



Testimony from Bikkhu Bodhi

Testimony Tapa Brata Usada II - Pacung 6th - 17 th January 2002

By : Ven. Bhikku Bodhi

My name is Bhikku Bodhi, and as Merta Ada mentioned yesterday, I've lived as a Buddhist monk now for 29 years. Most of this time I've spent in Sri Lanka.

In a way it's a little unfair for me to try and evaluated the Usada II course. Firstly, I did not systematically complete the Usada 1 course, and secondly, I have been living as a monk for 29 years. I have been practicing meditation for many years and so I am not completely new to them.

The meditation that I've done over the years that is included within your system is mindfulness and breathing. But I've got to say that Mr. Merta Ada has introduced a somewhat different way of doing mindfulness and breathing from that which I'm acquainted with: different to the traditional way we practice. We focus the attention either in the nostrils or on the upper lips wherever one feels the impact of the breath. But Merta Ada has introduced a quite interesting (and I found it very useful variation of) focusing the attention. He teaches people to focus the attention inside the nostrils at the point where one feels the contact with the inner part of the nose. And it actually gives a very powerful impression, which serves as a strong basis for concentration.

The other meditation that I've done for years in a somewhat different way, is the meditation on the parts of the body. In the classical Buddhist tradition, we have a selection of 32 parts, which are not arranged very systematically, and not in account with the modern physiology. Merta Ada has expanded the list of parts to meditate upon and has arranged it in a much more scientific way by proceeding from the grosser, harder part of the body, to the subtler, finer part of the body. This past September in Singapore, I also learned from Burgs the meditation on the four elements. This is the meditation which comes down in the classical Buddhist tradition, but it is very rarely practiced these days. If it is, it is often practiced in a rather superficial way. But I found from the instructions received from Burgs in Singapore, coupled with the instructions received from Merta Ada here, it to be very deep, very thorough, and very systematic.

The meditation topic which was completely new to me was taking the meridian system, and I

found it challenging. I think Merta Ada has told you, I suffered for many-many years from chronic migraines and sometimes my condition becomes so severe that I have to lie on my back and I find it really challenging just to get up take a glass of water or to go to the bath room...(laugh). On the day when the meridian meditation was taught, I was having an attack, but I always take it as a principle never to give up and always to fight back...(laugh).

The next stage was meditating on the Chakra system, which is also completely new to me as a practice. I have read about the Chakra meditation in books on yoga, but it was always presented as something which is to be done by a yogi living high in the Himalayas. But Merta Ada made it very intelligible, very practicable. I have to say, I found it very beneficial, inspiring and useful.

The Metta meditation, I have done many-many times over the years. I mean I've done it as a regular practice over the years, and Merta Ada teaches it in a very classical way. In fact, he bases his method on the classical Theravada and Buddhist Meditation Manual of Visuddhimagga, taking the groups, via groups, oneself, family or respected teachers, close friends, neutral people, enemies.

I think this is very beneficial meditation for ending the retreat for putting on the last day. It serves to re-integrate the practitioner after he's been plunging the depths of his body and mind for all of these days. The Metta meditation acts as a kind of bridge for coming back into the world.

Merta Ada has integrated many different types of meditation in his system. Four or five techniques are from the Classical Buddhist tradition, the Meridian meditation is from Chinese and Balinese Health theory; and the Chakra meditation is from the Indian Yoga tradition. He has integrated them into a system, **which he is presenting as a way to physical health.**

But also as he emphasizes many times, the main purpose in developing this meditation, and even developing physical health is to be able to develop the harmonious mind. I think really this is may be the most important lesson that we should learn. The body might be healthy or unhealthy: it may be feeble and sick, or it may be vigorous and strong, but no matter what the condition of the body is, the most important thing is to keep the mind free from affliction by what he calls the winds of defilement. The thoughts of pride and self-glorification when the body is strong, the thoughts of sorrow, depression when the body is sick and weak.

As I've mentioned I've been afflicted by migraines. Sometimes I get a little upset, but maybe I can congratulate myself that generally I maintain an attitude of a complete, fairly complete equanimity towards it, I just try to look at the body as being something we say (in Pali language) is not mine, not I, not myself: not something that we should identify with. And so, the most important thing in practicing this meditation is to be able to develop the harmonious mind: the mind which is balanced, poised, free from attachment, free from aversion, free from sorrow, free from elation.

If I were to present what might be taken as criticism, it seems to me that to really penetrate these meditations, one needs a period of about 3 months...(laugh..).

In Buddhism we speak of 4 types of people; Those who make easy progress and have quick comprehension, those who make easy progress and have slow comprehension, Those who make difficult progress and have quick comprehension, and those who make difficult progress and have slow comprehension.

It seems the course compressed into 10 days is best suited for those who make easy progress and have quick comprehension. But some of us, myself included, would fit into category of those who make difficult progress and have slow comprehension. One experiences very tangible concrete benefits from the meditation, but to really plunge into this meditation and to immerse oneself in attempt take each to its full potential, each technique in itself could be extended for over a month, or several months.

OK, I have to - perhaps in closing - just express my appreciation and gratitude towards Merta Ada and also Burgs who have spent time with me as very good friends and very strong sources of support.

I happened to come to learn about Merta Ada, from 2 streams that came quite independently, but crystallized at the same time. First from my friend in Singapore, Dr. Why Chung, he told me that Burgs would be coming to Singapore at the end of September and that he would be teaching an 8 day course in Meditation, and suggested that I attend it. Then I just read a little description about Burgs, his background, and it mentioned that he has learned meditation - this Usada meditation - for several years under an Indonesian healer in Bali named Merta Ada. Then about a week later, I got an e-mail from close friend, a French monk, Ven. Titinnanno, telling me that he had just come from Bali and had been practicing meditation under Merta Ada, and suggested that I come to practice with him and he even offered to cover my airfare to Bali and back. So, in closing I would just have to also express my appreciation to Ven. Titinnanno, who made this course possible for me.