

*seen
in their
true
light*

Ajahn Jayasaro

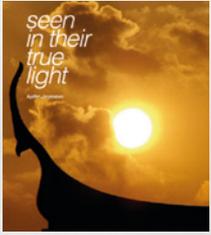


A vibrant rainbow arches across a dark, stormy sky, casting a soft glow over a lush green forest below. The scene is captured from a low angle, emphasizing the height of the rainbow and the density of the trees. The overall mood is serene yet powerful, capturing a moment of natural beauty amidst a dramatic weather system.

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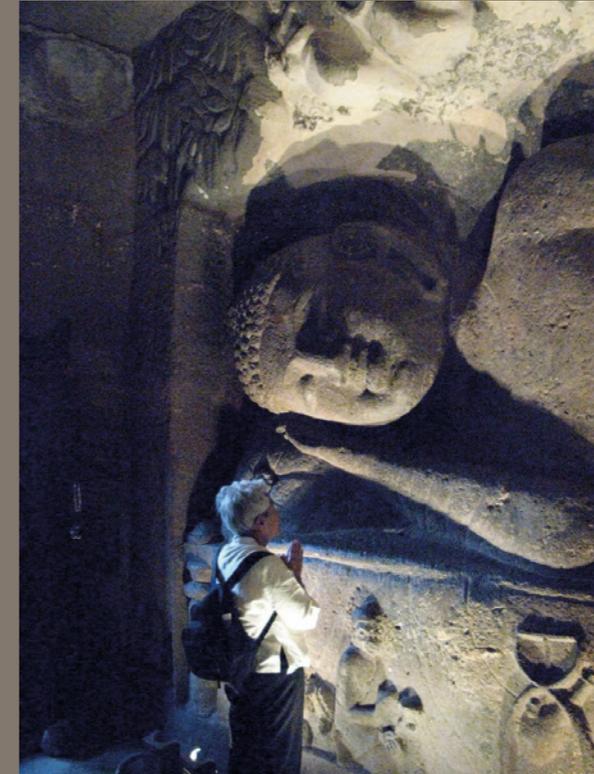
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namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa



irrigators lead water
fletchers fashion shafts
carpenters bend wood
the wise tame themselves

Dhammapada v.80



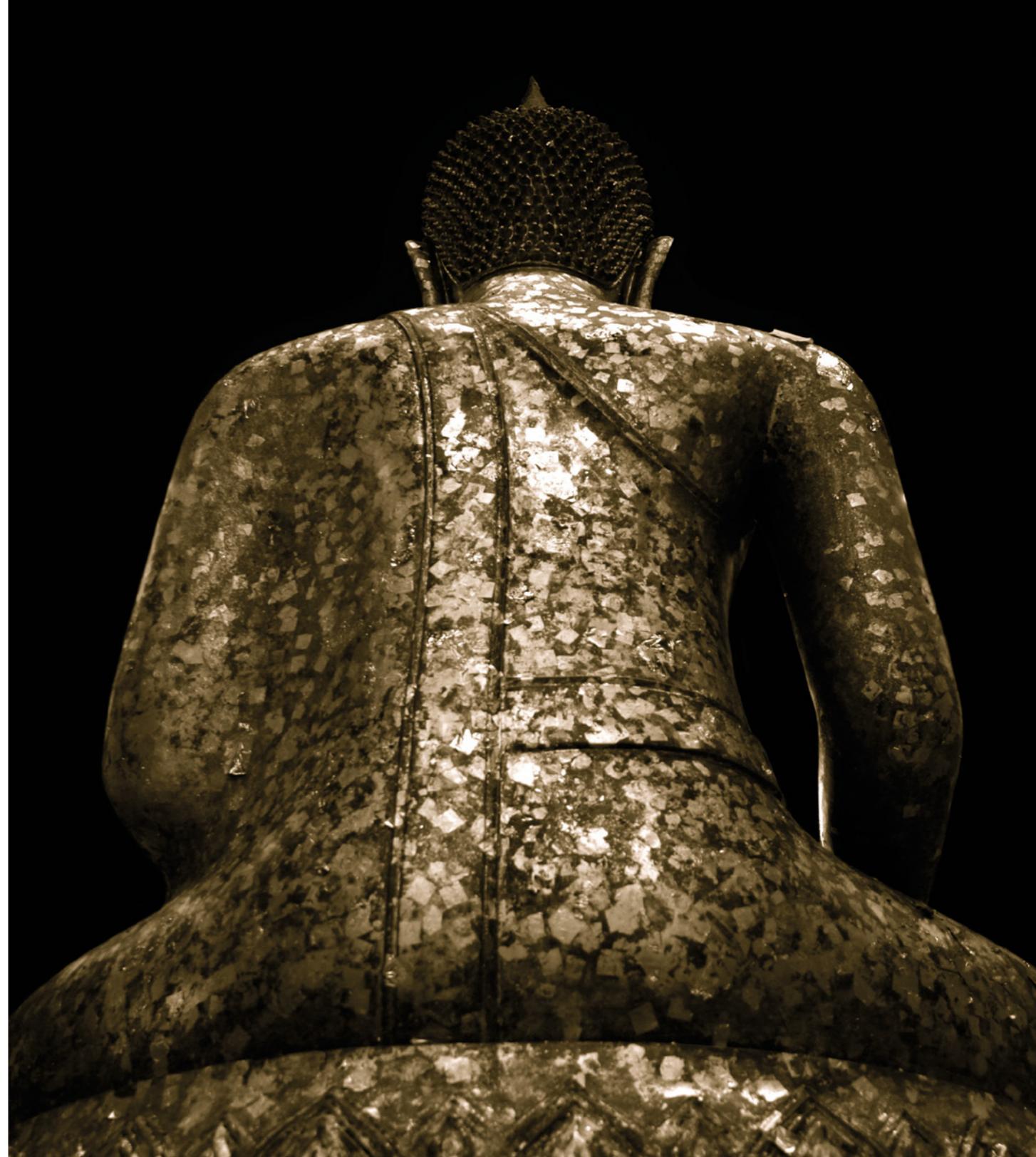
Foreword

Although never a photographer myself, I have always been fond of photography. Last year I decided to produce a Dhamma book that would be of interest to the many people in Thailand who do not usually read Dhamma books. It would be a book of photographs. I asked for photos on any subject at all from my students and through them their families and friends. In all I received some three or four thousand images, which I whittled down to a few hundred of my favourites. And then I began to impose a narrative on the material. I chose as my subject the path to liberation. The demands of metre can affect the content of a poem, bringing forth phrases from the poet's mind that might otherwise have remained unformed. Similarly, In seeking to present the Buddha's teachings within the framework provided by a random set of photographs I have found new ways of expressing myself. I hope my readers will enjoy the experiment as much as I have.

In Thailand, performing an act of goodness without hope of reward or recognition is compared to attaching gold leaf to the unseen back of a Buddha image. I would like to express my deep appreciation of all those who have attached gold leaf to this project.

The book before you is an English version of the Thai original. It is not an exact rendering of the original, more a non-identical twin.

Ajahn Jayasaro
Janamara Hermitage
March 2012



life's not an easy thing
it's no smooth run
sometimes it weighs us down
so much
life taxes us
with more than we'd choose
life's unstable
always perhaps
and ever flowing
flowing through our fingers
life's like a dream it's true
and a short dream
such a very
short
dream





and then
one day
one lifetime
you wake up
you ask yourself
this
all of this
why?
for what?



the world is hot
said the Buddha
hot and burning
with the fires of greed
the fires of aversion
the fires of delusion
and human beings
longing for coolness
stoke those fires
again and again
and again

the furniture may be exquisite
and the bars of solid gold
but once the bird realizes
that the cage is a cage
it finds within that cage
no joy

what is goodness?
what is evil?
how can you decide?
what cleanses the mind?
by what is it defiled?
and how can you know?
what is happiness?
what is suffering?
and what is
or is there
an ultimate joy?

know that in the beginning
it is not the answers that matter
but the asking





the Buddha revealed that
true happiness is a result
it is the fruit of understanding
the way things are
this understanding too is a result
the fruit of an education
of conduct speech and mind

the Buddha did not demand or entreat us
to believe his words
but challenged us
to put them to the test of our experience

feeling the great compassion of the Buddha
fills us with radiance and warmth

awakening to the knowledge that
it is our human capacity to learn
our need to learn
that makes us sublime
is the turning point
in our wanderings
through samsara
developing the path of practice
we give meaning to our life
and ground





drifting along with the current
is not providence
it's not fate
there is no external compulsion

by diligence vigilance
restraint and self-mastery
let the wise one make for himself an island
that no flood can overwhelm

Dhammapada v.25





the door is without a lock
but no one can open it for us
so open the door
and having opened it
find the courage
to walk right through

the Buddha is the knower of all worlds
there is no danger
no cause of suffering
that the Buddha does not reveal to us
no virtuous practice we need to cultivate
that the Buddha does not explain

not once
in vision or in conduct
has the Buddha been at fault
he is the supreme teacher
of human and heavenly beings
he is perfect in wisdom and compassion

when we recollect the virtues of the Buddha
nourished by gratitude
our mind grows bright clear and strong





in our practice
we go to the Buddha as our refuge
by cultivating within us
the Buddha virtues
of knowing wakefulness and ease





the Dhamma:
teachings that give knowledge and understanding
of the progress and decline of the human heart
the true nature of our life
and the world around us
the Dhamma is a map
for our journey to liberation

when we recollect the virtues of the Dhamma
nourished by gratitude
our mind grows bright clear and strong



in our practice
we go to the Dhamma as our refuge
guiding our life by the light of the teachings
not forgetting the Dhamma
not turning our back on the Dhamma
dwelling undeluded by the world

the Sangha:
the community of well-practised ones
those who have realised
upheld
transmitted the Dhamma
witnesses to the efficacy of the teachings
they prove that all human beings
male and female
can realise the Dhamma
and should try to

when we recollect the Sangha
nourished by gratitude
our mind grows bright clear and strong





in our practice
we go to the Sangha as refuge
by making the effort to practise well
by following in the footsteps of the noble ones
by abandoning the unwholesome
cultivating the wholesome
and purifying the mind



in the beginning the way ahead is indistinct
we doubt and hesitate
but faith sustains us
confidence that nothing but freedom from defilement
can answer the deepest needs of the human heart
and that this ultimate freedom truly can be ours
through wise effort



do not allow the Dhamma
that you practise
to be compromised
or constrained
by desires and opinions
the sages say
but with devotion
and humility
incline your heart
towards the Dhamma
in its entirety



suffering
should be understood

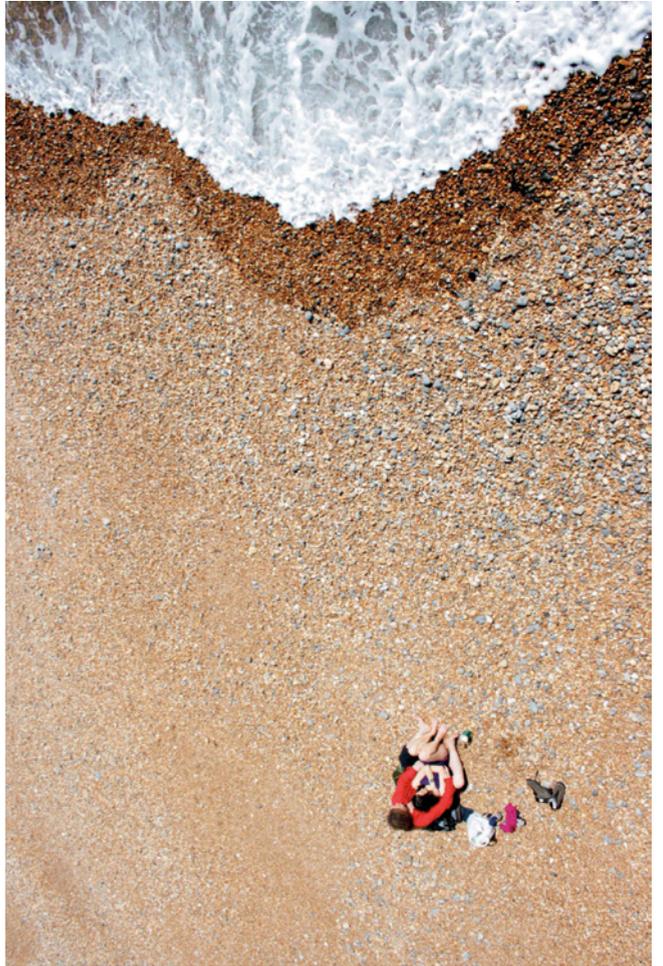
all this movement
it feels as if there should be
some kind of destination
but we don't know where
all these problems
it seems as if there should be
some kind of resolution
but we don't know how
because we don't know
it goes on and on
because we don't know
there is no conclusion





separated from things we like
exposed to things we dislike
not getting the things we want
how frustrated we feel
how constricted





sometimes we get the things we want
but grasping onto them tightly
the tides of impermanence
appear like an enemy
threatening

a mask seems easy to discard
but it's harder than we think
and gets harder
and harder

a child's life is not easy
living in a world it does not understand
and cannot control
those meant to provide safety stability love
sometimes abuse their trust
or neglect it
so many possible causes
of a small child's tears





and now
not quite so lovely
how short-lived
that bloom
proved to be

the value of a life:
can it be measured
by the body's charms?
the wise know
it cannot



‘This body has many pains, many drawbacks.
In this body many kinds of disease arise, such as:
seeing-diseases, hearing-diseases, nose-diseases, tongue-diseases,
body-diseases, head-diseases, ear-diseases, mouth-diseases,
teeth-diseases,
cough, asthma, catarrh, fever, aging, stomach-ache, fainting, dysentery,
grippe, cholera, leprosy,
boils, ringworm, tuberculosis, epilepsy, skin-disease, itch, scab, psoriasis,
scabies, jaundice, diabetes, hemorrhoids, fistulas, ulcers;
diseases arising from bile, from phlegm, from the wind-property,
from combinations of bodily humors,
from changes in the weather,
from uneven care of the body,
from attacks,
from the result of kamma;
cold, heat, hunger, thirst,
defecation, urination.’

Girimananda Sutta

old age
ripe for wisdom ►
rife with pain





a lonely place
no strength to go
nowhere to go
young you didn't think it'd come to this
didn't like to think
used to be so strong and healthy
used to ...



neither in the sky nor in mid-ocean
nor in the clefts of rocks
nowhere in the world is a place to be found
where abiding one may escape from death

Dhammapada v. 128

neither in the sky nor in mid-ocean
nor in the clefts of rocks
nowhere in the world is a place to be found
where abiding one may escape from
(the consequences of) an evil deed

Dhammapada v. 127



let's be blunt
all the people ever born
form just two groups:
those who have died already
and those that are going to die
no one denies that one day they too will die
but deep down we think
yes but not yet
not today
and so many people believe that
on the very day they die

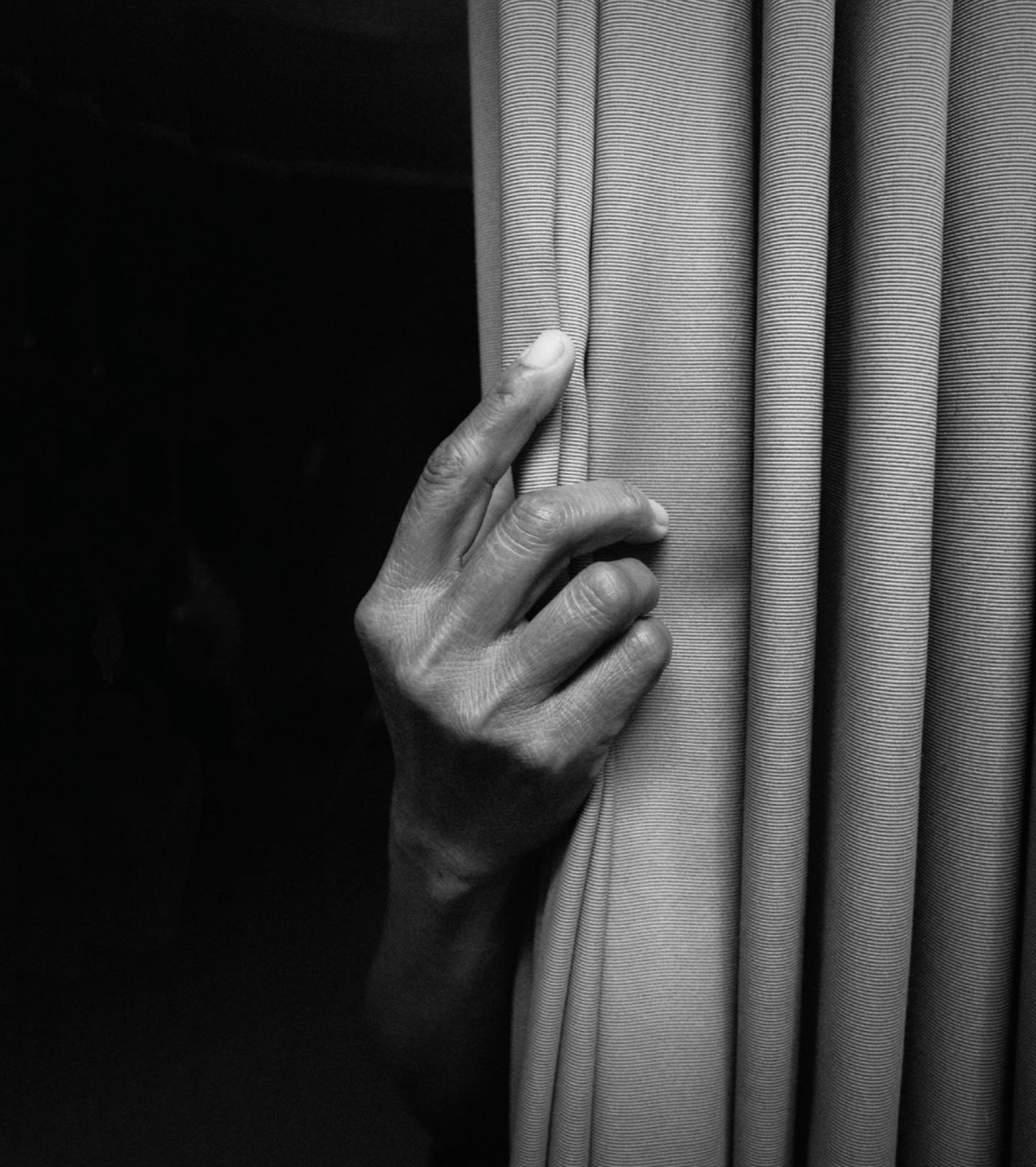
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seen in their true light





where do we go after death?
before you ask such questions
reflect on this being you believe will die
ask other questions first
where is
what is
this being
right now?



the cause of suffering
should be abandoned

groping
in the darkness
looking for a way
to cope
to carry on
mind in turmoil



want to get
want to have
want to be
want to get rid of
want to get away from
want to play
want to forget
want to sleep

human beings
and tigers
tigers do not prey
on their own kind



we are afraid
afraid of carrying heavy burdens
but even more afraid
of having nothing to carry





love
love if you will
but don't ignore
the maybes
the maybe nots



separated
all arid inside all parched
they call it a broken heart
but it's not broken not really
and it's no dry desert

not indulging in sorrow
not fighting with sorrow
sorrow unfed
fades away



when it doesn't work out
believing black thoughts
denying the uncertain
unpredictable
nature of things
how could you not be depressed?





if we don't grasp hold
of the snake
it won't bite us
if we don't grasp onto
the moods
the feelings
the thoughts
they won't bite us

a prey to mental states
the mind
breathlessly
precipitously
falls



cessation of suffering
should be realised

suffering utterly allayed
there remains
purity
wisdom
compassion





the path
should be cultivated

in this cultivation
the inner and outer
must be developed in harmony
we must care for
and educate
the things we do
the words we speak
together with our cleansing of the heart
together with our cleansing of the heart
the words we speak
the things we do
and educate
we must care for
must be developed in harmony
the inner and outer
in this cultivation

should be cultivated
the path



kāya bhāvanā

(cultivation of the right relationship to the material world)

not obsessed by the body
not neglecting the body
the cultivator
exercises a sufficient amount
rests a sufficient amount
at a regular time



eat to live
the sages say
don't live to eat



wisely reflecting I eat this food
remembering with gratitude where it comes from
and how many people have no food or too little
guarding my mind against indulgence
mindful of each mouthful
I take into this body what it needs
to support me
on the path



puñña
merit:
actions
speech
thoughts
that elevate the mind



give fitting gifts
at fitting times
to those fitting to receive them

the puñña of giving grows
by caring for the mind
in a wholesome happy state
free from all desire for reward
before giving
at the time of giving
after having given

recollecting our pure acts of generosity
joy arises
it is a noble treasure of the mind
one that nobody can steal from us
and which never loses its lustre





in every generous act
the one who gives receives
the one who receives gives
both feel refreshed and restored



just as a bee in a flower
harming neither hue nor scent
gathering nectar flies away
so in towns the wise mendicant fares

Dhammapada v.49



the world of technology encourages us
to become engrossed in it
time-savers allow us
to waste time more easily
communication devices allow us
to quarrel more often
living in this complex confusing world
now more than ever
we need mindfulness
restraint
understanding of the way things are



the forests will survive

when we are willing to refrain from
destroying them (*sīla*)

because we love the forests and feel
tied to them (*samādhi*)

have the wisdom to see their value
(*paññā*)



nature is constantly ready
to teach those who are constantly ready
to learn from it

nature's biggest lesson
is that everything occurs
appears and disappears
through causes and conditions
with no creator
and no director

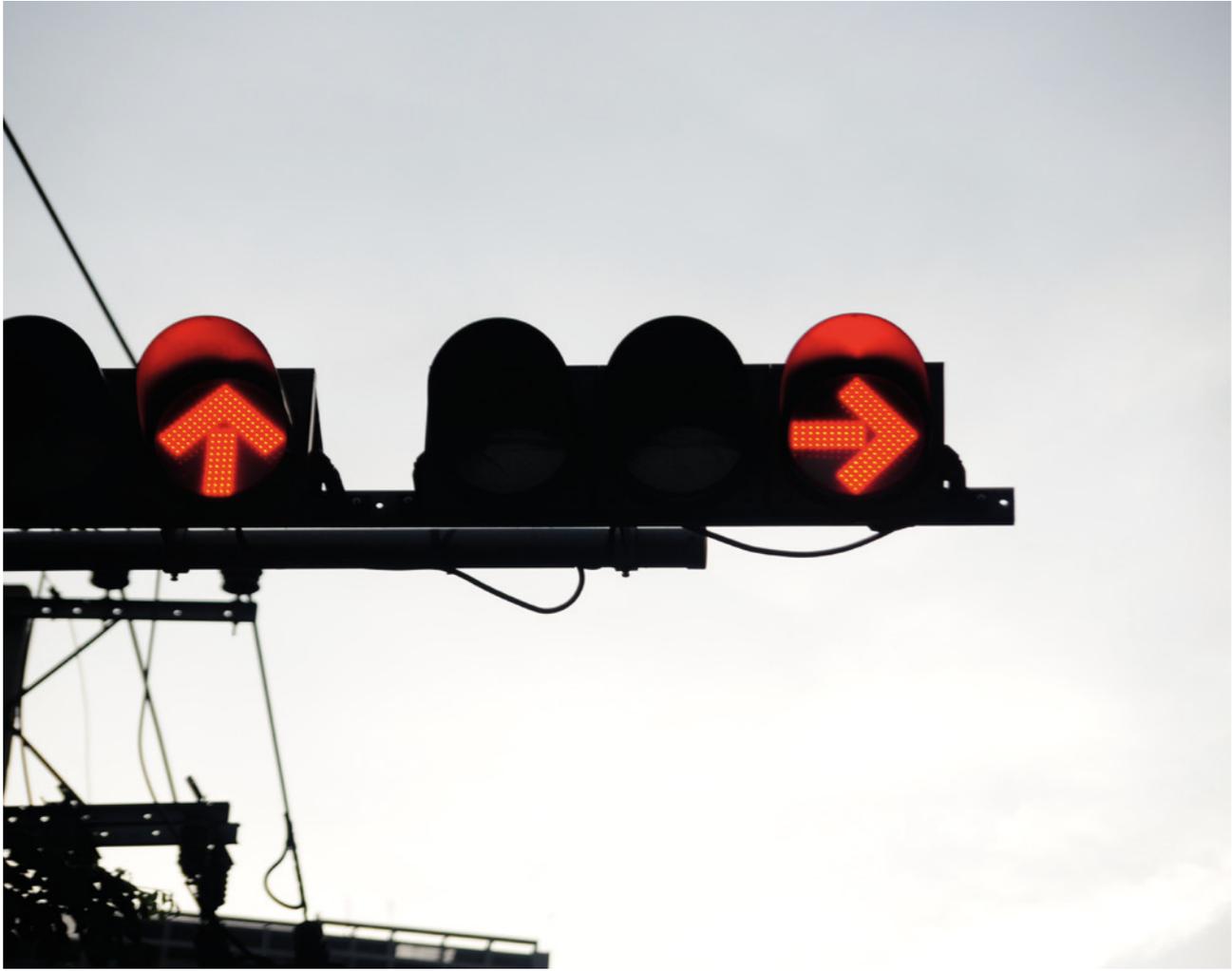
nature instructs us
in the intricate play
of cause and effect

sīla bhāvanā

(cultivation of our relationship to
the social world)

every community may expect
well-being harmony and peace
its members faithful friends
when it adopts wise standards
freely accepted by all
setting boundaries
for actions and speech





the clearest expression of maturity:
an ability to exercise intelligent restraint



even though the defilements remain
even though we're still willing to give them a home
govern them with precepts
don't allow them to cause harm
to self or others



let us be students of life
let parents keep learning about parenting
sons and daughters about filial ties
let us learn our duties
as well as our rights
all of us need to keep learning
only the arahants have finished the work



all yes all beings
hate to suffer
love to feel good
just as we do
knowing this
the wise person harms no creature
but offers them safety
and kindness





stiff with conceit
we make no real contact
believing so much
in our opinions and desires
the links we seem to create
are merely apparent

communication takes place
when there is mutual respect
and empathy
each side knowing how to speak
and how to listen
the most difficult thing
being how to listen





the visible fruit of the training of conduct
is harmony of the group
an atmosphere of safety
and warmth



the internal fruit of the training of conduct
is a mind free of guilt and regret

fortified by self respect
we become a friend to ourself
primed to welcome the Dhamma's light



what great fortune
is a good and noble friend!
one worthy of love and respect
a good example
giving encouragement
instruction
and tireless admonition
one who enables us to understand
the most profound teachings
and inspires us
to dedicate ourselves to truth



should one see a wise person
who, like a revealer of treasures,
points out our faults and reproves us,
then associate with such a one;
well it is, not ill, to do so

Dhammapada v.76



serving one's benefactors
paying homage to noble beings
elevates the mind



frequent recollection of the noble ones
honouring their virtues
following their instructions
elevates the mind



a good teacher
points out the way
with wisdom
and kindness



a good teacher
is dedicated to sharing
both knowledge
and life skills



you're not a friend because you hang out together
its acting well towards another
that makes you a friend
it's speaking well to them
speaking well of them
thinking well of them
wishing good things for them
that makes you a friend

helpful friends:
when you are being heedless
they look out for you
when you are being heedless
they look out for your possessions
you can rely upon them
in times of danger
when you are in need
they give more than you ask for

Digha Nikaya 31



A photograph of a wooden wall with two windows. The wall is made of horizontal wooden planks. The windows are made of vertical wooden planks. The scene is lit with warm, golden light, and there are shadows of leaves and branches cast across the wall. The text is on the left side of the image.

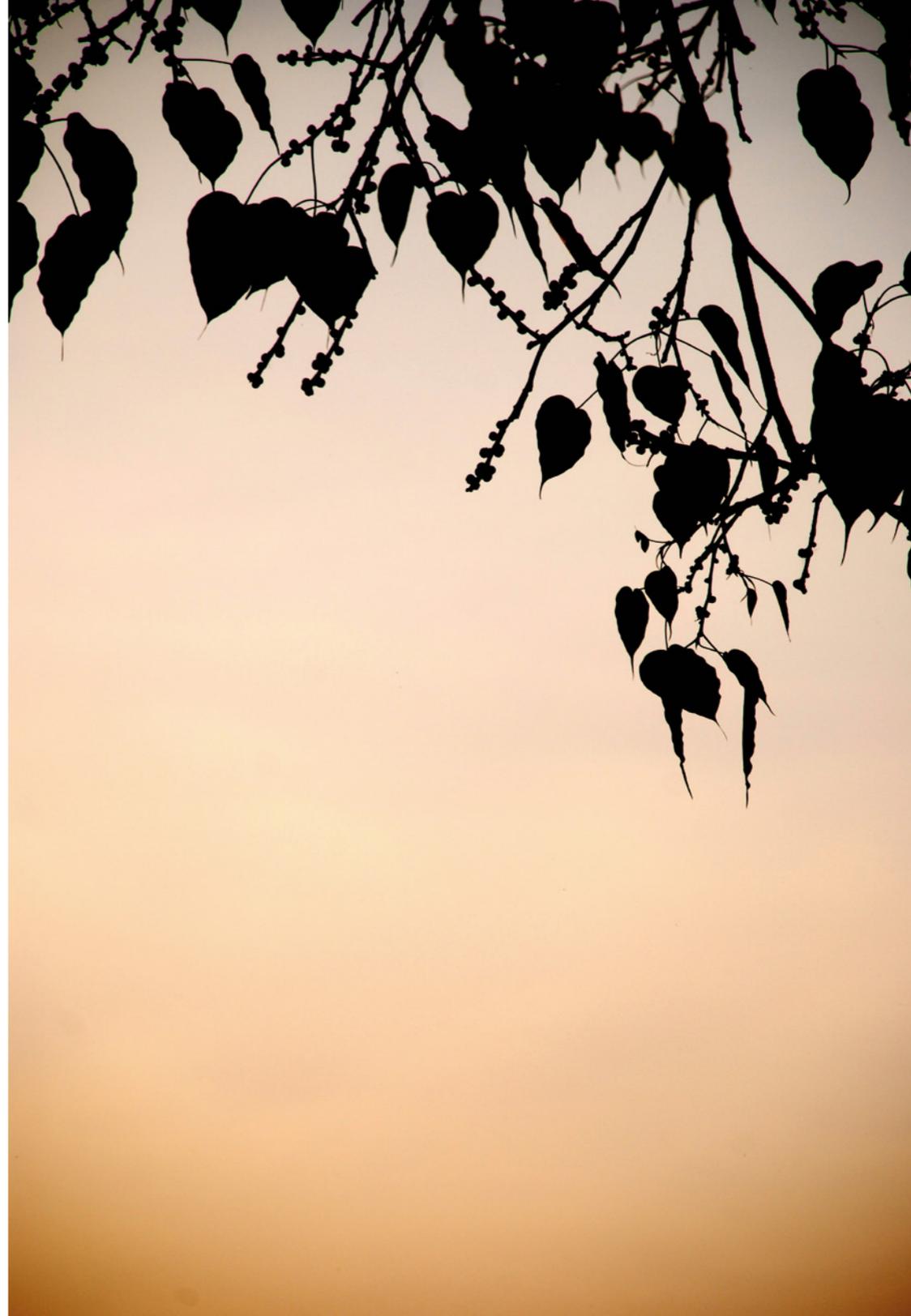
citta bhāvanā
(cultivation of the heart)

find a quiet place
every day
put down your burdens
for a while
turn the light of awareness
around
get to know
what's happening
within



vibrant green plants
can grow from a rock
all virtuous qualities
can grow in a human heart
naturally heedless

*“That the Tathagata teaches you to abandon
the unwholesome and develop the wholesome
is because it is something you can do. If you
could not, I would not teach you to do so.”*





the truth that all things will change
warns us of complacency
without the right effort
bad qualities may not get better
but worse
good qualities may not flourish
but wither



the sage
acts and works
with respect
with focused attention
with clear awareness



seeing a fellow being suffer
without fear
without aversion
without indifference
and without mere pity
imagine yourself
in that being's place
and seek to help
in whatever way you can



training yourself to enjoy each task
awake and aware
in the present moment
no sense of drudgery
or boredom
can drag you down



in our efforts
to cultivate the heart
it is forbearance
that allows
no ensures
continuity

A person is seen from behind, sitting in a small, dark wooden boat on a body of water. The water is covered in a dense field of bright, golden-yellow reflections, likely from the setting or rising sun, creating a shimmering effect. The person is wearing a light-colored shirt and dark pants. The boat is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the frame. The overall atmosphere is serene and contemplative.

adept at finding happiness
in what is presently possessed
no gnawing wants
no jealousy
no search for shortcuts
disturbs their minds
when the time is ripe
they move on to other or better things
without foolish expectations
calmly
with foresight



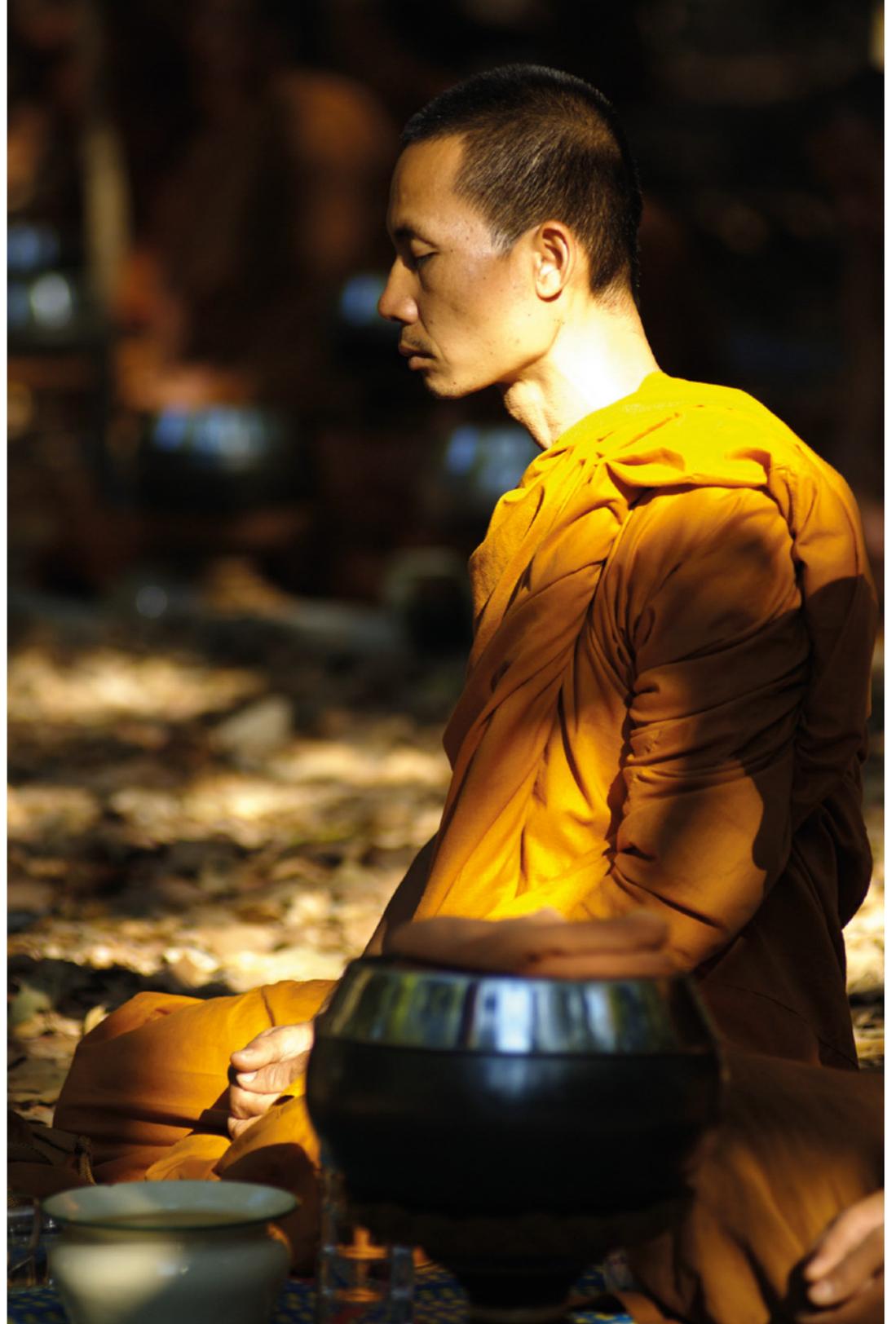
there is a summit
it can be reached
never give up



chanting
meditation
radiating thoughts of loving kindness
these are daily practices
for seekers of a balanced life



to lead the mind to peace
we must learn about all that makes it unquiet
we must learn how to prevent those things from arising
and how to deal with them if they do





when you have firm confidence
in the value of training the mind
when you're brave enough
to renounce the small pleasures
you've always drunk
from mood from memory and thought
the mind naturally inclines towards peace
and the happiness
of being awake

with the eyes closed
awake and aware
in the present moment
no sense of gender or age
no personal history
entrap us
no pull of liking
no rejecting push

a rest from conventions
loosening attachments
allows us a glimpse
of the way things are



it's difficult for everyone
if it wasn't so difficult
the results would not be so great
when the mind becomes distracted
reestablish attention
without expectations
without discouragement
without boredom
when the causal conditions are fulfilled
the fruits will appear



it is not the delights of the world
that draw the mind from peace
it is an idea of the world
created by desire



all
the enticing
exciting
dimensions of experience
are just pretty colours
dyeing the mind



abandoning delight in the world
a cool inner bliss
replaces the pleasures of consumption
we know
immediately
without the slightest doubt
that this is a more sublime joy
a joy without compare



there is an energy
that unchannelled
flows into ill-will and finding fault
deal with it wisely
and you may pour that molten flow
into a Buddha
within your heart



the shrunk and discouraged
the dull stiff and sleepy mind
this is your doing
not your curse
kindle new interest
and you will not droop





keep it steady and constant
practise when inspired
practise when lazy
adapting
fine-tuning
your effort
eventually
you will reach the goal

the effort to defeat defilements
must be of just the right intensity:
if you try too hard you'll only get tense



how much longer
are we going to allow the mind
to swing around and cavort
so wildly?
look and see
it is right there
in the centre of the agitation
that the non-agitated mind lies waiting

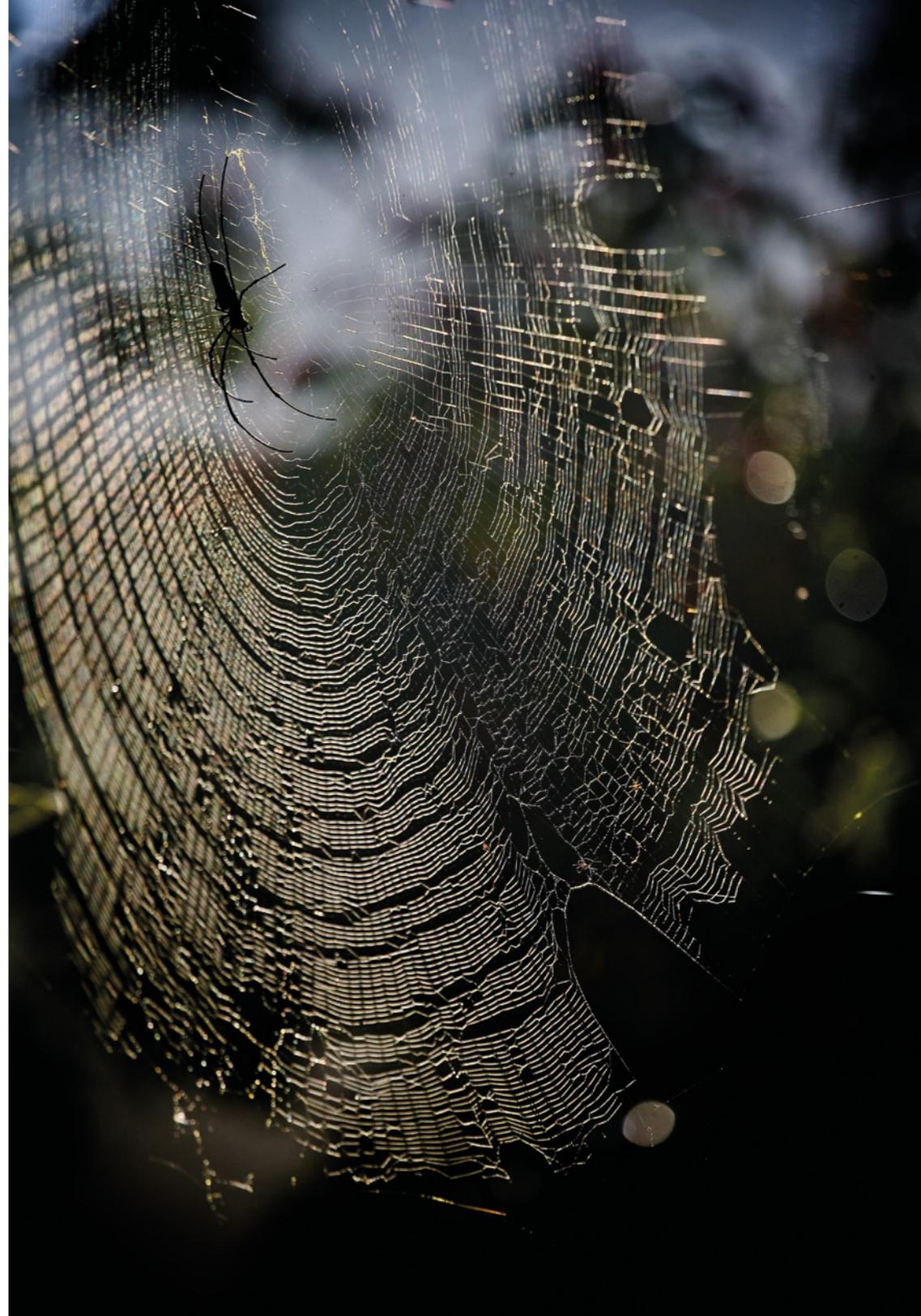




stranded in the desert
of doubt and hesitation
trackless in all directions
experience these doubts
as merely that
merely doubts
mere mental events
and nothing more
then the path onwards
will appear
as if by magic



that early mindfulness
weak and fitful
gradually becomes a refuge
awake and aware in the present moment
the mind dwells like a spider
in the centre of its web
immediately attending to
every slight jolt to the mind
before returning to the wakeful state
just as a spider
sensing its web disturbed
darts out
eats its prey
before returning to its watchful state

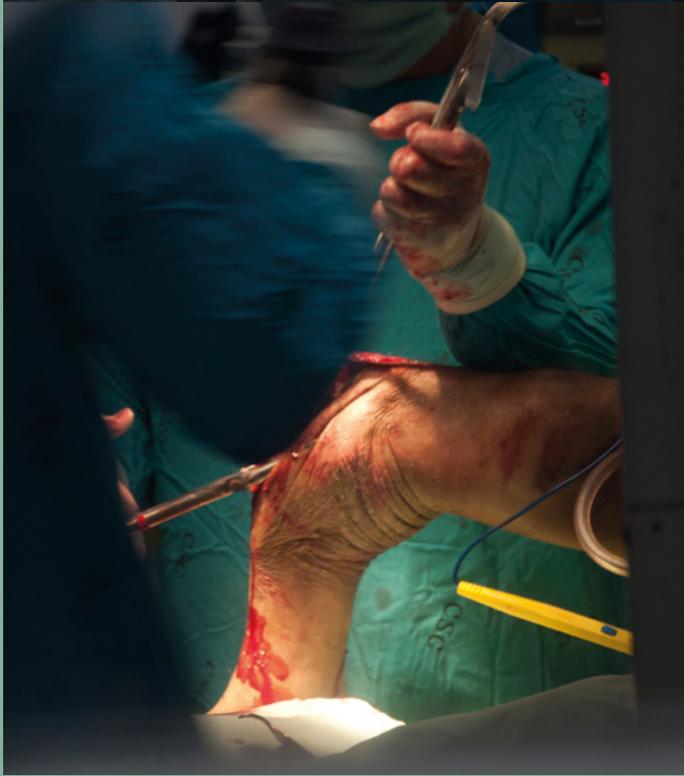




walking meditation
nurtures an inner stability and calm
that enriches and imbues
everyday life



misled by the body
we identify with it
identifying with the body
we suffer
cultivators investigate
the nature of the body
in order to comprehend its truths
and free themselves
from a false sense
of me and mine



how does it feel
to see parts of the body
usually concealed?
why should that be?

the recollection of death
helps us to see the value of life more clearly
our life is short
uncertain
in the time we have left
what should we do
to spend it most wisely?





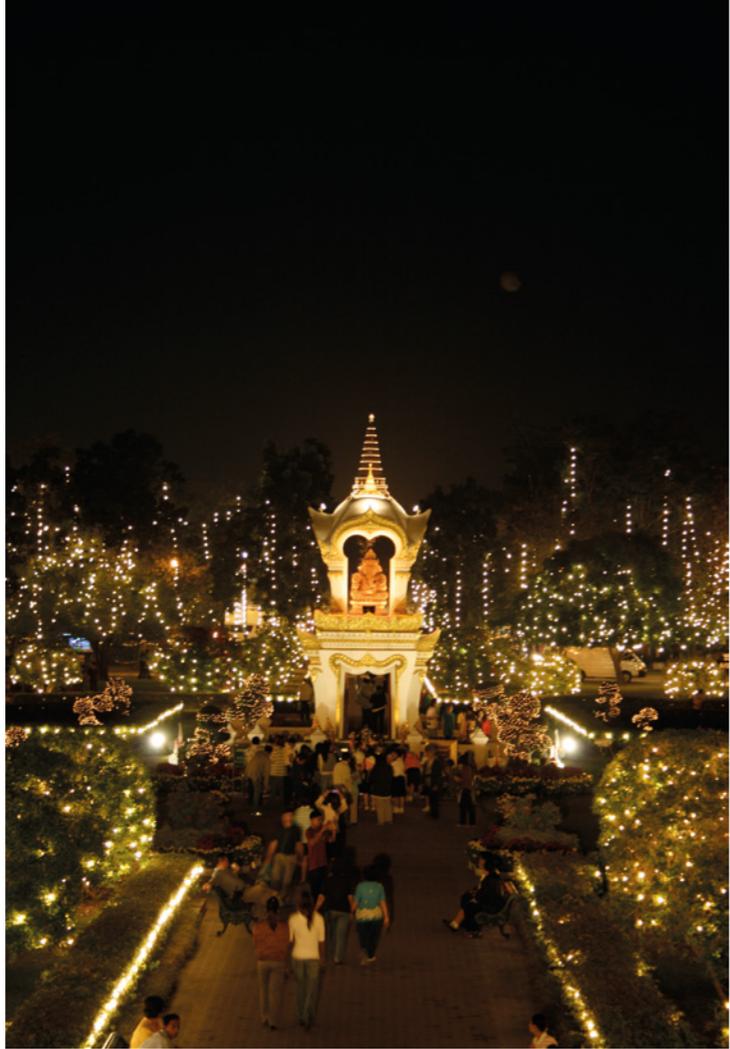
cultivators develop clear comprehension of:
their aim
the suitability of the present endeavour
in light of that aim
the object of attention
the nature of experience



samādhi brings equanimity
neither swaying towards nor away from experience
the mind is ready to see all things
in their true light

mundane right view:
ideals
values
beliefs
in tune with the truth
an accurate grasp
of the law of kamma
the process of rebirth
wholesome and unwholesome qualities
suffering and happiness
the potential of a human birth





the Buddha taught
that every action has results
our life becomes better or worse
through our volitional actions
of body speech and mind
praying to an external power
to grant our wishes
is futile
and shows no respect
to this our potential
for liberation



the devas have done innumerable good deeds in the past
they are worthy of our deep respect
unworthy of our worship
they are senior fellow travellers
riding for now
in luxury class

as Buddhists
we revere the one
who is free of all this

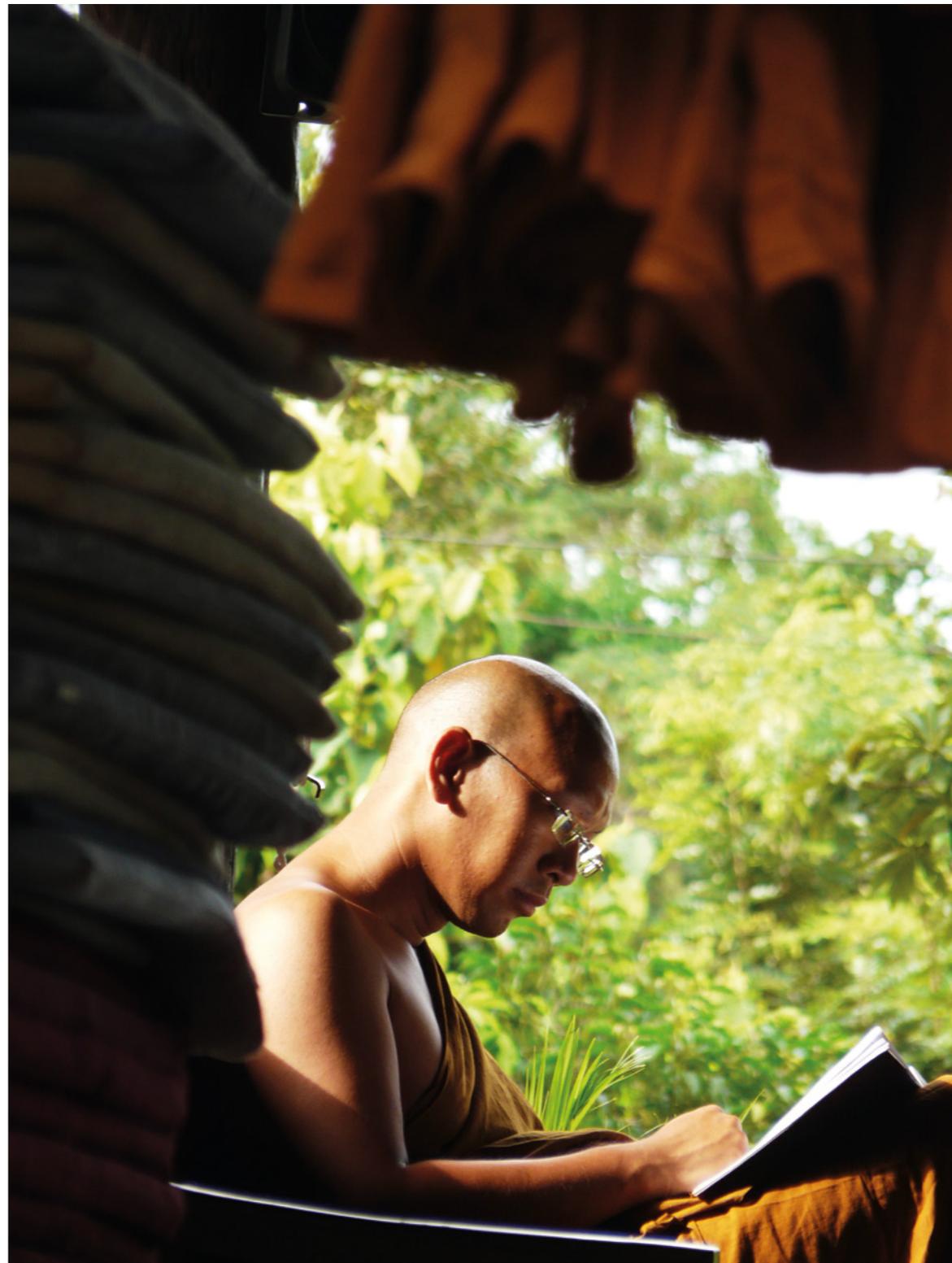




living with the wise
holding on to pride
attaching to views
we see everything through a haze



reading Dhamma
listening to Dhamma
committing Dhamma to heart
constantly comparing the teachings
to your own experience
faith will steadily grow
governed by wisdom



wise reflection
means well-directed thinking
disciplined thinking

thinking in such a way
that defilements are reduced
virtues increased

contemplating the way things are
the impermanence
the imperfections
the causal nature
of all phenomena





this body
is impermanent
pleasant unpleasant and neutral feelings
are impermanent
perceptions
are impermanent
mental states
are impermanent
sense consciousness
is impermanent



nothing lasts
everything that arises is subject to decay and dissolution
nothing can maintain itself in any one state for long
nothing subject to arising and passing away
can provide us with true and lasting happiness
no condition can satisfy our needs
there are no safe havens
in this transient world
nothing lasts



common sense tells us
that there is one who thinks who speaks who acts
dwelling behind within
our thoughts our words and deeds
and this one is who we are

not so
common sense is wrong
no need to believe the sages
look closely for yourself



this life is a stream
that has no owner
no controller
nobody needs to make a stream flow
it is its nature to flow
according to causes and conditions

seeing
not nothing
but no thing
we learn to let go



it is because there is an unborn
an uncreated
an unoriginated
an unformed
that there is liberation
from the born
the created
the originated
the formed

Udana 80.3



having transcended all suffering
their minds experiencing the true joy of inner freedom
arahants do not forget
all those sunk in suffering
for the remainder of their lives
tirelessly
they point to the door
out of the gaol
that we heedless people create
for ourselves

the task of leading the mind
out of its sleep and dreams
is not beyond us
but it is work
work that no earthly or unearthly power can do for us
it is our own responsibility
and if we haven't yet started on this path
when should we start?

why not today?



may the urgency of our condition
ring within your heart
like a monastery bell!









this book is a gift of Dhamma