

Multiple Characters Multiple Suffering



Upul Nishantha Gamage

Impatience and stress is a result of acting many characters or trying to do many jobs at a time. When you are meditating, one character inside you is being attentive to the meditation object, while the other characters are thinking about your bank account or your occupation or children or food and so on. None of these characters are necessary for

brushing teeth. If you practise this meditation you get to meet not just a small piece of you, but the entire you everywhere; when brushing teeth, combing hair, sweeping, doing your job, driving your vehicle, watching television, reading a book as well as at Nilambe. Meditation joins the life broken into an uncountable number of characters.

uncountable number of characters that you play, let go of unnecessary characters and live in one character at a time. At that point, you'll realize that there is no quality and ability other than meditation that makes you relaxed and restful.



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**Dhamma Dāna
For Free Distribution Only**



Dhamma Dāna

**In memory of
Our beloved parents**

May this merit be conducive for them to
attain Nibbana!

Palitha and Chamara

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Talk given by

Upul Nishantha Gamage

On January 26, 2013 (Full-moon Day)

At Nilambe Buddhist Meditation Centre

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1. Full-moon and religious feelings

Dear Dhamma Friends, we all have decided to spend the first full-moon day of this year at the Nilambe Buddhist Meditation Centre. On the one hand, a full-moon day generates a religious feeling in us. It is the concept of the moon, not the moon that makes us feel that way. A full-moon or new-moon cannot generate a religious feeling or pleasant feeling or spiritual feeling in us. However, the concept associated with the full-moon day generates a pleasant feeling among the Sri Lankan Buddhists. Though we say that such a feeling crops up, we, the Buddhist intentionally generate it in us, because the full-moon day is the same for everybody, whether we are Buddhists or non-Buddhists, clergies or lay persons and Sri Lankans or foreigners. Regardless of these differences, the full-moon is the same for everybody. However, a pleasant feeling crops up in a person because of the way s/he looks at that idea about the full-moon.

Such pleasant feelings may not crop up in all the Buddhists. However, if a person has religious feelings, rays of the full-moon are instrumental in emerging, growing and blooming such feelings. *Dear Dhamma Friends*; may be because of that,

Buddhist temples, monasteries and meditation centres may overflow with devotees on full-moon days. This is due to some feelings attributed by us, not due to special power associated with the full-moon day.

A mind of a person having such feelings is always pleasant. A full-moon day cannot purify the mind of a person. A new-moon day cannot make the mind of a person dirty. It is our job to purify our own mind. This job cannot be handed over to a distant moon. Therefore, do not do that. We ought to take that job into our own hands. It is our responsibility to make up our own mind. There is no need of a particular day for that. In a way, having a special day for that is better than not having one. A person tends to incline more and more towards the religion on full-moon days because of the cultural influence.

2. Meditation-past and present

Dear Dhamma Friends, there is more and more inclination towards this spiritual path or meditation on full-moon days. Today's world is joyful, enthusiastic and interested more and more in meditation not only on full-moon days but also on other days. Comparatively, there was no such joy, enthusiasm and

interest in meditation about 30-40 years ago. Meditation was not a popular topic either. Though there were many popular topics then, meditation was not popular enough to inspire writing newspaper articles, broadcasting discourses and Dhamma discussions, and holding well-known seminars on meditation.

Meditation existed then in the forest and monasteries. Therefore, a person interested in learning meditation or meeting an ascetic had to go the forest. There was hardly any such place in the town. Just look at the transformation taken place within the last 30 or so years. Meditation that existed inside rock caves and mountain passes of the distant forest has come, at present, to the town. Meditation has come to the school, the educational institute, the professional institute, the hospital, the police station, the prison etc. It has come not only to these places, but also to your home. There is no need to go somewhere to understand and learn about meditation as it is quite possible to do so through media. On the one hand, it is an inspiration.

3. Globalization of meditation

Dear Dhamma Friends, regardless of differences in religions, meditation is getting popular more and more, not only in Sri Lanka but also throughout the world. **Meditation receives a first place among many popular things in the world.** There may be many other things in the world that are getting popular. In the meantime, **meditation hidden in a corner is getting globalized.** We can certainly be happy innocently about us for protecting meditation and the Dhamma that is needed by the today's world. While having that innocent happiness, we can also be humble and silent about that happiness without being proud about protecting the Dhamma for thousands of years by sacrificing lives and starving, in order to give this message to the world.

Think about the following for a moment: “Why is it that the world has given meditation a considerable place? **Why is meditation getting so popular, regardless of differences in religions, though the religion has not equally become popular?**” Even non-Buddhist religious places conduct programmes, workshops and retreats on meditation. Educational, administrative and medical institutes in the world

that have no affiliations with any religion, conduct similar programmes. When we ponder as to why meditation is getting so popular in the world, a common answer given is associated with suffering. Furthermore, since there is more suffering today than then, we think meditation is needed now more than ever.

4. The past and the present

However, though there is some surface truth in that answer there is no depth. **Do we suffer more now than those who lived about 30 years ago?** Though we like to think so, it is worth finding out whether there is any truth in such statements.

Do we suffer more now than those who lived then? All the facilities we enjoy now were not there in the past. Life seems to have been difficult more and more, when we go back to the past further and further. Transport facilities we enjoy now were not there then. Medical facilities we enjoy now were not there then. Leave those aside. It was so tiresome in the past to bring some water home. Cooking is so easier now than then. When we think in this manner, those who lived in the past would not have believed, even if a fortune teller or a god had told them: “In another 100 years, there will be a time when we can fly not only

within one country but also from one country to another, or that there will be a day that we can see anything that is in the far distance from here if we are not blind; We can hear any sound that is in the far distance if we are not deaf; It will be possible to make someone living in a distant place see you and hear your voice; There will be a day like that.” When a god or a fortune teller in the past told like this to a bygone society in any country, how would they have thought?

There are many more things to tell: “No need to draw water from a well or a brook now because placing a finger at a device on a wall provides water. Similarly, placing a finger at another place on a wall illuminates, thereby getting rid of darkness. There will be a day like that in the future. A day like that will emerge. Furthermore, all the internal parts of the body can be seen in order to find out where and what the illness is or to find out whether there is an illness. The patient can also see his/her own body. If it is too cold, contacting a place on a wall fully warms up the surrounding and vice versa.” In this manner, we can prepare a long list about today’s era of facilities. These things are not surprises for us. However, even if someone had told these things to people who lived in the past, they would not have believed such stories or would have taken such stories for

fairy tales saying: “How is it possible to illuminate a house by placing a finger on a wall?”

5. Hell in heaven

Even beyond that, there are systems that can be operated simply by looking at them. It is not essential to turn the keys or switches on and off with fingers as just looking at them is sufficient. It is possible to illuminate a dark place, make a place cold or warm simply by looking at some devices. If we had told these things to those who lived in the past, they would not have believed them. If not, they would have thought that we were talking about heaven, because we think of heaven as a place where food and beverage just emerges. Even at present, it is the same as pressing a button after inserting a coin gives a drink and a plate of food someone needs. If we had told such things to people who lived in the past, they would have imagined a heaven to emerge in another 50 or 100 years on the Earth because such things are possible only in heaven. Based on their limited knowledge and hardships they had suffered to live-to light a stove, boil some water, stitch a dress, prepare some medicine, go somewhere, build a house, send a message-they would not have been able to think or imagine a world with such

comforts. However, they would have felt so happy to know about such a world and wished for living there in the future. We wish for a heaven because of that. Such a heaven with lots of comforts has emerged on this human world. However, does anybody feel that we are living in a heaven? For how many of us has the heaven that we saw with the eyes of the past, become hell today, when we look at it with the eyes of the present?

6. Suffering—then and now

Dear Dhamma Friends, two matters are important here. **How does a sufferer get left behind in the midst of all the comforts and facilities that are available in the present? How does a sufferer live with all these comforts, resources and facilities that we did not have in the past, and we could not even imagine?** Is that something possible? That is one matter.

The second matter is this. In the distant past, people physically suffered a lot. Emergence of science & technology and industrialization is a result of the struggle against physical suffering existed in the past. If we experience some more physical suffering at present, then science continues to struggle against that, looking for ways for relieving such suffering. This

suffering has always existed. This suffering did not arise in the year 2013. To the best of our belief, Buddhism emerged in the world about 2600 years ago. When the Lord Buddha preached Buddhism, He did not say that something known as suffering would emerge in another 2600 years. He said: “Suffering exists.” The Lord Buddha preached such discourses to the people who lived then and also to gods and Brahmins. He said: “All of you suffer.” **Suffering has existed all this time.** We do not come across any place in the past where varying magnitudes of suffering existed. Similarly, **we cannot say that there is more suffering at present than then.**

Dear Dhamma Friends; **popularity of meditation at present is not due problems associated with suffering.** Suffering is not the reason. **We can never find a day in the history of mankind that people did not suffer.** No matter how distant the past was, people suffered due to diverse reasons. At the time of the Lord Buddha, there were people who suffered due to economic problems, political problems, caste related issues, mutual disunity, illnesses, loss of the loved ones, and even beyond all those, due to diverse opinions and beliefs. **Suffering has existed abundantly all this time in Saṃsāra.**

We cannot say that suffering of Saṃsāra exists in varying magnitudes. We think that suffering becomes less and less when we go back further and further to the past. Those who lived in the past think that suffering becomes less and less when they go forward further and further to the future. **Both these groups have not experienced the present suffering. If they had seen the present suffering, they would not have made such cheap statements. Suffering has no relationship with time, either with the past or with the future. Suffering is an action of the present.** As we do not see this action in the present, we hand the suffering over to time. We think: “Time will solve problems associated with suffering. There will be a time period devoid of suffering.” There will not be such a time period. **Suffering is something that we create, an illness that we contract. Therefore, we need to make an attempt to cure the illnesses on our own as it does not happen automatically.** That is the story about suffering.

7. The secret behind popularity of meditation

Suffering is not the real problem but agitation. Today we are so agitated. **Meditation has received a considerable place at present because of agitation not because of suffering,** though

agitation is also a suffering. *Dear Dhamma Friends*, **today's society suffers and experiences agitation that did not exist in the past.** Agitation that not existed and not necessary in the past has turned out to be something essential in the present. **We all are under enormous stress because of this agitation. The word 'stress' is something new, which has a history of only about 15 to 20 years** (especially in Asia). No such word existed about 50 to 60 years ago. There was no such word because there was nothing called stress then. Words are formed based on incidences. If there is no incidence there is no need of a name. What is the point in giving a name? **This word 'stress' is used abundantly today.** On the one hand, there are reputable illnesses that we are proud of. Stress is one among them. It is considered a disgrace not to suffer from such illnesses. It is a disgrace not to have cholesterol or high blood pressure. Likewise, it is a disgrace not to have stress. *Dear Dhamma Friends*; it is worth thinking about the agitation that we all have. Agitation is not suffering as the latter exists anyway. The problem here is not about suffering of Saṃsāra.

How many types of jobs do we have to do? Just think for a moment about the things that you do in your office. Suppose you have to write something. While writing, you have to collect

some information from somebody in regard to your write-up. While writing, you are asking for some information. While asking, you have to retrieve some information from the computer. Now you are doing three things-writing, asking and working on the computer. At the same time, the phone is ringing, so you have to answer the phone. In the midst of all these, someone is talking to you. When all these things are happening simultaneously, you get tired, sweat, feels like drinking some water. Now, you are drinking some water. **Not just 4 to 5 types of jobs, today's human has to attend to so many types of jobs at one particular moment, wherever the person is, at home or on the road.**

8. More facilities but hectic life

Today's transportation facility is something really worth appreciating. Such facilities were not there in the past. Today we can travel a couple of miles within few minutes. A similar journey would have taken a couple of days in the past. At present, we can complete such a journey within 10 to 15 minutes without sweating. If we had to walk, we would sweat. However, **we cannot travel peacefully at present as we have to answer the mobile phone or read an SMS while driving.**

When I get a ride from somebody, I often turn the mobile phone off thinking: “If my phone rings or if an SMS is received or if I have to answer the phone, it may disturb the person who is driving.” Though I turn the phone off, the driver uses the phone most of the time while driving. Sometimes, I cannot even believe how the person who is driving answers the phone while driving. Sometimes, the driver answers not just one mobile phone but two. While driving the vehicle with one hand, the driver reads and replies to SMSs. The danger here is one thing. It is not the danger that matters as the last thing that can happen is death. **The biggest problem is not the death but stress.** This is what has happened to us today. **We try to do many jobs simultaneously. There was no such time period in the past. Those who lived in the past did one work at a time. There was no technology then to do many jobs together.**

In the past, the body was given the priority. People then were engaged in physical work. **The body cannot do many jobs at the same time. The body can do only one job at a time.** After stopping one job only, the body attends to the next job. **Therefore, one’s mind was calm in the past, though suffering was there to some extent in proportion to clinging. However, there was no agitation in the past. It was not possible to be**

agitated either as the body was given the priority. Just observe that clearly. When you do some physical work, suppose you are ploughing a field, you have to stop ploughing first before attending to some other work. A farmer would stop ploughing and then talk to another farmer. It is the same with cooking. As a person had to blow the stove, prepare firewood, stir the curry, open and close the cooking vessels, doing things not related to cooking was not possible. However, today's technology does not need any of those and allows us to do many jobs while cooking.

Dear Dhamma Friends, though doing many jobs simultaneously is a characteristic of development, **our head has got messed up as we try to do so many jobs. Often we do 3 to 4 or even more like 7 to 8 jobs at the same time. This is known as stress. Brain cells and neurons get messed up as we struggle to finish many jobs within a short time, as if a computer gets stuck upon loading it with many tasks.** Today, the human society has come to a place like that because of this agitation. **Because of agitation, humans are so impatient.** People come for meditation as an answer to impatience. **Meditation has become popular not because of suffering but because of**

impatience, though suffering is also a different type of impatience.

9. Getting the lost time back

Suppose a person from a society that occupies each and every second with many jobs comes to a meditation centre, there is no need to be agitated about anything when in a meditation centre as time is plenty, which is the first point. **When someone comes to this meditation centre or goes to any other meditation centres, there is no problem about time.** Sometimes, the time is too long. Someone may feel that a meditation session of one-hour is too long. S/he may be anxious thinking about when the meditation is going to end. S/he may feel that a one-hour meditation session is as long as a day. **When a person is in stress, even one day is shorter than an hour.** Such a person does not even feel the day passing by. **You have a lot of time when you are at a meditation centre,** which is the first point mentioned earlier. **The lost time is given back to the mankind.** There are many things that we have lost with development. We prepare lists of things that we have lost-plants, birds, animals, biodiversity etc., however, we do not include time anywhere on that list.

Dear Dhamma Friends, however, the first thing we have lost is time. **We have lost everything else because we have lost time.** We have lost the environment, marriage etc. A marriage may end up in a divorce because of lack of time to attend to the needs of each other. There are fights among family members as time is not enough for listening to each other peacefully. Anyhow, **when we are at a meditation centre, we get the lost time back.** Time available at a meditation centre is more than what we need. Therefore, the day is too long and there is no agitation either.

10. Getting the lost rest back

The facilities available at this meditation centre are similar to those existed in Stone Age-no facilities, no electricity, thus cannot use electrical appliances, no switches on walls to illuminate, cool down or warm up the surrounding as we wish. **Therefore, a person gets to experience the past. A person gets to experience the ease people had in the past.** Therefore, meditation has become popular, not for any other reason or not merely for its quality. We do not talk much about the qualitative characteristics of meditation. More than that, meditation has become popular because this environment and the timetable

make a person restful. **It is the rest that we have lost today. It is the rest that is essential to us today. Meditation makes you restful. Regardless of meditation, a person becomes restful when staying at a meditation centre.**

11. No need for meditation centres

Having stayed at a meditation centre and come back to society, it may be possible for a person to stay calm for some time. After a while, s/he will be under stress again thus wanting to meditate again. Therefore, there is no end to these two extremes-going to meditation centres and turning the head into something like devil's workshop upon going to agitated society. These two extremes will always exist. As long as these two exist, both meditation centres and agitated society will also exist. Both these places do not help one another to fully solve the problems. When the problems associated with one place are solved, the other place becomes an unnecessary place. **If there is no agitation in society meditation centres are not necessary. Meditation is necessary, but not meditation centres.**

12. Wearing a wrong dress

Dear Dhamma Friends; when a person who lives in a town goes to a village and takes a bath from a well, spends some time looking at a paddy field or a wood or a brook, puts the wristwatch aside and has no access to a television and a telephone, even if s/he is not at a meditation centre, becomes restful. No need to meditate for that, because there is no reason to be stressful when someone stays like that. Meditation is not about staying some time like that. **Meditation is a qualitative development. We misidentify meditation for rest and stop there without reaching that qualitative state.** We always wear a wrong dress as meditation. Rest is only a by-product of meditation. Ease is only a by-product of meditation. **No need to meditate for ease, as it is possible to relax when leaving the restless and stressful society for a calm and quiet place.** As such places make us restful both physically and mentally, we do not need to meditate merely for that.

13. Cultivating virtuous abilities

Meditation is something quite different from relaxation. Meditation is directly connected with suffering. You suffer whether you are restful or agitated. Those who lived in the

past suffered. Everybody lives in the present suffers. Everybody who will live in the future will also suffer. Suffering is there in the human world, the heaven and the Brahman world. Suffering is something quite different. If we think that suffering exists only at present, not in the past, only in the human world, not in the heaven, that is not suffering, but the problems associated with stress. **Meditation is for qualitative development. We need to meditate for cultivating some qualitative development in us. Basically, meditation is developing, cultivating and improving our abilities and inner beauties. One single word used in the Dhamma for abilities and virtues is 'skill' (*kusal*). Skill is a combination of both ability and virtue. Not only ability, there has to be virtuousness. A person has to be virtuous. Ability can go in many directions. Meditation is about cultivating virtuous abilities.**

14. Is meditation another job?

Meditation is not another job. Meditation is not another job that increases the workload of a person who is living life full of work. Suppose a person, after having stayed at a meditation centre, went home for some time and came back; When I asked that person whether s/he was able to meditate or not, often the

answer is: “I could not meditate due to so much work and lack of time.” On the one hand, that answer seems like true. However, that is not true. We are caught up in a big lie. **Referring to having so much work is a lie.** That is probably not a lie uttered knowingly. Let’s accept that a person has so much work if s/he says so, without arguing about it. However, based on that, **if someone thinks that meditation is another job, obviously, such a person will lack time for meditation.** Based on that argument, we can come to such a conclusion.

To repeat; as meditation is taken for another work, the basic argument is: “In my day-to-day life, I have lot of work. I have no time even to attend to day-to-day work. How can I find time for another work?” Based on that argument, one can come to such a conclusion and do away with meditation. However, meditation is not another work. A person needs time to work and a place to work. Everybody gets tired by working. Nobody gets restful by working. Nobody can say that s/he becomes restful by working more and more, but become more and more tired. Whether that work is mental or physical, a person gets tired. **If a person considers meditation as work, s/he gets tired when meditating too.** Therefore, often mediators say that they get tired when meditating. **Truly, meditation does not**

make anybody tired. There is a mistake here, which is a result of holding the serpent by the tail.

Sometimes, when a person looks at the timetable used at the centre and sees that 5.00 to 6.00 am is allocated for meditation, s/he thinks that meditation is a work that s/he has to do during that time. Again, time from 9.30 to 11.00 am is allocated for meditation. Then again a person thinks that s/he has to meditate during that time. The moment a person thinks that s/he has to meditate, it becomes a work or an activity. S/he may further think that such work known as meditation does not exist before 9.30 am and after 11.00 am, but only between 9.30 and 11.00 am. If someone thinks like that, meditation becomes a huge weight on the meditator. **You may have seen some meditators come running to the meditation hall for morning meditation upon ringing the bell-**come running for meditation at 5.00 am and 9.30 am. This happens as they think: “If that time passes by it may not be possible to come to meditation, another work to be done, on time,” as if a person runs to the office before redline is drawn.

15. Do not hurry but be calm

Meditation is something that can never be grabbed by running after it. If you stay at where you are, you still do not meet meditation. However, running will never let you meet meditation. The more you run, the more meditation escapes. No matter how many times the meditators are advised to walk slowly, they cannot grasp such advice because of their agitated mind. **Walk to the meditation hall as slowly as possible. The slower you walk, easier to meditate.** Therefore, **walk slowly to the meditation hall. Take each step attentively. Let go of your hurry. Become calm step by step.**

No matter how many times the meditators are asked to walk slowly, they do not seem to understand this simple matter. Therefore, they run. According to the timetable, chanting starts at 6.45 in the evening followed by meditation. Someone may think: “I need to chant now, then to meditate.” These two are two activities—chanting followed by meditation. If someone likes meditating more than chanting, s/he tries to finish the latter soon. Soon after chanting is over, such a person gets up in a hurry and unfolds the mats in a hurry. What is this hurry for? That is to meditate. When I say this, it sounds like a joke. We all are

caught up in that joke and suffer. **Chanting is a meditation. Unfolding a mat is a meditation.** What is the hurry for? Meditation is one of the things that is not possible to do in a hurry. The more you hurry, the more you miss out of meditation. **A restless and stressful mind cannot grasp something so subtle like meditation.**

16. The two extremes

Dear Dhamma Friends, the first principle we need to understand about meditation is that it is not another work/job. Sometimes, the technicians who construct or repair a building or build steps of this meditation centre are engaged in heavy work. Sometimes, huge stones beyond our imagination are carried by them. These stones are broken with a sledge hammer. These stones are polished up with a hammer and spike. When we look at the way they work, it looks like very hard work. Sometimes, the meditators are asked to help the technicians during the time allocated for working meditation. **After having lifted a stone or two and split some firewood, they feel so tired. Some meditators say that they did not come to the meditation centre to split firewood or to lift stones but to meditate.** At that point they think that meditating is not tiresome as they have

only to sit at a place, but working is tiresome. That is one extreme. **We always think that meditation cannot exist in the active life and it exists in a totally different place. Therefore, we escape from life for meditation, because we think that busy life is one thing and meditation is something else.**

There is another extreme. I often ask the technicians and cooks to come for meditation as they work so hard. Sometimes, they sit in the meditation hall for a little while as they cannot refuse my request. I see them sitting with great difficulty. The truth is this. **It is easier to cook throughout the day for 60 or more people than sitting silently for half an hour. It is easier to lift and break huge stones the whole day than quietly sitting for half an hour.** These are the two extremes. We are always in one of these extremes-**either we think that meditation is easy or others think that working is easy.**

Dear Dhamma Friends, the meditator does not exist in both these extremes. If we are in one of these extremes there is no meditator. There is some mistake. **Ignorance is there, if we think that life is troublesome and staying at a meditation centre is easy.** That is not a statement made having knowledge and understanding about meditation. Similarly, **if a person**

thinks that meditating is a nuisance and it is easy to suffer living an ordinary life, there is some confusion.

17. What is meditation?

Meditation is life. Meditation and life cannot be separated. **Trying to separate the two brings out confusion. Meditation is living wisely. Meditation is living with insightful thinking. Meditation is the insight that separates essential and non-essential activities. Meditation is the effort we take to let go of non-essential activities and to make essential activities successful. Meditation is the technology for knowing how to have mental peace when we are engaged or not engaged in a particular activity.** The last point is the most important.

18. The two halves

When you work for one month you get tired, get sick of work, become restless, get many feelings, become bad-tempered, and lose patience. Under such circumstances, everybody thinks about a full-moon day: “Go to Nilambe or to a temple on a full-moon day and spend some time peacefully.” For the remaining 29 days of the month, a person having an agitated life dreams about Nilambe. One may say that it is a good act. However,

when such a person comes to Nilambe, s/he keeps thinking about work with his/her eyes closed. See clearly. **What are the kinds of thoughts that arise in such a person?** Does s/he think about the Noble Eightfold Path, the Four Noble Truths, the Dependent Origination, and the Seven Awakening Factors? Such thoughts do not arise. The thoughts of such a person are associated with what was done, what has to be done and unsuccessful work. These are the thoughts. After coming to Nilambe, such a person keeps thinking about his/her busy life. When at work, s/he keeps thinking about Nilambe. **Nobody properly lives at any of these places. A person who is here is not properly here. It is the same when s/he is at home.** It is the same when driving a vehicle or working. **Such a person, though s/he is physically at all these places, keeps dreaming of something. One half of that person is at one place and the other half is somewhere else.**

19. Ten in one

A Japanese monk who most people believed to have been spiritually blossomed was asked: “What did you do before attaining enlightenment?” He replied: “I drew water from a well, split wood, swept, drank water when thirsty, ate alms food when

hungry, and slept when sleepy. That is what I did before attaining Arahantship.” Another question was asked. What do you do after attaining Arahantship? He replied: “I drink water when thirsty, eat alms food when hungry, sleep when sleepy, draw water from the well, bring firewood for the cold season etc.” What is the difference between now and then? It seems like the same. When a person looks at these matters externally, there is no difference.

The monk preached: “When I drew water, I did not do it properly as many others were there in my head; persons thinking about drinking water, splitting firewood, begging for alms food, eating alms food and imagining about begging for alms food.” In this manner, I did about 10 more jobs earlier while drawing water. However, now, when I am drawing water, I do only that, nothing else. When I am splitting firewood, I do only that. When I am begging for alms food, I do only that. That is the difference. An outsider cannot see that difference. However, only one person exists now. There are no 10 persons or 10 jobs but only one person and one job at a time.

20. Cause of stress and impatience

Dear Dhamma Friends, only one person can meet the character called ‘meditator.’ If there are multiple characters in you, attending to 10 different jobs, none of them meet the meditator. **When someone has a head doing 10 different jobs at a time, such a person cannot meditate. Do not make an 11th person called “the mediator.”** We create another person called “the meditator” among many characters already created by us because of our ignorance. Inside our head, there is a mother or father, an employee, a person dreaming of the past or future, a person thinking of the country, Buddhist order, the bank, property etc. We go somewhere each and every moment with this whole group.

We read a book also in a similar manner. Who gives full attention to reading a book? One person inside us is reading a book, while a second person who wants to think about the bank account is doing that, a third person who wants to think about his/her job is doing that, a fourth person who wants to think about food is doing that. All these things are happening in every moment in us. **Just count and see how many characters you are in. How many jobs are these characters trying to do?**

These characters are striving inside the computer known as you, to do many jobs. This is impatience. This is stress. If a person counts the number of characters in him/her, that person will go insane. **If a person properly understands about the number of jobs happening simultaneously inside one's head, s/he will really go mad.** Among these 10, 15 and 100 different jobs, meditation is not the 101th job. If one does that, s/he will get into big trouble. If a person makes meditation the 101th job, s/he will not be able to find any time for meditation. Furthermore, such a person does not have any opportunity to meditate and also feels tired, sleepy, and lifeless. **Even if a person finds some time to meditate, as it is the 101th job, s/he has to think about the rest 100 jobs while meditating.**

21. Joining the broken pieces

Dear Dhamma Friends, **meditation is about becoming fully united with you.** Meditation is not a broken life. Life is broken into so many pieces-one piece wants do his/her job, another piece has to think about his/her family life, the next piece has to think about the future. We have stepped onto a life that is broken into uncountable numbers of pieces. **Do not break one small piece and make even a smaller piece called meditation.** That

is a big crime. **We need meditation to put all these broken pieces together. That is known as ‘composure.’ That is known as ‘one-pointedness.’** Take all the broken pieces of life into one fist. Join them. How do we join the broken pieces? We need attentiveness for that. We need to practise attentiveness in order to put the broken pieces together.

22. One job at a time

How do we practise Anapanasati Meditation (Mindfulness of Breathing)? We are being attentive to the breath. The breath is the object of Anapanasati Meditation. However, **having taken leave from work, though you have come with difficulty passing this difficult route to Nilambe, the person in you who wants to be attentive to the breath does not have enough energy to do that as many others in you use that energy. How many things do you think about? Meditator is not there in a person who keeps on thinking while being seated for meditation, but a person who is thinking about his/her job.** Though a person comes here after taking leave from work, s/he is still doing his/her job, while being seated on a mattress with his/her eyes closed and back straightened. S/he is either teaching, doing mathematics, treating a patient or cooking. If

you are a mother or father, you are thinking of your children. If you are a child, you are thinking of your parents with your eyes closed. While thinking of many things, a person tries to be attentive to the breath. However, **no sooner you are attributed with these characters you become totally occupied by them. No sooner the character associated with job enters the stage, the meditator disappears, and you start acting that character.** While you are acting that character, if you remember one of your friends, then you become the character called the friend. At that point, if you remember an illness, you become the patient's character. **In this manner just see how many charters we try to act within this half an hour of meditation.** Therefore, we do not have time. If we have got half an hour for meditation, even within that time period, we do not have time for meditation. The problem associated with lack of time for meditation focuses on this. **One may lack time not because of his/her employment or responsibilities at home but because of this confusion or habit associated with trying to do many jobs simultaneously.** Therefore, even if a person gets a one-month vacation s/he does not have time for meditation. Even if a person is at a meditation centre for one month, s/he does not have time for meditation. This is such a crime. **Therefore, practise in life to pay full attention to what you are doing.**

This is something that needs practising in life. If you drive your vehicle, that is your job, nothing else. Pay full attention to driving. If you are reading a book, pay full attention to reading. If you are watching TV pay full attention to that. Likewise, pay full attention to sweeping if you are sweeping or to eating if you are eating.

One needs effort for that as paying attention to one thing does not happen automatically. Tending to do many jobs at once happens automatically. This is something ridiculous. **One can do many jobs at a time effortlessly. But one has to take a lot of effort to do one job at a time.** See that we have to live a life that has turned inside out. **We can do 10 jobs simultaneously without any effort. We need a big effort to do one job at a time.** This effort is known as the Right Effort.

23. The first priority

Right Effort is a skill (*kusal*). Doing many jobs simultaneously is an unskill (*akusal*). Giving the first priority to the job that you have chosen is a skill. Do not let go of that priority. Always give the first priority to the breath if you have sat for Anapanasati Meditation. You may remember many other things.

Suppose you remember a close friend of you who is about to die. Having come here, what is the use of thinking about that? Did you come here for that? No, you did not come here for that. Separate these two. **The first priority now is not the friend who is about to die but the breath.** If you need to give the first priority to the friend who is about die, you'd better go there and attend to the needs, if such needs are there, without staying here. You may remember your occupation. Remembering your occupation has no use. Give the first priority to your occupation when you are engaged in that. If you have sat for Anapanasati Meditation, be mindful on the breath.

The most important theory of meditation is about giving the first priority to mindfulness. If meditation is a subject, the first lesson of the syllabus is on giving the first priority to mindfulness. Give the first priority to mindfulness. **What is mindfulness? It is to be aware of what you are doing at present.** Give the first priority to that. You may remember your children. Do not give the first priority to your children when you are attentive to breath. Do not give the first priority to your children when you are driving. Give the first priority to driving, to that action. Your children may be at home or school. At a time when you need to give the full attention to your children,

be attentive to them, not to your occupation or to the meditation centre or to the television. This life is very easy. However, you have to make an effort to regain the life which has got turned upside down. Make the life that is standing on the head to stand on the feet. We need to take a big effort for that.

Dear Dhamma Friends, therefore, meditation is not a job. Do not suffer by making meditation a job. At any moment when you make meditation a job, you lose natural happiness, natural elation, natural joy, and natural ecstasy. When this happens, you have to grind teeth, start a big struggle, and face obstacles. Afterwards, you start fighting against obstacles. Mind does not settle down. You struggle with your mind. You may find it difficult to be in one posture. You fight against aches and pains. Wherein is happiness? Wherein is ease? We think that we cannot be attentive to the meditation object as someone is sweeping, someone else is coughing, another is shouting, mind is wandering, the body is aching. **If we take meditation for a job all these things are obstacles. However, meditation is not a job. It is to be aware of what is happening.**

24. Effortless awareness

We do not take an effort to breathe. **Our job is not to breathe but to be aware of the breath.** Often Anapanasati Meditation is referred to as breathing-in and breathing-out. **Breathing -in and -out is not our job.** Do not become overworked by making a job that does not belong to us. **Breathing -in and -out is an activity belonging to the body.** The body has been doing that nicely from birth until now. You do not have to accept that job. **Meditation is about being aware of what is being done or what is happening.** If the breath goes in, just be aware that it is going in. **A person does not need to take any effort to be aware of the breath. A person does not become weary either.**

25. Letting go of thoughts

In the meantime, just recognize when thousands of other characters that we act, crop up wearing different masks. **None of these characters are necessary for the act called meditation.** Therefore, leave these characters alone. Send these characters to the back of the stage. When the character called ‘the worker’ comes, let go of that character. When you remember social responsibilities, let go of them at that time.

When you remember your house and other properties, let go of them.

The Dhamma teaches about “letting go” as a concept, not as giving up things physically. “Letting go” or the intention of renunciation (*Nekkhamma Saṅkappa*) is one part of “Right Intention” (*Sammā Saṅkappa*), the second factor of the Noble Eight Fold Path. Do not grasp these things as concepts. **Suppose you remember your house. It does not mean that the house has physically entered your mind. It is a thought about the house, which is merely a concept.** Thoughts like “I am the head of the household, I am the housewife” are mere concepts. There is no house or a head of household here at the meditation centre. Truly, there is no such person here. **Only two thoughts are there—a thought about a house and another thought about you as the head of the household.**

Nekkhamma Saṅkappa is the renunciation of such thoughts. Do not creep into the thought associated with your house and stay in it. Renounce that thought. Let go of that thought. **Let go of that and come back to your prime activity, which is to be aware of the breath.** If it is “walking meditation” come back to the walk. **You can meditate at any place. When you are**

brushing your teeth, you are a person who is brushing your teeth. The vehicle may enter the head of the person who is brushing teeth. It is not the vehicle, but the thought made by you about your vehicle enters your head. Let go of that thought. Do not grasp that thought. Let go of the vehicle means letting go of making thoughts associated with your vehicle. Let go of the thoughts associated with your vehicle and give the first priority to the activity you are doing, which is brushing your teeth.

26. Meet the entire you

Is there a place where you cannot do this meditation? Is there a place where you find it difficult to do this meditation? Is this a job? Is this another job that makes you tired, stressful, lose your time and get busy? Or else, is it a job that makes you restful, relaxed and meet yourself? Meditation is a light that joins the life that is broken into an uncountable number of characters. **If you practise this meditation you get to meet the entire you, not just a small piece of you. You get to meet the entire you everywhere; when brushing teeth, combing hair, sweeping, doing your job as well as at Nilambe.**

This is the interpretation given in Buddhism about meditation. There may be diverse interpretations about meditation. However, Buddhism gives such an interpretation about meditation. **Use meditation to understand life, not to run away from life, not to make a new character. Use meditation to recognize the uncountable number of characters that you play. Use meditation to live in one character at a time. Use meditation to let go of unnecessary characters.** At that point, you'll realize that there is no quality and ability other than meditation that makes you relaxed, restful and lighten. Meditate for that.

May the Triple Gem Bless You!!!