

# **ISSUES THROUGH THE MOSS**

**By: Mali Bagøien**

**With introduction by  
Phra Ajahn Thate Desaransi**

# Introduction

to the Thai Version

by Phra Ajahn Thate Desaransi

THE BOOK THAT YOU are now going to read is the story of the Dhamma practice of a female Buddhist from Norway. She started to practise after having experienced extreme suffering in her life. She did not give up, but fought with patience, energy and endurance. With firm resolution she investigated thoroughly, using the full force of vigilance in order to find the cause of this suffering, until the heart finally found the Buddha Truth in all phenomena. This resulted in freedom from the power of Suffering. It gave her energy to endure, to live at ease and be free from danger in the midst of "the Stream of the World", which is full of suffering. This happened before she had learned of the Buddhist Religion.

Later, having had a chance to gradually learn the Buddha Dhamma and having practised to a certain degree, she took as a basis the traditional practice as taught by this writer.

If others who are practising Dhamma read her story and see that her practice has succeeded, it might be beneficial for them and increase their faith and energy. The Dhamma of the Buddha, which we all are practising here, can yield results, irrespective of time, place, person, belief or race, if there is present a firm resolve and also faith, energy, endurance and sincere and honest practice.

In fact she did not want to let her story be known, but because this writer, whom she reveres highly, asked her to do so, she wrote in English and let it be translated into Thai so that I could read it.

Having read her story and thought over it, I considered that it might be useful to others who are practising Dhamma. For this reason, I am letting it be printed.

May all Dhamma practitioners who read it, choose one or another aspect of Dhamma which is useful to them, allow it to strengthen their hearts and minds, their mindfulness and wisdom, in the practice of Dhamma, and so practise, each in accordance with his or her abilities.

# Childhood and Youth

**When I Came To Wat Hin Mark Peng** for the first time, the nuns started to call me Mali, which is a forest flower. Here in Norway where I was born and still live, I am called "the Moss", which was a name given to me by my daughter, who has a particular sense for what is appropriate. To be moss-covered, means something very old. In a deeper sense it also means being like the earth, resenting nothing no matter how much it is trampled upon.

My father was more than 40 years old when he married, and after four years my elder sister was born. One and half years later, on the 10th of July 1930, I was born. I was supposed to be a boy, and when I grew up, I actually liked to play with boys rather than with girls.

My father was a wholesaler and had built up his own firm. He was a very energetic type, and both he and my mother were kind-hearted and helpful people. Before my father married, he had been taking care of his two younger sisters for many years after their parents died, the youngest was at that time only seven years old. After he married, he built a nice house upon a hill close to the woods and mountains, because he liked to spend his leisure time walking in the wilds. This house was also a mainstay for other family members in case of need. When I was a child, my mother's sister stayed with us for a long time after an unsuccessful brain operation. On another occasion my mother's brother also came to stay with us for quite a period, because his wife had left him. These are examples of my parents' hospitality and helpfulness.

When my sister and I grew up, our father used to take the whole family for a nature walk every Sunday. In winter time we had to use skis, and we started learning when we were about two years old. Every Easter-time he took us up to the high mountains of Norway, which are about 1,000 - 2,000 meters high, and are covered with snow about 8 months of the year. In the summertime he took us to the seashore. When we were 6 - 7 years old, he built a nice hut at the fjord where we spent the summer holidays and had a very happy time.

When we went up in the mountains, we used to stay in a farm which kept cows and goats. From their milk, cheese and butter were made. From the age of seven, I liked to help in the cow-stall, cleaning, feeding and milking the cows. I preferred to get up early in the morning in order to help doing this, rather than staying comfortably in bed being served with cakes and milk like the other guests. Every day after these self-imposed duties were finished, the daily ski-tour awaited. This had to be performed irrespective of weather. We learned to endure the hardships of nature, cold, wind, snowstorms, and also to respect the dangerous rays of the sun reflected from the white snow. Sometimes we walked many Norwegian miles a day (one mile is 10 km), climbing up to the mountain tops as well. This I

liked very much, finding it the greatest joy to behold the view, overlooking "the whole world" from above. My mother was no bold-hearted type and was often scared when we had to run down the mountain sides. My father was then very considerate and helped by running in front and finding easy tracks for us to follow.

Thus we learned to live with nature and to love it. Before my father married, he used to go skiing over "the roof of Norway ", which means passing through the highest mountain plateaus of the land. He had many stories from these adventures which he used to relate to my sister and me after we had gone to bed in the evening. We liked these stories much more than fairy tales, and could listen to them over and over again.

When I was nine years old the second world war broke out and Norway was occupied by the Germans. This put an end to happy childhood. Five years later when the war was over, both my sister and I continued our education at school. Both of us had learned to play the piano since early childhood. I loved classical music very much and played often. After college I had intended to study philosophy but lost the opportunity because I got married.

My mother and father had warned me and said that the man was not for me, but I was deaf and blind. My mother cried when I got married. This man was artistic in many ways, especially interested in painting pictures and in singing. He had a strong voice, and when we met he was training his voice with the intention of becoming an opera singer. He was a gregarious person, very entertaining and amusing. When he was around, everyone seemed to have a good time. He was also a passionate sports angler, going with his fishing rod up and down rivers and around lakes. When we married he was not earning any money and in order to develop his voice further, he had to go abroad seeking better teachers.

Now I made my first deliberate renunciation: I decided to stay at home working in my father's firm in order to earn money for the family. After about five years, he was engaged in Switzerland and Germany. This lasted for six years, but after that he was out of work again. I went back to my parent's home once more with the children, now one girl and two boys, and continued to work as before while he was staying abroad, trying to further develop his voice in order to get an engagement. I was striving from dawn till dusk, sharing my salary with him, living just temporarily as if in a constant "waiting room", waiting for his coming home in the holidays or for conditions to change. But my great interest was his voice, I would do everything possible in order to help him realize his great talent, to have him standing on a stage sending his voice out into the air!

After some years he was finally engaged in Oslo. All the time my great hope had been that we all would be able to live together. I deeply missed having a home of our own where the family could be united. The few times we were gathered, were for me the most precious moments, and I was quite greedy for them. But even if I gave him some savings in order to buy an apartment for the family, he never succeed in finding one. So he went on living alone in a rented room, and I still had to help support him now and then, since strangely enough his salary was not sufficient for him alone.

In 1976, the year when we had been married for 25 years, he was expected home for Christmas as usual, but this time he did not come. I received a phone call from a hospital in

Oslo with the message that he had fallen under the train which was to take him to Trondheim, and had lost both his legs. Shocked, I immediately left everything at work and at home and hurried to the hospital in order to help him. I usually operated a car belonging to the firm, and drove it myself to Oslo.

When I met him, something strange happened, because I said: "**Good that this happened to us, because I can take it!**" (Mostly when people are struck by calamities, they tend to say: "**Why should this happen to me!**") He looked rather uncomprehendingly at me and said nothing. Now four weeks of struggle for his life began. Usually people do not die because of amputation, but his legs would not heal. They were simply rotting away, I was sitting at his bedside as much as I was allowed, helping with the nursing and the bandaging of his bloody bone stumps.

The doctors were seeking the reason why he did not recover, and asked me about his alcohol habits. They told me that he had had a very high alcohol percentage of the blood when the disaster happened. He had missed the train and had tried to fling himself on it when the train had already started to move out of the station. He lost his hold and fell under the rolling wheels.

On being questioned, I told them that he was perhaps drinking a bottle of wine a week, so the doctors could not understand. Finally they decided to operate and check his liver. I was in great agony while this operation was undertaken. What would it prove?

It proved that his liver was quite dried up by the consumption of too much alcohol. This was the reason why his body could not take the great strain. Yet I was desperately hoping that he would not die. If he would only go on living, I would leave everything else and just take care of him, rolling him in a wheelchair for the rest of my life! My "self-identification" with this man was so great that if he died, it seemed like life would not be worth living. (Even to a solid piece of suffering like this, the deluded mind is able to cling tenaciously.)

But he died; without having said a word to me all the time that I had been sitting at his bedside.

While I was staying in Oslo, I had also discovered that the money which was meant for buying an apartment, was used up. But even though this was a shock, it drowned in the great sorrow of his death.

I took my great treasure up to the mountains I loved and buried him there in a little churchyard. Only the priest and the children were present. I did not allow anyone else to partake in the ceremony. So strong was the grasping of the heart. The sorrow was mine and mine alone.

Three months went by in utter sorrow. I had determined to remain a widow for the rest of my life, taking care of the children as I would have wished him to do if I had died first. I went to work as usual, but when I was free, I drove up to the mountains to visit the churchyard. When I was skiing in the clean landscape covered with snow, it stimulated my thoughts so that I pictured him bright and glorious, almost like a god.

I had been seeking for proof of our great love in the things which were left behind, perhaps a picture of myself or the children, but the only pictures that I had found so far were

only photographs and paintings of himself in the different roles. In the spring of 1977 the things that had been kept in his wardrobe at the theatre were handed over to me, packed in a carton. I was in tense expectancy while opening it, and also a little scared. This was my last hope. If I could not find a picture of me, then perhaps one of our youngest son, the smallest one?

I found two pictures: one of a little baby boy sitting on the lap of an unknown woman, and one of the same little boy sitting smiling in front of a birthday-cake with one single candle alight; and some legal papers of a law suit proving his fatherhood and duty to support the child.

***This was the final blow!*** Like lightning it struck down and penetrated to the very bottom of the heart, hit delusion in the Solar Plexus. Now there was no more room for hiding away any more, trying to escape the truth.

As if every bone in my body was crushed, I went to work. Not able to cry, not able to speak. This man that my mind had grasped as "myself", had dishonoured himself, so I was dishonoured. Shame and hatred was burning the heart. Thinking back on it, I was more like one who had committed a deadly crime. I had been taking honour from this man. What had been my pride, became my shame. What had been my love, turned into hatred and grudge.

I could not say a word to anyone. Had I done so, I would have been increasing the fire even more, spreading it to others. I had to endure it alone keeping the fires of greed, hatred and delusion within my own frame.

By seeing that all my conceptions had been falsity, I lost my foothold in the world and fell into the great abyss. My foothold in the world had been my conceptions and firm belief in the reality of being a wife, a mother and a daughter. When the truth penetrated, it cut off this foothold, and I realized that:

***I was not a mother any more!***

***I was not a widow any more!***

***I was not a daughter any more!***

Complete disenchantment is like this. The view of being something in the world, is our "self-identification" with the world. This view is so deeply rooted in the heart that it feels like being One with it. By losing it, the heart suffers the pain of death.

The thought occurred to me that "***I had been killed by a dead man!***" So what could the heart turn towards? Who was there to take revenge on?

It was like staying in a roaring ocean of burning heart blood. The cause of suffering revealed itself, giving the heart a first-hand lesson in the fires of greed, hatred and delusion. These fires are interrelated and kindle one another. Out of greed, hatred may arise. Out of hatred, greed may arise. Not knowing how it happens is delusion itself, so they always operate together.

Like the proverb, "***A burnt child shuns the fire***", so it happened with my mind. It detested sexual desire to such an extent that it was deadly scared of it, loathing it, abhorring it.

The mind was burning itself by itself and reaped the torture of it. The thoughts of the dead man's untruthfulness were increasing the fire until it became unbearable in the fifth night. There was hardly room for breathing in the overwhelming mental pain, and the thought of taking my own life arose. I was about to get up in order to find a razor blade to cut the arteries, when I faintly knew that:

***"Now you are drowning in the darkness".***

A moment thereafter the heart reached out and prayed:

***"Eternal God, give me Light!"***

This gave the heart a few moments' relief, and it prayed further:

***Eternal God, give me Light!***

***Teach me to Love!***

***Teach me Mercy!***

***Teach me to Forgive!***

***Give me Peace!***

***Extinguish me!***

This prayer came from the bottom of despair and the darkness of ***"not knowing, not understanding"***. In the grip of hatred and grudge, the heart prayed to learn to love and to have mercy. Being tortured by its own accusing, it prayed to learn to forgive. Burning within the fire of greed, hatred and delusion, it prayed for Peace. Suffering within an Ego, it prayed for extinction of the suffering of "me and mine".

## **The World's End**

Within the heart there arose an image of the vast ocean as far as the eye could see, and an immense, gigantic wave was arising at the extreme border, reaching up to the sky, extending over the whole horizon. Having reached its summit, it crumpled up and turned around, throwing the heart on its way back "Home".

When greed has reached its limit, the heart has reached "the end of the world" where there is no more exit, the way is totally barred. If the heart does not drown in this great trial, it has to turn around and go back, seeking its way "Home".

***The way out into the world goes sailing on the current of Greed.***

***The way out of the world goes against the current,  
fighting with the weapon of relinquishment.***

There was now a firm resolve within the heart to go on living for the sake of finding the Truth behind everything. ***Everything so far had been Falsity***. The heart was seeking the Truth and was seeking God. What was God? Pondering and seeking the heart found that, God was

the Eternal Primordial Fire. But fire is suffering, and God is not suffering? Then God must be That which is outside the fire!

I was seeking all the time and went to the library in order to look for some books that could help me. The first one I grasped hold of was the Dhammapada, which had recently been translated into Norwegian. I did not have to read much before I knew that it was true. This I had experienced myself, and I was filled with awe at the profound teaching of the Buddha. Here was light in the darkness, here was medicine for the sick heart. There was no doubt in my heart that this was the right way.

Let me give a few examples from Dhammapada :

3. *"He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me"  
–in those who harbour such thoughts, hatred will never cease.*
4. *He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me"  
–in those who do not harbour such thoughts, hatred will cease.*
5. *For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred ceases by love, this is the law eternal.*
7. *He who lives looking for pleasures only, his senses uncontrolled, immoderate in food, idle and weak, Mara (the Tempter) will certainly overthrow him, as the wind throws down a weak tree.*

8. *He who lives without looking for pleasures, his senses well controlled, moderate in his food, faithful and strong, him Mara will certainly not overthrow, any more than the wind throws down a rocky mountain.*

67. *That deed is not well done of which a man must repent, and the reward of which he receives crying and with tearful face.*

68. *No, that deed is well done of which a man does not repent, and the reward of which he receives gladly and cheerfully.*

71. *An evil deed, like newly drawn milk, does not turn (suddenly); smouldering like fire covered by ashes, it follows the fool.*

165. *By oneself is evil done.  
By oneself does one get defiled.  
By oneself is evil left undone.  
By oneself is one purified.  
Purity and impurity depends on oneself.  
No one can purify another*

**246. He who destroys life, who speaks untruth, who in this world  
takes what is not given him, who goes to another man's wife;**

**247. And the man who gives himself to drinking intoxicating liquors, he,  
even in this world, digs up his own root.**

What I had been before, was dead. At work everybody used to address me as Mrs., as when I was married. ***I was not Mrs. any more! She was dead!*** It was hard to go on being called anything that I really was not, it sounded quite false to me and grated my heart. So whether it was right or wrong, I applied to lawfully use my father's name as before I was married, thinking: ***"Perhaps someday I will come to know what is behind all names"***.

I was like a dying patient who needs a single room. I wanted to stay alone and clear up the place. Everything coming through the sense doors was painful. Sights and colours, sounds, smells, tastes, not to speak of thoughts! The clothes that I wore were grey. The food that I ate was tasteless, very sparse and only vegetarian, sometimes I fasted for many days. I became thin and small like a 12 year old child, I did not wish to see anyone and wanted no one to see me when I felt compelled to seek solitude in the wilds after daily work was finished.

I also started to clear away all the superfluous mess that had been accumulated over many years, and to clear disorder in all nooks and corners. Things that reminded me of the past were relentlessly thrown into the fire.

Simultaneously with clearing up externally, I was clearing up internally. In the beginning there were incalculably gross things, seemingly insurmountable both externally and internally.

Fortunately by this time and during the next four years, I had no others to take care of. My father had died some years before at the age of 87, and my mother could still manage alone. My daughter was married, the eldest son studying in Oslo, and the youngest one had gone to sea.

# Meeting Dr. Philip

THERE WAS IN TRONDHEIM a very kind and intelligent woman of Jewish origin whom I had known when I was younger. She and her husband wanted to help me in what they saw as my bereavement, and invited me to their home. There I met Dr. Philip who was her brother. She told me that he had been to Thailand several times to live in a monastery, and had knowledge of Buddhism. He was quite different from other people I had met so far, I learned Sila<sup>1</sup> (Morality) just from looking at him. He appeared calm and dignified, infusing respect.

*"Oh, when would I be like him?"*

I was invited to go with this family to Israel and stay over Christmas and new Year in 1977/78. Dr. Philip was supposed to come a little later. I was by that time very depressed and troubled and awaited him with great excitement, having so many questions to ask him. When he finally arrived, my heart became calm at the mere sight of him, and all my questions and problems seemed to vanish. I found this strange and told him so one day when we were walking in the mountains of Israel. Little did I know that the heart, this subtle thief, had reached out and grasped Dr. Philip as "self", being absorbed in his calm state.

Another day when we were walking along the seashore and sat down to rest on some stones he explained to me about the five Khandhas. Body was not self; feeling, perception, thoughts and consciousness were not self. So I understood that I was simply nothing, and was very delighted about that.

When I left Israel, my heart was at ease. Back in Norway, I was not inclined to tackle mental work for a while, just resting in that ease of mind. Finally I noticed that I had stopped the work of seeking for truth, and told myself to go back to investigate.

I had asked Dr. Philip to recommend some Buddhist literature, and he had suggested *The Middle Length Sayings* which were available in London. After some time I obtained three volumes through the Pali Text Society and started to read with the assistance of an English-Norwegian Dictionary. This had to be used diligently, because my knowledge of the English language was only from college, and besides the language in the Scriptures is very elevated.

Dr. Philip had his "mainstay" in Oslo and was working there and all over the world. When he was in Trondheim, he used to stay at his sister's home or in his hut outside the town. He had given me permission to borrow his hut when he was away, so I went out there one autumn evening in order to stay alone and read. I had just finished reading the

1 For explanations of technical terms in the pāli language, please refer to the glossary on page 49.

Satipatthana Sutta, when the heart became still. Sitting there alone deep in the forest, these lines occurred to me:

*I am a little bird,  
Sitting on my head.  
Can fly out when I wish  
can slip in when I wish  
I am happy.*

*I am a little bird,  
I have to sit on my head,  
if not –  
there is no one to watch myself.*

And the drawings followed suit. This was a unique teaching from the heart to the heart, using its own language which is hard to understand. (***It took me two years to understand these lines.***) But the main thing is that the heart understands itself, then it will act accordingly.

I was wondering all the time what meditation really was. I used to write to myself when some questions or acknowledgement arose in the mind, and once I asked Dr. Philip if this was meditation, but he said, "no". Dr. Philip could float in the air in meditation, so I thought that this must be supreme. My own body was as heavy as a mountain, and so was my heart with all the unanswered questions and problems.

On one occasion, I was awaiting his coming in great anxiousness, because I felt quite stuck. Learning from his sister that he had arrived but had gone directly to his hut, I went out there in spite of the approaching darkness. Being in great need, I felt that I could not wait until the next day. I had only walked once through the dense forest, and the way was not easy even in broad daylight.

On entering the forest, I saw that it was impossible to find the way, there being no path. I went back into the open plain pondering desperately how to find the way. What if I tried to follow the edge of the water? I went down to the lake and began to walk, or rather creep, under trees and branches and over slopes of naked rocks. It began to rain, but I was heedless of everything but finding help for my mental pain. My only hope was that I really would find him; what if he was not there at all? If only I could get close enough to see if there was light in the window, then it would be a token that I would later be able to find ***light in darkness.***

Finally I reached the last headland and could see across the little bay that light was shining through the window, and a great relief arose in the heart even if there was still quite a distance left. When I finally reached the hut, I saw from outside Dr. Philip sitting in front of the fireplace gazing into the fire, and it struck me: ***"Like this, God is sitting looking at the fire"***. (Not that Dr. Philip was God in this connection; this refers to that which was the Real

God that I still did not know.) Dr. Philip told me that in Thailand, when disciples were in great need of their Teachers, they used to go looking for them, sometimes for several months, when their Teachers were staying in the wild forests of Thailand.

This autumn I continued to read *The Middle Lengths Sayings* from cover to cover. Coming to the *Dhatuvibhanga Sutta* in the third volume, I was deeply struck by this beautiful and instructive Sutta. The Buddha explains Dhamma to a young monk who had gone forth from home in order to look for the Buddha, but did not know that it was the Teacher himself he had met. Yet when the explanation was ended, he realized that this was so, and begged forgiveness for having addressed the Holy One as "Friend".

I was like the young man who needed instructions, and was just as grateful as he was. Thus tears were streaming in gratitude as if the Buddha himself had given this talk to me!

On another occasion when I had driven Dr. Philip out to the hut, we went for a walk. While standing on a hill surveying the landscape and the lake below, the following occurred quite clearly to me, and I said:

***"It is strange, but everything is there when we are aware (mindful) of it!"***

And he answered:

***"When you know who it is that is aware, then you have understood!"***

Deeply struck by his words, I left him there and drove back home. I had a horse that I used to train and care for every day, and when I was driving up to the farm where the horse was kept, was pondering over ***"who is it that is aware?"***. In Israel I had found out that I myself was nothing. When I was nothing, then ***"the one who is aware"*** must be God.

***"But I am not God?"***

***"Then there is no one who is aware".***

When I had finished with the horse, I felt compelled to drive out to the hut again in order to tell him and have the problem solved. This time I came from another direction above the hut where the way is shorter. But it was already too dark to find the path through the forest, so I decided to return and wait till the next morning. I got up very early, went out to the hut and knocked at the door. On entering the hut, I said:

***"There is no one".***

***"No one, who?" he asked.***

***"There is no one who is aware" I replied.***

***"How can it be no one?" he said, "Who is it that tastes what is sweet?"***

I was at my wit's end. ***"Who is it that tastes what is sweet?"***

I went out of the hut and down to the water, pondering deeply.

Then I went back and asked him:

**"Do you mean that which takes rebirth?"**

**"There is nothing wrong in what you are saying",** was his answer.

Whereupon I went back through the wood, entered my car and drove to work. Thus Dr. Philip helped me to find **"the Knower"** or the mind.

To me Dr. Philip was like a god who knew everything that I was striving to understand. But I felt there was no help in clinging to him or his knowledge. I had to **"build my own mountain to climb"** if I wanted to get the view he had. The notion of God is that which we revere most highly, that which is holy to us and what we love with an innocent kind of love, not wanting to possess, but to give up ourselves to.

Once when walking in the wood I asked Dr. Philip who was walking in front of me:

**"May I be your slave?"**

**"No",** was his answer from ahead.

**"May I be your sister then?"**

**"We are all brothers and sisters",** was the reply.

But the importance of having love for those who are morally beautiful, such as the Buddhist monk or nun who has trained himself or herself well in Sila, Samadhi and Pañña, is indispensable. They infuse respect and reverence and keep the Path of the Lord Buddha open and free from weeds so that others may find the right way. But at this time I only had Dr. Philip to revere, which was sufficient for me.

However, I received a lesson teaching me that there is no stable person one can lean on. Everyone is changeable. Even the highest heavenly beings are unstable and cannot be relied upon.

The necessity of being one's own refuge was expressed as follows:

**God took my hand.**

**The lightning struck down.**

**The earth trembled.**

**I wanted to grasp back—**

**My hand was empty.**

By this time I had two cases going on: The one-pointedness in Dr. Philip causing happiness which I did not know how to get out of, and the still unsolved lawsuit with the dead man causing suffering. I never told Dr. Philip nor anyone else about this, I had to let everyone think that I was a sorrowing widow, which was pretty hard to endure because it was not the case.

All the time I was weighing for and against, trying to find "the guilty one" in the case with the dead one. A dead man cannot speak nor defend himself, so I had to defend him as well as accuse myself in order to get the right balance. If I had accused him only, the hatred would never have been appeased and justice not performed. I was seeking the truth behind

everything and could not be content before truth was revealed. After about two years of investigation and probing into this case, the dead man was acquitted.

***He was not the one at fault,  
or the one who was guilty in my suffering.  
He had only been just as he was according to his nature.  
I was the guilty one who had been blind and had concocted ideas  
About him that was not in accordance with reality.***

I had to reap the punishment for having been blind.

***When this was understood, tears of release came streaming, and I could forgive with compassion.*** He had not really been a bad person, only a victim of passionate desires. His bad Karma had ripened and brought him to a hellish state, dishonoured, deprived of legs, dying without being able to confess, dying with the whole burden within his heart, reaping the fruits of a seducer and deceiver. The Evil One is likened to a seductive snake. May everyone take care and not try to seduce any other being. There is no pardon in not knowing!

***The deeds and their results are rolling on.  
And if I had not made myself deserving of it, I would not  
have had to experience the suffering that I had to go through.***

The Law of Nature is absolutely just. I had to reap all the fruits of my own life, having been stubborn and unruly, having done a lot of unwholesome deeds in following my feelings instead of reason. I had caused my parents much pain and worry, also my sister. They had always tried to help me, but I just could not accept their help or listen to them. I went my own way which led me into the kind of suffering which opened my eyes. May this awakening be the reward of their good intentions.

May it also be an eye-opener for others, making them see the danger in sense desires. The satisfaction of sense desires does not last long, but their evil results are of long duration.

When the mind has started the cleansing process, it has to go through the fire of shame. This inward way is very painful, forcing the mind to be confronted with its own failures and wrongdoings. But this fire of shame is actually a helpful friend, teaching the mind to see what is wrong and what is right. Little by little the mind develops clear consciousness and alertness, and finally even the slightest fault will be felt as a burning whip touching the heart. The mind will be ashamed of itself. This feeling of shame protects the world. When the mind has no feeling of shame, it will be relentless towards other living beings, just following its own desires.

Another thing that I took advantage of, was the horse that I have already mentioned. It was a racehorse and had belonged to the youngest son before he went to sea. When he left home, I had to take care of the horse myself. It was trained by way of a little car in summertime and a sleigh in wintertime. I had never driven a horse before and had to

concentrate very hard. Sometimes it bolted, but as I was one who had nothing more to lose, I was not afraid and managed to handle the different situations in one way or another. I went up to train this horse almost every day for about three years, cleaning its stable and feeding in the fields it occurred to me that,

***"animals have no chance to help themselves out of their imprisonment, but human beings do have a chance".***

Another evening after having finished the cleaning of the stable, I became aware of the young cows standing bound to their stalls eating hay, and a deep compassion for them arose in the heart by seeing their hopeless situation. Bursting into tears I said to them:

***"Oh, poor ones, if you knew why you are eating, you would not take another morsel".***

Moreover, one winter evening when I was coming back from a sleigh drive in the forest, the horse went too near the farmer's house wall. The farmer standing there watching me, said rather harshly:

***"How are you driving?"***

I, a little ashamed: ***"The horse is walking like this".***

Whereupon he said: ***"You are the driver!"***

***"Aha", I thought, "I am the driver".***

And there after: "Then I'd better drive myself".

Not long after this I sold the horse and started to "drive myself" out of the dark forests and mountains alone in order to fight with the fear of darkness. I went to places that I had never frequented before, seeking difficult tracks in order to train mindfulness and the sense of locality. When fear came upon me, I started to send compassion to the trees and animals living in the wilds. They had to endure everything, cold and heat, rain and snow, wind and storm. Trees could not move; if the rain was staying away, no one was there to give them water. If animals were sick, there was no one giving them medicine or help. When they were dying, small creatures were crawling up on them eating them even before they were dead.

Once in wintertime, I think it was in 1978, I had the opportunity to stay in Dr. Philip's hut for some days. It was extremely cold, -20° C below zero, and I had to keep the hut warm by means of an open chimney. I had to chop and gather wood myself, cut down trees and drag them forth to the hut through the snow. By striving like a horse I felt deep compassion for animals who have to do hard work for their owners and sometimes be ill-treated as well. After 3-4 days of intermittent firing, I was sitting in front of the fire-place gazing into the flames as usual. Then there occurred a whispering voice in the air:

***"So it is like this!"***

And I realized that life is just like fire, stretching its flames out in order to burn everything that comes in contact with it.

And the mind said to itself :

***"I do not want to be kindling any more!"***

On an occasion when I was visiting Dr. Philip's sister and brother-in-law, I heard someone say that Dr. Philip was egotistic. I was very astonished at such a view and pondered over it. The result of this was as follows:

***A Buddhist***

***is in the world's eyes an "egoist".***

***All he sacrifices for himself,  
truly and eagerly from dawn till dusk,  
he purifies his heart of evil pain,  
until sparkling pure and clean,  
it glitters with light like a precious gem,  
shining for everyone who passes by,  
but seldom seen,  
and that's because  
the world's eyes see only gems  
that beautify the necks of lovely dames.***

Late in the year 1978, I met Dr. Philip again at his sister's home. This time he gave me a Dhamma Desana by Venerable Ajahn Maha Boowa, called ***The Farewell Night***, I hurried home after a short glance at the first lines, eager to read it like one who is hungry is eager to eat a good meal. With few words Venerable Ajahn Maha Boowa opened up a vast expanse and explained the way like a general giving orders to his soldiers. I kept reading this Desana over and over again, always discovering new things. There were many Pali words that I asked Dr. Philip to translate for me. He hurried to do so, and I grasped hold of **Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta** and used this recipe ever after in all circumstances.

The next time Dr. Philip came back to Trondheim, he asked me what had happened, because I looked so much happier.

***"I am using the recipe, to be sure,"*** was my reply.

***"What recipe?"*** he asked, a little puzzled.

***"Aniccam, dukkham, anatta, of course!"***, I answered.

I was sure that Dr. Philip used this recipe himself, because he was the one who had given me The Farewell Night, which explains the use of this weapon of wisdom. But he had not.

Dr. Philip also lent me a **Buddhist Dictionary** by Nyanatiloka which I used diligently and found to be a great help. Here all the important Pali terms which I encountered, were explained, and I reflected a great deal on them. Especially **Paticcasamuppada, Anatta, Kamma, Khandha, Magga, Sacca, Ti-lakkhana, Samsara, Patisandhi**, to mention some, were subjects that I contemplated eagerly over and over again. Whether I was sitting in my room, driving to and from my working place, driving the horse, walking in the mountains or woods on foot or skiing, I was always absorbed in contemplation. The mind was nagging on unsolved problems.

There were in this dictionary also many verses illustrating the meaning. I liked them very much and kept reciting them without expecting anything to come out of it. One of them goes like this:

*In truth, there only is this mind and body found,  
no person, no man is ever to be seen.  
It's empty all, just wooden swivel-doll,  
a heap of misery resembling wood and straw.*

I do not know whether it was because of this verse, but once I was sitting in my room, a mental image arose of my own body swinging lifeless to and fro in the air in front of me with empty, senseless eyes, with a drivelling mouth and a torn-up root hanging dangling at the bottom.

At the sight of this, the mind was extremely delighted and said to itself:

***"There I've got you! So that's all you are! I am not going to be fooled by you any more!"***

While I was wondering about what meditation really was, I "meditated" in my own home-made way without knowing it, like one who is playing the piano without any musical notation. I just took what I found and used it. Dr. Philip tried to explain about Jhana (Absorption), but I did not understand anything about it, probably because I was quite absorbed already! In Norway we have a proverb: ***"One cannot see the wood for mere trees!"***

Just so difficult is it to discover oneself, one's true self. Because of all the external things which are standing in the way, barring the inner door, the mind is used to looking outwards seeking an external refuge as long as it has not yet discovered the refuge within. The refuge is always there, but the mind is looking in the wrong direction and is holding on to false things instead of letting them go. Just this much is barring the door, or concealing the mind's true nature from the mind itself. What is concealed, is like a riddle. When the riddle is solved the truth is revealed. A riddle is only a riddle as long as it is not solved!

# Wisdom develops Samadhi

In winter 1978-79 Dr. Philip gave me another book by Venerable Maha Boowa: **Wisdom Develops Samadhi**. Whether it was his genuine intuition or my luck, he could not have found a book better suited to help me at this time even if he had searched through all the available books in the whole world in times past by, in the future or in the present.

In Sila, I was already well prepared without ever having studied the different precepts, I just kept practising "**being a little bird sitting on my head**" (watching and guarding the mind), without knowing that it was practice or "meditation". With regard to Samadhi, my mind was naturally concentrated and was also calmed down by having found "**the Guilty One**" in the lawsuit with the dead man; this being the personal lawsuit. After this was solved, the mind went on inwards searching for "**the Guilty One**" behind all phenomena; this being the universal suit. With regard to Wisdom, it was working all the time trying to understand the Truth.

The full-grown Wisdom of Venerable Maha Boowa was helping. The Great General was giving his commands, and "**the Soldier**" was reading the chapter on Wisdom over and over again with certain intervals, the mind pondering over the true meaning.

One evening when I was sitting in my room reading the last part of the chapter on Wisdom, I felt that I had not yet penetrated the meaning. This stirred me deeply, and I said despairingly to myself:

**"What is it that I do not understand? What is it?  
I'd better read the last chapter once more".**

At the time of the Buddha, it is known that many Bhikkhus penetrated the truth just by listening to the Buddha's instruction. This was so because they were well prepared in many ways and listened wholeheartedly with the sole intention of understanding the truth.

So it was the case with the little "Bhikkhuni" in Norway who never had seen a monk, never heard a Dhamma Desana, but was listening to the written words wholeheartedly in order to understand what was not understood before!

So by reading once again about the culprit Avijja (Delusion) who was blended with the heart as one, all of a sudden the whole world came to a standstill, everything outside and inside became bathed in white, there was a thundering sound when the heart gathered all its forces of Saddha, Viriya, Sati, Samadhi, Pañña in order to break through the Not Understanding, which fell to the ground like the last tree in the dark forest, and light arose.

The Darkness of Not Understanding was gone and revealed the **Guilty One** behind all phenomena in the world, all living things in the past, in the future, in the present. From here everything goes out, here was the starting point. The Knowing being within, watched all the

doors flinging up and revealed the most glorious heavenly realms, telling the heart that even the highest realms have to go out from this state.

The Avijja-Heart was disclosed, brought to light. It had burst like the trolls in the Norwegian fairy-tales burst when the sun rises. The trolls always operate in the dark, they are indeed afraid of light. No wonder!

And the Sun in this connection, is the floodlight of Wisdom. When Wisdom sees Avijja, which is hidden inside the Heart itself, it has no place to hide anymore. This has been its safe hiding place for aeons, because the Heart, the great fool, has always sought the Guilty One outside itself, never turning its eyes towards itself in order to find the Real Culprit.

Thereafter these questions arose in the heart:

***“Who knows the beginning of the world!?”***

***Who knows the end of the world?”***

And the heart answered:

***Who has been at the end of the world***

***may learn to know the beginning.***

***The end of the world is the violent wave of suffering,***

***each one's doomsday with oneself.***

***If you take the suffering,***

***let it torture your exhausted heart,***

***wisdom will penetrate and relieve your violent pain.***

***With wisdom as weapon***

***the heart will fight its way***

***through dark forest, burning fire,***

***steep cliffs and high mountains.***

***The way goes back,***

***through all the deeds that are done;***

***at last the heart stands naked in front of the last gate.***

***It is opened through a wonder,***

***the heart gets in,***

***the greatest bliss to know,***

***the heart has come Home.***

***All the doors are opened,***

***everything that was hidden before is realized in a flash.***

***Freedom from hatred is to know,***

***“the Guilty one” is always the Same,***

***in the whole world there is no one to blame!***

After this had been written down, tears would come streaming every time I went out into the wood in the evening recollecting the deep words. The great wonder of having

understood the Truth was an immense release. The heart had been able to put down a heavy burden.

While I was contemplating Avijja, *the Story of my Life occurred:*

*The cow grazes in the pasture  
while the Owner fattens himself  
on the milk she gives.*

*The cow thinks she is popular and respected,  
but the gratitude that awaits  
is at the slaughterhouse gates....*

*The meat thereafter eaten.*

The Cow is blind, not knowing the truth. The Cow is also like a mother deserving love and gratitude.

The Cow is a picture of myself in this life, feeding a venomous snake, thinking it is the greatest treasure. When the snake is fully grown, it turns round and vents its deadly venom straight into the heart. The great fool who deceives itself, fights with itself, is always the same one: this Avijja-Heart.

When hatred is gone, greed is gone, because these fires operate together. No greed, no disappointment. No disappointment, no sorrow, anger or hatred.

Several months passed by in happiness. Strange, all the suffering in the world had disappeared. I noticed that the happy heart had a tendency to be bold and to colour everything happy. It also wanted the happiness to last, so there arose anxiousness about it, a wish that nothing should disturb it. Just this much was enough to create uneasiness. Something was wrong, and I did not know what, I only knew who "the troublemaker" was.

One evening when I was sitting in front of the fire-place at home, I was pondering over this unstable happiness and the reason why. Perhaps there was an "Ego" hidden somewhere that I had not discovered. I came to think about all the papers that I had written to myself in the course of the last three years, the whole personal story of suffering from the very beginning, with all its questions and comprehensions. Perhaps there was an Ego hidden there? I went upstairs to my room and brought the whole heap down with me and threw the papers little by little into the fire, thinking:

*"What is worth remembering, that you will remember.*

*What is not worth remembering, let it go".*

I watched the flames consuming them all until the last paper was turned into ashes.

The next morning at five o'clock, I woke up from sleep clearly mindful and sat down in praying posture on the floor. I became aware of a little hair of the body scratching the skin. I had trained myself not to grasp when something occurred, but merely to watch and endure, so even if there was an itching on my body, I said to myself: *"Don't scratch back!"*

All of a sudden the whole body was on fire, kindled from within. There was not a single spot which was not red-hot. It came so suddenly that there was no room for planning anything. In emergencies things will arise spontaneously, and what came to my rescue was "The Farewell Night" with its teaching of **Aniccam, Dukkham, Anatta**, the weapon of wisdom which I had used diligently ever since. I fought saying to myself that:

***"This pain is not real! It is not myself. It cannot last! It is just as impermanent as the heavenly happiness you have just had –"***

The sweat was running in big drops, sticky like blood. There was no room for breathing within the flames. It was as if all the pain in the world was gathered in this body alone, and if I had added merely a little fear to the pain, the fire would have increased and won the battle. I kept fighting with the pain until it subsided, and knew afterwards that I had been fighting with death.

The great Force of Truth had won and made the body appear like a little insignificant heap of ashes. It was a great release to the mind to see that the body was no more than that. And the deep knowledge arose that,

***"There is no permanent feeling to be found, there is no permanent place to be found"***.

After the battle was over, I was extremely exhausted, but I had received a severe lesson on the results of clinging and said to myself:

***"Now you must not cling to this! Do not linger on or cherish this subtlety. Get up and take a shower and go to work as usual."***

I did so, but the mind was extremely soft and subtle that day, and I wrote a long letter to Dr. Philip about the event. With little knowledge of meditation, I thought that he must have gone through the same long ago, thinking that it must be likewise for everyone. But I learned later on that this is not the case.

The following evening I went into the dark wood where the mind easily entered a calm state, I stood leaning against a big tree with closed eyes, waiting for the fire to arise again. Whatever was going to happen, I was willing to endure it for the sake of Truth.

But nothing happened then, and the fire has never returned.

The following summer I had the opportunity of going to Svalbard (Spitzbergen) which is a group of islands belonging to the Kingdom of Norway and is located in the Arctic area. My son-in-law was employed there as a geologist and he and my daughter had newly moved there. This was a great opportunity for me to stay in solitude in the wilderness. My daughter intuitively understood my need for this and helped me to stay alone in a hut in the wasteland. Here I was really at ease. It was "summertime", which means not warm, but bright, because the sun shines day and night. There are no trees and bushes, but moss plains

and very small flowers with short stems, which have developed in order to be able to withstand the strong wind. Everything changes so rapidly up there, so Aniccam, Dukkham, Anatta, is easy to perceive.

The first time I saw the small flowers in this wide, expansive landscape surrounded by mighty, naked mountains, tears came streaming. The small flowers were like a picture of my own heart which had been striving to penetrate the cold, frozen earth in order to come forth into the light. Some flowers were standing quite alone, just like myself. And Svalbard Summer arose in the mind:

*Up here on the roof of the earth,  
my heart is at one.  
Life shows its true nature:  
changeable, impermanent, belonging to none.  
Like the Saxifrage in its purple splendour  
and the Arctic Poppy dressed in white,  
better to blossom one single night  
than experience the Light.  
The wandering heart to the pole having won,  
Takes a leap—  
And joins the sun.*

Later on I came back to Svalbard several times and experienced all the seasons of the year. One winter I stayed some weeks in another hut further away in the wasteland. It was dark day and night and mighty storms were raging. The thermometer marked -35° C, but the wind made it feel like -60°. The huts up there are fastened to the earth by way of bolts, otherwise they might be taken by the wind and smashed into pieces.

There were some reindeer living around the hut, and they just crouched down with their backs turned against the wind. I felt deep sympathy with these gentle animals striving to survive in such hard circumstances. In autumn they find enough food and fatten themselves up before the long winter. And just then, human beings with enough food and drink, go hunting after them for sport, shoot them down and eat their fat flesh which was meant for their survival. These reindeer are so gentle and kind, they do not harm anyone at all. And *Svalbard Winter* came into my mind:

*Up here on the roof of the earth,  
my heart is at one.  
Life shows its true nature:  
Suffering and pain for every creature.  
The penetrating rays of the cold  
are consuming the poor reindeer  
who humbly the frozen wilderness roam,  
seeking food on a moss-covered stone.*

*"The Moss", the reindeer's provender,  
Feels pity indeed to see them as food for the hunter.*

Back to the beginning when I met Dr. Philip, he spoke to me about a book called **Monkey by WU CH'ENG-EN**. He said that this was the most amusing book he had ever read, and he used to give it to all his friends. I bought a copy myself and the following verse which the Patriarch recited to Monkey, caught my attention:

*To spare and tend the vital powers, this and nothing else  
Is sum and total of all magic, secret and profane.  
All is comprised in these three, Spirit, Breath and Soul:  
Guard them closely, screen them well; let there be no leak.  
Store them within the frame;  
That is all that can be learnt, and all that can be taught.  
I would have you mark the tortoise and the snake,  
locked in tight embrace.  
Locked in tight embrace, the vital powers are strong;  
Even in the midst of fierce flames the Golden Lotus may be planted.  
The Five Elements compounds and transposed, and put to new use.  
When that is done, be what please, Buddha or Immortal.*

By these words Monkey's whole nature was shaken to the foundations...

The next time Monkey came to see the Patriarch, the latter said to him:

"But after five hundred years Heaven will send down lightning which will finish you off, unless you have the sagacity to avoid it. After another five hundred years Heaven will send down a fire that will devour you. This fire is of a peculiar kind. It is neither common fire, nor celestial fire, but springs up from within and consumes the vitals reducing the whole frame to ashes, and making a vanity of all your thousand years of self-perfection. But even should you escape this, in another five hundred years, a wind will come and blow upon you. Not the east wind, the south wind, the west wind or the north wind; not flower wind or willow wind, pine wind or bamboo wind. It blows from below, enters the bowels, passes the midriff and issues at the Nine Apertures. It melts bone and flesh, so that the whole body dissolves. These three calamities you must be able to avoid."

One of the first things I told Dr. Philip when we first met, was that I had been "struck by lightning". I was not able to explain how, because I could not tell the crucial point, but he was very astonished over my utterance, certainly because of this book Monkey.

How I was struck by lightning, I have already told at the outset.

What the fire from within concerns, turning the whole frame into ashes this had been experienced as related.

With regard to "keeping within the frame", this was something that I also had practised, even though not deliberately. From the very beginning I kept silent, letting nothing out to anyone. Then the mind "closed" the sense-doors of its own, like a deadly sick person who needs a single room to be free from disturbances. The mind went inside in order to clear up its case alone. Thus it was very concentrated in a natural way.

After the experience of "the fire coming from within", the memory of these "three calamities" came into my mind. Thus I started to await the third one, namely the wind that would dissolve the whole body into pieces. I had a faint notion of it once I was sitting on the floor in my room, and knew exactly how it would be, but it did not rise into full force as I was hoping for.

One winter evening a full snowstorm was blowing, and I went up into the mountains in order to "invite the wind". I was skiing, and went out into an open plain where the wind had full force and the snow was whipping fiercely. I sank down in the snow on my knees, waiting for the wind to blow up from within...

But I finally had to give up and go home. The mind had had enough lessons.

I had no understanding of using Kammatthana, but as I already have told, I liked to recite verses, not knowing that this also is Kammatthana. And in connection with Dr. Philip there had arisen in my mind the memory of an old, Swedish folk song which I kept reciting while the mind, having Dr. Philip as object, kept asking itself over and over again: "Where have I met you before? Where?"

One winter night when I was skiing in the mountains outside the town, the object of meditation was "the love of God". Love of God is like love of something higher than ourselves, like dogs' love of their masters, children's love of their parents, disciples' love of their spiritual teachers who reflect the Truth for them, just as Dr. Philip had reflected the Dhamma to me. A faint remnant of clinging was still within the heart, but finally the problem was solved when I came skiing out of the forest into a wide plain covered with clean, new snow over which the full moon stood bright and clear. Just as the moon reflects the light from the sun, so a pure heart reflects the Dhamma. Even as the moon has no light in itself, is not "the Real", so a holy being is not "Real", has no essence or core in itself. In this understanding the clinging to Dr. Philip fell from the heart and was expressed in the following lines:

#### **REFLECTION**

*Because I neglected the morning sun,  
it did not shine for me.*

*Because I weighed down the pure heart with sense pleasures,  
it did not shine for me.*

*One winter night when I came out of the wood,  
the full moon shone bright and Clear,*

*and I understood:  
What are YOU, indeed,  
But your pure heart  
to reflect the Light  
from what is REAL!*

In the Purity of the Heart we are all one and the same. The mind cannot let go of its clinging before it has understood **how** things really are. Then the problems are solved, whatever they might be.

One night not long after this when I was sitting on the floor in my room, the heart became still, and there occurred a mental image of two big footprints, cobweb-like, in the air in front of me – coming from nowhere, going nowhere – and the heart knew whose footprints it was, although never having heard of the Buddha Footprints before.

The next morning in the same moment I woke up, there was a picture within the heart of the sitting, smiling Buddha, and the profound understanding arose that when the Buddha is the Heart, the Heart is certainly not mine! The heart is there, but it is not mine. The "Love of God" is there, but it is not mine. Everything in the world is there, but nothing belongs to anybody.

It was at this time, while contemplating the results of clinging, that the last lines in *Exam* – – Who knows the beginning of the world – – were formed:

*But the Bliss must not be grasped,  
the Pure Heart is free.  
That which is within everyone,  
belongs neither to you nor to me.*

The end of the year 1979 was drawing near, and I knew that I had to experience death. Dr. Philip came to visit Trondheim this winter, and I told him about this one day when we were skiing, I had no idea myself of what death would be like, I just knew that I had to experience it.

Dr. Philip had given me a new book by Venerable Ajahn Thate Desaransi, *Dhamma in Practice*, a collection of five works. Ajahn Thate was Dr. Philip's Teacher whom he revered deeply and often referred to when he gave me some statements. "Venerable Ajahn says so!" (So it **has** to be like this!) In these books Dhamma is explained in a very refined and accurate way, illustrating everything with the heart. It struck me that Venerable Ajahn Thate's eyes were keen like a hawk's scrutinizing the landscape below for some small living things for its prey. In the same manner Venerable Ajahn's eyes could detect every single little thing going on within the heart. He explained to me much of the way that I already had gone, but of which I had not known the names. I had been like one walking in an unknown landscape without a map and by chance had found the right way, or like one who had been walking at the edge of many dangerous cliffs in the dark, not knowing the danger, but luckily managing to steer clear.

In the first months of 1980 Dr. Philip went abroad for several months, and had also planned to stay with Venerable Ajahn Thate in *Wat Hin Mark Peng*. I had hoped to be able to go with him, because I had a deep longing to go there. If only I could speak with Venerable Ajahn Thate, he would understand everything. But Dr. Philip was also going to India and other places and lent me his hut instead. I went out there in the Easter holidays, taking with me two books: *The Three Combined Armies of Dhamma* by Venerable Ajahn Thate, and the third volume of *The Middle Length Sayings* with the Sutta "The Six Sixes" (*Chachakka sutta* – *MN 148*), which I was contemplating. With regard to Tan Ajahn Thate's book, I was especially contemplating the Epilogue which ends in question: In the same manner, how can Vipaka (here implying the body with its sense doors), Viññana (Consciousness) and Pañña (Wisdom) appear? And with what will they be used?

The hut was very dirty because of the constant heating with wood which gives off a lot of smoke. I had never learned to be a good cleaner, but started to clean the whole hut from ceiling to floor, the lockers, the cupboards, the windows and everything. In order to get water, I had to hack a hole in the thick ice covering the water, carry it inside, and heat it on the fire. Simultaneously with cleaning the hut, I was cleaning "inside", using the wisdom of Dhamma contemplating the Six Sixes: six internal sense doors, six external sense doors, six classes of consciousness, six classes of contact, six classes of feeling, six classes of craving. After five days of hard work, I was finishing my work by polishing a little round brass tray. I polished and polished until it was shining like gold, and I was very pleased.

Then there arose an image within the heart like the full moon bright and clear. I moved from the sitting-room into the little kitchen and stood a few moments looking out of the window at the ice-covered lake below. Then all of a sudden everything disappeared. The hut, the body, everything vanished in a flash, and there was only the space and a refined image of six sense-doors drawn like cobwebs in the air, showing that the body is merely a sense door, showing that all the doors have no substance, that they are empty and that everything passing by or through have nowhere to stay, they are just changeable phenomena coming and going and not worthy of being grasped at. The one watching this, knew like this and further said to itself:

***"That which is aware of this is also not myself, not me or mine."***

Thereupon a spiral was seen whirling with lightning speed through the air, and suddenly the body was back on the floor again, standing as before in front of the little window.

Such was the experience of Death. It was experienced in the way that "Nothing really dies". Of something that is not "**real**" in the ultimate sense, one cannot say that it dies, because it does not really exist, has no pith or real substance. ***That which Knows this, or the Knowing***, is beyond all that arises and passes away and does not itself arise or pass away. It simply just **IS**, exists on its own independent of any sense door or sense impression. It is not born, and does not die.

This was the answer to the mind's quest in the beginning: ***To find the Truth behind everything*** (all phenomena).

The heart was calm and vast.

I packed my few things, closed the hut and went back home. A couple of days later I got a letter from Dr. Philip in Thailand stating that Venerable Ajahn Thate had given me permission to come and stay in Wat Hin Mark Peng. I made myself ready in 14 days, cleared up at work and at home with the thought that I might never come back.

The equanimity within continued. Even my great wish to go to Thailand seemed insignificant now. Whether or not I would be able to go was not so important any more. For when doors are closed, we feel imprisoned and want to get out, but when the doors are open, we no longer feel imprisoned and the wish to go out disappears of its own accord. When we are free to go, we don't have to go anywhere.

The mind stays in the present.

Every moment is holy.

There was only the holy journey in the present.

I came to Wat Hin Mark Peng like a soldier coming from the war having slain all the enemies, wanting to tell the King. But I could neither speak Thai, nor express myself in English via a translator. I wanted to speak straight from the heart to Venerable Ajahn Thate, but that was not possible, so at last I "threw the story" into the River Khong.

I was also like a child coming home to its father. The best father is one who understands children with friendliness and patience. Then he can treat them according to their needs so that they can grow and thrive. The inner journey to Thailand had taken four years from the heart's very first step towards "Home". Had I reckoned all the physical footsteps which were taken in these years, they might have brought me just so far.

In Hin Mark Peng I was like a flower in good earth, everyone opening their heart doors, giving me friendliness and help. I had so many things to learn, and sucked everything in with open eyes and open ears. I liked the Pali Chanting very much, it was like the sound of Dhamma, and I sat listening outside the temple every morning. I also began to learn it myself, and chanted together with the nuns every evening. I wanted to stay and become a nun myself, and had no intention of going back to Norway. Even if I could not understand the Desanas which were given, Venerable Ajahn Thate was teaching me Dhamma every morning in the Sala. He was sitting there calm and friendly. When many guests were arriving, he greeted them with friendliness. When they left he gave them friendliness. When there was a lot of noise, he was undisturbed and friendly, welcoming all, regretting nothing.

Everything coming into contact with the sense doors ought to be treated in this way, just like guests coming and going; not clinging to nice guests, not pushing out unpleasant guests.

Dr. Philip left after some days because his mind was disturbed. His happiness was gone, and his mental state was colouring everything "black". Wat Hin Mark Peng, which used to be heaven on earth, became for him unbearable. He was very nervous when he left. I followed him outside the monastery and told him that he did not have to be afraid, ***because he had helped me and therefore he could never fall.***

After a few weeks I received a telegram from Norway stating that Dr. Philip could not take care of himself. He was stuck and could not get free. I told Venerable Ajahn this and

asked him if Dr. Philip should come back to Thailand, but he answered: "No, don't bring him here". Then there was only one thing left for me to do: Go back.

Going back was like turning the River Khong against its stream. My heart revolted within and tears squeezed their way out, but only for a moment. I had resolved to go and next morning I left in a hurry, without even eating the daily meal. But what counted the most: I had not yet been able to pay respect to Venerable Maha Boowa. I left Thailand without having seen him, not knowing whether I would ever have the opportunity to do so again.

Anyhow, it was a "funny" journey. The plane did not come to Udon; it had broken down. I caught a bus to Bangkok. Midway, near a very small village, the bus also broke down, and we were transferred to an open lorry which took us to the nearest town. While sitting there like buffaloes under the open sky, the rain started to splash down. Nobody complained. On arrival in the town, I followed the other passengers to the bus. I had no Thai money to pay for the new ticket, only travellers' cheques, but one of the male passengers paid the 7 Baht fare for me. By the time I arrived at the airport, there were ten minutes left before the plane to Norway was to take off. I had the ticket, but no money to pay the airport taxes. So I had to change money first, and only reached the plane just before take-off.

When I arrived back in Norway, Dr. Philip was not in Trondheim, but in Oslo, and his state was not as serious as feared. However, his sister was deeply touched that I had come back, she understood that I had come only because of her brother. So instead of staying at Wat Hin Mark Peng and becoming a nun, as I was inclined, I started my "comeback" to the world by following Dr. Philip's family to Israel where they were going to spend their holidays. They took Dr. Philip with them, and I followed in order to help his sister take care of him and for my own and Dr. Philip's sake, to take care that he was not confined to a mental hospital, where he might have been given drugs or electroshock treatment. His sister was very concerned about him. Philip was her only brother whom she loved and respected highly, and it was a great shock for her to see him acting like a "madman".

Just as I once had set aside everyone else in order to help myself, so also now in order to help Dr. Philip. I did not go back to work nor tell the firm that I had come back from Thailand, but went straight to Israel after about two weeks in Trondheim where I also helped to look after Dr. Philip every day, walking with him in the mountains outside the town and letting him help me in the garden so that he had some physical work to do. His family was very upset and put the blame on Venerable Ajahn Thate. It seemed to them that he had misled Dr. Philip. They imagined Venerable Ajahn to be like a witch-doctor who practises magic, so I tried to explain how things really were. It was not Venerable Ajahn's fault that Philip was not able to do what he was advised to do. I gave them the book *Maggavithi* (Steps Along the Path) by Venerable Ajahn Thate, which I found well suited to Dr. Philip's case; it explained the problems he had. At that time I did not know that this book had been written with regard to Dr. Philip. I also gave his sister, Wisdom develops Samadhi. The next day she told me that she had sat up all night reading, and now she could understand.

I also pointed to myself as an example, I was not at all mentally disturbed or sick. On the contrary, I was very healthy both mentally and physically, and I had come straight from Wat Hin Mark Peng!

In Israel, I invited Dr. Philip to go walking with me and he always walked behind. We also rode bicycles a lot, and I chose roads where the traffic was great, so that he had to use his mindfulness to keep himself on the right pathway. He did not speak to anyone except me, and even to me said very little. One day we were sitting on the terrace, he said:

**"It is terrible, you know, to lose one's identity".**

This was the problem. He had lost his self-identification with "the god Philip". His happiness was gone and he felt as if he had lost himself. He was in the same state that I had been in four years before, when I lost my self-identification and ceased to be either a mother or a widow. I had lost all my children in one deadly blow, even if they were still alive. Everything is OURS as long as we identify with it. That's the whole story. The mind deceives itself and is doomed to harvest all the disappointments. The good fortune in my case was that I had given up Dr. Philip's "god-ness" before he lost it himself. Had he lost it while I still was dependent on him, I might have lost my foothold. I tell this because I want to stress how important it is to be one's own refuge, to be one's own light, not taking refuge in any other person or deity, not gazing at the light of another and getting absorbed in it. It might expire, and the one who was absorbed will have lost his refuge.

"Atta-dipa, Dhamma-dipa" → **Be your own refuge, take Dhamma as refuge.**

"Atta hi attano natho" → **Oneself is one's own protector.**

Dr. Philip's mind coloured everything black and threatening. One day he told me that I was evil. The flowers and bushes in the beautiful park below were so dangerous that we could not pass them. Death stood written on his face, it was like stone, and people who saw him were scared. Formerly he used to be "lost" in his happy mental states, now he was "lost" in his unhappy state. This is the result of not using the Buddha wisdom: Aniccam, Dukkham, Anatta. Whatever we experience, happy or unhappy, good or bad, has to be contemplated as impermanent and not self. If we do not, we get stuck for a long time and have to suffer immensely.

One day when I was washing the dishes and letting Dr. Philip help me, his sister could not take it any more. She could not bear to see her brother in such a state, so I suggested that I go back to Norway and take Dr. Philip with me to Svalbard for a while. They agreed, and I went to Tel Aviv in order to book tickets, I was a little anxious when I left Dr. Philip, noticing that his heart was kind of softening, and said that I wanted to take him along. But his brother-in-law had already started the car and we went off without Dr. Philip.

While I was away this single day something happened so that they had found it necessary to seek help from a psychiatrist who sent him to a hospital. I was not allowed to talk with him, as they feared it might do him harm.

Thus I went back to Norway alone and started to work again. I had done all that was possible for me to do. If I could have drowned myself in order to help him, I would have done so. Even though he was like this, I respected and revered him as before, knowing it was only a changeable state that he had to go through and learn from. He was going through "hell"

just as I had four years earlier. He had a very strong will to endure, and he had a lot of merit keeping him from drowning completely. He was the kind of person whom people like to help, very gentle and kind of "helpless", just like a little child which is protected by its own helplessness.

That same autumn, while contemplating Dr. Philip's case, I wrote:

#### **HAPPY – PETER**

*Once upon a time there was a little man  
who happiness found in "no man's land".  
He grasped it eagerly with the whole of his heart,  
"Happiness is mine", he to himself declared.  
"I am happiness, happiness is me,  
thereby I'll drive away all evil I meet on my way.  
The man would not let happiness go, therefore,  
by the turning of the wheel,  
he came to a state of woe.  
What he now got to see, gave him no peace,  
now he had come on the wrong track,  
Everything that before was good  
has become evil and black,  
he's devoured by dread and feeds his fear:  
"Here is not good, this I do not want,  
this is not me, where is the happy me?!"  
He searches in despair and searches in vain,  
darkening his heart more and more in pain,  
losing his way completely in the mist,  
because he cannot see  
that "Happy-Peter" in reality never did exist!  
Desire lives in dark places  
gathering dirt and dust  
He who will free himself, faces  
the cleaning up task as a must!*

Dr. Philip's merit carried him safely through all dangers. The doctor in the hospital did not keep him there for more than a couple of weeks. He then went back to Oslo with his sister's family. After a short while he left Norway, or rather fled, without telling anyone about it, feeling that he had to clear up his case alone without interference from anybody else. Thus he stayed abroad for more than a year before he gave any sign that he was alive and well.

What had happened and the reason why he departed from Norway, he told in a little booklet written as a kind of fairy tale, which he distributed to his friends and acquaintances. He bought an apartment in Gibraltar which he used as his mainstay thereafter.

He tells in his booklet that after a year of travelling in Africa, Spain and other places, he had come to a place named "The end of the world", which was a place on the border between Gibraltar and the desert. He was sitting alone on a stone contemplating that he had nowhere to go and nothing to go back to. Then there arose a mental image of himself in the air vanishing over the horizon with an apologetic smile.

This was the end of "the god Philip". His self-identification with the godly state was gone and finished. Dr. Philip was simply dead. And his heart which had been like a mountain of ice, melted, and he felt like a newborn child. This child went out into the world again, and was named David (until the time would come when names were no more needed). David had to learn everything anew, and this David it was who came back to Norway. He was not at all like the former Dr. Philip. David was more earthly.

Now Philip-David appreciated being a human being, and he came to visit me often to speak Dhamma. I gave him back the Dhamma-food that he once had given to me, and he used it, worked with it and helped himself.

To his sister's great apprehension, in 1985 he returned to Wat Hin Mark Peng to pay his respects to Venerable Ajahn Thate. This time however, he benefited greatly from his stay there. He writes in a letter to me, dated December 1985:

Having been Venerable Ajahn Thate's disciple for 20 years, he said to me one day, "**It takes a long time to learn**".

Coming back to stay with him some years later, I (Dr. Philip) said,

**"It takes a long time to learn"**.

He was silent for a moment and then said,

**"I will teach you the heart of all religions: The heart (jy) is that which is neutral. When it moves from its place, it is mind (citt). From there on it is able to branch out endlessly. Do not let your mind become concentrated. Just let it be neutral"**.

I (Dr. Philip) asked, "**Where should the mind dwell?**" "**The mind dwelling some place,**" he replied, "**is clinging.**"

When Dr. Philip stayed abroad, we used to correspond, and once I sent him a letter including The Goal Line which I had written in 1982 in Norwegian. He sent my own letter back to me from Gibraltar translated into English as follows:

**For the desireless, there is no clinging.**

**For the desireless there is no need to achieve anything more.**

**THE GOAL LINE:**

*objects of our desire, our wishes,  
a limit which can never be reached  
when we constantly seek after more.  
The moment we are free from desire and wishes,  
the Goal Line is suddenly there!  
If one has achieved something, then  
this is linked with suffering,  
trying to keep hold of it.  
If there is no holding fast,  
then the heart has understood suffering  
and is free from suffering.  
This is the end of suffering,  
which is the highest aim.  
The highest is reached in giving up all.  
(I, me, mine, all the worlds).*

*Dhammapada 186-192 (Not quoted here)*

*Desire leads to clinging.  
Where there is no desire, there is no clinging.  
It is like fire,  
which always stretches out its flames  
to achieve something, to get hold of something  
to consume. That is suffering.  
Where there is no fire,  
there are no flames stretching out  
to achieve anything at all,  
to get hold of something to consume.  
That is the end of suffering.*

*Dhammapada 95, 96 (Not quoted here)*

*It is wisdom, that cuts the roots, and  
digs them up. It is wisdom that  
finds delusion underneath, and  
puts an end to it like the Troll that  
bursts (disintegrates) when the sun  
strikes it or like the bandit  
who gives himself up when the police  
have caught up with him.  
When the troublemaker has been*

*driven away from the heart then  
peace and freedom remain.  
Wisdom understands suffering, finds  
the cause, and removes it along with the roots.  
When the cause is removed,  
the effects cease. Automatically.  
All salvation and liberation comes from within  
(and also all attachment).  
Freedom from hatred is to know:  
'The Guilty One' is always the same,  
in the whole world there is no one to blame.  
But happiness must not be grasped.  
The pure heart is free.  
That which is in us all  
is neither yours nor mine.*

It is worth remarking that many years ago when Dr. Philip was helping me, he also sent me Dhamma instructions written in English, which I used to translate into Norwegian in order to understand them better. Dr. Philip's knowledge of Norwegian was not as good as his knowledge of English, which was like his mother tongue.

Another letter from Dr. Philip, dated 7.3.1988.

*A four weeks period of meditation investigating Venerable Ajahn Thate's sentence "heart and mind are both the mind", came to its end on my birthday. Your Dhamma letters were a wonderful help, and what you wrote about "The Goal Line" was the key.*

*P.S. It happened one day at the beginning of the practice, that pacing up and down on the waterfront in Gibraltar, coming to the end of the walking stretch, the thought arose "How wonderful that I am not enlightened".*

*Looking at this, suddenly laughter came up, and a great deal of foolishness disappeared. After this, insight came up day after day.*

So there is nothing we have to attain. There is no "I" who is going to be enlightened. Buddha Sasana just helps us to give up desire. Then everything is there of its own accord and has been there all the time.

*Suffering has always been the Great Teacher,  
and Happiness the Great Seducer.*

In another letter he sent me some Dhamma that he had written before:

FROM 1962:

*Everything tells the truth.  
Nothing tells a lie.  
The only one who deceives himself is oneself.*

FROM 1972:

*The normal human state  
is to be beside oneself.  
Beside oneself, one looks around  
everywhere in the external world,  
without finding what one is looking after.  
The moment one comes back to oneself,  
is like waking up from a dream.  
When one finds that one has everything  
one can wish for, one does not wish  
anything anymore, and it is just by no longer  
wishing anything that one finds everything  
one has been searching for.*

FROM 1988:

*To realize that one always has been there,  
is the last step on a journey.  
Body, mind and the whole world  
Are just as they have always been in their concord.  
Walking down the steps it is crystal clear.*

ON THE WAY OF PRACTICE

*(Given by Dr. Philip to Venerable Ajahn Thate on the 26.4.88)*

*However long one may have practiced,  
one should start each day  
as if it was the first time in one's life  
that one has ever practiced  
and as yet knows nothing about it at all.  
In this way one will never need to ask  
about the end or beginning of learning.*

ON THE WAY OF PRACTICE 2

*The Dhamma is the most precious thing in the world.  
Being the most precious thing in the world,  
it is something we should protect.  
When we protect the Dhamma,  
then the Dhamma protects us.  
When the Dhamma protects us,*

*then there is peace in our hearts.  
When there is peace in our hearts,  
there is peace in the world.*

#### THE SILA AND DANA JEWEL

*If throughout one's life, one has done a single good  
and pure deed, it will be one's light on the path.*

In 1988, I went to Wat Hin Mark Peng again, and while I was there, Dr. Philip also came. Thus we met in Thailand for the first time in eight years. In the course of these years, things had naturally been changing. This time I invited Dr. Philip to go with me to visit the old nuns, and one day while we were sitting on the veranda of Khun Mae Noy, he said to her, laughing:

*"Formerly I used to be Mali's elder brother. Now Mali has become my elder sister."*

I had often thought that we had been like two mountain climbers, giving each other a hand when needed. Sometimes positions may change.

***Dhamma is that which all beings are looking for***, but mostly do not find because they search for it outside themselves, in things that are fleeting and inconstant. Dhamma is that which is never used up, the inexhaustible happiness everyone is longing for. But striving to grasp hold of worldly happiness, we reap nothing but "empty hands" and disappointment. Once we have experienced real disenchantment with the world, we may be able to search for truth, listen to truth and discern truth.

## Since 1980

Since I came to Wat Hin Mark Peng for the first time in 1980, I have now been there eight times altogether, each time for two or three months. I have also been able to pay respects to Venerable Maha Boowa almost every time I have been there. But since I can speak only a little Thai, I have never succeeded in telling him how miraculously he helped me before I had ever met him.

The seventh time, 1990, I managed to have the last of the verses "*Issues through the Moss*" translated into Thai, with help from other monastic members. Each time I stayed there, I tried to learn to speak and write a little, mainly in order to find a way to speak with Venerable Ajahn Thate. These verses were my way of doing so, and he welcomed them with great kindness and understanding. This has been a great release to me and has given me strength.

In connection with the rest of the verses, I would like to tell a little about life since I came back to stay at home again in 1980. It was not easy, to put it mildly. There were seemingly insuperable obstacles to overcome. A mind inclined to monastic life and solitude, will find it difficult to stay in a family. Having received the deadly blow in the circumstances, it was for me just as comfortable as staying in a tiger's den. Hearing words such as "*your mother*", "*your children*", "*your sister*" etc. was like the scratching of tiger claws in the heart. As is well known by Buddhists in Thailand, the only way to survive in the midst of tigers, is to have Metta and understanding for them. Formerly I was a "tiger" myself looking at the world with a "tiger's eyes". My nature having been changed, the others could not possibly understand me, but I could understand them. When you can understand yourself, it is not necessary to be understood by others, even though it is a good thing.

On the other hand, family members are likely to feel restrained or hampered in many ways when one of their members is different or too "far away" from them as in my case. Having been very strict with myself, I felt that others sometimes were scared of me. It has taken many years to be able to function "smoothly", to soften and open up the heart.

It was natural for me to continue to live according to the monastic rules. This included only one meal a day (eating alone), morning and evening chanting meditation and working with translation of English Dhamma books into Norwegian, reading Dhamma or writing Dhamma myself. This I performed while I was still working in the firm and later on while trying to make life comfortable and normal for the others, for instance by cooking for them in the way they were used to and keeping the house and garden.

Dhamma is something immensely great and wonderful. That is why it is awe-inspiring, preventing those who revere it from being heedless when giving it to others. In the beginning I did not dare to say a word to anyone. Thinking of the great trials I had gone through, I could not see anyone around me who would be able to understand. Feeling healthy, one is not motivated to seek the doctor! Telling people about suffering and its

cause, or the danger in sense pleasures, they will most likely think you are crazy or stupid, not enjoying the pleasures of life as they are.

On the other hand I felt it was my duty to tell how things really are, what actually had happened. But I was held back because I did not know how to put it, nor did I want to compromise a dead man. Ten years later, when I gave the "Issues" to Venerable Ajahn Thate and was asked **how** it happened that I came to Wat Hin Mark Peng, I wrote it for him, and he let it be printed. Without revealing this crucial point, which was the cause of the mind turning away from the world, I was not able to explain how it happened. I have told it because it is the truth, and it is my hope that it will be of benefit to others, not harming or offending anyone.

I was able to leave the firm in 1983 with the intention of going to Wat Hin Mark Peng for good. Just then my old mother broke her hip-bone and my mother's younger sister came to a state where she could not care for herself any longer, so I invited her to stay with us. In the meantime both sons had come home, and in addition I had two old dogs approaching old age and death. In order to give a short picture of my relationship to the eldest dog over his 12 year life span, I relate the following:

The first four years of his life, before the revulsion came, I cared for him with loving attachment.

The next four years, while struggling to get free, I cared for him with aversion.

The last four years of his life, I cared for him with compassion.

Such is the way: From attachment through aversion (or disenchantment), to detachment and compassion.

After leaving the firm, I was given a little pension, and with that and what I had inherited from my parents, including the house, I had means for survival.

I was quite ashamed of everything that came "running after me". All that I had needed before while I did not have it, came after me when I did not need it any longer. But I finally said to myself: "You have taken the suffering, now take the good results as well. Use it for the benefit of others".

So I stayed at home caring for both old and young, the mind struggling to adjust itself and polish up where it discovered frictions. To myself I called this "to polish up the other way", which means to adjust oneself to "the world" again, learn to live with it and take conditions as they are. The development of compassion and understanding is indispensable for this kind of work. There was no other teacher available but the making of mistakes and learning from them. However things of the world may be, we all have to have family members whether we are attached to them or not. They are our fellow beings and ought to be treated as such.

My aunt suffered the pains of old age and longing to die. One day when she was moving around with the help of a "supporting frame", she said:

***"It is a punishment of sin to become old!, so said my father."***

***"Then it must be a punishment of sin to be born", I replied after a little pause, "for the cause of growing old is that we are born!"***

My aunt died after one year at the age of 87, my mother after five years at the age of 91. She died in her sleep without bodily pain, but she had suffered from the loss of Sati (mindfulness) and memory. This implied that I had to be "a little bird sitting on her head" too, watching and guarding her 18 hours a day and sometimes at night also. So I simply had to be my old mother for a long time, because the little bird cannot sit on two heads at a time.

Her loss of memory and mindfulness showed me again how illusory and uncertain our "grasped selves" are. Old people may forget their former roles and whom they were related to, even their children, and experience uncertainty and fear.

One year after my mother passed away, the eldest dog ended his life after having been sick for a long time, and the youngest one died 2 years after him.

Sabbe Sankhara Anicca - Everything that is born must die.

This realm where we are born, is in reality the realm of death. If we were not born, we would not have to die. That is why the Buddha was seeking a way out of the created world to the Uncreated, which is the Deathless.

In order to show how the rest of "the Issues" have peeped forth, I will relate some events which took place between 1980 and 1983:

In the beginning when I started to take care of the family again, it reminded me of a "**pig sty**". There is really not much difference. A pig sty is a pig sty, a bird's nest is a bird's nest, they are all homes like those of human beings and precious to the mind which is attached to them. One should not look down upon pigs and birds or other animals striving for their little homes, they are dear to them all in the same way. The mind which has tasted the freedom of detachment, will be able to see the true nature of it.

While reflecting on this, the following story occurred, called:

#### **THE PIG'S LIBERATION**

***Once upon a time there was a little pig  
who lived in this sty, not so big.  
One day when the door was left ajar,  
he left his dirty home with plans to go so far.  
So happy and free he trotted about,  
finding the beautiful world there out.  
But the owner caught him, and with a rope he bound  
that little pig, so unhappy to be found.  
And when again he was confronted with his dirty bin,  
He had to be forced to back within.  
"Oh me, oh my, does it really look so bad?"***

*the little pig wailed so sad, so sad.  
"Then I will rather eat no more,  
here there is nothing worth eating for!"  
The little pig became thin and lean,  
unlike his mother so big and fat,  
and that's why he was never seen  
placed on a Christmas table plate!*

I liked this story very much, but I am not sure whether the other members of "the sty" were quite so delighted.

The Lie, our false conceptions of conventional realities, taking it as ultimately real, being absorbed in our different roles as mother, father, son, daughter etc., or in our five Khandhas (of body, feelings, memories, thoughts and consciousness), is life. It struck me once that life is actually like Jhana (absorption) in meditation. The mind reaches out and grasps everything as **Self** so fast that we are not aware of it when it happens. That is why we are entangled like a ball of thread, we have no idea of how it happens because we do not follow "the Subtle Thief" closely enough. Thus we have all these strange **Selves** going about in this world, everyone with the same feeling of being something separate, something peculiar that must be preserved and protected. This is the story of the Avijja-Heart, going about fighting with itself. It is very painful to have one's eyes opened, it is so frightful that beings in general prefer to close their eyes rather than to face the truth.

Such was the case with me anyhow. In the beginning, when the truth tried to tell me how it really was, I closed my eyes even harder for fear of the great pain of losing my ideas, the shams of life.

An old female friend of my aunt who came to visit us, once spoke to me about my children being my own flesh and blood! I replied that my own flesh and blood was not mine, far less the flesh and blood of my children, and that we grasp them as self because we are blind. Then she replied quite shocked: "**Then I would rather be blind!**"

When our false ideas have received a deadly blow, we lose our happiness and are left with the first Noble Truth of Suffering. This overwhelming disappointment causes the fire of greed, hatred and delusion to explode. Thus we are confronted with the second Noble Truth. If we can take this, endure it, not run away from this unique and direct Teaching, wisdom will penetrate within the heart, just as explained in "Exam". Wisdom will quench the fire, because in wisdom is Light, Loving Kindness, Mercy, Forgiveness and Peace. In this Peace the fires of greed, hatred and delusion are extinguished. Such is the "Extinction" of Suffering, or Freedom from Suffering. And this is in itself the answer to my prayer in the very beginning. The Lie of Life was expressed as follows:

**DRESSING:**

*The Lie, however finely and neatly dressed,  
who dare not let it go,*

*will always go restless and oppressed.*

**UNDRESSING:**

*The Truth, even if painful and sad,  
who dares face it and see it,  
will thereafter go peaceful and glad.*

**RESTORING:**

*Nothing in the world belongs to you or to me.  
A Lie cannot be owned,  
And what is True is Free!*

I gave this to the eldest son, the student, who liked it.

By the way, this young man had difficulty waking up in the morning, and one day when he was going to have an exam, he came down and said: "This morning I have had a terrible nightmare. It seems to me as though I am making one deliberately in order to have to wake up!"

I was struck by this utterance which reminded me of my own life before I "woke up". I had made my life into a terrible nightmare so that I actually had to wake up!

*I wrote it down like this:*

*"What we experience while we are asleep, we call a dream.  
what we experience while we are awake, we call reality.  
When we are dreaming something pleasant, we say:  
'What a pity that I should wake up!'  
When we are tormented by night-mares, we say:  
'Good that it was only a dream.'*

*The difference between dream and what we call reality,  
is really minimal:*

*While we are asleep, we are without mindfulness  
which is our mate on the ocean of life,  
While we are awake and do not use this mate of ours,  
but felt ourselves to be helplessly driven along,  
then life is a sleep in blindness.*

*The goal of sleep is to wake up.*

*Not before we awaken, do we know that we have been sleeping?  
The goal of life is to wake up, make an end of the sleep of ignorance.  
That is to discover that what we called reality,  
is just as unreal as a dream."*

The youngest son, the sailor, came home because he ran out of work. Having neglected him for so many years, I now had a hard job trying to help him from drowning in the ocean of unwholesome deeds.

I learned later on that I had been like a mainstay for him, because I had been a good example for him. So if I had not helped myself first, I would have had no chance to help him.

At sea he had learned to use drugs. Seeing how this was pulling a human being towards downfall, I wrote *The Fisherman* and gave it to him.

*The fisherman baited with lure his hook,  
the fish rose to the bait.  
Now it hangs there, wriggling,  
unable to free itself.  
The fisherman is the Evil One himself,  
he rejoices maliciously,  
each time he over the boat's gunnel pulls  
a suffering human heart.*

*The fish is still innocent,  
it is but blind and foolish.  
But he who makes himself the Fisherman,  
must stand before the doom of Death.*

*(The Fisherman is like the Tempter seducing others.  
The Fish is like the mind deceiving itself.)*

My heart, being deeply touched by compassion, was urged to point out the right way to him in the following manner:

#### TO A YOUNG SAILOR

*We are all like boats upon the sea,  
each a vessel separately,  
Hull and engine are like body and senses,  
captain and mate "The One Who Knows".*

*The heart provides motive power  
desiring and yearning to find the right place,  
where it can free itself from bonds and chains,  
be done with suffering and find a peace,  
South-Sea islands are merely for pleasure,  
there one finds no peaceful place.  
Big city quays with "ravenous sharks",  
no course on your chart to trace.  
Who would escape from "the Eternal Cycle"*

*must reverse the wheel and set the opposite course.*  
*Straight against the Stream and giant waves*  
*goes the only right way performe.*  
*The captain who manages to steer his ship*  
*scatheless through this struggle,*  
*safely landed on the other shore,*  
*he finds happiness and peace.*  
*Never more will he set foot in a boat*  
*to sail life's terrible sea.*

These verses were written in 1981 or -82. In 1983 when I had another opportunity to go to Thailand, I bought some volumes of *The Kindred Sayings* and *Gradual Sayings* which were available in Bangkok. These brought me great happiness. In *Kindred Sayings on Sense (The Salayatana Book)*, I found the chapters of *the Ocean* and *the Fisherman*. I will write them down for those who might not have read them:

## THE OCEAN

"The Ocean! The Ocean! Brethren," says the ignorant worldling. But that, brethren, is not the ocean in the discipline of the Ariyan. That ocean (of the worldling), brethren, is a heap of water, a great flood of water.

The eye of a man, brethren, is the ocean. Its impulse is made of objects. Whoso endureth that object-made impulse, of him, brethren, it is said, "he hath crossed over. That ocean of eye, with its waves and whirlpools, its sharks and demons, the Brahmin hath crossed and gone beyond. He standeth on dry ground."

The tongue of a man, brethren, is the ocean. Its impulse is made of savours. Whoso endureth that impulse made of savours, of him it is said, "he hath crossed over. That ocean of tongue, with its waves and whirlpools, its sharks and demons, the brahmin hath crossed, gone beyond. He standeth on dry ground."

The mind of a man, brethren, is the ocean. Its impulse is made of mind-states. Whoso endureth that impulse made of mind-states, of him it is said, "he hath crossed over. That ocean of mind, with its waves and whirlpools, its sharks and demons, the brahmin hath crossed, gone beyond. He standeth on dry ground."

*Whoso hath crossed this monster-teeming sea.*  
*With its devils and fearsome waves impassable,*  
*"Versed in the lore," "living the holy life",*  
*"Gone to world's end", and "gone beyond" he's called.*

## THE FISHERMAN

He in whom lust, malice and ignorance are cast off, he hath passed over this ocean, with its sharks and demons, with its fearsome waves impassable.

*Bond-free, escaped from Death and without base,  
Transcending sorrow, to become no more,  
Evanished, incomparable one –  
He hath beroofed the King of Death, I say.*

Just as a fisherman, brethren, casts a baited hook in some deep pool of water, and some fish, greedy for the bait, gulps it down, and thus, brethren, that fish that gulps down the fisherman's hook comes by misfortune, comes to destruction, becomes subject to the pleasure of the fisherman, even so, brethren, there are these six hooks in the world, to the sorrow of beings, to the harm of living things. What six?

There are, brethren, objects cognizable by the eye... inciting to lust. If a brother delight therein, welcomes them, persists in clinging to them, such a one is called "hook swallower", "come by misfortune from Mara", "come to destruction", "become subject to the pleasure of the Evil one". And so also for the other external sense-spheres (ear, nose, tongue and body).

There are mind-states, brethren, cognizable by the mind... If a brother delight not therein, welcomes them not, persists not in clinging to them, such a one is called "one that has not taken Mara's hook", "hook-breaker", "hook-shattered", "one that is scatheless", "not subject to the pleasure of the Evil One".

For five years or more, the struggle went on to save "the young sailor" from "drowning". I was looking for practical ways in which he would have a chance to do good. Once I let him take care of Grandmother while I was in hospital. The reason for this was that I had a stroke due to overstraining myself, and lost the left field of vision.

When I came back from the hospital after five days, my mother praised him and said that she had never thought that he could be so kind and clever.

While speaking about my mother: one day while she still was able to read the newspaper, she came down to the kitchen and said to me:

*"It is terrible that there must always be a war going on in the world.*

*Why cannot people live in peace?"*

*"When everyone cleans their hearts from greed, hatred and delusion", I said, "then there will be no more war".*

*"Well, I think that the politicians are at fault", was her reply.*

Some days later when I came down into the kitchen, I found a mouse caught in a trap in the locker. When my mother came down for breakfast, I said to her:

**"Now the war has broken out in our house also. The first dead victim is lying in the locker".**

**"Oh!,"** she said, quite shocked, her eyes big as plates.

I presented the poor little one in the trap to her.

Whereupon she said: **"I didn't do it!"**

But I knew that her son-in-law, my sister's husband, had done it for her.

In the afternoon I wrote: **Lesson for Grandmother** who was afraid that a little mouse should eat up and ruin her house:

**Once upon a time there was a little mouse  
who moved into Grandmother's house.**

**He was named Pat  
and lost his life in a trap.**

**Who can build a mouse but not a house?**

**Who can build a house but not a mouse?**

**Dread is dread and fear is fear,  
who is afraid of death goes peacefully nowhere.**

**It is the same frightened heart in big and small,  
watch therefore well that  
all living creatures in peace may dwell.**

After my mother's death, I would have been free to go to Thailand; my intention had been to stay at home until my duties were finished. But just then "the young sailor" was converted and had become a Christian. Being soft and tender like a child I felt that he needed help. He asked me if it was right or wrong, and I answered: It is not wrong as long as you refrain from evil, develop good and cleanse your heart.

He is now a trustworthy, clever, kind and helpful human being.

But unfortunately Christians do not learn to abstain from killing animals, even if they are taught not to kill, because their God has given human beings power over animals.

If we only live according to rules or doctrines, but do not really understand with our hearts through the development of wisdom and compassion, we will never understand the Law.

**Long ago I wrote to the young Sailor:  
Watch your heart, child of man,  
if you want to get out of the fire of suffering!  
Cleanse your heart, child of man,  
if you want to free yourself!**

By having observed how beings are deteriorating through unwholesome deeds and improving through wholesome deeds, these verses occurred:

## THE CARETAKER AND THE CLEANER

*He who is good today,  
May become bad tomorrow  
if he does not guard his purity in thoughts, words and deeds.*

*He who is bad today,  
May become good tomorrow,  
if he cleanses his thoughts, words and deeds.*

But this has no end in itself, being the Eternal Cycle of Change, going round and round with its ups and downs. What has to be done, is to go beyond both good and evil with their results. By uprooting the cause (of suffering), the result (suffering) disappears.

At the very beginning of my practice when I was in deep despair and darkness, I felt that this house where I am still living was a real hell and wanted to go somewhere else in order to be free from suffering!

But then this thought arose:

*"If you cannot do it here, you will not be able to do it anywhere! Maybe some time in the future, you may manage to turn this place into a good one".*

Where the hearts are good, the world is good. There is not any place that is at fault. When the heart has become right, everything is right.

The word "Dhamma" means many things, also Righteousness and Law. It is wonderful to know that everything is in accordance with Law and Righteousness.

Once, when I was striving, suffering as if under a heavy burden, I had a strong wish to lay down my head, not knowing why.

What does this really mean?

It means to surrender, lay down the Burden of the five grasped groups by way of which we think "we are". To give up the false self for the True Self, for that which is truly Worthy:

*The Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha.  
Wisdom, Truth and Virtue.  
For the Triple Gem have I laid down my head.  
That is why the heart is at Peace.*

This is another answer to the prayer in the beginning:

*Eternal God, give me Peace.  
Extinguish me.*

There can be no real Peace before the fires of greed, hatred and delusion are extinguished. The wish to be, to exist, to have, to get, belongs to greed which makes the heart think "***I am***" by way "of stolen goods".

The Eternal God, that which is outside the fire, is just the released Heart which has given back with open eyes, all that has been grasped in blindness.

Such was the way from Darkness to Light, from Falsity to Truth, from Burning to Quenching.

Dhammapada 202:

***No fire is there like lust.***

***No crime like hatred.***

***No ill like the Five Aggregates.***

***No higher bliss than Nibbana's peace.***

Living beings in general love the fire, keep kindling it, keep feeding it, because they are afraid that it will go out. They think that if the fire goes out, there will be nothing left. But they forget that "the one who knows" that the fire has gone out, does not "go out". The fire ends, but the Knowing does not end.

We are burning within the fire, more or less intensely, until we start seeking a way out by means of quenching it. We all have to be our own "fire-extinguisher", and the tool for this is the Dhamma of the Buddha. He found the way to do it by himself, we just have to follow his recipe or footprints.

When our house is burning, we are urged to drop everything else in order to put the fire out. Why not do the same when our heart is on fire? Or will we let ourselves be burned up without seeing the danger?

***Those who are burning within the fire,  
do not know that they are burning.***

***One who has escaped from the fire,  
is looking back on the fire,  
seeing the suffering  
having Compassion for everyone.***

This is like "***God' sitting looking at the Fire***".

Whether we use the word, God, Dhamma, the Released Heart or whatever, it cannot affect the truth. It is just as it is, whatever we call it.

When all limited thought constructions are given up, even the most sublime ones, the Truth may reveal itself to the mind.

The Truth is pure, it is not stained by any falsity. But when the mind is stained, it colours the Truth accordingly when coming in contact with it. Nevertheless, when a person with the pure intention of helping another fellow being hands over the Dhamma to another,

this is a pure deed. Whether the recipient makes use of it or not, is up to him. But when it is accepted with pure intention and put to use, it becomes a deed purified on both sides.

In Dr. Philip's words:

***"If throughout one's life,  
one has done a single good and pure deed,  
it will be one's light on the Path."***

I have told a little about a journey through some of the realms of existence, experienced in a short period at the same place. There is no need to go anywhere in order to experience heaven or hell, the human, the animal or the ghost realms. They are all created and experienced right there in the same heart. The Uncreated is also experienced just there.

Thus no one should overlook oneself, because we all have to experience with our own hearts, just as we have to taste with our own tongues. No one can taste for another, and no one can understand for another. Each heart has to understand for itself. The only thing that is needed, is to set the heart in proper order, making it apt for Truth.

Try to tell a mole that life up on the surface of the earth is much more pleasing than living down in the dark earth. The mole will look at you with scared eyes and hasten down to its impermanent "security".

A mole's life would be real suffering for a human being, but is "happiness" for the mole. A human life would be suffering for a celestial being, and a celestial life would be suffering for those who have tasted Release.

Such is the grasping of the heart which cannot let go of whatever realm it is born into at present. Desire and delight breeds fear of losing the hold. But whatever we grasp after, just there we get stuck. Just like the fish on the hook or the mouse in the trap. They take the lure for the survival of their bodies, but meet with death.

The Buddha explains the pleasures of the senses like bait on the hook or lure in the trap. One who turns away, will go free. Not that we have to starve to death, but we need to see the danger and become disenchanted in order to be free of desire. Seeing a deadly hook beneath anything that is alluring, is a good lesson causing the mind to turn away.

When the mind is blind, it is called delusion, or ignorance of the truth. It does not mean that the mind cannot see anything at all, but that it colours and stains things according to its conditions. It is blind like people living in a dark forest, never finding a way to get out of it. But they see enough to find mushrooms and blueberries and honey. Darkness breeds fear, though, so they can never feel secure, never know what enemies are hiding beyond the trees.

Blindness causes beings to go round and round in a circle. This holds true whether it is mental or physical blindness. There is a story of a blind person who tried to escape the communists in Laos by swimming over the river Khong to Thailand. He swam around in a circle and did not reach the Thai shore.

I tried this out once when I was skiing up in the mountains. There was a vast plateau covered with new snow with no tracks at all. I closed my eyes with the firm intention to go straight forward, and went on. After a while I opened my eyes and discovered that I had moved in a circle.

So if we want to go out of the Eternal Cycle, we must open our eyes. Open them to see clearly how things really are, not let ourselves be fooled. Open them to see where we are going, watch our steps, which are our actions, or else the gravitational force will pull us in its direction. It is painful to open one's eyes, though. It means to taste and understand the Four Noble Truths: Suffering, the Cause of Suffering, the Cessation of Suffering and the Path going to Cessation of Suffering.

If we cannot take the pain or do not know that we are ill, we cannot cure ourselves. We will not seek "the Doctor" who knows the cause and the way to remove it. **Sila, Samadhi, Pañña**, the Ariyan Eightfold Path, leads from the created, sorrowing realm, to the Uncreated, Unsorrowing Realms.

The Worlds End.....Dhamma Remains



# Glossary

**Anatta** – Not-self. The characteristic of being without a stable core or essence, without an owner. One of the ‘three characteristics’.

**Anicca** – Impermanence. One of the ‘three characteristics’.

**Avijja** – Ignorance. Usually it refers to a fundamental ignorance about the true nature of the world and ourselves. The first link of ‘Paticcasamuppada’.

**Bhikkhuni** – A Buddhist nun.

**Desana** – A discourse (on the teachings of the Buddha).

**Dukkha** – Unsatisfactoriness or suffering. One of the ‘three characteristics’.

**Jhana** – Meditative absorption, a heightened state of consciousness.

**Kamma** – Literally ‘action’, in Buddhist philosophy it is considered that all intentional action bears fruit in the future, in this life or in future lives.

**Kammattana** – Literally ‘basis of work’. It is usually referring to a meditation object, for example the breath.

**Khandha** – The ‘Five Khandas’ are what builds up an individual person according to Buddhist philosophy. These five are (1) form or materiality; (2) feeling; (3) perception; (4) volitional formations; and (5) consciousness.

**Magga** – Literally ‘path’. Usually referring to ‘The Noble Eightfold Path’.

**Metta** – Loving kindness, good-will.

**Pañña** – Wisdom, discernment.

**Patisandhi** – Re-birth linking (consciousness).

**Paticcasamuppada** – Dependent origination. Detailed exposition of the Second Noble Truth showing how all suffering originates through a series of steps.

**Sacca** – Truth. Usually referring to ‘The Four Noble Truths’.

**Saddha** – Faith, confidence.

**Samādhi** – Concentration, collectedness.

**Sati** – Mindfulness.

**Samsara** – The cycle of re-birth.

**Sila** – Virtue, ethics or morality.

**Ti-lakkhana** – The three characteristics that apply to all conditioned phenomena – impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and not-self. (Please see ‘Anicca’, ‘Dukkha’ and ‘Anatta’ in this glossary.)

**Viriya** – Energy, effort.





This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.

To view a copy of this license, visit:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

You are free to:

- Copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format.

The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms.

Under the following terms:

- **Attribution:** You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.
- **NonCommercial:** You may not use the material for commercial purposes.
- **NoDerivatives:** If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you may not distribute the modified material.
- **No additional restrictions:** You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.

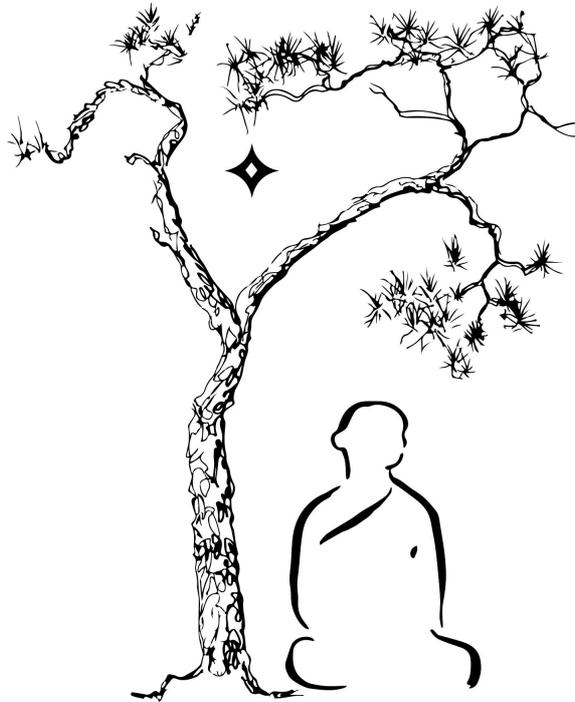
Notices:

You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation.

No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material.

Originally published by: Inward Path Publisher,  
Penang, Malaysia. 1998.  
© 1998 Mali Bagøien.

Published in 2017 by:  
Lokuttara Vihara, Skiptvet, Norway.  
<http://skiptvet.skogskloster.no>  
Version 1.0



**Lokuttara Vihara**  
Skiptvet Buddhist Monastery  
Norway

For free distribution only