job, because of the feeling that it is possible to do many jobs simultaneously. The truth is this: **It is not possible to do many jobs at a time. There is a limit to a person's ability. Nobody can work limitlessly. Don't be a slave of stress. We have been slaves of stress all our life.** Don't be a slave anymore. Kukkucca refers to someone's hesitance about doing things or thinking that it is not possible to do anything. Don't be a slave of Kukkucca either. Be free from such slavery.

17. Removing the alloys

The Five hindrances are the five ways of our thinking. Let go of these five. It is possible to let go. The prime duty of meditation is to identify these five hindrances and let go of them. We should not keep thinking about them, but let go of them. As a result, someone can acquire a mind like pure gold. Someone gets to experience a glittering, luminous, shining, smooth and malleable mind like pure gold. That is the nature of the mind anyway. **Meditation does not create such a mind but removes the impurities or alloys.** We have had 5 alloys all along thinking that we had pure gold. It is possible to remove the alloys. It is difficult to do so, but possible. When we remove the five alloys,

we get to see the mind. **All this time we did not see the mind, but only the five alloys. We saw the five hindrances or five types of wrong thoughts. Now we see a beautiful and shining mind. The mind is as luminous as pure gold. The mind-is so amicable. The mind is so flexible. It glitters.**

18. Dragging life around

Why do we need a mind which is like pure gold? We need such a mind to see the truth. Why do we need to see the truth? Because we suffer, not knowing what life is. Life is a vehicle. The Dhamma gives this simile. We use a vehicle to go to a place where we intend to go. Without knowing that life is a vehicle, we keep on dragging it around. We keep on dragging life. As a result, we feel tired from the dragging. Just see. Haven't we been doing that? We have been dragging life along with a lot of difficulty. Therefore, we feel so tired. We fall down. We walk backwards, get up, and start dragging again.

Life is not a journey up a slope. **Life is not something to be dragged.** Life is a vehicle. Life is a vehicle that takes us to the other side of any pit or precipice. Life is a vehicle that climbs up any hill. Human life is a vehicle that gets us across any ocean. The human mind is such a vehicle. Life is an airplane that takes

you above any dark cloud. The mind is such a vehicle. These are the abilities and capabilities of a mind. Though we have all this, we keep on pulling life behind us, like a cart. When we pull, we can go only a foot or two. We cannot pull beyond that because we are tired. Therefore, we collapse and fall down.

19. Unwise thinking

The mind devoid of hindrances says: “Life is not suffering. Therefore, what you experience as suffering is not the suffering of life, but the suffering that you have created. The Dhamma describes the suffering formed by us as *sankhārā dukkha*.’ Everything we have created is suffering (*Sabbe sankhārā dukkhā’ti*). **Suffering is something that we have created, not something that exists independently.** We lament and cry over the suffering created by us. We even drink poison because of the suffering created by us. **We suffer because our thinking is wrong. Wrong thinking makes us suffer.** Therefore, the creator of suffering is unwise thinking (*ayoniso manasikāra*). Unwise thinking is a result of wrong thinking and stupid thinking. As result, we produce suffering. **Each suffering is a product of unwise thinking.**

Seeing things in this manner makes us happy, though we still undergo suffering. The happiness is due to the following reason: We get to see that we can get rid of or overcome this suffering, because we were not born with suffering. Further, we see that nobody has given us suffering, we don't have to take suffering with us when we die, and we don't have to undergo suffering in life.

20. Non-existent suffering

Dear Dhamma Friends, understand clearly what suffering is. **It is not something that we take with us when we die.** Don't try to take suffering with you when you die. There is no worse stupidity than that. We say that there is no freedom even after death. No suffering exists here for us to take with us when we die. We did not bring any suffering with us when we were born either. If we ponder on it, it is obvious that there is no suffering inherent in life. However, we undergo suffering. **Undergoing suffering does not mean that there is something called suffering.** We can experience many things which do not exist. We may experience things that do not exist in reality. We think about and suffer over things that do not exist in reality. We may suffer due to worry. **Many of us suffer thinking about illnesses that do not exist.** Many of us take medicine for

illnesses that do not exist. Many of us cry over problems that do not exist. Many of us live in fear of enemies and ghosts that do not exist. In this manner, **we suffer over things that do not exist.**

Suffering exists, but it is not the truth. Suffering is referred to as a water bubble. A water bubble exists but there is nothing inside it, only air. Suffering is like that. **There is something like suffering but there is nothing inside it. A pure mind is necessary to see the truth. A pure mind teaches us the truth.** An impure mind always deceives us and makes us greedy; turns us into losers, slaves, patients, and debtors. Unwise thinking does all this. Sensory desire makes us debtors. Ill-will makes us patients. Sloth and torpor makes us prisoners. Restlessness makes us servants. Doubt abandons us in a desert. When we let go of these five hindrances, even if we do not get anything, we'll feel so free and elated. We need to see the truth. We need a pure mind to acquire wisdom.

21. Forms of knowledge

There are many forms of knowledge. We say: "I know." If we have had some education we can say: "I know." We can acquire education with the help of teachers, books, and electronic

media. So, we acquire knowledge through education and say: “I am educated.” That is one form of knowledge, which we have accumulated. Such knowledge is associated with the past and memory. As long as we can remember, such knowledge exists and is also useful.

We also acquire knowledge through our experience in life. This form of knowledge is also so valuable. We can acquire knowledge through books and experience. We can learn cookery by attending classes and also by referring to books. A person first starts cooking with the help of cookery books. Later, s/he acquires knowledge through experience gained while cooking. As a result, s/he can alter the recipes and prepare new dishes. These are the two ways of acquiring knowledge. A person should be a student in a Medical Faculty to become a doctor. In the beginning of his/her a career as a doctor, knowledge gained at a Medical Faculty is helpful in prescribing medicine. However, at a later stage in his/her career, the experience gained through interactions with patients is helpful in prescribing medicine, which is better than the medicine given in an early stage of his/her career. So, we can acquire knowledge through books, teachers, and experiences. All these types of knowledge are associated with

the past and our memory. We may forget the knowledge gained through these modes: books, teachers, and experiences.

Wisdom is associated with the present, not with the past. If we make our mind pure by removing hindrances and focussing on what we want to know, at that moment itself, wisdom arises. **Wisdom is associated with the present, not with the past or with something learnt through books, teachers or experience. We cannot accumulate wisdom.** If we wish, we can write about knowledge gained through wisdom. However, such knowledge is not useful.

The pure mind creates a person with wisdom. The pure mind devoid of hindrances understands how things are truly happening. For instance, how does anger arise? If a mind devoid of hindrances fully focuses mindfully on a particular subject, someone can understand that subject. With that understanding, all the nonsense we have been thinking all this time disappears, like the dew that vanishes when the sun rises or like the clouds that float away. False views and concepts disappear. **We attempt to understand what is happening and also to find out reasons for everything that is happening in the present moment, nothing else.** This truth is not somewhere else. Our attempt is not to see things written in a book or

engraved on stones, but to understand how things are happening in the present moment. **We begin to understand the theories associated with everything happening in the present moment. Therefore, we don't get deceived anymore.** We are not going to make up stories anymore. We are not going to be a debtor, a patient, a prisoner, a slave or a person stranded in a desert who is about to die.

22. The utmost victory

We have got a life that we can master/conquer. We have lost to a life that we can win. If a person has lost to himself/herself, s/he has lost to the whole world. Though we think that we have won after fighting with so-and-so and scolding others, all these things are defeats, because we have lost to sensory desire, ill-will, laziness, jealousy, and blind reasoning. **If you win the battle of your mind, you become a person who cannot be deceived anymore.** Nobody can deceive you anymore. You don't get deceived. The person who can be deceived does not exist. Even nature cannot deceive such a person. Life cannot deceive you. You don't get deceived by death. **A person who doesn't get deceived by life and death cannot be deceived by anything else. Such a person can live freely without being deceived by anything/anybody.** Meditation is the method

needed to help you win the battle of your mind, and to thereby live without being deceived. Therefore, be happy for putting at least one step forward on such a journey. The first step is very important. The first step takes us to the second step. As we cannot begin a journey with the second step, taking the first step will help us to take the second step. We ought to take that first step. Therefore, the Dhamma says: “Come and see, take the first step and see.” Keep this happiness in mind.

May the Triple Gem Bless You!!!