Knowing, Awareness and Wisdom

Joseph Goldstein · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Three-Month Retreat (IMS 2007) · 1:02:16

Back in the mid-sixties, I first went to India to look for a teacher. I'd been in the Peace Corps in Thailand before that and had just begun a little bit of practice of meditation, but without really having gotten too much instruction. I came back to the States and tried to practice by myself, but it was extremely confusing. I was just mixing up everything I had heard—mantras and third eyes and the breath—kind of just a jumble of things. It didn't take long to realize that I could use some guidance.

So I went back to Asia thinking I might go to Thailand, but I wanted to stop in India first. I went around a bit looking for a teacher in different traditions and ended up in Bodh Gaya, which of course is the place of the Buddha's enlightenment. At that time, it was extremely undeveloped—just this small little village with the beautiful temple. There were very few Westerners there, maybe half a dozen. Munindraji, my first teacher, had just come back after spending nine years in Burma at Mahasi Sayadaw's monastery.

I ended up staying at the Burmese Vihara, which was a monastery, or rather a resting place for Burmese pilgrims. But because Burma was closed at the time, it was pretty empty, and just a few Westerners in Bodh Gaya were staying there. They took me to Munindraji.

One day, as we were sitting around on the roof of the Vihara—this was right at the beginning of my stay—he went around to each of us and asked, as we did in the go-around the first morning, why did you come to practice? People had different responses, but for me it was really clear from the beginning that what drove me to practice, what brought me to practice, was the possibility of awakening.

People can start meditation from very different motivations. Some might begin the practice really as a way of stress reduction. We live in a very stressful society, very speedy, and sometimes people look to meditation as a way of reducing stress in their lives, which it certainly helps to do. Sometimes people are drawn to meditation because of a great desire to come out of psychological or emotional suffering. We can get so tied up in emotional and psychological knots that cause a lot of suffering for ourselves and others, and so that can be a motivation—how can I understand that? Or it might be the desire for liberation, for awakening, for enlightenment.

What's interesting to observe, and you may know this from your own experience, is that as we practice and as our understanding deepens, the motivation often changes. We may start motivated by one idea or feeling, but as we learn more and go deeper into the Dharma, it's as if our minds and hearts open to greater possibilities.

There are many different methods and techniques of insight meditation. Munindraji said that after he had

studied with Mahasi Sayadaw, he went around Burma and studied fifty different ways of doing Vipassana. So it's not that there's just one approach. There are many methods of cultivating awareness, of cultivating mindfulness. But all of these techniques and methods are rooted in one discourse of the Buddha. That's why this particular discourse is so amazingly rich and powerful. As you know, it is the Satipatthana Sutta, the discourse on the foundations of mindfulness.

The Buddha opens this discourse—you know, sometimes they refer to certain statements of the Buddha or Arhants as the lion's roar, dramatic declarations. Well, the Buddha opens the discourse on mindfulness with an amazing statement. It's very unambiguous. The opening of the sutta says, "This is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation."

for the disappearance of suffering and discontent, for the attainment of the true way, for the realization of nibbana—namely, the four foundations of mindfulness.

And what are the four? Mindfulness of body, of feelings, of mind, and of dhammas. I'll leave *dhamma* untranslated here, but it often refers to the different categories of experience, including many of the well-known Buddhist lists.

So this is quite a statement. The Buddha is saying this is the direct path to liberation. This is the direct path to the end of suffering—namely, the four foundations of mindfulness. It's not an insignificant thing that we're undertaking here. We're embarking on a path that leads to the highest realization, that leads to the end of suffering. Over these next weeks and months, we'll be exploring in different ways these four foundations of mindfulness.

But I thought tonight it would be helpful to clarify and define three important terms. These terms often get confused, so having clarity about them will provide a good foundation for your practice.

The first of these terms is *consciousness*. Consciousness is the ordinary, ongoing process of knowing different objects of experience. This process is rolling along, proceeding in all beings. It's going on in animals, in human beings. It's going on in babies, in children, in adults. The same process of consciousness—knowing sights and sounds and smell and taste and sensations, different objects of mind.

I find it interesting sometimes just to watch a pet or a baby or a young child. We can see it so clearly in just observing them—that knowing process is going on. They're being led by all the things that consciousness is knowing: sights, sounds, tastes, just as we are. I really enjoy watching either a pet or a wild animal because you can just see the knowing mind being led by the senses. Sense impressions are happening moment after moment. I call it "black lab consciousness." If you're familiar with black labs, they're particularly delightful to watch.

This is quite an aside, but there's a wonderful line in a translation of a poem by Pablo Neruda, translated by Stephen Mitchell. It's one of my favorite lines in poetry for describing animals. He says, "Dogs are baffled lions." I get great delight watching dogs live their lives because it's kind of like baffled lions.

Anyway, that's an aside. Consciousness is the simple knowing of these different sense objects arising moment after moment. The knowing and its object always arise together, simultaneously. So it's a pairwise progression: knowing an object, knowing an object, knowing an object. This is going on throughout our lives, in all beings.

The second term I want to discuss is *mindfulness*, or *awareness*. In this context, I'm using these terms synonymously. In some contexts, people do mean different things by mindfulness and awareness, but here I'm using them to mean the same thing.

Mindfulness or awareness sometimes gets confused with knowing. We use the words imprecisely—we're aware of something, we know something. But in a meditative understanding, they really refer to two quite different things. Mindfulness or awareness is that quality that is aware that we're knowing. It is aware that we're knowing a particular object. It is the present-moment remembering of what is happening in our experience. The word *sati* in Pali, often translated as mindfulness, is associated with remembering—this remembering in the moment.

Yes, this is what's happening. We know, we're aware that we know something. We're aware of what it is that we know.

So the ordinary knowing of different objects is how we're usually going through the day. And we're usually going through the day with black lab consciousness. We're just doing different things, engaged in all the activities. And in this black lab consciousness, just the simple knowing, we are acting out, unmindfully, all the habit patterns of our conditioning, all the habituated tendencies. We're just going along like that black lab.

But sometimes—and this happens more frequently with our meditation practice—we remember what we're doing as we're doing it. That's a moment of mindfulness. We can be lost, carried away. And then in a certain moment we remember, oh, this is what's happening. We become mindful of the object. We become mindful of the fact that we're knowing it. So it's one level of waking up.

A simple example of the difference between consciousness, that bare knowing, and mindfulness: just think back to the last time you were at the cinema, watching a movie. A good movie, very absorbed. As we're lost in the story, as we're just absorbed in the story of the movie, we have all the attendant emotions. Maybe we're excited or happy or sad or frightened, depending on what the movie is. And then maybe we have a moment when we suddenly remember, oh, this is just a movie. All that stuff is not really happening. In that moment of mindfulness, there's a little more space in the mind. We're not so totally identified with or lost in what's happening. It's like a moment of creating more space in which we're mindful of what's happening.

What's interesting here, and this would be worth examining in your own experience: before that moment of mindfulness, we are still knowing what's going on. The consciousness is there. We're not unconscious.

And if somebody asked you afterwards what was in the movie, we would be able to tell them, because the knowing is there. The flow of consciousness is going on. It goes on all the time. But we're not always mindful in those moments of consciousness. Mindfulness is that stepping back from being lost in, stepping back from being completely identified with.

So our practice, even in the first few days, illuminates a tremendously important insight. It's an insight that you have all had already. And that is: we see how often our minds become absorbed in the movies of our minds. It's like there's an internal cinema. And we are in this movie theater, and a good part of the time we are lost in the story. Not only with the stories in the mind—just as we go through the day, we get lost in the knowing of different sense objects, in sights, in sounds, in smells. When we're not mindful that that's happening, it's just leading us around, just like the dogs are being led around by their senses.

One of the things that we see in being on retreat is how often this happens. And of course, all the internal phenomena as well—the memories, the plans, the fantasies, the wants. There's a whole internal drama going on. I'm sure you've noticed: you can just be sitting and one thought may arise, and if it's unnoticed, it's as if we just hop on a train of association. One thought leads to another, leads to another, leads to another. And before we know it, we're at some completely unpredictable destination. We're in a whole inner world scenario. How did we get here?

Sometimes we call this phenomenon the wandering mind, but I think that's not such a useful term, because the wandering mind implies something that we have to go get and bring back. So it's a bit of work. The mind doesn't actually wander anyplace. The mind is always right here. What we call the wandering mind is simply that objects are arising in the mind that are going unnoticed. You see the difference? It's not that the mind goes anyplace. The mind is always right here.

But when we don't notice what's arising, it seems as if the mind is wandering. So it's not so much the effort to drag the mind back to the present moment—it's always in the present moment. It's more a question of training ourselves to be aware of what's arising in the moment. That's a much more restful attitude. Not that it's any easier, but it's a more restful perspective.

Don't underestimate the value of this insight, of realizing how often the mind is lost in the thoughts and feelings and dramas of our minds. Because most people don't know this about their minds. If we went up to somebody on the street and asked, "Do you get lost in what's happening in your mind?" they'd say, "Oh no, I know what's going on." Unless we have taken the time and turned the attention inward, people don't know. They don't know this about themselves. And because they don't particularly know it, they're not particularly motivated to wake up from this dreamlike flow of delusion.

This understanding that we all share—has anybody not seen this? I don't think so. It's an important one because it becomes a powerful motivating force. We see how often we're asleep, and it motivates us: Can I be more awake in my life?

This is the power of mindfulness. It's noticing, remembering the present moment. And instead of being lost or identified with what's arising, we know what's arising. We know that we know.

There's a dharma poem by one of our teachers who died some years ago. He was one of the really great Dzogchen masters in the Tibetan tradition, and he wrote this dharma song on mindfulness:

Mindfulness is the root of Dharma.
Mindfulness is the body of practice.
Mindfulness is the fortress of the mind.
Mindfulness is the aid to the wisdom of innate wakefulness.
Lack of mindfulness will allow the negative forces to overcome you.
Without mindfulness you will be swept away by laziness.
Lack of mindfulness is the creator of evil deeds.
Without mindfulness and presence of mind nothing can be accomplished.
Without mindfulness you are a heartless zombie, a walking corpse.
Dear Dharma friends, please be mindful.
And by the aspiration of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, may all Dharma friends attain stable mindfulness and ascend the throne of perfect awakening.

It's powerful. Unfortunately, the word in English doesn't really suggest the power of this quality of mind. It's kind of a prosaic word, "mindfulness." But when you really see what that quality is in the mind, it is an amazing quality. It's mindfulness which allows for this whole awakening process to take place. It's knowing that we know. It's stepping out of the dream.

As we relax into an awareness, a mindfulness of the body and mind, we begin to experience greater subtleties—greater subtleties about the sense objects and greater subtleties about the attitudes in our mind about experience. I'm sure you've seen already: we become much more intimate in our experience of the body. We begin to feel all kinds of sensations that we may not have even known were there. They're not necessarily all pleasant, but our awareness gets much more refined. We begin to feel tightness and pressure and vibration and heat and cold and lightness and heaviness and softness and hardness. There's a whole world of sensation that begins to reveal itself as we become mindful. We go from the abstraction of having a body—"body" is an abstraction—to the actual felt sensations. That's where we're really in touch with what is going on.

Even just walking about through the day, instead of being led by unmindfulness like the black lab, with mindfulness we get much more subtly aware—even just of colors, shades of color, where we're not so fixated on the concept and we're just aware of seeing. It's interesting to bring seeing into the practice. It's a big domain of experience.

But we don't often bring clear, sustained mindfulness to it. What is it like just to have that soft awareness of seeing? So much is revealed. Or smelling. Or tasting. And of course, we become much more subtly

aware of the thoughts and emotions in our minds.

So as we practice this mindfulness, this continuity of mindfulness, a certain momentum builds up, and it becomes both more effortless and also more refined. But mindfulness itself is not enough. Awareness itself is not enough. And this brings us to the third term.

There's consciousness—that simple knowing going on moment after moment in all beings. There's mindfulness or awareness, which is that moment of stepping out from being lost in that flow, where we're aware of what's happening, where we know that we're knowing. And the third term we need to understand in this meditative journey is wisdom.

Now, wisdom comes out of awareness. We could say mindfulness or awareness is the platform of wisdom, the foundation of wisdom. Wisdom combines the qualities of investigation. It is that quality of mind that is really investigating and looking deeply with what the Buddha called right understanding and right view. It's those times when we are learning from our experience. It's not just being mindful of what's there—that's the foundation, that's the platform. But we want to then bring an investigative wisdom so that we learn from what we're mindful of.

We begin to investigate from that platform of mindfulness: What is the nature of the experience that's presenting itself? We see that whatever is arising—whether it's some sensation in the body or a sight or a sound or an emotion or a thought—everything that arises is simply expressing its own nature. And this is a very important word. It's one of the translations of the word dharma. Dharma means law, or the nature of things. So our dharma practice is really the investigation of the nature of experience. Mindfulness lets us know what it is that's there. Wisdom investigates that.

One of the things we begin to see through wisdom is that experience doesn't belong to anyone. It's not that there's someone behind this flow of experience to whom it's all happening. Rather, moment after moment, consciousness and its object are flowing along—everything simply expressing its own nature. We could think of it as nature unfolding. That's what's happening.

But as we all know, there's a very strong tendency, a tendency of delusion, to personalize this experience. "This is happening to me." It's always delusion, but sometimes it's even more inappropriately deluded than other times.

I'll give one example. This is a story from Ajahn Chah, who was a great teacher of the Thai forest tradition. It's from a book of his teachings. He was off on retreat in a little meditation hut outside of one of the villages where he had one of his monasteries. The villagers, who were all his students, knew that he was going off on retreat, and they were providing for his needs. But one night he's meditating in his hut and he hears all this loud music coming through loudspeakers from the village. Loudspeakers are very predominant in Asia, especially out in the countryside. So this loud, loud music is blaring.

He got very irritated. "Don't they know I'm here? I'm their teacher and they know I'm meditating, they

know I'm on retreat—why are they making so much noise?" You can just imagine. It's not an unfamiliar train of thought. It's easy to imagine what it would be.

But then, because he was Ajahn Chah, he didn't just stay lost in that reactivity of mind. He began to investigate. He brought wisdom to bear on what was happening. And this was his wisdom conclusion: "Well, they're just having a good time down there. I'm making myself miserable up here. No matter how upset I get, my anger is just making more noise internally."

Then he had this insight: the sound is just the sound. It's me who is going out to annoy it. If I leave the sound alone, it won't annoy me. It's just doing what it has to do. That's what sound does—it makes sound. That is its job. So if I don't go out and bother the sound, it's not going to bother me.

It's so down to earth and yet so profound. It's just seeing the nature of things. That's the nature of sound, to make sound. If our minds don't bother it, it won't bother us.

Just as we can investigate experiences the way Ajahn Chah did with sound, we can bring that same wisdom mind to investigate everything that's arising within us. A very fruitful arena to investigate, to bring wisdom to, is the arena of physical sensations that we feel.

This is a big part of our practice. As we sit and walk and go through the day, there are many sensations felt. We feel a sensation and become mindful of it—that's the first step. We're not just being carried away and lost in what's happening. We become mindful of a particular sensation. But then we can look further. We can use our wisdom to investigate: what is it? What is the nature of this sensation? And if it's an uncomfortable one or a painful one, we can investigate what this pain is about, because pain or discomfort can signify different things.

If you put your hand in fire, you don't want to just be noting "burning, burning, burning." There's no wisdom in that. You may be mindful of the burning, but there's no wisdom. Wisdom recognizes that this particular sensation is a danger signal. This is telling me something: take the hand out of the fire. That's the working of wisdom.

Sometimes we might begin to understand different pain or discomfort in the body as the unwinding of accumulated tensions. We all come here—I don't think there's anybody that arrives with a body completely free of tension. Maybe, but not too many. Just because of the busyness and stress of our lives, we accumulate tension. So we come here and begin to feel discomfort and pain. If we can bring wisdom to it rather than just be lost in reactivity, we understand: this is tension. And through awareness, through mindfulness, we can actually let it unwind. That is the de-stressing that is going on. We make the space for it to unwind.

Sometimes we might bring wisdom to experiences of discomfort and through that investigation recognize: this is arising because I'm efforting too much. I'm over-striving and getting tight in doing it. This is something we want to know, we want to understand. All of this is the wisdom mind.

Sometimes unpleasant sensations happen at particular stages of insight. As we go through stages of insight, some are characterized by pleasant sensations, some by unpleasant. That's just what happens in those phases of practice. That's another way of understanding it.

Wisdom doesn't stop just with an understanding of the sensations. Wisdom can also look at the attitude in our mind about the sensation. This gets quite interesting. We're sitting and walking, going through the day, and particularly with uncomfortable sensations—how are we relating to them? Some very common attitudes in the mind with regard to pain or discomfort might be fear.

We might begin to feel some pain, and even if it's okay right now, the thought comes: "What's this going to be like in half an hour?" We just anticipate. In our minds, we anticipate it growing worse and worse and worse, and we get more and more afraid. That becomes the way we're relating.

Or it might be self-pity. "Everybody is sitting in bliss. I'm the only one sitting in pain." And then we just start feeling really sorry for ourselves.

Or avoidance. There's a great meditative technique called the sidelong glance—we're kind of mindful out of the corner of our eye, pretending the discomfort isn't there.

Or it could be downright aversion. We don't like it. It's unpleasant. It's painful. We want it to go away.

Although we may usually be aware of the sensations themselves, very often we're unaware of the attitudes in our minds about them. That's why it's so helpful to ask that question periodically—in the sitting, in the walking, throughout the day—just check in: "What's the attitude in my mind about this?" Because it will reveal aspects of what's going on that may very well have gone unnoticed.

There's a very good feedback mechanism, a kind of mindfulness bell to wake us up when we know something's going on but can't quite figure it out, when we don't understand our attitude and we're just kind of lost. The feedback that is so helpful and very obvious is the feeling of struggle.

You know how sometimes in the walking or the sitting it's just not flowing? You have that sense of struggling in the practice. That sense of struggle is an important piece of information. When you become aware that you're struggling, it always signifies one thing: the feeling of struggle always signifies that something is going on that we're not accepting. Because if we were accepting it, we wouldn't be struggling.

This is very useful. The feeling of struggle is usually obvious. Rather than just drowning in it, take it as valuable feedback. There's a very effective and simple technique here. We become aware that we're struggling—this is the wisdom mind coming in. Wisdom understands: struggle means something is arising that I'm not accepting.

So the technique is simple. It's as if we just sit back, open up, and ask the question: "Okay, what's happening?" We open ourselves to what's happening. And it's very interesting to see the different kinds of things that we may not have noticed—things we're not accepting.

Usually with strong pain, we're aware. But it might be subtle levels of discomfort that we're not open to, not accepting, not even aware of. Yet it's creating that sense of struggle because we haven't opened to it.

It might be an unpleasant mood. Maybe you're feeling bored or depressed or low in energy. If we're not accepting of that, there's going to be a struggle. Struggle means non-acceptance. We can open to it: "Oh, this is boredom, this is depression, this is whatever it is."

Sometimes the struggle comes when there's a whole run of thoughts, just thinking, thinking, thinking, thinking—and we're not accepting of that. So then we get into a struggle.

Is this clear? Struggle means non-acceptance. It has been so helpful to me in my practice to realize this, because right in that moment we have the chance to see what we're not opening to. It's so simple.

As we open to all of these different things, it's wisdom which is then able to see clearly: pain is like this, fear is like this, restless mind is like this.

We're simply seeing the nature of whatever presents itself. There is no problem. We're open to the whole range.

But very often people feel discouraged or impatient when the realization dawns—and it usually dawns pretty early in a retreat—that meditation is not all bliss. What's interesting, and this is true for very experienced meditators as well as for people just beginning, is how astounding the depth of this conditioning is. How often do we measure and evaluate our sittings in the context of pleasant is good, unpleasant is bad?

Let's say you're at home and you have a sitting where the body is light, the mind is concentrated, there are nice feelings. You get up, somebody asks you, "How was your sitting?" "Oh, great sitting today." And maybe you have a sitting full of pain and restlessness and boredom. You get up, "How was your sitting?" "Oh, terrible sitting today." We all do this. It is so deeply imprinted: pleasant is good, unpleasant is bad. Wrong. This is not right view. We have to get this one very deeply. Coming to know the truth of what's actually happening, whether it's pleasant or unpleasant, is the deepening of our practice.

Sayadaw Tejaniya has a few great lines about this. He says, "You have to accept and watch both pleasant and unpleasant experiences. You only want pleasant experience. You don't want even the tiniest unpleasant experience. Is this fair? Is this the way of the Dharma?"

So please be aware of this. Dharma practice is to see the nature of what is arising in the moment. Sometimes it's pleasant, sometimes it's unpleasant, and to a large extent that's outside of our control.

When we bring wisdom to investigate and understand the different sensations in the body, it can also lead, in an unusual way, to a deepening and freeing understanding of the nature of consciousness. The awareness of sensations themselves reveals something about the nature of consciousness. I had a very dramatic experience of this, so I'll share this little story with you.

This was a few years ago, maybe three years or so. It was January, and I had gone down to the Caribbean for a week's vacation with friends. It was beautiful—about seventy-five degrees, balmy breeze, visually stunning, the scents of the flowers delicious. Everything was completely agreeable. Then after a week down there, I flew back. This is January in Barre. It was a particularly cold spell. It was twenty below zero, freezing. I stepped outside and it was like ice hitting the skin.

My first hit was, "This is unpleasant. That was pleasant." It was so unavoidable. But then—and this is what I love about New England winters; I'm one of the few people who actually like them—the intensity itself inspires investigation if one has any Dharma background at all. What is this experience that is so intense and sometimes so unpleasant?

Right in that moment, I just became aware of the knowing mind. It was so cold, twenty below zero and icy, and I became mindful of the knowing mind. Oh, it's consciousness, which is knowingness. In that investigation, it was really interesting because I realized that the knowing didn't care whether it was cold or not cold. The knowing simply knows. It's like a mirror that simply reflects what comes in front of it. The mirror doesn't care. It doesn't have preferences.

Just like the mirror reflects everything equally, consciousness simply knows. That's its only function. And it was so interesting to see that the knowing mind can know this very intense unpleasant sensation, and from the perspective of knowing, it's exactly equal to that week in the Caribbean. That was just very interesting to observe about the nature of consciousness.

But then I had the thought, "But it was really nice down there. It was really pleasant." In talking to Sayadaw U Tejaniya about this little story, he had a very apt comment. He said, "That thought—'Oh, but that was really pleasant down there'—that's just the work of feeling. The work of feeling is to taste the pleasantness and unpleasantness of objects." So there's nothing wrong with understanding that that was pleasant, that was unpleasant. It's that feeling tone of the mind. That's the job of feeling. That's the nature of feeling. It tastes whether something is pleasant or unpleasant.

Do you see how it's all just nature at work? Cold colds. Knowing knows. Feeling feels. And this is the investigation of the Dharma. This is the investigation of our lives. What is actually happening? Not our stories, not our reactions—can we bring it all onto the platform of mindfulness? That's essential. We have to be aware of what's happening, and then bring the wisdom mind to bear. We get interested in what it is that's happening.

Just as we become increasingly mindful of the different sensations and our attitudes about them, and the kinds of understanding that can come when we're mindful of the sensations in the body—whether pleasant or unpleasant—we also become much more mindful of all the thoughts and images and attitudes in the mind. We just see over and over again our likes and our dislikes, our judgments and our desires, all these conditioned patterns, these conditioned tendencies of the mind.

We begin to see all the projections we have about other people. Have you noticed just these quick little judgments? Somebody walks by and there's just some little quick judgment. Or sometimes it's whole big stories. We can create a whole drama about somebody, and it's often about people we don't even know. We have no idea really of who they are, but it doesn't stop the mind from creating the story.

Now, what's obvious is that we don't invite all these thoughts. We're not sitting here saying, "Okay, thought, come." They just come by themselves. But through mindfulness, through that great power, we begin to see the difference—the essential difference in our experience—between being lost in a thought and being aware that we're thinking. Right there, you could say, is the key to understanding our minds: the difference between being lost in a thought and being aware that we're thinking.

This again is from U Tejaniya. Please listen carefully because if you get this, it will save you six weeks or three months of dukkha. It's very simple: Don't feel disturbed by the thinking mind. We are not practicing to prevent thinking. What you are practicing is to recognize and acknowledge thinking whenever it arises. We don't have to struggle with the thinking mind. It's just its nature. We want to practice recognizing and being aware that we're thinking. That's all.

In the awareness of thought, we begin to see its true nature. We begin to see its empty nature, its insubstantial nature. And it's all through mindfulness. It's all through paying attention.

I would like to close with a teaching from Ajahn Mun, who was the grandfather of the Thai forest tradition. He was one of these great Thai forest masters, considered by many people to be an arahant, someone of very powerful understanding. There's a wonderful biography of him by one of his main disciples, Ajahn Maha Boowa, who is also considered to be an arahant.

It's the biography of Ajahn Mun, and it's a fantastic story of his life and his attainment. So at some point after the retreat, it's something you might be interested in looking at.

This is from Ajahn Mun:

Of the many things that people value and care for in the world, the mind is the most precious. In fact, the mind is the foremost treasure in the whole world, so be sure to look after it well. To realize the mind's true nature is to realize the Dhamma. Understanding the mind is the same as understanding Dhamma. Once the mind is known, then Dhamma in its entirety is known. Arriving at the truth about one's mind is the attainment of Nibbana. Clearly the mind is a priceless possession that should never be overlooked.

This is our practice. It's really investigating this priceless treasure.

Let's sit for a few minutes.

Transcriptions produced locally using Swiss low-carbon electricity. Corrections and rewriting by cloud-hosted AI.