

## The Four Foundations Of Mindfulness

Excerpted from a teaching in Vermont, 1996. Originally published in Bodhi Magazine, Issue 3

Basic prajna includes the three principal prajnas, which are the prajna of listening, the prajna of contemplating and the prajna of meditation. In the Mahayana tradition, mindfulness is regarded as wisdom, as transcendental knowledge, which is known as prajna in Sanskrit. The mindfulness practices we are about to discuss are the basic method of developing these three principal prajnas. A more clear and detailed expression of the three prajnas is found in the practices of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness, in the tradition of the Mahayana path, are explained in five basic points. These are the five basic stages we go through as we study, cultivate the wisdom of prajna, integrate that into our experience, and develop that experience into the full state of realization or prajna. We begin by looking at this mindfulness practice at the most fundamental starting point of hearing, or learning, and contemplating. There are five points to contemplate in order to understand this notion of mindfulness, the Foundations of Mindfulness practice.

### **Point One: The Object, Essence And Support Of Mindfulness**

The first point is the object of intention, or the object of our meditation. In the path of the Four Mindfulnesses, there are four objects of intention or meditation. The first of the four objects is the body. Feeling is the second, and the mind is the third. The fourth object is called phenomena or dharmas in Sanskrit.

When we relate with these four objects in a samsaric way, we are clinging to them, each in a different style. We have different samsaric relationships with each of these four objects. Because of clinging onto these four objects and because of the persistence of our basic tendencies to relate with these four objects in a most neurotic way, the whole universe, the whole world of samsara, is created. For that reason, in the practice of mindfulness we use these four objects as the objects of our meditation, as the objects of our intention, and by using them we develop a sane, a more profound relationship with these objects. We develop a more profound understanding of these four objects and more profound ways of dealing with them. Through the development of this deeper understanding and more skillful methods, we are trying to transcend our relationship with these four objects.

The four objects are referred to, in the ordinary samsaric sense, as body, feeling, mind, and phenomena. The object of body is related to as the basis of clinging to oneself as an entity, as an existent, permanent ego. The body serves as the basis of that clinging, to which we add feeling, which is seen as something to be experienced, something to be enjoyed by this self in the most basic sense. Then we have mind in the third stage, which we relate to as the real self. When we try to point to the self, the ego, we usually point to our consciousness, our basic stream of mind or basic sense of mind. That becomes the actual object of self-clinging, the actual object of ego-clinging, which cannot exist without body and feeling. Mind cannot really express itself without the existence of body (body here is referring to form), and the object of feeling. Therefore mind, as the third object, the third stage of mindfulness, is the basic notion of consciousness. It is the basic notion of awareness. Then we have the fourth object, the object of phenomena. Ordinarily, we relate to that object as the basis of all confusion. However, from this perspective, all confusion arises from these phenomena, and all aspects of liberation also arise in these phenomena as well. So phenomena is seen as the basis of confusion and liberation, or samsara and nirvana. Samsara or nirvana appears or is experienced on the basis of the fundamental phenomena, the basic sense of dharmas or existence.

These four unhealthy relationships, or misunderstandings of these four objects, lead us in a vicious circle of samsara. We are involved in a continual game of illusion. The game of illusion arises from a lack of prajna in our relationships with these four objects. Therefore, we're trying to develop the understanding of prajna in order to realize how we can relate with these four objects more profoundly, as well as more basically. The main point presented in the first stage of mindfulness practice is to recognize these four objects.

### **Point Two: Understanding the Essence**

The second point of mindfulness practice is understanding the essence, understanding the true essence or true nature of mindfulness. What is mindfulness? What does it mean? This practice of mindfulness is actually the nature of prajna, as we discussed earlier. The essence or the nature of mindfulness here is the prajna of seeing, the prajna of understanding, the prajna of experiencing the true nature of form or the body, the true nature of feeling, the true nature of mind, and the true nature of phenomena. That prajna is the nature of mindfulness. This mindfulness is known as dran pa in Tibetan. It's called dran pa nye bar zhak pa (dren pa nye war bzahag pa). It's very simple. Dran pa literally means "recollection" or "mindful" or "being watchful." And that dran pa is the wisdom, the prajna of seeing, the prajna of simply experiencing without any labels. Zhak pa means "placing" and nye bar means "utterly or closely." And so it means closely placing your mind, closely focusing your mind, closely relating your mind with these situations and objects more directly. Dran pa nye bar zhak pa is basically the wisdom or the prajna of seeing and relating with these four objects closely. Relating with these four objects most directly with our prajna, with our mind, is what we call the practice of mindfulness. It is simply seeing what form is, simply experiencing what form is, simply being there with the form, simply going through these experiences with all of the four objects.

If you look at the nature or the essence of these mindfulness practices, you will see that their essence is simply the prajna of relating with these four objects very directly. It is the prajna of understanding or experiencing these four objects without any barrier between you as a knower, you as the experiencer, and the experienced object. The absence of any barrier is what prajna is here. The actual prajna is also without coloring. Therefore, we see the objects' most basic, fundamental state and relate with that. The fundamental state of simplicity of the object is the essence or nature of mindfulness.

### **Point Three: Assistant or Support**

This leads us into the third stage, which is called the assistant or support. Mindfulness of the four objects of intention, body, feeling, mind, and dharmas, is practiced through the two supports of mindfulness and awareness. We must maintain these two supports, these two assistants. Without having these two disciplines developed in our practice, in our mundane experiences, there's no way we can really truly be mindful. There's no way we can really truly relate to the four objects with prajna. Therefore, the real tool or support, so to speak, is the development of the discipline of mindfulness and the discipline of awareness. These two disciplines are known as the assistants or the support for our practice of mindfulness and for the development of our relationship with the four objects.

### **Point Four: Mindfulness Of Body And Mindfulness Of Feeling**

This leads us to the fourth stage, which is the actual point of our discussion. The fourth stage is the method of practicing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. That method begins with working with the mindfulness of body, working with the mindfulness of form. If you really examine these four mindfulnesses, you will recognize that they are in the nature of working with the five skandhas. The first mindfulness, which is the mindfulness of body, relates to the skandha of form. The second mindfulness, the mindfulness of feeling, relates to the skandha of feeling. That is very straightforward. The third mindfulness is also very straightforward. The mindfulness of mind relates to the skandha of consciousness, which is the fifth skandha. And the mindfulness of dharmas, or phenomena, relates to the other two skandhas, which are perception and concept or formation. So mindfulness of phenomena is working with these two skandhas. Keeping this in mind helps us to fully understand these four mindfulnesses.

## **First Foundation: Mindfulness of Body**

We begin with the mindfulness of body. There are two ways of viewing the practice of mindfulness of body. The first is the general Buddhist approach, which is the most fundamental way of looking at this mindfulness. The second approach reflects the more specific Mahayana point of view. To begin with the most basic and general approach, the mindfulness of body or form relates to our fundamental sense of existence, which normally is not stable, not grounded, due to our samsaric pattern of tendencies. Our existence is very wild. It's very crazy, like the mad elephant that we talked about earlier. For that reason, we work with our form, the existence of form, at the first stage of mindfulness practice. In particular, we work with three different levels of form. These

are the outer form of our physical existence, the inner form of our perceptions, and the innermost form, which is related to the Mahayana understanding of the selflessness of body.

### **The General Buddhist Approach: The Outer Form of Body**

In the most basic sense of the general Buddhist approach, we're working with the outer form of our physical existence. With this method of mindfulness, we're trying to bring our mind to the realization and understanding of what this existence is, what this physical form is. We're trying to bring it to the state of mindfulness, bring it to the most physical level of our experience of body. Usually, we experience our physical body as existing "out there" somewhere. We generally feel that our body exists outside of our mind. We feel that the body exists in a definite form, in a very solid way, of our mind. That is our fundamental experience of body, and that experience of body goes wild in our usual situation of life. In this path of mindfulness, we're bringing the wildness of our physical existence down to a level of calmness, to a certain level of groundedness. By simply bringing it into the present, we're bringing it to what it actually is, rather than thinking about what it actually is.

What we are working towards, at this level of mindfulness, is to see the outer form, outer existence, outer nature of our body, regardless of whether it's matter or mind. Forget about such philosophical or theoretical divisions. We're simply relating with what it is, and that is the mindfulness of body. Simply being there with our body, with our physical sense of existence, is the mindfulness of body. If we approach this with too much philosophy, too much analysis, it becomes too complicated. Trying to see if body is mind or matter, if it's a projection or not, becomes an obstacle and prevents us from directly relating to what it is. The Buddha talks about this basic approach in the sutras when he says things like, "When you see, just see. When you smell, just smell. When you touch, simply touch. And when you feel, simply feel."

We are using very basic logic here in order to relate to the most fundamental level of our experience. For example, when we sit down on a meditation cushion, we have a basic sense of feeling, of the sensation of our body, of our existence, of this gravity. Just simply being there with that, just simply being there with our existence, is what we call mindfulness of body, in the most basic sense. That mindfulness is not just simply being there, but it also involves a certain prajna of understanding what it actually is.

### **General Buddhist Approach: The Inner Form of the Body**

That experience takes us into the inner state of physical existence; which is seeing the true nature of our body, seeing the true reality of the relative existence of relative self. This begins with seeing the most fundamental level of the presence of our body. That is to say, we're experiencing the most fundamental existence of our presence. That is a very simple experience. We just simply sit and be with our body, not with our mind, so to speak. In that exercise, it's possible for us to have some sense of this profound existence, the profound presence of our body, the profound experience of just being whatever it is. Simply being that experience is the inner experience of the physical self, the physical existence. At this stage of the mindfulness of the inner form of body, we go

further into the depth of experiencing that being, that presence. We're going into the subtlety of our physical nature. We're seeing our own impermanent nature, and seeing that is a very profound level of mindfulness.

Experiencing the impermanent nature of our body is the subtle experience of the mindfulness of body. That experience is a profound understanding and a profound realization. Buddha said that of all the footprints that the animals make in nature, the deepest imprint is the footprint of the elephant. And Buddha said, in a similar way, the most precious and the deepest impression that any thought can make in the progress of our path is the thought of impermanence. It leaves a very strong impression. It is a very strong and deep experience on our path. And therefore, the realization of the impermanence of our body is a very profound mindfulness practice.

### **Mahayana Approach: The Innermost Form of the Body**

Through the practice of reflecting on our physical self, our physical existence, we develop the mindfulness of body, which is seeing with awareness. When we are working with that physical experience, then we are getting into the depth of the Mahayana approach of working with the mindfulness of body. At that level, we go beyond the simple physical presence of a body. At that point, we are relating with the way the body is experienced by an individual being. The way we experience the existence of our body is simply our perception, simply our reflection, our projection. There's nothing really solid beyond that; there's no real existence of a physical body outside, as far as the Mahayana path is concerned. At this point, we are seeing a much deeper level of physical self, physical presence of mindfulness. We're discovering that mindfulness is seeing the true nature of that experience. We're approaching the level of absolute reality, rather than remaining on the relative level, where we are seeing the relative nature of mind, the relative nature of our body, the relative nature of our mindfulness. We are going more into the depth of mindfulness, which is the absolute truth. Therefore, when we talk about this mindfulness, in the Mahayana sense, we are talking about the selflessness of the body, which is very different from the general Buddhist approach.

### **The Dream Example**

At this level we are dealing with our projections. We are dealing with the understanding and mindfulness of our projections. We're seeing that the physical world that we experience here is not necessarily solid and real. This can be understood clearly through the example of the dream. When we are dreaming, we have subject, we have object, and we have the action between the subject and the object, which is the experience of the threefold situation. As long as we remain in the dream state, those three things equally exist. We experience these three things as solid. We experience a real world, real phenomena, real body. Our own physical existence is there, the physical existence of the object is there, and the physical existence of the action is there. All three are simply existing in the dream state.

But if you look at your dream from the point of view of waking up, of the awakened state, it does not exist, right? If you look back at last night's dream, and if you look back at yesterday's experience of life, which is not really a dream (like yesterday's experience

of this shrine room, yesterday's experience of our sitting, yesterday's experience of our talking), if you look back, they both equally do not exist. Your experience of yesterday is not solid; your dream of last night is not solid, as far as today is concerned. If you look back from the point of view of today, which is the awakened state, relatively speaking, then both of those equally do not exist, you know. There's no solid reason to say yesterday was more solid than last night's dream. There's no solid logical reason, so to speak, except that we cling to our dream-like experience of yesterday more than to our experience of last night's dream.

Therefore, in the Mahayana path, our whole experience of the body, our entire experience of the physical world, is simply a projection of our mind, a projection or a production of our karmic mind, and that experience is simply existing as long as we remain in this dream of samsara.

### **Two Aspects of the Dream**

For that reason, in the Mahayana path, we talk about two aspects of dream. We talk about the "real dream," and we talk about the "exemplary dream." So what is the real dream? Here, the real dream is our daily life experience, and the exemplary dream is the dream that we have at night when we are sleeping. These are the examples that show us which dream is the real dream. The real dream is this experience of our life, this experience of our body, this experience of our physical presence and existence. The real dream is this experience of a solid self, and therefore, our physical existence is simply regarded as a dream in the Mahayana Path. Maintaining the discipline of seeing the dream-like nature of our body and bringing our mind back to the awareness of that experience is the mindfulness of body in the Mahayana path. The Mahayana discipline of mindfulness of body is strongly related with the notion of selflessness, strongly related with the notion of the non-existence of body, rather than relating with the existence of body. Consequently, there's a very big difference between the Theravadin meditation of mindfulness of body and the Mahayana meditation of mindfulness of body. There's a big difference in its approach to its meditation technique.

### **The Four-Fold Emptiness**

Thus, mindfulness of body in the Mahayana sense refers to the original vipashyana meditation on selflessness of form, emptiness of form. The mindfulness of body here is the practice of the four-fold emptiness in the Heart Sutra, which says, "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. Form is no other than emptiness, emptiness is no other than form...." That four-fold emptiness of form taught in the Heart Sutra by Lord Buddha is the Mahayana discipline of mindfulness of body. It is simply relating with the dream-like nature of our physical existence, the physical world of body, and relating with the notion of emptiness of body, the notion of selflessness of form. That practice is what we call the mindfulness of body in the Mahayana tradition.

### **Method of Practice: Analytical Meditation**

How do we practice this? The Mahayana path is strongly connected to the practice of analytical meditation. There's no way we can really practice mindfulness of body, in the Mahayana sense, without understanding and practicing analytical meditation. Because

of this, the development of the three stages of prajna becomes extremely important for the Mahayana path. In order to really practice mindfulness of body, we must begin with the Theravadin approach of simply being there in the physical sense, experiencing the presence of our body, first. This begins with sitting in the meditation posture. It begins with meditation or reflection that focuses on every aspect of feeling, every sensation of the body (a more detailed description of the sensation of feeling will come with the next stage). For example, when we sit in the meditation posture with our hands resting on our knees, there's a sense of touching. There's a sensation, a feeling. There's an experience of body here, right here, in our hands. There's an experience of body when we touch our meditation cushion. There's an experience of our whole body sitting upright in the Seven Point Posture, right? The Seven, or Eight Points of Posture, or the Five or Seven or Eight Points of Posture of the meditation technique. (laughs) Yes, there are different ways of counting, you know. Our legs are crossed, so there is the sensation of body there. Our backbone is straight and upright, and there is a strong sense of body there. Our shoulders are evenly stretched, and our hands are in the meditation mudra. Relating with that complete sense of being there is what we call mindfulness of body in the most basic sense.

That mindfulness of body does not happen if we are not participating fully in our sitting posture, with all of these Seven Points. Just being there, just simply breathing with your body, is the mindfulness of body. We don't have to acquire something new. Mindfulness of body is just simply being with your body, being aware and mindful. Going further into the experience of body is seeing the illusory nature, the dream-like nature of your body as a reflection of your mind. Then going into the depth of that experience, you are seeing it as the four-fold emptiness, and that is the complete practice of mindfulness of body in general. That is the practice of the first mindfulness. Practices such as sitting or walking meditation are situations where we can have strong experiences of this mindfulness. In contrast, we usually go mindless in our regular existence in the world, and we do not really experience our own presence on the physical level.

## **The Second Foundation: Mindfulness of Feeling**

### **General Buddhist Approach: Fear and the Three Objects**

The second stage of mindfulness is the mindfulness of feeling, which is simply relating to or working with our basic existence in the world as samsaric beings. In the general Buddhist approach, "feeling" refers to the feeling of working with our basic fear. That feeling is the fear of suffering, or the fear of fear. Actually, fear itself is not fear, but the fear of fear becomes the most troubling presence in the realm of our feeling. Therefore, the mindfulness of feeling relates with the three objects of our existence in the samsaric world, that is the pleasant object, the unpleasant object, and the neutral object. In relation to these three objects, we experience three different states or aspects of fear. Towards the pleasant object, we have a fear of attachment. We have a fear of desire. Towards the unpleasant object, we have a fear of hatred. We have a fear of aggression. We have a fear of anger. And towards the neutral object, we have a fear of neutral feeling. We have a fear of becoming numb, of getting into a state of numbness, a state of

stupidity, so to speak. We regularly experience these three aspects of feeling in just surviving our daily existence in the samsaric world.

In relation to these three feelings, Buddha taught that we have to relate to the three objects properly, by understanding them and working with their nature. He said that when we examine the nature of these three feelings and their three objects, we discover that their fundamental nature is suffering. The pleasant object, the unpleasant object, and the neutral object all exist in the same nature of suffering, regardless of whether we're relating to attachment, aggression or a neutral state of mind, such as ignorance. Consequently, practicing mindfulness of suffering is the mindfulness of feeling. And relating with the three objects is the means of relating with the three levels of suffering that are so frequently talked about.

### **The Three Levels of Suffering**

The mindfulness practice here is to contemplate or meditate on suffering and the three expressions of suffering, and to therefore experience their nature. So what is the nature of suffering here? Buddha said there is one word that can describe the meaning of suffering, and that is "fear." Fear is what suffering means. But what is this fear? It is the fear of losing something that is very pleasant, something that is very pleasurable, something that is very dear and loving, something to which you have become attached. It is the fear of losing that. Fear is also the fear of gaining something. That fear is the fear of gaining something that is unpleasant, something that you don't want. You always get what you don't want, and you don't get what you really want. That's what suffering here is. Fear is being expressed in these two manifestations, so to speak. The second manifestation of fear is gaining something that you don't want, that you don't expect. That begins with the flu and goes all the way up to whatever experiences we might go through. These three natures of suffering are connected with the nature of fear, basically, and therefore, we have three levels of suffering, which we call the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change, and the all pervasive suffering. These are the three sufferings.

### **All Pervasive Suffering**

The nature of all pervasive suffering is this fundamental fear, which exists within every level of our feeling, whether we're feeling really high, really feeling happy, or whether we are really feeling down with suffering. All of our feelings are pervaded by this fundamental fear, and that's why it is called "all pervasive suffering." This is explained in the traditional Buddhist literature with various examples. First, it is similar to developing a fatal disease, which is not yet fully ripened. The disease is growing, but you haven't really seen it. You haven't really experienced it yet, but its presence is there all of the time. Every minute, every second, it's growing. It's developing. That kind of fundamental situation is known as all pervasive suffering, which grows into the suffering of change.

### **The Suffering of Change**

The traditional example for the suffering of change is like having a very delicious cookie baked with poison. It's very delicious, but it's deadly poisonous. When you eat that

cookie, it's still very pleasurable, very sweet, you know. In order to show that more dramatically, Shantideva, in the Bodhicaryavatara, gave this example: the suffering of change is like honey on a razor blade. He said that when you lick this honey on the razor blade, it's very pleasant, it's very sweet. It's honey, you know. And because of our desire, our attachment, we lick this honey harder. We want more and more and more all the time. Because of our poverty mentality, we lick the honey harder each time we experience its sweetness. The harder we lick the honey, the deeper we cut our tongue. So in a similar way, the suffering of change is experienced as perhaps a more pleasurable, more pleasant, more pleasing experience of feeling, but it leads us to the result of pain, the result of suffering. This is what we call the "suffering of change."

### **The Suffering of Suffering**

The suffering of change leads us to the suffering of suffering, the most obvious suffering, which is noticing that our tongue is gone after experiencing the delicious honey. When we notice that our tongue is gone, we realize that we won't have to experience the honey again for many months (or lifetimes, I don't know).

As we work with and examine these three levels of experience, feelings of suffering, as well as pleasant feelings and neutral feelings, we can see that they are all related with the three sufferings. If you look at pleasurable feelings, they are connected to the suffering of change. If you look at feelings associated with unpleasant objects, they are connected to the suffering of suffering. If you look at the feelings of the neutral state of mind, they are connected to fundamental suffering, all-pervasive suffering. Therefore, we practice by observing these three feelings and working with our experience of them in a most mindful way. If we're truly experiencing these three states of suffering, three states of feeling, just as they arise, that is the mindfulness of feeling. So the mindfulness of feeling is being totally watchful, totally present with every level of our fear, and working with that in the most fundamental way. This is the mindfulness of feeling from the perspective of the general Buddhist approach.

### **Mahayana Approach: Fearlessness and Selflessness**

The Mahayana tradition looks at mindfulness of feeling as seeing the selfless nature of suffering, the selfless nature of fear, which is seeing the true nature of fear as not being fear. This is how we originally began our discussion. We see that the fear of fear is simply a disturbing fear, and that relating to this fundamental fear without fear is the way to practice Mahayana mindfulness of feeling. Therefore, what we are doing here is simply looking at our fear. We are simply experiencing our suffering, our so-called suffering, nakedly, without any filters of fear. That's how the Mahayana mindfulness works. Through this method and through having more detailed instructions on how to work with this fear, we transcend our fear and become a fearless warrior on the Mahayana path. Without working with the second mindfulness, the mindfulness of feeling, which deals directly with our fear, it is very difficult to follow the path of Mahayana. Without it there's no way to become a fearless warrior.

This second mindfulness becomes very important, especially for the Mahayana path of transcending our fear and working with our basic suffering. On the most fundamental

level, that basic suffering is just fear of being in the state of fear. Instead of being paranoid about fear, instead of being troubled by fear, and dragging ourselves into this endless pull of fear, we are looking at the fear itself in the state of Mahayana mindfulness. Through looking at the fear directly, most directly, face to face, we are transcending our fear. That is the path of the Mahayana mindfulness of feeling, which is the second stage of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

## **The Third Foundation: Mindfulness Of Mind**

### **General Buddhist Approach**

We have discussed the first two aspects of mindfulness briefly: the mindfulness of body and the mindfulness of feeling. Now we will look at the third mindfulness which is known as the mindfulness of mind. At this point, the third stage of mindfulness is working directly with our basic state of mind, our consciousness or awareness.

"The mind" here in Buddhism refers to a detailed classification of mind. We're not speaking simply of one giant nature of mind. There's no such thing as one giant all-pervasive mind, so to speak. Our practice of mindfulness of mind here is working with every single, individual experience of our consciousness, which is divided into six different categories known as the six consciousnesses, in the general Buddhist approach. At the Mahayana level, it is divided into eight categories called the eight consciousnesses. And if you want to go into more detail (laughs), then the mind is further explained in the Abhidharma literature as having the basic mind and fifty one mental factors. So we have a very detailed explanation of mind, generally speaking, in this path of spirituality. But what we are fundamentally dealing with, here, is developing the mindfulness of simply experiencing every individual movement of our mind, every individual fragment of our mind, and every individual living state of our consciousness. Accordingly, at this stage, we have the method of mindfulness of mind to help us relate to and simply be present with the momentary movement of mind, the momentary experience of every living, individual incident of our thoughts or perceptions or memories, which we call mind.

### **Mahayana Approach: The Meditation State**

This mindfulness is closely connected or related to the meditative state of our experience. It's basically working with our mind in the meditation state, beginning with our practice of shamatha and vipashyana, and continuing all the way up to tantra. The Vajrayana practices are closely connected to this mindfulness of mind. In this practice, we are developing the discipline of simply watching our mind, simply guarding our mind, simply bringing our mind down to some sense of groundedness. Right now, our mind is up in the air, perhaps in the form of that wild elephant we talked about. The mad elephant. It's totally in the state of dreaming, in the state of non-reality, in the state of non-existence. This mindfulness is actually doing the work of bringing that mind down to the basic, fundamental state of oneness, oneness of this reality, of this moment. Basically, that is the mindfulness of mind.

## **Dwelling in the Past and Anticipating the Future**

Because of this total state of dreaming, what's happening in our basic experience of mind is that we have never, ever lived. We have never, ever lived in all of these years. We think we are living. We believe we are living. We dream we are living. Although we imagine we are living, we have never actually lived. We are either in the state of having lived or will be living, but we have never lived; we are never living. That's how our mind functions in our basic world, in our samsaric world. On the one hand, our mind is in the state of dwelling in the past, dreaming about the past. Such good old experiences of the past have always occurred in our mind, and we have always been "sort of living" in the state of past memories. Or we have been bothered, disturbed, and totally destroyed, in some sense, by certain memories of the past which keep reoccurring in our present lives. Our mind has never been free to live in the present. It's always been under the dictatorship of our memories of the past or living as a service for the future.

We've been living for, dreaming of, or anticipating the future, where we have a multitude of dreams, typical American dreams, pure American dreams. We have many dreams, which is not bad in itself, but they are dreams of the future. We have a list of plans miles and miles long for how we will really live in the future, how we will practice, how we will achieve this and that. And so we invest our energy, our time, our effort in these dreams. As a result of investing all of our time, effort, and energy towards these achievements, we may actually achieve a certain part of our list in the present. We may have already achieved a certain number of these things, and we will achieve others. But when the future becomes the present, we don't have time to experience it. We don't have time to appreciate it. We don't have the prajna to relate with it. We don't have the space, the freedom, to totally be with and enjoy our own dreams that have come true in the present. We have totally forgotten how we planned to live at this stage.

We have totally, totally gone out of control. We have lost our freedom and our dreams, along with our basic beliefs in those dreams. Our idea of living has altogether disappeared, slipped out of our hands, like the present moment. Therefore, this practice of mindfulness teaches us to bring our mind to a greater state of freedom. It teaches us to free our mind from the imprisonment of dwelling in anticipation of the future. In the freedom of that space, we are able to experience the actual sense of living, the simplicity of completely being present with our state of mind, as a living mind.

## **The Present Moment**

Hence, this mindfulness of mind works with that basic principle of freedom, and when we look at that principle, the present state of our mind is a very tiny spot. It's a very tiny and slippery spot. It's so tiny and slippery that we always miss it. It's so tiny that it's an infinite spot. The whole purpose of this mindfulness of mind is to bring us back to this tiny spot of the present momentary nature of our mind and to the experience of the infinite space and freedom within that speck of existence. In order to do that, we must experience the lively nature of our mind, which is so present and so momentary and so fresh. Every individual moment and every individual fragment of that mind is completely pure and fresh in its own state.

The whole point here is to experience that freshness, that genuineness, the honest face of that tiny spot, without really coloring it with our memories, concepts, philosophy, theory, or expectations. Totally experiencing it without all of these is what we call simply being there. And that cannot happen if we can't let go of our memories and thoughts, if we can't let go of our memories of our understanding, our memories of our expectations. We have to simply understand our thoughts. We have to see the nature of our thoughts directly and genuinely to be there, rather than living in our memories of understanding, our memories of meditation, or memories of our expectations of our meditation. If we are living in the memory of thoughts, then we are still not being there; we are still not experiencing the fundamental, tiny, infinite spot.

### **Imprisonment**

To the extent that we are living in this memory of thoughts, we are not experiencing any of the freedom of space. To the extent that we are living in the memory of understanding, while we may have good memories or a good understanding, it's like we are decorating our prison. Our prison may look a little different; it may look a little better and more refreshing, but we still are living within that limited space, within that barrier. We haven't freed ourselves from the prison of memory, from the prison of dwelling in the past, from the prison of anticipating the future. Therefore the total sense of mindfulness of mind is just simply being there in that tiny spot, that infinite space. That experience only comes through letting go, totally letting go of our expectations. When we totally let go of our clinging, when we totally let go of our thoughts, we totally free our thoughts.

### **Dressing Up Our Thoughts**

In a way our thoughts are imprisoning us. On the other hand, we are imprisoning our thoughts. We are imprisoning our thoughts in the same way that our thoughts are imprisoning us. We're not just simply letting thought be thought. We're imprisoning our thoughts and trying to turn them into something else. We're not simply letting these thoughts be thoughts in their own state. We're not giving them the freedom to be thought. We are coloring them. We are clothing them. We are dressing up our thoughts. We're painting the face of our thoughts. We're putting hats and boots on them.

It's very uncomfortable for the thoughts. (laughter) We may not realize it. We may not recognize it, but if you really look at the state of the thoughts themselves, it's very uncomfortable. It's very uncomfortable for them to be what we want them to be. It's like your parents or your society putting great expectations on you to be someone else, someone you don't want to be. At that point, you can feel the imprisonment. You can feel clearly and strongly the imprisonment of samsara. In a similar way, our thoughts are experiencing this imprisonment by our expectations, by the way we color and clothe them. It's really equally uncomfortable, you know, with all these hats and boots on. It's like dressing up a monkey in the circus. We have monkeys, chimpanzees, all dressed up in beautiful tuxedos and bow ties, with dignified hats and beautiful shiny boots. But you can imagine the discomfort the chimpanzee feels at that point. No matter how beautiful he may look, no matter how dignified this monkey may appear to be, from the point of

view of the monkey's basic instinct, it's so uncomfortable to put up with all these expectations of your human boss.

### **Recognition of the Arisal of Thoughts: Freeing our Thoughts and Ourselves**

In a similar way, our thoughts are going through the same torture when we put labels and different expectations on them. When we color these thoughts with philosophy, religious beliefs, and theoretical understandings, they feel tortured by all of these things that we're going through. Therefore, mindfulness of mind is simply freeing our thoughts, freeing our mind, and coming back to this basic spot, infinitesimal spot, that is the state of our thoughts or the state of our mind. Coming back to and experiencing the infinite space of freedom within that spot of nowness, that tiny spot of the present moment, is what we call the mindfulness of mind. It's simply being there, and simply letting it be whatever it is.

In that process of letting it be, how do we practice? In our meditation and post meditation exercises, we have to recognize the first stage of the arisal of our thoughts and emotions. We have to be clear about and acknowledge all of these thoughts and emotions that are arising and coming to our door as our guests. We have to be aware of, acknowledge, and recognize these people, these little beings, these fragments of beings, in their own way. We have to recognize them. We have to acknowledge them at the first stage of their arisal. That's our method here. For example, if a strong anger or aggression arises in your mind during the state of meditation or post meditation, the first thing to do is simply recognize it. However, we have to recognize it again and again, because it only exists in this tiny spot. Every moment, every fragment is a new anger. It's a new guest. It's a new state of Mr. Anger. So whenever a new guest arrives, first he or she rings your doorbell, then you have to acknowledge that guest, recognize him or her and let your guest in. In a similar way, we have to recognize our anger, in every moment. One anger may have hundreds of moments, and we have to distinguish these moments as many times as possible. When we identify a moment of anger, we just simply let the anger be anger. We give some freedom to the anger. As much as we want freedom from our anger, our anger is striving for freedom from us. Therefore, at this stage of recognition, we must let it go. We must let it go, allow it to be in it's own state. We must not bind our anger to our sofa. We must not chain our anger to our chair. He or she is simply our guest, so we must respect this guest in order to be a more civilized meditator. There is a great need for us to practice this, because recognition is the first stage in working with our thoughts, the first stage of freeing our thoughts and freeing ourselves.

### **Recognition: The Speed Bump**

My usual analogy for recognition is a speed bump. What does a speed bump do? It slows us down; it slows down the speed of our car. The purpose of the speed bump is not to stop the car. We must understand that. And the purpose of recognizing our anger is not to stop our anger. It's not to chain down or hold onto our anger. It's purpose is the same as the speed bump. It slows down the speed of our klesha mind. No matter whether it's anger, aggression, passion, or jealousy that we're feeling, it slows down the speed of that klesha mind, that thought, that memory, that anxiety. In the process of slowing down, we are creating more space. And the greater space that is created here

with this simple moment of recognition is the space of wisdom, the space of compassion, the space of love, the space of prajna, and the space of mindfulness. That space will help us handle this car we are driving. And when we develop more control, more space, it gives a greater sense of safety, not only to the driver, but to the pedestrians who are walking on the street. We must look at it both ways, you know. It's not just creating more space for ourselves, but for others too, the pedestrians who are crossing the road. We're creating some space between ourselves and our anger, between ourselves and our emotions, between ourselves and our klesha mind. The space we experience from the speed bump is this tiny spot, which is infinite space. This is the beginning of experiencing our infinite space.

This aspect of mindfulness practice, recognition of the first stage of arisal, is very much emphasized, not only in the general Buddhist journey of mindfulness, but also in the most supreme vehicle of the Mahayana.

### **Three Stages of Recognition**

Because the process of recognition is so strongly emphasized, we should look at it in more detail. There are three stages of recognition. The first stage is, recognizing the very tip of the arisal of thought. This is the very first moment, the very first tiny spot, so to speak, of the movement of thought, of the movement of emotion. Recognition of the very first moment is the foremost way of recognizing thought, which happens only after we have some shinjang, some development or sense of suppleness in our practice. The second stage of recognition is recognizing thought when it has arisen. At this stage, our thoughts are a little bit blown-up, or grown-up. It's like diagnosing a disease at a later stage of development. Because it has already developed, its treatment requires a little more work. It's a little bit late, but still manageable. The third stage of recognition is recognizing thought after everything has happened. We don't recognize it until after it has arisen and grown to the full-blown stage. By then it has destroyed everything, and at that time we recognize it. This is like recognizing our monkey in the zoo. We recognize our monkey wearing the full tuxedo. Maybe he's doing a tango. (laughter) Something like that. It's a little late, because we have totally imprisoned him at that stage; we have totally imprisoned our emotions, our thoughts, and ourselves. This is the stage where our disease is fully grown, and there's nothing much we can do except to take pain killers and wait.

These are the three stages of recognition, and the Mahayana Path very much emphasizes the first method. Through the development of our courage, skill, and compassion, we increase our power to recognize thought at the first stage, which is...? (Students: Tip of its arisal.) Yes, the tip of its arisal, the first tiny spot of the existence of any thought, which is, you know, infinite space.

### **Manure for the Seed of Enlightenment**

In another analogy from the Sutra tradition, Mahayana people are regarded as farmers and Hinayana people are regarded as city dwellers or city slickers. The reason for this comparison is that, from the Hinayana point of view, practitioners relate to their emotions like city people relate to their human waste. From that point of view, we are

trying to get rid of it and get away from it, as soon and as far away as possible. There's no sense of really needing to keep it, because we see our human waste as a total waste. So the Hinayana view of emotions is similar to the city person's view of human waste. Whereas in the view of the Mahayana Path, the practitioner is more like a farmer who sees that human waste is great manure. It can be recycled and used effectively so that it becomes a great help and support for us in growing the seed of enlightenment. This seed of enlightenment sown by the Mahayana farmers cannot grow without this manure. It cannot grow without fertilization. So without the manure of our emotions and our thoughts, we cannot cultivate any seed of enlightenment.

### **Guarding the Crops of Enlightenment**

The process of cultivating our crops, in the Mahayana Path, involves guarding our farm. We must guard from intruders the seeds of enlightenment that we have sown. In the history of Mahayana farming, there has always been some disturbing being, like a pig, that comes around and breaks into our farm. This pig has destroyed many of our seeds. As soon as it enters our fields, it starts digging up everything. All of the seeds that we've sown have been totally destroyed by this pig. The Mahayana method of dealing with this is simply to wait. We wait for this intruder with a strong, solid club. We just wait at the gate, or any possible entrance, and when the pig is about to enter, the first thing we'll see is the snout, right? In the general Buddhist view, the pig symbolizes ignorance. So as soon as we see the snout entering our property, we have to use the club and hit the pig on the snout with as much force as possible, with great love and compassion. (laughter) You have to strike it directly on the snout. It's very different than hitting the hip or body, which doesn't provide as much of a lesson. It's more forcefully chased away by hitting its snout. It's a very painful form of compassion. We can only hit the snout of the pig if we catch it at the very beginning stage of its entrance into our farm. Then we can hit it as hard as possible and be most effective. If the pig has slipped by us and already entered, then we can only strike it on its back. We'll never get the snout. In the same way, the Mahayana method is like hitting the snout of the pig, which means you're recognizing the arising of the movement of mind right at its very beginning stage, at the first moment. Isn't that a great compassionate analogy? Yes, it is because the pig is destroying the seed of enlightenment, so it's a bad karma.

With that analogy, we can see how the recognition process takes place. As soon as any thoughts or emotions arise, at the very first trace of their arising, we must try to maintain this mindfulness. In this process, we're letting emotions be emotions and letting mind be mind. We simply observe the movement of mind and work with it. When we experience that tiny spot of thenowness of our mind, of our emotions, of our thoughts, we are experiencing the infinite space of our mind, infinite space of our thoughts, infinite space of our emotions. We are freeing our emotions, and we are freeing ourselves at that very moment. In a way, it's a very simple process. At the same time, it takes many words. This fundamental process of working with our mind begins with working with our meditation process. In the practice of meditation, we repeatedly bring our mind back to its present state ofnowness or to the present momentary fragment of our mind. That's why we use different techniques, to come back to that very tiny spot and experience the infinite space, which is the whole purpose of our meditation.

## **The Fourth Foundation: Mindfulness Of Phenomena**

### **General Buddhist Approach: Interdependence**

The fourth mindfulness is called the mindfulness of phenomena or mindfulness of dharmas. After working with the development of the mindfulness of mind, this mindfulness brings us to the next stage, which is the experience of panoramic awareness of the phenomenal world. The phenomenal world is not only within our thoughts, within our mind. The phenomenal world is also the object of our mind, the world that is experienced around us with body, speech, and mind. Having a sense of relating with these surrounding phenomena in a mindful way is what we call the mindfulness of phenomena. That mindfulness is basically the recognition of the interdependent relationship of our mind and the phenomenal world. It is working with the relationship of each individual phenomenon existing around us as the object of our experience. In order to understand that particular phenomenon and relate with it properly, we must develop the mindfulness of phenomena. And that, in some sense, is not really separated from awareness.

This mindfulness is very much related to the notion of awareness, of having a three hundred sixty degree awareness of the phenomenal world existing around us. When we can relate that kind of panoramic awareness with the simple, present nature of phenomena, that is what we call the mindfulness of phenomena. It is simply having the prajna to relate with the phenomenal world outside more directly, more precisely, without any fear, and without any conceptions. Without any philosophical conceptions, we simply relate to the most fundamental state of phenomena.

### **The Six Objects**

What we are working with here is the six objects of our six sensory perceptions. That's pretty straightforward. We are working with form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and dharmas. The sixth object is a little more complicated. The object of mind, the sixth sensory perception, which is called the mind perception, is known as dharmas. So working with the six objects in a precise way is the full understanding of the true nature of pratityasamutpada, the interdependent origination of the phenomenal world. Relating to the phenomenal world in its own interdependent state is called the mindfulness of phenomena, which means not conceptualizing, not labeling the phenomenal world as something else. We experience it as it is, with its own interdependent nature. Understanding that interdependent nature begins with the understanding of the twelve links of interdependent origination, known as the twelve nidanas.

### **Mahayana Interdependence**

Beginning with the twelve nidanas, we have the Mahayana understanding of interdependent origination, which is basically the understanding that everything arises from emptiness and everything dissolves into emptiness. There is no separation between form, or appearance, and emptiness. Emptiness arises from appearance, and appearance arises from emptiness. There is no emptiness without appearance, and there is no appearance with out emptiness. That is what we call the interdependent nature. If

there is no phenomenal world appearing, then there's no emptiness of that phenomenal world. If there's no emptiness, there's no appearance of the phenomenal world. That's pretty simple, right? (laughs) It's very simple; it's very easy.

Actually, it's a somewhat complicated notion, which has to be looked at in greater depth to really be understood. But in the most basic sense, we are talking about the inseparability or the dependent nature of the two truths. There is no absolute truth without the relative truth, and there's no relative truth without the absolute truth. They are dependent on each other. Especially when viewed from the ordinary level of understanding, then the phenomenal world is seen to be totally in the nature of dependent origination, or the interdependent state. Therefore, in the Mahayana sense of relating with the phenomenal world, the mindfulness of phenomena is simply understanding the realization of emptiness, the selflessness of phenomena, the emptiness of phenomena, the egolessness of phenomena. That understanding, experience, and realization is what is known as the mindfulness of phenomena. That realization is basically developed through the cultivation of the three prajnas of hearing, contemplating, and meditating which we discussed earlier. By going through this three-stage process of analyzing the phenomenal world from the Mahayana perspective, we can reach the level of the realization of emptiness, the realization of the egolessness of phenomena, the realization of the non-existence of these outer phenomena, which we ordinarily believe are solidly real.

Not only do we arrive at this insight through the process of philosophical analysis, but we can also see this in the development of today's science. Although I've not personally studied modern physics, friends and people who know a little more about it tell me that modern physicists now say they can't find the existence of atomic particles, at any level. All they can find existing at this level is something called a "quark" or a form of energy or light, which is still better than saying "emptiness." We feel a little bit more comfortable, you know, with these terms, because there's still something to hold onto. Other than that, I think we're reaching pretty much the same level of seeing the non-existence of phenomena. Furthermore, this wisdom resulting from the development of modern science was discovered and taught by Lord Buddha Shakyamuni 2,500 years ago. The process presented to us by the Buddha to lead us to that stage of understanding is very much like the development of science. It's very interesting. At the first stage of his teaching, Buddha taught about the existence of atomic particles. Following that, the Buddha went into the details of how these atoms function, how they form gross objects, and how these indivisible particles cannot be perceived. All of these things, which are very similar to the view of science, were introduced gradually by the Buddha up to the level of seeing the selflessness of phenomena, the egolessness of phenomena. Therefore, the Mahayana mindfulness of dharmas, or phenomena, is working with this realization and understanding of the selflessness of phenomena.

### **Analytical Meditation: The Gong**

In general, we practice this mindfulness by taking the objects of our sensory perceptions as the objects of our meditation and analyzing them by simply being present with that particular object in the tiny spot of its existence. This state of oneness, the state of the

present, clicks us into the experience of infinite space through the analytical meditation process.

My analogy for the analytical meditation process is the ringing of a gong. The actual beauty of the sound, the beautiful humming of the gong, is produced by our effort. First, we pick up the striker with our hand, then we move our hand and striker to ring the gong. From there the sound is produced, the beautiful humming sound, which is beyond our hand, our effort, the striker, and the bell itself. It is beyond all of this, beyond the combination. It is beyond all this existence.

As beginners, we get attached to the beauty of that sound. As soon as we hear it, we become totally passionate about it, so we unskillfully grasp the gong. We want to hug the gong and make it all our own and say, "Yes, I got it." In that process, we have already frozen this beautiful humming sound. As soon as we say, "I got it," it's gone miles away. And so in that process, we are screwing ourselves up on the path of analytical meditation. But at the same time, we don't have to be discouraged by that. We still are holding the striker, and we still have the gong in front of us. We still have our hand, which can move and hit the gong. Therefore, we can still produce the beautiful humming sound of the gong again and again, as often as we want. And we can touch it; we can hold it. We can hug the gong over and over, as much as we want until we get totally tired of hugging the gong. Then there's a certain point where we reach the peak of holding onto the gong.

At that point, we can totally let go. We can totally let go of the thought of hugging; we can totally let go of the thought of touching, the thought of making it mine. Only then can we live in the presence of this beautiful sound of humming.

### **Resting Meditation: Freedom from Clinging**

It is through analytical meditation that this beautiful humming sound of the experience of selflessness, the shunyata experience, is produced. The analytical process is the ringing of the gong that leads us to the effortless enjoyment of the beautiful humming sound, which is resting meditation. And that resting meditation experience of egolessness, or selflessness, is very difficult to attain without the analytical process of meditation. How can you get the gong humming without ringing it? It's pretty difficult. Maybe you can do that in virtual reality later, but now we need to have this method of ringing the gong in order to experience the humming sound of the bell. In order to totally let go of holding onto the gong, of our attachment to the gong, we need to ring the bell again and again. As far as vipashyana, as far as mindfulness is concerned, that is the whole process we work through in analytical meditation, which leads us to the stage of resting meditation.

That's a brief discussion on the techniques or the methods of practicing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, which was the fourth point. We have talked about different points, and that was the fourth point, if you still remember, if it has not become gigo. "Garbage in, garbage out." (laughs) But it's good garbage. It's mindfulness.

## **The Results Of Mindfulness**

The fifth point, in our description of the five points of mindfulness practice, is the result. To review these points, they are the five main stages that we progress through in our study and cultivation of the wisdom of prajna, and which then become the means for integrating that understanding into our own experience. We progressively develop that experience into the full state of realization or prajna. Point one is the "object of intention." Point two is "understanding the essence." Point three is "assistant or support." Point four is "the method of practicing," where we have the actual description of the Four Foundations practices. And point five is "the result" of mindfulness practice. As I mentioned earlier, the mindfulness practices are the basic method of developing the three principle prajnas.

On the most basic Buddhist level, the result of these four mindfulnesses is fundamentally the realization or actualization of the Four Noble Truths. It is said that through the mindfulness of body and the mindfulness of feeling, we come to the realization of the truth of suffering, and the causes, or origins, of the truth of suffering. With the mindfulness of mind, we come to the realization of the truth of cessation, of completely being freed. This means the complete experience of the freedom of thoughts, freedom of emotions, freedom of oneself, and the total sense of spacing out in this tiny spot, in this infinite space. That is the truth of cessation. And the fourth mindfulness, the mindfulness of dharmas, or phenomena, brings us to the realization or actualization of the truth of the path that leads to cessation. If you understand the interdependent nature of all phenomena, if you can relate with all phenomena as selflessness, emptiness, shunyata, egolessness, then that is the actual cause, which is the path leading us to the actual result of nirvana or cessation.

So that is the basic result of this mindfulness practice, the fifth point. From the Mahayana point of view, the result of these four mindfulnesses is basically the realization of two fold egolessness, the egolessness of self and the egolessness of phenomena, or selflessness of person and selflessness of phenomena. That is essentially what this mindfulness is all about.

## **Mahayana View: Fourteen Points of Difference with the Hinayana**

In general, there are fourteen very small points of difference in the basic Buddhist view of mindfulness and the Mahayana view. I'll give you a brief account of these fourteen.

The first point is called the basis or origin, the difference in the basis or the origin.

The second point is the antidote. In the Mahayana path, the antidote is to overcome all aspects of ego-clinging, all aspects of elaboration, whereas in the Hinayana path, the antidote is that which overcomes only one aspect of ego clinging and one aspect of elaboration. It's not an antidote for all aspects. So you can think about that.

The third point is the entrance. Entrance here refers to the object of our contemplation of mindfulness or to the person who's entering into this path of mindfulness. In the Hinayana path, one enters alone into this path of mindfulness through the Four Noble

Truths. Whereas, in the Mahayana state, we do not enter alone. We enter with all sentient beings, with bodhicitta, the supreme ambition. At this level, we're entering the path of the Four Noble Truths but not alone; we're entering together with all sentient beings. That's the difference.

The fourth point is called the object. In the Mahayana Path, the object is all phenomena. If you look at the four mindfulnesses, according to our prior discussion, the object of the four mindfulnesses in Mahayana becomes the whole of phenomena. All dharmas are the object of mindfulness.

The fifth point is attention or engagement. The difference in attention or engagement of mind is that, in the Mahayana sense, all dharmas are regarded as projections of our mind. All dharmas are seen as illusory. All dharmas are seen as egolessness, selflessness. That's the difference here.

The sixth difference is the attainment. Attainment is the resultant stage. Through the basic mindfulness practice in Hinayana, the attainment is cessation, the nirvana which is the complete state of thoughtlessness, complete state of mindfulness. Whereas, in the Mahayana view, the result, or the attainment, is the state of enlightenment. The complete state of enlightenment goes even beyond the truth of cessation, beyond the notion of thoughtlessness, and beyond the notion of just simply nirvana being peace. That is the difference here in the attainment.

The seventh point is called agreement. Agreement here refers to the fact that all of the Mahayana Path practices of mindfulness are in agreement with the practices of six paramitas. No matter which mindfulness you may be engaged in, it is related or connected to the six paramita practices.

The eighth point is appropriateness. In the Mahayana Path, mindfulness is practiced in accordance with what is appropriate for all sentient beings and what is appropriate for the whole environment, rather than practicing it for the sake of oneself alone.

The ninth point is called utterly understanding or true understanding. In the Mahayana Path, true understanding is understanding the body as illusory body, understanding feeling as a dream-like feeling, understanding the mind to be like space, and understanding all phenomena as sudden arising, as suddenly arising like the clouds. That's the general sense. There's a lot of meaning behind these analogies.

The tenth one is the attainment of power. In the Mahayana sense, we attain the power of transcending our emotions even though we constantly come back to the samsaric world to benefit sentient beings. It's not like the Hinayana arhats who practice mindfulness to leap out of samsara, to completely leave samsara behind. The intention of the Mahayana practice of mindfulness is to come back and do whatever beneficial work we can for the benefit of all living beings. And when we come back again and again to help and work on the development of one's own path, as well as the paths of other sentient beings, we have attained the power of not being attached to that samsaric world, even though we are

living in it. We have the power of not being attached to our emotions, not being attacked by our emotions, even though we live with emotions and use emotions as our path. That is the attainment of power here.

The eleventh point is outshining others' greatness. Isn't that interesting? This means that, even though we are beginners on the path of Mahayana, even though we have very little practice, very little achievement as a result, because of the power of our courageous heart, because of the power of this infinite compassion and love and bodhicitta, the qualities of the Mahayana practitioner outshine all of the achievements of any other realization. Any other attainments of greatness are outshone or overpowered by the simple seed of bodhicitta, the simple seed of love and compassion, and the simple method of being skillful.

The twelfth point is called the quality of excellence. That's simple; that's excellent.

The thirteenth point is called infinite meditation, which means the Mahayana path has a variety of meditation methods so that our development does not simply end at the state of cessation. Cessation is attained, and then we go further, beyond cessation, to a greater development in meditation.

And the fourteenth point is the result. The difference in result is that in the Mahayana path, the result attained is the ten bhumis. We progress through the result of the ten bhumis, attaining Buddhahood at the end of the tenth bhumi. That is the Mahayana result.

We have briefly touched on the topics of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness from both the general Buddhist view and the view of the supreme Mahayana path. We are trying to develop this genuine path of spirituality through the three principal prajnas, which are naturally cultivated through our study, contemplation, and meditation on the practices of mindfulness.