

ment." And the Buddha taught the bhikkhus the practice of conscious breathing to help them refresh themselves.

When he returned to Savatthi, the Buddha gave further teaching on breaking through attachment in response to a bhikkhu named Arittha, who was bound to narrow views because he also misunderstood the teaching. Sitting before the bhikkhus at Jetavana, the Buddha said, "Bhikkhus, if the teaching is misunderstood, it is possible to become caught in narrow views which will create suffering for oneself and others. You must listen to, understand, and apply the teaching in an intelligent manner. Someone who understands snakes uses a forked stick to pin down a snake's neck before trying to pick it up. If he picks the snake up by the tail or body, the snake can easily bite him. Just as you would use your intelligence in catching a snake, you should use it to study the teaching.

"Bhikkhus, the teaching is merely a vehicle to describe the truth. Don't mistake it for the truth itself. A finger pointing at the moon is not the moon. The finger is needed to know where to look for the moon, but if you mistake the finger for the moon itself, you will never know the real moon.

"The teaching is like a raft that carries you to the other shore. The raft is needed, but the raft is not the other shore. An intelligent person would not carry the raft around on his head after making it across to the other shore. Bhikkhus, my teaching is the raft which can help you cross to the other shore beyond birth and death. Use the raft to cross to the other shore, but don't hang onto it as your property. Do not become caught in the teaching. You must be able to let it go.

"Bhikkhus, all the teaching I have given you, such as the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, the Four Establishments of Mindfulness, the Seven Factors of Awakening, Impermanence, Non-self, Suffering, Emptiness, Signlessness, and Aimlessness, should be studied in an intelligent, open manner. Use the teachings to help you reach liberation. Do not become attached to them."

The monastery for bhikkhunis housed five hundred nuns. They frequently invited the Buddha and other Venerables

from Jetavana to come and give them Dharma talks. Venerable Ananda was asked by the Buddha to be in charge of selecting which monks should go to deliver Dharma talks to the bhikkhunis. One day he assigned Venerable Bhandā to go. Venerable Bhandā had attained deep fruits in his practice, but he was not noted for his speaking talent. The following day, after begging and eating his meal alone in the forest, he went to the bhikkhunis' center. The sisters warmly received him and Bhikkhuni Gotami invited him to sit on the pedestal to give his Dharma talk.

After settling on his cushion, he recited a short poem:

"Dwelling in tranquility,  
seeing the Dharma, returning to the source  
without hatred or violence,  
joy and peace overflow.  
Mindfulness is held perfectly;  
True peace and ease are realized.  
Transcending all desires  
is the greatest happiness."

The venerable said no more, but proceeded to enter into a state of deep concentration. Though his words had been few, his presence radiated peace and happiness, which most of the sisters found greatly encouraging. Some of the younger sisters, however, were disappointed by how short his talk was. They urged Bhikkhuni Gotami to ask if he might say something more. Bhikkhuni Gotami bowed to Venerable Bhandā and expressed the wish of the younger sisters. But Venerable Bhandā simply repeated the same poem again and then stepped down from the pedestal.

Some days later, the Buddha was told about Venerable Bhandā's Dharma talk. It was suggested to the Buddha that, in the future, monks more talented at speaking should give the Dharma talks. But the Buddha replied that a person's presence was more important than his words.

One morning after returning from his begging, the Buddha was unable to find Ananda. Venerable Rahula and others said they had not seen him. Then one bhikkhu reported that