Programme: WBU BUDDHIST SUNDAY FORUM  
Topic: “THE DEVELOPMENT OF SAMATHA”  
Speaker: Ven. Dr. Preeyong Medhino (Ven. Wimoak)  
Moderator: Dr. Chris Stanford  
Rapporteur: Suttinee Yavaprapas  

On October 14th, 2555(2012) 12:00–13.30 hrs. Ven. Dr. Preeyong Medhino (Ven. Wimoak) gave a lecture on “THE DEVELOPMENT OF SAMATHA.” Ven. Wimoak is the abbot of Wat Pipphalivanaram (Master Kassapamuni) in Rayong. He obtained M.A. (Buddhist Studies) and Ph.D. (Buddhist Studies) from Mahachulalongkorn university. He has extensive experience in teaching insight meditation and has since been engaged by numerous organizations both in Thailand including Dhammasathan Chulalongkorn university and abroad such as Buddhist organization in Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Singapore. He has designed and conducted the popular program: Development of Mindfulness and Awareness in the Work Place for various private organizations and also state government including EGAT. Ven. Wimoak has gained his experience in Insight Meditation from practicing under various renowned meditation master and from his own perceptive and innate exploration. His style is described as approachable, candid and experiential.

He is known as Ven. Wimoak because his way of practice is based on the three Suttas: Ānâpânasâ Sutta (Mindfulness with Breathing), Kâyagatasati Sutta (Mindfulness Immersed Throughout the Whole Body) and Sûññata Sutta regarding Sûññata-samâdhi (Emptiness Meditation) and Sûññata-vimokkha (Liberation through Emptiness). His well-known writing is his book on the title “The Development of Mindfulness in Mind Culture.”

Ven. Wimoak started his lecture with a topic of meditation. His focus was the Ānâpânasâ Sutta. This Sutta is a famous meditation Sutta, as the basis of many schools of meditation, especially Wat Suan Mokh. He illustrated how the Sutta takes us step by step into the inner breath where we can bring the heart inside the body. When we can connect with this inner breath that is very pleasant and inspiring, we reach calmness. When we practice Samatha, the mind is developed to be with the body that becomes relaxed by itself and we become calm. When we practice Vipassana, we develop our heart with more awareness and understanding in the calmness. The body, mind and heart finally become one. Hence, while a samatha meditator gives emphasis on concentration of mind, a Vipassana meditator places importance on developing right
understanding of the body-mind processes and their true nature. So, heart and mind could be the same thing moving the attention through the breathing from the external body. It is felt by the external bodily sense at the nose and nasal passage, to the inside of the body. We should do meditation as an exercise and then later we can connect to it more in daily life especially as a brief exercise just before eating, drinking, or going out. We should stop for a moment to recall the inner breath and then do what we have to do.

He said the westerners focus too much on the object of meditation, the breath, the rising and falling of the stomach, so that awareness goes out to it and gets lost. It is better to find awareness within and then we can be mindful of the whole. More than 90% of consciousness is lost outside while we are using only less than 10% of consciousness to lead our lives. The result of consciousness leakage is the poor quality of life of a person, a family, a society and a country. Hence the mindful meditation is an insight approach to restore consciousness applied to any activities without any leakage so that it can be developed to Supreme Wisdom or Enlightenment.

The first step, he said, was awareness of the whole body, rather than a specific part. He told us not to focus on thoughts or feelings. It should come from awareness inside. This will bring lightness, happiness, rather than the heaviness of thinking. It is important to balance thinking and feeling, and both with the body. It develops right concentration through right mindfulness and awareness with the technique of anapanasati, the cultivation of mindfulness of the in and out breath. It is a very good technique of meditation because the breath is quite natural. It does not require any ego. The breath comes in and goes out by itself; it doesn't require us to do anything. Anapanasati is quite different from breath control because it is using the natural flow of the breath. There is no contriving or constructing, making it into this or that, which is what we do with most other things. It is just the natural flow of the breath. We should allow the mind to rest, dwell with, and get close to the breath, which is in itself an extremely tranquil, peaceful and soothing object. There is just the rhythmic flowing in and flowing out of the cooling, gentle touch of the breath.

It requires a lot of patience before our minds become used to this simple activity, observing and staying with the breath. So we must have patience and confidence in the teachings of the Buddha and in our teachers. Confidence will bring the attention back to the breath, turning towards the breath more fully. We must sustain our attention on the
breath and be with it. Since we become really concentrated, it causes the mind to become joyous and happy, and the body to feel rapture and bliss. This is happiness far greater than what we can derive from the sensory world. It gives us the incentive and the ability to resolve, each time we sit in meditation, to really turn towards the breath, incline towards it, be satisfied with it, knowing that the mind will be happy. We can have joy and go deep into emptiness without expectation. This is how we get into liberation through emptiness.

Ven. Wimoak is able to put Dhamma into accessible words based on direct experience, which is in contrast to the formulaic approach of most Thai monks. His instructions are adapted to the needs and audience of the day. He emphasizes mindfulness based on the heart, and knowing the mind in all postures and activities. Ven. Wimoak shows us that mindfulness awakes on its own accord when the right conditions are there. It is sensible attention and intention that brings the wakefulness in its natural state. And that is how to develop mindfulness and awareness for right concentration.