

The Buffalo, the farmer, and the rice field...

(Based on the teachings of Ajahn Cha...)



On many Thai farms there is a farmer, a water buffalo, and a rice field. The farmer allows the water buffalo to wander anywhere it wants on the farm, except to the rice fields. However, the water buffalo's nature causes it to crave rice plants. So it occasionally wanders toward the rice plants for a quick lunch. But there are consequences...

The farmer must be diligent, watching for the water buffalo's trip to the rice field. He must turn the beast away--sometimes with a gentle nudge, sometimes with a whack from a big stick. After awhile, the water buffalo knows what is and is not acceptable behavior. After awhile, it naturally avoids the punishment associated with the rice field.

This is similar to living with our minds. The water buffalo is like our mind, the farmer like the mind's quality of knowing (or mindfulness), and the rice field is the thinking/craving part of our mind--the field of unwholesome thought, words and actions. Knowing often allows the thinking mind to wander as it interacts with the world around it. However, knowing must be vigilant to ensure the thinking mind does not wander into the field of unwholesomeness. When it does, the knowing quality of our minds uses the Buddha's teachings to help train the mind's thinking/craving quality.

We train the mind by showing it how and why thoughts, feelings, the hindrances, and other phenomena arise and how and why they pass away. We teach the mind to understand the pleasure, the danger, and way out of danger as it approaches the field of unwholesomeness. In time, the mind clearly understands its nature and the way to avoid suffering.