

## It had been a cold winter on retreat

It was February, 2012. It had been a cold winter that year to be on retreat. I had been meditating a lot and exercising as well to keep myself going. Then one day I heard that there was a funeral approaching in the monastery and the body had arrived and was laid to rest in the temple. As was my usual practice I went to see and to practice mettā meditation for the deceased. When I arrived I realized that I had met the man a few times. He was well known as an exercise fanatic, there were pictures of him in local newspapers on display were he was doing various extreme things for charity and so on.

There had been, I had heard, some strange events since his death. Apparently the Buddha figure in his home where his body had previously been had mysteriously fallen from the shrine and broken. The same had then happened in the temple. I also knew that he had had a slow and difficult passing with some awful neurological condition. My mind came to wonder whether this man had lost faith through all that and then found some way to show it after he had died.

I returned to my hut in the forest to continue practicing and for a moment felt despondent. I thought of all the exercise I was doing and of the dead man and found myself thinking, with a big sigh, “Oh, what’s the use.” After all the meditation and contemplation of the body and death I had been engaged in over the last months, something in me immediately found that thought funny, but as soon as I smiled at myself a massive wave of bliss took over my mind completely. My body was filled with light and an unbelievable rapture. This ecstatic feeling lasted a few minutes, I think, I am not sure and then I had a very clear vision of my teacher, Ajahn Anan, smiling very broadly. Then I surprised myself with another thought, “I wonder if that means he feels like that all the time.”

Two years later I was in Thailand and finally had the chance to ask Ajahn Anan about this experience. I wanted to know if he really did feel like that all the time. He said yes. I was and am still completely amazed by that. He then leant forward and with an extremely penetrating look in his eye said,

“Kalyano, that’s the highest.”

From that time to this I have kept returning my mind to that. This is a difficult practice, I need all the encouragement I can get.



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