

Upul Nishantha Gamage

If one tries to retain things that are decaying, perishing, smelling and getting dirty in the mind, it becomes a fountain of so many inner illnesses. Let things come and go as you let the in-breath and out-breath come and go in tranquillity meditation. At that moment, you are as free as the sky.

Upul Nishantha Gamage

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Dhamma Dana
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Dhamma Dāna

Dedicated to my loving husband and wonderful children

May you walk in greater faith and spirituality by the power of the Dhamma you practise!

Chamini Siriwardena

No Colour No Shape

Talk given by

Upul Nishantha Gamage

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1. Physical well-being

Dear Dhamma friends. Having meditated for some time, you are experiencing some mental and physical consolation and comfort at this moment. Let's make an attempt to further highlight some facts about us, about life and about existence of saṃsāra (cycle of suffering).

Meditation is not only for meditation. In other words, one should not meditate or practise meditation merely to become a meditator. Often, meditation is considered a piece of equipment or a vehicle to be used for seeing the truth. We need to make meditation a vehicle to reach the truth. Meditation is not simply to be standstill. It is not simply for living forever in surroundings created by meditation, which are physically and mentally consolatory, wholesome, sweet, tasty and serene. Practicing specially tranquillity meditation creates overwhelming physical well-being and settling down, which are two different experiences. The body feels so comfortable. All of us have experienced physical well-being as felt by lying down when tired or eating when hungry or sipping a refreshing drink when thirsty. In this manner, we have had diverse experiences

associated with physical well-being. The physical well-being caused by meditation is different from all these, as it crops up from inside, not entering from outside. The next experience caused by meditation is tranquillity or settling down.

2. The body is on race riots

There is nothing or nobody like the body, which goes on race riots and strikes, is under threats and rumbles. Always the body rumbles, riots and goes on strikes over hunger, thirst, sleepiness, headaches, coldness, warmness, aches and pains, sweating, needing for using toilets, washing the face, brushing the teeth, taking showers, combing, shaving etc. See how many demands of the body are there and how many threats are made by the body. There are threats behind all these demands. As we are scared of these threats, the demands are met no sooner they arise, particularly with regard to the body. In general, only one out of ten demands is met. However, regarding the body, 2 or 3 demands have been met before one demand crops up as we are scared of these demands made by the body. Just look at all these demands mentioned earlier, starting from the food. The food sufficient for one whole month is stored because we are scared.

On one hand, the body is a nuisance and a trouble due to the difficulty in turning down these unending demands. Who is going to turn them down? Who is going to get the demands met with the help of someone else? It is your responsibility to meet the demands of the body. One may not understand these things. Most of us do not see the body as something that goes on race riots and strikes, is under threats and rumbles. Most of us see the body as a carnival, a festival or a musical show. However, we realize the gravity of this, only when we experience the outcomes and evil effects.

In any case, all these things settle down during meditation, though the body goes on a race riot in the beginning without letting us sit even for 5 minutes. However, when a person gradually goes deeper and deeper into meditation, as the body settles down and the mind becomes extremely happy, the body experiences physical well-being, which is not comparable to those caused by any food or beverage or comfortable chair/bed. The physical well-being given to the body by the mind or gifted by meditation is not comparable to any such experience given externally. At that point, you may realize that the body has not experienced something similar before. You may have experienced something similar or even deeper when you had

engaged in tranquillity meditation in previous births of this *saṃsāric* journey. However, as the body has not experienced such a physical well-being and lightness before, these experiences of the body caused by meditation is considered so great. Therefore, the body settles down for awhile and does not demand for anything or bother for awhile over hunger, thirst, sleepiness etc. As all these demands are constricted, the body is very much willingly agreeable to meditation, which is known as settling down of the body. So the body has settled down and become wholesome. One can rest for awhile with such a settled down and wholesome body. As we are exhausted travellers of this *saṃsāric* journey and have been looking for a shade, this settled down body or composure or meditational resting position is a good place for taking a rest. Sometimes we do not realize how much we have exhausted because of the journey of life.

We travel day and night. It is not only during the day-time but also during the night-time. This travelling is like the day and night rotation of the moon, though we do not see it. The Earth and we keep on rotating. The Earth does not stop its rotation at night. The sun or the moon or nothing in the universe has stopped. All these things/we keep on rotating around them/ourselves and around the other things/others. While

rotating around oneself, this rotation continues around the others. This sounds crazy. Though we think that the life has stopped, it is not the case. The life is on a continuous run from the birth to the death and from the death to the birth. The death is not a stop but a run. We keep on running while sleeping, from the morning till the evening. Though we have got exhausted due to this running, all of us cannot help running. Even though this exhaustion has made it impossible for us to run further, we have come to a state where we are compelled to run. Meditation makes this running restful for a moment. At that point, one may wish to experience such restfulness everyday. One may long for sitting at a place with a one-pointed mind and wholesome and settled down body.

3. The trap or bait

Dear Dhamma friends. This is a trap or bait. On one hand, the mental and physical well-being caused by the one-pointedness of the mind encourages us to continue practising meditation. Nobody would meditate continuously, if one experiences more and more sorrowfulness and painfulness and becomes more and more impatient with the practice. No, it is not the case. The more you meditate, the more you experience well-being and

comfort. Therefore, this well-being is a stimulant for continuation of meditation. On one hand, it stimulates or encourages the meditator as if the competitor is encouraged in a competition by cheering of the supporters or spectators or party hangers. Let's take a tug of war or a marathon as an example. The competitors are encouraged by cheering, which helps them to continue in the competition. Similarly, this well-being encourages the meditator to continue with meditation. On the other hand, this well-being is the bait. One can get into trouble by swallowing the bait. Therefore, one should deal carefully with this physical and mental well-being. Otherwise, this vehicle may become undrivable. One may not be able to attend to the needs ahead; one may sit, close the eyes and try to reach the well-being experienced hundred or thousand times. One might even reach the well-being, stay there for the longest possible time and open the eyes once the time is over. Afterwards, one may again close the eyes when the time allows, particularly with the intension of experiencing restfulness. That is all. One who has started a long journey would travel a foot or two and enjoy the victory drink thinking that the person has reached the destination. This is not the case. There is a problem to be solved about life or about oneself or about samsāra.

4. The taproot

We meditate to solve this problem, to see the life, to see the origin, to see the root, to see the taproot, to see the root cause. We look for the taproot not to look at its beauty but to uproot it. What are we trying to uproot? It is the root cause of problems, suffering or unrest. We travel from the leaf bud, flower and fruit of a huge tree in search of the taproot. It is not an easy journey. It is easy to climb up a tree as it is possible when one learns to climb up a tree or with the help of a ladder. However, it is not easy to find the taproot. One needs sensitive equipment, insight and composed mind to look for the taproot. We make this equipment via meditation. You become a sensitive microscope. You can look at the root cause of restlessness through the sensitive microscope. These root causes are very small. Any critical illness such as pneumonia or typhoid or jaundice or dengue cannot be seen through a microscope. However, a microscope can be used to find out the root cause of these illnesses as the naked eye cannot see them. A microscope is used not to look at the beauty of something or make fun but to put aside something or to be free or to liberate.

4. Fear, anger.....contagious

Dear Dhamma friends. Meditation is for liberation. This needs to be comprehended like a thematic statement or a slogan. Meditation is for liberation. What is meditation for? It is for liberation, which is different from feelings such as happiness and comfort. Happiness is a feeling which can be shared with another person. When you are happy, you can share your happiness with the others. The liberation is untouchable and cannot be shared with the others. The liberation has no colour though the happiness has a colour, which can be imparted to it. Happiness has a shape. Your happiness is reflected in the colour and the shape of your face or facial expressions. You share the colour and the shape of happiness with the others. It is the same with anger. The colour and the shape of anger are also shared with the others. Even the suffering has a colour and a unique shape. Likewise, all the feelings experienced by us have characteristic coloures and shapes. Therefore, these feelings can be shared or given or taken. So you can make another person angry or reproduce your anger in the others. Your colour can be imparted to the others. Those who have been imparted with the colour and the shape of fear can make the others fearful. Even the

loving kindness has a colour and a shape. It might be possible for the naked eye to see these coloures and shapes. However, all these are worldly things. Therefore, loving kindness is also something worldly. These worldly things can be created. Happiness, anger, jealousy and all the other feelings or experiences are created by you. One may say that these things are mental too. These feelings created by you are worldly. Loving kindness, love and hatred are non-existing but can be created. Therefore, the Dhamma refers to these feelings created by us as $sankh\bar{a}ra$ meaning formations and sankhahta meaning things that are conditioned.

6. Same raw materials-different outcomes

A cup of tea or a coconut sambol or a soup or a dish of rice has to be prepared. The raw materials/ingredients used and the method of preparation of these are not the same. Sometimes, the ingredients might be the same. However, these ingredients in different proportions are used according to different culinary methods to make these preparations. A particular ingredient used in the beginning of preparing something might need to be used in the middle of the

cooking process to prepare something else. Some raw materials are cooked, some are boiled and some are fried.

Even though the raw materials are the same, the outcome may be different depending on the mechanism of preparation. Similarly, one can produce love. The same ingredients can be used in a different manner to produce hatred. Love is your own production. There is no magic or miracle or wonder or hallucination associated with producing these feelings, which need ingredients/raw materials and a technology. Jealousy is created. Loving kindness is also created. Similarly, sympathetic joy, equanimity and compassion are created. Those who make such feelings get to enjoy them first. One gets to experience and share the results and energy of loving kindness with the others to the extent these things have been produced by him/her. Similarly, one gets to experience the results of hatred. The results of hatred can be shared with those who wish. On the contrary, something wholesome is produced in tranquillity meditation. When we meditate, comfort can be produced instead of suffering as the feelings created are under control of the meditator.

7. Knowing what is being produced

The major difference between non-meditators and those who practise tranquillity meditation is the inability of the former to know what is being produced. According to the Dhamma, nonmeditators are described as untrained persons who do not know and see what is being produced. They are not aware of the ingredients/raw materials, and what is being produced. They are in the dark and do not know where the chillies, sugar, knife, hearth, salt etc. are kept in the kitchen. Therefore, they grab something that can be reached in the dark and prepare something as there is no knowledge about what is being produced. However, they cannot help making something either. One can say as an argument that there is no need to produce these things. But it is impossible not to make these things because we are used to making something, which is known as sankhāra or formation. We keep making things and piling them up. What do we pile up? Mistakes are piled up. When we cook in the dark using whatever that can be garbed without any knowledge about what is prepared, most likely what is produced is bitter and indigestible. Everything piled up is unwholesome and sorrowful. The moment you try to produce love, hatred has already been formed. The problem is the inability to stop

at love. We do not know how to stop at love or we cannot stop at that point. Therefore, love ends up at hatred or jealousy.

At every moment, in the pitch darkness and with our eyes closed, we produce something in the factory known as life. This happens not only when you are awake but also when sleeping. Even when you are unconscious, something is produced without any knowledge about what it is. Therefore, repentance always comes behind you. Repentance follows the producer at that moment itself or later. Whether you make something good or bad, repentance itself follows you. There is no point in describing about it over and over. Happiness is also something we make. One can experience it for awhile. However, nobody can feel a particular happiness over and over, though we have experienced it so many times.

8. Landslides-everywhere.... in everything......

As stated earlier, meditation is not for producing happiness and stay there or produce consolation and stay there. These meditational experiences need to be used as equipment or vehicles to look for the root cause of suffering. Where is the root cause of everything produced? What is the reason behind awkwardness of everything produced? What is the reason behind turning happiness into unhappiness? What is the reason behind turning love into hatred? We need to go on a journey in search of these reasons. The insight meditator is the passenger who goes on such a journey. In a way, practitioner of tranquillity meditation is a person who has stopped or is trying to stop. Therefore, those who are used to practising tranquillity meditation often look for restful and quite places. They need a restful and quite place, close the eyes and sit. The desire to stop is hidden within all these needs.

The insight meditator does not try to stop on ad hoc basis. He/she does not build houses on slippery places. He/she understands that, even though the surface looks stable, there can be landslides underneath. All the places can be subject to landslides. There is no place in this world that is not subject to landslides or does not deteriorate or gets destroyed including even *jhāna*. If one becomes oneness with Brahman or Atman through *jhāna*, even such positions are subject to landslides. There is no happiness or well-being or settling down that is not subject to landslides. All these things are slippery. Though these

things look nice, they can turn upside down and inside out becoming so destructive and ugly. This basic comprehension about everything produced is subject to changes is very much essential for insight meditation. Something that does not change cannot be produced. This basic understanding is necessary. Without such understanding, one may try to stop after having experienced something so delicious in meditation. Therefore, more that 99% of those who meditate try to stop at tranquillity. Not even 1% likes to enter into insight meditation because of ignorance or lack of courage or necessity. One needs to be so courageous to enter into insight meditation as it is scary to know that a building, which is thought of being stable, is built on a place that may be subject to landslides. This thought is very scary. Whatever we have built, no matter how we have built it, we may lose it. Everything is lost or gets destroyed or is dispossessed whether it is made of gold or platinum or diamond or anything else. Therefore, meditation is not a journey leading to make something last forever. It is impossible to make something last forever. Nothing can be built without raw materials, which get destroyed no matter what they are. There is no raw material on this earth or in the sky or in the universe or at the bottom of the sea or in the core of the earth that is indestructible. It is the nature of all these raw materials to be possibly subject to changes.

9. Law vs principle

Everything inside us or inside our body or inside our mind is subject to changes. Therefore, nobody can make anything internally or externally that is not subject to changes. This is not a law but a principle. Understand the difference between these two. The laws can ban certain actions. One can break these laws and get punished. However, principles cannot be broken. Death is a principle. Everybody born will die. This is not a law but a principle. It is the principles not the laws presented in Buddhism. The birth is equal to the aging and the death, which is an equation. There are two sides to an equation. The birth is equal to the death. The birth is equal to the aging. All these are principles. This realization is very important. One has to be so courageous to come to this realization. Whatever is made or under which name anything is made, everything changes. Whether these things are worldly or mental, are made alone or together with the others, everything loses, changes or is dispossessed. We are unable to make anything that does not

lose or change or is not dispossessed. Once we realize these things, we feel like getting to know about liberty. This question crops up; liberated from what? It is the liberation from making things that are destructible, get dirty, die, and are subject to changes day and night. We work like slaves in our own factories. Therefore, we need to be free from making anger and also not to make anything else instead of anger. We need to be free from making things that are sorrowful. Liberation is something that cannot be made. Everything else can be made except the liberation. We experience what we make. We also experience the opposite of what we make. Even if we have made something to enjoy its beauty, it is impossible to see the beauty all the time as its ugliness or distortion has also to be seen. There is nobody who has stopped after having seen the beauty. There is nobody who has stopped after having experienced the happiness. We need to be free from both these things. This need for liberation crops up when the principle with regard to changes, distortions, transformations and vicissitudes are understood more and more.

10. The prison and the prisoner

Dear Dhamma friends. Insight meditation is a journey, which is in search of liberation. What are we going to be free from? It is the liberation from oneself. Nobody has put us in a prison. I am a prisoner inside the prison known as "I". I am not a prisoner of anybody else's prison. If it is the case, we may be able to free ourselves by discussing with that particular person or signing a contract or bribing. As this is an entanglement, it is not possible to do so. I myself am a prisoner in the prison known as "I". The prisoner and the prison are the same. Who are you going to inform of this suffering? There is nobody to inform as nobody has made you to suffer. There is nobody to appeal to or pray for. You are the pilot of yourself. You have created yourself. You have created the suffering and the prison. Who is there to inform. Therefore, nobody is informed here. Instead, one needs to meditate.

Even in meditation, we do not plead for happiness, though an overwhelming happiness is experienced in tranquillity meditation. As a result of happiness experienced by us in tranquillity meditation, we do not feel the hunger or sleepiness or sickness or numbness or aches and pains. However, this

happiness turns into suffering one day. Nobody is there to tell us when it happens. We do not tell about this to anybody. No point in telling another person about this either. However, we need to explore or carry out an experiment or go on a journey in search of the taproot and also with the intension of uprooting it. As stated earlier, liberation is not a product as it cannot be produced. Prisons, fences, parapet walls, padlocks, locks, keys, shackles can be made. Therefore, liberation is not a *sankhāra*. It is not a formation. Simply recognize as to why you are dispossessed of your own liberation. The meditator questions "why am I deprived myself of this liberation"? Nobody can answer or solve this for you. Therefore, we need to go on a journey in search of the reasons for dispossession of our liberation.

11. Stagnated water

Let's take a simple example or two to make this clearer. When it rains, the water from the mountain tops flows along the land to the valleys and plateau, and through the rivers to the sea. This is a natural process. We make artificial irrigation channels. Gutters and drains are constructed around houses to allow water

from the roof, kitchen and bathrooms to flow. Water from the gutters is collected to a common drain. In a housing complex, there are common and private drains. Whether these irrigation channels/gutter/drains are common or private or artificial or natural, the only purpose of them is to take or transport water from the top to the bottom. The responsibility of all these brooks, cannels and rivers is to transport water. These irrigation channels could question about the purpose of transporting water. These brooks, cannels and rivers, gutters and drains might think of keeping a portion of water being transported. You may have seen such brooks, cannels and rivers, which retain some water particularly at bends. Such places that retain water are so dirty, smelly and disgusting. Such places are habitats for worms and flies. Nobody would like such places. However, because of the ego, these brooks, cannels, rivers and drains retain a portion of water, forgetting their prime responsibility. This stagnated water has no use for anybody. Everybody tries to bypass stagnated water. This stagnated water contains germs and also is a fountain of diseases. The drain containing stagnated water starts decaying whether it is made of concrete or iron. It continues to decay. It is difficult to remove the stagnated

water by sweeping as a pit is already made in which water is collected.

12. The person in the dirty drain

Dear Dhamma friends. There are things that we retain in us. See clearly. An individual is a channel of nature. Just think about the breath. All of us have been practising awareness of the breath. In this meditation, the breath comes and goes. On one hand, there is tranquillity. On the other hand, in insight meditation, we become an independent avenue for this breath to come and go, whether we like it or not. The breath keeps on coming and going. Can we retain the breath? Attempting to retain the breath makes you suffer. Letting the breath come and go makes you free. It is the same with what you eat and drink. The nature comes and goes completely through us. Look at sounds. The ears have not retained any sound we have heard. Trying to retain food we eat inside the body causes indigestibility. Afterwards, we need to either throw out or take medicine to defecate. There is no suffering as long as you let whatever that comes leave. You have the freedom. This is a very simple principle. However, we go against this principle. Things that are

retained decay and perish. If one tries to retain things that are decaying, perishing, smelling and getting dirty in the mind, it becomes a fountain of so many inner illnesses. There is no problem if the mind lets the thoughts and memories flow freely. There is no problem no matter what is remembered or heard. The problems crop up when the mind tries to grab things with the intension of retaining them as good or bad. Whether what you grabbed is good or bad, these things start rotting with you. As stated earlier, the dirt in a drain decays with it. Similarly, everything grabbed in the mind rots with us. Therefore, nothing should be retained in the mind, specially the shortcomings of the others.

Dhammapada 50.7

One should not pry into the faults of others. One should rather consider what by oneself is done and left undone

When we think about the shortcomings of the others over and over, we tend to retain part of such thoughts. It is the same when you read newspapers and watch television. We tend to retain information acquired by reading newspapers or watching

television and gathered while walking along the road or talking to somebody or visiting someone's house, a funeral house or a wedding. We bring not only the wedding cake but also some thoughts associated with activities ofthe shortcomings, things done and not done, things said and unsaid. Why do we have to be a rotting drain for these things? This is the question to be asked if we are in search of liberation. "Why do I have to be a rotting drain for the other's shortcomings and weaknesses? Why do I dispossess my freedom to be a dirty drain?" Though many good things flow in the drain, even such things cannot flow beyond the stagnant point. As a result, even the good things start rotting. For instance, if you put some potable water into a dirty drain, the water turns dirty with which even the feet cannot be washed. This is what we have done to our minds. Nobody has done it. Such a mind does not get cleansed no matter how much one listens to the Dhamma or reads the Dhamma books. This is because of retention of the Dhamma in a mind, which looks for shortcomings, weaknesses and faults of the others. This needs a change. One method to change is to splash the mind with a huge column of water. Sometimes, if we would listen to a sermon preached on this subject by the Lord Buddha or a perfected person (Arahant), the dirt could be washed entirely out. However, dirt may get collected when one goes home. We need to change the way we think. Unless we change, no matter how long we sit for meditation or listen to the Dhamma talks or read the Dhamma books, we are still the same prisoner. You are still the same person in the dirty drain collecting dirt, stale things, faults, injustices and lapses of the others and being possessive of these things. We tend to collect these things saying and thinking that this was not the way to do or say or cook etc. As a result, we rot and keep on rotting within these things.

13. Freedom of the sky

Meditation makes you to be like the sky. This is something very important. The sky cannot be constructed. A drain or a ditch can be made. There are white and black clouds, starts, satellites and planets in the sky. Birds fly and airplanes and meteors travel in the sky. The sky does not become beautiful because of any of these. The sky does not get filled by them or emptied without them. None of these can deprive the sky of its freedom. A black cloud cannot make the sky black. A white cloud cannot make the sky white. These things are not possible because **the sky is**

not going to acquire any of these things, neither the black cloud not the white cloud. However, the sky lets these things come and go. The sky possesses such freedom. The sky does not deprive the freedom of anybody. Therefore, the sky enjoys an unlimited freedom. The sky is always clean. The sky is always free because it is always empty. The number of stars in the sky is uncountable. The infinite emptiness, which cannot be filled even by an infinite number of stars, is known as the sky. The stars are not like small particles of sand. We can imagine the size of a star. The Earth is not a star. The Sun is larger than the Earth. There are stars even larger than the Sun. Even the infinite number of huge stars cannot fill the sky. The emptiness of the sky cannot be dispossessed. One turns into a person like the sky through insight meditation.

14. The transformation

How does this transformation take place? It happens when you stop forming things. **Stop building and retaining things** (*visankāra gathan chittan*). Always one keeps on thinking and producing something; good, bad, anger, jealousy, fear, sadness, tears, smile. The wrong thinking is about making something.

Even the person who made these things cannot keep them all along. The person who made things becomes a prisoner inside the same thing. If you produce something, you are no longer a free person. You become a prisoner of what you have produced. Therefore, if you make anger you become a victim of the anger. The person who made the anger dispossesses freedom. You dispossess the freedom because of the anger produced by you. You become a prisoner of the fear made by you. This is something very simple, which does not need photographs to explain. However, we are not attentive about it. We think that we might be able to attain ultimate liberation (nibbāna) one day. It should not be like that. We need to stop making shells as the liberation cannot be built. As stated earlier, the prisons can be built and padlocks, locks, keys, shackles and chains can be made.

There is no need to stop the sounds. Sounds will come and go through the ears. However, if we put shackles on the sounds, judging them as good or bad and beautiful or ugly, the listener gets shackled. You do not suffer from any scolding, if you do not grasp it. If you start paying attention to the scolding, you become a prisoner of that scolding. Any thoughts or past memories may come and go. There is no

problem, even if these memories are associated with the distant past. No memory can make you impatient. However, we gasp these memories and make prison cells, which we thought of being good or beautiful. As a result, a sufferer can be born in every memory and thought. This is the challenge. That is the reason for needing very sharp mindfulness. This sharp mindfulness is needed for not becoming a prisoner from one experience to another, from one thought to another, from one sound to another and from one form $(r\bar{u}pa)$ to another. It is needed for not becoming a prisoner who gasps things or shackles him/herself due to clinging and aversion. It is important to understand that we suffer not only due to clinging but also due to aversion. We are stopped as a result of clinging and aversion. Both wanting and rejecting are formations (sankhāra), which make us prisoners. The sky does not do it but the drain. The drain retains certain things and lets certain other things flow. As the sky does not need anything, it is free. At any moment when you are out of needs, you can be as free as the sky. One does not have to grind teeth and do something in order to be free. We hear. Do we need to listen? That need is not there. Don't we need to listen? That need is also not there. It is the craving that says there is no need. The

craving makes both clinging and aversion. You remember something. Are you trying to forget? No. Are you trying to live in that memory? No. Just be like the sky. It is possible to be like the sky. Try to be like the sky, not like the dirty drain. Let things come and go as you let the in-breath and out-breath come and go in tranquillity meditation. At that moment, you are free. You need to apply that expertise and cleverness to the other experiences as well. At that point, you can witness the freedom. The world; hearing, seeing, feeling, remembering etc., is still there. However, there is no prisoner in any memory or any sound. There is no sufferer. It is only hearing and no suffering. It is only remembering and there is no shackled prisoner. Meditate for that journey. Engage in insight meditation over and over for that journey towards freedom.

May the Triple Gem Bless You!!!