

The wisdom vehicle: Paññā Pāramitā

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The fourth of these vehicles that cross the flood of the world is wisdom – *paññā*. We also translate *paññā* as discernment or clarity. It is an innate faculty: we all have it. In the suttas, it is said ‘wisdom and consciousness are conjoined.’ (*Middle Length Discourses* 43.4-5, trans. Bhikkhu Bodhi, pub. Wisdom, Boston 1995) In other words wherever there is consciousness there is wisdom because wisdom is the faculty that makes distinctions – pain/ pleasure, safe/threatening, black/white. For the lower forms of animal life, this faculty is programmed around sense-contact – to differentiate between pain and pleasure. Those creatures which have more evolved forms of discernment are acknowledged to be ‘higher’ forms of life. Birds adapt to live in cities, sparrows peck the silver foil off milk-bottles, wolves outwit hunters and learn how to stalk their prey. Mammals can learn how to manage their environment and their social order, and they know when things are safe, its time to relax, play and enjoy life. Sometimes they do better than humans on that score. Wherever there is consciousness there is wisdom, but for humans the job is that ‘wisdom is to be developed, and consciousness is to be fully understood.’ (ibid)

Yes, the human mind is a mixed blessing. We can witness our instincts and responses and discern 'good/appropriate/skilful' from its opposite; but we can also get so lost in the theories and viewpoints that we've adopted to measure our responses by, that we get confused and life is no fun. We get so thrown around by what we think we should be, and what we fear we might be, and the ways we wish other people would be, that we don't find a stable balance. So with a human mind it's imperative to develop the wisdom faculty – in order to understand mind-consciousness with its values and dogmatic biases, its compassion and depression, its love and its lust. Otherwise, it can be a real mess.

Three Aspects of Wisdom

The development of wisdom is on three fronts. The first is the learning aspect: that is, the function of picking up and assimilating some ideas. This is what is called *pariyatti*, conceptual wisdom or theory which we might obtain from a book, or a talk. The second is the wisdom of practice, of directly applying theory in one's life and practising towards clearing away the causes of stress, confusion and suffering. This is called *paṭipatti*. Thirdly, there is the wisdom of realisation, or *pañvedhi*, which is a confident, clear and peaceful knowing that stands outside of opinions, reactions and biases. It is the kind of knowing that 'knows' that something is so or not so, and in that purity of knowing gives a release from confusion and stress.

These three aspects of wisdom are symbolised by the beautiful Buddhist figurines that carry a book, sword and lotus. The book is the wisdom of theory - *pariyatti*; the sword is the wisdom with regards to application, of putting theory into practice - *paṭipatti*; and the lotus is the wisdom of realisation - *pañvedhi*. The book is the knowledge, which requires skill to pick up, assimilate and bear in mind. The sword symbolises the energetic cutting off of delusion and entanglements: it requires the wisdom to know what to cut through, so that you don't cut off your intelligence by hacking in the wrong direction. Applied practice isn't about eliminating thoughts and

feelings; it's not butchery of the heart. It's that clearing away of confusion that allows the lotus of realisation to come to light and blossom.

In a way, these three are sequential, although not quite as straightforward as first A then B then C. The way that they generally come into play is that you get some advice, make a considered effort and get some degree of realisation – enough to give you confidence in the theory, make more of the mind accessible and subsequently broaden or deepen the realisation. The process loops around, but it begins with mapping out a basis for inquiry – such as what is stress and what is ease – and getting a feel for what are the causes or triggers for either of these states. Just to know that such maps are available is already a kind of release – from hopelessness, apathy and despair. So a lotus begins to bud with the first glimpse of clarity at a theoretical level. Then one sizes it up and looks into how suffering or stress is bound up in this topic, and sees that perhaps something one is doing isn't to be done. Maybe we're holding on trying to possess or control a situation that can't be held, or hankering for something that actually doesn't go that way. Or we're resisting an uncomfortable feeling, getting defensive and pretending it isn't there (and of course that we're not being defensive). When you realise that you're trying to push a river uphill, or stop it flowing downhill, and that it's a waste of energy, that's a further budding of the lotus. Then, having the idea that you can release yourself from stress, you stop wasting your time and energy in unnecessary holding or pushing or resisting. That's another release; one which encourages your wisdom sword to cut off the tangles, biases, desires and worries that bind you into unnecessary effort. The energy that is caught up with confused misunderstanding and wrong activities – whether psychological, physical or emotional – is then released. It is subsumed into the energy of the mind, and there is a feeling of wholeness, peace and freedom. So every time we have some kind of realisation experience, energy is untangled and settles. This nourishes and brightens the mind. This is the blossoming of wisdom as a felt sense.

Wisdom is an innate faculty: just like a raccoon has wise paws that can distinguish between a rock and a clam in a stream, our minds have an awareness that is able to receive and evaluate the states they go through. This mental awareness (*citta*) already has enough wisdom to recognise and resonate with qualities like kindness, generosity, truthfulness and integrity. We know what goodness feels like when it occurs; it is something that strikes us. That recognition is a realisation. Then if we reflect and consider the message that our awareness, rather than our confusion, gives us, we steer towards that goodness, because it makes us feel good, and brings balance into our world. The path out of confusion and its contingent stress therefore begins with accessing and bringing to the fore this reflective awareness.

It has to be brought to the fore by deliberate encouragement and practice, such as through exercises of meditation, because although we are already endowed with wisdom and other good qualities, we don't always access and use them. It's easy to let assumptions, beliefs, passions and worries lead the mind – because they speak the loudest. The important thing then is to take the time and create the occasions to bring our wisdom forth. This is what is meant by *patipatti* – practice. For example, because of this reflective mind, one can attune to and be pleased by kindness, generosity, and the rest, and when discernment is added one evaluates that experience and thinks, 'I'd like to do more of that'. That piece then goes into one's personal book-wisdom. Accordingly as clarity about the feel of one's activities grows, one follows that up with acting with more conscience and concern towards other people and creatures. So when wisdom comes to the fore, other virtues get boosted.

Conversely, humans can neglect or override that innate wisdom, with craftiness or manipulation. So wisdom is not just a matter of refined intellect – psychopaths and dictators can be very cunning – but of the connection to our innate ability to evaluate

mind-states, not according to theory or belief, but as they are directly felt in the present. This is the wisdom that senses balance and wholeness, discerns cause and effect, and realises the fruit, the blossoming of clarity and happiness. This is the wisdom of 'right view.' It is the beginning, and in its complete flowering, the consummation, of the Path out of confusion and stress.

Wisdom as A Path out of Suffering

We develop wisdom by guiding it towards letting go of what obstructs the skilful, or of what keeps us unbalanced and stressed. This is the process of 'practice-wisdom;' it grows especially well through meditation. 'Meditation' in the Buddhist sense means the cultivation of calm and insight (*samatha-vipassanā*), and development of mindfulness (*sati*) and concentration (*samādhi*) to bring those about. Mindfulness bears something, an idea or a sensation, in mind; this sustained bearing in mind counteracts scattered attention and impulsiveness. Concentration is the deepening into the steadiness that mindfulness brings, a deepening that becomes pleasurable. These two support calm. And when the mind is calm we can look into it with insight, and bring wisdom to bear on the hidden roots of mental action. This insight is needed because it's often the case that we don't really know or are clear with regards to the causes, motivations and effects of what we're doing. This basis of action gets buried beneath the sheer quantity of action that our minds get involved with. So a wise person begins to develop calm and insight to penetrate and see how he or she creates suffering and how they can stop doing that.

Wisdom in meditation is a process of learning to handle and evaluate in terms of the feel of the mind – like the raccoon with his paws. It's not a matter of theory of what you think you are or should be, but really knowing, 'It feels like the problem is of overactivity. I'm just doing too much. I expect too much. I demand too much of myself. I demand too much from other people. I have too much wanting – wanting to be inspired, loved, useful, praised – or wanting to have things, to be busy, to be active doing something.' For this felt knowing you have to calm and inquire into the mind with reflective awareness, rather than think about yourself. Then you can see: 'This is suffering; this craving to be some state or another is the cause; there is a letting go of that; this is how to bring it about.' This simple but far-reaching understanding, of four noble truths, is the central thing the Buddha taught.

How to bring about letting go of the cause of suffering is an ongoing Path, the fourth truth. We focus on this process in formal meditation exercises, and also in daily life. It's about knowing the good, living it out, knowing the bad and steering away from it and being aware of the results. Then through acquiring the results of goodness, one begins to feel clear and in tune with goodness. Then one can see when there's something dissonant because of hyperactivity, expectations, or loss of warm-heartedness. In getting a feel for what is unbalanced or stressed, one sees what to let go of. Maybe we have to give up a grudge, a demand we make on ourselves, or an idea of how happy we should be. We tend to experience ourselves in terms of a role or a function, an identity, or a feeling of pleasure or pain, or adopt an inner 'verdict' of being a success or a failure. However when mental awareness clearly discerns: 'All this is something that passes through awareness. These are states that I can step back from,' we see the stress and the possibility for release. It is this 'need to be' that is an unhelpful bias that keeps my mind adopting what passes as some kind of an identity. What we do need is to *do*, to let go of bias and come back to balance – because I can't be the top or the best (or the worst) all the time anyway. Then with that release, one feels a quiet happiness of clarity and confidence, and with that the need abates. This release is what motivates us to apply wisdom; it's not just an interesting idea.

When the mind settles, then its wisdom will tell you when you are in or out of tune. When it's in tune it resonates with goodness in your heart, 'This feels good. This is good for others. This is good for me.' There's that sense of empathy and you feel free. Then you do good things, not because of some identity with being good, but just because it feels good. You feel confident about doing good; you aren't frightened of it or embarrassed by it. You don't feel your acts of goodness are inadequate, useless or pointless, or that somebody else can do better. It doesn't matter whether anyone else can do better or if anyone else notices or cares. This is where wisdom begins; having the discernment to feel what is right and what is wrong, in a truly intrinsic way rather than through a self-assertive 'I'm better than you are, this is the only way' bias. The result is that aware intelligence, rather than self-image, governs the heart.

Wisdom needs meditation

Wisdom builds on the basis of renunciation. Meditation is a kind of renunciation. In meditation we are deliberately putting aside sense contact, putting aside going out through the sense doors. It is the first thing we do. We come to the point where we feel we want to put aside that reaching out through the senses, because reaching out is sensed as throwing us out of balance, and we feel overloaded or out of touch with ourselves. Just to know one is out of tune is already a sign of wise reflective awareness. So putting aside the outreach, we turn inwards and stabilise the attention by establishing mindfulness on a meditation topic. This is a beginning.

Although renunciation seems to mean putting aside sensory activity, this is really only a rough guide since the sense world is something that we are born into and have to engage with. More accurately, wise renunciation means working with sensory impact and sensory contact, so that we are not compulsively drawn out through the senses to the point where we lose balance and the all-important quality of discernment. It's a matter of how much of your energy and your mind goes out, and how much stays within to maintain balance. Without that balance, the wisdom faculty doesn't have a still and firm state to refer to, so we lose presence of mind in outgoing activities. The wisdom that can know the results of our actions can get pushed to one side by the blind energy of impulses; or by the equally blind denial or suppression of sensory input. So the practice is to know how to back off a little from sense contact, and with that broader perspective how to reflect, and how to pick up engagement with the sensory world from a clear, ethical and compassionate place.

The wisdom of mindfulness makes it possible to find mental balance: this balance is the 'feel' of knowing, a feeling of quiet assurance and presence. It gets lost when we cling to states of mind, because these are in motion and pull us along. Our emotionally powered thoughts demand that we follow them, fix them, worry about them or act upon them. So we have to learn to undo this habit of reaching in, adopting, or clinging, to them. Getting a feel for how pushy or unkind we can be to ourselves in this respect points to the need for the renunciation of self-image, for letting go of the effort to be what our driven minds demand of us. You can never satisfy a driven mind. So a wise person is someone who can give up the 'should be program' to find a more natural tune. Then you see how the clamouring and the clutching, the fearing and the grasping, are unnecessary and unworthy. They are ugly things; they are unworthy of us.

All clinging, to sense-data or to psychological drives is bound up with un-knowing/ignorance. This loss of balanced awareness fosters the sense of needing sense-contact (*kama-taṇhā*), needing to be something, or 'becoming' (*bhava-taṇhā*), or the need to deny, to not be or 'not become' (*vibhava-taṇhā*). *Kama-taṇhā* is the thirst for sense-data - which isn't good news, because not everything we see, hear, taste, smell or touch is pleasant; and all of it is changeable. So this thirst tunes us in to a pretty unfulfilling channel. *Bhava-taṇhā* is the thirst for a state of mind, or a position in

society, which aims to make us feel solid and secure. (How many 'successful' people are really calm and assured in themselves?) Vibhava-taṇhā is the drive to get away from something that triggers embarrassment, anxiety or loss of self-image. With this we look to be away from the chaos of feeling, so we try to seal ourselves off from the awkward instincts of our reflexes: a sure way to develop neurosis and denial. All of these taṇhā drives cause us to contract into habits that end up defining us: my attachment to winning an argument, my need to be approved of that makes me compliant but secretly resentful of others, my habitual self-disparagement that attempts to purge me of what I think are my sins and weaknesses. These self-forming habits, complex and innumerable as they are, all stem from these primary taṇhā reflexes. And they are all forms of what we call dukkha – loss, imbalance, stress and suffering.

These thirsts or drives are unhealthy and unhelpful reflexes that take careful and caring effort to relax out of. They are made particularly tenacious because everything in the world tends to feed them. The world in general is geared to 'the carrot and stick' way of operating. Fame, praise, gain, status, power, and excitement condition the personality – which contaminates this very important organ of our being. Personality is the psychological interface between the realm of feeling and mind-states and the world of function and behaviour. It's a pretty important manager and facilitator. However, it gets seduced by notions of prestige and fulfilment. So the manager takes a bribe and instead of serving as a facilitator, gets told that it is the real self, it needs to look good and feel good and the way to do that is to dominate or ignore inner balance. Then these thirsty reflexes take over to the point of extreme delusion; people get hung up on how they look, how suave or cool or powerful they are – all of which is superficial and subject to change. And the personality ignores the fact of death, ignores the fact that it is just a construction, and ignores the wisdom that would align it to these truths. We therefore feel incapable of coming to terms with the mortality or the fragility or the limitations of the human condition. We can't manage the push and pull of feelings. So people blow up and fight at football matches or jump off a cliff when they lose their job, or go mad with revenge when they feel insulted. Either that or these reflexes are ignored, or shamed and criminalised. Either way, wisdom isn't developed and our personality isn't able to manage what life brings up in a balanced and peaceful way

Wisdom in Meditation

These reflexes can be wisely addressed through meditation practice. When we come to meditation we turn off the glare of sense contact and sit still to establish a calm and introspective environment. Because of this basic *samatha* the drive that comes with sense-contact is checked – we're not getting engrossed with sights, touches and all of that. Nor are we getting ahead, being a star or getting ego-affirmation. On the other hand, the urge to get away is checked by drawing attention into feeling the presence of the body, here and now. So these drives are muted by calm and stillness, and this makes it possible to witness and evaluate them, and refer them to the basic sanity of our inner balance, our 'wisdom-body.' This subsequent process of evaluation sets up the path of insight, which is an intimate inquiry into the mind.

As we meditate insightfully, we can notice restlessness as an underlying characteristic of whatever grabs hold of our attention. Whether it's a worried thought, an eager plan, or regret about the past, it is accompanied by a restless urging, an inability to be still, and an inability to be at peace with oneself. There's always something nagging, pushing, beckoning, or tickling somewhere. It's a restless existence. Therefore, in terms of the way these energies or taṇhā forces go, the wisdom of inquiry focuses on the underlying quality, rather than take issue or be fascinated by the topic that the mind is chewing over. This insight wisdom puts aside

the tribunals over the past, and the prognosis for the future. Instead it furthers a learning of when it is the time to check the mind, when it is time to exert the mind, when it is time to gladden the mind, and when it is time to sit back and rest the mind. Furthermore, insight wisdom doesn't buy into speculation and option fever. It delights in cooling, because this is where the true strength and beauty of the mind come forth. Remember it's not that we don't have these qualities, but we neglect access to them and the opportunities to bring them forth.

How to check the mind? Well, we establish a focus; say through being attuned to the breathing. We give attention to that and as the reflex to go out rises up, we relax it or hold it back. One might think, 'Let that pass for now. Now's the time to stop; to put that down.' Or, having lost the focus, we witness what that felt like and what it feels like to be aware, and then simply return the attention to the next out-breath. How to exert the mind? When the mind is dull, or bored, it's time to really lean in to what's happening and inquire 'Where am I? What is useful here? What is of this moment?' This is the practice of wise exertion; and wise exertion is motivated by the interest in establishing clarity and presence. This cuts off the habitual exertions of craving, bearing grudges, and pointless speculation. Why waste one's energy on what isn't going to happen or what has already passed?

How to gladden the mind? Herein we can reflect on what there is to be grateful for – whether that is relative health, friendship, freedom from violation, or one sweet breath of fresh air. We can contemplate the mystery and the gift of being able to know, or the knowing faculty itself. Then in this faculty, where ideas and interpretations can't go, we can find rest. So these are all applications which bring realisations that steady, inspire, welcome and celebrate one's mind. They all tackle the restless push of the *taṇhā* drives. However, an ongoing mindful discernment is needed in order to know which way to go – so that for example we're not resting in confusion, or exerting our mind into frenzy and stress. And that means being clear and conscious about our intentions.

There have been many times when I have recognised that I haven't come to meditation with clarity of intention. This is how it can be in a monastery, when meditation gets to be part of the routine and one tends to just tumble into it. One can easily spend a whole hour, thinking about this, that or the other when one hasn't made the determination, 'Now is the time to put that aside.' 'Now is the time to apply a focus.' So what one does first is check in with wisdom and get the priorities straight. One stops or at least changes gear and then exerts the mind: 'Now is the time to go to the breath, the body or a recollection. Go this way.' Just letting things flow is not wise when we're on the skids; flowing along the skids is not really going anywhere useful. Instead, it's sliding down into the mud. So that would not be a time for flowing but rather a time for the accelerator and brakes, and knowing how to use them without wrecking the system.

Wisdom knows where to start. There is no way you can cultivate *samādhi* without first coming to the humbling realisation that your attention stays still for about one second before it twitches to the next item. In meditation the wisdom of recognition is called 'full awareness' (*sampajañña*). This faculty recognises how it is at any moment. And it recognises: 'mindfulness can be established for this moment.' It encourages: 'Just do this for a moment; just try to start looking at your experience.' It doesn't carry the pressure of 'you have always got to keep this going'. Mindfulness might fall away but then full awareness says, 'Stop. Just for this moment pick this up.' Direct applied wisdom can only operate in this moment. As soon as you stray from this moment, you're no longer in the domain of the wisdom that blossoms into realisation.

Awareness of the breath is a very good way of staying with the moment because you only have to deal with one inhalation, one exhalation or half an inhalation at a time, or

the pauses between in- and out- breath. Therefore you are applying yourself to very small increments of experience. This bit of advice means that the wisdom you already have has a seedbed to grow on. You can't plant this seed in the on-flowing slips and slides of mental currents, but you can carve out a little niche and just pop it in there. It's rather like planting grass in shifting sand dunes: you see where through a little careful effort you can eventually anchor the drift.

This 'moment at a time' reference also gives us the opportunity to get out of the time frames that bhava-taṇhā erects for us. These include the voice that says, 'Got to get to samādhi; got to develop this in my practice; when is the clear light coming?' These thoughts can be transformed into, 'Impatience here...Well, let's just take a moment and be with one exhalation.' Then there's the tenacious vibhava which says, 'I never want to be bothered with this again. I want to get all my problems over with. I've been sitting for ages; everything should be over by now, shouldn't it?' But with wisdom we put aside both the urge to accumulate and gobble up experience, and the urge to get rid of experience. Instead we practise wisdom: through checking the mind, checking those reflexes moment to moment. Then you get realisation, you get to know the mind and look beneath the mirage of its activity. Check the worry, impatience and conceit. Then already you are starting to take away some of the fuel for taṇhā. You really don't know how long it takes or where you are but you do know this moment.

Walk your wisdom

I also recommend the use of walking meditation because the moment-by-moment process is built into that. You have the reality of physically taking one step at a time and that is a very good thing to gear down to – just one step at a time. Make the path somewhere between 20 and 30 steps, so that it is not too long and deliberately stop at the end of each walking set. However, be sure not to stop only physically but also psychologically – to rest the rolling on of the mind and just be present. Within this practice you keep coming back to the reference point of being present with the body and with the dying down of the resonances and echoes of what has been occurring for you during those 20 paces. You stop and attend carefully to standing. That shift from moving to standing is quite a significant and useful one since in a standing meditation one is continually brought back to the fullness of the body with no aim, and there's a sense of open presence. Then, deliberately intend to walk, picking it up with a sense of willingness and going through with it.

The Buddha says that by walking meditation one can clean out unwholesome states. It is rather like when you wash a shirt – you put it in the water and swish it around; you don't just let it sit there in a bucket. You're supposed to give it a bit of vigour and rub it so that it brings up all the dirt, and then you can wash it away. The walking meditation is similar. It is firm, clearly distinct, one-step-at-a-time. It's a gentle but persistent exertion. Then you deliberately stop and start; one step at a time. It gives you a good feeling for the style and bearing of meditation – how the process is momentary, how there is time for stopping and reviewing, and how there is a deliberate span to it.

During the walking meditation, the mind comes up with all kinds of thoughts, worries and so forth. But basically you have some sense of a reflective presence. It's not the case that you shouldn't think in meditation. Sometimes one should think very deliberately in encouraging and supportive ways – 'just a step at a time' 'what's happening in the body right now' – ways that keep nudging the mind back to upright. If the thinking isn't conducive, it is better to find a means whereby you can step back from it, rather than wish it wasn't there. Trying to wish it away is the vibhava instinct of 'shut up'. Avoiding this pitfall, the wisdom practice is one of learning how to let thinking come and go, without putting energy into it, and without fighting with yourself. Through that calming, you can begin to calm the thinking mind. You begin to

see the rhythms and the spaces between thoughts, where they can be stopped and dispelled. And you begin to see, 'Ah, this is the point of letting go'; or 'This is where I'm hanging on.' Then there's a spark of realisation.

One of the processes that walking can assist is in fact that of reviewing the thinking mind. You see where you start panicking or getting really indignant about a particular memory, person or activity. It is useful to see it, so that you can focus on it and say, 'Well okay, let's look at that. What is that animosity, jealousy or craving? What is it founded on?' Then you look into it. You can find yourself walking up and down the meditation path thinking, 'I'm going to tell him, I'm going to sort him out.' But by steadying the energy of that impulse with the walking, you come out of its grasp. You can't calmly and gently get angry with someone: if we hold the mind against the walking (or the breathing) it can't sustain the heated tense state.

The walking practice provides a continuum of effort and energy, along with the continuum of a background calm and steadiness. Because of that samatha, you can apply reflective wisdom towards looking into your mind or heart. You have a sense of ground or surface, so that you can see where the bubbling is. Then you can see where the hindrances and attachments are and find a way to release them. This is how calm and insight work together.

Realisation

What we see with insight is that all our aversion, our greed or our worry cluster around perceptions or impressions that we have. For instance, when you dislike a person, the person in your mind is just an accumulation of various impressions that irritate you and all the perceptions that do otherwise are screened out. You don't remember the person's suffering, virtue or nobility, you remember their tardiness, greediness, or uncooperativeness. In this way you build up an identikit picture of a person based on a few perceptions. But if you step out of that through calming the mind, you can investigate and acknowledge the things you weren't noticing. Then it's clear that: 'This isn't a person, this is an aversion-person. This is a person I have created out of aversion.' And as you look into that, you learn what your own mind can't tolerate; and as long as that remains the case, you are allowing that thing to have power over you.

Your limitations allow whatever you dislike to have power over you. An undeveloped mind can be invaded and feel bad, day and night. But is that really because of things and people out there? Do you really think bad weather, a flight delay, or a person you don't like wants to sit in your mind and annoy you? But some do, for ages. It's because of something in yourself – nobody else is storing it up; try to recognise that. Generating aversion for something or someone is unnecessary; a tremendous amount of energy gets used in sustaining something that is painful and crippling. When you work with aversion, greed or fear, you inquire, 'How has my mind gathered together this particular image?' Then you begin to understand a little bit about perception and suffering. You understand how perceptions are purely selective impressions and that these afflictive ones are based on pain and on ignorance of that. We're sensitive and don't like irritating things; but if we're not wise enough to acknowledge and let go, if we ignorantly shield ourselves from that irritation, these irritants get embedded into anxiety and aversion. You need to get past inflicting them on your mind; but that comes not through dismissing them, but through looking into them, how they're caused and how they can cease.

A small story may be useful. It concerns the man who as an enormous act of generosity gave the Sangha at Cittaviveka a stretch of woodland. He did so also because he wanted the woodland to be regenerated and managed carefully, and he had ideas about how that would happen. However on examination, no-one else felt

his idea were practical. But because he was very much an ideas person, he was so disappointed that he couldn't come to the monastery for 18 years. Instead he spent 18 years sitting at home in London, worrying. So during that time, all the people who were involved that he had been in contact with became figures of aversion for him – both the monks in the monastery and the trust directors. He finally managed to break through this stalemate and actually come down to the monastery to check things out. Somebody took him for a walk in the real woods – not the 'ideas' woods – and he saw how beautiful it was. He said, 'I've been worrying and complaining about how wrong it all was for 18 years – and it's all so perfect.' It wasn't the way his ideas wanted it, but he got to see that things didn't have to go in accordance with his ideas. And he gave a big, joyful smile. You could see this huge mass of aversion, this sourness, falling off like a terrible scab from the wound that clinging to ideas had given him. And underneath that he was fresh and joyful. That's what realisation is all about.

The mind sinks its teeth into something and gets hooked. Then it builds up a perception that we don't want to have challenged. When we have people we dislike, it becomes difficult to actually get together and have face-to-face contact. We cling to our notions and impressions and think, 'I'm not going to talk to you. You don't understand anyway.' We get infatuated with our viewpoint because it makes us feel solid, even if it makes us feel miserable. That's how sick *tanha* is. But to unlock the aversion we don't have to be 'right' or 'wrong.' All we need is simply to be with the other person or irritating thing and acknowledge that have other features than our mind-set has presented. Even more to the point, we can undertake this process with regards to ourselves! We can start to liberate ourselves from our perceptions and notions by wisely knowing the patterns and behaviours of the mind are selective, incomplete and not to be clung to. It's not that they have no truth in them, but most usefully, they show us where we hang on blindly to 'my view, my way.' Which is definitely a habit to kick. Life inevitably brings things I don't particularly want. I do manifest as other than ideal. But that's alright. I don't have to knot up into this contracted heap of hatred over things that are not going my way.

When you open a mass or tangle of suffering, you see, 'The problem isn't the person or the situation; it is just my aversion, doubt, restlessness or craving. What am I craving for? What am I averse to?' Then you begin to see how it is; the problem isn't my thoughts, other people's behaviour, but taking them in and adopting them as real and solid. Then the wisdom cut can be light and clean, a mass of suffering falls away, and you experience a suffusion of relief. It is then that you get the *paṭivedhi*, or the wisdom body, flowering – even just for a few moments. One realises that rather than holding on in order to have, or to be right or wrong or whatever, our mind can unfold. This is beautiful.

With wisdom we don't have to contract out of experience, we sustain wise awareness of it, and blossom through and out of it naturally, just like the lotus grows out of the mud. Then there is nothing to be done apart from enjoying it. The wisdom of enjoyment is not about doing something, but about receiving. For us do-ers acknowledging the ability to enjoy, to be open and to receive takes wisdom too. So take the time to savour and enjoy the realisation; then it will feed back into the assurance that there is an innate wisdom. This is a change of lineage: rather than belonging to a body, to a family, a job, *kamma* or a mind-set, we belong to wisdom. Wisdom is inherent in being human.

(this talk is one of a forthcoming collection on the Ten Paramita. For details consult www.forestsangha.org 'current news')