



“We run after the comfort in the front and to escape from the suffering coming from behind.  
Stop. Turn back and face the suffering coming behind.  
May you be able to live like a victorious human being!”

Upul Nishantha Gamage



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Light of Nilambe

“.....yo mittānaṃ na dūbhati.”  
....he who does no wrong to his friends.”  
Mittānisamsa Sutta

*Dhamma Dāna*

Dedicated to my good kalyānamitta,  
K.B. SAMANATHA SENANANDA (Nihal)  
and all friends and dāyakas  
who are supporting and encouraging me daily  
to go forward  
in the true Dhamma of the Lord Buddha

**Ven. German Dhammadīpa**  
Dhammavivekārāma  
Lewella

# **IN BETWEEN HAPPINESS AND UNHAPPINESS**

Talk given by

**Upul Nishantha Gamage**

On March 07, 2012 (Full-moon day)

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## 1. The common target

*Dear Dhamma friends.* All of us have had different dialogs, ideas and diverse experiences about meditation. It is not an extrinsic, unknown and peculiar subject for us. We have learnt about meditation with the help of books, sermons, discussions, personal considerations and experiences gained through practicing. Having put what was heard, thought and seen together, all of us have had personal conclusions and opinions about what meditation is. What do we need meditation for? Why should we meditate? What do we look for in meditation? What type of changes in us do we try to achieve? What could go wrong by not meditating? We can find answers to the question “What is meditation?” from different angles and aspects. Meditation is directly connected with the human life. We do not know whether a tree can meditate or not. We think that it is impossible for a tree to meditate. We are not very sure whether an animal can meditate or not as we have not seen an animal practicing meditation. If live animals and trees cannot meditate, it is impossible for the lifeless stones, rocks and mountains to meditate. Only those who have acquired a human life can meditate. Everybody who has acquired a human life does not

meditate but only a handful. Human population is very small compared to those living on the land, sea and sky. We are not the majority. In comparison to vegetation such as plants and grasses, we are very few in number. For a comparison, if the lifeless sands, stones, water droplets and buildings are placed on one side and the human population on the other side, we are definitely losers.

It is very obvious that humankind is so scarce, and only a handful meditates. Most human beings have not read, heard, thought and experienced about meditation. All of them look for something in their living. Everybody is engaged in looking for something. You and I came to this human world or conceived in a mother's womb looking for something. As human beings, we thought we could find what we were looking for. We have forgotten that legend, history, past or the narrative before our birth. There might be individuals possessing such memories. However, as a whole, none of us possesses such memories. Most of us are not mindful about it. Therefore, we think that our birth was an abiogenetic condition or a result of randomness without any prior plan or target. We may think that we were fallen to Sri Lanka and to a particular village, an area and a

family as if a leaf or a flower falls on the ground due to wafting. However, it is not the case. We might have been wafted. **Even in that wafting, there was a target and something searched for.** Searching did not start today.

We are searching even now and will be searching tomorrow, within this life, death and rebirth. **What are we searching for? All of us search for something very simple, which is the comfort. The comfort is the common target of all of us regardless of our differences.** Though there can be diverse differences in relation to religion, race, wealth, knowledge or gender, such differences are non-existing when the target is the comfort. Everybody goes after the comfort without any division. Life is a journey. In this journey, having gone passing various events, we are here now. Having passed various age limits, we are in different age limits now. We looked for comforts suitable for each age limit. The comfort looked for by a toddler was in the surrounding, in a mother's bosom and also with toys like dolls. In this manner, we may have experienced some comforts as toddlers. At the same time, there may have been comforts not experienced by us. We keep looking for various means to acquire those comforts not experienced by us. So it is a journey

after the comfort. In a way, it is a tour. Life is a circular tour. Circling around and *samsāra* (cycle of suffering) are two closely linked words. We keep on looking for comforts because we think that comforts are at a particular place. We target a particular destination in travelling. All of you left homes in this morning targeting this Nilambe Buddhist Meditation Centre. We travel with some destination in mind. **We always see a distant comfort in the tours taken in search of comfort**, which is either on the top of a hill or to be searched by crossing over mountain pass. Because of these, living is considered difficult. The life is considered tough. We have never thought whether the life is tough or not. The life might not even be tough. However, it is not easy to reach or acquire this distant comfort alone as it is on the top of a hill or mountain pass. Therefore, we need money, others' help, time and knowledge. As such, one has to learn first, make money first, get married, make friends and engage in a profession. We need to gather all these to reach the comfort seen in the distant sky.

## 2. Sinking scaffolds

**We need to make a scaffold to construct the palace known as the comfort.** We have been making scaffolds in all our lives. As we think that a house cannot be built without scaffolds, we make them for building a house. We made the scaffold known as learning. Experiences, qualifications, professions and knowledge are some other scaffolds we have made. In this manner, **we make diverse scaffolds to arrive at the residence or valley or palace known as the happiness.** We need to discuss separately about whether we have arrived at these destinations or not. How many scaffolds have we made at this age? How many scaffolds have we stepped on to? Have we finished building the palace of happiness? If not, what is left? Has it been only laying the foundation stone? Has not even the foundation stone been laid? It is worth thinking about these matters. When is the construction to be started? Not just scaffolds. **When are we going to experience the happiness and the comfort we have been searching for, wishing and targeting in the *samsaric* journey?** We should think about this matter. Though we do not think about it now, there will be a day

that the time will question us about it. **It is a question we have to face or answer at the last second or in the twinkling of an eye when we are about to die.** We can bypass that question now, as it is an optional one. We can keep on avoiding this question as we give priority to some other questions. We can avoid as there is enough time. However, we keep on postponing answering till tomorrow, day after tomorrow, next week and so on.

*Dear Dhamma friends,* we are compelled to face this question in the twinkling of life. Do we have an answer to give at that time? If it is a compulsory examination, we know the question. The problem is about not knowing the answer. The real problem is not about unknowing the question but about unknowing the answer or not having an answer. When there is no opportunity to postpone any longer, most people become answerless as there is no other answer. This is a crime. We have loaded our heads with a large sum of knowledge by various means, as it is a lot easier to acquire information and knowledge at present compared to the past. Learning is an extremely simple matter. It is so easy to acquire knowledge or learn something unknown, as there are so many methods, media and facilities. What do we

fill our heads with and cover our lives with? **We have been learning how to make scaffolds, which are temporary, breakable, sinking and deteriorating.** This is a very sensitive matter. I am not going to talk about it much, as you may become sorrowful. You have not come here to become sorrowful or shed tears.

## 2. Stopping at happiness

*Dear Dhamma friends.* All of us have been running in this journey of life at varying speeds, both physically and mentally. It is difficult to find a person who walks slowly and calmly. We keep running inside the house, in the courtyard, on the road, by vehicles and coming back at the same speed. The speed of physical running increases gradually, which is considered a characteristic of improvement and development. **We are engaged in an invisible running concurrently with the visible physical running. Running after targets is known as the journey of life.** Having thought that there is a place that makes us elated and delightful, we run from here to that place. “I’ll be happy if I get to do, read, listen or see that. I’ll be happy if I can meet and talk to a particular person.” Just see that we are always

under that impression in our mind. Always we have a target in our mind. We think that there is comfort behind such a target. We think that comfort is beneath the black strip on the back of a lottery, which is scratched expecting a win. There is a dark membrane or a black cloud or a gloomy screen between the distant comfort and us. We think that comfort, happiness and victory are beyond these. Therefore, we need to remove or penetrate them. How many such screens or things, places, foods and beverages and movies have we passed through? Have we met the comfort, elation and delightfulness targeted, searched for, wished for and decided beforehand? We may have experienced something like that. There is nobody who has been crying or sighing throughout life. If someone says so, it is a lie uttered knowingly or unknowingly. One may have laughed endlessly. **Why couldn't we stop inside that laugh? Why couldn't we dwell in that happiness?** Why couldn't that little child stay inside the overwhelming happiness brought about by the toys? Why couldn't a person dwell in the jubilant happiness brought about while giggling, singing, dancing, eating and drinking with friends? Why couldn't a person stop and stay inside the utmost happiness experienced with friends having spent thousands of rupees? Why does this happiness disappear,

as if water flows between the fingers without leaving even a droplet on the palm? **Why can't we retain the happiness we try to grab? Why can't we stop at happiness?** If we can stop at happiness, there is no need to spend money or run repeatedly.

### 3. Winning posts and targets

All of us run on a massive race track, where an end cannot be seen. It is not possible to put a full stop. We see a winning post also. In a normal race, one stops after reaching the winning post, as there is no point in running, because the race is over either having won or lost. However, **in life, we cannot stop at the winning posts.** How many occasions were there from the childhood to date that we thought of having won? Just try to remember. How many occasions were there that we won? However, why couldn't we stay or stop at any of those victories? After having won and reached the winning post, we scream and enjoy the victory drinks. But, the winning post has disappeared. Where is the happiness of victory? The winning post is no longer there. We can see another winning post at a distant place. We run towards that winning post now. As we cannot stop there for a long time, we run without delaying. In

this manner, **we run from one winning post to another. Even the winning posts run.** Who are we competing with? See clearly. A child may think that he/she is competing with classmates. Businessmen think that the competition is among those engaged in similar businesses. Politicians think that they have to compete with those in the opposition. When two persons having the same target run, one of them thinks that the other person is the rival. We always see another person or a thing as the rival. However, **the real competition is between the winning post and us. This winning post is untouchable. We cannot grab the same winning post and say that we have won twice. All the victorious targets run at the same speed with us.** Even if the targets do not run, those comforts we thought of being inside the targets run. We feel the shadow of that comfort. Have we really won or been deceived by the thought of winning, when we throw parties for celebration of victories? Have we been deceived by the shadow of comfort? In any case, there is no need of any more examples, as all of us can clearly see this matter.

Though we look very comfortable while sitting here, there are many targets in our heads. For instance, there are targets

associated with economy. **Satisfaction is a temporary target, as we feel the inadequacy before reaching there.** We have targets for goods to be purchased. When we go after an economic target, the money earned is not sufficient to achieve them. Therefore, **no matter how much we earn, we have never become winners. We are always behind running known as spending whether we earn more or less than what we really need. Therefore, we have to run even faster on the track known as economy.** We'll have more distant targets. It is the same with having targets for making friends. Healthiness is another target we run after. If we think in this manner, we'll fall mentally sick.

## 5. The most valuable object

*Dear Dhamma friends.* It would be better not to think about these. Thinking may make you feel bad about what you have done to this valuable and rare human life. The human beings are few in number compared to number of apple trees, coconut trees, grasses, ants, fish, birds, cats and dogs in the world. Having been proud of being human beings, what have we done to our lives? Regardless of religions, human beings hold a high

position. According to creationistic religions such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam, the God created the human beings resembling him. According the Old and New Testaments of the Bible and the Koran, the first creation of the God is the human being. The other things such as animals and vegetation were created for the benefit of human beings. Buddhism does not refer to creationism, but the greatness and supremacy of humanity is recognized. Human life is precious and expensive, though there are many cheap things in the world. **We have forgotten how much we have paid and committed merits to acquire a human life. This precious human life is a result of spending the merits committed for a long time.** Therefore, you are a valuable person from the point of view of any religion, science and evolution. The human being is the foremost product of the nature. Starting from single cell organisms, the nature has been creating so many organisms. However, it has not created any organism greater, more intelligent and more active than the human being. Therefore, you are an extremely valuable asset. From the point of view of religions and science, the human being is the most valuable object in the world.

## 6. Feeling of nothingness

Why do you feel that you are worthless? This feeling of worthlessness is becoming more and more common. Why was I born? Why did I get married? Why do I live? Why don't I die? One may not see any value in him/her. These feelings are ominous. These feelings are sub-questions related to the question to be asked in the twinkling of an eye at death. In general, one feels this way at the old age. However, at present, these questions have no age limits. One may feel the worthlessness in the middle age. Some western youngsters who come here often have felt the worthlessness, meaninglessness and nothingness even in their twenties. "What is the purpose of living? Why was I born? What has to be done while living?" These are not philosophical questions but associated with disappointment. Whatever done is useless. Little by little, these disappointments come closer. **The world is on a run. It is not the victory but the defeat that comes closer with increase in speed.** If you ponder, it is obvious that this speed of running gets accelerated. As a result, at 20 or 30 years of age, one might exhaust gaining experiences acquired by some others through 50, 60 or 70 years of their living. Afterwards, we may think

that there is nothing left to be done? Therefore, it is so usual for a person to feel worthlessness, meaninglessness and nothingness at 20. As you run faster and faster or walk at a high speed, the defeat follows you at the same rate. These thoughts of defeat are ordinary. However, those who live a serene life get these thoughts towards the dusk of their life. **When you run faster and faster, one may get these thoughts even at his/her teenage. On one hand this is dangerous, because about 50, 60 years of life is left ahead having nothing to do. On the other hand, if one makes a turnaround at this point, he/she can have a bright future.**

## 7. The empty travelling bag

*Dear Dhamma friends.* We always run after a comfort in the front with an empty container. The intension is to get the empty container filled with comforts in the front. As the life is empty now, we think that our lives will be filled by acquiring the comfort in the front or reaching a particular place. **All of us run with the intension of filling our empty lives with future happiness, comfort and pleasure.** We take a travelling bag full of goods when travelling. Unlike that, we run with an empty

travelling bag with an intension of filling it. We had an empty travelling bag at the start. Even now, we have an empty travelling bag. However, we have a distant hope and a target. We think that life will be filled with happiness, if we can reach that distant place. **The thought of possible filling of our lives with happiness makes us living, because we need a hope for living.** Reaching the distant winning post is the hope. Beyond that, there is no problem. For instance, we tend to think that all the problems may be over once we get a house built, find a job or get a promotion. Therefore, we run. If we stop, it will be late. We are in such a hurry without being able to even stop for a second.

## 8. Blind runners

What is the role of meditation? Will we be able to run faster? By meditation, can we fly to reach the targets that are impossible to be reached by walking? Will we be able to attend to many works or take part in many races, simultaneously? That is the way we think. But it is not possible. Even if it is possible, meditation is not for that. There are some matters here which are not obvious to us. As these matters are not so obvious and we do not look at

them, we have become blind runners in a very unfortunate race. **We have become blind runners who cannot even see the destination. But we keep on running.**

*Dear Dhamma friends.* Why can't we stop for a moment, though there are many things to be accomplished? It is very obvious that this life is not enough to fulfil all the expectations and targets, which is the reason for this *samsaric* journey. We have created this *saṃsāra*. All the desires create a *saṃsāra*. **The higher is the number of desires, the longer is the *saṃsāra* because a person needs more time to fulfil all his/her desires.** *Saṃsāra* is the time, which is not given by somebody but created by the desires. Therefore, ***saṃsāra* is clearly proportional to the desires. The higher is the number of targets the longer is the *saṃsāra*.** As such, there is no time to stop. Stopping makes us losers. We have such an attitude. We see some comfort in the front. Meditation is a comfort if we gain mental tranquillity. As we have not yet gained mental tranquillity, we think that it will happen in a while. It will happen in another hour. If we meditate for a whole day, it will happen by evening. If we meditate for a week or a month it will happen. We always see the comfort as something in the future.

The present is empty and there is no comfort. **The present named as the container can be filled by the future named as the comfort. For that we need to run or fly as there is no time for stopping.** This is the first point which is clear.

## **9. Looking two-dimensionally vs three-dimensionally**

The second point is about the suffering that is coming behind us. **We have to run to escape from that suffering.** This second point may not be clear at once so one has to think about it. A huge flow of suffering runs after us to catch us. For instance, take hunger, a banal example. At the moment, it is behind us but will come to meet us in another 60 to 90 minutes. That thought does not give any comfort. Therefore, to escape from that discomfort, we work, make money, shop, cook etc. If we are hungry, we have to eat. In this manner, how many sorrows are following us, not only hunger? Some sorrows are very closely following us. Some are way behind. Therefore, if one looks behind, the problems that are following us so closely, way behind, coming to grab us, suppress us can be seen. Therefore, we keep on running to escape from them. Where are we now?

**We are in between a flow of suffering and the comforts anticipated in the future**, which is the third point. In this manner we have no way out. **If we look at the race track two-dimensionally, we can see the suffering coming behind and the comfort in the front. So one has to run to escape from the suffering and reach the comforts.** There is not enough time to stop even to breath. If we look at the race track from above or three-dimensionally, without looking only two-dimensionally, then we can see the whole picture about this *samsāra*, a tour and a life race. If we look at the race track from above, it is so obvious that it is impossible to say who is behind or in front of whom. The three points are as follows. There is a comfort, a suffering and a person. If we think in relative to us, so many problems are coming behind us. These problems can be analysed. For instance, economic problems are coming behind us. We need to run before these problems come and suppress us like a river overflowing the river banks. Where do we run? We need to run to an economically strong place. Similarly, ailments come behind us so we need to run to the place named healthiness while exercising, taking medicine and complying with doctor's advices. Friends get angry. Such strained relations also come behind us so we need to run. If not,

we loss. If we look behind or observe from above, we can see the flowing of an uncountable number of sorrows behind us at a rapid speed. The simile given in the Dhamma for this is a volcano. When a volcano erupts, the lava flows rapidly. When this happens, one has to run, though it is difficult to escape by running. If we do not run, we get burnt. Are we strong enough to run and escape? We were at the foot of a volcano enjoying, singing, dancing and playing. However, after its eruption, we have to run.

## 9. The three points

*Dear Dhamma friends.* We talked about three points. The first point is about having something called happiness in life, which we have experienced thousands of times after having spent money and worked hard. We can talk about happiness experienced by us. However, **we cannot stop at any happiness. Therefore, we can talk about happiness which did not stop but went passing us.** That is the first point. No happiness becomes a home for us forever but only temporarily, like a bus halt or a road-side shed or a guest house. One can rest. One can rest for a moment and run again. We can talk about the

temporariness of such happiness. The second point is about the unhappiness hidden within happiness. Therefore, **happiness does not fade away as happiness but turns into unhappiness. Comfort turns into discomfort. Healthiness becomes unhealthiness. Friendliness becomes unfriendliness. We have not experienced any victory and comfort that do not change or roll or turn inside out. Therefore, any victory brings about fear.** No sooner we thought about having won, the fear comes behind it. The fear may not appear, but the existing comfort may disappear. The comfort to be accomplished may not come true. The third point is the **feeling of inadequacy.** Comfort is there but not enough. Life does not get filled up fully. Though we think that life is full, it is just a thought of a moment. What you see is nothingness or cessation of comfort within a flash. Therefore, we run.

## **10. The suffering is in front of the comforts**

All the sorrows follow us as if a dog is chasing. We run to escape from the sorrows and acquire the comforts. So **we are running around on a circular trace track seeing the suffering**

**in the back and the comfort in the front.** Who is running to escape from whom? This question is a big puzzle. Are we running to escape from the suffering? Is the comfort running to escape from the suffering? What is the truth? Is there an end to this? Where this race is going to end at? Who is going to step out of the race? Stepping out of whom is going to end this race? We think that running fast and getting rid of all the sufferings make us winners. If we look carefully, we can see that we are running with the suffering behind us. When we run around a circle, the suffering is covered with the comfort. **If we look from above, the comfort is in front of us and the suffering is in front of the comfort. Whatever we think, the comfort turns into a suffering within sometime after experiencing it.** We can see that the suffering in front of the comfort. However, when we look two-dimensionally, we cannot see that the suffering is in front of the comfort. The comfort is seen as comfort. The smile is seen as smile. The friendliness is seen as it is. The healthiness is seen as it is. The wealth is seen as it is. **We cannot see that the unhealthiness is in front of the healthiness, the poverty is in front of the wealth, the suffering is in front of the comfort, the unhappiness is in front of the happiness, and the unfriendliness is in front of**

**the friendliness.** The comfort, the suffering and we are running at different speeds. These can change for a short while. But this goes on like play trains run on rail tracks used by children for playing.

## 12. The laughing defeat

The *samsāra* is a game. But it is a dangerous game. It is not something good to be played continuously. Where is the solution? How many circles have we run? We do not remember. What have we achieved after circling so many times? Is it what we have achieved or is there more to be achieved? Is it the comfort experienced or expected to be experienced? Is it the suffering already undergone or to be undergone in the future? It is worth to assess these things comparatively. If we do not do it, the comfort distances from us, and the suffering gets close to us. There will be a day that we cannot run anymore. It is not about stopping wilfully. **There will be a day that we are going to collapse due to our inability to run. This is not death. When this happens, the comfort runs away and the suffering gets close to us.** We cannot say that it won't happen. At the times we had thought that way, the suffering just fell from nowhere. The

suffering, ill-health or economic problems arose. One can take diverse steps and run to escape from the suffering. One may be able to temporarily win over the suffering or even smile or dance. But that victory is not a real victory. **Within that victory, the defeat laughs at us. When we smile over a victory, the defeat laughs at us from behind.** Therefore, in this world, there is something that can be done to become victorious. This is possible only for human beings not for the other live organisms, vegetation and lifeless mountains, waterfalls, sea, deserts etc.

### **13. Stop and turn back to face the suffering**

What is it that can be done only by human beings? It is the turning back. We can turn back. One needs a lot of courage, determination and effort to take that step. When we turn back, we face the suffering that we are trying to escape from. On turning back, we may collapse due to economic problems or lack of physical energy or ill-health. We may also fall mentally. If we do not face the suffering, it comes from behind and hits us like the tsunami. Therefore, face the suffering. This is not about

self-mortification. Instead of escaping, understand the suffering. According to the Dhamma, **the suffering is something to be faced and known. The suffering is not something to be escaped from or won over a fight.**

In the first preaching of the Lord Buddha, in the analysis of the Four Noble Truths, the suffering was described as something to be comprehended well. One has to know what suffering is by facing and comprehending it fully with no lapses. For this, one has to turn back. **To turn back, one has to stop first as turning is not possible while running. Meditation makes us to stop. The first action is stopping.** We have been thinking endlessly and making plans about our job, education, ailments, family matters etc. Should we do the same while meditating? We need to stop thinking about these things while meditating. It is not about stopping all the thoughts. **When you remember many things while meditating, let go of thinking. Just stop.** For instance, stop further thinking about the economy. The person who is here is not a thinker of the economy. You need to practise not to think about the economy while meditating. Stop such thinking. Do not run with such thoughts. Running with thoughts is not the meditation. Therefore, **the first step in**

**meditation is stopping. No matter what type of thoughts we get, just stop at that point itself.** This is one of the most difficult things to do. It is difficult to stop, as most of us think that we have not thought enough of these things. So we are again late. When we meditate for an hour, time is not sufficient anyway. Don't get caught in that illusion and mirage. The more you run, the more you loss. The faster you run, the more and more you loss. The westerners, who ran fast about 25 years ago, think now as to why they do not die. They think what the purpose of living is. We too are trying to reach that point by accelerating. According to some Buddhist literature on predicting the future, the life expectancy is going to be as short as 10 years. During that time, the targets we accomplish at present within 60 or 70 years will have been fulfilled by 10 years of age. It is not something imaginary as reflected by the rate at which we are running. The speed of life is not as same as the physical speed. The faster is the speed of life, the more is your loss.

**The amount of suffering is proportional to the magnitude of the craving.** This equation is very clear and simple but difficult to be understood. We run in proportion to the craving, as it is the

fuel for this journey. The craving accompanies us from one place to the other. It accompanies us even after the death. When Vaccigotta raised this question “who is taking us from one life to the other?” the Lord Buddha had given a very simple simile. “*What takes a fire spark from a burning fire at one place to another place?*” It is the wind. Similarly, **a person who is here will be taken to another life by the craving.** It is the craving that takes the consciousness from here to another place due to clinging. **Therefore, stop for a while. The first step in meditation is stopping.** You may remember something. You may remember your job or marriage. Remembering is one thing. Are we going to run making plans with these memories in meditation? Just let go. Stop. Whatever the thoughts that arise, just recognise them and stop. There is settling down as a result of stopping. Though we think that stopping is a loss, there is tranquillity and rest. This is the first step of composure. In the Dhamma, the rest is described as composure. In the Noble Eightfold Path towards liberation, right composure, which is one of the targets of meditation, is described as one of the most important aspects of liberation. The settling down is the first step towards the right composure. This settling down is a result of letting go of thoughts associated with worldly things. Stop

running with the mind making plans about life, clinging on to them and thinking and repenting about them. Don't become a slave of the thoughts associated with making competitors and rivals and boosting ego. Let go of these thoughts. You need to stop. This is the first step in meditation. Understand clearly that **the thoughts will come. The purpose is not to stop the thoughts from arising. Whatever the thought you get or whoever you remember, don't dream about the person or ponder on that person or look for comfort clinging on to the person or build scaffolds.** You may remember a house or a house being built. Don't build scaffolds while meditating for completion of the rest of the house. Just let go of these thoughts. You need to stop.

#### **14. Munching on the old refuse**

Don't create unborn unwholesome acts by pondering on the thoughts. We cannot meditate if we do not let go of the thoughts. All these thoughts are stale or stale topics. There is no brand-new thought. We may have thought about it, made plans about it, been happy about it and suffered over it at least once before. All of us may have laughed, sobbed and cried over all

these thoughts and memories, not only once but many times. Therefore, understand that all these thoughts are useless with no essence like the refuse of sugarcane. The refuse of sugarcane does not have even a single droplet of juice sweet in taste. All the thoughts have been munched so many times. **What is the point in looking for comforts in thoughts that have been munched in the past?** This shows the magnitude of suffering we are experiencing. We don't see the suffering. We look for comforts remembering the past. We try to be happy remembering the past incidents which brought happiness. We look for comforts by dreaming about the future. **Why do we try to make the present happy with the comforts experienced in the past and those to be experienced in the future?** We try to do that because the present is a suffering and bitter. How do we cover up this bitterness? We munch on the old refuse. Is it this known as life? Is this the activity assigned to a human being? When can you make your life tasteful? Do you think that it is possible? No. Therefore, **give up on the past memories or refuse. Just understand that those past memories are refuse. Past is a refuse.** There is nothing more to it. There may be things to be learnt from the past. However, there is nothing to be

munched, no nutrients to be absorbed. Therefore, **don't chase after anything you remember. Just let go.** This needs courage.

## **15. Open to the suffering**

The desires arise with past memories and feelings like anger. We have been slaves of those so many times. We have become cowards and jealous and greedy persons by remembering the same thing over and over. We may have become such persons may be 1000 times in the past. Is there a need to repeat it for the 1001 times? Was it for that we sat for meditation? We need to withdraw from such unwholesome acts. We need the determination and courage. When we stop, we can stay away from such acts. We become restful at that point. The head which was so messy like devil's workshop has come to a state of a holiday. You become so calm. We are a result of excitement and stress. You who had been a result of excitement and stress have become a result or a fruit of calmness. You have become the calmness. **You have become a person born of calmness. When this happens, there is a comfort felt both physically and mentally.** Only a person who has stopped can experience

at least these comforts. Now you are strong. You also experience physical and mental comfort arose as a result of stopping. **Now you can turn back and face the aggressive problems and the suffering coming behind.** Understand the suffering. I restate that you don't have to suffer but need to understand the suffering. Understand it clearly. Everybody who runs suffers. That is why they run. Stopping does not aggravate the suffering. Therefore, I am not talking about the suffering of people. Open to the suffering. I am not talking about teeth grinding or being patient over the suffering. Open to the suffering, which is different from suffering. The suffering comes from behind and hits our back and head. Ailments hit us. Economic problems hit us. Resentment hits us. We are beaten up all the way. We need to be mindful and turn back. Let the suffering go across you. **If you face the suffering, it cannot hit you. You turn into something transparent, so the suffering can go across without stopping inside you.** Let the thought go across the mindfulness. Just wait quietly and look at the resentment. Let the resentment go across the mindfulness. Turn back and look at the hunger, thirst and sleepiness. You'll experience something totally different. Open to the suffering just once. The same suffering will not come to meet you again. **If**

**you are fully open to any suffering, it can come to you only once. It won't and cannot come to you twice. Even if it comes, it is no longer a suffering. The same problem will go again and again after those who are running away from the suffering.** We may have experienced the same problem because of parents, friends, marriage, children, in-laws and grandchildren. If you do not open to the suffering, all of them beat you up. There is no end. It is very important to open to the suffering. **One cannot experience realization without looking at and fully comprehending the suffering.**

## **16. Be an empty tunnel!**

*Dear Dhamma friends.* Stop for a moment and let go of the plans you make on the journey, which looks for comfort through suffering. Temporarily separate. Give up on foolish thinking, which looks for the taste in refuse. Look at the problem with an open mind. There are no gates or barriers or collisions when you open up. We have created barriers, which are associated with ego. We have placed barriers of ego. "This is what I like. I do not like these things. This is not the way it should happen. This is not the way to cook. This is not the way to dress. It should not

rain.” Whatever they are, we keep on clashing. Whatever the incident, we clash. **The suffering is because of clashing not because of the incidents. The incidents collide with the ego.** Do things happen according to our wishes or not? **Collision of two things creates friction, which is known as the suffering.** We need to remove them. Open up. No point in putting rules as the incident has already taken place. Therefore, remove the rules. Remove the frame of ego and also likes and dislikes. Just look at the way how things are happening. In this process, **the person turns into an empty tunnel. Whatever comes, everything goes through the empty tunnel and comes out of it. There is no stopping inside the tunnel.** There are no gates and barriers inside the tunnel. It turns into an empty bamboo. The composed mind or open mind is like that, and there is no stopping in it. There are no barriers. It does not try to throw anything away in a hurry or hold anything. It does not say yes or no. You are empty. You have become an empty tunnel or bamboo. **We do not have to suffer any longer as the suffering goes through the empty tunnel without stopping inside. Incidents go through us like the breath. The breath comes and goes through us. We are like empty tubes. We do not say that the in-breath is better than the out-breath or vice versa.**

In the manner that our body opens up like an empty tube for the in-breath and the out-breath, we need to open up for incidents. Then you are not going to be beaten up by any incident. **You become an observer of incidents, a person who realizes how incidents occur.** No incident can make you fall. If you keep running away, you tend to fall over and over.

*Dear Dhamma friends.* You many have diverse experiences and different ideas about meditation. You may have gained different benefits. **The utmost benefit of meditation is to become a non-sufferer as we have suffered enough. Therefore, instead of escaping, stop and face the suffering as an open person.** Be courageous! You'll reach a state where you are not going to be beaten up. The freedom to be a tunnel is enormous, as if the vehicles come and go. Similarly, the hunger comes. If there is anything to relieve the hunger, you do it. Resentment comes. Just realize it without becoming a resentful person. That is the real victory or the victory of humanity. If you want to live like a victorious human being, stop for a moment, release the mind, understand the suffering and open the mind. Stop for a moment and take an attempt with an open mind to understand the problems of the mind, which are trying to escape. **One has to**

**do only three things; stopping, turning back and facing. One needs a lot of courage and determination for this *vipassana* meditation, if the problem to be entirely solved. Those possessing such courage are known as the human beings.**

**May the Triple Gem Bless You!!!**