Beginning To See

by Sujata

Pen-art by Julio Lynch

A collection of epigrams about the problem of living and the freedom to be gained through meditation
This book is dedicated to
the 9-to-5ers
and everybody else

Text edited by Vipassana Dhura Meditation Society
Much suffering comes into the life of one who tries to be anywhere but here in the present moment.

Are you content with where you are right now?

because "right nows" are all you have
There is nothing in this life that we can have for very long things and people come ... then leave us ...

and we are left sad and aching because of our attachment

Because we accept only the pleasure in our lives an immense amount of fear is created as we spend our lives dodging pain
The world continually demands that we direct our attention outside ourselves.

Meditation teaches us to revolt.

And turn that awareness toward our neglected, dimly-lit insides ...

Painful feelings in the mind (jealousy, envy, hatred, loneliness, frustration, depression) indicate wrong attitudes about life.

A meditation
retreat can show us what we're doing wrong

We live fearfully

Because we want Reality to occur in a Yaw cificeps

We progress in this life according to our honest wisdom

honest wisdom is realizing what you feel, knowing what you think,
and opening your attention to everything that comes before you

We should take time each day to understand ourselves, To watch exactly what we experience in walking and sitting meditation

How to Start a Good day
Every day you are responsible for how you feel
no one can make you
unhappy
or nervous
Choices in a meditator's life are very simple: he does those things that contribute to his greater awareness and wholesomeness of mind. He refrains from those that do not

In what direction are you taking yourself? (Is it worth your effort? Is it exactly where
you want

to go?)

Insight meditation systematically trains us to be aware of everything we're “up to”

Ego
Is but a worrisome product of unmindful, wandering thoughts

when powerful awareness is cultivated, we happily learn that there is no one who thinks,
Only thinking...
No one who walks,
Only walking...
No one who sees,
Only seeing...
And finally the great burden
is dissolved

Nonattachment
does not mean
being dead

Rather, it is made up of
mindfulness
clear comprehension
loving kindness
compassion
sympathetic joy
and
equanimit

It is hard
to be compassionate
and loving

but it is
harder
to be
uncompassionate
Because anger hurts
The one who feels angry
Meditation on Loving Kindness

Besides teaching insight meditation, the Buddha also taught a meditation to develop loving kindness toward all creatures. The instructions are to sit in a quiet place and first reflect on the dangers of hatred, anger and resentment, and the benefits of loving kindness. These reflections remind us of the importance of maintaining a loving attitude in all circumstances.

Only when there is love for oneself can there be love for others. So we practice loving kindness and compassion towards ourselves first. Warmth for ourselves grows as we repeat the loving thought: 'May I be free from troubles (anger, fear, tension, anxiety, hatred, etc.). May I be happy.'

When we first begin the practice of loving kindness, we may be surprised to find we have difficulty wishing ourselves well. We may feel guilty or unworthy. There may be self-hatred in our minds, conditioned by years of comparing ourselves to others, or to some ideal we’ve been clinging to.

Spend some time each day specifically cultivating that warm and open mind which thoughts of loving kindness produce by gently and silently repeating your wish for yourself: 'may I be happy,' or 'may I be free from restlessness,' or 'may I be free from anxiety,' in whatever way feels appropriate to you. After sharing loving kindness and compassion to yourself, spend some time trying to extend this loving kindness to all beings everywhere, without distinction.

If we work ardently at this meditation we will begin to see a healthy change happening within ourselves.

May all beings be happy.

Anger is most dangerous
it can destroy you, the person next to you, and the place in which you live.

When aversion arises in our minds, we must be aware of it and try to mindfully drop it.

Hatred is harmful in any of its forms – resentment, aversion, jealousy, anger, harshness, disgust.

If we watch carefully what it does to our minds and what we do to other people when motivated by hatred, we have no choice but to give it up.

We don’t want time on our hands, because then we might stop long enough to notice
that we are very unhappy
people,
going nowhere
special ...

The Buddha did not
come to reassure us
that the world was
moving in the
right
direction

Once a king who was
marching to war came
near the place where
an enlightened teacher
was living.
The king was in a great hurry
but he wanted to learn
something from the saint.
Respectfully the king approached,
paid homage, and asked the
holy one:

"Will you tell me the Buddha's
teachings, for I have little time
and may even be killed this
very day?"

The sage looked at the
man in the royal cloak and answered
with one word:
"Awareness."
Meditation is for those who are born without having it all together.

Meditation is not straining or striving.

The mind should be relaxed but alert.
The back should be straight but not tense
An insight meditation exercise

For the development of clear, mindful awareness, the Buddha taught us to closely observe the movements of the body and the mind. A good way to develop your attentiveness, concentration and insight is to watch carefully the rising and falling movements of the abdomen. In this meditation exercise we begin by observing these obvious bodily movements. When these become clear we will also be able to be aware of the more subtle movements of the mind.

Go to a quiet place and sit in a comfortable position with the eyes closed and the back straight but not rigid. The movement of the abdomen is always present. Place your attention on its natural in and out movement, making a mental note of each part of the process as it is occurring. Only be aware of the actual process of the movement, the rising and falling. As you become more and more alert and can follow the movements more carefully, you will become aware that the breathing is sometimes shallow, sometimes deep, sometimes rapid, sometimes slow and calm. But there should be no effort to control or interfere with the breathing in any way. Just watch the movements as they appear, without judgment, while you breathe normally.

While you are watching the rise and fall of the abdomen, the mind may, by itself, go towards other objects, such as thoughts, feelings, or bodily sensations. These new objects should be noted as soon as they arise. If a thought comes into your mind, be aware of "thinking." If a sound comes to your attention, make a mental note of "hearing." After each mental note, firmly and calmly return your attention to the primary objects of meditation, the movements of the abdomen.

As you develop more concentration in regard to the primary objects, you will quickly notice any other object as it arises. However, until the mind is alert enough to notice these objects as soon as they arise, it will tend to
wander unmindfully after these thoughts, feelings and emotions. Some time later, the meditator will realize he has been day dreaming. As soon as he is aware that his attention has drifted away from the present moment, he should patiently note that his mind has been "wandering" and that he is now "remembering to be mindful." Then he should return his attention to the rising and falling movements.

Mindfulness can also be practiced during walking meditation, with the lifting, moving and placing of the foot as the primary objects of awareness. Walk with the head upright, keeping your eyes on the ground a few feet ahead of you. Walk at a moderately slow pace, with steps small enough so that, without losing your balance, you can place one foot completely on the ground before moving the other foot. Remember to note each part of the movement as it occurs. It is a good idea to spend equal amounts of time in walking and in sitting meditation -- for example, thirty minutes of walking, then thirty of sitting; later, one hour of walking, then one hour of sitting.

During all the activities of the day --- eating, washing, moving from place to place, going from job to job --- one should be aware of the movements of the body necessary for each activity, or of whatever thought, feeling or physical sensation is predominant.

One who persists in noting all these objects as they come to his attention will develop increasingly clear awareness. Noting should be done neither too fast nor too slowly. It should be immediate, firm and clear, but not harsh. One is not to be lazy and sit daydreaming, but should instead develop an awareness that is alert and accepting of whatever objects arise. At a certain point when mindfulness is well-developed, awareness will be automatic, and there will be less and less need for making mental notes. However, whenever attention weakens, one should return to making clear notes.

It would be convenient if one could simply "decide" to be aware. However, we are conditioned not to be aware. Our minds are trained to be complicated, and so it is necessary to re-train ourselves in order to be simply aware. The most skillful way for a beginning meditator to develop mindful awareness is to place himself under the guidance of a qualified meditation teacher for a period of intense practice. During a meditation retreat he leaves behind for a time the rush and trouble of his daily life, and
in an atmosphere of quiet mindfulness and loving kindness devotes his energy entirely to the development of awareness. The minimum length of time usually needed for beginning westerners is one month. After completing such a period of intensive meditation, one is better able to continue the development and practice of mindfulness in daily life.

What could be better than a meditation you can take anywhere?
A saint is a very simple man.  
When he walks, he walks.  
When he talks, he talks.  
And that's all.  

He doesn't  
daydream while walking  
or think of seeing when he's hearing.  

That is very hard to do.  
That is why he is a saint.
Unsatisfactoriness is the First Noble Truth

Life is suffering

But wisdom cuts off the suffering

When wisdom breaks the shell of ignorance suffering stops
In order to understand this problem called ‘life’ we have to start from the beginning and make the mind like a baby’s again.
We run here and there all our lives trying to be successful, correct and right, when the true goal of life is learning

Meditation does not necessarily make us feel good
but it wakes us up to the many things we do feel

A meditation retreat brings great relief. For a time, we don't have to take our mind and its problems seriously.

We don't have to act on its thousand wandering thoughts.

We just note them mindfully and they pass away . . . . . . . . . . . . .
The untrained mind is so vulnerable to circumstances. Something good happens and it's happy ...

Something bad happens and it's sad ...
One who has suffered enough from the attachments and aversions of his mind's uncontrolled wanderings becomes watchful of any direction in which the mind moves.

Your mind has a mind of its own.
Thoughts are not necessarily connected with reality.

That’s one reason the Buddha taught us to be aware of them before we are influenced by them.

What happens between the time we awake
and the time we go to bed

is out of our control

Distracted, strangers to reality, without awareness,
we stumble, fall and hurl ourselves to death.
If living were easy
there would be no need
for mental training.

But because life
can be very,
very hard

we have
to meditate
much.

The mind is the
only means we have
of getting out of
this mess.

Be careful
with it.
Immorality, selfishness, anger and chemicals dull this single key.

Meditating is the kindest thing we can do for ourselves.

The mind is a garden.
By choosing what to think about,

we can grow either weeds or fragrant flowers.

(but even a small weed can learn to grow flowers)
Reaching enlightenment is just a matter of continuous practice.

You can do it.

Our characters are developed by persistent practice.

If we practice love, we become more loving.

If we practice patience, we become more patient.

If we practice generosity, we become more generous.
Life is unsatisfactory for many reasons. Some of these are:

- Life is not perfect.
- Our joys are impermanent.
- No one gets out alive.
- Our bodies have to be washed over and over again.
- We must be taught by pain as well as by pleasure.
- Most of our happiness depends on mere thoughts of the past and the future.

Mindfulness is the cure
for the disease of suffering

Take delight in mindfulness.
Control your mind.
Pull yourself out
of the mire of passions

Just as an elephant,
sunk in mud,
pulls himself out.
Nothing is gained without effort.
To train your mind, you have to work
every minute, every day, every year
from one life to another.

Be kind and compassionate.
Try not to let anyone come to you
without going away happier.

Compassion is the highest attitude.

One day a mother lost her only child. The grief drove her mad. Carrying his corpse, she went to the Buddha in search of a remedy for her dead son, not understanding he was dead. The Buddha agreed to help the mother if she brought him a bag of mustard seed. But the seed could only come from a house in which no one had ever died.

The distraught mother went from house to house asking if anyone had died there. The answer was always "yes." At every house she was told, "the living are few, but the dead are many."

After a while she understood the true nature of life. She returned to the Buddha without the mustard seed. The Buddha explained that death is
common to all living beings.

The mother understood that a human's life flickers like the light of a lamp. She finally stopped weeping and accepted the death of her only son.
The naïve mind is willing to try anything, no matter how dangerous... just because of its ignorance.

To be free we
must be comfortable
being important or unimportant, high or low,
at any time
in any place

Attachment is
a form of
self-cruelty
Please remember...
everything that has a beginning has an ending.
We should be able to accept any kind of food that's offered.

Attachment to a particular diet is wrong. Food in itself is not a means of transcendence. It only sustains the body while the mind works toward enlightenment.

We must sleep away one third of our lives because we wear ourselves out liking and disliking all day long
Wise people are neither optimists nor pessimists. They see things as they are.

Each morning we should commit ourselves to finding the truth of every situation.
Is there anything better to be than free?

Karma means intentional action
every time you do a good karma it comes back to you

Get your “but” out of the way
I would like to...

... but...

I'd go there...

... but...

I could do that...

... but...

The Buddhist does not:

hurt things
kill things
harm things.

The Buddhist does:

Act with compassion and loving kindness;
live and let live.
Buddhist precepts:

1. don't kill
2. don't steal
3. don't lie
4. don't commit sexual misconduct
5. don't take intoxicants

Most of us depend on holidays, weekends and days off

Those who cultivate gratitude and appreciation celebrate daily
The Story of Nanda

During the Buddha's time there was a young monk called "Nanda" who didn't understand the importance of mindfulness. One day, Nanda thought of giving his best robe to the enlightened teacher Sangara. Nanda was happy with the idea, thinking it would be an act of great merit to show such generosity towards a spiritually-developed being.

He thought, "by this noble deed, surely I will soon attain enlightenment." Because he was not yet well-trained to mindfully watch the nature of his thoughts, Nanda did not recognize the selfish desire and attachment which made his intentions impure.

The next day, Nanda waited until Sangara left the monastery. In his absence Nanda swept his room, brought water for drinking and washing, prepared a seat of cushions and flowers, and laid out the gift of the robe. When Nanda saw Sangara returning, he went out to the road, greeted him respectfully, and brought him to his quarters. Seeing the room, the teacher was pleased with the young monk's energy and kindness. Nanda took a palm leaf and began to fan the holy one. Then he presented his gift, saying that he wanted with all his heart to give his best robe to Sangara.

The teacher Sangara realized the young monk had not been mindful and
had allowed himself to become attached to the idea of giving the gift. Seeing this as an opportunity to teach Nanda the danger of lack of mindfulness, he said he already had a complete set of robes. As he had no need for the gift, he instructed Nanda to give the robe to a needy monk. Nanda repeated his request several times, only to have the teacher thank him for the gift, but instruct him to give it elsewhere.

This polite refusal hurt Nanda's feelings and resentment arose in his mind. In this confused state of mind, he stood fanning the teacher. Instead of practicing mindfulness by dismissing his resentment and attending to the fanning, Nanda permitted his mind to dwell on the incident. As his mind wandered the resentment grew, and he thought, "If Sangara is not willing to receive my gift, why should I remain a monk? I will become a householder once more."

Then his thoughts began to wander even more restlessly, taking his attention farther and farther from the present moment. "Suppose I become a householder once more," he thought. "How shall I earn a living? I will sell this robe and buy myself a she-goat. As the she-goat brings forth young, I will sell them and in this way make a profit. When I have accumulated a profit, I will take a wife, and my wife will bear me a son. I will put my son in a little cart, and taking my son and wife along with me, I will make the journey back here to pay respects to the elder Sangara. As we travel, I will say to my wife, 'Wife, bring my son, for I wish to carry him.' She will reply, 'Why should you carry the boy? You push the cart.' Saying this, she will take the boy in her arms, thinking to carry him herself. But, lacking strength, she will let him fall in the road and the cart will run over him. Then I will say to her, 'Wife, you have ruined me.' So saying I will bring down my stick upon her head."

So pondered Nanda as he stood fanning the elder. Consumed by his reflections, he swung his palm-leaf fan and brought it down on the head of the elder. Sangara asked himself, "Why has Nanda struck me on the head?" Immediately becoming aware of every thought which had passed through Nanda's mind, Sangara said to him, "Nanda, you did not succeed in hitting the woman, but what has an old teacher done to deserve a beating?" Nanda thought to himself, "I am a disgrace! The elder knows the foolish thoughts which have passed through my mind."
Sangara told Nanda that if he sought forgiveness he should come and sit before him. Trembling, Nanda sat down, his eyes cast downward toward the floor he had so proudly swept just a short time before.

Sangara patiently said, "Nanda, do you see that you have made no effort to mindfully watch your thoughts, and do you see how needlessly you have suffered because of your mind's unnoticed wanderings? Your gift was not freely given because you demanded that it be received in a specific way. When your demands were unfulfilled you suffered resentment. The resentment was allowed to grow unwatched until it made you completely unmindful. As you stood fanning me, you negligently became absorbed in wandering thoughts which had nothing to do with the present moment.

"Do you see now the danger of unmindful thinking? Do you see that if the mind is not carefully watched, one becomes painfully absorbed in unwholesome states of mind? One unwholesome mental state weakens the mind so that it becomes susceptible to another and another. In this way, your mind, weakened by selfish desires, became caught up in attachment, which led to disappointment, resentment, delusion, and now, regret.

"Nanda, work gently and persistently to develop mindfulness. As you have seen, one who does not live each moment in mindful awareness is headed toward one painful experience after another. But he who learns to watch the restless cravings and painful attachments of the mind will soon give up suffering."

A human being who controls his mind is a saint.

Irritation is natural.
Warts are natural, too.

Express your love to your children

Tell them every day how much you love them

When we
demand things of other people, our relationships are not free.

Loving kindness is not possessive
Being impeccable means:

consciously choosing who our friends are, what we eat, where we live, what clothes we wear – everything.

Generosity is a prerequisite for progress on the spiritual path. Simple generosity leads to non-attachment. And non-attachment is the key to freedom from suffering. Like all virtues, generosity needs constant attention in order to grow and mature.
The Story of Visakha

Visakha, the daughter of a millionaire, was a very generous lady and the chief benefactress of the Buddha. She gave alms regularly and tended to the monks who lived at the monastery.

One day she went to visit the Buddha, wearing her most valuable jewels. On the way she decided her attire was inappropriate, and gave her jewels to her servant for temporary safe-keeping.

After reaching the monastery and listening to the Buddha’s discourse, Visakha returned home accompanied by her servant. But the servant had forgotten about the jewels and had left them at the monastery. Ananda, the Buddha’s attendant, found the jewels and put them in a safe place until Visakha returned.

When Visakha heard what had happened, she decided to use it as an opportunity to give a great gift to the order of monks. She decided to sell the jewels and use the money for the order. But on discovering that no one could afford such expensive jewelry, she decided to buy it herself and use the money for things the monks needed.

The Buddha, pleased with her generosity, suggested she build a monastery, which she did. The Buddha stayed at this monastery with his disciples for six rainy seasons (an annual, 3-month period in late summer and fall).

Rather than chastising her servant, Visakha was grateful for the occasion to perform this meritorious deed.

Prosperity results from
The Story of Anathapindika

The Buddha's greatest supporter was Anathapindika, a wealthy businessman from Savatthi. When Anathapindika first heard of the Buddha, a fully-enlightened teacher, his desire to meet him was very strong. Rather than waiting until the next day to visit, he traveled alone through the forest on that same night, in total darkness, to the place where the Buddha was staying. Anathapindika met the Buddha just before dawn.

Upon receiving instruction from the Buddha, Anathapindika's inspiration was so great that he invited the Buddha, along with the entire community of monks, to stay with him for the rainy season.

The Buddha accepted, and Anathapindika set about finding a suitable place to build a monastery. He finally came upon the pleasure park of Jeta, the prince of Savatthi. Now, this park was a wonderful place, serene and peaceful and fulfilling all the requirements for a monastery. A place such as this Prince Jeta was reluctant to lose. He told Anathapindika the price would be equivalent to the number of gold coins it took to cover every inch of ground in the entire park. He thought this high price would deter Anathapindika.

But when Anathapindika started hauling in the gold in carts, Prince Jeta realized this was no ordinary purchase. When Anathapindika's gold coins
ran out, leaving a small spot uncovered, Prince Jeta offered that patch of ground as his gift to the order of monks. The monastery was constructed, and the Buddha spent a great part of his life there, giving many discourses.

*The gift of truth excels all gifts*

There have been many would-be saviors in the world no one has succeeded in saving the world.

Save yourself

Rather than trying to convince anybody that meditation is the right path, we can show by our attitude (compassion, wisdom, kindness) the benefits of meditation
About the author

An American who began his search for understanding at an early age, Sujata traveled half-way around the world where he found some very rare people who, unlike all others he had met, were not plagued by the universal human enslavements of hatred, attachment and selfishness.

Using the tools of insight meditation which he practiced as a Buddhist monk, Sujata teaches meditators to watch carefully the ways of the mind. As resident teacher of Stillpoint Institute, he guides others along the Buddha’s path, through the difficult process of laying down the burden of self.