

*This sort of structured discourse found in the Pali literature can seem like linguistic sleight-of-hand, but when one examines it closely and works with it in experience it shows itself to be an insightful and practical guide for finding one's way among the tangle of views and opinions passing for truth in our world. We cannot help but base much of our belief on insubstantial grounds, but we can avoid the pitfall of regarding our knowledge as definitively true until we have verified it directly. In terms of understanding the Dharma, we can see that the first crucial step is gaining confidence in the integrity of a teacher by means of careful investigation. The rest can develop naturally, but is bound to be a gradual evolutionary process. What we see here is not so much a circular argument as a feedback loop that cycles over and over as wisdom gradually emerges from a life of diligent investigation of truth.*

## In what way is there the discovery of truth?

A teacher may be living in some village or town. A person goes to him [or her, throughout] and **investigates** him in regard to three kinds of states: states of greed, hatred and delusion.

“Are there in this teacher any states based on greed, hatred or delusion such that, with his mind obsessed by those states, while not knowing he might say, ‘I know,’ or while not seeing he might say, ‘I see,’ or he might urge others to act in a way that would lead to their harm and suffering for a long time?”

If when he investigates him he comes to know: “There are no such states based on greed, hatred or delusion in this teacher; the bodily and verbal behavior of this teacher are not those of one affected by greed, hatred or delusion; and the Dhamma that this teacher teaches is profound, hard to see and hard to understand, peaceful and sublime, unattainable by mere reasoning, subtle, to be experienced by the wise; this Dhamma cannot easily be taught by one affected by greed, hatred or delusion,” then he places **faith** in him.

Filled with faith he **visits** him and **pays respect** to him.

Having paid respect to him, he **gives ear**.

Giving ear, he **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.

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**.

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In this way there is the discovery of truth.  
But as yet there is no final arrival at truth.

The final arrival at truth lies in the repetition, development, and cultivation of these same things.

From the *Canki Sutta (Majjhima 95)*; following Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation, *Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, Wisdom (1995).

## What is most helpful for the final arrival at truth?

**Striving** is most helpful for the final arrival at truth. If one does not strive, one will not finally arrive at truth; but because one strives, one does finally arrive at truth. And what is most helpful for striving?

**Scrutiny** is most helpful for striving. If one does not scrutinize, one will not strive; but because one scrutinizes, one strives. And what is most helpful for scrutiny?

**Application of the will** is most helpful for scrutiny. If one does not apply one's will, one will not scrutinize; but because one applies one's will, one scrutinizes. And what is most helpful for application of the will?

**Zeal** is most helpful for application of the will. If one does not arouse zeal, one will not apply one's will; but because one arouses zeal, one applies one's will. And what is most helpful for zeal?

A **reflective acceptance** of the teachings is most helpful for zeal. If one does not gain a reflective acceptance of the teachings, zeal will not spring up; but because one gains a reflective acceptance of the teachings, zeal springs up. And what is most helpful for a reflective acceptance of the teachings?

**Examination of the meaning** is most helpful for a reflective acceptance of the teachings. If one does not examine their meaning, one will not gain a reflective acceptance of the teachings; but because one examines their meaning, one gains a reflective acceptance of the teachings. And what is most helpful for examining the meaning?

**Memorizing** the teachings is most helpful for examining the meaning. If one does not memorize a teaching, one will not examine its meaning; but because one memorizes a teaching, one examines its meaning. And what is most helpful for memorizing the teachings?

**Hearing the Dhamma** is most helpful for memorizing the teachings. If one does not hear the Dhamma, one will not memorize the teachings; but because one hears the Dhamma, one memorizes the teachings. And what is most helpful for hearing the Dhamma?

**Giving ear** is most helpful for hearing the Dhamma. If one does not give ear, one will not hear the Dhamma; but because one gives ear, one hears the Dhamma. And what is most helpful for giving ear?

**Paying respect** is most helpful for giving ear. If one does not pay respect, one will not give ear; but because one pays respect, one gives ear. And what is most helpful for paying respect?

**Visiting** is most helpful for paying respect. If one does not visit [a teacher], one will not pay respect to him; but because one visits, one pays respect to him. And what is most helpful for visiting?

**Faith** is most helpful for visiting. If faith [in a teacher] does not arise, one will not visit him; but because faith [in a teacher] arises, one visits him.

# TRUTH

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There are five things that may turn out in two different ways here and now. What five?

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## FAITH

*(saddhā)*

Something may be well accepted out of faith, yet it may be empty, hollow, and false.

Something else may not be well accepted out of faith, yet it may be factual, true, and unmistaken.

If a person has faith, he preserves truth when he says: “My faith is thus;” but he does not yet come to the definite conclusion: “Only this is true, anything else is wrong.”

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## APPROVAL

*(ruci)*

Something may be well approved of, yet it may be empty, hollow, and false.

Something else may not be well approved of, yet it may be factual, true, and unmistaken.

If a person approves of something, he preserves truth when he says: “My approval is thus;” but he does not yet come to the definite conclusion: “Only this is true, anything else is wrong.”

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## ORAL TRADITION

*(anussava)*

Something may be well honored in oral tradition, yet it may be empty, hollow, and false.

Something else may not be well honored in oral tradition, yet it may be factual, true, and unmistaken.

If a person honors something in oral tradition, he preserves truth when he says: “My honoring of oral tradition is thus;” but he does not yet come to the definite conclusion: “Only this is true, anything else is wrong.”

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## REASONED CONSIDERATION

*(ākāra-parivittakka)*

Something may be well considered with reason, yet it may be empty, hollow, and false.

Something else may not be well considered with reason, yet it may be factual, true, and unmistaken.

If a person considers something with reason, he preserves truth when he says: “My reasoned consideration is thus;” but he does not yet come to the definite conclusion: “Only this is true, anything else is wrong.”

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## REFLECTIVE ACCEPTANCE OF A VIEW

*(ditṭhi-nijjhāna-kkhanti)*

Something may be well accepted upon reflection, yet it may be empty, hollow, and false.

Something else may not be well accepted upon reflection, yet it may be factual, true, and unmistaken.

If a person accepts a view upon reflection, he preserves truth when he says: “My acceptance of a view upon reflection is thus;” but he does not yet come to the definite conclusion: “Only this is true, anything else is wrong.”

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In this way there is the preservation of truth.  
But as yet there is no discovery of truth.