

The Path of Coming

Alive



Upul Nishantha Gamage



All confusions in life arise because we do not see thinking as an action. A mental action and a physical action can never take place simultaneously. Engaging in a bodily action or a verbal action while thinking makes you a dead person as the mind gives the first priority to its actions. Life devoid of the foundation of mindfulness is dead or lifeless, like a dead body. Therefore, each thought can carry us and drop us at a place unknown to us, at a place where we do not want to go, like a gale that blows away things that are dead. As a result we feel helpless.

The foundation of mindfulness teaches us the simplest method for becoming alive, becoming aware of what is happening and how to live without being blown away by mental actions. Just do one action at one time or become unified in any given moment. One moment is only for one action, not for 2 or 3 actions. One moment is equal to one action.

Recognize when a thought arises. Let go of thinking if you do not want to think. Stop physical actions if you want to think. The foundation of mindfulness is the path for coming out of your helplessness and becoming alive, cool, peaceful and liberated.



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Light of Nilambe

23

Dhamma Dāna

*This is
to express my deepest gratitude to*

my loving mother

Lakshmi Hatthotuwa

on her Birthday.

***May this merit be conducive for all mothers
to have best of health, happiness and long life!***

Himali Samaraweera

The Path of Coming Alive

Talk given by

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CONTENTS

1. The causes of confusion and clarity	9
2. One action at one time	11
3. Entangling	12
4. Clinging to the unborn future	14
5. Coming, staying and going away	16
6. Entangling with the past and the future	17
7. The cause of mental heaviness	19
8. Releasing the mind	21
9. Experience associated with tranquillity meditation	23
10. The path for clearing the mind	25
11. Lifeless living	27
12. The Dead are blown away	29
13. Strength and power of live emotions	30
14. Living vs existing	34
15. Helplessness	35
16. What makes you dead while living?	36
17. What makes us alive?	38
18. Becoming unified at one moment	40
19. What causes confusion in saṃsāra?	41
20. Thinking is also an action	42
21. Thinking gets given priority	43
22. The simplest method of becoming alive	45
23. Benefits of becoming alive	46

Previous Publications of Light of Nilambe

1. What is human life?
2. Be an outsider if you want to change the inside
3. Seeing emptiness
4. Suffering is a dream
5. In between happiness and unhappiness
6. Buddhism = Heartfulness + Mindfulness
7. No colour no shape
8. Living with awareness & Watching thoughts and emotions
9. Sit on your own seat
10. Illusion of painful painkillers
11. Disentangling tangles
12. Rain of thoughts

13. No burning
14. Springs from the heart
15. Multiple characters multiple suffering
16. Save time by investing in time
17. Hatred, love & mettā
18. Acquiring a mind like pure gold
19. Seeing the nature of the world
20. Living inside a world of stories
21. The beauty of the silent mind
22. The happiness of letting go

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1. The causes of confusion and clarity

Dear Dhamma Friends, we all have experienced how meditation corrects us physically and also mentally. Meditating for some time keeps us away from confusions, complications and complexities. For instance, meditation corrects complications and difficulties associated with breathing. We can meditate with the intention of correcting such complications. And even if we do not, meditation corrects the complications associated with breathing.

What are the complications associated with breathing? One such complication is being confused as to whether we are breathing in or out. Two things are needed for any entangling. For instance, two threads of yarn get entangled. The presence of more than one person may create confusion. **Two actions like breathing in and breathing out may become entangled with each other because of the competition between them.** Breathing in tries to surpass breathing out. Or, breathing in

starts before breathing out is over. Meditation corrects any such confusion associated with breathing.

A person may find it difficult to experience breathing in completely at the beginning of meditation as breathing out happens in the middle of it. Breathing in also happens in the middle of breathing out. Therefore, it is difficult to distinguish between these two actions at the beginning of meditation. There may be some other reasons for this difficulty. But, the fact that more than one action is happening at once is one of the reasons for such a difficulty. **If only one action takes place at one moment, then there is no confusion.** If two different actions become entangled with each other, if they try to surpass each other, then there is no clarity in them.

Dear Dhamma Friends, because meditation overcomes the complications associated with breathing, we can experience clearly that breathing out takes place after breathing in is over and vice versa. In this manner, **a person gets to clearly experience breathing when practising meditation on**

mindfulness of breathing (*Ānāpāna Sati Bhāvanā*). **This is the first thing that a person gets to clearly experience.** As a result, a person experiences the beauty of breathing in and breathing out.

2. One action at one time

We can use the word ‘beautiful’ not only to describe things we see but also to describe things we do not see, but experience. Meditation on mindfulness of breathing offers us this pleasant experience associated with the breath. **Now only one action - either breathing in or breathing out - takes place at one moment.** Now these two actions do not take place simultaneously. Therefore, there is no entangling between breathing in and breathing out, like a tangled rope. Breathing in completely allows breathing out to take place. Breathing in is quiet when breathing out is taking place, as if the former did not exist. When breathing out is over then breathing in will start. Breathing out does not disturb breathing in. As a result, a person gets to experience the beauty of the action called

breathing. **One action does not disturb the other action. Whichever action should take priority at any moment, it is given not only the priority but also a complete footing.** Not just a quarter or a half or a percentage or a portion, the full footing is given to breathing. Now, therefore, breathing is a beautiful experience.

3. Entangling

Everything is entangled in our life, especially in human life. Not only human life, everything in the universe is entangled with something. It is not possible to find anything that is not entangled with something. Just ponder on the whole universe. **Everything in the universe is entangled.** We see lots of stars in the sky at night when there are no clouds. We think that the thousands or millions of stars in the sky are situated distantly and independently from each other. That is not true. All the stars are entangled with something. A star that we think exists independently has no freedom because it is entangled with many things such as the planets and the Milky Way in the

galaxy. Therefore, stars do not have a free journey. The planets in our solar system do not have any freedom.

Everything in the physical world is entangled with other things that are necessary and unnecessary. You do not come across anything in the physical world that exists in isolation. This is presented as a theory of the physical world. Nothing in the physical world exists in isolation without becoming entangled with and combining with something. Our life is the same. **Our life becomes entangled with necessary and unnecessary things and essential and non-essential people.** The mind and the breath are the same.

All this entangling and confusion is caused by unawareness. Entangling and confusion do not happen knowingly. We do not think, say or do anything with the intention of getting confused about something. We become entangled as a result of thinking, saying and doing things unknowingly.

Dear Dhamma Friends, see how the present entangles with events that have already taken place. The present entangles also with events associated merely with the past memory. Such events may never happen again. **Have you experienced any moment in the present that has not entangled with the past?**

A moment is something very small. Life is extremely long compared to a single moment. Life is measured in years. In general, a lifespan is not just a year or two, but maybe 60 or 70 or 80 years. A moment is like a tiny particle of a life lifespan.

Have you come across any moment in the present that has not entangled with the past (past experience, any pleasure or suffering experienced in the past, smiles in the past, tears in the past etc.)?

4. Clinging to the unborn future

We also entangle with the unborn future, which is just a mere belief. Thinking about the existence of a tomorrow is a mere belief. Who knows for sure that there will be a tomorrow? Is

there any evidence to prove that there will be a tomorrow? We only believe that there will be a tomorrow, next month, next year etc. Such a belief may come true. Just because our belief comes true, we cannot say that tomorrow or next month or next year is not a mere belief. We believe that there is something called the future. It is not a big mistake in our ordinary life to have such a belief, but it is big mistake as far as saṃsāra is concerned. **Because we believe that there will be a tomorrow, the future and the next birth, we cling to the unborn future.**

Moreover, we have wishes and expectations associated with the unborn future. What do we desire and expect? We desire and expect saṃsāra. If a person has a desire for tomorrow, s/he does not desire to have tomorrow but saṃsāra. A person who desires the next year also desires saṃsāra. **A belief associated with the future causes someone to cling to saṃsāra.** Such a belief is a factor that causes clinging to saṃsāra. We need such a belief for our day-to-day life. It is difficult to attend to

activities in our ordinary life without having such a belief. But if **you understand that tomorrow is only a belief, you can live without having any confusion.**

5. Coming, staying and going away

Dear Dhamma Friends, we think that tomorrow truly exists. We do not think that tomorrow is only a belief. We think that the past is true. Therefore, we think that the suffering and pleasure we experienced in the past still exist. However, **anything we experienced in the past does not exist in the present. Only thoughts associated with the pleasure experienced in the past exist.** Suffering and pleasure go away leaving only memories associated with them with us. It is the nature of each and every suffering and pleasure experienced by us to come, stay for a while and go away.

Dear Dhamma Friends, **no suffering stays with us forever. No matter how painful and unbearable our suffering is, it comes, stays for a while and goes away.** We suffer for some time, not

forever. Similarly, no pleasure stays with us forever. A person may experience enormous pleasure, ease and comfort for some time, maybe for a long time, maybe for a short time, not forever. **Each pleasure comes, makes us happy for some time and then goes away.**

6. Entangling with the past and the future

We cannot find out where the pleasure has gone. We cannot find it even if we look for it. Where is the pleasure you experienced with pride and insolence? Where is the pleasure that you made known to the whole world? Where has it gone? Where is it hidden? You can never see the pleasure you experienced in the past again. Such pleasure has evaporated, disappeared. It is not dead either. If it were dead we should be able to see it somewhere as everybody who dies is born again. It is possible for us to find everybody who dies somewhere in this saṃsāra. However *Dear Dhamma Friends*, **it is impossible for us to find the pleasure we experienced in the past.** This is the truth.

We entangle the present moment with the pleasure and suffering experienced in the past. What else do we have to think about? We may have lots of things to think about. But what do we think about most? We think mostly about the pleasure and suffering experienced in the past. We also think about the pleasure we intend and wish to experience in the future, maybe tomorrow, maybe later. We think about such pleasure. We contemplate the future pleasure. A person may feel happy while thinking about the future pleasure. Everybody contemplates and thinks happily, not sadly, about the future pleasure.

We also have fear for possible suffering in the future. We fear that our plans may not work properly, our expectations may not come true, we may have to face unexpected events in life etc. **We entangle the present moment with such fear and doubt.** What else do we think about the future? No matter how we think about the future, we think only about the

pleasure we wish for and expect to experience and also the suffering we do not like but may have to face.

We cannot count the number of moments in life as there are countless moments. Have you experienced even one moment in life in which you did not become entangled with the past and the future?

7. The cause of mental heaviness

This confusion and complexity goes on and on. Therefore, the mind is not clear. Such a mind is not light. **Such a mind is very heavy.** If you ponder, we cannot see any mental reason why we feel tired and live life laden with heaviness. Although we cannot see any mental reason, our **head is laden with the pleasure and suffering experienced in the past and also with those that we anticipate.** We keep a big pair of scales consisting of two pans, which carry the past and the future pleasure and suffering in them. **A person stands up in the present while carrying such a pair of scales on his/her shoulder.** How can a

person experience any ease? We cannot see these things. We can see if a person is carrying a coconut or a loaf of bread. We are aware of its weight, maybe 400g or 500 g or 1 kg. Another person can take the loaf of bread or the coconut from the first person to relieve them when they get tired. However, we do not see the mental heaviness or confusion of another person as it is not something physical like a coconut or a loaf of bread. Therefore, **another person cannot relieve your mental heaviness.** Who can do such a thing? Someone else can carry something you carry in your hands. You can also give something you carry to another person. You can put it down. You can throw it away.

However, **who can take the heaviness off your head? Who can share the heaviness of your head? Who can relieve your heaviness?** Therefore, we make both pans of the scales heavier throughout our life. The weight of both pans increases. The greater the pleasure or suffering we experienced in past, the heavier the pan on one side or other of the scales. Even the

pleasure and suffering we anticipate do not lessen but increase. Therefore, the pan on the other side of the scales also gets heavier. **Heaviness associated with the past, the future, pleasure and suffering goes up.** We become entangled with all these four things and get stuck in the present. Therefore, a human experiences a life that is stuck in the present.

8. Releasing the mind

Practising meditation on mindfulness of breathing solves confusion associated with breathing in and breathing out. As a result, only breathing in takes place when you inhale and only breathing out takes place when you exhale. These two actions do not happen simultaneously. Also, any thinking associated with a timeframe starts relaxing and getting clearer. This can happen naturally. A person can solve this confusion intentionally. Practising meditation on mindfulness of breathing naturally solves this confusion to some extent because the meditator pays attention to an object that is in the present.

All meditation objects exist in the present. We cannot meditate on objects that existed in the past. We cannot meditate on objects we anticipate in the future. Whatever the meditation object is, whether it is a kasina or the soles of the feet in walking meditation or sounds or the breath, all of them are associated with the present.

In tranquillity meditation, we pay attention to an action taking place in the present. We can choose one action among many actions taking place in the present. Then we practise to pay attention to that action. We do not pay attention to 10 or 20 actions but only one action. This is one basic theory of tranquillity meditation. Understand this theory clearly. Tranquillity meditation is not about paying attention to many actions but only to one action. **Pay attention again and again only to that particular action. Not only that, try to concentrate the mind on that particular action as long as possible.** As a result, **we are able to release our mind from the past and the future.**

Though we refer to the past and the future, they do not exist. Only two thoughts about the past and the future exist. There is no powerful force known as the past and the future. Only two thoughts about the past and the future exist. We confuse the present with these two thoughts about the past and the future. We let go of these thoughts in tranquility meditation. **There is no meditation without letting go.**

Pay attention to the meditation object you have chosen again and again while letting go of thoughts about the past and the future. In this manner, you cultivate your mind. **You do not habituate the mind but cultivate it.** Cultivating is one thing and habituating is something else. You cultivate the mind. As a result, the mind becomes free from thoughts about the past and the future. Therefore, a person can fully experience the meditation object chosen by him/her. The mind feels enormous peace and immense freedom. **The mind gets released from confusion. Only the present exists at that moment. Heaviness caused by thoughts about the past pleasure and suffering**

does not exist. Likewise, heaviness caused by thoughts about future pleasure and suffering does not exist. Only ease in the present moment exists. We experience a clear mind.

9. Experience associated with tranquillity meditation

This clarity of the mind gives limitless peace, happiness and ease. Such an experience is not enlightenment. I am not talking about the pleasure of enlightenment. This is about the peace which emerges as a result of cultivating the mind to concentrate on one object in tranquillity meditation. **This is about the peace and ease of composure.** The body becomes well too. As an example, I talked earlier about the clarity of breathing. Not only breathing, but also many other physical complications get settled. **Even the mind gets settled as a result of cultivating the mind through tranquillity meditation.**

Dear Dhamma Friends, ‘tranquillity meditation’ describes the peace and happiness of a clear mind and the ease of a settled body. The Dhamma says: “Experience all this.” We can

experience all this step by step. Meditation is for correcting ourselves, not for getting ourselves confused. Meditation is not for making our life more confused than it already was and thereby making it heavier beyond the limit that we can tolerate. Meditation makes us put aside the heaviness we had before. It disentangles any confusion we had before. It gets us to experience the peaceful joy caused by disentangling our confusion mindfully.

If you feel any freedom when you put aside your heaviness, just experience it. *Dear Dhamma Friends*, if a person practises tranquillity meditation in this manner s/he can live an uncomplicated life, a less confused, less complicated and less complex life. However, as soon as you give up this practice, you get confused again. It does not happen at that moment itself. But if you neglect your practice, if you forget your practice, you may get confused again. As the **tendency of getting confused still exists, we need a practice that goes beyond tranquillity meditation.**

10. The path for clearing the mind

Such a practice is referred to as the foundation of mindfulness (Satipaṭṭhāna). We have heard about the foundation of mindfulness quite often. As a group of people who are interested in meditation, we all have heard, thought and read about the foundation of mindfulness and have also practised it to some extent.

Let's pay attention to the foundation of mindfulness for a while. Let's pay attention to the facts we have heard, read, experienced and thought about regarding the foundation of mindfulness. In a sense, we can say that the foundation of mindfulness is the basic teaching in Buddhism. It is alright if we say that **the one and only teaching in Buddhism is the foundation of mindfulness**. This does not mean that there is no other teaching in Buddhism. But if somebody asks what Buddhism is about, what is the message given in Buddhism in one word, that is the foundation of mindfulness. Such an answer is 100 per cent correct. It is even 200 per cent correct.

What is the foundation of mindfulness? We can give the same analysis presented earlier. **It is the path that clears a confused mind. It is the path that disentangles entangled thinking.**

I said earlier that entangling happens unintentionally. Nobody can get entangled intentionally. We get entangled without our knowledge. We get caught in thorny bushes without our knowledge. We do not think that we'll get caught. However, we realise it only after it happens.

The foundation of mindfulness refers to waking up to the entangling that happens without our knowledge. A person creates all confusions as a result of living without knowing what is happening. A person creates all confusions associated with the economy or emotions or other people or him/herself because of unawareness, because of being devoid of mindfulness.

We need to acquire mindfulness in order to live without creating confusions. The basic point presented by the

foundation of mindfulness is how to live without creating any confusion. **Tranquillity meditation is about disentangling the existing tangles. It does not teach us how to live without creating confusions.** That is more than enough if we do not get entangled again. However, because we may get entangled again, practising only tranquillity meditation is not enough.

11. Lifeless living

The foundation of mindfulness teaches us how we create confusions and how we should live without creating confusions. The foundation of mindfulness educates us on living without creating confusions. Therefore, the word ‘viharati’ (living) appears from the beginning to the end of the foundation of mindfulness. There are two ways of living, either as a dead person or as a living person. **The life of a person who lives like a dead person is lifeless.** Such a person lives a lifeless life. Therefore, the Dhamma says that such a person, though living, is like a dead person. This simile is beautifully presented in the Dhamma.

Dhammapada verse 21

Appamādo amatapadaṃ (mindfulness is the way to the deathless), *pamādo maccuno padaṃ* (being devoid of mindfulness is the way to death).

Appamattā na mīyanti (those who are mindful do not die), *ye pamattā yathā matā* (those who are not mindful live as if already dead).

Life devoid of the foundation of mindfulness is like a dead one. Such life is lifeless, like a dead body. As a person has to die to become lifeless, how can life become lifeless? *Dear Dhamma Friends*, in the absence of the foundation of mindfulness, although a person is living, his/her life is like a dead one. **If you are not mindful, it is not you who live.** That is the problem here. **It is not you who live but many other things. You are lifeless but many other things are alive.**

12. The Dead are blown away

The wind blows away things depending on its strength. It can carry things from one place to another place. A wind not so strong can carry a dry leaf. A stronger wind can carry a branch of a tree. A wind that is much stronger or a gale can carry even a tree. When we look at the sky, we can see that things such as leaves and branches are blown away by the wind. A gale can carry even a vehicle from one place to another place. Roofs and roofing materials are blown away. However, none of these things need to be carried from one place to another place. **Everything blown away by the wind is dead. Only the wind is alive and everything that it carries with it is dead.** Even a bird that is blown away by the wind is not alive. Only the wind is active at that moment because the bird does not flap its wings and fly but is blown away by the wind. The wind does not take the bird to a place where it wants to fly.

We become completely inactive when a gale blows us away. This is the best simile to understand the nature of being alive

and dead. Only the wind/gale is alive. **Everything, whether it is alive or dead, blown away by the wind is dead at that moment.** Such things have no power. They completely surrender to the gale. They are controlled by the gale. Therefore, the gale carries things and throws them away at a place where they do not want to be.

13. Strength and power of live emotions

In the absence of mindfulness, we too acquire such a state. In the absence of the foundation of mindfulness, each thought can carry us and drop us, like a gale, at a place unknown to us, at a place where we do not want to go. This is not like we are being carried by somebody somewhere affectionately. See clearly what the thoughts, especially defilements and emotions do to us. **Defilements are more intense than a gale.** The velocity of the wind can be measured. Its direction can be measured. We can predict winds - a wind of a known velocity will blow in a particular direction tomorrow. We can control such things. We can predict such things to some extent.

However, who can predict any emotion, not somebody else's emotion but your own emotion? Can we predict the kind of emotion that may arise in us at a particular moment, at a particular place? Can we predict its intensity? Can we predict what it will do to us? Can we predict when it will leave us? Such predictions are not possible because the emotions are very strong, even stronger and crueller than a gale.

One single emotion is more than enough to ruin someone's life, to ruin someone's life unexpectedly. Therefore, see clearly what happens to you when an emotion or defilement arises. **You become a person who is dead like a tiny dry leaf.** You cannot refuse anything like a dry leaf which cannot refuse being blown away by the wind. The wind takes the dry leaf to a place where the wind wishes. The wind breaks it into many pieces. The wind carries it 100 or 200 meters above the ground and drops it. As a result, the leaf falls onto a place where it does not want to be and breaks into pieces. **Each thought and emotion that arises in us can do the same thing to us if we are**

not mindful. We have to go to a place where we are not supposed to go, we have to fall down somewhere, and we have to suffer.

Whenever we are under the influence of any emotion, we are dead, though we think we are strong. At such moments, **the person is dead but the emotion is alive, the anger is alive. Both the anger and the angry person do not become alive together.** The more dead the person is, the more alive the anger becomes. The more inactive the person is, the more active the anger becomes. This happens not only with anger but also with all other emotions. Just look at desire, lust and greediness. The more intense such emotions are, the weaker the person becomes. The weaker and weaker the person becomes, the more and more intense the emotion becomes. As a result, **the person becomes dead and the emotion becomes alive.** Therefore, the emotion that is alive can take the dead person anywhere it wants. A person who is alive can refuse to go anywhere or to do something under the influence of

emotions. A dead body does not have the ability to refuse such things. Whether a dead body is carried in a vehicle or on the shoulder, or is dragged along the ground, it does not refuse to go. The term 'dead' refers to the nature of being unable to refuse something or losing the ability to say 'no'. **In the absence of the foundation of mindfulness, or cultivated mindfulness, or developed mindfulness, only a dead person exists.** We cannot say that a dead person lives, instead, a dead person exists.

14. Living vs existing

There are two actions in this world. 'Living' is one action and 'existing' is the other action. We cannot say that this meditation hall lives but it exists. We say that a tree or a mountain, or a river, or the sea, or a desert, or the ground, or the sky exists. We do not say that they live. **Things that merely exist are not alive.** They are dead. We do not use the verb 'exist' to refer to anything alive. We say that such things live. A mountain does not live but exist. A mountain can never live.

However, a mountain has existence. A mountain exists as it is not because it needs to be that way. Other factors such as rain, the sunlight, the gravitational force etc. affect the existence of a mountain as it is, a river as it is, a waterfall as it is, a building as it is, a desert as it is, the sky as it is, the sun as it is, the stars as they are and the planets as they are. Any such existence cannot become alive. Therefore, a mountain cannot live but it can exist. The sun cannot live but it can exist. A river cannot live but it can exist.

15. Helplessness

A river flows not because it wants to flow but because of other factors such as the gravitational force. No river can refuse to flow when the gravitational force pulls it down. Any river has to yield to the gravitational force and continues to flow down across land to the sea. Similarly, the water in a river has to yield to the sun and evaporate. No single drop of water can refuse to evaporate when the sun rises, saying: “I do not evaporate. I do not want to evaporate. I do not need to become a cloud.” No

drop of water has the ability to refuse to evaporate. A drop of water does not want to evaporate or turn into a cloud or a mist. When the heat and pressure required for evaporation build up, a drop of water has to yield to them and evaporate whether it likes it or not. A drop of water is helpless. **Everything that exists is helpless.** A drop of water does not know for how long it has to exist as it is, for how long it has to evaporate in the form of a mist, for how long it has to stay in the sky as a cloud. Will it be able to stay as a cloud? No, it will not. When the cloud becomes heavy, it has to fall down in the form of rain. This happens not because the cloud wants to fall down. **This is the truth about everything that exists. Everything that merely exists is extremely helpless.**

16. What makes you dead while living?

A human becomes extremely helpless like a drop of water due to the loss of being alive, the loss of mindfulness. Such a human no longer lives but exists. **There is nothing more sorrowful than becoming a person who does not live but exists.** *Dear*

Dhamma Friends, death is not as sorrowful as that. Although death brings sorrow, **having to merely exist after being born as a human is more sorrowful than death.** Dying after being born as a human is not a reason to be sorrowful as it is a natural event in life that cannot be prevented from happening. However, **it is sorrowful when a person who was born as a human starts to merely exist instead of living like a mountain or a drop of water.** Such a person is washed away by each thought like the river current that washes away dry grass. As a result, a person is taken here and there, to a place where s/he does not want to be.

If you think about what you have done to yourself, a sense of spiritual urgency crops up. Just think what you have done to yourself. A mountain cannot think like that. A mountain cannot look into what has happened to itself. It is not possible for the sunlight, rain, clouds, rivers, waterfalls, the sea, mountains and deserts to examine themselves. Even animals do not have that

ability. Therefore, it is better to say than an animal exists rather than it lives.

Animals are alive. Animals like their life. Therefore, killing, scaring, torturing and tormenting animals is a sin, an unskill. However, an animal cannot understand what has happened to it. Therefore, in a way, even an animal exists, rather than living. It exists with the help of metabolic reactions. It exists with hunger, thirst, sleepiness etc. Even a human exists. However, **only a human can question what has happened to him/her.** This is the first question asked by the foundation of mindfulness: “What has happened? See what has happened.” Whom can you ask this question? There is no point in asking your teacher because you will not get an answer that can solve your problem. Therefore, **question yourself.**

17. What makes us alive?

The foundation of mindfulness is the process that makes us alive. Something that merely existed starts becoming alive.

Something that merely existed starts living. Such a transformation is the greatest evolution. We talk about different periods of evolution. The next leap forward in the evolution process is the foundation of mindfulness. **Becoming a person who is truly alive is in the hands of the meditator.** The entire evolution process was in the hands of nature. However, **nature cannot make a dead person who merely exists into a living person.** But the foundation of mindfulness can do that. Mindfulness acquired, generated, developed and cultivated by you can make a person who just exists into a living person. The entire foundation of mindfulness teaches us this lesson in detail and in brief. No matter how long or short the lesson is, **its simplest message is about becoming alive, becoming aware of what is happening without being influenced by each and every force, without being washed away.** Be alive. Be aware of what is happening. The foundation of mindfulness gives your lost life back to you. Therefore, we do not lose anything because of the foundation of mindfulness. Instead, we get back the things we have already lost.

We do not have our life. Therefore, we just exist. Because a mountain or a river does not have life at all, they have no life to give. However, we have thrown away the life we had. The foundation of mindfulness gives our lost life back to us. Only the foundation of mindfulness can gift our lost life back to us. A god or a Brahman or a king cannot do that. They may be able to give diverse gifts. However, it is impossible for them to give our lost life back, to make us alive.

18. Becoming unified at one moment

Dear Dhamma Friends, what does the foundation of mindfulness tell us in a simple manner? To the best of my understanding, **it tells us to live without creating any confusion with anything/anybody.** We need at least two things to create any confusion/entangling-the present and the past, the present and the future, here and there etc. **There is no entangling in the absence of two things. The foundation of mindfulness tells us to become unified at one moment/any given moment.** We have become many-2 or 3 or more-at any

given moment. Therefore, it is no surprise if we become entangled. In the simplest manner, **the foundation of mindfulness tells us to become one. Just do only one thing at one moment. One moment is only for one action, not for 2 or 3 actions.** We have entangled each moment as we think that we can do many things during one moment. Therefore, we try to do more than one job at one time. Then we become entangled.

19. What causes confusion in saṃsāra?

Trying to do many jobs at a time is the basic problem which causes confusion in saṃsāra. See clearly. Then we can see that the problem about saṃsāra is very simple. **Trying to do many jobs—in one moment creates saṃsāra. The creation of suffering and agitation is also a result of trying to do many jobs at a time.** Because of that, we even create defilements. Do not think that trying to do many jobs at one moment is a sign of your cleverness. It does not increase your efficiency, though we often think it does. **We can never save time by**

doing many jobs at one time, though we think we can. Moreover, the lifespan of a person does not get longer and saṃsāra does not get shorter. We do not get to experience any lightness. Furthermore, it is difficult to do many things at one time without making mistakes. Just look at our mistakes. Making mistakes is a characteristic of humans. Often we have to correct what we write as we make mistakes. This happens because we are doing something else - either listening to something, looking at something or thinking about something else - while writing. When you try to do two jobs at a time, one job goes wrong. It is not possible to do two jobs without making mistakes in one of them.

20. Thinking is also an action

According to the Dhamma, thinking is also an action. Because we do not see it as another action, all confusions in life arise. **Thinking, contemplating, making plans and recalling are mental actions.** Scraping coconut, slicing onions, driving, listening and talking are physical actions. **A mental action and a**

physical action can never take place simultaneously. Suppose you are engaged in a physical action - maybe walking or driving, or reading a book, or listening to something, or talking, or cooking, or sweeping, or preparing tea or painting. These are either bodily actions or verbal actions. While we are engaged in one of these actions, we start thinking. We start thinking about something totally different from what we are doing. A totally different thought arises. Then we start thinking about it. **As thinking is also an action, now we are doing another action called thinking.** We are thinking while walking, driving, or cooking. Maybe we are recalling something or making plans while cooking. What happens here?

21. Thinking gets given priority

The mind makes its action the priority. The mind always does this. **The mind always gives priority to its actions. When the mental action takes priority, physical actions such as bodily actions and verbal actions take second and third place.** As a result, we cannot fully engage in bodily actions or verbal

actions. We do these actions only partially. What do we do completely? Only thinking. What are we doing most of the time? We are thinking or making plans, or dreaming or daydreaming. We are always intruded upon by such mental actions like a gale. **Thinking blows like a gale. A bodily action or a verbal action is blown away by thinking.**

See that thinking is also an action. As soon as thinking is made alive, the person who is walking disappears. As soon as the action of thinking about the incidents that happened in the past becomes alive, the person who is listening becomes dead. Now the listening is dead. Now the words you hear do not reach the ears. Whatever you hear does not reach the interior of your ears as they are dead now. Your ears are like a turned off recorder. You do not understand what you are hearing. Suppose you remember something while you are reading a book. Now you keep on reading while you are remembering. Now your reading is dead and your dreaming is alive. Therefore, you do not understand what you are reading. You

are reading page upon page but you do not understand what you read, you do not remember what you read, you cannot recall what you read. **This happens because a person who is dead has read the book.** Reading is dead. Similarly, eating is dead. In this manner all the actions we do have this confusion. Sleeping is also dead. Therefore, even sleeping is confusion.

22. The simplest method of becoming alive

Dear Dhamma Friends, be alive. The foundation of mindfulness tells us the simplest method of becoming alive. **Just do one action at any given moment.** When you are walking, you need to do only walking. When you are sitting, you need to do only sitting. When you are eating, you need to do only eating. When you are talking, you need to do only talking. When you are listening, you need to do only listening. This explanation of the foundation of mindfulness is very beautiful and charming.

What is the simple message given in the foundation of mindfulness? Do you want to continue to merely exist like a

mountain? Do you want to exist like a drop of water which evaporates or a cloud that floats in the sky or a raindrop that falls to the ground at an unwanted time? Do you want to exist like a person who gets angry or becomes fearful or feels a surge of desire or feels madly jealous when you do not need to be? Or else, **do you want to acquire a peaceful and easy life free from all of this?**

23. Benefits of becoming alive

There is no problem if you want to exist like a mountain or a leaf that is blown away by the wind, or a drop of water that is evaporated by the heat or flows down under the influence of the gravitational force. However, a drop of water or a particle of dust or a dry leaf does not feel the taste, pleasantness, freedom and peacefulness of life. If you want to experience such a life you need to be alive. Be alive. Be mindful. **Let go of thinking in order to be mindful. If you want to think, just do only thinking as it is also an action.** If you want to think about something pay attention only to that. **Stop the physical actions**

if you want to think. Become a person who is alive and thinks. Become a live thinker, not a thinker who is agitated, who thinks in dreams, who is lost in thoughts. First become alive and then think, plan and recall mindfully.

It is very beautiful to think mindfully. A person can make decisions beautifully. You do not get entangled. The chance of making mistakes is reduced. You can collect all the necessary data. You are not in a hurry. You can explore all the possibilities before making a decision. **Thinking is an action.** A person can think when s/he wants to think while giving full attention to it. If you are eating, it is the action 'eating' that needs to be alive. Let go of thinking while you are eating. **Do not let any thought make you a dead person. Do not let any emotion take your life from you.** Now, anger is not alive, desire is not alive.

Who gives life to anger and desire? We do. We give our life away as gifts to defilements such as anger and desire. Then see what happens to us? We are washed away like dead persons by

the emotion that we have made alive. We are washed away in saṃsāra.

Dear Dhamma Friends, let go of thinking if you do not want to think. Recognize when a thought arises. Do not think and do something else simultaneously. When you do that, thinking definitely takes priority. Thinking takes your full attention. Then, you are driving without paying attention to it, you are slicing onions without paying attention to it, you are reading without paying attention to it, **you are meditating without paying attention to it. You are not alive. Your life is dead.** You are left only with helplessness. The foundation of mindfulness is the path for coming out of your helplessness and becoming alive. **One moment refers to one action. One moment is equal to one action.** This is the path for becoming cool, peaceful and liberated.

May the Triple Gem Bless You!!!