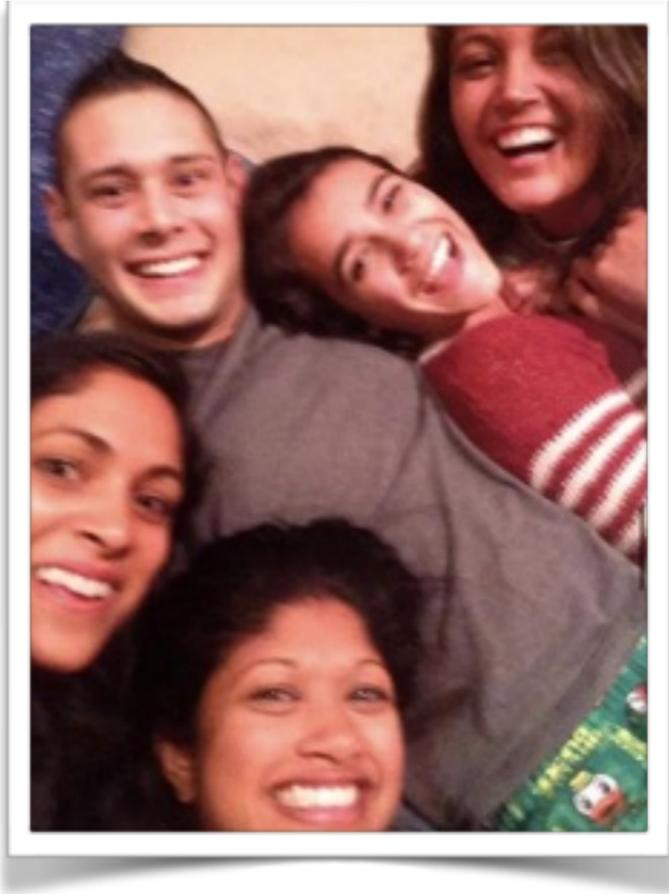


Sadhu Achie



A book of stories and teachings

Introduction

The Ten Perfections, or paramitas are the Buddhist teachings that are probably the most useful for bringing the path of awakening into everyday life. They are a list of qualities that you can develop in any situation - as you're working, with your family at home, at the office, as you're driving, and as you're meditating. The qualities are:

- i. Generosity
- ii. Moral Conduct
- iii. Renunciation
- iv. Discernment (or Wisdom)
- v. Patience
- vi. Truthfulness
- vii. Determination
- viii. Loving-Kindness
- ix. Effort
- x. Equanimity

It is my wish that these reflections will help to encourage you to develop these qualities so that you may experience their benefit in your life.

Bhikkhuni Satima

Generosity

As a family, my parents were very generous. They shared what they had with the servants and with those less fortunate. Every month, we gave dana to the temple by putting food into the basket for the monks. One time when I was quite small, I put all the food that had been cooked for us into the basket. The servants had to make more for us because there was nothing left for us to eat. My parents didn't get mad at me for giving the food away because they taught me that giving dana was a good thing to do.

My sister, Poppy, and I shared toys and games. We were quite close to each other and played together often - skipping, making paper dolls, etc... I also shared with my brother Sarath. We used to listen to "Hit Parade" together. One of the hit parade songs that I still remember is "Sugar in the morning, sugar in the evening, sugar at suppertime. Oh my darling sugar, I love you all the time." In the same way,

generosity makes our lives better and sweeter.

When I was living in Minnesota, we used to go to South Dakota prison once a month to give the inmates Dhamma talks. Before leaving, I would spend some time preparing a talk. We drove many miles to get there. Sometimes we would have a meal (dana) with them. It was given by the workers at the prison. We helped them not only by the Dhamma that we shared but also by allowing them the opportunity to share with us and thereby cultivate good qualities in their hearts. Thus, by being generous, we can help to bring out the goodness in others .

Whenever I go to Sri Lanka, I find ways to practice generosity. There are so many opportunities to help those who are less fortunate. For one child, I bought a sewing machine so that she could use it to earn a living. For another child, I opened a bank account for her future education. I like to support the education of children, especially when I know that they have no other means.

Even today, I am helping three children by putting money in their bank accounts for their future schooling.

So whenever you can, I encourage you to do random acts of kindness without expecting anything in return. For example, for no reason you give someone a flower. If they want to give you something back, you tell them, “Just pass it on.” No matter how busy you are, you can always find some time to listen to someone who needs to talk. Giving someone the opportunity to discuss with you their problems and share their sorrow or suffering will ease their mind. This will help them to let go of their problems and find joy and happiness.

I’m sure that you can come up with many more creative ways to be generous, but for now this is enough.

Determination

I remember when Becky and I along with a few of our friends went to the Bhavana Society in West Virginia with the idea of finding a place where I could live as a Buddhist nun. We found a lovely place in the forest where I wanted to build my kuti and we got Bhante Gunaratana's blessings. I was so excited! When we came back home, we were going to gather all the materials to build the kuti. But when my granddaughter Nadeesha heard about it, she became very upset. She didn't want to "lose her Achie". She locked herself in the bathroom and refused to come out. Then my son, Nadeesha's father, said to me, "So you want to be an ordained bhikkhuni but what will happen to my daughter? How will you cope if something happens to my daughter?" So right then and there I gave up the idea of going back to live at the monastery. I didn't want to see any harm come to my grand-daughter. Because of the love and compassion that I had for her, I let that idea go.

However, the determination to live as a Buddhist nun didn't go away. Fortunately, Becky found out about the Zen path where females could become ordained and still live at home. This way Nadeesha wouldn't lose her grandma and I could still practice as a Buddhist nun. It was required that I practice for two years as a student before ordaining as a Zen monk¹. I enjoyed the practice, studied a lot, and did many retreats. Being a different tradition than I grew up with, some of the things were new to me such as the koans and I found them challenging to work with. But overall, my Zen training was very beautiful.

After a while, I became a little disheartened with the Zen path because I felt that it was neither here nor there, kind of in between a lay and monastic life. This led me to want to return to my roots within the Theravada path. In 2002, when I was in Sri Lanka, I spent some time at a monastery in Nugegoda

¹ In the Zen tradition, both males and females are called monks.

where there were ten precept nuns. While I was there I met a Burmese bhikkhuni named Saccavadi who was very helpful to me. She let me know how I could I ordained as a Samaneri, a novice nun. Once ordained, I let Nadeesha and my family know that I had changed the color of my robe from black to orange. At that time, Nadeesha was nearly a teenager and she was okay with my decision. I stayed and trained at Madawilla Monastery for about a year or so. It felt great to be amongst other Theravada monastics.

When I came back to Minnesota to stay with Becky and Prassana, I was welcomed as usual and resumed my practice in their home. I was determined to take the next step to become a fully ordained Bhikkhuni. That required that I train two years as a Samaneri. During this time I attended and taught classes at Minnesota Buddhist Vihara.

Upon my next trip to Sri Lanka in 2004, together with my dear friend Bhikkhuni Saccavadi, I searched to find a place where I could take bhikkhuni ordination.

After calling many temples and practice centers, we finally found out about an ordination that would take place in a short while at the Golden Temple in Dambulla. We quickly hired a vehicle and went to Dambulla. I mustered up my courage and asked to meet with the head priest. When I told him what I wanted, he said “No, I can’t ordain you! I don’t know who you are or where you came from. Have you filled out an application? Have you submitted this and that and the other? No, I can’t do this!” Upon hearing this, I broke down in tears and asked, “Do you mean to say that all the nuns during the time of the Buddha sent in their application?”

Finally, he said (just to get rid of me I suspect), “First you have to send in an application. Then you have to report on your studies including references from your teachers and get a hand-written letter from the bhikkhu who will agree to be your teacher for the next five years. I had to really scramble to get all these pieces together. Since I had already been teaching at the temple in Minnesota as a Samaneri, the senior

bhikkhu Seevali Thero readily agreed to be my teacher.

I went to the place where the application was supposed to be but they didn't have one so I went to a printing press and made my own application up and filled it out. I contacted all the places where I attended classes asking for references and got them. I had to get all this paperwork back to the monk in Dambulla within one week. I finally got it all together and sent it out with a special courier.

Days passed and I didn't hear anything back. Desperately, I went to the tooth relic temple and talked to the Buddha, asking for help. The next day, the priest called me and told me that he would ordain me but that I would have to take and pass an exam with the rest of the candidates. The exam was in Singhalese which I didn't know how to write so I asked to read the exam in English. The priest didn't want to give me the exam in English but relented when I told him that I had an American passport. My strong determination paid

off. I passed the exam and was ordained as a bhikkhuni on the 2nd of July, 2006. Mission impossible became possible due to my determination.

Loving-Kindness

We were taught by our parents to be kind not only to our family and friends but also to strangers. As I see it, strangers are friends we just haven't met yet. When I was a teenager, I would add a smiley face after my signature. When I went to the store to buy something, I gave the check to the person at the counter. They may have been tired or had a tough day with the customers but when they saw my smiley face, they would break into a smile. Later on as an adult I even put a smiley face on my income tax papers. I still do it to this day. Even a small gesture like a smile is a gift that can brighten a person's day.

Loving kindness is a significant part of my meditation practice. When I practice metta, thoughts of anger melt away. Once I feel relaxed and calm, I offer the metta to others. It's like putting a cooling lotion on their hearts so they can experience peace, joy and happiness. The metta you give is unconditional. It

doesn't matter who the other person is or what they have done. While practicing metta, it feels like I am truly in a heavenly place. It may not be this way for others but I see metta as a soft, bright, red color that encompasses others from head to toe. The important thing is the feeling that is generated rather than the color one sees.

Metta is not just about meditation. It is also practiced in the way one speaks and acts. For example, I try to use gentle language. I call the children, "honey, sweetheart or love" which is why I often don't know what their real name is. I feel that I can be easily satisfied, taking what is offered even if it is not my favorite thing. I'm happy because I know that people take a lot of time to prepare an offering for me. In return for their offering, I give the people metta. I also love animals and will always give the dogs and cats at the vihara my left over food. A couple of times in Sri Lanka, I released a cow that was going to be slaughtered that day. I gave it to a poor man who would only use the cow for milk for his family.

When I was a teacher, I used to tell the children in school not to harm any living being. During the rainy season in Minnesota, worms come out of the ground. One child that I taught, would not let her mother back out of the driveway because the car would have squished so many worms. So the child made the mother pick up every single worm before allowing her to back the car up and take her to school. When they finally arrived at school, the mother asked me, "What are you teaching my child?" I said I was teaching kindness to all creatures.

One child that I was teaching came to school very upset and started running after his mother as she was leaving to go to work. I ran after the child and held him back. He kicked me repeatedly in my shins. Even as he was kicking, I was hugging him. Eventually, I was able to calm him down. After a while, I showed him the bruises on my shins and said, "See what happened!". We both laughed and that was the end of the episode. Everything was forgiven and forgotten.

Because I only had love towards him, I understood that his reaction was natural for a child who was afraid and needed security. Loving-kindness sees beyond the action and into the heart of the person.

Moral Conduct

My parents raised us on the foundation of moral conduct. They showed us by their words and by their example that we should not harm other beings. Even though we didn't chant the precepts regularly, we were taught to observe them in our daily lives.

If I ever took a toy from my siblings, my parents would explain that it didn't belong to me and I would have to give it back. We were even asked not to kill the mosquitos that would bite us. We had nets around our beds and would use spray to discourage the mosquitos from entering the house. I think that most families in Sri Lanka emphasize such values.

In our schools, morality was also considered important. Even though they were not written up for all to see, the five basic precepts were the rules of the classroom. If a child came up with a harsh word toward another child, he or she was corrected and shown how to speak gently. If there was a fight or

argument amongst the children, the teacher was there to help restore peace and harmony. We were taught to let go of grudges and hard feelings. The biggest punishment I remember receiving was having to sit apart from my friends and think about what I had done.

As I got older and started dealing with more complicated issues, I could still refer back to the five precepts to help me. Take for example, the fifth precept of refraining from intoxicants. Many Buddhists in Sri Lanka take social drinks because it became part of our culture due to the British influence. It's the same way in America. During a formal meal or gathering, having a drink or two is the norm. People might feel they need to drink because everyone else is doing it and it may help them to feel relaxed and at ease. The danger in that is when something becomes a habit, we can start to depend on it and even get addicted to it. Because alcohol clouds the mind, someone who is inebriated can do things that they would not normally do. They can become a

nuisance to themselves and to the society in which they live.

I used to take social drinks, myself, but I gave it up as I realized the value of having a clear mind. It is difficult to meditate with a clouded mind. When the mind is bright, clear and luminous - as its true nature is - it is easier to experience peace, joy and harmony. When the mind is burdened by worries and agitation, we may think that the only escape is to drink so that we can drown our sorrows but that will bring more problems in the long run. While it is true that there are many troubling things in this world, fortunately the Buddha taught us effective ways to deal with them. By facing our problems directly, we can begin to see the deeper causes of our suffering and let them go.

Renunciation

Renunciation means letting go or giving up based on our understanding of the true nature of things: that all is impermanent, unsatisfactory and without a lasting essence. Some people may think that renunciation will leave one feeling poor or missing out on something, but actually I find that I am gaining more peace, joy and happiness as I let go of what is not really necessary. Instead of gearing my life toward attaining more and more material things, I find that I can enjoy the less tangible things in life such as being present to someone in need, seeing a flower or being with the silence that surrounds me.

As soon as I became a bhikkhuni and I came back to Minnesota from Sri Lanka, I gave my checkbook and everything related to money to my son with the instructions to never ask me about these matters from this point forward. I felt like a big load was taken off my shoulders. I was so happy and still to this day I feel

delighted to not have any dealings with money. In the past, it was a challenge to manage my money properly so that I would have enough for my needs and the needs of my children. I did well at that but not having to deal with it at all was even better.

As a lay person, I was very fond of clothes. I liked making my own clothes and having all sorts of beautiful styles. When I became a Samanera (novice), I had to give up all of my lay clothes and wear the robes. I changed my attitude toward clothing from being a form of self expression to being something to just cover the body in a modest way. I felt proud to wear the simple robe which was the same as the Buddha and his disciples wore. Even though I would wear the same thing every day, I didn't get tired of it. Every time I would say the reflection on wearing the robe I would be reminded of my purpose as a bhikkhuni.

Even harder than letting go of material things is letting go of our preferences to have things the way we want them. The

begging bowl that I was given when I ordained represented my life as an alms mendicant. Instead of striving after what I wish for, I would now be receiving whatever was offered. In the past I could choose whatever food I wanted to eat, but now I would be allowing others to make merit by offering whatever they wanted to. Rather than demanding what others should give me, my job is to simply accept what is put into the bowl. Living *inter*-dependently instead of *in*-dependently has given me the opportunity to diminish the sense of a separate self. One of my daily chants contains the line, “My very life is sustained by the gifts of others.” This brings up a lot of gratitude and metta in my heart.

In the past, I lived in a big house with many rooms, filled with objects that I liked. As a bhikkhuni, I live a very simple life. When I spent time in Sri Lanka and Australia, I lived in a “kuti” which is a small monastic hut, basically one room with few furnishings. I found it to be very peaceful and conducive to meditation

practice because the mind wasn't distracted by external things. When I lived with Becky and Prassana in Minnesota, even though they had a big house, I lived only in a small part of it, an annex. It was the same when I moved to Evergreen and now in Niwot with Priyantha and Sujeewa. They've all been very generous to make my accommodations comfortable while also keeping it simple. By letting go of luxurious spaces, I am able to develop contentment that goes deeper and is conducive to my practice.

I will end with a quote by Albert Einstein that I really like which is : "A calm and modest life brings more happiness than the constant pursuit of success combined with constant restlessness."

Effort

There is nothing in life that you can do without putting forth effort. You need effort in the beginning to get something started, in the middle to keep it going, and in the end to complete it. But effort alone is not enough. You can be working very hard but heading in the wrong direction and that won't lead to good results. So you have to make sure that your intention is geared toward what is wholesome, what will truly benefit yourself and others. People often think that the Buddha taught that we should not have desire at all; but that is not true. He taught that wholesome desire (chanda) is a necessary component of success.

There was a period in my life when I needed to apply a lot of effort to overcome the problems that I was facing. First, I needed to have a clear intention of where I wanted to go. For me, that was towards freedom, both physical and mental. In order to get there, I had to make a plan even though

I knew I wasn't in absolute control of the outcome. The plan was to enroll in the Montessori training so I could gain a skill that would allow me to be more independent and ultimately leave the country. Although I loved my country, under the circumstances, I felt that I needed to leave it in order to find inner peace and happiness.

Even after my initial goal of getting the training was achieved, I still needed to put forth effort. While still in Sri Lanka, I applied for a job as a teacher in Minnesota. Once I got the job, my sponsor found a place for the teachers to stay. Fortunately, I arrived in the summer while it was still warm. As winter came, I enjoyed the snow and the cold but I had to add warm jackets, hats and gloves to my wardrobe. Even doing these small things required some effort. At first, my sponsor gave me a ride to work but later I had to find a car and learn to drive on the opposite side of the street. I didn't know how to cook so it took a lot of effort to learn how to make basic meals. I was grateful to have received a rice cooker as one of my first

Christmas presents. I was living with four other Sri Lankan friends who helped with the cooking. When we work together with others, the effort can be less in some ways but more in other ways.

Sometimes people think that being a monastic means that meditation will be easy, but actually it still requires effort. I set my alarm clock for 4:30 am but there are times when I feel tired and would rather lie in bed than get up and meditate. I know that lying in bed will not be beneficial to me in the long run so I arouse energy and get up. The thought of having a hot cup of coffee lures me out of from under the covers. Once I'm sitting on the meditation cushion, it takes effort to keep coming back to the object of meditation such as the breath or the bodily sensations. At the beginning, the mind tends to wander a lot. Instead of getting angry at myself, I gently bring the mind back with loving-kindness and compassion. This is how effort needs to be sustained moment after moment.

There will always be times when we feel like giving up. We may think that we don't have what it takes to keep going or that the obstacles are too great. I would encourage you to take it one moment at a time, one breath at a time. Don't allow worry about the past or the future to get in your way; just keep coming back to the present moment with loving-kindness and compassion. We all have the strength inside of us to keep going; we just have to put forth effort to access this strength. To achieve your goals, take one step at a time. Effort is not about forcing something to happen. Rather it is about a continuous attention to the present moment.

Patience

In 1973, I came to America on a work exchange program. The program was only for a year but I was able to extend for a second year. After that, I would have to go back to my country because I didn't have a permanent right to remain. I was happy and excited to be in America because I had a chance to do something I wanted to do - to become a Montessori teacher. And yet I was also sad because I couldn't bring my children with me right away. Even though it was only a year before I could bring Priyantha to join me, it felt like an eternity. I cried every day and night because I missed my children. I knew I had to be patient and meanwhile do everything I could to bring them all here. At the end of the second year, my other two sons arrived.

After I applied for my permanent visa, I had to wait several years. I knew that I had to be patient because there was nothing I could do to make it go faster. It was the Dhamma that helped me to stay

calm and have the trust that all would work out well. At that time, I didn't have a meditation practice but I had unshakeable faith and confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. No matter what the outcome would be, I knew I'd be okay. This is what helped me to be patient. Eventually, we all got permanent visas and were able to stay in the United States.

As a parent, our children give us a wonderful opportunity to practice patience. My son Amal was a good swimmer and was on the school swim team. Unfortunately, I was not able to buy him expensive swimming trunks. Because of that, he gave up swimming. I had to respect his choice even though I thought it wasn't a good choice. I didn't get angry with him or try to change his mind. We have to allow our children to go their own way, to learn their own lessons and even make their own mistakes. Being an example of patience is the best way to teach our children that this quality brings calm and steadiness to our lives.

Sometimes I lie awake at night, wishing I could sleep. It's an unpleasant experience, a lot of pain and suffering. There's nothing I can do but to be patient and watch how the mind changes on its own. At first it was a struggle, but I eventually learned to go with the flow because fighting it only brings more problems and intensifies the suffering. In the same way, when I have pain in my legs or another part of my body, this is also an opportunity to be patient and accept things as they are. If I insist on having things the way I want them to be, I get more and more upset. If I can be patient and allow the body to be as it is, then I can let go of clinging and attachment and find contentment.

If we are able to focus on the present moment, the future will take care of itself. As we do what we need to do now to the best of our ability, we can let go and trust that the unfolding of the future will happen on its own. It is anxiety, desire and frustration that gets in the way of our mind being content, happy and peaceful. When you feel impatient,

take a deep breath in through the nose and let it out slowly through the mouth. See what happens. That will give more space in the mind. Essentially, patience is the space between wanting and getting. It's the calmness and steadiness that comes from allowing things to unfold naturally.

Truthfulness

We all probably have experienced times when people weren't truthful to us. It hurts, doesn't it? We suffer because we have higher expectations of the person and our trust in them becomes damaged when they don't tell us the truth. Normally, I am not a dishonest person because I know the value of truthfulness. Even if people don't like what I have to say, if it is beneficial and can help them, I would still say it. If someone tells me the truth and I don't like it, I will reflect on it and see if I can learn something from what they are saying.

When I was a child in grade school, a friend of mine copied from my homework paper. When the teacher saw us looking at each other's papers, she thought that I was the one that copied from my friend. I was punished by having to write, "Honesty is the best policy" one hundred times. My friend felt badly about this and spoke to her parents. Her father then wrote a letter

explaining to the teacher what had happened. Later on, the tables would be turned.

Before I came to the US, I didn't want to remain with my husband nor did I want to bring him to this country. I didn't tell him this because my purpose was to change a situation that wasn't working well for any of us. I was so fearful because I was like a pawn in his hand. My intention was for the long term benefit of myself and my children. I also knew that my husband would be better off if he wasn't in an unhappy marriage. So I told him that at the end of the two years I would be able to buy a car for him with the money I had earned through my teaching job. I never really intended to do so but I felt it was necessary to say this in order for him to let me go and also let the children go.

I sent money back to Sri Lanka for the first two years that I was in the US. Finally, when I got my green card, I stopped sending money back. Naturally, my husband was angry when he found out he was tricked. Being halfway

around the world, I wasn't scared. I never went back to settle with him; it didn't matter to me that he kept the material possessions that we shared. Even though we never spoke about it afterwards, we both understood that it needed to be that way.

Some people might hear this story and say that I wasn't being honest, that I was twisting the truth. I see it as a paradox: a tough decision had to be made. In order for me to arrive at what I viewed as a more beautiful and peaceful home life, I felt that I had to use dishonest means. This isn't something that is praised in the Buddhist texts, but due to my circumstances, I felt there was no other choice. I never talked about it with my children and they never asked any questions. Sometimes, silence is golden and words can cause more harm.

Most of the time when people aren't honest, it is because they fear the consequences of telling the truth. We may feel that we aren't in control and so we resort to doing something tricky or

underhanded. Recalling the times when I have not been completely honest, I will admit my fault and try to understand why I chose to act differently. In the end, we should forgive and let go of our mistakes and strive to do better the next time. As we increase in wisdom, we will gain more courage and be better equipped to tell the truth.

Equanimity

We all have preferences - likes and dislikes. For example, I would have loved to have stayed permanently at Dhammasara Monastery in Western Australia. I liked the community of nuns there. I liked the spiritual leader, Ajahn Brahmavamso, and I liked the setting too. I enjoyed each of my visits there, but for some reason or another, I didn't pursue the possibility of staying long term. Later on, when I looked back, I regretted that I didn't pursue that possibility. Feeling regret is a form of dukkha (unsatisfactoriness). That regret has to be let go of in order to find equanimity and rest in a place of contentment with what is.

It's not easy to get beyond a perception of good and bad or right and wrong. We're taught from a young age what is skillful and unskillful, what is good and what is bad. The moral conduct that I spoke about earlier is all about "do this" and "don't do that". This is the starting place and the foundation that supports

well being. However, as we grow in wisdom, we will see how even these opposites are intertwined. We can't have one without the other. Seeing this doesn't mean that we discard morality; it means that we understand that morality itself is built on causes and conditions. This wisdom is what gives rise to equanimity and helps us to let go of self-righteousness and judgment towards others.

The Buddha teaches that there are four divine abidings (brahmaviharas). These are loving-kindness (metta), compassion (karuna), sympathetic joy (mudita) and equanimity (upekkha). Equanimity is the highest of the four qualities because it perfects the other three. Otherwise, we might have loving-kindness, compassion and sympathetic joy only towards those we like but not towards those we don't like. With equanimity, we offer these qualities to everyone unconditionally without exception. Even the robber, the murderer, and the politician we don't like are regarded the same way that we would treat our beloved child. This does

not come naturally. It is a practice that has to be cultivated.

When we hold to dualities, we end up suffering a lot because things will never be exactly the way we want them to be. If they do go the way we want them to go, it's only temporary. It's only by seeing the changing nature of phenomena, that we can accept whatever happens in the moment. We can witness this directly by watching conditions both externally and within our own minds. Equanimity isn't difficult when the things we differentiate between don't matter that much. Say, we have a choice between eating pizza or stir fry and we like them both. The highest form of equanimity goes beyond this level of differentiation. It is the result of deep levels of meditation (jhanas).

When I first heard about my heart condition and that there was no cure for it, I wanted to end everything right away. I didn't want to take any medicine or even eat. I didn't want to do anything that would prolong my life. I felt I had

lived long enough. Later on, I realized that this was not the right attitude and that I have no control over how long I live. I have to be patient and allow nature to take its course instead of grasping at one extreme or the other. The middle way that the Buddha teaches is the best way. I now feel fine with whatever happens.

Wisdom

Wisdom is more than what your fortune cookie tells you. The saying on that little tag on the teabag might be clever, but wisdom is more than cleverness. Wisdom is also more than knowledge. We can know a lot about things but not be wise. To illustrate this, I'll give you an example from my own life. When I first came to the United States, I thought that I knew everything about Buddhism. I was invited to one of the public schools to give a talk on Buddhism. The presentation went well. At the end of the presentation, the classroom teacher made a comment. He said, "So Buddhism is an individual journey." I had no idea what he was talking about. I just smiled and left it at that.

After I came home, I started going through all my materials on Buddhism to find out what this inner journey was. This was what got me started learning the Dhamma.

At that time, Buddhist books were not freely available. I had to go to the

University of Minnesota bookstore to buy a book on Buddhism. You would think that growing up in Sri Lanka I would know all about Buddhism. That is why I was so sure I could give a talk to the students. After the talk, I realized that I actually knew nothing about Buddhism. I didn't even know the Four Noble Truths. It was very humbling but it was also the start of my individual journey.

When we cultivate wisdom, we are learning the true nature of things. In fact, nature itself is a great teacher. Everything in nature is teaching us what life is all about. For example, looking at nature we can see how everything changes from instant to instant. I have watched many times how a flower blooms, fades and falls away. I have watched the leaves on trees change color and then fall off, becoming part of the forest floor. As a child, I was fascinated with how the fruit grew on the trees and how it ripened. I had to wait until nature made it ready before I could eat it. Even though I was intrigued with the workings of nature as a child, I didn't

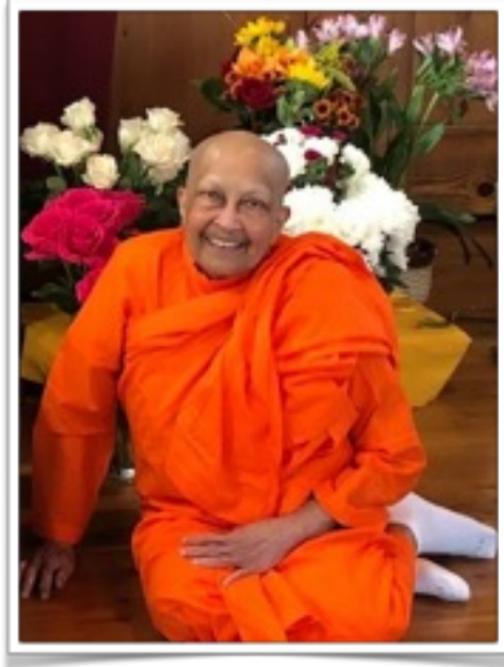
fully understand nature until I reflected on it in the light of Dhamma.

Another word for wisdom is insight. We are trying to see inside of our own mind. If we are looking into a still lake, we can see our reflection clearly but if there are ripples in the lake, the image that appears will be distorted. Similarly, if we are trying to see the nature of our minds but have agitation, worry, strong sense desire and restlessness we won't be able to see reality as it truly is. For example, when I sit down to meditate but I'm worried about whether my granddaughter has studied enough for her test, I cannot go deeply into meditation. As a result, I may be thinking a lot but I don't see the true nature of things as they really are. Once I let go of the worry, then my mind settles down and I see the qualities of the Dhamma and feel peaceful and at ease.

Wisdom doesn't come quickly or just by wanting it. We need to cultivate it through meditation, by bringing the mind into a still point. This takes time, patience and consistent effort. In fact, all

of the qualities that were talked about in this little booklet culminate in wisdom. Just keep working on them little by little and I assure you that your full potential will be reached.

About the Author



Bhikkhuni Satima, affectionately known as “Sadhu Achie” (Monastic Grandma) was born in Sri Lanka on August 22nd, 1935. She ordained as a bhikkhuni in July, 2006. Achie reports that her papers are now in order and she is just waiting for the vehicle to take her back to her real home.

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