

*We begin with silence.  
Nurture openness and receptivity to the teachings.  
Prepare for a meeting with the unknown.*

#### WORDS

*Speak the words and phrases that touch you;  
listen deeply to words shared by others.  
Speak only words of the text and ruminate;  
let them find a home in your memory.*

#### FELT RESPONSES

*Remain absorbed in the words and turn towards resonances in the body.  
What emotions are evoked, what images?  
What is the experience of the body?  
Speak only those felt responses related specifically to the text.*

#### MEANING

*Explore the meaning of the words and phrases.  
Inquire. Do not be afraid to analyze.  
Notice how threads of meaning are woven.  
Are there ambiguities, metaphors, contexts?  
How clearly can these words be understood?*

#### DIALOGUE

*Join together in the immediate experience of the Dhamma:  
the way things actually are.  
Release the text; trust that it will inform the present moment.  
Speak to present experience, sharing observations, pain, insights.  
Listen deeply.  
There are ample silences to soak in each and every spoken word.*

*We end in silence.  
We use words when helpful, let go when unnecessary.  
Experience ripens.*

“Monks, a friend endowed with seven qualities is worth associating with. Which seven? He gives what is hard to give. He does what is hard to do. He endures what is hard to endure. He reveals his secrets to you. He keeps your secrets. When misfortunes strike, he doesn't abandon you. When you're down and out, he doesn't look down on you. A friend endowed with these seven qualities is worth associating with.”

AN 7.35

“Suppose, Bhikkhus, a wise, competent, skilful cook were to present a king or a royal minister with various kinds of curries: sour, bitter, pungent, sweet, sharp, mild, salty, bland.

“That wise, competent, skilful cook picks up the sign of his own master’s preference: ‘Today this curry pleased my master ... or he spoke in praise of this bland one.’

“That wise, competent, skilful cook gains clothing, wages, and bonuses ... because that wise ... cook picks up the sign of his own master’s preference.

“So too, Bhikkhus, here some wise, competent, skilful bhikkhu dwells contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world. While he dwells contemplating the body in the body, his mind becomes concentrated, his corruptions are abandoned, he picks up that sign. He dwells contemplating feelings in feelings ... his mind becomes concentrated, his corruptions are abandoned, he picks up that sign ... mind in mind ... his mind becomes concentrated, his corruptions are abandoned, he picks up that sign ... phenomena in phenomena, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world. While he dwells contemplating phenomena in phenomena, his mind becomes concentrated, his corruptions are abandoned, he picks up that sign.

“That wise, competent, skilful bhikkhu gains pleasant dwelling in this very life and he gains mindfulness and clear comprehension. For what reason? Because, Bhikkhus, that wise ... bhikkhu picks up the sign of his own mind.”

“Suppose, monks, a carpenter has an axe and its handle shows the marks of his fingers and thumb. He will not know that so much of the handle has worn away today, so much yesterday, and so much at other times; but he will just know of what is wasted that it has worn away. It is similar with a monk who applies himself to the meditative development of his mind: though he has no knowledge that so much of the taints has worn away today, so much yesterday and so much at other times, yet he knows of what is wasted that it is worn away.”

AN 7.67

“...imagine a tree abundant in its branches & leaves: Its buds grow to maturity, its bark grows to maturity, its sapwood grows to maturity, its heartwood grows to maturity. In the same way, when -- there being *mindfulness & alertness* -- a person is abundant in mindfulness & alertness, the prerequisite for a sense of conscience & concern becomes abundant. There being a sense of conscience & concern... the prerequisite for restraint of the senses becomes abundant. There being restraint of the senses... the prerequisite for virtue becomes abundant. There being virtue... the prerequisite for right concentration becomes abundant. There being right concentration... the prerequisite for knowledge & vision of things as they actually are present becomes abundant. There being knowledge & vision of things as they are actually present, the prerequisite for disenchantment & dispassion becomes abundant. There being disenchantment & dispassion, the prerequisite for knowledge & vision of release becomes abundant.”

AN VIII.81

“Bhikkhus, I do not say of all Bhikkhus that they still have work to do with diligence; nor do I say of all Bhikkhus that they have no more work to do with diligence... I do not say that final knowledge is achieved all at once. On the contrary, final knowledge is achieved by gradual training, by gradual practice, by gradual progress.

“And how does there come to be gradual training, gradual practice, gradual progress? Here one who has faith [in a teacher] visits him, he gives ear; one who gives ear hears the Dhamma; having heard the Dhamma, he memorizes it; he examines the meaning of the teachings he has memorized; when he examines their meaning, he gains a reflective acceptance of those teachings; when he has gained a reflective acceptance of those teachings, zeal springs up in him; when zeal has sprung up, he applies his will; having applied his will, he scrutinizes; having scrutinized, he strives; resolutely striving, he realizes with the body the ultimate truth and sees it by penetrating it with wisdom.”

MN.70.11 and 22-3

“There are these four right exertions. Which four? There is the case where a monk generates desire, endeavors, arouses persistence, upholds & exerts his intent for the sake of the non-arising of evil, unskillful qualities that have not yet arisen... for the sake of the abandoning of evil, unskillful qualities that have arisen... for the sake of the arising of skillful qualities that have not yet arisen...(and) for the maintenance, non-confusion, increase, plenitude, development, & culmination of skillful qualities that have arisen. These are the four right exertions.

“Just as the River Ganges flows to the east, slopes to the east, inclines to the east, in the same way when a monk develops & pursues the four right exertions, he flows to Unbinding, slopes to Unbinding, inclines to Unbinding.”

SN XLIX.1

"And how, Bhikkhus, do the four foundations of mindfulness, developed and cultivated, fulfill the seven enlightenment factors?"

"Bhikkhus, on whatever occasion a bhikkhu abides contemplating the body as a body (or: feelings as feelings, or: mental states as mental states, or: phenomena as phenomena), ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the world-on that occasion unremitting mindfulness is established in him. On whatever occasion unremitting mindfulness is established in a bhikkhu-on that occasion the mindfulness enlightenment factor is aroused in him and he develops it, and by development, it comes to fulfillment in him.

"Abiding thus mindful, he investigates and examines that state with wisdom and embarks upon a full inquiry into it. On that occasion the investigation of states enlightenment factor is aroused in him, and he develops it, and by development it comes to fulfillment. In one who investigates and examines, tireless energy is aroused, and he develops it, and by development it comes to fulfillment. In one who tireless energy is aroused, rapture arises, and he develops it, and by development it comes to fulfillment. In one who is rapturous, the body and mind become tranquil, and he develops it, and by development it comes to fulfillment. In one whose body is tranquil and who feels pleasure, the mind becomes concentrated, and he develops it, and by development it comes to fulfillment. He closely looks on with equanimity, and he develops it, and by development it comes to fulfillment. "

MN 118.29-37