

---

# OVERCOMING EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCES AND LEARNING THE MEANING OF LABELLING IN MEDITATION

---

(By Bhikkhu Dhammānanda)



Inter-human relationships, although we derive pleasure from them, are very often the greatest sources of suffering for human beings. Antagonism, animosities and conflict situations play a smaller or larger part in pretty much everyone's life. And the growing realisation of this is certainly one of the major reasons for the growing interest in meditation in the more advanced part of the human family.

But as research in meditation is largely still in its beginning stages, many learning meditators know little more than some basic standard instructions. Therefore, here some glimpse of how a successful meditation may look like.

Most meditators will probably in the beginning of their meditation alternate between a whole body awareness and an awareness of the in-breath and out-breath. And as they are able to refine their body and mind with this alternation of awareness, very often their physical energy

increases, but gradually also their emotional energy equally increases. Thus, whatever emotions they might have habitually suppressed, now begin to rise to the surface of their mind and gradually win in strength. Of course, for a person who has largely moved out of most of his dependencies with other human beings, intuition will quickly find the proper way of proceeding and the letting go will happen almost automatic. But for a person who is still not there yet, some further instructions may be helpful. Actually, a person who is able to attune his mind to his bodily energy, proves by that, that he possesses already a fair amount of both inner knowledge and intuition. These naturally will increase with further rightful practice. Thus, as his emotional energy increases and is seen to be of a higher kind than the physical, he will try to attune his consciousness more and more to the emotional energy revolving around the area of his heart. There he might circle around with his consciousness in a manner similar to an electron circling around the core or nucleus of an atom. And whenever the mind is contacting there something of the condition of the mind, he might ask some question such as, "What exactly is this?", "How to gain knowledge from that?", or if he is clear about what it is, he might label what he experiences there as for example 'anger, anger', or 'antagonism, antagonism' or any in the beginning perhaps usually short description or word. And as he does that, slowly some insights may arise as to how to solve the emotional problem or the problematic life situation he is involved with. This process from labelling to insights may be illustrated with the following anecdote.

It might be thought of as being similar to a child, going with his father into the forest and there sometimes asking "What is this?", "What is that?" and then learning from his father: "This is a tree, this is a bush, this is a sparrow, this is a hawk...etc.". But at a later stage, he may learn, either from his father, or having acquired interest in it upon further questioning from somebody else, that: "Such a tree may be used for building a hut, such a tree is suitable to be processed into furniture. The fruits on that bush are edible and may be made into such or such a food. Those mushrooms are poisonous,...etc.".

And learning in that manner, he may acquire a purpose in going through the forest, which will extend even beyond his stay in the forest.

In the same manner, a person begins by merely labelling his experiences (creating name-concepts), usually by asking his memory for answers. But slowly, either through gaining knowledge from outside sources, or through experimenting and studying himself, he will gradually evolve concepts of the meanings and purposes of those things that he has initially only labelled. Thus the yogi turns his suffering into a meaningful experience and a source of new knowledge.

And as he becomes able to evolve ideas while remaining in contact with the processes in and around his heart, his mind and consciousness become more and more malleable and refined. Thus he begins to perceive more and more things of a subtler kind, things of a subtler world. And he

begins to enter into that world more and more fully. And as he enters that world, whatever he perceived as his suffering before, appears to him more and more as something far away. Just as if he had been living in some village in a valley and he were troubled by some lasting rain and thus he moved up on a nearby mountain from which he could see both the village and the rain clouds below himself. In a similar manner, attuning to that subtler energy inside the body, which is ever hidden beneath what manifests within, he acquires a perspective that lets him see all suffering and problems from a distance that is untouched.