

The Prison of Life

(from a lecture given to foreign meditators on
10 February 2531 (1988) at Suan Mokkhabalarama.)

Today, we'll talk about the thing called "prison." This should help us to understand the thing called "life" better. Then, we'll know Dhamma better, which will help us to live life without dukkha (dissatisfaction, pain, stress, suffering). So today we'll talk about the thing called "prison." Please prepare your minds to listen carefully.

Wherever the conditions and signs of prison exist, right there is dukkha. You should observe that all the forms and types of dukkha have a quality of prison about them. Being captured, incarcerated, enchained, and put through difficulties and hassles, are characteristics of dukkha. If you understand this, then you will understand more clearly the meaning of what we call "*upadana*" (clinging, attachment). Wherever there is *upadana*, right there is a prison. This thing "*upadana*" itself brings about the conditions of imprisonment.

Wherever there is *upadana*, right there is bondage. The bondage may be positive or negative; both are equally binding. By regarding things and clinging to them as "I" or "mine," bondage occurs. When bound to something, we get stuck in it, just like being stuck in prison.

All of the Dhamma principles of Buddhism can be summarized: *upadana* is the cause of dukkha; dukkha is born out of *upadana*. We all must understand this matter of *upadana* well. To make it easy to understand, we must see it clearly as being just like a prison -- a mental prison, a spiritual prison. We come to study Dhamma and develop *samadhi* (mental stability and calm) and *vipassana* (insight) in order to destroy *upadana*. Or, if we speak metaphorically, we study Dhamma and develop the mind in order to destroy the prison that now traps us.

We're speaking about a mental or spiritual prison, but it has the same meaning as a concrete prison. It's just like the physical prisons that people are caught in everywhere, but now we're speaking of a purely spiritual prison. This prison's a bit odd, or extraordinary, in that we can't see its substance with our eyes. What's even more extraordinary is that people volunteer to get locked up in this prison. People are actually delighted to go and get locked up in spiritual prison. This is a very queer aspect of the spiritual prison.

Freedom is Salvation from Prison

You must recall the words "salvation" or "liberation" that are used in all religions. The final goal of all religions is salvation, or emancipation, or whatever word is most suitable in each language. But all these words have the same meaning -- getting saved. All religions teach salvation. Yet, from what are we saved? We are saved from spiritual prison. The thing that all of you want and need even right at this moment is the thing called "freedom" or "liberty," which is, simply, escape from prison. Whether a physical, material prison or a mental, spiritual prison, the meaning is the same. In all cases, we want freedom.

Those who lack wisdom can see and fear only the physical, material prisons. But those who have the wisdom (*pañña*) to look more deeply will see how much more terrifying and dangerous the spiritual prison is. Really, we can see that hardly anybody is locked up in the ordinary jails, while everyone in the world is caught in the spiritual prison. For instance, every one of you sitting here is free of the ordinary prison, but you all are incarcerated in the spiritual prison. That which drives us to be interested in Dhamma, to come to study Dhamma, to practice mental development, is the oppression and force of being caught in this spiritual prison. Whether you feel it or not isn't important. It forces us, no matter what, to struggle and search for a way out of spiritual imprisonment. Nonetheless, it's forcing all of you, whether you realize it or not, to find spiritual freedom. So you come looking here and other such places.

Although that which imprisons us is only one thing, namely, *upadana* all by itself, this prison takes on many different forms. There are dozens of styles and kinds of prison. If we take the time to study every type of prison, it will help us to understand this phenomenon much better. Then we will understand *upadana* better, and we also will better understand *tanha* (craving) and *kilesa* (defilements of mind) which, according to the Buddhist teaching, cause *dukkha*. We will understand the issue of *dukkha* if we understand the issue of prison clearly and thoroughly.

I'd like to advise that you use this word "*upadana*" instead of "attachment" or any other English translation. Those English words are constantly being misunderstood. You may not understand it fully at this time, but try to use this word *upadana* to accustom your mouth, your mind, and your feelings to it.

We must realize that the heart of Buddhism is to wipe out *upadana*. The heart of Buddhism is that which gets rid of *upadana*, or cut it out. Then there is no prison, and then there is no *dukkha*.

You must take the meaning of the English words attachment, grasping, and clinging, then combine them to get the meaning of "*upadana*." It's better for us to use the word *upadana*. Its meaning is broader and it will enable us to look into this matter more deeply and extensively.

The Single Essence of Buddhism

It may be just one simple word, but *upadana* is the most important thing. The heart of Buddhism is just to uproot or cut out this *upadana*. Then *dukkha* will be finished. Please understand that this is the heart of all Buddhism, it is found in every sect and school. Theravada Buddhism, Mahayana Buddhism, Zen Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, whatever kind of Buddhism you like, they're different only in name or in the external ceremonies and practices. But inside it's all the same thing: the cutting off of *upadana*.

Don't be sad, don't be disappointed or anxious, don't make trouble for yourself thinking that you haven't been able to study all the schools of Buddhism. Don't worry if you haven't been able to study Buddhism in Tibet, in Sri Lanka, in Burma, in China, or anywhere. That's a waste of time. There is just a single essence or heart of it all, namely, to eliminate *upadana*. The labels Theravada, Mahayana, Zen, Tibetan, and Chinese reflect only the outer covers of what seems to be different kinds of Buddhism. If there are any differences they are merely surface or superficial ones, just a bunch of accumulated rites and rituals. The true heart of the matter, the heart of all Buddhism, is the same everywhere: the uprooting and cutting out of *upadana*.

So just study this one thing. Don't waste time being sad or thinking that you haven't studied all the different kinds of Buddhism. Study this single matter of the cutting off of *upadana*, that is enough.

If you really want to know Mahayana Buddhism like an expert, then you'll have to go and learn Sanskrit. You can spend almost your entire life trying to learn Sanskrit and still not really know anything. Or if you want to know Zen well, then you have to learn Chinese. Spend your whole life learning Chinese and in the end you still won't know Zen. To know Vajrayana, the Buddhism of Tibet, you'll have to learn Tibetan. Just learning the languages will cost almost your whole life, yet you won't really have learned anything.

You still haven't gotten into the heart of Buddhism. These are just superficialities conjured up as new developments. Understand the heart of it all and learn just this one thing: the cutting off of *upadana*. Then you'll know the essence of Buddhism, whether it is labeled Mahayana, Theravada, Zen, or Vajrayana. Whether its from China, Japan, Korea, or anywhere else, it's all in one place: cutting out *upadana*.

Even in the single school of Theravada Buddhism there are many different forms. There are many different ways of mental cultivation, too. There's the kind of meditation from Burma, where they watch the rising and falling of the abdomen. There are the kinds based on the mantras "Samma Araham" and "Buddho, Buddho," as well as all other kinds of different things. But if it's correct, the heart of each is always in exactly the same place: the need to eradicate *upadana*. If it hasn't gotten to the elimination of *upadana*, it isn't the real thing yet. And it won't be of any use or benefit, either.

Why not be interested in the matter of cutting off *upadana*, or, if we speak metaphorically, destroying the prison? So it's best if we speak about this prison.

Discover It Inside

To speak most correctly, we really can't learn from scriptures, from techniques, or from those various teachings if we are to be truly successful. To successfully reap any real benefits, we must learn in the thing itself, namely, the actual prison. Study the actual *dukkha* in itself, that prison itself. So we'd better look for and find this prison.

At this point, we are confronted by two choices: are you going to learn from the outside or are you going to learn from the inside? The distinction is crucial. The Buddha said that we must study from inside. The external learning is from books, ceremonies, practices, and things like that. Everything that we must learn, the Tathagata has explained in terms of the body which is still alive. That means a living body, with a living mind, not a dead one. That's where real learning takes place, so learn there. Learn from that inside, which means learn within yourself while still alive, before you die. External studies, learning from books and all those different ceremonies and rituals, hasn't really accomplished anything of value. So let's study inside. Please remember these words "learn inside."

Training in *samadhi* and *vipassana* (concentration and insight), that is, [developing mindfulness with breathing \(anapanasati-bhavana\)](#) as we have been doing here, is this learning inside. To do this inner study takes a fairly good amount of patience and endurance, but not too much. Actually, in comparison with some of the things other people are practicing, such as high level sports, gymnastics, and acrobatics, training in *samadhi* and *vipassana* is less difficult. Yet people have enough endurance and perseverance to be able to do such things. Just have moderate endurance and we will be able to train with *samadhi* and *vipassana*, through mindfulness with breathing. Some people can't take it, and have run away already. We have had enough endurance to get this far, and if we continue a bit more, then we'll be able to do it and we'll receive the proper benefits. So, please, apply yourself to this inner study and do so with sufficient patience and endurance.

Life Itself Is Prison

Using metaphors makes it easier for us to understand the matter we're discussing. So we will make use of them here today. The first prison which you must look for and see is life itself. If you look on life as a prison, and see the prison that it is, then we must say that you know the truth of nature quite well. Most people, however, look on life as something enjoyable, as an opportunity to have fun. They are willing to live for the enjoyment of life. They then become infatuated with and engrossed in life, which is what turns it into prison.

If we see life as a prison, then we must have seen the *upadana* in this life. If we haven't seen the *upadana* in life, we won't see that life is a prison and we'll be content to think that this life is heaven instead. This is because there are so many things in life that satisfy us, that trick us and engross us; however, in anything that we find satisfying, agreeable, attractive, and infatuating there will be *upadana* as well. That thing becomes a prison. However much we love something, it becomes at least that much a prison because of *upadana*. This is a positive kind of *upadana*. As soon as we hate something, or dislike something, that becomes a negative kind of *upadana*, which is a prison just the same. To be beguiled and misled, either by the positive or by the negative, is a prison both ways. And that prison turns life into *dukkha*.

In addition, one will be able to see that when there is *upadana* in life, then life becomes a prison. And so, when there is no *upadana*, then life is not a prison at all. You can see this right now, here, whether or not there is *upadana* in your life? "Is my life a prison or not? Am I living in a prison of *upadana*, or not?" Each of you must look very carefully into your own hearts and see absolutely clearly whether life is a prison for you or not. Have you got a prison or not? Are you living in a prison or not? Otherwise, why are we coming here to meditate, to cultivate the mind? In essence, the true goal and purpose of mental development is the destruction of our prisons. Whether your studies and practice are successful, whether you can destroy the prison or not, is another question. Nonetheless, our real aim and purpose is to destroy the prison of life.

Consider this carefully. If we don't recognize *upadana*, we are caught in prison without even

recognizing the prison. We are trapped in prison without knowing the prison at all. What's more, we are satisfied and infatuated with that prison, just as we are infatuated and satisfied with life. Because we are infatuated and satisfied in life, we get caught in the prison of life. What are we going to do that it won't be a prison? This is the question that we must answer most carefully and correctly.

How are we to live so that life is not a prison? This means that ordinarily, or naturally, life is not a prison, that we only make it into a prison through *upadana*. Because of our own ignorance, our own stupidity, our own lack of correct understanding, we have *upadana* in life. Life then becomes a prison for us. In Thai we have a phrase which is both crude and critical, "*som nam naa man*," which means something like, "it serves you right." Life isn't a prison or any such thing, but through our own stupidity we make *upadana* with ignorance (*avijja*) and then there's the prison. What can we say but "*som nam naa man*, it serves you right."

If you are successful in practicing *anapanasati-bhavana* (mindfulness with breathing mind cultivation), you will understand life well. You will know *upadana* well and you won't have any *upadana* in this thing called "life." Then any prison that is happening dissolves and disappears, and new prisons don't occur. This kind of life has the most value, but who gets it or does not get it is another matter. Please try to understand these facts as you ought to. This will motivate you to apply yourselves with energy and patience to be able to destroy the prison.

One way to look at these facts is to observe that life must carry on according to the law of nature; or that we ourselves must carry on in line with natural law. We must search for food, must exercise, must rest and relax, must work to maintain and support our lives: we must do these and all the other things that you know so well. Not to do them is impossible. We're forced to do them. This is a prison, too. The fact that we must always follow the law of nature is a kind of prison. How are we going to break out of this particular prison?

Why have we gotten caught in the prison of having to live subject to the law of nature? This prison comes from our *upadana* regarding ourselves, or regarding our lives. When there is *upadana* toward ourselves, then "I," the self is born. This "I" is anxious about, it worries over, it is frightened and afraid of, these natural duties, and so is made miserable by them. These difficulties come from *upadana*. If we had no *upadana* regarding "I," then these necessary duties would not be like a prison. We would be able to hunt for our needs, earn a living, and exercise and care for the body, without being miserable, if we didn't have any *upadana* toward life. This is very subtle; it's a mystery for most people. This is the subtlety of natural truth. How are we going to live so that there's no dukkha connected with the fact that everything in this life must be performed in line with the law of nature?

The Instincts Are Prison

The next prison to consider is that we live under the influence of the instincts. We are under the instincts' power. All living things, whether people, animals, or plants, have instincts. These instincts constantly force us to follow their concerns and needs. This is especially true for the sexual or reproductive instinct. How much does it control, hassle, activate, and complicate us? Sexual feelings and reproductive urges squeeze us, oppress us, disturb us so profoundly; they force us through all kinds of difficulties. But we can't stop. Sometimes we prefer it this way. Our children grow and mature to the stage where the sexual instinct ripens completely and then the child is caught in the prison of this sexual instinct.

Finally, even the instinct of showing off can run our lives. Many people wouldn't think of this as an instinct, but all animals have it. The need to show off, to brag, to display oneself is an instinct. Even animals have the condition of wanting to show off that they are beautiful, or strong, or agile, or whatever. Even this craziest, most ridiculous instinct is a prison. We want to show off and boast. If it wasn't a prison, it wouldn't force and oppress us in the least. Now, however, it forces us to buy beautiful clothing, beautiful jewelry, beautiful shoes even, and lots of them, too!

Why must we have many beautiful shirts and many pairs of beautiful shoes? Why do we need them all? (And forgive me, we must mention the women in particular here.) There is this instinct to show off and it is one kind of prison. Because people can't endure it, they are forced to follow this instinct, spending all kinds of money on all kinds of things. The instinct to show off is the funniest, most ridiculous of them all. Still it truly is a prison. People never have enough money because of this prison. Please consider and reflect carefully about these examples of instincts which we have raised.

They are prisons too.

If we think about this, if we make an account of all our expenses, we'll discover that some people spend more money on clothing, jewelry, and keeping themselves always beautiful than they spend on food. Further, they insist on decorating and prettying up their houses, which piles up their expenses. Taken together, the two are more than they spend on food, which is necessary for life. We put more money into things which are unnecessary in life than we put into the necessities of life, like food. This is one more way of getting caught in the instinctual prison.

The Senses Are Prison

Next, we come to the most amusing prison, the prison that's closest to us. There are these eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind: the six *ayatana*, the six sense media or bases. They are prisons, too. Take a slow, careful look at them. Listen carefully in order to understand how our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind -- all six of them -- become prisons.

In Pali we call them the *ayatana*. The root of this word literally means "tools or means for communicating with the external world" -- places, mechanisms, means, or whatever, for contacting or communicating with the external world. We call them "*ayatana*." If you're willing, use this Pali word "*ayatana*." We aren't sure what to call them in English, maybe "sense media" or "connectors." All six *ayatana* are prisons.

We have *upadana* towards life, regarding ourselves, which has these six media for sensing, for experiencing, for communicating, or for tasting and receiving sense objects. When there's *upadana* regarding these six *ayatana*, we serve them and become their slaves. We serve the eyes to gratify the eyes. We serve the ears to gratify the ears. We serve the nose to satisfy the nose. We serve the tongue to satiate the tongue. We serve the skin and general body sense to make it comfortable. We serve the mind, the mental sense, in order to soothe and comfort it. This means that all our behavior is just for entertaining these *ayatana*. Everything we do is for the sake of these six *ayatana*. We surrender to them and become their slaves. Then, they squeeze and control us, there's no avoiding them. We call this "getting caught in the prison of the *ayatana*."

Consider whether there is anyone, whether there are any of you, who is not slavishly serving these six *ayatana*. And you serve them willingly, don't you? You endure hardships and bend over backwards in order to serve them, always looking for ways to make the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind comfortable and happy, in the most bound up way. So we must admit that we are slaves. Those people who lack wisdom will certainly be slaves of the *ayatana*, will keep getting caught in the prison of *ayatana*. Through the correct and successful practice of mindfulness with breathing, we can escape from the prison. If we practice anapanasati incorrectly and incompletely, we will remain caught in the *ayatana* prison for who knows how long.

Superstition Is Prison

For the next prison, we want to mention being deceived by the thing known as "*saiyasatr*". All the superstitious formalities and beliefs are *saiyasatr*. The more ignorance there is, the more one lacks correct knowledge, then the more trapped one is in superstitious prisons. Now, education and science (*vidayasatr*) have improved, which has led to a better understanding of natural truths, and of all things. Still, there remains too much entrapment in superstitious prisons. It's a personal thing. Some people are caught very much and others not so much. People are caught in different degrees and ways, but we can say that there are still people caught in the prison of *saiyasatr*, trapped by superstition.

Although in general superstition has diminished greatly due to the progress of science, there is still quite a bit of *saiyasatr* left in the temples and churches. Please forgive us for saying so, but the place we can find superstition the most is in churches, in the temples, and in those kinds of places. Although superstition has lessened in general, there's a lot remaining in such places. Wherever there are altars, wherever people bow down and worship so-called sacred and holy things, there is the place where the "science of the sleeper" persists. Superstition, *saiyasatr*, is for people who are asleep. It's for those who don't understand correctly, who are ignorant. We are taught these things as children, before we have the intelligence and ability to reason about them. Children believe whatever

they're told, and so "adults" teach them many superstitious things. If you still feel that thirteen is an unlucky number, that's *saiyasatr*. You're still sleeping. There are many other examples of superstition, but we'd better not name them. Some people might get offended. These kinds of things are prisons. Why not look carefully enough to see them as such. Even the number "13" becomes a prison when we're foolish.

Sacred Institutions Are Prisons

We should continue with those institutions or establishments which are holy and sacred, or are famous and celebrated; or those that are rumored to be so elite and prestigious that anyone who becomes a member of one is prestigious, too. There are a number of such places and institutions around. As soon as someone registers as a member of that association or this organization, that institute or this establishment, they start to get ideas and feelings about it. They feel that "we're better than them" or "we're the ones who are right and the rest are stupid." They grasp and cling without the least bit of consideration or critical thinking. In this way, that institution, even that church -- we can't avoid saying so -- becomes a prison. So we beg of you, don't think that Suan Mokkh is some holy or miraculous institution, otherwise Suan Mokkh will become a prison. Please don't turn Suan Mokkh into your prison. You ought to think freely, examine carefully, evaluate critically. Understand and believe only what is genuinely beneficial. Don't get imprisoned in any of those prestigious or famous institutions.

Teachers Are Prison

Now we come to the prison called "ajahn" (teacher, master, guru), the famous teachers whose names reverberate afar. In Burma there's "Sayadaw This," in Sri Lanka there's "Bhante That," in Tibet there's "Lama So- and -so," in China there's "Master Whoever." Every place has its famous teacher whose name is bouncing around. Whether national, regional, provincial, or local, every place has got its Big Guru. Then people cling and attach to their teachers as being the only teacher who is correct; their teacher is right and all other teachers are completely wrong. They refuse to listen to other people's teachers. And they don't think about or examine the teachings of their own Ajahns. They get caught in the "Teacher Prison." They turn the teacher into a prison, then get caught in it. It's an attachment which is truly ridiculous. Whether a big teacher or a small teacher, it's *upadana* just the same. They keep building prisons out of their teachers and gurus. Please don't get caught in even this prison.

Holy Things Are Prison

The next prison is that of holy scriptures, which we can find everywhere. Among those people where there isn't much wisdom, these things are much clung to, and the more so as being "holy." They even become stand-ins or replacements for God. It's as if merely bringing in the holy books is the same as actually getting help. It leads to there being many kinds of holy objects: sacred relics, holy water, and all kinds of sacred things. Be most careful of this word "holy." It will become a prison before you know it. The more holy something is, the more greatly it imprisons. Watch out for so-called "sacredness" or "holiness."

You ought to know that there is nothing more sacred than the Law of *Idappaccayata* (the law of conditionality), the supreme holiness higher than all things. Everything else is holy by convention or by what people concoct themselves, which is holy through *upadana*. Wherever there is holiness through *upadana*, that holiness is a prison. The Law of *Idappaccayata* is sacred in itself, without needing any attachment. There's no need for *upadana*. It controls everything already and is truly holy all by itself. Please don't get caught in the prison of holy things. Don't make sacred things into a prison for yourself.

Goodness Is Prison

A further prison is one that is very important, one that causes all sorts of problems. This prison is what they call "goodness." Everyone likes the "good" and they all teach each other to do good. Then they worship what they call "good." But as soon as there is *upadana* mixed in with what they call good, that good becomes a prison. You ought to have good, have goodness, without having *upadana*. Then good won't be prison. If there's *upadana* it becomes prison. Like we say, they go crazy about

good, they get drunk on good, they get lost in good, until it turns into a problem. So be extremely careful not to make goodness into a prison. But there's nothing we can do to help now, everyone is caught in the prison of goodness -- blindly, obliviously, trapped in the prison of good.

If you are a Christian, we request that you think and ponder much about the teaching in the book of Genesis, where God forbids Adam and Eve to eat the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Don't go and eat it, or it will lead to knowing how to discriminate between good and evil. Then it attaches with *upadana* toward that good and evil. And then good and evil become prisons. This teaching is very profound and good, most intelligent and wise, but nobody seems to understand it. People don't show much interest in it and thus can't be correct Christians. If they were proper Christians they would not cling with *upadana* to good and evil. We must not make either good or evil into prisons. This means not getting caught in the prison of goodness.

We swallowed that fruit and came to know good and evil, then got caught and stuck in all the good and evil. We have had continual problems ever since, that's how it came to be called "original sin," or sometimes "perpetual sin." It became the original prison, a perpetual prison. Please beware: be careful not to get caught in this original prison, this perpetual prison. Don't ever let yourself get caught in this prison.

With being imprisoned in goodness, or the good, as soon as one gets caught it carries on further all the way to the highest good, to supreme goodness. Then the supreme goodness will become that supreme prison. If it develops this way, then God will become the supreme prison. May you understand and remember that *upadana* builds prisons in this way.

Views Are Prison

The next prison is our own *ditthi*. The Pali word *ditthi* is difficult to translate. Knowledge, thoughts, ideas, theories, opinions, beliefs, understanding -- all these are *ditthi*. *Ditthi* means all our personal thoughts, opinions, theories, and beliefs. It isn't just certain opinions and little beliefs, it's all of them, all views. Everything with which we view experience is called *ditthi*. We are caught in a prison of our own views. We don't obey anyone except our personal *ditthi*. This is a most terrifying prison, because we impetuously, rashly, hastily sail along according to our own personal views. We turn our backs on and lose out to the things that ought to benefit us, because our minds are closed to everything but our own ideas, beliefs, and views. Thus, these views become a horrible prison that holds us and locks us into just one way of understanding. Beware of the prison of one's own *ditthi*.

Purity is the Highest Prison

Next we come to a prison which is really strange and marvelous; you could call it the "highest prison." The highest prison is what they call "innocence" or "purity." It's difficult to understand exactly what they mean by these words. We hear all kinds of talk about innocence and purity, but people never seem to know what they're talking about. This purity is clung to and attached to, is regarded as this and that, is worshipped, is used for show and competition, is for boasting all over how pure "I am." But if there's *upadana* it's all just purity through *upadana*, not genuine purity. There are many forms of purity that are assumed out of clinging, such as, needing to take baths; making incantations; being anointed, sprinkled, or doused with who knows what; or any of the myriad rituals and ceremonies done for "purity." This purity is pure *upadana*, and purity through attachment is a prison. Please don't get lost and end up in the prison named "purity."

It's something pitiful to see. Clinging to self so much, then attaching to purity just as much, some religious creeds even go so far as to teach some perpetual purity as some eternal soul dwelling in some eternity, or some such thing. The whole thing comes from grasping and clinging to purity through *upadana* until one is caught in an eternal prison. It just ends up an eternal prison.

Voidness is Not Prison

May we tell you that this is the last one, the final prison. Escape from the prison of highest purity, break out of the purest prison, into the voidness free of soul and self. Not having any self, living free from self, voidness of self -- of any sense of self, void of all ideas and notions about self -- is true purity. Any purity which is truly eternal cannot be a prison in any respect, unless people

misunderstand and cling to it as some self or soul, in which case it becomes a prison again. Let go unequivocally, be absolutely free of self -- that is real purity. It's no prison. Voidness is the purity which isn't a prison.

So it is that the real prison, the collection of all these prisons that we have mentioned, is the thing they call "*atta*" (in Pali), "self," or "soul." Oneself is the prison. This self here is the prison. Every kind of prison is included in, comes down to the words "oneself" or "myself." Clinging to self as self, and then as belonging to self, attaching to "I" and "mine," this is the true prison, the heart and soul of all prisons. All prisons are gathered in the word "*atta*." Tear out the foolishness that creates *atta*, along with *atta* itself, and all the prisons will be gone. If you practice *anapanasati* (mindfulness with breathing in and out) correctly until truly successful in it -- real, not imagined success -- you will destroy all the prisons completely. That is, destroy *atta*, then all the prisons are finished and we won't build any more of them ever again. May you all experience success in destroying the prisons, that is, *atta* or self.

The purpose of *anapanasati* is to remove all vestiges of *upadana* regarding self. The complete removal of attachment toward self is the final and perfect quenching of *dukkha*, which happens to be the meaning of liberation, of salvation. The highest goal of every religion is salvation, the value and benefits of which are beyond words. So please try. *Anapanasati*, when practiced correctly, leads to this liberation from *atta*. I have been trying my best and I am willing to do whatever I can to help everyone understand *anapanasati* and practice it successfully, in order that all of us can escape from all aspects of humanity's prison.