

RIGHT EFFORT – *SAMMĀ VĀYĀMA*¹

A Talk given by Ajahn Brahmavamso at Bodhinyana Monastery

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This evening I want to talk about the factor of the eightfold path² called *sammā vāyāmā*, right effort, or sometimes *sammā padhāna*, right exertion or striving, because it's an important factor of the path that leads to liberation. Without that factor there can be no liberation, it needs to be well understood because it concerns what you actually do. One needs to put in a very subtle effort to abandon the defilements. So much of our effort comes from the wrong place, from a sense of control, a sense of 'me' and 'mine', that it tends to make the wheel of *saṃsāra*³ go around faster, rather than allowing everything to stop.

Often people get extremely confused about how much effort to put in, and when and how to apply it. Sometimes people put heaps of effort into their practise, and end up just getting headaches, being tense and up-tight, and never finding any degree of peace and clarity in their minds. At other times people put forth no effort, as they used to say in Thailand they 'just eat and sleep like a dog', and they don't get anywhere in their practise. They never get any clarity, deep insight, or any happiness born of liberation.

So the Buddha taught the very subtle point of what right effort is, and where it comes from. Basically right effort comes from right view, and when it's wholesome, it leads to the path of liberation. When effort comes from wrong view – in particular the view of 'me' and 'mine' – then it will always lead to more suffering. It's interesting to notice the source of that effort. Not so much whether one is putting forth effort, or focusing on what the goal is, but to start off by finding out what the source of that effort is. If the source of that effort is coming from right view, from an appreciation of the suffering of existence, the Buddha said, "It is like perceiving ones hair being on fire", the effort that results from that perception would be one hundred percent effort to solve the problem, to escape from the danger of being burnt. In the same way, if one truly has a full understanding, or at least faith in the problem of suffering, of

*dukkha*⁴, that effort will usually result not from an ego, or a ‘me’, or ‘mine’, but just as a natural result of seeing the problem. That’s one of the reasons the Buddha taught the eightfold path with the teaching on right view.

Most people live in denial about suffering. The very hope for happiness in the world covers up the real truth of existence. The real truth of existence should be able to be seen by anybody, no matter how many possessions, or how much health and wealth they have. Those things are so insecure that even though one has superannuation, or a health benefits fund, it does not mean that one is going to escape from the rule of impermanence, and the fading away of such things as wealth, health, family, and even ones own body. That needs to be faced up to. That needs to be seen, for one to truly recognize the predicament. If we truly recognised it then we would not waste so much time in life. Already each one of us here has been alive for many years, and we have no idea how many years we have left. But unfortunately we go around blindly, blinded by *avijjā*⁵, led by the nose by craving, thinking that thereby we can solve the problem of suffering, and get peace, security, and happiness. That is why it’s my job to keep harping on the extent of suffering. By teaching suffering, and the escape from suffering, which is first experienced in the deep meditations known as the *jhānas*⁶, and is fulfilled in the releases called the fruits of the Path, Stream Winning⁷, Once Returning⁸, None Retuning⁹, and Arahant¹⁰.

When one sees the escape from suffering as that, and one sees what suffering is, then it gives one the cause for right effort to really manifest in ones mind. So, right effort is not something that you do, you cannot suddenly decide, as many people try to do, “Okay; now I will make the effort to become Enlightened”. Even in my own experience, I have seen people who try to get Enlightened quickly, in order to get that out of the way so that they can do something else with their life. Enlightenment is not something that happens as a matter of ego, or will. That type of will, coming from ego will not produce any results, other than more suffering and disappointment. Enlightenment has to come from seeing the *Dhamma*¹¹. That is why we have to use our intelligence, listen to the *Dhamma* and be exposed to the teachings of the Buddha. We have to be exposed to *Ariyans*¹². Because if we aren’t exposed to those things, to

that source, to right view, and to the right understanding that generates right effort, it will not occur.

The four right efforts¹³ that the Buddha taught, all concern the dichotomy between unwholesome *dhammas*¹⁴ and wholesome *dhammas*. Wholesome *dhammas* are what's conducive to enlightenment. Unwholesome *dhammas* are what goes in the opposite direction. Unwholesome *dhammas* are cravings, just the wanting, and thinking that it's 'mine'. Wholesome *dhammas* are letting go cravings, abandoning and give away, rather than accumulating. But first of all we need to know the difference between those terms, what is *kusala* (wholesome), and what is *akusala* (unwholesome)? Even though we may have been monks for many years, we sometimes miss that difference, and we take what is *akusala* to be wholesome, to be good, conducive to enlightenment. What is really unwholesome, like too much sleep, talking, eating, and too much indulgence is not going to lead to the goal, but sometimes we take it to be wholesome. You all know many examples of people justifying their defilements. Justifying them really deep down, they should know much better. That justification should be seen for what it is, just the work of the defilements, bending perception, thoughts, and views, to make the world fit into ones defilements, rather than following the teachings of the *Ariyans*, and of the Buddha.

When we see that so much of what we are doing is only the justification of wrong views and defilements, we have to be very careful. We have to at least have faith and confidence that what the Buddha said was unwholesome, is the truth. At least we can follow that much, later on we can use the acid test, that whatever is unwholesome, does not lead to *nibbidā*¹⁵, to *virāga*¹⁶, to *upasama* (calmness), to *nirodha*¹⁷, to *sambodhi*¹⁸, to *Nibbāna*¹⁹. Use the test that the Buddha gave to Upali, to see whether it does lead to the repulsion from the world, the fading away of things, to the calm states of mind, which leads to cessation, and to *Nibbāna* itself. We should actually test what we are doing, and what we think is wholesome, to see where it leads, and if it leads to these things, then we should give it full effort because it's wholesome, good, and conducive to *Nibbāna*. If it leads in the opposite direction, taking us away from that realisation, that peace, then you know it must be the wrong direction. So you can at least test what is wholesome and unwholesome by that much.

If you don't have the faith to follow what the Buddha taught, or if you are confused about what the Buddha said, you can use that test, and then you will know what leads to cessation, to stopping things, you will know what leads to peace, and what leads to the opposite of peace, the restlessness of the mind in particular. The Buddha emphasised that association with too many people, taking delight in talking, sleeping, eating, and in company, are unwholesome because they are not conducive to the deep states of meditation. They are not conducive to *nibbidā*, to repulsion of the world. You're engaged with, and looking for distraction in the world, but you can never get release from the world that way. One should notice the unwholesome *dhammas*, delight in talking, in company, in sleeping, and in eating. Each one of these is said to be unwholesome.

What is wholesome is when we delight in solitude, silence, simplicity, giving up things, and in meditation. Those sorts of delights are wholesome, they're good, and because they are conducive they lead to peace, and enlightenment. All you monks who are aspiring towards *jhānas*, Stream Winning, and towards *Arahantship*, to achieve that you've got to lay down a very clear path. You've seen other monks who have followed the path of the Buddha, and achieved the results. Look to see what they've done, and see what you've been doing, see whether you have really been following wholesome *dhammas*, or unwholesome *dhammas*. Knowing the difference between the two is so important. Once you have that difference clearly in your mind, and you know what will be the result of these things, then right effort can actually happen.

Right effort consists of the four right efforts, you avoid that which is unwholesome before it gets into your mind, if it does find it's way into your mind you do whatever it takes to abandon it, to get rid of it. You do whatever it takes to allow the wholesome *dhammas* into your mind, and if they are there you cultivate them, you guard them. So if for example you are aspiring to seclusion, you guard that seclusion, you stay in your hut, if you can you try and avoid people, you try and avoid even your fellow monks. You know that's a wholesome *dhamma*, and you want to cultivate it. You try and make situations where you don't have to speak to so many people. You

try and make situations where solitude can happen. I have for many years tried to build this monastery to provide solitude for monks, but as they say, “You can lead the horse to water, but you can’t make it meditate”. You have to make opportunities for seclusion. But what people sometimes do is they come here, and they waste the opportunity. They hang out, and talk to people. I can’t really do much, except to encourage and advise the practise of *viveka*, seclusion.

It’s the same with simplicity, we try and encourage simplicity. We try and have a very small storeroom in the monastery, so that there are not many things there. We try and encourage keeping the food simple for the monks. It’s very hard to do that. But at least we can have monks who don’t delight in what they eat. We can have monks who don’t delight in sleeping, who try to get as much time as possible off the bed, who instead delight in wakefulness and walking or sitting meditation.

It does take a lot of time to develop these peaceful states of mind, and to develop clarity. Lazy people, lazy monks, don’t gain these states, those who are diligent gain these states. The *Dhamma* is not for the lazy. The *Dhamma* is for the diligent. It’s worth while putting forth the effort. Once one knows what the wholesome is, and one starts to put forth effort towards the wholesome, it brings a lot of happiness and well being into one’s life. Those who bring up energy, and have aroused and developed that energy, who go against the desires of the body to rest, to lay down, to look after themselves are the one’s who will gain clarity, and peaceful states. The way this body works, sometimes you can’t believe what it says, because the body is a great liar. I have often challenged my own body, to find out if what it says is true, whether it really did need that sleep, food, or medicine. You challenge it, and you find out that the body is a great liar, you can do without things. You can go without sleep and without food as long as you don’t worry about it. You can even sometimes go without medicines, if you don’t worry about it. It’s just the mind creating all these things.

So when one develops the aspiration for simplicity, even though you may not be achieving that yet, as long as the aspiration is to simplify – by which I mean to have fewer possessions, burdens, and duties – then you are going in the right direction. You’re trying to arouse the wholesome qualities of simplicity, of fewer duties, having

fewer things to do. If we try to aim for that, we're trying to make right effort, and we know what we are supposed to be aiming for. Seclusion comes along with simplicity, and that means you haven't much to think about when you meditate. When you're simplifying your life outside you find it's very easy to simplify the mind inside.

Simplifying the mind is what meditation is all about. Taking the mind from diversity to unity, to nothing at all, and bringing it to cessation. These are wholesome *dhammas*, and they take effort. It also takes effort to abandon the unwholesome *dhammas*. So, if you have an unwholesome *dhamma* in the mind, if there is ill will, anger, lust, greed, fear, revenge, guilt or whatever, the best way to overcome them is inside your mind. That's where these unwholesome *dhammas* start from, where they grow, and are cultivated. You can look for the triggers outside, but you know that if you sort out one trigger, there will be another trigger if you've the same defilements in the mind. It really should be dealt with internally, whether it's guilt, anxiety, ill will, lust, greed, or whatever, you find all those defilements come from the illusion of 'me' or 'mine'. All that anger about what a person did, or what they said, why they did it, or what they meant by that. There's no one there who said that. There's no one here who heard it. These are just words floating through *samsāra*, they just happened to float through you for a few moments, and then they are gone. Who knows? But if you catch on to them, and put them in your mind, and cultivate that fire, they can burn you with anger and ill will. Just let them go! That's why in meditation you should just know that you don't even own the past, you don't own the future. It's nothing to do with you.

That sort of simplicity, letting go, giving up what doesn't belong to you, is part of the third noble truth, *cāga*, the way to *Nibbāna*. *Cāga* is just giving away, because it is nothing to do with you, it's not your possession, it's somebody else's problem, because it's not 'mine'. Whatever words someone uses, they're not mine. They're nothing to do with me. You can call me an idiot, the greatest monk, the stupidest monk, they're your words not mine. They're nothing to do with me. All the mistakes that I have made in the past, all the great things I've done, and all the things that have happened to me to date, I don't own them. They are nothing to do with me. So, you give it up. I don't own my future either, who knows what it is. How can you own

something that is so uncertain? I might come to own it later, but only for a moment, and then it's taken away from me. It's wonderful having no possessions. When you can see *cāga* like this, you understand the unwholesome *dhammas* are coming from the illusion of 'self', of 'me' and 'mine'. It's not the other persons fault, the monasteries, the teacher's, the lay people or the weather's fault, and it's not life's fault, it's just the defilements, and misunderstandings. It's not seeing according to reality, according to truth.

So with these unwholesome *dhammas* the effort should not be to set up that stupid monk who did that rotten thing to you. The effort should be to sort out that stupid monk in here, me. Once you know where to practise right effort, and you see what needs to be done to abandon that unwholesomeness, use *anattā-saññā*, the perception of non-self, not 'me', not 'mine', not 'self'. This feeling inside, of irritation, not really happy, really fed up, this doesn't belong to you, it's just a mood going through the mind, like the clouds going across the sky. You don't own those clouds; you can't collect them, put them in your bag, and say they are yours. They come and go by themselves, *anicca-saññā*, the perception of impermanence. The mood you are in is always going to change, you're really happy now, it's going to change, and you'll get miserable soon. That's the way of moods. It's the way of *vedanā*²⁰, happiness and suffering, they just following after each other like day and night. You can't have a place where it's day forever and ever, otherwise there would be no meaning to day or night. Suffering only exists because happiness is. Happiness is only possible because of suffering.

All the things you think are your happiness, and your suffering, belong to nature, they are not yours. So if you can see things as they truly are, then these unwholesome *dhammas* can be let go. Right effort can only manifest if it comes from wisdom. You try and give up unwholesome *dhammas* from the sense of a 'self' and a 'me'. You don't want to be angry, but you will be angry for being angry. You don't want to be fed up, so you end up going elsewhere. You try to find another place, or you disrobe to find another life style. You are just like a mangy dog, taking the mange with you wherever you go. You are not scratching in the right place. When one sees these unwholesome *dhammas* are not outside, that the problem is in the 'self' going out to

change the world outside, it's never going to work. What we need to do is have right view, and to see the world in terms of *anattā-saññā*, and *anicca-saññā*. It's not mine, it doesn't belong to me, and it's going to go anyway. Just let it go and see effort become wise effort, and if it's wise effort it's right effort, it produces the result of wholesome things in the mind. All those unwholesome *dhammas* – which you know all too well – can be abandoned, let go of. What I'm saying here is that will power is not right effort. It has to be effort based on wisdom power. Will power so often comes from a sense of 'me' and 'mine'. It's coming from a wrong place, from *avijjā*, and illusion. With wisdom power it's easy to practice right effort, and abandon that which is unwholesome. It's easy to abandon greed and anger, because they don't belong to me. The words I hear, the things I have to deal with are just the play of *samsāra*.

The best way to avoid unwholesome things coming up in the future is to have wholesome things in the mind. The best way to avoid sleepiness is to have delight in wakefulness. The best way to avoid the desire to speak to many people is to have delight in solitude. The best way to overcome lust is to have delight in letting go, and in the emptiness of the mind. Whatever it is, the wholesome qualities are the antidote, and to arouse those wholesome qualities and to keep them in the mind is by far the best way. In the same way the best way of keeping burglars out of your house is to have all your friends and relations, who you trust, in your house at all times. What burglar would break into a house full of people, with the lights on in every room, and where you can see there are people in every room? Burglars only break into empty houses when people are away. Unwholesome states only break into empty minds, when there are no wholesome states there.

Those who maintain wholesome states of mind, joy in monastic life, and solitude delight in the *Dhamma*, enjoy reading the *suttas*²¹, and practising meditation. They delight being by themselves in their huts, having all the time to develop the mind, *samādhi*²², and release. If you can develop these wholesome states of mind, all the other unwholesome states are very easy to keep out. They can't find a crack in your defence to come in. That's why we really encourage in this monastery, lots of sitting, walking, and practise as a way of overcoming, and keeping out the unwholesome

states. Again, developing the wholesome states of mind, you will find that once you begin, once you're inspired and motivated to go to bed late, and get up early, to eat little and speak little, it's very easy to find that right effort in your life.

I've have managed in my monastic life to really put effort into whatever I do. If I'm building, giving a talk, or chanting, I put effort into it, even though I might not succeed. I really give it my best shot every time, no matter what I have to do. Sometimes you fail. Sometimes I have to give a talk in Thai, and I'm not very good at Thai, but I give it my best I try. That's how I develop the energy of right effort. Really arousing energy in what you're doing. Even when I'm writing a letter, if you've seen my writing you will know that I try and write very neatly, it's just making the effort that's all. Once you start arousing effort, then effort is easy to arouse in the future. But once you get into laziness it's like going deeper and deeper into a swamp. The deeper you get into the swamp the harder it is to get out, you just sink. With effort and energy, the more effort you put in, the more effort and energy you have. One can develop the idea of doing everything one hundred percent. Sometimes people ask the question, "Should I be meditating all the time throughout the day, always watching my breath, or watching something else?" The answer of course is no. If you are moving bricks, put all your effort into moving those bricks to the right place. Give it one hundred percent. If it's time to eat, eat with one hundred percent attention, and watch what you're eating, don't watch your breath otherwise the food might fall out of your mouth. Do one thing at a time, and give it everything you've got. That was the teaching that I had from Ajahn Chah, and that's the teaching that I've always practised. That's the reason why I can be so busy in the external world, doing so much teaching, giving talks, and stuff like that, and then I find when I go back to my *kuti*²³, and have a few minutes free to sit meditation, I've got energy. Because you've been working hard, and you've put all that energy into moving those bricks with full attention, you find that when you are watching the breath, you can put the same amount of effort and energy into watching the breath. It's just energy that is aroused, energy that you can arouse anywhere, energy that is there to be used for the next task at hand.

Once one can put energy and effort into this life, you will find that it's much easier to abandon the unwholesome, arouse the wholesome, and to sustain the wholesome.

When you know what the wholesome is, that means that when you do things like sitting down to meditate, the mind doesn't wander around all over the place. That wandering is due to a lack of energy, sloppiness of the mind, a lack of sharpness coming from a lack of energy. There is no real effort there. The mind should know what to do. Sometimes it's just a lack of clarity. Everyone in this monastery has been here long enough to know what they should be doing. You've read the *suttas*, and you know exactly what you should be doing. There should be no doubt in your mind about what the task at hand is, but whether you're doing it or not, and putting forth the effort is the point. Know those wholesome and unwholesome *dhammas*. Know the difference between the two. If you like, with every meditation, remind yourself, and go through what wholesome and unwholesome *dhammas* are, and then put forth the effort; effort, which is not coming from a sense of self, but from right view, the effort to abandon, to free, to let go.

When you can actually put forth right effort it's easy to meditate. I've taught the stages of meditation, which are not my theory, but just the nature of the mind when it starts to simplify. Firstly there are thoughts of the past and future, put forth effort, know that the past and the future are unwholesome *dhammas*, they are *akusala*, and they don't lead to freedom. Abandon them, and arouse the present moment. The delight in that present moment is a wholesome *dhamma*, look upon that as your friend, and fill your house with friends, moment after moment of present moment delight in what's wholesome. If you can really start to do that, to put effort into just being present, your meditation will increase in leaps and bounds. Put forth the effort by letting go of the 'commentator', you can start that effort in your daily life by not speaking so much. If you have something to say, say it, but at other times develop silence, and the aura of silence, then you'll find that when you're meditating it's much easier to stop that whole momentum of inner conversation. If you talk a lot outside, you will also talk a lot inside. That's reason that on retreats, when people get very quiet in their minds, they don't say anything to each other. Afterwards they don't ask questions, they're just quiet, and they are enjoying that quiet. So put forth effort to stop this thinking mind. Those thoughts don't belong to us, therefore we can abandon them. They are not important, not valuable, and therefore we can throw them away like so much garbage. We know that they imprison us; therefore we can free

ourselves from thoughts. You all know the experience when you've been silent for some time, compare that to the experience when you're thinking, thinking. How long do you really want to suffer like that? You've the opportunity, and the encouragement, in a monastery such as this to practise silence. I will never tell anyone off because they don't talk to me, or for being too silent when we are working, for not talking during the meal, or afterwards when you wash the bowls, neither would any of the great Kruba Ajahns tell monks off for being too quiet. In fact they would praise a practitioner, who just sits there quiet in his mind, alert, with hardly any thoughts coming in. Those thoughts are unwholesome *dhammas*, but silence is wholesome. Just knowing that the thoughts are not yours, *anattā-saññā*, and *anicca-saññā*, they are not going to lead anywhere, they will just fade away. Allow them to fade away; they have no value, so they are empty of meaning. You will never get to truth through thinking about it. I've had many arguments with monks and other people, and it's a complete waste of time trying to convince another person about what is *Dhamma*, what the truth is. It's much better to stop thinking, become silent, go from diversity to unity on to the breath, the beautiful breath, get into *jhānas*, and then reflecting afterwards, you will see, rather than arguing about what's right and wrong. So see the value of thinking compared with the value of silence, which is immense. You know what's wholesome, what's unwholesome, and that's half the battle of developing right effort.

The effort to develop silence externally and internally arises not because you want to impress people, nor is it coming from the 'self', but from right view. These things are important to know, and then you can start to go deeper into just one thing rather than many things. Unity is much more wholesome than diversity, diversity complicates the world, and it leads to *papañca*, or proliferation. So many things to think about, to decide, projects in this monastery, projects in my *kuṭi*, projects in my mind, so many things to plant, to write, to build, to fix, so much diversity. Go into your hut and meditate, and all you've got is this one breath happening now. You haven't got a bowl, a robe, books, family, a body, or sickness, all you've got is this one little breath happening now. Just knowing that much, one little breath happening now, the sheer simplicity of this is breath taking.

Once you get into that simplicity you know it's wholesome just to be with the breath, there's nothing else in the whole world. Just to be with this breath happening now, then you are very close to being a true recluse. You are someone, who owns nothing, who has left home. Anagārikas who have left their *kuṭīs*, their possessions, their plans, left all their past and future, and left their body. You've got this tiny fraction left, this one breath happening now, not even two breaths. You've either got an in breath, or an out breath, but you haven't both.

Just by making it simple like that, right effort really gets involved. This is the right effort of letting go, of abandoning, you realize that wholesome *dhammas* are arising one after the other, and you can see how these wholesome *dhammas* are arising. Simplicity, giving up, abandoning, and renunciation are happening there, you're experiencing it by just being with one breath. Just think how much you've renounced, all your worldly wealth, monastic wealth, your monastery, your position, whether you're a novice, a monk, an abbot or whatever. You've just given up all of that. Whether you're this nationality, this gender, or this old, you've abandoned all of that to get just to one breath. You've also abandoned your sickness, that's someone else's. Just with one breath that's very easy, but then give that away as well, keep giving away, that's right effort, abandoning, *cāga paṭinissagga mutti anālaya*,²⁴ those are the true four right efforts embedded in the third noble truth. This is something that – after a while – just happens because of right view. Just getting to one breath, once you start to see that amount of *Dhamma*, of happiness, freedom, peace, and liberation that gives you, then right view is very strong. Seeing right view, and the strength of that right view, seeing that amount of renunciation, letting go, liberation, gives so much happiness, and the whole snowball effect has begun.

From that right view, leading to right effort, and a degree of liberation, just being with the breath, liberated from so much, and that liberation will strengthen the right view of the third noble truth, which will give rise to more letting go. You will be able to let go of the breath, allowing the breath to disappear all by itself, you're letting go of the 'controller', the 'doer', the 'maker', and this is what right effort is. The 'doer', 'maker', and the 'controller', are not right effort, they're coming from a sense of 'self'. Right view gives up the whole idea of a 'self' and replaces it by a process of

dependent origination, cause and effect. Once you have the cause of giving up, silence, and renunciation, then the whole breath disappears and beautiful *nimittas*²⁵ arise in the mind. The effort is still surging towards more and more letting go, abandoning, freedom, not allowing anything to settle on the mind to disturb it. All of the cravings are just like birds that have left their perch, and they can never find their way back into your mind at this time. *Anālaya*, no perch in your mind for craving, and so what happens is more freedom, even from the *nimittas*. Go deeper into the *jhānas*, giving up more of bliss, and then you actually understand what effort is, and afterwards you ask yourself, “What did I do to get into these stages?” Because these are really wholesome states, these are really *kusala*, the most *kusala* thing you have ever experienced. No one who has ever experienced these stages would ever say they are unwholesome, or that they have nothing to do with the *Dhamma*. Anyone ever experiencing these states would know they are very wholesome, very *kusala*, the sort of thing the Buddha would indeed encourage and praise.

You see the whole process of that effort, real right effort. You see it is all an effort of abandoning, letting go, and it’s not coming from a sense of ‘self’. It’s not the effort of the world, which people too often think is the only effort there is. It’s not the effort to control, to find security, to be, to make, or to achieve, its effort that is coming from a completely different place. It’s *sammā-vāyāma*, right effort, part of the *Ariyan* eightfold path, the *anattā-magga*, the non-self path, coming from faith in the Buddha, understanding the *Dhamma*, and the manifestation of right view, allowing this whole process to unwind, untangle the knots. The knots are just untying themselves.

Samsāra, you just practise letting go, slowing down that process, and then all the wholesome *dharmas* start to arise, the unwholesome *dharmas* just disappear, and they cannot come up into the mind. Effortlessness comes from right view, and there you will understand how right effort can really give rise to the right mindfulness. Right mindfulness is clarity of the mind, the clear seeing of the mind. Wrong effort comes from a sense of ‘self’, the self clouds everything with ‘me’ and ‘mine’. You cannot really truly, be mindful, or truly be alert, because everything is clouded as ‘mine’, as ‘me’, the self is in there somewhere. This is the reason why when a person gets into deep meditation, the power of the mind increases a thousand fold. That’s

why any person who has applied mindfulness after a deep meditation finally realizes what mindfulness is. They've been wasting their time before experiencing deep meditation thinking they can find any *dhamma* in that degree of mindfulness. The simile I've often used is that trying to find the *Dhamma* prior to these deep meditations is like trying to dig a hole with a spoon, a blunt spoon. Whereas after the *jhānas* – with that degree of mindfulness – the power of mindfulness brightens, and illuminates everything, it is so penetrating. It's like digging a hole with a big backhoe. With one scoop, in a few minutes you have this huge hole, which would have taken you years if you had been messing around with a spoon. This is the reason right effort will lead to right mindfulness, which will lead to right *samādhi*, emptying the mind completely, which will lead to the right liberation, knowing the whole process, and knowing that suffering is wanting, doing, the whole thing that we've missed. When we realise that the ending of the 'doer', the ending of consciousness, is the ending of suffering, then it's very easy to understand what the Buddha was doing, what the path is, and what the four noble truths are. You just untangle and allow every thing to stop, to disappear. By not doing you are stopping that which feeds *saṃsāra kamma*²⁶, by letting go of doing the whole process of consciousness also starts to stop. 'To be, is to do, to do is to be', when doing stops being soon stops afterwards, this is the reason why the effortlessness means that different types of consciousness start to turn off. Effortlessness means that first of all body consciousness begins to disappear, and then sight, sound, taste and touch disappear, followed by giving up doing, mental consciousness also starts to disappear and fade away. With more fading away deeper levels disappear, and as the deeper levels disappear more bliss manifests. You are seeing the whole path, and it becomes automatic. Right effort, real right effort is part of an automatic process, so please understand what the Buddha was talking about with right effort. Understand it's coming from right view. Right view is the source of right effort, understand that right view. Develop *anattā-saññā*, the perception of non-self, *anicca-saññā*, the perception of impermanence, and *dukkha-saññā*, the perception of suffering, until you see what the real problem is, understanding from seeing the true problem. Be awake, be silent, let go of past and future, of all your thinking, of diversity, and let go of the world that will manifest. So as the Buddha said at the end of his talks, there are these empty

places, these quiet huts, so don't be heedless, meditate, make use of your time, and then you will be fulfilling the right effort.

¹ Efforts, The Four Right:

1. Not to let an unwholesome thought arise, which has not yet arisen.
2. Not to let an unwholesome thought continue, which has already arisen.
3. To make a wholesome thought arise, which has not yet arisen.
4. To make a wholesome thought continue, which has already arisen.

² Eightfold Path, The:

1. Right View or Understanding.
2. Right Thoughts or Intentions.
3. Right Speech.
4. Right Action.
5. Right Livelihood.
6. Right Effort.
7. Right Mindfulness.
8. Right Concentration, i.e. *jhāna*.

³ *Samsāra*: The round of rebirth (Literally: 'wandering on').

⁴ *Dukkha*: Suffering, and unsatisfactoriness.

⁵ *Avijjā*: Delusion or ignorance (of the Four Noble Truths).

⁶ *Jhāna*: The deep meditation states of letting go.

⁷ *Sotāpanna*: Stream Winner, the first stage of Enlightenment. One guaranteed to attain Full Enlightenment within seven lifetimes at most.

⁸ *Sakadāgāmi*: A Once Returner, or second stage of Enlightenment.

⁹ *Anāgāmi*: Non Returner, one who has attained the third stage of Enlightenment

¹⁰ *Arahant*: A Fully Enlightened One.

¹¹ *Dhamma*: The teachings of the Buddha; the truth; the Norm.

¹² *Ariya*: A Noble One, a person who has attained to one of the four stages of Enlightenment.

¹³ Efforts, The Four Right:

5. Not to let an unwholesome thought arise, which has not yet arisen.
6. Not to let an unwholesome thought continue, which has already arisen.
7. To make a wholesome thought arise, which has not yet arisen.
8. To make a wholesome thought continue, which has already arisen.

¹⁴ *dhamma*: Things, states, factors, mind objects.

¹⁵ *Nibbidā*: Aversion, revulsion or wearisomeness towards (esp.) the round of existence. This is a consequence of deep insight, and has nothing to do with unwholesome states.

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- ¹⁶ *Virāga*: Fading away, detachment, absence of lust, dispassion. This is a consequence of deep insight, after “seeing things as they really are” and experiencing revulsion towards *saṃsāra*.
- ¹⁷ *Nirodha*: Cessation, as in *dukkha-nirodha*, the cessation of suffering, the Third Noble Truth.
- ¹⁸ *Sambodhi*: Enlightenment; the highest wisdom.
- ¹⁹ *Nibbāna*: Literally; “Extinction” (as in the going out of a flame). The supreme goal for Buddhists – it is the destruction of greed, hatred, and delusion – thus, the end of all suffering.
- ²⁰ *Vedanā*: That quality of every conscious experience – whether through sight, sound, smell, taste, touch or mind – which is either pleasant, unpleasant, or somewhere in between. The English word “feeling” is not all that accurate as a translation.
- ²¹ *Sutta*: Discourse of the Lord Buddha, or one of his chief disciples, as recorded in the Pāli Canon.
- ²² *Samādhi*: Sustained attention on one thing.
- ²³ *Kuṭī*: Monks hut or dwelling.
- ²⁴ *Cāga paṭinissagga mutti anālaya*: Giving up, relinquishing freedom, non-reliance (from Bhikkhu Bodhi’s translation). *Cāga* and *paṭinissagga* can both be translated as giving up, abandoning, relinquishing etc. *cāga* is more related to generosity, *paṭinissagga* to the idea of forfeiting. *Mutti*: freedom; *anālaya*: detachment, non-reliance, literally non-roosting.
- ²⁵ *Nimitta*: A sign, characteristic. In the context of Buddhist meditation, a mental sign.
- ²⁶ *Kamma*: Action, or activity created by volition