

The Practical Way To Nibbāna

based on Mahasatipāṭṭhana Sutta



a vmc publication

The Practical Way To Nibbāna

based on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta



VIPASSANA MEDITATION CENTRE (SINGAPORE)

Tel: +65 64453984

<http://vmc128.sm.com>

Email: vmckm@singnet.com.sg

Sabbādānaṃ dhammadānaṃ jināti
“The gift of Dhamma excels all gifts”

Sharing of Merits:
**May all beings rejoice in the accumulated merits
of this Dhammadāna.**

First Edition: March 2007 – 2000 copies

The Practical Way to Nibbāna
ISBN: 978-981-05-7625-7

Published by

Vipassana Meditation Centre (Singapore)

Printed by

Future Print Pte Ltd
10 Kaki Bukit Road 1
#01-35 Kaki Bukit Industrial Building
Singapore 416175
Tel: (65) 6842-5500 Fax: (65) 6842-6050
E-mail: admin@futureprint.com.sg



a vmc publication
2007/02

SCRIPTURAL FOREWORD

Thus have I heard:

At one time, the Blessed One was living in Kurū, where there was a market town of the Kurus, named Kammāsadamma. There the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus thus: "Bhikkhus," and the bhikkhus replied to him, "Venerable Sir." And the Blessed One spoke as follows:

This is the only way, bhikkhus, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of pain and grief, for reaching the Noble Path, for the realization of Nibbāna, namely, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

What are the four? Herein [in this teaching], bhikkhus, a bhikkhu dwells contemplating the body in the body, ardently, clearly comprehending and mindful, removing covetousness and grief in the world; he dwells contemplating the feeling in the feelings, ardently, clearly comprehending and mindful, removing covetousness and grief in the world; he dwells contemplating the consciousness in the consciousness, ardently, clearly comprehending and mindful, removing covetousness and grief in the world; he dwells contemplating the Dhamma in the Dhammas, ardently, clearly comprehending and mindful, removing covetousness and grief in the world.

PREFACE

Our Centre in brief.....

Vipassana Meditation Centre (Singapore) is one of the earliest Buddhist institutions to propagate and perpetuate the practice of Vipassana Meditation in Singapore. It was set up in 1993 as a non-profit organization with the Registrar of Societies.

VMC is set up with the objective of providing opportunities and a venue for all (Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike), who are interested in studying and practising the Teachings of the Buddha, i.e. the cultivation and development of the mind that leads to the end of all suffering. Towards this end, we strive in the best possible way to provide the earnest Truth seeker with the theoretical aspect of the method of Vipassanā Meditation (The Four Foundations of Mindfulness) that is based upon the Pāḷi canonical texts. This is followed with clear and precise instructions for putting the theories into actual practice.

From time to time, we organize meditation retreats, guided by learned and capable meditation teachers to provide opportunities for a more intensive mode of practice. Our annual Mettā retreat has been well received since we introduced it in 1998. We are also trying to set up a permanent centre which is conducive and comfortable for the practice of

Vipassanā Meditation in Singapore, as promoting the practice of Vipassanā Meditation is our primary aim.

Important annual events such as Vesak, Vassa entry and Kaṭhina on the Buddhist calendar are also observed. Besides providing opportunities to accrue merits, such occasions also allow Buddhists to understand the significance of these occasions and thus enrich their appreciation and understanding of their own faith.

Those devoted to the practice of giving and sharing may offer dāna at the centre or during meditation retreats. They may also make donations for the publications of Dhamma materials, such as Dhamma books and Dhamma CDs, for free distribution.

The activities organized by VMC are as follows: (as of December 2006)

Weekly Activities

Tuesday	7.30 pm to 9.00 pm	Pāḷi / Sutta / Paritta Pāḷi / Dhammapada Chanting Class
Friday	7.30 pm to 9.00 pm	Group Sitting Meditation

Saturday	8.00 pm to 9.00 pm	English Dhamma Talk
Sunday	2.00 pm to 4.00 pm	Children Dhamma Class
	7.30 pm to 9.30 pm	Burmese Chanting /Dhamma Talk

Monthly Activities

- Every 2nd and last Saturday of the month, there will be a One Day Mindfulness Retreat from 9 am till 6 pm.

Regular Events

- Meditation Course for Beginners will be conducted in the months of February, May, and August.
- Novitiate Programme will be conducted in the month of November/December.
- Mettā/ Vipassanā Meditation Retreat will be conducted in the months of March, May/June, August/September.

All are welcome to participate.

- The programmes are subject to change. Please check for updates at our website <http://vmc128.8m.com> or contact our centre.

Our Religious Advisors

Ovādācariya Sayādaw U Paṇḍitābhivaṃsa
(Chief Religious Advisor)

Ovādācariya Sayādaw U Paṇḍitābhivaṃsa entered a monastery in a remote village in Burma at the age of seven, and progressed to become renowned as an outstanding teacher in the tradition of Mahāsi Sayādaw famed for reviving and developing a rigorous meditation technique found in ancient texts.

Sayādaw U Paṇḍita teaches from his own profound meditative experience gained from over 70 years of monastic training, and from his detailed study of the Pāli suttas.

Since 1951, he has taught thousands of students, and travelled to many Asian countries as well as to the United States, Europe and Australia to lead retreats. He is now the abbot of Paṇḍitārama Golden Hill Meditation Center¹ in Yangon, Myanmar where he teaches ordained and lay students from Asia and the West.

¹ 80-A Than Lwin Road, Bahan Township, Yangon, Myanmar
Tel: (00951) 535 448, (00951) 705 525, Fax: (00951) 527 171. Forest Center
Branch : 247 211

Sayādaw U Paññāthami (*Religious Advisor*)

Sayādaw U Paññāthami was born in Myanmar in 1948. He received higher ordination at the age of twenty. He graduated with Sasanadhaja Dhammacariya and in his early years, Sayādaw had practiced meditation under illustrious masters, notably the late Most Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw as well as Sayādaw U Paṇḍita.

Sayādaw has many years of experience guiding meditators, easterners and westerners alike, particularly in the practice of Insight (Vipassanā) Meditation. He had carried the torch of Dhamma to many countries: Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, Canada, USA, UK, France, Belgium and Taiwan and is well respected for his skillful guidance, loving-kindness and compassion.

Since January 2000, Sayādaw U Paññāthami has been the abbot of Paṇḍitārama Sydney Meditation Cente,² Sydney, Australia. In November 2001, he founded the Paṇḍitārama Melbourne Meditation Center.³

² 18, Hilwa Street, Villawood, NSW 2163
Tel: (02) 9727 2077

³ 51, Hope Street, Springvale, VIC 3171
Tel: (03) 9574 1816

Sayādaw U Paññānanda
(Religious Advisor cum Resident Monk)

Sayādaw U Paññānanda was born in 1958. He received higher ordination at the age of twenty. He graduated with Sasanadhaja Dhammacariya and is a disciple of Sayādaw U Paṇḍita of Paṇḍitārama Golden Hill Meditation Center in Yangon, Myanmar. Sayādaw studied and practised Vipassanā Meditation under Sayādaw U Paṇḍita.

Sayādaw U Paññānanda also taught Vipassanā Meditation and gave Dhamma talks as an assistant meditation teacher while he stayed in the Paṇḍitārama Golden Hill Meditation Center. He was a Dhamma lecturer in Myanmar from 1982 to 1994.

In 1997, he came to Malaysia under the instruction of Sayādaw U Paṇḍita to teach Vipassanā Meditation in Penang and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He has been the religious advisor cum resident monk of Vipassana Meditation Centre (Singapore) since 1999.

Acknowledgements

In 2004, founder member Koe Lian Sim mooted the idea of a handbook for retreatants. She had come across several small books she found most helpful for those intent on the practical way to nibbāna and thought of putting them together in a book. Several discussions with fellow practitioner Tejinda Peh resulted in this first ever compilation, *The Practical Way To Nibbāna based on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

However, the printing of this book on Vipassanā Meditation could not have materialized without the continuous help, support and contributions of those who have worked selflessly in making this publication possible.

I would like to specially acknowledge the kind assistance of our religious advisors, resident monk and sisters/brothers in the Dhamma. Special thanks are due to:

- our Chief Religious Advisor, Ovādācariya Sayādaw U Paṇḍitābhivaṃsa, for his permission to publish part of the contents from "In This Very Life", pages 13-19 and put the material into question-and-answer form by Tharmanay Kyaw.
- Sayādaw U Dr. Sunanda of Buddhist Hermitage, Lunas, Kedah, Malaysia for his

acknowledgement to reprint the Vipassanā Meditation Instruction by the late Most Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw.

- our religious advisors, Sayādaw U Paññāthami and Sayādaw U Paññānanda for the invaluable advice in the compilation of this book.
- The VMC Publication Sub-Committee for this Publication Project.

May all of them receive the merit of this Dhammadāna and may it be the supportive factor in their spiritual quest.

May all beings in all directions receive the benefits of this Dhammadāna and attain enlightenment.

U Myint Than
President
13th Management Committee
Vipassana Meditation Centre (Singapore)
March 2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
The Meaning of Satipaṭṭhāna	1
Practical Basic Exercises in Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā Meditation	
Introduction	14
Practical Insight Meditation	
Preface	71
Part 1 :Basic Practice	
- Preparatory Stage	77
- Basic Exercise I	81
- Basic Exercise II	82
- Basic Exercise III	84
- Basic Exercise IV	95
- Summary	96
Part 2 : Progressive Practice	98
How Nibbāna is realized	125
The Way To Practise Vipassanā Meditation	141
Dhamma Discussion	157
Guidance For Yogi At Interview	172

THE MEANING OF SATIPAṬṬHĀNA

The Ovādācariya Sayādaw U
Paṇḍitābhivaṃsa

Introduction

The Venerable Sayādaw U Paṇḍita talks frequently about the meaning of *satipaṭṭhāna*. He uses etymology to explain the proper way to note and observe the arising physical and mental objects in the practice of meditation.

This detailed and practical exposition of the term *satipaṭṭhāna* goes to the Sayādaw's credit. It is a formula or recipe for success in meditation. If applied meticulously to one's practice, the dhamma will unfold in no time.

THE SEVEN BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

The practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation leads to the purification of the mind, the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, the complete destruction of physical pain and mental distress, the entering of the right path and the attainment of *nibbāna*.

THE ETYMOLOGY OF SATIPAṬṬHĀNA

The Pāli term *satipaṭṭhāna* is generally rendered as the 'Four foundations of mindfulness'. However, its full meaning can be revealed by breaking up the

compound word into its parts and examining these elements both individually and in combination.

Sati + patthana

or

Sati + pa + (t)thana

The word *sati* derives from the root meaning 'to remember' (*sam sarati*), but as a mental factor it signifies 'presence of mind, attentiveness to the present, awareness, wakefulness and heedfulness', rather than the faculty of memory of the past.

Patthāna means 'close, firm and steadfast establishment, application, setting up'.

Combining these two elements, the meaning of the compound becomes 'close, firm and steadfast establishment of awareness on the object of observation'. This kind of awareness is also called *suppatitthita sati*, 'steadfast mindfulness'.

THE FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

The four foundations of mindfulness have a single essence - mindful contemplation of natural phenomena. They are differentiated insofar as this mindful contemplation is applied to four objects: 1. the body (*kāya*) 2. the feelings (*vedanā*) 3. states of consciousness (*citta*) and 4. mental objects (*dhamma*). The latter comprise such factors as the

five hindrances, the five aggregates, the six sense bases and six sense objects (general activities), the seven factors of enlightenment and the four noble truths.

SATI

'Mindfulness' has come to be the accepted English translation of the term *sati*. However, this is an incomplete rendering. 'Observing power' is a more adequate translation. The full scope of its meaning will be explained by examining its various aspects, such as characteristic, function, manifestation, proximate cause and the further distinguishing factors of mindfulness.

a) Non-superficiality

Sati has the **characteristic** of not wobbling; that is, of not floating away from the object (*apilāpana lakkaṇā*). The commentators have given the simile of cork or a dried, hollow pumpkin thrown into water. The cork or pumpkin will pop up and down on the surface of the water. In the same way, the noting and observing mind should **not** skim over the object in a superficial manner. Instead, the mind should sink or plunge into the object of observation, just as when a stone is thrown into water it will sink or plunge to the bottom.

Suppose you are watching your abdomen as the object of your *satipaṭṭhāna* practice. You try to be very firm, focusing your attention on the main object so that the mind will not skip off. Instead, the mind

will sink deeply into the process of rising and falling. As the mind penetrates this process, you can comprehend its true nature: tension, pressure, movement and so on.

b) Keeping the object in view

The *function* of *sati* is the absence of confusion, or non-forgetfulness (*asammosa rasa*). This means that the noting and observing mind should neither lose sight of, nor miss, nor forget, nor allow the object of observation to disappear. To express this aspect positively, the function of *sati* is to keep the object always in view. Just as a footballer never loses sight of the football, a badminton player the shuttlecock and a boxer his opponent's movements, so too the yogi never loses sight of the object of mindfulness.

c) Confrontation and protection

There are two manifestations of *sati*, namely, coming face-to-face with the object; and protection.

• Face-to-face with the object

The chief manifestation of *sati* is confrontation – it sets the mind directly, face-to-face with the object of observation (*visayabhimukha bhava paccupaṭṭhāna*). *Sati* manifests as the mind in a state (*bhava*) of confronting, face-to-face (*abhimukha*) with an object or objective field (*visaya*).

It is said that the human face is the index of character. Therefore, if you want to 'size up' a person, you have to be face-to-face with that person

and examine his or her face carefully. Then your judgment will be correct. But if you stand at an angle, behind or far away from that other person, then you will not be able to distinguish the distinctive features of his face.

Similarly, when you are observing the rising movement of your abdomen, if the mind is really face-to-face with the rising movement, you will notice different sensations in the rising such as tension, pressure, heat, coolness or movement.

• **Protection**

If the noting and observing mind remains face-to-face with the object of observation for a significant period of time, the yogi can discover a great purity of mind due to the absence of *kilesas* (mental defilements). This purity is the result of the second manifestation of *sati* – guardianship or protection from attack by the *kilesas* (*āraṅkha paccupaṭṭhāna*). With *sati* present, mental defilements have no chance to enter the stream of consciousness.

Sati is likened to a doorkeeper because it guards the six sense-doors. A doorkeeper does not admit bad and destructive people, he admits only good and useful people. *Sati* does not admit unwholesomeness (*akusala*); it admits only wholesomeness (*kuṣāla*). By not accepting *akusala*, the mind is protected.

d) The proximate causes of mindfulness

The **proximate causes** for the arising of *sati* are: strong perception (*thirasaññā padaṭṭhāna*) and the four foundations of mindfulness (*kāyādi satipaṭṭhāna padaṭṭhāna*).

• Strong perception

In order to be mindful of an object, strong and firm (*thira*) perception of it is necessary. As much as perception (*saññā*) is firm, strong and steadfast, mindfulness will also be firm, strong and steadfast.

The two functions of perception are the recording and the recognition of formations (*sankhāra*), irrespective of their wholesome or unwholesome nature. *Saññā* is compared to the recording of talks with the help of a tape or video recorder. The recording takes place regardless of the content or quality of the talks. A clear, high quality recording such as a state-of-the-art digital recording on CD of a classical concert or opera, is the cause for a clear, strong, impressive listening experience (mindfulness) when replaying the recording.

Similarly, in the meditation practice a strong, clear-cut perception (noting or labelling) of the arising objects of observation is very supportive of strong clear-cut, steadfast mindfulness.

• Four foundations of mindfulness

Another proximate cause for the arising of *sati* is the four foundations of mindfulness (*kāyādi*

satipaṭṭhāna padaṭṭhāna). That is, mindfulness itself is the cause of mindfulness. In fact, the development of mindfulness is the result of continuous momentum, one moment of mindfulness causing the next.

This can be compared to the process of acquiring an education, assuming that the student is studious and does his homework respectfully. Lessons learnt in the lower grades are a cause for learning lessons in the higher grade. Primary school education is a cause for high school education, and this in turn serves as a cause for tertiary and university education.

In a nutshell, mindfulness leads to ever greater and stronger mindfulness.

IMMEDIACY

Immediacy in the awareness of an object of observation is very important. Nothing should come between the presently arising object and the noting and observing. The arising object and the noting mind should not be separated in time. The observation of the presently arising object should happen at once, without any delay. It should be instant. As soon as the object of observation arises it should be noted and observed.

If one's noting and observing is delayed, then the object will have already passed by the time one's awareness turns to it. Objects of the past and future

cannot be known correctly, and if the attention cannot remain with objects as they arise, then it is no longer *vipassanā* practice. It is no longer dwelling in the reality.

CONCURRENCE

When two or more processes occur at the same time, it is the phenomenon of 'concurrence'. Concurrence of the noting and observing mind and the object of observation is an important aspect of *sati*. For example, when an object arises, the mind falls on the object simultaneously with its arising, synchronically with it.

EXTRAORDINARY MINDFULNESS

The particle *pa* of *sati-pa-tthana* specifies that the mindfulness should be of an extraordinary or outstanding nature (*visiṭṭha*); excessive, intensive and persistent (*bhusattha*). Ordinary mindfulness is out of place in intensive *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation. It is this nature of the particle *pa*, and its practical aspects, which we shall now explore.

a) Rushing (*pa-kkhanditvā pavattati*)

The particle *pa* of *sati-pa-tthana* can also be interpreted as *pa-kkhandana*: rushing, leaping, plunging. As soon as the object of observation arises, the mind has to rush forward towards and into the object of observation with great force, with courage. It attacks the object without hesitation, without thinking, reflecting, analyzing, imagining,

questioning, considering, speculating or fantasizing. Thus, several aspects are involved in 'rushing':

- Sudden, impetuous, quick and swift movement with violence, speed or great force, strength and dynamism.

Simile: like rushing somebody to the hospital.

- Capturing, catching or arresting by sudden attack; to make a swift attack or assault, to charge.

Simile: The soldiers capture and defeat the enemy troops in a sudden, forceful attack.

- An eager movement of many people to get to a particular place.

Simile: The crowds rush through the gates of the football stadium just before the game begins.

- To move urgently, with excessive speed, haste, or hurry.

Simile: A person at work may say, "I'm in a dreadful rush" or in accordance with the saying, 'Strike while the iron is hot', one notes and observes the object while it is 'fresh' or 'hot'.

Yogis should not be noting and observing in a stop-and-go manner. The awareness should not be slack,

sluggish, casual; not lagging behind or late; not gazing. It should be without wandering mind, with no room for thoughts. The noting and observing should not be in a cool and hesitating manner; instead, it must be rushing in a systematic and orderly manner.

b) Firmly grasping or seizing the object (*upagganhitva pavattati*)

A rice farmer when harvesting paddy needs to firmly grasp or seize a bushel of rice. Only then will he be able to cut it with a sickle. Similarly, a meditator has to firmly grasp the object of observation so that the mind will neither slip off nor lose the object under observation.

As mindfulness becomes steadfast, the yogi will be able to firmly seize coarse objects. With more practice, attention can hold on to more refined objects and eventually even very subtle objects can be firmly grasped by the mind. Therefore, a yogi should first try to grasp physical objects before attempting to seize the more subtle type of mental objects like intentions, thoughts, etc.

c) Covering the object completely (*pattharivā pavattati*)

The noting and observing mind must cover the object of observation completely, spreading over the entire object, enveloping it, grasping it in its entirety. Not just a part of the object must be observed, but

the object should be noted and observed from the beginning, through its middle, to its end.

d) Unbroken continuity (pavattati)

In the practical sense, this aspect means that the noting and observing of the arising objects of observation should be continuous, that is, one moment of mindfulness connected to the next moment of mindfulness, moment after moment. The preceding moment of mindfulness should be connected with the succeeding moment of mindfulness. In brief, mindfulness should be sustained.

Similes:

- If there is a gap between two floor planks, dust and sand may enter. If there is no continuity of mindfulness and there is a gap, defilements may enter.
- In the past one had to start a fire by rubbing two sticks together. If one fails to rub continuously, but instead takes a rest and resumes rubbing later, no fire will start. Similarly, if mindfulness is not continuous, the fire of wisdom will not ignite.

To reaffirm this aspect negatively, the noting and observing, or mindfulness, of the objects should not have gaps but be continuous; it should not proceed in a stop-and-go manner. People who practice in fits and starts, resting occasionally and then starting

again, being mindful for a stretch and then stopping to daydream, are known as 'chameleon yogis'.

NON-MANIPULATING

The universal characteristic of 'not-self' (*anattā*) can be applied to the process of noting and observing the arising physical and mental objects.

A meditator must take great care to watch the objects of observation without manipulating, controlling or governing them. He should simply observe what is there – not what he expects or wants to be there.

CONCLUSION

What can we now say *satipaṭṭhāna* is? *Satipaṭṭhāna* is mindfulness of any noted object by rushing to, entering into and spreading over it, so that the mind stays closely and firmly with it. When noting 'rising', the mind enters the noted object; that is, the rising movement of the abdomen. The mindfulness rushes into it and spreads over it so that the mind stays closely and firmly on this object or phenomenon. The process is then repeated when noting 'falling', and so on for all other objects that arise in the body and mind.

Therefore in conclusion, *sati* or mindfulness must be dynamic and confrontational. Mindfulness should leap forward onto the object, covering it completely, penetrating into it and not missing any part of it.

If your mindfulness has these qualities, then swift progress in meditation is guaranteed and, with the fulfillment of the practice, seeing *nibbāna* is assured.

SATIPATṬHĀNA AT A GLANCE

- Close and firm establishment;
- Non-superficiality;
- Keeping the object in view;
- Face-to-face with the object;
- Protection of the mind from attack by *kilesas*;
- Strong perception;
- Mindfulness is the cause of mindfulness;
- Rushing and plunging;
- Firmly grasping the object;
- Completely covering, or spreading over, the object;
- Immediacy;
- Continuity;
- Concurrence;
- Non-manipulating.

THE SATIPATṬHĀNA VIPASSANĀ MEDITATION

A Basic Buddhist Mindfulness Exercise

The Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw

Agga Mahā Paṇḍita

INTRODUCTION

Satipaṭṭhāna or the practice of mindfulness was recommended by the Buddha for all who seek to grow spiritually and eventually attain the realization of enlightenment. Buddhism itself is essentially a practical path, a system of physical and psychological techniques designed to bring about this realization. The method here described in this little book by the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw, Bhadanta Sobhana Mahāthera, Agga Mahā Paṇḍita, the spiritual head of Sāsana Yeikthā Meditation Centre, Rangoon, is the foundation of all Buddhist meditation practice. This form of meditation may be practised with benefit by all, Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike, because its aim is simply to expand the practitioner's consciousness and bring him face to face with his mind.

Buddhist psychology or **Abhidhamma** teaches that you are not your mind. You already know that you

are not your body. But you do not yet know that you are not your mind, because normally you identify yourself with each thought, feeling, impulse, emotion or sensation that comes into your mind. Each takes you on a little trip. Through the practice of mindfulness, you come to observe the rise and fall, the appearance and disappearance of these various thoughts and feelings, and gradually develop a sense of distance and detachment from them. Then you will no longer become caught up by your hangups. This leads to a deep inner peaceful calm. Through further practice, you will develop insight and wisdom, which is the power of consciousness to pierce through the veils of illusion and ignorance to the reality that lies beyond.

At the request of the former Prime Minister of the Union of Burma and of the President of the Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Association of Rangoon, the **Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw** came down from Shwebo to Rangoon on 10th November 1949. The Meditation Centre at the Thāthana Yeikthā, Hermitage Road, Rangoon, was formally opened on 4th December 1949 when the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw began to give to twenty-five devotees a methodical training in the right system of **Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā** (Insight Meditation through Mindfulness).

From the first day of the opening of the Centre, a discourse on the exposition of the **Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā**, its purpose, the method of practice, the

benefits derived there from, etc., has been given daily to each batch of devotees arriving at the Centre almost every day to undertake the intensive course of training. The discourse lasts normally for one hour and thirty minutes, and the task of talking almost daily in this manner had inevitably caused a strain. Fortunately the Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha Association came forward to relieve the situation with an offer of charity of a tape recorder machine with which the discourse given on 27th July 1951 to a group of fifteen devotees undertaking the training was taken on tape. Thereafter this tape-recorded discourse has been in constant use daily, preceded by a few preliminary remarks spoken by the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw in person.

Then owing to the great demand of many branch Meditation Centres of the **Mahāsī Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā** as well as of the public, this discourse was published in book form in 1954. This book has now run into several editions. As there was also a keen interest and eager demand among many devotees of other nationalities who are unacquainted with Burmese, the discourse was translated into English by the late U Pe Thin, a lay disciple and practised Mahāsī yogi, who had acted as interpreter to British Rear Admiral Shattock who went through a course of *Vipassanā* meditation practice at the Centre in its early days.

Explanatory Note on certain technical Buddhist terms

Dhamma (Sanskrit **Dharma**) may mean (1) the doctrine of the Buddha, (2) the Truth, (3) the Ultimate Reality, (4) the correct conduct of life, (5) the ultimate psychic events which combine to form the content of consciousness.

Ñāṇa may mean Gnosis or higher spiritual knowledge and illumination, or could signify an individual cognition of this type.

Samādhi may mean (1) ordinary attention, (2) concentration of mind so it becomes one-pointed, (3) ecstatic trance, (4) a general name for all the various practices of mindfulness and meditation.

The aim of Buddhist psychology (known as **Abhidhamma**) is to show that the mind is in reality an impersonal process composed of a large number of elementary psychic events called **dhammas**.

Through mindful observation one comes to realize that there is no permanent abiding entity called a self or ego in the **Khandhās** (Sanskrit **Skandhas**) (the five aggregates of human existence). The result of this realization is a detachment from the sensations, feelings, thoughts, ideas, impulses, etc, which are continually arising in the mind. The insight into this and full realization of it, is known as **Paññā** (Sanskrit **Prajna**) or wisdom.

Namo Buddhassa

Honour to the Fully Enlightened One

On coming across the Teachings (*sāsana*) of Lord Buddha it is most important for every one to cultivate in oneself the virtues of Morality, Concentration and Wisdom (*sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*). One should, undoubtedly, possess these three virtues.

Morality (*sīla*) is the observance, by lay-people, of five precepts as a minimum measure. For monks it is the discipline of the Rules of Conduct for Monks (*pātimokkha sīla*). Any one who is well-disciplined in Morality would be reborn in the happy existence of human beings or *devas*. But this ordinary form of Ordinary morality (*lokiya sīla*) would not be a safeguard against the relapse into the lower states of miserable existence, such as hell, or animal or Hungry Ghost (*peta*). It is, therefore, desirable to cultivate the higher form of Supramundane Morality (*lokuttara sīla*) as well. This is Path and Fruition Morality (*magga* and *phala sīla*). When one has fully acquired the virtue of this Morality one is saved from the relapse into the lower states, and one will always lead a happy life by being reborn as human beings or angels (*devas*). Everyone should, therefore, make it a point of one's duty to work for the Supramundane Morality. There is every hope of success for anyone who works sincerely and in real earnest. It would indeed be a pity if anyone were to

fall to take advantage of this fine chance of being endowed with the higher qualities, for one would undoubtedly be a victim sooner or later of his own bad *Kamma* which would pull him down to lower states of miserable existence of hell, or animal or *petā*, where the span of life lasts for many hundreds, thousands or millions of million years. It is therefore emphasized here that this coming across the Teachings of Lord Buddha is the very opportunity for working for the Path and Fruition Morality.

It is not feasible to work for the Morality alone. It is also necessary to practise Concentration (*samādhi*). Concentration is the fixed or tranquil state of mind. The ordinary or undisciplined mind is in the habit of wandering to other places; it cannot be kept under control; it follows any idea, thought or imagination, etc. In order to prevent its wandering, the mind should be made to attend repeatedly to a selected object of Concentration. On gaining practice, the mind gradually loosens its traits and remains fixed on the object to which it is directed. This is Concentration. There are two forms of Concentration, viz, Ordinary Concentration and Supramundane Concentration. Of these two, the practice in the Meditational Development of Peaceful Calm (*samatha bhāvanā*) viz: Mindful Breathing, Meditation on Friendliness, Meditational Devices (*ānāpāna, mettā, kasiṇa*) will enable the development of the states of Ordinary Absorption (*lokiya jhāna*) such as four Form Absorptions (*rūpa-jhānas*) and four Formlessness Absorptions (*arūpa-*

jhānas), by virtue of which one would be reborn in the plane of *Brahma*. The life span of *Brahma* is very long and lasts for one world cycle, two, four, eight up to a limit of eighty-four thousands of world-cycles as the case may be. But at the end of the lifespan a *Brahma* will die and be reborn as human being or angel. If he leads a virtuous life all the time he may lead a happy life in higher existence. But as he is not free from Defilements (*kilesas*) he may commit demeritorious deeds on many occasions. He will then be a victim of his bad *Kamma* and will be reborn in hell or other lower states of miserable existence. This Ordinary Absorption also is not a definite security. It is desirable to Work for the Supramundane Concentration, which is nothing but Path and Fruition Concentration (*maggā samādhi* and *phala Samādhi*). To possess this Concentration is essential to cultivate Wisdom.

There are two forms of Wisdom, namely, Mundane and Supramundane. Today the knowledge of literature, art, science or worldly affair is usually regarded as a kind of Wisdom. But this form of wisdom has nothing to do with any kind of Meditational Development (*bhāvanā*). Nor can it be regarded as of real merit because many weapons of destruction are invented through these knowledges, which are always under the influence of greed, hatred and other evil motives. The real spirit of that which is Ordinary Wisdom (*lokiya paññā*) on the other hand has only merits and no demerits of any kind. The knowledge in welfare organizations and

relief workers without causing any harm: learning to acquire the knowledge of the true meaning or sense of the scriptures, and the three classes of knowledge in Insight Meditation (*vipassanā bhāvanā*), such as, Wisdom which consists of Learning (*suta-maya-paññā*) - knowledge based on learning; Wisdom which consists of Reflective Thinking (*cintā-maya-paññā*) - knowledge based on thinking; and Wisdom which consists of Meditational Development (*bhāvanā-maya-paññā*) - knowledge based on mental development, are Ordinary Wisdom (*lokiya paññā*). The virtue of possessing Ordinary Wisdom would lead to a happy life in higher states of existence, but it cannot prevent the risk of being reborn in hell or other lower states of miserable existence. Only the development of Supramundane Wisdom can decidedly remove this risk.

The Supramundane Wisdom is Path and Fruition. To develop this Wisdom it is necessary to carry on the practice of Meditational Development of Insight (*vipassanā bhāvanā*) out of the three forms of discipline in cultivating Morality, Concentration and Wisdom. When the virtue of Wisdom is duly developed, the necessary qualities of Morality and Concentration are also acquired.

The method of developing this Wisdom is to observe matter and mind which are the two sole elements existing in a body with a view to know them in their true form. At present times experiments in the analytical observation of matter are usually carried

out in laboratories with the aid of various kinds of instruments; yet these methods cannot deal with mind stuff. The method of Lord Buddha does not, however, require any kind of instrument or outside aid. It can successfully deal with both matter and mind. It makes use of one's own mind for analytical purpose by fixing bare attention on the activities of matter and mind as they occur in the body. By continually repeating this form of exercise the necessary Concentration can be gained and when the Concentration is keen enough, the ceaseless course of arising and passing away of matter and mind will be vividly perceptible.

The body consists solely of the two distinct groups of matter and mind. The solid substance of body as it is now found belongs to the former group of matter. According to the usual enumeration in terms of Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Eye, Form (*paṭhavī, āpo, tejo, vāyo, cakku, rūpa*), there are altogether twenty-eight kinds in this group but in short it may be noted that the body is a mass of matter. For instance it is just like a doll made of clay or wheat which is nothing but a collection of clay dust or wheat powder. Matter changes its form under physical conditions of heat, cold, etc., and because of this fact of changeableness under contrary physical conditions it is called Form (*rūpa*). It does not possess any faculty of knowing an object.

In the **Abhidhamma**, the proper name for the third division of the Buddhist scriptures, dealing with the

metaphysical and psychological, the elements of mind and matter are classified differently as Things Which Possess Consciousness and Things Which Lack Consciousness (*sarammana dhamma* and *anārammana dhamma*) respectively. The element of mind has an object, or holds an object, or knows an object while that of matter does not have an object, nor holds an object, nor knows an object. It will thus be seen that the Abhidhamma has directly stated that there is no faculty of knowing an object in the element of matter. A yogi also perceives in like manner, that is, 'material element has no faculty of knowing'. Logs and pillars, bricks and stones and lumps of earth are a mass of matter; they do not possess any faculty of knowing. It is the same case with material elements constituting a living body; they have no faculty of knowing. The material elements in a dead body are like those of a living body; they are without the faculty of knowing. But people have a general idea that material elements of a living body possess the faculty of knowing an object irrespective of the fact whether it is in a dead or a living body.

Then what is that which knows the objects now? It is the element of mind which comes into being depending on matter. It is called Mind (*nāma*) because it inclines to an object. Mind is also spoken of as 'thought' or 'consciousness'. Mind arises depending on matter as will be described hereafter. Depending on eye, eye-consciousness (seeing) arises; depending on ear, ear-consciousness (hearing)

arises; depending on nose, nose-consciousness (smelling) arises; depending on tongue, tongue-consciousness (taste) arises; depending on body, body-consciousness (sense of touch) arises. There are many kinds, either good or bad, of the sense of touch. While it has a wide field of action by running throughout the whole length of body, inside and outside, the sense of sight, hearing, smell, or taste can on the other hand come into being respectively in its own particular sphere, such as eye, ear, nose, and tongue, which occupies a very small and limited space of the body. These senses of touch, sight, etc. are nothing but the elements of mind. Also there comes into being the mind-consciousness (i.e., thoughts, ideas, imaginations, etc.) depending on mind-base. All of these are elements of mind. Mind as a rule knows an object while matter does not know.

People generally believe that, in the case of seeing, it is the eye which actually sees. They think that seeing and eye are one and the same thing. They also think, "Seeing is I: I see things: eye and seeing and I are one and the same person." In actual fact this is not so. Eye is one thing and seeing is another and there is no separate entity such as 'I' or 'Ego'. There is only the fact of "seeing" coming into being depending on eye.

To quote an example, it is like the case of a person who sits in a house. House and person are two separate things: House is not the person nor is

person the house. Similarly it is so at the time of seeing. Eye and seeing are two separate things: eye is not seeing nor is seeing eye.

To quote another example, it is just like the case of a person in a room who sees many things when he opens the window and looks through it. If it be asked, "Who is it that sees? Is it window or person that actually sees?" The answer is, "The window has no ability to see; it is only the person who sees." If it be asked again, "Will the person be able to see things on the outside without the window?" then the answer will be, "It will not be possible to see things through the wall without the window; one can only see through the window." Similarly, in the case of seeing there are two separate things of eye and seeing: eye is not seeing nor is seeing the eye. Yet there cannot be an act of seeing without the eye. In fact seeing comes into being depending on eye. It is now evident that in the body there are only two distinctive elements of matter (eye) and mind (seeing) at every moment of seeing. In addition there is also a third element of matter (visual object). At times the visual object is noticeable outside the body. If the last one is added there will be three elements, two of which (eye and visual object) are material and the third of which (seeing) is mental. Eye and visual object being material elements do not possess any ability of knowing an object, while seeing being a mental element can know the visual object and what it looks like. Now it is clear that there exist only two separate elements of matter and mind at the

moment, and the arising of this pair of two separate elements is known as 'seeing'.

People who are without the training and knowledge of the Meditational Development of Insight (*vipassanā bhāvanā*) hold the view that seeing belongs to or is "self, or ego, or living entity, or person". They believe that "Seeing is I; or I am seeing; or I am knowing". This kind of view or belief is called the Erroneous View That There is a Self (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). *Sakkāya* means the group of matter (*rūpa*) and mind (*nāma*) as they exist distinctively. *Diṭṭhi* means to hold a wrong view of belief. The compound word of *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* means to hold a wrong view or belief on the dual set of Matter and Mind which are in real existence. For more clarity it will be explained further as to the manner of holding the wrong view or belief. At the moment of seeing, the things that are in actual existence are the eye and visual object of material group, and the seeing which belongs to mental group. These two kinds are in actual existence. Yet people hold the view that this group of elements is "self, or ego, or living entity". They consider that "seeing is I; or what is seen is I; or I see my own body". Thus this mistaken view is taken on the simple act of seeing as 'self', which is *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi*.

As long as one is not free from *sakkāya-diṭṭhi*, one cannot expect to escape from the risk of falling into miserable existence of hell, or animal, or *peta*. Though he may be leading a happy life in the human

or *deva* world by virtue of his merits, yet he is liable to fall back into the state of miserable life at any time when his demerits operate. For this reason Lord Buddha pointed out that it was essential to work for the total removal of *Sakkāya-ditṭhi* as follows:

***Sakkāya ditṭhippahānāya sato bhikkhu
paribbaje***

This says: "Though it is the wish of everyone to avoid old age, disease and death, yet no one can help it but must inevitably submit to them one day."

After death, rebirth follows. Rebirth in any state of existence does not depend on one's own wish. It is not possible to avoid rebirth in the realm of hell, or animal, or *peta* by merely wishing for an escape. Rebirth takes place in any state of existence as the circumstances of one's own deeds provide, and there is no choice at all. For these reasons, the Wheel of Rebirth (*Saṃsāra*) is very dreadful. Every effort should therefore be made to acquaint oneself with the miserable conditions of *Saṃsāra* and then to work for an escape from this incessant cycle, and for the attainment of *Nibbāna*. If an escape from *Saṃsāra* as a whole is not possible for the present, an attempt should be made for an escape at least from the round of rebirth in the realm of hell, or animal, or *peta*. In this case, it is necessary to work for the total removal from oneself of the erroneous view that there is a self, which is the root cause of rebirth in the miserable states. This erroneous view

can only be destroyed completely by the Holy Path and its Fruition (*ariya magga* and *phala*) and three virtues of Morality, Concentration and Wisdom. It is, therefore, imperative to work for the development of these virtues. How to work? That is, Sato: by means of noting or observing; Paribbaje: must go out from the jurisdiction of Defilement (*kilesa*). One should practise by constantly noting or observing every act of seeing, hearing, etc., which are the constituent physical and mental processes of the body till one is freed from *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi*.

For these reasons, advice is always given here to take up the practice of *Vipassanā* Meditation. Now yogis have come here for the purpose of practising *Vipassanā* Meditation, who may be able to complete the course of training and attain the Holy Path in a short time. *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* will then, be totally removed and security against the danger of rebirth in the realm of hell, or animal, or *peta* will be finally gained.

In this respect the exercise is simply to note or observe the existing elements in every act of seeing. It should be noted as 'seeing, seeing' on every act of seeing. (By the terms of note or observe or contemplate, it means the act of keeping the mind fixedly on the object with a view to knowing clearly) Because of this fact of keeping the mind fixedly by noting as 'seeing, seeing' at times a visual object is noticed, at times consciousness of seeing is noticed, or at times it is noticed as eye-base or as a place

from which it sees. It will serve the purpose if one can notice distinctly any one of the three. If not, basing on this act of seeing, there will arise the erroneous view of self which will view it in the form of a person or belonging to a person and in the sense of Permanence, Happiness and Selfhood (*nicca, sukha* and *attā*), which will arouse attachment and craving. The Defilements will in turn prompt deeds, and the deeds will bring forth rebirth of new existence. Thus the process of dependent origination operates and the vicious cycle of *Saṃsāra* revolves incessantly. In order to prevent this from the source of seeing, it is necessary to note as 'seeing, seeing' on every occasion of seeing.

Similarly, in the case of hearing, there are only two distinct elements of matter and mind. The sense of hearing arises depending on ear. While ear and sound are two elements of matter, the sense of hearing is an element of mind. In order to know clearly any one of these two kinds of matter and mind, it should be noted as 'hearing, hearing' on every occasion of hearing. So also it should be noted as 'smelling, smelling' on every occasion of smelling, and as 'knowing, knowing' on every occasion of knowing the taste.

Similarly, it should be noted in the case of knowing or feeling the sensation of touch in the body. There is a kind of material element known as Nerve Tissue (*kāya-pasāda*) throughout the body which receives every impression of touch. Every kind of touch,

either agreeable or disagreeable, usually comes in collision with Nerve Tissue and there arises a Touch Consciousness (*kāya-viññāṇa*) which feels or knows the touch on each occasion. It will now be seen that at every time of touching, there are two elements of matter, viz, sense-organ and impression of touch, and one element of mind, viz, knowing of touch. In order to know these things distinctly at every time of touch, the practice of noting as 'touching, touching' has to be carried out. This merely refers to the common form of sensation of touch. There are special forms which accompany painful or disagreeable sensations, such as, to feel stiff or tired in the body or limbs, to feel hot, to feel pain, to feel numb, to feel ache, etc. Because Feeling (*vedanā*) predominates in these cases, it should be noted as 'feeling hot, feeling tired, painful', etc. as the case may be.

It may also be mentioned that there occur many sensations of touch in hands and legs, etc., on each occasion of bending, stretching, or moving. Because of mind wanting to move, stretch or bend, the material activities of moving, stretching, or bending, etc., occur in series. (It may not be possible to notice these incidents for the present. They can only be noticed after some time on gaining practice. It is mentioned here for the sake of Knowledge) All activities in movements and in changing, etc., are done by these minds. When the mind wills to bend, there arises a series of inward movements of hand or leg; when the mind wills to stretch or move, there

arises a series of outward movements or movements to and fro respectively. They disappear or are lost soon after they occur and at the very point of occurrence. (One will notice these incidents later on.)

In every case of bending, stretching or other activities, there arises in the foremost a series of intending or willing minds, and on account of which there occur in the hands and legs a series of material activities, such as stiffening (or being hard), bending, stretching, or moving to and fro. These activities come up against other material elements, nerve tissue, and on every occasion of collision between material activities and sensitive qualities, there arises Touch Consciousness, which feels or knows the sensation of touch. It is, therefore, clear that material activities are the predominating factors in these cases. It is necessary to note these predominating factors. If not, there will surely arise the wrong view of holding these activities in the sense of "I or I am bending, or I am stretching, or My hands, or My legs." This practice of noting as 'bending, stretching, moving' is being carried out for the purpose of removing such a wrong view.

As regards 'thoughts, imaginations', etc., it may be mentioned that depending on mind-base, there arise a series of mental activities, such as thinking, imagining, etc., or to speak in a general sense, a series of mental activities arise depending on this body. In reality each case is a composition of matter and mind; mind-base or body is matter, while

thinking, imagining, etc., are mind. In order to be able to note matter and mind clearly, it should be noted as 'thinking, imagining', etc., in each case.

After having carried out the practice in the manner indicated above for a time, there may be an improvement in Concentration. One will notice that the mind no longer wanders about but remains fixedly on the object to which it is directed. At the same time the power of noting has considerably developed. On every occasion of noting, he notices only two processes of matter and mind. A dual set of object and mind, which makes note of the object, is thus coming into existence.

Again on proceeding further with the practice of contemplation for some time, one notices that nothing remains permanent but everything is in a state of flux. New things arise each time: each of them is noted every time as it arises; it then vanishes. Immediately another arises, which is again noted and which then vanishes. Thus the process of arising and vanishing goes on, which clearly shows that nothing is permanent. One is therefore convinced that "things are not permanent" because it is noticed that they arise and vanish at every time of noting. This is Insight into impermanency (*aniccānupassanā-ñāṇa*).

Then one is also convinced that arising and vanishing are not desirable. This is Insight into Suffering (*dukkhānupassanā-ñāṇa*). Besides, one

usually experiences many painful sensations in the body, such as tiredness, feeling hot, painful, aching, and at the time of noting these sensations, he generally feels that this body is a collection of suffering. This is also Insight into Suffering.

Then at every time of noting, it is found that elements of matter and mind occur according to their respective nature and conditioning, and not according to one's wish. One is therefore convinced that they are elements: they are not governable: they are not person or living entity. This is Insight into the Absence of a Self (*anattānupassanā-ñāṇa*).

On having fully acquired these knowledges of Impermanence, Suffering, Absence of Self (*anicca, dukkha, anattā*), the maturity of Spiritual Knowledge of the Path and Spiritual Knowledge of its Fruition (*magga ñāṇa* and *phala ñāṇa*) takes place and realization of *Nibbāna* is won. By winning the realization of *Nibbāna* in the first stage, one is freed from the round of rebirth in the unhappy life of lower existence. Everyone should, therefore, endeavor to reach the first stage as a minimum measure.

It has already been explained that the actual method of practice in *Vipassanā* Meditation is to note or to observe or to contemplate the successive occurrences of seeing, hearing, etc., at six points or sense doors. However, it will not be possible for a beginner to follow up all successive incidents as they

occur because his Mindfulness, Concentration and Spiritual Knowledge (*sati*, *samādhi* and *nāna*) are still very weak. The incidents of seeing, hearing, etc., occur very swiftly. Seeing seems to occur at the time of hearing; hearing seems to occur at the time of seeing; it seems that both seeing and hearing occur simultaneously. It seems that three or four incidents of seeing, hearing, thinking, and imagining usually occur simultaneously. It is not possible to distinguish which occurs first and which follows next because they occur so swiftly. In actual fact, seeing does not occur at the time of hearing nor does hearing occur at the time of seeing. Such incidents can occur one only at a time. A yogi who has just begun the practice and who has not sufficiently developed Mindfulness, Concentration and Spiritual Knowledge will not, however, be in a position to observe all these incidents singly as they occur in serial order. A beginner need not therefore follow up on many things, but should instead start with a few things. Seeing or hearing occurs only when due attention is given. If one does not pay heed to any sight or sound, one may pass the time mostly without any occasion of seeing or hearing. Smelling occurs rarely. Experience of taste occurs only at the time of eating. In the cases of seeing, hearing, smelling and tasting, the yogi can note them when they occur.

However, body impressions are ever present: they usually exist quite distinctly all the time. During the time that one is sitting, the body impressions of

stiffness or the sensation of hardness in this position is distinctly felt. Attention should therefore be fixed on the sitting posture and a note made as 'sitting, sitting, sitting'.

Sitting is an erect posture of body consisting of a series of physical activities which are induced by the consciousness consisting of a series of mental activities. It is just like the case of an inflated rubber ball which maintains its round shape through the resistance of the air inside it: so is the posture of sitting, in which the body is kept in an erect posture through the continuous process of physical activities. A good deal of energy will be required to pull up and keep in an erect position such a heavy load as this body. People generally assume that the body is lifted and kept in the position by means of sinews. This assumption is correct in a sense because sinews, blood, flesh, bones are nothing but material elements. The element of stiffening which keeps the body in an erect posture belongs to the material group and arises in the sinews, flesh, blood, etc., throughout the body like the air in a rubber ball. The element of stiffening is *vāyo-dhātu*, the air element. The body is kept in the erect position by the presence of the Air Element in the form of stiffening, which is continually coming into existence. At the time of heavy drowsiness one may drop flat, because the supply of new materials in the form of stiffening is cut off. The state of mind in heavy drowsiness or sleep is Unconsciousness (*bhavanga*). During the course of Unconsciousness, mental activities are

absent and for this reason the body lies flat during sleep or heavy drowsiness. During waking hours, strong and active mental activities are continually arising, and because of these there arises a series of Air Elements in the form of stiffening. In order to know these facts it is essential to note attentively as 'sitting, sitting, sitting'. This does not necessarily mean that the body impressions of stiffening should be particularly searched and noted. Attention need only be fixed on the whole form of sitting posture, that is, the lower portion in a bending circular form and the upper portion in an erect posture.

It will be found that the exercise of observing a single object of sitting posture is too easy and does not require much effort. In the circumstances Vigor (*virīya*) is less and Concentration is in excess, and one would generally feel lazy to carry on the noting as 'sitting, sitting, sitting', repeatedly for a considerable time. Laziness generally occurs when there is excess of Concentration and less Vigor. It is nothing but a state of Torpor (*thīna-midha*). More Vigor should be developed, and for this purpose the number of objects for noting should be increased. After noting as 'sitting', the attention should be directed to a spot in the body where the sense of touch is felt and a note made as 'touching'. Any spot in the leg or hand or hip where a sense of touch is distinctly felt will serve the purpose.

For example, after noting the sitting posture of the body as 'sitting', the spot where the sense of touch is

felt should be noted as 'touching'. The noting should thus be repeated on these two objects of sitting posture and the place of touching alternately, as 'sitting, touching; sitting, touching; sitting, touching'.

The terms noting or observing or contemplating are used here to indicate the fixing of attention on an object. The exercise is simply to note or observe or contemplate as 'sitting, touching'. Those who already have experience in the practice of meditation may perhaps find this exercise easy to begin with, but those without any previous experience may find it rather difficult to begin with.

The more simplified and easy form of exercise for a beginner is this: At every time of breathing there occur movements in the form of rising and falling of one's abdomen. A beginner should start with this exercise of noting or observing these movements. It is easy to observe these movements because they are coarse and prominent and are more suitable for a beginner. As in schools where simple lessons are easy to learn so is the case in the practice of *Vipassanā* Meditation. A beginner will find it easier to develop Concentration and Spiritual Knowledge with a simple and easy exercise.

Again, the purpose of the *Vipassanā* Meditation is to begin the exercise by contemplating prominent factors in the body. Of the two factors of mind and matter, the mental element is subtle and less

prominent while the material element is coarse and more prominent.

Therefore the usual procedure for one who practices the *Vipassanā* insight meditation (*vipassanā-yānika*) is to begin the exercise by contemplating the material elements at the outset. As regards material elements it may be mentioned here that Etheric Matter (*upādāya-rūpa*) is subtle and less prominent while Dense Physical Matter (*mahā-būta*), the four primary physical elements of Earth, Water, Fire and Air are coarse and more prominent and should therefore have the priority of being placed first in the order of objects for contemplation. In the case of rising and falling, the outstanding factor is the Air Element. The process of stiffening and the movements of abdomen noticed during the contemplation are nothing but the functions of this element. Thus it will be seen that the Air Element is perceptible at the beginning. According to the instructions of *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the discourse of the Buddha, dealing with the practice of mindfulness, one should be mindful of the activities of walking while walking, of those of standing, sitting, and lying down while standing, sitting, and lying down respectively. One should also be mindful of other bodily activities as each of them occurs. In this connection, it is stated in the commentaries that one should be mindful primarily of the Air Element in preference to the other three. As a matter of fact, all four elements of Dense Physical Matter are dominant in every action of the body, and it is

essential to perceive any one of these. At the time of sitting, either of the two movements of rising and falling occurs conspicuously at every time of breathing, and a beginning should be made by noting one of these movements.

Some fundamental features in the system of *Vipassanā* Meditation have been explained for general information. The general outline of basic exercises will now be discussed.

When contemplating rising and falling, the disciple should keep his mind on the abdomen. He will then come to know the upward movement (expansion) of the abdomen on inbreathing, and a downward movement (contraction) on outbreathing. A mental note should be made as 'rising' for upward movement, and 'falling' for downward movement. If these movements are not clearly noticed by merely fixing the mind, one or both hands should be placed on the abdomen. The disciple should not try to change the manner of his natural breathing; he should neither attempt slow breathing by the retention of his breath, nor quick breathing nor deep breathing. If he does change the natural flow of his breathing, he will soon tire himself. He must therefore keep to the natural breathing, and proceed with the contemplation of rising and falling.

On the occurring of upward movement, a mental note calling it as 'rising' should be made, and on the downward movement, a mental note calling it as

'falling' should be made. The calling of these terms or names should not be repeated by mouth. In *Vipassanā* Meditation it is more important to know the actual state of object than to know it by the term or name. It is therefore necessary for the disciple to make every effort to be mindful of the movement of rising from the beginning till the end and that of falling from the start to the finish, as if these movements are actually seen by the eyes. As soon as rising occurs, there should be the knowing mind close to the movement. As in the case of a stone hitting the wall, the movement of rising as it occurs and the mind knowing it must come together on every occasion. Similarly the movement of falling as it occurs and the mind knowing it must come together on every occasion.

When there is no object of special outstanding nature, the disciple should carry on the exercise of noting these two movements as 'rising, falling; rising, falling; rising, falling'. While thus being occupied with this exercise, there may be occasions when the mind wanders about. When the Concentration is weak, it is very difficult to control the mind. Though it is directed to the movements of rising and falling, the mind will not stay with them but will wander to other places. This wandering mind should not be let alone: it should be noted as 'wandering, wandering' as soon as it goes out. On noting repeatedly once or twice when the mind stops wandering, then the exercise of noting as 'rising, falling' should be continued. When it is found again

that the mind has reached a place it should be noted as 'reaching, reaching'. Then the exercise of noting as 'rising, falling' should be reverted to as soon as these movements are clear. On meeting with a person in the imagination, it should be noted as 'meeting, meeting', and after which the usual exercise should be reverted to. Sometimes the fact that it is a mere imagination is found out at the time of speaking with an imaginary person, and it should be noted as 'speaking, speaking'. The real purpose is to note every mental activity as it occurs. For instance, it should be noted as 'thinking, thinking' at the moment of thinking, and as 'reflecting, planning, knowing, attending, rejoicing, feeling lazy, feeling happy, disgusting, etc.' as the case may be on the occurrence of each activity. The contemplation of mental activities and noting them as they occur is called *Cittānupassanā*.

Because they have no practical knowledge in *Vipassanā* Meditation, people are generally not in a position to know the real state of the mind. This naturally leads them to the wrong view of holding mind as Person, Self or Living entity. They usually believe that "Imagination is I: I am imagining: I am thinking: I am planning: I am knowing, and so forth."

They consider that there exists a living entity or self which grows up from childhood to the age of manhood. In reality there does not exist a living entity, but there does exist a continuous process of

elements of mind which occurs singly at a time and in succession. The practice of contemplation is therefore being carried out with a view to find out the actual fact.

As regards mind and the manner of its arising, the Buddha stated in the ***Dhammapada*** the following:

*Duraṅgamaṃ Ekacaraṃ, Asarīraṃ Guhasayaṃ.
Ye Cittaṃ Saṃyamessanti, Mokkhanti
Mārabandhanā.*

Duraṅgamaṃ - Used to go to far-off objects. Mind usually wanders far and wide. While the yogi is trying to carry on with the practice of contemplation in his meditation cell he often finds out that his mind usually wanders to many far-off places, towns, etc. He also finds that the mind can wander to any far-off places which have been known previously at the very moment of thinking or imagining. This fact should be found out with the help of contemplation.

Ekacaraṃ - Usually occurs singly. Mind usually occurs singly and one after another in succession. Those, who do not perceive this fact, believe that one mind exists in the course of life or existence. They do not know that new minds (thought forms) are always arising at every moment. They think that seeing, hearing, etc., of the past and those of the present belong to one and the same mind, and that three or four acts of seeing, hearing, touching, knowing usually occur simultaneously. These are wrong

views. In actual fact, a single new mind arises at every moment. This can be perceived on gaining considerable practice. The cases of imagination and planning are clearly perceptible. Imagination vanishes as soon as it is noted as 'imagining, imagining', and planning also vanishes as soon as it is noted as 'planning, planning'. These instances of arising, noting, and vanishing appear like a string of beads. The preceding mind is not the following mind. Each is separate. These facts are perceivable personally, and for this purpose one must proceed with the contemplation.

Asarīraṁ · Incorporeal. Mind has no substance and no form. It is not easy to distinguish it as with matter. In the case of matter the structure of body, head, hands and legs is very prominent and easily noticed. If it is asked what is matter it can be handled and shown. As for mind it is not easy to describe, because it has no substance and no form. For this reason it is not possible to carry out laboratory analytical experiments of mind. However, one could fully understand if it is explained that the knowing of an object is mind. To understand the mind minutely, it is essential to contemplate the mind at every time of its occurring. When the contemplation is fairly advanced the mind's approach to its object is clearly comprehended. It appears as if each is making a direct leap towards its object. In order to know the true manner of mind the contemplation is thus prescribed.

Guhāsayam - Stays in the cave. Because this mind usually comes into existence depending on mindbase and other sense doors situated in the body, it is said that it stays in the cave.

Ye Cittam Saṁyamessanti, Mokkhanti Māra-bandhanā - If the yogi could restrain this mind he would be freed from the bondage of Death. It is said that the mind should be contemplated each time as it occurs: mind can thus be controlled by means of contemplation. On his successfully controlling the mind, the yogi would win freedom from the bondage of Death. It will be seen now that it is important to note the mind at every occurrence. As soon as it is noted mind usually vanishes. For instance, by noting once or twice as 'intending, intending' it is found that intention disappears at once. Then the usual exercise of noting as 'rising, falling; rising, falling', should be reverted to.

During the time of proceeding with the usual exercise, one may feel wanting to swallow saliva. It should be noted as 'wanting' and on gathering saliva as 'gathering', and on swallowing as 'swallowing' in the serial order of occurrences. The reason for contemplating in this case is because there may be a persisting personal view as "wanting to swallow is I: swallowing is also I." In actual fact, 'wanting to swallow' is mind and not I and 'swallowing' is matter and not I. There exists only mind and matter at that time. By means of contemplation in this manner one will understand clearly the process of actual facts.

So also in the case of spitting, it should be noted as 'wanting' when one wants to spit, as 'bending' on bending the neck (which should be done slowly), as 'looking, seeing' on looking and as 'spitting' on spitting. Afterwards, the usual exercise of noting as 'rising, falling' should be proceeded with.

Because of the fact of sitting for a long time there will arise in the body unpleasant feelings of being stiff, being hot and so forth. These sensations should be noted as they occur. Mind should be fixed on the spot and a note made as 'stiff, stiff' on feeling stiff, as 'hot, hot' on feeling hot, as 'painful, painful' on feeling painful, and 'prickly, prickly' on feeling a prickly sensation, and as 'tired, tired' on feeling tired. These unpleasant feelings are Feelings of Pain (*dukkha vedanā*) and the contemplation of these feelings is Insight Into Feeling (*vedanānupassanā*).

Owing to the absence of knowledge in Insight Into Feeling, there used to prevail a wrong view of holding them as one's own personality or self, that is to say, "I am feeling stiff: I am feeling hot: I am feeling painful: I was feeling well formerly but now I feel uncomfortable" in the manner of a single self. In real fact unpleasant feelings arise owing to disagreeable impressions in the body. Like the light of an electric bulb which can continue to burn on the continuous supply of energy so is the case of feelings, which arise anew in series on every occasion of coming in contact with disagreeable impressions.

It is essential to understand these feelings clearly. At the beginning of noting as 'stiff, stiff; hot, hot; painful, painful', he may feel that such disagreeable feeling grows stronger, and then he will notice that the mind wanting to change the posture arises. This mind should be noted as 'wanting, wanting'. Then a return should be made to the feeling and noted as 'stiff, stiff, or 'hot, hot', and so forth. If the contemplation is continued with great patience in this manner, such unpleasant feelings will pass away.

There is a saying, "Patience leads to *Nibbāna*." Evidently this saying is more applicable in this case of contemplation than in any other case. Plenty of patience is needed in contemplation. If a yogi cannot bear unpleasant feelings with patience but frequently changes his posture during contemplation, he cannot expect to gain Concentration. Without Concentration there is no chance of acquiring Spiritual Knowledge of Insight (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*). Without this, the attainment of Path, Fruition, and *Nibbāna* cannot be won. Patience is of great importance in contemplation. Patience is mostly needed to bear with the unpleasant feelings. This means the observance of the Cultivation of Patience (*khantīsamvara*) discipline. He should not therefore change his posture immediately when he feels unpleasant sensations but must proceed with noting them as 'stiff, stiff; hot, hot' and so on. Such normal painful sensations will ordinarily pass away. In the case of strong Concentration, it will be found

that even great pains will pass away when they are being noted with patience. On the fading away of suffering or pain, the usual exercise should be reverted to and noting carried out as 'rising, falling; rising, falling'.

On the other hand it may be found that pain or unpleasant feelings do not pass away in spite of making a note with great patience. In such a case it cannot be helped but to change the posture. One must, of course, submit to superior forces. When Concentration is not strong enough, pain will not pass away soon. In these circumstances there will often arise a mind wanting to change the posture, and this mind should be noted as 'wanting, wanting', after which it should be continued to note as 'lifting, lifting' on lifting the hand; as 'moving, moving' on moving it forward. These bodily actions should be carried out slowly, and these slow movements should be followed up and noted as 'lifting, lifting; moving, moving; touching, touching' in the successive order of processes. Again on swaying the body, a note should be made as 'swaying, swaying'; on raising the leg as 'raising, raising'; on moving as 'moving, moving'; and on putting down as 'putting, putting'. If then there is nothing to do, it should be reverted to the usual exercise of noting as 'rising, falling; rising, falling'. There should be no stop or break in between. The preceding act of noting and the one which follows should be contiguous. Similarly the preceding Concentration and the one which follows should be

contiguous, and the preceding Spiritual Knowledge (*ñāṇa*) and the one which follows should be contiguous. In this way the gradual development, by stages, of Mindfulness, Concentration and Spiritual Knowledge takes place, and depending on their full development the final stage of Spiritual Knowledge of the Path (*magga-ñāṇa*) is attained.

In the practice of *Vipassanā* Meditation, it is important to follow the example of a person who tries to make a fire. In olden days a person had to work without stopping by rubbing two dry sticks till fire was produced. As the sticks got hotter and hotter, the more effort was needed, and rubbing had to be carried out incessantly. Only when the fire was produced was he then at liberty to take a rest. Similarly a yogi should work hard so that there may not be any break between the preceding noting and the one which follows, and the preceding Concentration and the one which follows. He should revert to his usual exercise of noting as 'rising, falling' when he has noted the painful sensations.

While being thus occupied with his usual exercise, he may again feel the itching sensation somewhere in the body. He should then fix his mind on the spot and make a note as 'itching, itching'. Itching is an unpleasant sensation. As soon as it is felt, there arises a mind wanting to rub or scratch. This mind should be noted as 'wanting, wanting' after which no rubbing must be done as yet but a return must be made to itching and a note made as 'itching, itching'.

While occupied with contemplation in this manner, itching usually disappears in most cases. Then the usual exercise of noting as 'rising, falling' should be reverted to. If, on the other hand, it is found that itching does not disappear but it is necessary to rub or scratch, the contemplation of the successive processes should be carried out by noting the mind as 'wanting, wanting'. It should then be continued by noting as 'raising, raising' on raising the hand; as 'moving, moving' on moving the hand; as 'touching, touching' when the hand touches the spot; as 'rubbing, rubbing' or 'scratching, scratching' when the hand rubs or scratches; as 'withdrawing, withdrawing' on withdrawing the hand; as 'touching, knowing' when the hand touches the body; and then afterwards contemplation should be reverted to the usual exercise of noting as 'rising, falling'. In every case of changing the postures, the contemplation of the successive processes should be carried out similarly and carefully.

While thus carefully proceeding with the contemplation, it is found that painful feelings or unpleasant sensations arise in the body of their own accord. Ordinarily people used to change the posture as soon as they feel even a slight unpleasant sensation of tiredness or feeling hot without taking heed of these incidents. The change is carried out quite heedlessly just while the seed of pain is beginning to grow. Thus painful feelings fail to take place in a distinctive manner. For this reason, it is said that Posture (*iriyā-patha*), as a rule, hides the

painful feelings from view. People generally think that they are feeling well for days and nights. They consider that painful feelings occur at the time of an attack of a dangerous disease.

The fact is just the contrast of what people think. Let anyone try and see how long he can keep himself in a sitting posture without moving or changing. He will find it uncomfortable after a short while, say five or ten minutes, and then he will find it unbearable after fifteen or twenty minutes. He will then be compelled to move or change the posture, by either raising or lowering his head, moving the hands or legs by swaying his body either forward or backward. Many movements usually take place during a short time and the number would be very large if they are to be counted for a day. However, no one appears to be aware of these facts because no one takes heed of them. Such is the order in every case. While in the case of a yogi who is always mindful of his actions, and is proceeding with contemplation, body impressions in their own respective nature are therefore distinctly noticed. They cannot help but reveal themselves fully in their own nature because he is watching until they come into full view. Though a painful sensation arises, he keeps on noting it: he does not ordinarily attempt to change or move. Then on the arising of mind wanting to change he at once makes a note of it as 'wanting, wanting' and afterwards, he returns again to the painful sensation and continues his noting of it. He changes or moves only when he finds the pain unbearable. In this case

also he begins by noting the wanting mind and proceeds with noting carefully every action in the process of moving. This is why Posture can no longer hide painful sensation. Often a yogi feels painful sensations creeping from here to there or he may feel a hot sensation, aching sensation, itching, or he may feel that the whole body is a mass of painful sensation. That is how painful sensations are found to be predominating because Posture cannot cover them.

If he intends to change the posture from sitting to standing, he should in the first place make a note of the intending mind as 'intending, intending' and proceed with the acts of arranging the hands and legs in the successive order by noting, 'raising, moving, stretching, touching, pressing' and so forth. When the body sways forward, it should be noted as 'swaying, swaying'. While in the course of standing up, rising, there occurs lightness in the body. Attention should be fixed on these factors and a note made as 'rising, rising'. The act of rising up should be carried out slowly. During the course of practice, it is most appropriate if a yogi acts feebly and slowly in all his activities just like a weak sick person. Perhaps the case of a person suffering from lumbago would be a more fitting example here. The patient must be cautious and move slowly to avoid pain. In the same manner, a yogi should always try and keep to slow motions in all the actions. The lowest speed is necessary to enable Mindfulness, Concentration, and Spiritual Knowledge to catch up. One has lived

all the time in a light-hearted manner, and now has just begun seriously to train oneself to keep one's mind in the body. It is the beginning only and Mindfulness and Spiritual Knowledge have not yet been properly geared up while the physical and mental processes are moving at top speed. It is therefore imperative to bring the top-level speed of these processes to the lowest gear so as to make it possible for the Mindfulness and Spiritual Knowledge to keep pace with them. It is therefore instructed that slow motion exercises should be carried out at all times.

Further it may be mentioned that it is advisable for a yogi to behave like a blind person throughout the course of training. A person without any restrained manner will not look dignified because he usually looks at things and persons wantonly. He cannot obtain a steady and calm state. While on the other hand the blind person behaves in a composed manner by sitting sedately with downcast eyes: he never turns to any direction to look at things or persons because he is blind and cannot see them. Even if a person comes near him and speaks to him he never turns around. This composed manner is worthy of imitation. A yogi should act in the same manner while carrying out the contemplation: he should not look anywhere, his mind must be intent solely on the object of contemplation; while in the sitting posture he must be intently noting as 'rising, falling'. Even if strange things occur nearby, he must not look at them carefully: he must simply make a

note as 'seeing, seeing' and then pass on to the usual exercise by noting as 'rising, falling'. A yogi should have a high regard for the exercise and carry it out with due respect so much so as to be mistaken for a blind person.

In this respect certain female yogis were found to be in perfect form. They carefully carried out the exercise with all due respect in accordance with the instructions. Their manner was very composed and they were always intent on the objects of contemplation. They never looked around. When they walked, they were always intent on the steps. Their steps were light, smooth and slow. Every yogi should follow their example.

It is necessary for a yogi to behave like a deaf person also. Ordinarily a person, as soon as he hears a sound, turns around and looks at the direction from where the sound comes. Or he turns around towards the person who speaks to him and makes a reply. He will not behave in a sedate manner. While on the other hand, a deaf person behaves in a composed manner: he does not take heed of any sound or talk because he never hear them. Similarly a yogi should conduct himself in like manner without taking heed of any unimportant talk nor should he deliberately listen to any talk or speech. If he happens to hear any sound or talk he should at once make a note as 'hearing, hearing' and then return to the usual exercise of noting as 'rising, falling'. He should proceed with his contemplation

intently so much so as to be mistaken for a deaf person.

It should be remembered that the carrying out intently of contemplation is the only concern of a yogi; other things seen or heard are not his concern. He should not take heed of them even though they may appear to be strange or curious. When he sees any sights he must ignore them as if he does not see; so also in the case of voices or sounds he must ignore them as if he does not hear. In the case of bodily actions, he must act slowly and feebly as if he were sick and very weak.

It is therefore emphasized that the act of pulling up the body to the standing posture should be carried out slowly. On coming to an erect position, a note should be made as 'standing, standing'; if he happens to look around, a note should be made as 'looking, seeing'; and on walking each step should be noted as 'right step, left step' or 'walking, walking'. In each step, attention should be fixed on the movement from the point of lifting the leg to the point of putting down. While walking in quick steps or taking a long walk, a note on one section of each step as 'right step, left step' or 'walking, walking' will do. In the case of taking a slow walk, each step may be divided into three sections of lifting, pushing forward and putting down respectively. In the beginning of the exercise, a note should be made on two sections in each step as 'lifting', by fixing the attention on the upward movement of the leg from

the beginning to the end, and as 'putting' on the downward movement from the beginning to the end. Thus the exercise which starts with the first step by noting as 'lifting, putting' now ends. Here it may be mentioned that, at the time of noting as 'putting' when the leg is put down in the first step, the other leg happens usually to lift up to begin the next step. This should not be allowed to happen. Next step should begin only after the end of the first step, such as 'lifting, putting' for the first one and 'lifting, putting' for the next step. After two or three days this exercise would be easy and he should carry out the exercise of noting each step in three sections as 'lifting, pushing, putting'. For the present, a yogi should start the exercise by noting as 'right step, left step', or 'walking, walking' while walking quickly, and by noting as 'lifting, putting' while walking slowly.

In the course of his walk, he may feel wanting to sit down. He should then make a note as 'wanting, wanting'; if he then happens to look up as 'looking, seeing; looking, seeing'; on going to the place for sitting as 'lifting, putting'; on stopping as 'stopping, stopping'; on turning as 'turning, turning'; when he feels wanting to sit as 'wanting, wanting'. In the act of sitting, there occurs a heaviness in the body and also a downward pull. Attention should be fixed on these factors and a note made as 'sitting, sitting, sitting'. After having sat down, there would be movements of bringing the hands and legs into position. They should be noted as 'moving, bending,

stretching' and so forth. If there is nothing to do and if he is sitting quietly, he should revert to the usual exercise of noting as 'rising, falling'.

If, in the course of contemplation, he feels painful or tired or hot, he should make a note of them and then revert to the usual exercise by noting as 'rising, falling'. If he feels sleepy, he should make a note as 'sleepy, sleepy', and proceed with the noting of all acts of preparing for lying down and bringing into position the hands and legs as 'raising, pressing, moving, supporting'; when the body sways as 'swaying, swaying'; when the legs stretch as 'stretching, stretching'; and when the body drops and lies flat as 'lying, lying'.

These trifling acts in lying down are also important and they should not be neglected. There is every possibility of attaining enlightenment during this short time. On the full development of Concentration and Spiritual Knowledge enlightenment is attainable during the present moment of bending or stretching. In this way, Venerable Ānanda (nephew and personal attendant of the Buddha) attained *Arahatship* at the very moment of lying down.

About the beginning of the fourth month after the great final *Nibbāna* (*mahā-parinibbāna*) of the Lord Buddha, it was arranged to hold the first *saṅgāyanā*. By this term is meant the council of monks who collectively made classification, examination, confirmation and recitation of all

teachings of Lord Buddha. At that time, five hundred monks were chosen for the work. Of them four hundred and ninety-nine were *Arahats* (Adepts, who have become perfect and have attained enlightenment) while Venerable Ānanda alone was a *Sotāpanna* (Stream Winner, i.e., the first stage on the path when one has entered the stream leading to enlightenment). In order to attend the Council as an *Arahat* on the same level with the others, he made his utmost effort to carry on with the meditation until just one day before the first day of the Council. That was on the fourth waning of the month of August. He proceeded with the contemplation of Mindfulness of the Body (*kāya-gatā-satī*) which is also known as the Application of Mindfulness to Insight into the Functioning of the Body (*kāyanupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*) and kept on walking the whole night. It might be in the same manner of noting as 'right step, left step' or 'walking, walking'. He was thus occupied with the intent contemplation of mental and material processes in each step till the dawn of the next day. But he had not yet attained the *Arahatship*.

Then the Venerable Ānanda thought thus: "I have done my utmost. Lord Buddha used to say, "Ānanda, you possess full Perfections (*pāramīs*). Do proceed with the practice of meditation. You will surely attain *Arahatship* one day." I have tried my level best so much that I can be counted as one of those who ever did their best in meditation. What may be the reason for my failure?" Then he

remembered: "Ah! I was overzealous in keeping solely to the exercise of walking throughout the night. There was an excess of Vigor and less Concentration, which indeed was responsible for the state of Restlessness (*uddhacca*). It is now necessary to stop walking so as to bring Vigor in level with Concentration and to proceed with the contemplation in a lying position." Venerable Ānanda accordingly entered his room and sat down on the bench and then began to lie down. It was said that Venerable Ānanda attained *Arahatship* thus at the moment of lying down or rather at the moment of contemplating as 'lying, lying'.

This manner of attaining *Arahatship* has been recorded as a strange event in the Commentaries because this manner was outside of the four regular postures of walking, standing, sitting and lying down. At that moment, Venerable Ānanda could not be regarded strictly to have been in a standing posture because his feet were off the floor, nor could he be regarded as sitting because his body was in a leaning position quite close to a pillow, nor in a lying posture because his head had not touched the pillow and the body did not lay flat as yet. As Venerable Ānanda was a Stream Winner, he had to develop the three other higher stages: the Path and Fruition of a Once-Returner, second stage on the Path; Path and Fruition of a Never-Returner, third stage on the Path; and Path and Fruition of an Adept, fourth and final stage of the Path (*sakadāgāmī magga & phala*, *anāgāmī magga & phala*, *arahatta magga & phala*) in

his final attainment. It took a moment only. Every care is therefore needed to carry on the practice of contemplation without relaxation or omission.

In the act of lying down, contemplation should be carried out with due care. When one feels sleepy and wants to lie down a note should be made as 'sleepy, sleepy; wanting, wanting'; on raising the hand as 'raising, raising'; on stretching as 'stretching, stretching'; on touching as 'touching, touching'; on pressing as 'pressing, pressing'; after swaying the body and on dropping it down as 'lying, lying'. The action of lying down should be carried out very slowly. On touching with the pillow, it should be noted as 'touching, touching'—there are many places of touch all over the body but each spot only need to be noted at one time. In the lying position, there are many bodily actions for bringing the legs and hands into position also. These actions should be noted carefully as 'raising, stretching, bending, moving' and so on. On turning the body, a note should be made as 'turning, turning' and when there is nothing particular, the usual exercise of noting as 'rising, falling' should be reverted to. When lying on the side or on the back, there are usually no particular things to be noted: then the usual exercise must be reverted to.

But there may be times when the mind wanders while one is in the lying posture. This wandering mind should be noted as 'going, going' when it goes out, as 'arriving, arriving' when it reaches a place, as

'planning, reflecting', and so forth on each state in the same manner as in the case of contemplation in the sitting posture. Mind generally vanishes on being noted once or twice. Then the usual exercise of noting as 'rising, falling' should be reverted to. There may be also instances of swallowing or spitting saliva, or feeling of painful sensations, hot sensations, itching sensations, etc., or of bodily actions in changing the position and moving the limbs. They should be contemplated as each occurs. (When sufficient strength in Concentration is gained, it will be possible even to carry on with the contemplation of each act of opening and closing of the eyelids and winking.) Afterwards one should then return to the usual exercise when there is no other thing to do.

Though it is late in the night and it is time for sleep, it is not advisable to give up the contemplation and go to sleep. Anyone who has a keen interest in contemplation must be prepared to face the risk of spending many nights without sleep.

The scriptures are emphatic on the necessity of developing the very qualities of Energetic Vigor Which Consists of Four Limbs, i.e., varieties (*caturanga viriya*) in the practice of meditation. In the hard struggle, he may be reduced to a mere skeleton of skin, bone and sinew when his flesh and blood wither away and dry up but he should not give up his efforts so long as he has not attained whatever is attainable by manly perseverance, energy and

endeavor. These instructions should be followed with a strong determination. It may be possible to keep awake if there is strong enough Concentration to beat off the sleep but he will fall asleep if sleep gets an upper hand. When he feels sleepy, he should make a note as 'sleepy, sleepy'; when the eyelids are drooping as 'drooping, drooping'; dazzled as 'dazzled, dazzled'. After the contemplation in the manner indicated, he may be able to shake off the sleepiness and feel fresh again. This feeling should be noted as 'feeling fresh, feeling fresh' and after which the usual exercise of noting as 'rising, falling' should be reverted to. However, in spite of his determination, he may feel unable to keep himself awake if he is very sleepy. In a lying posture, it is more easy to fall asleep. A beginner should therefore try to keep himself mostly in the postures of sitting and walking.

But when the night is late, he will be compelled to lie down and proceed with the contemplation of 'rising' and 'falling'. In this position, he may perhaps fall asleep. During the time of sleep, it is not possible to carry on with the contemplation. It is an interval for a yogi to relax. An hour's sleep will give him an hour's relaxation and if he continues to sleep for two, three or four hours, he will get relaxation for longer hours. But it would not be advisable for a yogi to sleep more than four hours, which is pretty long and ample for a normal sleep.

On waking up, a yogi should start his contemplation from the moment of awakening. To be fully occupied with intent contemplation throughout the waking hours is the routine of a yogi who works hard with true aspiration for the attainment of Path and its Fruition. If it is not possible to catch the waking moment, he should start with the usual exercise of noting as 'rising, falling'. Or if he becomes aware firstly of the fact of reflecting he should begin his contemplation by noting as 'reflecting, reflecting', and then revert to the usual exercise of noting as 'rising, falling'. Or if he becomes aware firstly of hearing a voice or sound, he should begin by noting as 'hearing, hearing' and then revert to the usual exercise.

As soon as he wakes up, there may be bodily actions in turning this side or that side, and in moving the hands and legs and so forth. These actions should be contemplated in successive order. Or if he becomes aware of the mind leading to various bodily actions, he should start his contemplation by noting the mind in the first place. Or if he becomes aware firstly of the painful sensations, he should start by noting the painful sensations and then proceed with bodily actions. If he stays quietly without moving, the usual exercise of noting as 'rising, falling' should be attended to. If he intends to get up he should note as 'intending, intending' and then proceed with the noting of all actions serially in bringing the legs and hands into position. It should be noted as 'raising, raising' on raising the body, as 'sitting,

sitting' when the body is erect and in sitting posture, and if there are any other actions of bringing legs and hands into position these actions should also be noted. If there are no particular things the usual exercise of noting as 'rising, falling' should be reverted to.

So far, things relating to the objects of contemplation in connection with the four postures and changing from one posture to another have been mentioned. It is merely a description of the general outline of major objects of contemplation to be carried out in the course of practice. Yet in the beginning of the practice, it is difficult to follow up on all of them in contemplation. Many things will be omitted. But on gaining sufficient strength in Concentration, it is easy to follow up in contemplation not only those already enumerated but many more. With gradual development of Mindfulness and Concentration, the pace of Spiritual Knowledge quickens and thus many more can be perceived. It is necessary to work up to this high level.

Contemplation should be carried out also in the case of washing the face in the morning or when taking a bath. As it is necessary to act quickly in these cases, contemplation should be carried out to such an extent as far as possible in these circumstances. On stretching the hand to catch hold of the mug as 'stretching'; on catching hold of the mug as 'holding'; on dipping the mug as 'dipping'; on bringing the

mug towards the body as 'bringing'; on pouring the water as 'pouring'; on feeling cold as 'cold'; on rubbing as 'rubbing' and so on. There are also many actions in changing or arranging the dress, in arranging the bed or bed sheets; and in opening the door and so on. These actions should be contemplated in detail serially as much as possible.

At the time of taking a meal, contemplation should be started from the time of looking at the meal table as 'looking, seeing; looking, seeing'; when stretching the hand to the plate as 'stretching, stretching'; when the hand touches the food as 'touching, hot, hot'; when gathering the food as 'gathering, gathering'; when catching hold of the food as 'catching, catching'; after lifting when the hand is being brought up as 'bringing, bringing'; when the neck is being bent down as 'bending, bending'; when the food is being placed in the mouth as 'placing, placing'; when withdrawing the hand as 'withdrawing, withdrawing'; when the hand touches the plate as 'touching, touching'; when the neck is being straightened as 'straightening, straightening'; when chewing the food as 'chewing, chewing'; at the time of chewing when the taste of food is known as 'knowing, knowing'; when he likes the taste as 'liking, liking'; when he finds it pleasant as 'pleasant, pleasant'; when swallowing as 'swallowing, swallowing'. This is an illustration of the routine of contemplation on partaking of each morsel of food till the meal is finished. In this case also it is difficult to follow up all actions at the beginning of the

practice. There will be many omissions. He should not, however, hesitate but must try and follow up as much as he can. With the gradual advancement of the practice it will be easy to note many more than those mentioned here.

Now the lessons for the practical exercise of contemplation are almost complete. As they are explained in detail and at some length, it is not easy to remember all of them. For the sake of easy memory, a summary of important and essential points will be mentioned. They are few.

In the case of taking a walk, a yogi should contemplate the movements of the steps. While walking briskly each step should be noted as 'left step, right step' respectively. Mind should be fixed intently on the movement of each step. While in the course of walking slowly each step should be noted in two sections as 'lifting, putting; lifting, putting'. While in a sitting posture, the usual exercise of contemplation by noting the movements of the abdomen as 'rising, falling, rising, falling' should be carried out. The same manner of contemplation by noting as 'rising, falling, rising, falling' should be carried out in the case of lying posture also.

If it is found that the mind wanders during the course of noting as 'rising, falling', it should not be let off but it should be followed up immediately. On imagining it should be noted as 'imagining, imagining'; on thinking as 'thinking, thinking'; on

the mind going out as 'going, going'; on the mind arriving at a place as 'arriving, arriving'; and so forth on every occurrence. And the usual exercise of noting as 'rising, falling' should then be reverted to. When there occur feelings of tiredness in hands, legs or other limbs, or of hot or prickly or aching or itching sensations, they should be immediately followed up and noted as 'tired, hot, prickly, aching, itching', and so on as the case may be. A return should then be made to the usual exercise of noting as 'rising, falling'. When there are acts of bending or stretching the hands and legs, or moving the neck or limbs, or swaying the body to and fro, they should be followed up and noted in the serial order as they occur. The usual exercise of noting as 'rising, falling' should then be reverted to.

If the practice is proceeded with in the manner indicated, the number of objects will gradually increase in course of time. At first there will be many omissions because mind used to wander without any restraint. However, one should not lose heart on this account. This difficulty is usually encountered in the beginning of the practice. After some time mind cannot play truant any longer because it is always found out every time it roves. It therefore remains fixedly on an object to which it is directed. As rising occurs, the mind makes a note of it, and thus the object and the mind coincide. As falling occurs, the mind makes a note of it and thus these two coincide. There is always a pair of object and the mind which knows the object at every time of noting.

These two elements of material object and knowing mind only arise in pairs, and apart from these two there does not exist any other thing either in the form of a person or self. This fact will be perceptible personally in due course.

The fact that matter and mind are two separate things will be clearly perceived during the time of noting as 'rising, falling'. The two elements of matter and mind are linked up in a pair and their arising coincides, that is, the material process of rising coincides with the mind knowing it, the material process of falling coincides with the mind knowing it, and the respective processes of lifting, pushing, putting coincide with the respective minds knowing the processes. This knowledge in respect of matter and mind rising separately is called Spiritual Knowledge of Insight (*nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*). It is the preliminary stage in the whole course of Spiritual Knowledge of Insight. It is important to have this preliminary stage developed in a proper manner.

On continuing the practice of contemplation for some time, there will be a considerable progress in Mindfulness and Concentration. At this high level, it will be perceptible that, on every occasion of noting, each process arises and vanishes at the very moment. But it is, on the other hand, considered generally by uninstructed people that body and mind remain in a permanent state throughout the life or existence, that the same body of childhood

has grown up into manhood, that the same young mind has grown up into maturity and that both body and mind are one and the same person. The real fact is not so. Nothing is permanent. Every thing comes into existence for a moment, and then vanishes. Nothing can remain even for a winking moment. Changes are taking place very swiftly and they will be perceived in due course. While carrying on the contemplation by noting as 'rising, falling' and so forth one would perceive that these processes generally come up and disappear one after another in succession very swiftly. On thus perceiving that every thing vanishes on the very point of noting, a yogi is satisfied with the fact that nothing is permanent. This knowledge regarding the impermanent state of things is Spiritual Insight Into Transience (*aniccānupassanā-nāṇa*).

A yogi then feels that this ever-changing state of things is distressing and not to be desired. This is Insight Into Suffering (*dukkānupassanā-nāṇa*). And on also suffering, many painful feelings, it is regarded as a mere heap of suffering. This, too, is of the same insight.

Then it is perceived that the elements of matter and mind never follow one's wish but they act according to their own nature and conditioning. While being engaged in the act of noting the processes, a yogi is convinced that these processes are not controllable and they are neither person nor living entity nor self

in the real sense. This is Insight Into the Absence of A Self (*anattānupassanā-nāṇa*).

When a yogi has fully developed the Insights into Impermanence, Suffering, and Absence of A Self, he will realize *Nibbāna*. From time immemorial Buddhas, *Arahats* and Holy Ones realized *Nibbāna* by this means of *Vipassanā*. It is the highway leading to *Nibbāna*. As a matter of fact, *Vipassanā* consists of the four Applications of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhānas*) and is therefore the highway to *Nibbāna*.

Yogis have now come to take up the course of training in contemplation. It should be borne in mind that they are on the highway which had been taken by Buddhas, *Arahats* and Holy Ones. This opportunity is afforded to them apparently because of their Perfections of previous endeavors in seeking and wishing for it, and also of their present mature condition. They should rejoice at heart for having availed themselves of this opportunity. They should also feel assured that by walking on this highway without wavering, they will gain the personal experience of the highly developed Concentration and Knowledge as had already been known to Buddhas, *Arahats* and Holy Ones. They will develop such a pure state of Concentration as has never been known before in the course of their life and thus enjoy many innocent pleasures as a result of the advanced Concentration.

They will also learn the practical knowledge of Impermanence, Suffering, and the Absence of A Self by having a direct personal experience of the actual facts, and then realize *Nibbāna* on the full development of these knowledge. It will not take long to achieve the object, but possibly in a month, or twenty days, or fifteen days; or on rare occasions even in seven days for a selected few with extraordinary Perfection.

Yogis should, therefore, proceed with the practice of contemplation in great earnest and with full confidence trusting that it will surely lead to the development of Spiritual Knowledge of the Path and its Fruition, and to the Realization of *Nibbāna*. They will then be free from the Erroneous View That There is A Self (*sakkāya-diṭṭhī*) and Doubt (*vicikicchā*) and will no longer be subject to the round of rebirths in the miserable existence of hell, animal or hungry ghost.

PRACTICAL INSIGHT MEDITATION

Preface

It is a truism to say that nobody likes suffering and everybody seeks happiness. In this world of ours, human beings are making all possible efforts for prevention and alleviation of suffering, and enjoyment of happiness. Nevertheless, their efforts are mainly directed towards physical well-being by material means. Happiness is, after all, conditioned by attitudes of mind, and yet only a few persons give real thought to mental development, fewer still practice mind training in earnest.

To illustrate this point, attention may be drawn to the commonplace habits of cleaning and tidying up one's body, the endless pursuits of food, clothing and shelter, and the tremendous technological progress achieved for raising the material standard of living, for improving the means of transport and communication, and for prevention and cure of diseases and ailments. All these efforts are, in the main, concerned with the care and nourishment of the body. It must be recognized that they are essential. However, these human efforts and achievements cannot possibly bring about the alleviation or eradication of suffering associated with old age and disease, domestic infelicity and economic troubles, in short, with non-satisfaction of wants and desires. Sufferings of this nature are not

overcome by material means; they can be overcome only by mind training and mental development.

Then, it becomes clear that the right way must be sought for training, stabilizing and purifying the mind. This way is found in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, a well-known discourse of the Buddha, delivered well over 2,500 years ago. The Buddha declared thus:

“This is the sole way for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destroying of pain and grief, for reaching the Noble Path, for the realization of *nibbāna*, namely the four foundations of mindfulness.”

The four foundations of mindfulness are (1) the contemplation of the body, (2) the contemplation of feelings, (3) the contemplation of mind, and (4) the contemplation of mind objects.

Obviously, this way should be followed by those in search of happiness, with a view to getting rid of the impurities of mind, which are the cause of their sufferings.

If one were asked whether he wished to overcome sorrow and lamentation, he would surely say, “Yes”. Then he, nay everybody, should practise the four foundations of mindfulness.

If one were asked whether he wishes to destroy pain and grief, he would not hesitate to reply in the affirmative. Then he, nay everybody, should practise the four foundations of mindfulness.

If one were asked whether he wishes to reach the Noble Path and realize *nibbāna*, the state of being absolutely free from old age, decay and death and from all sufferings, he would certainly give an affirmative answer. Then he, nay everybody, should practise the four foundations of mindfulness.

How shall one practise the four foundations of mindfulness? In the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the Buddha said, "Dwell practising body contemplation, feeling contemplation, mind contemplation and mind-objects contemplation." Without the guidance of a well-qualified teacher, however, it will not be easy for an average person to practise these contemplations in a systematic manner in order to make progress towards development of concentration and insight.

Having myself undergone a most intensive practical course of *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation under the personal guidance of the Most Venerable Mingun Jetavan Sayādaw of Thaton, I have imparted the technique of meditation ever since 1938 and given personal instruction, as well as through books and lectures, to several thousands of yogis. In compliance with the requests of those of the earlier batches, who had benefited from my personal

instructions, I wrote a treatise on *vipassanā* or insight meditation, in two volumes. The treatise was completed in the year 1944 and has been published in seven editions. In all the chapters, except in Chapter V, dissertations and discussions are made with reference to Pāli texts, commentaries and sub-commentaries. In Chapter V, I chose to write in common language for easy understanding by my pupils as to how they should begin and then proceed step by step, stating fully the salient features, in line with the *Visuddhimagga* and some other texts.

This present book is the English translation of the said Chapter V. The first 14 pages of the Burmese original were translated into English in 1954 by U Pe Thin, an old pupil of mine, for the benefit of those who came from abroad to our Meditation Centre. Pages 15 to 51 of the Burmese original were translated into English, in compliance with the wish of the Venerable Nyanaponika Mahāthera, by Myanaung U Tin, a disciple and *dayaka* of mine. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that the area of our Meditation Centre, Thathana Yeikthā, is nearly twenty-four acres, with over fifty buildings to house the meditation teachers and yogis, monks as well as laypeople, both men and women.

The Venerable Nyanaponika Mahāthera put this translation into final literary shape after obtaining confirmation of his valuable suggestions. U Pe Thin's translation was revised by and improved upon, as to style, by Miss Mary McCollum, an American

Buddhist lady. She practised *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation under the guidance of Anagarika Munindra at the Burmese Vihara, Bodh-Gaya, Bihar, India. Anagarika Munindra stayed with us for a considerable period. He sent her revision to us for perusal and approval. When done, it was forwarded to the Venerable Nyanaponika Mahāthera. This book is, therefore, the coordination and combined publications of the aforesaid two translations, with my preface added thereto.

Chapter V of my Burmese treatise, as mentioned earlier, was written in common linguistic style. I should like to say here that the doctrinal terms found in this book without Pāḷi names are fully explained in '*Progress of Insight*' translated from my Pāḷi treatise into English by the Venerable Nyanaponika Mahāthera. His book, '*The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*' is itself a veritable mine of information and instruction on this subject of vital importance.

In conclusion, I would like (1) to say that I deeply appreciate the services of those who have done the translations and revisions as well as of those who are responsible for the publication of this book, (2) to urge the readers of this book not to be content with the theoretical knowledge contained therein but to apply that knowledge to systematic and sustained practice, and (3) to express my earnest wish that they gain insight soon and enjoy all the benefits

vouchsafed by the Buddha in the preamble of the
Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta.

Bhaddanta Sobhana (Agga Mahā Paṇḍita)

Mahāsī Sayādaw

October 1st, 1970

**'Thathana Yeikthā', 16, Hermitage Road,
Rangoon, Burma**

PART 1: BASIC PRACTICE

Preparatory Stage

If you sincerely desire to develop contemplation and attain insight in this your present life, you must give up worldly thoughts and actions during the training. This course of action is for the purification of conduct, the essential preliminary step towards the proper development of contemplation. You must also observe the rules of discipline prescribed for laymen, (or for monks, as the case may be) for they are important in gaining insight. For laypeople, these rules comprise the eight precepts which Buddhist devotees observe on sabbath days (*uposatha*) and during periods of meditation¹. An additional rule is not to speak with contempt, in jest, or with malice to or about any of the noble ones who have attained states of sanctity². If you have done so, then

¹ The eight *Uposatha* precepts are: **abstention from** (1) killing, (2) stealing, (3) all sexual intercourse, (4) lying, (5) intoxicants, (6) partaking of solid food and certain liquids after twelve o'clock noon, (7) dance, song, music, shows (attendance and performance), the use of perfumes, ornaments, etc., and (8) luxurious beds.

² There are four noble individuals (*ariya-puggala*). They are those who have obtained a state of sanctity: a. The stream-winner (*sotapānna*) is one who has become free from the first three of the ten fetters which bind him to the sensuous sphere, namely, personality belief, skeptical doubt, and attachment to mere rules and rituals. b. The once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*) has weakened the fourth and fifth of the ten fetters, sensuous craving and ill will. c. The non-returner (*anāgāmi*) becomes fully free from the above-mentioned five lower fetters and is no longer reborn in the sensuous sphere before reaching *nibbāna*. d. Through the path of holiness one further becomes free of the last

personally apologize to him or her or make an apology through your meditation instructor. If in the past you have spoken contemptuously to a noble one who is at present unavailable or deceased, confess this offence to your meditation instructor or introspectively to yourself.

The old masters of Buddhist tradition suggest that you entrust yourself to the Enlightened One, the Buddha, during the training period, for you may be alarmed if it happens that your own state of mind produces unwholesome or frightening visions during contemplation. Also place yourself under the guidance of your meditation instructor, for then, he can talk to you frankly about your work in contemplation and give you the guidance he thinks necessary. These are the advantages of placing trust in the Enlightened One, the Buddha, and practising under the guidance of your instructor. The aim of this practice and its greatest benefit is release from greed, hatred and delusion, which are the roots of all evil and suffering. This intensive course in insight training can lead you to such release. So work ardently with this end in view so that your training will be successfully completed. This kind of training in contemplation, based on the foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*), had been taken by successive Buddhas and noble ones who attained

five fetters: craving for fine material existence (in celestial worlds), craving for immaterial (purely mental) existence, conceit, restlessness, ignorance.

release. You are to be congratulated on having the opportunity to take the same kind of training they had undergone.

It is also important for you to begin your training with a brief contemplation on the 'four protections' which the Enlightened One, the Buddha, offers you for reflection. It is helpful for your psychological welfare at this stage to reflect on them. The subjects of the four protective reflections are the Buddha himself, loving-kindness, the loathsome aspects of the body, and death. First, devote yourself to the Buddha by sincerely appreciating his nine chief qualities in this way:

Truly, the Buddha is holy, fully enlightened, perfect in knowledge and conduct, a welfarer, world-knower, the incomparable leader of men to be tamed, teacher of gods and mankind, the awakened one and the exalted one.

Secondly, reflect upon all sentient beings as the receivers of your loving-kindness, be fortified by your thoughts of loving-kindness and identify yourself with all sentient beings without distinction, thus: May I be free from enmity, disease and grief. As I am, so also may my parents, preceptors, teachers, intimate and indifferent and inimical beings be free from enmity, disease and grief. May they be released from suffering.

Thirdly, reflect upon the repulsive nature of the body to assist you in diminishing the unwholesome attachment that so many people have for the body. Dwell on some of its impurities, such as stomach, intestines, phlegm, pus, blood³. Ponder on these impurities so that the absurd fondness for the body may be eliminated.

The fourth protection for your psychological benefit is to reflect on the phenomenon of ever-approaching death. Buddhist teachings stress that life is uncertain, but death is certain; life is precarious but death is sure. Life has death as its goal. There is birth, disease, suffering, old age, and eventually, death. These are all aspects of the process of existence.

To begin training, take the sitting posture with the legs crossed. You might feel more comfortable if the legs are not inter-locked but evenly placed on the ground, without pressing one against the other. If you find that sitting on the floor interferes with contemplation, then obtain a more comfortable way of sitting. Now proceed with each exercise in contemplation as described.

³ The **thirty-two parts of the body** as used in body contemplation, are: head hair, body hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, kidney, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, intestines, mesentery, stomach, excrement, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, lymph, tears, serum, saliva, nasal mucus, synovial fluid, urine, and brain.

Basic Exercise I

Try to keep your mind (but not your eyes) on the abdomen. You will thereby come to know its rising and falling movements. If these movements are not clear to you in the beginning, then place both hands on the abdomen to feel these rising and falling movements. After a short time the upward movement of exhalation will become clear. Then make a mental note of 'rising' for the upward movement, 'falling' for the downward movement. Your mental note of each movement must be made while it occurs.

From this exercise you learn the actual manner of the upward and downward movements of the abdomen. You are not concerned with the form of the abdomen. What you actually perceive is the bodily sensation of pressure caused by the heaving movement of the abdomen. So do not dwell on the form of the abdomen but proceed with the exercise. For the beginner it is a very effective method of developing the faculties of attention, concentration of mind and insight in contemplation. As practice progresses, the manner of the movements will be clearer. The ability to know each successive occurrence of the mental and physical processes at each of the six sense organs is acquired only when insight contemplation is fully developed. Since you are only a beginner whose attentiveness and power of concentration are still weak, you may find it difficult to keep the mind on each successive rising

movement and falling movement as it occurs. In view of this difficulty, you may be inclined to think, "I just don't know how to keep my mind on each of these movements." Then simply remember that this is a learning process. The rising and falling movements of the abdomen are always present and therefore there is no need to look for them. Actually it is easy for a beginner to keep his or her mind on these two simple movements.

Continue with this exercise in full awareness of the abdomen's rising and falling movements. Never verbally repeat the words, rising, falling, and do not think of rising and falling as words. Be aware only of the actual process of the rising and falling movements of the abdomen. Avoid deep or rapid breathing for the purpose of making the abdominal movements more distinct, because this procedure causes fatigue that interferes with the practice. Just be totally aware of the movements of rising and falling as they occur in the course of normal breathing.

Basic Exercise II

While occupied with the exercise of observing each of the abdominal movements, other mental activities may occur between the noting of each rising and falling. Thoughts or other mental functions, such as intentions, ideas, imaginings, are likely to occur between each mental note of rising and falling. They

cannot be disregarded. A mental note must be made of each as it occurs.

If you imagine something, you must know that you have done so and make a mental note as 'imagining'. If you simply think of something, mentally note as 'thinking'. If you reflect, 'reflecting'. If you intend to do something, 'intending'. When the mind wanders from the object of meditation which is the rising and falling of the abdomen, mentally note, 'wandering'. Should you imagine you are going to a certain place, note 'going'. When you arrive, 'arriving'. When, in your thoughts, you meet a person, note, 'meeting'. Should you speak to him or her, 'speaking'. If you imagine arguing with that person, note as 'arguing'. If you envision or imagine a light or colour, be sure to note, 'seeing'. A mental vision must be noted on each occurrence of its appearance until it passes away. After its disappearance, continue with Basic Exercise I, by being fully aware of each movement of the rising and falling abdomen. Proceed carefully, without slackening. If you intend to swallow saliva while thus engaged, make a mental note, 'intending'. While in the act of swallowing, 'swallowing'. If you spit, 'spitting'. Then return to the exercise of noting rising and falling.

Suppose you intend to bend the neck, note as 'intending'. In the act of bending, 'bending'. When you intend to straighten the neck, 'intending'. In the act of straightening the neck, 'straightening'. The neck movements of bending and straightening must

be done slowly. After mentally making a note of each of these actions, proceed in full awareness with noting the movements of the rising and falling abdomen.

Basic Exercise III

Since you must continue contemplating for a long time while in one position, that of sitting or lying down, (it is not advised that the meditator should use the lying posture except when it is time to sleep) you are likely to experience an intense feeling of fatigue, stiffness in the body or in the arms and legs. Should this happen, simply keep the knowing mind on that part of the body where such feelings occur and carry on the contemplation, noting tired or stiff. Do this naturally; that is, neither too fast nor too slow. These feelings gradually become fainter and finally cease altogether. Should one of these feelings become more intense until the bodily fatigue or stiffness of joints is unbearable, then change your position. However, do not forget to make a mental note of 'intending', before you proceed to change your position. Each movement must be contemplated in its respective order and in detail.

If you intend to lift the hand or leg, make a mental note as 'intending'. In the act of lifting the hand or leg, 'lifting'. Stretching either the hand or the leg, 'stretching'. When you bend it, 'bending'. When putting it down, 'putting'. Should either the hand or leg touch, 'touching'. Perform all of these actions in a

slow and deliberate manner. As soon as you are settled in the new position, continue with the contemplation in another position keeping to the procedure outlined in this paragraph.

Should an itching sensation be felt in any part of the body, keep the mind on that part and make a mental note, 'itching'. Do this in a regulated manner, neither too fast nor too slow. When the itching sensation disappears in the course of full awareness, continue with the exercise of noting the rising and falling of the abdomen. Should the itching continue and become too strong and you intend to rub the itchy part, be sure to make a mental note, 'intending'. Slowly lift the hand, simultaneously noting the actions of 'lifting'; and 'touching', when the hand touches the part that itches. Rub slowly in complete awareness of 'rubbing'. When the itching sensation has disappeared and you intend to discontinue rubbing, be mindful by making the usual mental note of 'intending'. Slowly withdraw the hand, concurrently making a mental note of the action as 'withdrawing'. When the hand rests in its usual place touching the leg, note, 'touching'. Then again devote your time to observing the abdominal movements.

If there is pain or discomfort, keep the knowing mind on that part of the body where the sensation arises. Make a mental note of the specific sensation as it occurs, such as 'painful', 'aching', 'pressing', 'piercing', 'tired', or 'giddy'. It must be stressed that

the mental note must not be forced nor delayed but made in a calm and natural manner. The pain may eventually cease or increase. Do not be alarmed if it increases. Firmly continue the contemplation. If you do so, you will find that the pain will almost always cease. But if, after a time, the pain has increased and becomes unbearable, you must ignore the pain and continue with the contemplation of rising and falling.

As you progress in mindfulness, you may experience sensations of intense pain: stifling or choking sensations, such as pain from the slash of a knife, the thrust of a sharp-pointed instrument, unpleasant sensations of being pricked by sharp needles, or of small insects crawling over the body. You might experience sensations of itching, biting, intense cold. As soon as you discontinue the contemplation, you may also feel that these painful sensations cease. When you resume contemplation, you will have them again as soon as you gain in mindfulness. These painful sensations are not to be considered as something wrong. They are not manifestations of disease but are common factors always present in the body and are usually obscured when the mind is normally occupied with more conspicuous objects. When the mental faculties become keener you are more aware of these sensations. With the continued development of contemplation, the time will come when you can overcome them and they will cease altogether. If you continue contemplation, firm in purpose, you will

not come to any harm. Should you lose courage, become irresolute in contemplation and discontinue for some time, you may encounter these unpleasant sensations again and again as your contemplation proceeds. If you continue with determination you will most likely overcome these painful sensations and may never again experience them in the course of contemplation.

Should you intend to sway the body, then knowingly note, 'intending'. While in the act of swaying, 'swaying'. When contemplating you may occasionally discover the body swaying back and forth. Do not be alarmed; neither be pleased nor wish to continue to sway. The swaying will cease if you keep the knowing mind on the action of swaying and continue to note 'swaying' until the action ceases. If swaying increases in spite of you making a mental note of it, then lean against a wall or post or lie down for a while. Thereafter proceed with contemplation. Follow the same procedure if you find yourself shaking or trembling. When contemplation is developed, you may sometimes feel a thrill or chill pass through the back or the entire body. This is a symptom of the feeling of intense interest, enthusiasm or rapture. It occurs naturally in the course of good contemplation. When your mind is fixed in contemplation you may be startled at the slightest sound. This takes place because you feel the effect of sensory impression more intensely while in a state of concentration.

If you are thirsty while contemplating, note the feeling, 'thirsty'. When you intend to stand, 'intending'. Keep the mind intently on the act of standing up, and mentally note, 'standing'. When you look forward after standing up straight, note, 'looking, seeing'. Should you intend to walk forward, 'intending'. When you begin to step forward, mentally note each step as 'walking, walking', or 'left step, right step'. It is important for you to be aware of every moment in each step from the beginning to the end when you walk. Adhere to the same procedure when strolling or when taking walking exercise. Try to make a mental note of each step in two sections as follows: 'lifting, putting, lifting, putting'. When you have obtained sufficient practice in this manner of walking, then try to make a mental note of each step in three sections: 'lifting, pushing, putting' or 'up, forward, down'.

When you look at the tap or water-pot on arriving at the place where you are to take a drink, be sure to make a mental note, 'looking, seeing'.

- When you stop walking, 'stopping'.
- When you stretch out the hand, 'stretching'.
- When you touch the cup, 'touching'.
- When you take the cup, 'taking'.
- When dipping the cup into the water, 'dipping'.
- When bringing the cup to the lips, 'bringing'.
- When the cup touches the lips, 'touching'.
- When you swallow, 'swallowing'.

- When returning the cup, 'returning'.
- When withdrawing the hand, 'withdrawing'.
- When you bring down the hand, 'bringing'.
- When the hand touches the side of the body, 'touching'.
- If you intend to turn round, 'intending'.
- When you turn round, 'turning'.
- When you walk forward, 'walking'.
- On arriving at the place where you intend to stop, 'intending'.
- When you stop, 'stopping'.

If you remain standing for some time, continue the contemplation of rising and falling. But if you intend to sit down, note, 'intending'. When you go forward to sit down, 'walking'. On arriving at the place where you will sit, 'arriving'. When you turn to sit, 'turning'. While in the act of sitting down, 'sitting'. Sit down slowly, and keep the mind on the downward movement of the body. You must notice every movement in bringing the hands and legs into position. Then resume the practice of contemplating the abdominal movements.

Should you intend to lie down, note, 'intending'. Then proceed with the contemplation of every movement in the course of lying down: 'lifting, stretching, putting, touching, lying'. Then take as the object of contemplation every movement in bringing the hands, legs and body into position. Perform these actions slowly. Thereafter, continue with noting rising and falling. Should pain, fatigue,

itching, or any other sensation be felt, be sure to note each of these sensations. Note all feelings, thoughts, ideas, considerations, reflections; all movements of hands, legs, arms and body. If there is nothing in particular to note, put the mind on the rising and falling of the abdomen. When sleepy, make a mental note, 'sleepy'. After you have gained sufficient concentration in contemplating, you will be able to overcome drowsiness and you will feel refreshed as a result. Take up again the usual contemplation of the basic object. If you are unable to overcome the drowsy feeling, you must continue contemplating drowsiness until you fall asleep.

The state of sleep is the continuity of subconsciousness. It is similar to the first state of rebirth consciousness and the last state of consciousness at the moment of death. This state of consciousness is feeble and therefore, unable to be aware of an object. When you awake, the continuity of sub-consciousness occurs regularly between moments of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching, and thinking. Because these occurrences are of brief duration they are not usually clear and therefore not noticeable. Continuity of subconsciousness remains during sleep - a fact which becomes obvious when you wake up; for it is in the state of wakefulness that thoughts and sense objects become distinct.

Contemplation should start at the moment you wake up. Since you are a beginner, it may not be possible

yet for you to start contemplating at the very first moment of wakefulness. But you should start with it when you remember that you are to contemplate. For example, if on awakening you reflect on something, you should become aware of that fact and begin your contemplation by a mental note, 'reflecting'. Then proceed with the contemplation of rising and falling. When getting up from the bed, mindfulness should be directed to every detail of the body's activity. Each movement of the hands, legs and rump must be performed in complete awareness. Are you thinking of the time of day when awakening? If so, note, 'thinking'. Do you intend to get out of bed? If so, note, 'intending'. If you prepare to move the body into position for rising, note, 'preparing'. As you slowly rise, 'rising'. Should you remain sitting for any length of time, revert to contemplating the abdominal movements.

Perform the acts of washing the face or taking a bath in due order and in complete awareness of every detailed movement; for instance, 'looking, seeing, stretching, holding, touching, feeling cold, rubbing'. In the acts of dressing, making the bed, opening and closing doors and windows, handling objects, be occupied with every detail of these actions in sequence.

You must attend to the contemplation of every detail in the action of eating:

- When you look at the food, 'looking, seeing'.
- When you arrange the food, 'arranging'.
- When you bring the food to the mouth, 'bringing'.
- When you bend the neck forwards, 'bending'.
- When the food touches the mouth, 'touching'.
- When placing the food in the mouth, 'placing'.
- When the mouth closes, 'closing'.
- When withdrawing the hand, 'withdrawing'.
- Should the hand touch the plate, 'touching'.
- When straightening the neck, 'straightening'.
- When in the act of chewing, 'chewing'.
- When you are aware of the taste, 'knowing'.
- When swallowing the food, 'swallowing'.

While swallowing the food, should the food be felt touching the sides of the gullet, 'touching'.

Perform contemplation in this manner each time you take a morsel of food until you finish your meal. In the beginning of the practice there will be many omissions. Never mind. Do not waver in your effort. You will make fewer omissions if you persist in your practice. When you reach an advanced stage of the practice you will also be able to notice more details than those mentioned here.

Advancement in Contemplation

After having practised for a day and a night, you may find your contemplation considerably improved. You may be able to prolong the basic exercise of

noting the abdominal movements. At this time you will notice that there is generally a break between the movements of rising and falling. If you are in the sitting posture, fill in this gap with a mental note of the act of sitting in this way: 'rising, falling, sitting'. When you make a mental note of sitting, keep your mind on the erect position of the upper body. When you are lying down, you should proceed with full awareness as follows: 'rising, falling, lying'. If you find this easy, continue with noting these three sections. Should you notice that a pause occurs at the end of the rising as well as at the end of the falling movement, then continue in this manner: 'rising, sitting, falling, sitting'. Or when lying down: 'rising, lying, falling, lying'. Suppose you no longer find it easy to make a mental note of three or four objects in the above manner. Then revert to the initial procedure of noting only the two sections; rising and falling.

While engaged in the regular practice of contemplating bodily movements, you need not be concerned with objects of seeing and hearing. As long as you are able to keep your mind on the abdominal movements of rising and falling, it is assumed that the purpose of noting the actions and objects of seeing is also served. However, you may intentionally look at an object; then simultaneously make a mental note, two or three times, 'seeing'. Then return to the awareness of the abdominal movements. Suppose a person comes into your view. Make a mental note of 'seeing', two or three times

and then resume attention to the rising and falling movements of the abdomen. Did you happen to hear the sound of a voice? Did you listen to it? If so make a mental note of 'hearing, listening' and revert to rising and falling. But suppose you heard loud noises, such as the barking of dogs, loud talking or shouting. If so, immediately make a mental note two or three times, 'hearing', then return to your basic exercise. If you fail to note and dismiss such distinctive sounds as they occur, you may inadvertently fall into reflections about them instead of proceeding with intense attention to rising and falling, which may then become less distinct and clear. It is by such weakened attention that mind-defiling passions breed and multiply. If such reflections do occur, make a mental note, 'reflecting', two or three times, then again take up the contemplation of rising and falling. Should you forget to make a mental note of body, leg or arm movements, then mentally note, 'forgetting', and resume your usual contemplation on abdominal movements. You may feel at times that breathing is slow or that the rising and falling movements are not clearly perceived. When this happens, and you are in the sitting position, simply move the attention to note, 'sitting, touching'; or if you are lying down, 'lying, touching'. While contemplating touching, your mind should not be kept on the same part of the body but on different parts successively. There are

several places of touch and at least six or seven should be contemplated⁴.

Basic Exercise IV

Up to this point you have devoted quite some time to the training course. You might begin to feel lazy thinking that you have made inadequate progress. By no means give up. Simply note the fact, lazy. Before you gain sufficient strength in attention, concentration and insight, you may doubt the correctness or usefulness of this method of training. In such a circumstance, turn to contemplation of the thought, 'doubtful'. Do you anticipate or wish for good results? If so, make such thoughts the subject of your contemplation; 'anticipating', or 'wishing'. Are you attempting to recall the manner in which the training was conducted up to this point? Yes? Then take up contemplation on 'recollecting'. Are there occasions when you examine the object of contemplation in order to determine whether it is mind or matter? If so, then be aware of 'examining'.

Do you regret that there is no improvement in your contemplation? If so, attend to the feeling of 'regret'.

⁴ Some of these points where the touch sensation may be observed are: where thigh and knee touch, or the hands placed together, or finger to finger, thumb to thumb, closing of the eyelids, tongue inside the mouth, lips touching when mouth is closed.

Conversely, are you happy that your contemplation is improving? If you are, then contemplate the feeling of being 'happy'. This is the way in which you make a mental note of every item of mental behaviour as it occurs, and if there are no intervening thoughts or perceptions to note, you should revert to the contemplation of rising and falling. During a strict course of meditation, the time of practice is from the first moment you wake up until the last moment before you fall asleep. To reiterate, you must be constantly occupied either with the basic exercise or with mindful attention throughout the day and during those night hours when you are not asleep. There must be no relaxation. Upon reaching a certain stage of progress with contemplation, you will not feel sleepy in spite of these prolonged hours of practise. On the contrary, you will be able to continue the contemplation day and night.

Summary

It has been emphasized during this brief outline of the training that you must contemplate on each mental occurrence, good or bad; on each bodily movement large or small; on every sensation (bodily or mental feeling) pleasant or unpleasant; and so on. If, during the course of training, occasions arise when there is nothing special to contemplate upon, be fully occupied with attention to the rising and falling of the abdomen. When you have to attend to any kind of activity that necessitates walking, then,

in complete awareness, each step should be briefly noted as 'walking, walking' or 'left step, right step'. But when you are taking a walking exercise, contemplate on each step in three sections; 'up, forward, down'. The student who thus dedicates himself or herself to the training day and night, will be able in not too long a time, to develop concentration to the initial stage of the fourth degree of insight (knowledge of arising and passing away)⁵ and onward to higher stages of insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*).

⁵ 'Tarūṇa-udayabbaya-ñāṇa' - On the degrees of insight knowledge, see *The Progress of Insight* by The Ven. Mahāsi Sayādaw (publ. by The Forest Hermitage, Kandy, Ceylon).

PART 2 : PROGRESSIVE PRACTICE

When as mentioned above, by dint of diligent practice, mindfulness and concentration have improved, the meditator will notice the pair-wise occurrence of an object and the knowing of it, such as the rising and awareness of it, the falling and awareness of it, sitting and awareness of it, bending and awareness of it, stretching and awareness of it, lifting and awareness of it, putting down and awareness of it. Through concentration attention (mindfulness) he knows how to distinguish each bodily and mental process: "The rising movement is one process; the knowing of it is another." He realises that each act of knowing has the nature of "going towards an object". Such a realisation refers to the characteristic function of the mind as inclining towards an object, or cognising an object. One should know that the more clearly a material object is noticed, the clearer becomes the mental process of knowing it. This fact is stated thus in the *Visuddhimagga*:

"For in proportion as materiality becomes quite definite, disentangled and quite clear to him, so the immaterial states that have that materiality as their object become plain of themselves too."

('The Path of Purification', translated by Bhikkhu Nāṇamoli).

When the meditator comes to know the difference between a bodily process and a mental process, should he be a simple man, he would reflect from direct experience thus: "There is the rising and knowing it; the falling and knowing it, and so on and so forth. There is nothing else besides them. The words 'man' or 'woman' refer to the same process; there is no 'person' or 'soul'." Should he be a well-informed man, he would reflect from direct knowledge of the difference between a material process as object and a mental process of knowing it, thus: "It is true that there are only body and mind. Besides them, there are none such entities as man or woman. While contemplating one notices a material process as object and a mental process of knowing it; and it is to that pair alone that the terms of conventional usage 'being', 'person' or 'soul', 'man' or 'woman' refer. But apart from that dual process there is no separate person or being, I or another, man or woman." When such reflections occur, the meditator must note 'reflecting, reflecting' and go on observing the rising of the abdomen, and its falling⁶.

With further progress in meditation, the conscious state of an intention is evident before a bodily movement occurs. The meditator first notices that

⁶ The preceding section describes the "analytical knowledge of body and mind" (*ināma-rūpa-pariccheda-nāṇa*), belonging to the "Purification of View".

intention. Though also at the start of his practice, he does notice 'intending, intending' (for instance, to bend an arm), yet he cannot notice that state of consciousness distinctly. Now, at this more advanced stage, he clearly notices the consciousness consisting of the intention to bend. So he notices first the conscious state of an intention to make a bodily movement; then he notices the particular bodily movement. At the beginning, because of omission to notice an intention, he thinks that bodily movement is quicker than the mind knowing it. Now, at this advanced stage, mind appears to be the forerunner. The meditator readily notices the intention of bending, stretching, sitting, standing, going, and so on. He also clearly notices the actual bending, stretching, etc. So he realises the fact that mind knowing a bodily process is quicker than the material process. He experiences directly that a bodily process takes place after a preceding intention. Again he knows from direct experience that the intensity of heat or cold increases while he is noting 'hot, hot' or 'cold, cold'. In contemplating regular and spontaneous bodily movements such as the rising and falling of the abdomen, he notices one after another continuously. He also notices the arising in him of mental images such as the Buddha, an *arahat* as well as any kind of sensation that arises in his body (such as itch, ache, heat), with attention directed on the particular spot where the sensation occurs. One sensation has hardly disappeared, then another arises, and he notices them all accordingly.

While noting every object as it arises, he is aware that a mental process of knowing depends on an object. Sometimes, the rising and falling of the abdomen is so faint that he finds nothing to note. Then, it occurs to him that there can be no knowing without an object. When no noting of the rising and falling is possible, one should be aware of sitting and touching or lying and touching. Touching is to be noted alternatively. For example, after noting 'sitting', note the touch sensation at the right foot (caused by its contact with to the ground or seat). Then, after noting 'sitting', note the touch sensation at the left foot. In the same manner, note the touch sensation at several places. Again, in noting 'seeing, hearing', the meditator comes to know clearly that seeing arises from the contact of eye and visual object and hearing arises from the contact of ear and sound.

Further he reflects: "Material processes of bending, stretching and so on follow mental processes of intending to bend, stretch and so forth." He goes on to reflect: "One's body becomes hot or cold because of the element of heat or cold; the body exists on food and nourishment; consciousness arises because there are objects to notice: seeing arises through visual objects; hearing through sounds, and also because there are the sense organs, eye, ear etc., as conditioning factors. Intention and noting result from previous experiences; feelings (sensations) of all kinds are the consequences of previous *kamma* in the sense that material

processes and mental processes take place ever since birth because of previous *kamma*. There is nobody to create this body and mind, and all that happens has causal factors.”

Such reflections come to the meditator while he is noting any object as it arises. He does not stop doing so to take time to reflect. While noting objects as they arise, these reflections are so quick that they appear to be automatic. The meditator, then, must note: ‘reflecting, reflecting, recognising, recognising’, and continue noting objects as usual. After having reflected that material processes and mental processes being noted are conditioned by the previous processes of the same nature, the meditator reflects further that body and mind in the former existences were conditioned by the preceding causes, that in the following existences, body and mind will result from the same causes, and apart from this dual process, there is no separate ‘being’ or ‘person’, only causes and effects taking place. Such reflections must also be noted and then contemplation should go on as usual⁷. Such reflections will be many in the case of persons with a strong intellectual bent and less in the case of those

⁷ The preceding section refers to “knowledge by discerning conditionality” (*paccaya-pariggaha-nāṇa*), belonging to the “Purification by Overcoming Doubt”.

with no such bent. Be that as it may, energetic noting must be made of all these reflections. Noting them will result in their reduction to a minimum, allowing insight to progress unimpeded by an excess of such reflections. It should be taken for granted that a minimum of reflections will suffice here.

When concentration is practised in an intensive manner, the meditator may experience almost unbearable sensations, such as itching, aches, heat, dullness and stiffness. If mindful noting is stopped, such sensations will disappear. When noting is resumed, they will reappear. Such sensations arise in consequence of the body's natural sensitivity and are not the symptoms of a disease. If they are noted with energetic concentration, they fade away gradually.

Again, the meditator sometimes sees images of all kinds as if seeing them with his own eyes; for example, the Buddha comes into the scene in glorious radiance; a procession of monks in the sky; pagodas (*dagobas*) and images of the Buddha; meeting with beloved ones; trees or woods, hills or mountains, gardens, buildings; finding oneself face to face with bloated dead bodies or skeletons; swelling of one's body, covered with blood, falling into pieces and reduced to a mere skeleton, seeing in one's body the entrails and vital organs and even germs; seeing the denizens of the hells and heavens. These are nothing but creatures of one's imagination sharpened by intense concentration. They are

similar to what one comes across in dreams. They are not to be welcomed and enjoyed, nor need one be afraid of them. These objects seen in the course of contemplation are not real; they are mere images or imaginations, whereas the mind that sees those objects is a reality. But purely mental processes, unconnected with fivefold sense impressions, cannot easily be noticed with sufficient clarity and detail. Hence, principal attention should be given to sense objects which can be noticed easily and to those mental processes which arise in connection with sense perceptions. So whatever object appears, the meditator should note it, saying mentally, 'seeing, seeing' until it disappears. It will either move away, fade away or break asunder. At the outset, this will take several notings, say about five to ten. But when insight develops, the object will disappear after a couple of notings. However, if the meditator wishes to enjoy the sight, or to look closely into the matter, or gets scared of it, then it is likely to linger on. If the object be induced deliberately, then through delight it will last a long time. So care must be taken not to think of or incline towards extraneous matters while one's concentration is good. If such thoughts come in, they must be instantly noted and dispelled. In the case of some persons, they experience no extraordinary objects or feelings and, while contemplating as usual, become lazy. They must note this laziness thus: 'lazy, lazy', until they overcome it. At this stage, whether or not the meditators come across extraordinary objects or feelings, they know clearly the initial, the

intermediate and the final phases of every noting. At the beginning of the practice, while noting one object, they had to switch to a different object that arose, but they did not notice clearly the disappearance of the previous object. Now, only after cognising the disappearance of an object, they notice the new object that arises. Thus they have a clear knowledge of the initial, the intermediate and the final phases of the object noted.

At this stage when the meditator becomes more practiced, he perceives in every act of noting that an object appears suddenly and disappears instantly. His perception is so clear that he reflects thus: "All comes to an end; all disappears. Nothing is permanent; it is truly impermanent." His reflection is quite in line with what is stated in the Commentary to the Pāḷi Text: "All is impermanent, in the sense of destruction, non-existence after having been." He reflects further, "It is through ignorance that we enjoy life. But in truth, there is nothing to enjoy. There is a continuous arising and disappearing by which we are harassed over and over. This is dreadful indeed. At any moment we may die and everything is sure to come to an end. This universal impermanence is truly frightful and terrible." His reflection agrees with the commentarial statement: "What is impermanent is painful, painful in the sense of terror; painful because of oppression by rise and fall." Again, experiencing severe pains, he reflects thus: "All is pain, all is bad." This reflection agrees with what the Commentary states: "He looks

on pain as a barb; as a boil; as a dart." He further reflects: "This is a mass of suffering, suffering that is unavoidable. Arising and disappearing, it is worthless. One cannot stop its process. It is beyond one's power. It takes its natural course." This reflection is quite in agreement with the Commentary: "What is painful is not self, not self in the sense of having no core, because there is no exercising of power over it." The meditator must note all these reflections and go on contemplating as usual.

Having thus seen the three characteristics by direct experience, the meditator, by inference from the direct experience of the objects noted, comprehends all the objects not yet noted as being impermanent, subject to suffering, and without a self.

In respect of objects not personally experienced, he concludes: "They too are constituted in the same way: impermanent, painful and without a self." This is an inference from his present direct experience. Such a comprehension is not clear enough in the case of one with less intellectual capacity or limited knowledge who pays no attention to a reflection but simply goes on noting objects. But such a comprehension occurs often to one who yields to reflection, which, in some cases, may occur at every act of noting. Such excessive reflecting, however, is an impediment to the progress of insight. Even if no such reflections occur at this stage, comprehension will nevertheless become increasingly clear at the

higher stages. Hence, no attention should be given to reflections. While giving more attention to the bare noting of objects, the meditator must, however, also note these reflections if they occur, but he should not dwell on them⁸.

After comprehending the three characteristics, the meditator no longer reflects but goes on with noting those bodily and mental objects which present themselves continuously. Then at the moment when the five mental faculties, namely, faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and knowledge, are properly balanced, the mental process of noting accelerates as if it becomes uplifted, and the bodily and mental processes to be noted also arise much quicker. In a moment of in-breathing, the rising of the abdomen presents itself in quick succession, and the falling also becomes correspondingly quicker. Quick succession is also evident in the process of bending and stretching. Slight movements are felt spreading all over the body. In several cases, prickly sensations and itching appear in quick succession momentarily. By and large, these are feelings hard to bear. The meditator cannot possibly keep pace with the quick succession of varied experiences if he attempts to notice them by name. Noting here has to be done in a general manner, but with mindfulness. At this stage, one need not try to note details of the objects arising in quick

⁸ The preceding paragraphs refer to the "knowledge of comprehension" (*Sammasana-ñāṇa*).

succession, but one should note them generally. If one wishes to name them, a collective designation will be sufficient. If one attempts to follow them in a detailed manner, one will get tired soon. The important thing is to notice clearly and to comprehend what arises. At this stage, the usual contemplation focused on a few selected objects should be set aside and mindful noting should attend to every object that arises at the six sense doors. Only when one is not keen on this sort of noting, then should one revert to the usual contemplation.

Bodily and mental processes are many times swifter than a wink of an eye or a flash of lightning. Yet, if the meditator goes on simply noting these processes, he can fully comprehend them as they happen. Then mindfulness becomes very strong. As a result, mindfulness seems as if plunging into an object that arises. The object too seems as if alighting on mindfulness. One comprehends each object clearly and singly. Therefore the meditator then believes: "Bodily and mental processes are very swift indeed. They are as fast as a machine or an engine. And yet, they all can be noted and comprehended. Perhaps there is nothing more to know. What is to be known has been known." He believes so because he knows by direct experience what he has not even dreamt of before.

Again, as a result of insight, a brilliant light will appear to the meditator. There arises also in him

rapture, causing "goose flesh", falling of tears, tremor in the limbs. It produces in him a subtle thrill and exhilaration. He feels as if on a swing. He even wonders whether he is just giddy. Then, there arises tranquility of mind and along with it appears mental agility. When sitting, lying, walking or standing, he feels quite at ease. Both body and mind are agile in functioning swiftly, they are pliant in being able to attend to any object desired; they are wieldy in being able to attend to an object for any length of time desired. One is free from stiffness, heat or pain. Insight penetrates objects with ease. Mind becomes sound and straight, and one wishes to avoid all evil. Through firm faith, mind is very bright. At times, when there is no object to be noted, the mind remains tranquil for a long time. There arise in him thoughts like these: "Verily, the Buddha is omniscient. Truly, the body-and-mind process is impermanent, painful and without self." While noting objects, he comprehends lucidly the three characteristics. He wishes to advise others to practise meditation. Free from sloth and torpor, his energy is neither lax nor tense. There also arises in him equanimity associated with insight. His happiness exceeds his former experiences. So he wishes to communicate his feelings and experiences to others. There arises further a subtle attachment of a calm nature that enjoys the insight associated with the brilliant light, mindfulness and rapture. He comes to believe it to be just the bliss of meditation.

The meditator should not reflect on these happenings. As each arises, he should note them accordingly: 'Brilliant light, faith, rapture, tranquility, happiness' and so on⁹. When there is brightness, one should note it as 'bright', until it disappears. Similar acts of noting should be made in the other cases too. When brilliant light appears, at the beginning one tends to forget noting and enjoys seeing the light. Even if the meditator applies mindful noting to the light, it will be mixed with feelings of rapture and happiness, and it is likely to linger on. However, one later gets used to such phenomena and one will continue to note them clearly until they disappear. Sometimes the light is so brilliant that one finds it difficult to make it vanish by the mere act of noting it mindfully. Then one should cease to pay attention to it and turn energetically to the noting of any object that arises in one's body. The meditator should not ponder as to whether the light is still there. If he does so, he is likely to see it. If such a thought arises, he should disperse it by vigorously directing his attention to that very thought. While concentration is intense, not only a brilliant light but also several other

⁹ These phenomena are the "ten corruptions of insight". They have the character of "corruptions" only when they cause attachment in the meditator, or lead to conceit, i.e., if, in misjudging these phenomena and overrating his achievements, he believes to have attained to the paths of sainthood. These "corruptions" occur at the stage of "weak knowledge of rise and fall".

extraordinary objects arise and may continue if one inclines to one or the other of them. If such inclination happens to arise, the meditator must note it quickly. In some cases, even if there is no such inclination towards any object in particular, faint objects appear one after the other like a train of railway carriages. The meditator should then respond to such visual images simply by 'seeing, seeing', and each object will disappear. When the meditator's insight becomes weaker, the objects may become more distinct. Then, each of them must be noted until the whole train of objects disappears finally.

One must recognize the fact that cherishing an inclination towards such phenomena as a brilliant light, and being attached to them, is a wrong attitude. The correct response that is in conformity with the path of insight is to note these objects mindfully and with detachment until they disappear¹⁰.

When the meditator continues to apply mindfulness to body and mind, his insight will grow in clarity. He will come to perceive more distinctly the arising and disappearing of the bodily and mental processes. He

¹⁰ This refers to "purification by knowledge and wisdom of what is path and not-path".

will come to know that each object arises at one place and on the very place it disappears. He will know that the previous occurrence is one thing and the succeeding occurrence is another. So, at every act of noting, he comprehends the characteristics of impermanence, painfulness and egolessness. After thus contemplating for a considerable time, he may come to believe: "This is surely the best that can be attained. It can't be better." He becomes so satisfied with his progress that he is likely to pause and relax. He should, however, not relax at this stage, but go ahead with his practice of noting the bodily and mental processes continuously for a still longer time¹¹.

With the improvement of practice and when knowledge becomes more mature, the arising of the objects is no longer apparent to the meditator; he notices only their ceasing. They pass away swiftly. So also do the mental processes of noting them. For instance, while noting the rising of the abdomen, that movement vanishes in no time. And in the same manner vanishes the mental process of noting that movement. Thus it will be clearly known to the meditator that both the rising and the noting vanish immediately, one after another. The same applies in the case of the falling of the abdomen, sitting,

¹¹ Reference is here to the "final knowledge of rise and fall" (*udayabbayā-nāṇa*).

bending or stretching of an arm or leg, stiffness in the limbs, and so on. The noting of an object and the knowledge of its ceasing occur in quick succession. Some meditators perceive distinctly three phases: noting an object, its ceasing, and the passing away of the consciousness that cognizes that ceasing—all in quick succession. However, it is sufficient to know, in pair-wise sequence, the dissolution of an object and the passing away of the consciousness of noting that dissolution.

When a meditator can clearly notice these pairs uninterruptedly, the particular features such as body, head, hand, leg are no longer apparent to him, and there appears to him the idea that everything is ceasing and vanishing. At this stage he is likely to feel that his contemplation is not up to the mark. But in fact, it is not so. Mind as a rule takes delight in dwelling on the sight of particular features and forms. Because of their absence, mind is wanting in satisfaction. As a matter of fact, it is the manifestation of the progress of insight. At the beginning, it is features that are clearly noted first, but now their ceasing is noted first because of the progress. Only on repeated reflection, features appear again, but if they are not noted, the fact of dissolution reappears to remain. So one comes to know by direct experience the truth of the wise saying: "When a name or designation arises, a reality lies hidden; when a reality reveals itself, a name or designation disappears."

When the meditator notes the objects clearly, he thinks that his notings are not close enough. In fact, the insight is so swift and clear that he comes to know even the momentary subconsciousness in between the processes of cognition. He intends to do something, for instance, bending or stretching an arm, and he readily notes that intention which thereby tends to fade away, with the result that he cannot bend or stretch for some time. In that event, he should switch his attention to contemplating the occurrences at one of the six sense doors.

If the meditator extends his contemplation over the whole body, as usual, beginning with the noting of the rising and the falling of the abdomen, he will soon gain momentum, and then he should continue noting, 'touching' and 'knowing', or 'seeing' and 'knowing', or 'hearing' and 'knowing' and so on, as one or the other occurs. While so doing, if he feels that he is either restless or tired, then he should revert to note the rising and falling of the abdomen. After some time, when he gains momentum, he should note any object that arises in the whole body.

When he can contemplate well in such a spread out manner, even if he does not note an object with vigor, he knows what he hears fades away, what he sees dissolves in broken parts, with no continuation between them. This is seeing things as they really are. Some meditators do not see clearly what is happening because the vanishing is so swift that they feel their eyesight is getting poorer or they are

giddy. It is not so. They are simply lacking the power of cognition to note what happens before and after, with the result that they do not see the features or forms. At such a time, they should relax and stop contemplating. But the bodily and mental processes continue to appear to them, and consciousness of its own accord continues to note them. The meditator may decide to sleep, but he does not fall asleep; and yet he remains fit and alert. He need not worry about the loss of sleep, because on this account he will not feel unwell or fall ill. He should go ahead with noting energetically and he will feel that his mind is quite capable to perceive the objects fully and clearly.

When engaged in noting continuously both the dissolution of the objects and the act of knowing it, he reflects: "Even for the wink of an eye or a flash of lightning nothing lasts. One did not realize this before. As it ceased and vanished in the past so will it cease and vanish in the future." One must note such a reflection¹². Besides, in the midst of contemplations, the meditator is likely to have an awareness of fearfulness. He reflects: "One enjoys life, not knowing the truth. Now that one knows the truth of continuous dissolution it is truly fearful. At every moment of dissolution one can die. The beginning of this life itself is fearful. So are the

¹² "Knowledge of dissolution" (*Bhagānupssanā-nāṇa*).

endless repetitions of the arisings. Fearful it is to feel that in the absence of real features and forms the arisings appear to be real. So are the efforts to arrest the changing phenomena for the sake of well-being and happiness. To be reborn is fearful in that it will be a recurrence of objects that are ceasing and vanishing always. Fearful indeed it is to be old, to die, to experience sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair." Such reflection should be noted and then dismissed.

Then the meditator sees nothing to depend on and becomes as it were weakened in mind as well as in body. He is seized with dejection. He is no longer bright and spirited. But he should not despair. This condition of his is a sign of the progress of insight. It is nothing more than being unhappy at the awareness of fearfulness. He must note such a reflection and as he continues to note objects as they arise, one after another, this unhappy feeling will disappear soon. However, if he fails to contemplate for some time, then grief will assert itself and fear will overpower him. This kind of fear is not associated with insight. Therefore, care must be taken to prevent the oncoming of such undesirable fear by energetic contemplation¹³.

Again in the midst of noting objects, he is likely to find faults, in this manner: "This body-and-mind process, being impermanent, is unsatisfactory. It

¹³ "Knowledge of fearfulness" (*Bhayatupatthāna-ñāṇa*).

was not a good thing to have been born. It is not good either to continue in existence. It is disappointing to see the appearance of seemingly definite features and forms of objects while in fact they are not realities. It is in vain that one makes efforts to seek well-being and happiness. Birth is not desirable. Dreadful are old age, death, lamentation, pain, grief and despair." A reflection of this nature must likewise be noted¹⁴.

Then, one tends to feel that body-and-mind as the object and the consciousness of noting it are very crude, low or worthless. By noting their arising and disappearing, he gets sick of them. He might see his own body decaying and decomposing. He looks upon it as being very fragile.

At this stage, while the meditator is noting all that arises in his body and mind, he is getting disgusted with it. Although he cognizes clearly their dissolution by a series of good notings, he is no longer alert and bright. His contemplation is associated with disgust. So he becomes lazy to contemplate. But nevertheless he cannot refrain from contemplating. For example, it is like one who feels disgusted at every step when he has to walk on a muddy and dirty path and yet he cannot stop going. He cannot help but go on. At this time, he sees the human abode as being subject to the process of dissolution, and he does not relish the

¹⁴ "Knowledge of misery" (*Ādīnava-ñāṇa*)

prospect of being reborn as a human being, man or woman, king or multimillionaire. He has the same feelings towards the celestial abodes¹⁵.

When through this knowledge, he feels disgusted with regard to every formation noted, there will arise in him a desire to forsake these formations or be delivered from them¹⁶. 'Seeing', 'hearing', 'touching', 'reflecting', 'standing', 'sitting', 'bending', 'stretching', 'noticing' - he wishes to get rid of them all. He should note this wishing. He now longs for the liberation from bodily and mental processes. He reflects: "Every time I note them, I am meeting with repetitions, which are all bad. I had better stop noting them." He should take note of such a reflection.

Some meditators, when so reflecting, actually stop noting the formations. Although they do so, the formations do not stop taking place, namely, 'rising', 'falling', 'bending', 'stretching', 'intending' and so on. They go on as ever. Noting of the distinct formations also continues. So, reflecting thus, he feels pleased: "Although I stop noting the body and mind, formations are taking place all the same. They are arising, and consciousness of them is there, by itself. So liberation from them cannot be achieved by mere stopping to note them. They cannot be forsaken in this way. Noting them as usual, the

¹⁵ "Knowledge of Disgust" (*Nibbidā-ñāṇa*).

¹⁶ "Knowledge of desire for deliverance" (*Muñcitu-kaṃyatā-ñāṇa*).

three characteristics of life will be fully comprehended and then no heed being given to them, equanimity will be gained. The end of these formations, *nibbāna*, will be realized. Peace and bliss will come." So reflecting with delight, he continues to notice the formations. In the case of those meditators who are not capable of reflecting in this way, they continue their meditation once they become satisfied with the explanation of their teachers.

Soon after continuing meditation, they gain momentum and at that time usually various painful feelings arise in some cases. This need not cause despair. It is only the manifestation of the characteristic inherent in this mass of suffering, as stated in the Commentary thus: "Seeing the five aggregates as painful, as a disease, a boil, as a dart, a calamity, an affliction, etc." If such painful feelings are not experienced, one of the forty characteristics of impermanence, suffering or no-self¹⁷ will be apparent at every noting. Although the meditator is properly noting, he feels that he is not doing well. He thinks that the consciousness of noting and the object noted are not close enough. This is because he is too eager to comprehend fully the nature of the three characteristics. Not satisfied with his contemplation, he changes his posture often. While sitting, he thinks he will do better walking. While

¹⁷ There are ten characteristics of impermanence, twenty-five of suffering and five of no-self.

walking he wants to resume sitting. After he has sat down, he changes the position of his limbs. He wants to go to another place; he wants to lie down. Although he makes these changes, he cannot remain long in one particular position. Again, he becomes restless. But he should not despair. All this happens because he has come to realize the true nature of the formations, and also because he has not yet acquired the "knowledge of equanimity about formations." He is doing well and yet he feels otherwise. He should try to adhere to one posture, and he will find that he is comfortable in that posture. Continuing to note the formations energetically, his mind will gradually become composed and bright. In the end his restless feelings will disappear totally¹⁸.

When the "knowledge of equanimity about formations" becomes mature, the mind will be very clear and able to note the formations very lucidly. Noting runs smoothly as if no effort is required. Subtle formations, too, are noted without effort. The true characteristics of impermanence, pain and no-self are becoming evident without any reflection. Attention is directed to a particular spot at any part of the body wherever a sensation occurs, but the feeling of touch is as smooth as that of cotton. Sometimes, the objects to be noted in the whole body are so many that noting has to be accelerated.

¹⁸ This refers to "knowledge of re-observation or reflection"
(*Patisanikhānupassanā-nāṇa*).

Both body and mind appear to be pulling upwards. The objects being noted become sparse and one can note them easily and calmly. Sometimes the bodily formations disappear altogether leaving only the mental formations. Then the meditator will experience within himself a feeling of rapture as if enjoying a shower of tiny particles of water. He is also suffused with serenity. He might also see brightness like a clear sky. These marked experiences, however, do not influence him excessively. He is not overjoyed. But he still enjoys them. He must note this enjoyment. He must also note rapture, serenity and bright light. If they do not vanish when being noted, he should pay no heed to them and note any other object that arises.

At this stage, he becomes satisfied with the knowledge that there is no I, mine, he or his, and that only formations arise; formations only, are cognizing formations. He also finds delight in noting the objects one after another. He is not tired of noting the objects one after another. He is not tired of noting them for a long time. He is free from painful feelings. So whatever posture he chooses, he can retain it long. Either sitting or lying, he can go on contemplating for two or three hours without experiencing any discomfort, spending his time tirelessly. Intending to contemplate for a while, he may go on for two or three hours. Even after that time his posture is as firm as before.

At times formations arise swiftly and he is noting them well. Then he may become anxious as to what would happen to him. He should note such an anxiety. He feels he is doing well. He should note this feeling. He looks forward to the progress of insight. He should note this anticipation. He should note steadily whatever arises. He should not put forth a special effort nor relax. In some cases, because of the anxiety, joy, attachment or anticipation, noting becomes lax and retrogressive. Some who think that the goal is very near contemplate with great energy. While doing so, noting becomes lax and retrogression sets in. This happens because a restless mind cannot concentrate properly on formations. So when noting is in good swing, the meditator must go on steadily; that means he should neither relax nor put forth special effort. If he does go on steadily, he will rapidly gain insight into the end of all the formations and realize *nibbāna*. In the case of some meditators, they may, at this stage, rise higher and again fall several times. They should not give way to despair but instead hold fast to determination. Heed must be paid also to note whatever arises at all the six sense doors. However, when noting is going on smoothly and calmly, contemplation in such a spread out manner is not possible. So this manner of noting should begin with the gaining of the momentum in contemplation until it becomes smooth and calm.

If the meditator begins either with the rising and falling of the abdomen or with any other bodily and mental object, he will find that he is gaining momentum. And then the noting will go on of its own accord smoothly and calmly. It will appear to him that he is watching with ease the ceasing and vanishing of the formations in a clear manner. At this point, his mind is quite free from all the defilements. However pleasant and inviting an object may be, it is no longer so to him. Again, however loathsome an object may be, it is no longer so to him. He simply sees, hears, smells, tastes, feels a touch, or cognizes. With six kinds of equanimity described in the Texts, he notes all the formations. He is not even aware of the length of time he is engaged in contemplation. Nor does he reflect in any manner. But if he does not develop sufficient progress of insight to gain the "knowledge of the path and its fruition" (*maggā* and *phala*) within two or three hours, concentration becomes slack and reflection sets in. On the other hand, if he is making good progress, he may anticipate further advance. He will become so delighted with the result that he will experience a fall. Then he must dispel such an anticipation or reflection by directing bare noting to it. A steady contemplation will achieve smooth progress again. But if sufficient strength of insight has not yet been achieved, concentration becomes slack again. In this way, some meditators progress and fall back several times. Those who are acquainted with the stages of the progress of insight by way of study (or by hearing about them)

encounter such ups and downs. Hence it is not good for a pupil who meditates under the guidance of a teacher to get acquainted with these stages before meditation begins. But for the benefit of those who have to practice without the guidance of an experienced teacher, these stages have been indicated here.

In spite of such fluctuations in his progress, the meditator must not allow himself to be overcome by disappointment or despair. He is now, as it were, at the threshold of *magga* and *phala* (the entry and the fruition of the stages of sainthood). As soon as the five faculties (*indriya*) of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom are developed in an even manner, he will soon reach *magga* and *phala* and realize *Nibbāna*.

HOW NIBBĀNA IS REALIZED

The ups and downs of insight knowledge occurring in the aforesaid manner are comparable to a bird let loose from a sea-going ship. In ancient times, the captain of a sea-going ship, finding it difficult to know whether the ship was approaching land, released a bird that he had taken with him. The bird flies in all four directions to look for a shore. Whenever it cannot find any land, it comes back to the ship. As long as insight knowledge is not mature enough to grow into path and fruition knowledge and thereby attain to the realization of *nibbāna*, it becomes lax and retarded, just as the bird returns to the ship. When the bird sees land, it flies on in that direction without returning to the ship. Similarly, when insight knowledge is mature, on having become keen, strong and lucid, it will understand one of the formations, at one of the six sense doors, as being impermanent or painful or without self. That act of noting any one characteristic out of the three which has a higher degree of lucidity and strength in its perfect understanding, becomes faster and manifests itself three or four times in rapid succession. Immediately after the last consciousness in this series of accelerated noting has ceased, *maggā and phala* (path and fruition) arises, realizing *nibbāna*, the cessation of all formations.

The acts of noting are now more lucid than the previous ones immediately before the realization. After the last act of noting, the cessation of the

formations and realization of *nibbāna* become manifest. That is why those who have realized *nibbāna* would say: "The objects noted and the consciousness noting them cease altogether; or the objects and the acts of noting are cut off as a vine is cut by a knife; or the objects and acts of noting fall off as if one is relieved of a heavy load; or the objects and acts of noting break away as if something one is holding breaks asunder; or the objects and acts of noting are suddenly freed as if from a prison; or the objects and acts of noting are blown off as if a candle is suddenly extinguished; or they disappear as if darkness is suddenly replaced by light; or they are released as if freed from an embroilment; or they sink as if in water, or abruptly stop as if a person running were stopped by a violent push; or they cease altogether."

The duration of realizing the cessation of formations is, however, not long. It is so short that it lasts just for an instant of noting. Then the meditator reviews what has occurred. He knows that the cessation of the material process noted and the mental process noting them is the realization of *maggā-phala-nibbāna*. Those who are well-informed know that the cessation of the formations is *nibbāna*, and the realization of cessation and bliss is *maggā-phala*. They would say inwardly: "I have now realized *nibbāna* and have attained *sotāpatti maggā-phala*." Such a clear knowledge is evident to one who has

studied the scriptures or heard sermons on this subject¹⁹.

Some meditators review defilements - those already abandoned and those remaining to be abandoned. After having reviewed in this way, they still continue the practice of noting bodily and mental processes. While doing so, the bodily and mental processes, however, appear to be coarse. Both the arising and the passing away of the processes are clearly evident to the meditator. And yet the meditator now feels as if his noting is lax and has regressed. As a matter of

¹⁹ At the suggestion of the Venerable Author, the following two references are here quoted, in explanation of the stages in the realization of *nibbāna*, on the paths of stream-entry, once-returning, etc.: a. "One who sees *nibbāna*, which merges in the deathless (in the sense of the end) realizes it . . . The seeing of *nibbāna*, at the moment of the first path is *realizing as seeing (dassana)*. At the other path moments it is *realizing as developing (bhāvanā)*." b. ". . . Suppose a man who can see is travelling along a path on a cloudy night. The path is obscured by the darkness. Lightning flashes and dispels the dark. In the absence of darkness the path becomes clear. This happens on a second journey, and again on a third journey. Here, like the man who can see his setting out on the path, is the effort of insight put forth by the disciple for the stream-winning path. Like the obliteration of the way in darkness is the darkness covering the truths. Like the moment when the lightning flashes and dispels the darkness is the moment when the light of the stream-winning path arises and dispels the darkness covering the truths. Like the manifestation of the way when darkness clears is the time of the manifestations of the four truths to the stream-winning path; and what is manifest in the path is even manifest to the person who has got it. Like the second journey is the effort of insight to get the once returning path.... Like the third journey is the effort of insight to get the never-returning path ..."

fact, he has come back to the knowledge of arising and passing away. It is true, his noting has become lax and regressed. Because he has come back to this stage, he is likely to see bright lights or shapes of objects. In some cases, this reversion results in unbalanced contemplation in that the objects noted and acts of noting do not go together. Some meditators experience slight pain for a while. By and large, the meditators note that their mental processes are clear and bright. At this stage, the meditator feels that his mind is absolutely free from any encumbrance; he feels happily unhindered. In such a frame of mind, he cannot note the mental process, and even if he does so, he cannot note it distinctly. He cannot think of any other thing either. He simply feels bright and blissful. When this feeling loses its vigor, he can again note the bodily and mental processes and know their arising and passing away clearly. After some time, he reaches the stage where he can note the formations smoothly and calmly. Then, if the insight knowledge is mature, he can again attain to the "knowledge of the cessation of the formations". If the power of concentration is keen and firm, then such knowledge can repeat itself frequently. In these times, the object of the meditators is to attain to the knowledge of the first *magga-phala*, and consequently they regain that knowledge repeatedly. Thus far has been described the method of meditation, the progressive stages of insight knowledge and the realization of *sotāpatti magga-phala*.

One who has attained the knowledge of path and fruition is aware of the distinct change of his temperament and mental attitude and feels that his life has changed. His faith or trustful confidence in the three sacred gems becomes very strong and firm. Due to this strengthened faith he also gains in rapture and serenity. There arises in him a spontaneous upsurge of happiness. Because of these ecstatic experiences he cannot notice the objects in a distinct manner although he endeavors to do so right after the attainment of *magga-phala*. However, these experiences wane gradually after some hours or days, and he will then be able again to note the formations distinctly. In some cases, the meditators, having attained *magga-phala*, feel relieved of a great burden, free and easy, and do not wish to go on contemplating. Their object, the attainment of *magga-phala*, has been achieved and their hearts' content is understandable.

Fruition Knowledge (Phala-ñāṇa)

If one who has attained *magga-phala* wishes to attain the knowledge of fruition (*phala-ñāṇa*) and *nibbāna* once again, he must direct his mind towards that goal and again attend to noting mindfully the bodily and mental processes. In the course of insight meditation it is but natural that "analytical knowledge of body and mind" appears first to a worldling (*puṭhujjana*) and "knowledge of arising and passing away" appears first to a noble person (*ariya*). Therefore, a meditator at this stage,

conscious of the bodily and mental processes, will forthwith achieve the "knowledge of arising and passing away", followed soon by the other progressive stages of insight, up to the "knowledge of equanimity about formations". When this knowledge matures, the cessation of formations, *nibbāna*, is reached with the resultant "knowledge of fruition". This knowledge lasts just a moment to one who has not previously made a resolve on its duration; but it may sometimes last a little longer. But in the case of those who had made a prior resolve on its duration, the "knowledge of fruition" lasts longer, say the whole day or night, or as long as the time resolved, as stated in the Commentaries. Likewise, in these days, in the case of those immersed in concentration and insight, fruition lasts an hour, two hours, three hours, and so on. Fruition knowledge comes to an end only when the meditator wishes to terminate it. Nevertheless, during a period of fruition knowledge, lasting an hour or two, reflective moments sometimes arise, but they disappear after four or five notings, and fruition knowledge recurs. In some cases, fruition knowledge lasts for several hours, without any interruption. While fruition knowledge lasts, consciousness is absolutely set upon the cessation of formations known by the designation of *nibbāna*. *Nibbāna* is a *dhamma* entirely liberated from the bodily and mental process and all mundane notions. Therefore, during the experiencing of fruition knowledge, there arises no awareness of one's bodily and mental processes and of this world, nor of any other mundane sphere. One is absolutely

free from the entire mundane sphere. One is absolutely free from all mundane knowledge and inclinations. There are around him all objects to see, hear, smell or touch, but he is not aware of them at all. His posture is firm. If bliss of fruition knowledge comes while he is sitting, his sitting posture remains firm, as firm as before, without bending or sagging. However, when the process of fruition knowledge comes to an end there arises at once in him the awareness of thoughts relating to the cessation of the formations or the objects of sight, hearing, etc. Then the normal contemplation returns or buoyant feeling or reflection. At the beginning the formations appear to him to be coarse and his notings are not vigorous enough. But in the case of those who are strong in insight, their contemplation runs as smoothly as ever.

A note of warning may be given here. The meditator should make a prior resolve on the speedy entrance into fruition knowledge and the duration of it. He should not turn his attention to a resolve once he has started to note the bodily and mental processes. Before the maturity of insight is achieved, while he is doing very well in noting the formations, he may experience "goose flesh", yawning, trembling and sobbing, and lose the momentum of contemplation. While the acts of noting are gaining strength, he may look forward to the goal and thereby loosen the grip on his contemplation. But he should not think of anything else than his contemplation and if he does so unwittingly, he must note the extraneous

thought. Some attain the fruition knowledge only after several losses of the momentum in their acts of noting. If one's concentration is weak, then the entry into fruition knowledge is slow, and when it comes, it does not last long. This is a description of the process of fruition knowledge.

Reviewing

Some of the meditators pass through the stages of the knowledge of fearfulness, misery, disgust, desire of deliverance and consequently have no clear view of them. So, one wishing to review them should review each of them for a fixed time. For example, for half an hour or one hour, one should pay heed only to the arising and passing away of the objects, with a resolve on the knowledge of arising and passing away. During that period, the knowledge of arising and passing away remains intact, and there will be no further progress of insight. However, when that period expires, knowledge of dissolution arises by itself. If it does not arise by itself, then heed must be given to dissolution with a resolve that knowledge of dissolution stays on for a certain length of time. During that period what has been resolved will occur. On the expiration of the time fixed, the next higher knowledge will arise by itself. If it does not, he should aspire to the knowledge of fearfulness associated with fearful objects. Then knowledge of fearfulness will come together with fearful objects. Then he should turn his attention to miserable objects and knowledge of misery will arise very soon.

When the mind is directed to disgusting objects, it will give rise to knowledge of disgust. Getting disgusted with every noting, knowledge of disgust will set in. The next stage must then be thought of: "knowledge of desire for deliverance". Seized with an ardent desire to be delivered from the formations, he should aspire to the relevant knowledge, and soon that knowledge will come, after some effort. When one inclines towards the next higher stage, one will experience pain, wish to change postures and become disturbed by a feeling of dissatisfaction, but will gain knowledge of re-observation. Then, the meditator must turn his mind to the knowledge of equanimity. The momentum of contemplation will go on until there arises smoothly the knowledge of re-observation. In this way, one will find that during the stipulated time, while one is noting, the particular knowledge one aspires to arises and on its expiration the next higher knowledge arises as if it were a barometric rise. If a review of the above-mentioned knowledges is not yet satisfactory, it should be repeated until one is satisfied. To a very ardent meditator, the progress is so very swift that he may reach the stage of knowledge of equanimity about formations in a few moments, as also the stage of fruition knowledge. One who is well matured in the practice can attain to fruition knowledge while walking or having a meal.

How to Attain the Higher Paths (Maggas)

When the meditator gets full satisfaction from the exercises to attain speedily the fruition knowledge of the first path, as also to abide therein for a long time, he should strive to attain to a higher path. He must then make an ardent wish in this manner, having determined a definite period for striving: "During this period I do not wish to experience the fruition knowledge. May there be no recurrence of that knowledge! May I attain to the higher path, the path I have not yet attained! May I reach that goal!" With this ardent wish, he should, as usual, note the bodily and mental processes. The advantage of the determination of a definite period is that he can easily attain again the fruition knowledge of the path already acquired, if he so wishes. If no such time limit is made, and one goes on striving to attain to the higher path, then it will no longer be possible for him to attain again the fruition knowledge of the lower path. In that event, if one finds that he cannot as yet attain to the higher path nor go back to the fruition knowledge of the lower path, he will be disturbed by a feeling of dissatisfaction and disappointment. The advantage of abandoning the wish for re-attaining the already attained fruition knowledge is the non-attainment of the knowledge during the particular period, and if there is maturity of insight, one can attain to the higher path. If the wish is not fully abandoned, then the previous fruition knowledge may set in again. Therefore, full abandonment of the wish is called for during the

definite period. When one begins the contemplation with a view to attaining the higher path, the progress of insight will begin with knowledge of arising and passing away. Then the progress of insight is not similar to that one makes while striving for the recurrence of fruition knowledge, but the same as the progress one makes in practicing contemplation for the lower path. Brilliant light or shapes may appear as in the case of the earlier stage of knowledge of arising and passing away. One may experience pain. Distinct arising and passing away of the bodily and mental processes occurs. Although it does not take long to regain the "knowledge of equanimity about formations" while one is contemplating for the recurrence of fruition knowledge, now if insight does not mature one will have to remain long at the stages of lower knowledges. However, no difficulty will confront the meditator as in the case of his contemplation for the lower path. It is possible that he may attain to one knowledge after another up to "knowledge of equanimity about formations" in a day's time. The mental process of knowledge is much more lucid, distinct and broad. Much keener are his experiences of fearfulness, misery, disgust, desire for deliverance from the ills of the mundane spheres. Formerly, although it was possible to attain fruition knowledge four or five times in an hour, now, if insight is not yet mature for the higher path, "knowledge of equanimity about formations" goes on. Possibly it may last from a day to months or years. On the maturity of insight, distinct notings of the

formations having appeared, the realization of the cessation of the formations comes with the attainment of the higher path and fruition. Then will come to him the “knowledge of reviewing”. He will later return to the stage of “knowledge of arising and passing away” with a very clear mental process. This is the description of the progress of insight leading to the attainment of *sakadāgāmi magga*, the path of the once-returner.

Again, if one ardently wishes to attain to the third path, *anāgāmi magga*, one must again decide on a definite period during which one abandons fully the desire for returning to the fruition knowledge of the previous path. Then one resolves thus: “May only the progress of insight relating to the higher path come. May I attain the higher path and fruition.” And he must begin contemplating on body and mind as usual. He begins with “knowledge of arising and passing away”, but soon he will attain the higher knowledges one after the other up to “knowledge of equanimity about formations”. If insight is not yet mature, then that knowledge will linger on. When it matures, then it will reach the cessation of formations and with it the knowledge of the third path and fruition. This is the description of the attainment of the third path and fruition, of the *anāgāmi* or non-returner.

One who aspires to the fourth and final path and fruition, that of sainthood (*arahatta magga* and *phala*), must fix a period and give up all desire to re-

attain to the fruition-knowledge of the third path. Then he must begin to contemplate the bodily and mental processes as usual. This is the only way, as stated in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. Beginning with “knowledge of arising and passing away”, soon “knowledge of equanimity about formations” will be attained. If insight is not yet mature, it will tarry. When it does mature, then the meditator will attain to the cessation of formations with the realization of the final *arahatta magga*.

In the foregoing paragraphs, the words to the effect that the progress of insight will end up in the realization of the knowledge of the paths and fruitions (*magga-phala-ñāṇa*) refer only to those who have gained maturity in the fulfillment of *pāramitās* (perfections). Those who have not yet developed *pāramitās* fully will come to a standstill at the “knowledge of equanimity about formations”. An important point to be noted is that, although the person who has attained the first path is likely to attain the second path soon with comparative ease, he will find it difficult to reach the third path for a long time. The reason is that both of the attainers of the first path and the second path are well practiced in the observance of virtue (*sīla*) or, in other words, they are the paragons of virtue. In the case of the attainer of the third path, he must have also fully developed concentration (*samādhi*). Therefore, he is not able to attain the third path easily in that he has to strive hard to develop concentration. Be that as it may, without utmost effort to develop one's powers,

nobody can possibly know whether he is able to attain this path or that path. In some cases, the attainment of a path comes only after a long time, and because one has to strive that long it must not be assumed that one has not yet fully developed *pāramitās*. Again, the present effort can lead to the fulfillment of *pāramitās*, getting nearer to maturity. So, one should not waste one's time by weighing in his mind the matter of one's having the *pāramitās* or not.

The meditator should bear in mind the following undeniable point and put forth utmost effort to achieve his aspiration.

Even the development of *pāramitās* is not possible without effort. Granted that one has fully developed *pāramitās*, he cannot possibly attain any path without effort. Such a person can attain a path easily and speedily if he puts forth effort. If he has developed *pāramitās* to an appreciable extent, his effort will lead to its maturity and consequently he can attain the path he aspires to. At the least, he has sown potent seeds for the harvest of a path in the next existence.

Advice

In these times those who are most ardent and keen to work for their own deliverance from the ills of the world and the attainment of *magga-phala-nibbāna*, which is the highest goal of *vipassanā!* (insight)

meditation, they will be well advised to practice by the aforesaid way the contemplations of body, feeling, consciousness and mental objects, called otherwise *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation. It is, in fact, a "must" for them.

A Special Note

The technique of insight meditation outlined in this treatise is quite sufficient for persons of fair intelligence. Such persons, having read it, should practice these contemplations with firm faith, keen desire and great diligence, in a methodical manner, and they can be sure of progress. It must, however, be pointed out that the details of the experiences and the progressive stages of insight gone through by meditators cannot possibly be described in full in this short treatise. There still remains much that is worthy of description. On the other hand, what has been described here is not experienced totally by every meditator. There are bound to be differences according to one's capabilities and *pāramitās*. Again, one's faith, desire and diligence do not remain constant always. Furthermore, a meditator, having no instructor and being entirely dependent on book knowledge, will be as cautious and hesitant as a traveler who has never been on a particular journey. Therefore, it is obviously not very easy for such a person to attain the paths, fruitions and *nibbāna* (*magga-phala-nibbāna*) if he goes on striving without a teacher to guide and encourage him. This being so, one who is really keen to meditate until he attains

his goal, *magga-phala-nibbāna*, must find out a teacher who is fully qualified by his own attainments to guide him all along the way from, the lowest stage of insight to the highest knowledges of path, fruition and reviewing. This advice is quite in accord with what is stated in the *Nidāna Vagga, Saṃyutta Nikaya*: "A teacher should be sought for knowledge about decay and death as it really is." Should anybody be obsessed with pride – "I am an extra ordinary man. Why should I learn from anyone?" - he will be well advised to do away with such pride, as Poṭṭhila Mahāthera did.

In the course of contemplation, bearing in mind the following advice of the Buddha, one should go all out to win the goal.

No slacker nor the man of puny strength.
May win *nibbāna*, freedom from all ill.
And this young brother, yea, this peerless man.
Bears the last burden, Māra's conqueror.

(The Book of Kindred Sayings)

THE WAY TO PRACTISE VIPASSANĀ MEDITATION

The Ovādācariya Sayādaw U
Paṇḍitābhivaṃsa

Preface

The following is based on “In This Very Life” by Sayādaw U Paṇḍita’s Meditation Instruction (pages 13-19). I have put this material into question-and-answer form so that readers may easily understand it.

Tharmanay Kyaw

1. Which place is best for meditation?

The Buddha suggested that either a forest place under a tree or any other very quiet place is best for meditation.

2. How should the meditator sit?

He said the meditator should sit quietly and peacefully with legs crossed.

3. How should those with back trouble sit?

If sitting with crossed legs proves to be too difficult, other sitting postures may be used. For those with back trouble a chair is quite acceptable. In any case, sit with your back erect, at a right angle to the ground, but not too stiff.

4. Yogi, why should you sit straight?

The reason for sitting straight is not difficult to see. An arched or crooked back will soon bring pain. Furthermore, the physical effort to remain upright without additional support energizes the meditation practice.

5. Why is it important to choose a position?

It is true that to achieve peace of mind, we must make sure our body is at peace. So it is important to choose a position that will be comfortable for a long period of time.

6. After sitting down, what should you do?

Close your eyes. Now place your attention at the belly, at the abdomen. Breathe normally, not forcing your breathing, neither slowing it down nor hastening it, just a natural breath.

7. What will you become aware of as you breathe in and breathe out?

You will become aware of certain sensations as you breathe in and the abdomen rises, as you breathe out and the abdomen falls.

8. How should you sharpen your aim?

Sharpen your aim by making sure that the mind is attentive to the entirety of each process. Be aware from the very beginning of all sensations involved in the rising. Maintain a steady attention through the middle and the end of the rising. Then be aware of the sensations of the falling movement of the abdomen from the beginning, through the middle, and to the very end of the falling.

Although we describe the rising and falling as having a beginning, a middle, and an end, this is only in order to show that your awareness should be continuous and thorough. We do not intend you to break these processes into three segments. You should try to be aware of each of these movements from beginning to end as one complete process, as a whole. Do not peer at the sensations with an over focused mind, specifically looking to discover how the abdominal movement begins or ends.

9. Why is it important in this meditation to have both effort and precise aim?

It is very important to have both effort and precise aim so that the mind meets the sensation directly and powerfully.

10. What is one way to aid precision and accuracy?

One helpful aid to precision and accuracy is to make a soft mental note of the object of awareness, naming the sensation by saying the word gently and silently in the mind, like 'rising, rising, falling, falling'.

11. When the mind wanders off and you start to think of something, what should you do?

At this time, watch the mind! Be aware that you are thinking.

12. How can you clarify your awareness of thinking?

Note the thought silently with the verbal label 'thinking, thinking', and come back to the rising and falling.

13. Is it possible to remain perfectly focused on the rising and falling of the abdomen all the time?

Despite making an effort to do so, no one can remain perfectly focused on the rising and falling of the abdomen forever. Other objects inevitably arise and become predominant. Thus, the sphere of meditation encompasses all of our experiences: sights, sounds, smells, tastes, sensations in the body, and mental objects such as visions in the imagination or emotions. When any of these objects arise you should focus direct awareness on them, and use a gentle verbal label "spoken" in the mind.

14. During the sitting meditation, what is the basic principle to follow? If another object impinges on the awareness and draws it away from the rising and falling, what should you do?

During a sitting meditation, if another object impinges strongly on the awareness so as to draw it away from the rising and falling of the abdomen, this object must be clearly noted. For example, if a loud sound arises during your meditation, consciously direct your attention towards that sound as soon as it arises. Be aware of the sound as a direct experience, and also identify it succinctly with the soft, internal verbal label 'hearing, hearing'. When the sound fades and is no longer predominant, come back to the rising and falling. This is the basic principle to follow in sitting meditation.

15. What is the best way to make the verbal label?

There is no need for complex language. One simple word is best. For the eye, ear, and tongue doors we simply say 'seeing, seeing, hearing, hearing, tasting, tasting'.

16. What are some ways to note sensations in the body?

For sensations in the body we may choose a slightly more descriptive term like warm, pressure, hardness, or motion.

17. How may we note mental objects?

Mental objects appear to present a bewildering diversity, but actually they fall into just a few clear categories such as thinking, imagining, remembering, planning, and visualizing.

18. What is the purpose of labelling?

In using the labelling technique, your goal is not to gain verbal skills. Labelling helps us to perceive clearly the actual qualities of our experience, without getting immersed in the content. It develops mental power and focus.

19. What kind of awareness do we seek in meditation, and why?

We seek a deep, clear, precise awareness of the mind and body. This direct awareness shows us the truth about our lives, the actual nature of mental and physical processes.

20. After one hour of sitting, does our meditation come to an end?

Meditation need not come to an end after an hour of sitting. It can be carried out continuously through the day.

21. How should the yogi get up from sitting meditation?

When you get up from sitting, you must note carefully – beginning with the intention to open the eyes. ‘intending, intending, opening, opening’. Experience the mental event of intending, and feel the sensations of opening the eyes. Continue to note carefully and precisely, with full observing power, through the whole transition of posture until the moment you have stood up, and when you begin to walk.

22. Besides sitting and walking, what else should the yogi be aware of throughout the day?

Throughout the day you should also be aware of, and mentally note, all other activities, such as stretching, bending your arm, taking a spoon, putting on clothes, brushing your teeth, closing your eyelids, eating, and so forth. All of these activities should be noted with careful awareness as a soft mental label.

23. Is there any time during the day when the yogi may relax his or her mindfulness?

Apart from the hours of sound sleep, you should try to maintain continuous mindfulness throughout your waking hours.

24. It seems like a heavy task to maintain continuous mindfulness throughout the day.

Actually this is not a heavy task; it is just sitting and walking and simply observing whatever occurs.

25. What is the usual schedule during a retreat?

During a retreat it is usual to alternate periods of sitting meditation with periods of formal walking meditation of about the same duration, one after another throughout the day.

26. How long should one walking period be?

One hour is a standard period, but forty-five minutes can also be used.

27. How long a pathway should yogis choose for formal walking?

For formal walking, yogis should choose a lane of about twenty steps in length and walk slowly back and forth along it.

28. Is walking meditation helpful in daily life?

Yes. A short period say ten minutes of formal walking meditation before sitting serves to focus the mind.

Beyond this advantage, the awareness developed in walking meditation is useful to all of us as we move our body from place to place in the course of a normal day.

29. What mental qualities does walking meditation develop?

Walking meditation develops balance and accuracy of awareness as well as durability of concentration.

30. Can one observe profound aspects of the Dhamma while walking?

One can observe very profound aspects of the Dhamma while walking, and even get enlightened!

31. If a yogi does not do walking meditation before sitting, is there any disadvantage?

A yogi who does not do walking meditation before sitting is like a car with a rundown battery. He or she will have a difficult time starting the engine of mindfulness when sitting.

32. During walking meditation, to what process do we give our attention?

Walking meditation consists of paying attention to the walking process.

33. When walking rapidly, what should we note? Where should we place our awareness?

If you are moving fairly rapidly, make a mental note of movement of the legs, 'left step, right step, left step, right step' and use your awareness to follow the actual sensations throughout the leg area.

34. When moving more slowly, what should we note?

If you are moving more slowly, note the lifting, moving and placing of each foot.

35. Whether walking slowly or rapidly, where should you try to keep your mind?

In each you must try to keep your mind on just the sensations of walking.

36. When you stop at the end of the walking lane, what should you do?

Notice what processes occur when you stop at the end of the lane, when you stand still, when you turn and start to begin walking again.

37. Should you watch your feet?

Do not watch your feet unless this becomes necessary due to some obstacle on the ground; it is unhelpful to hold the image of a foot in your mind while you are trying to be aware of sensations. You want to focus on the sensations themselves, and these are not visual.

38. What can people discover when they focus on the sensations of walking?

For many people it is a fascinating discovery when they are able to have a pure, bare perception of physical objects such as lightness, tingling, cold, and warmth.

39. How is walking usually noted?

Usually we divide walking into three distinct movements: lifting, moving and placing the foot.

40. How can we make our awareness precise?

To support a precise awareness, we separate the movements clearly, making a soft mental label at the beginning of each movement and making sure that our awareness follows it clearly and powerfully until it ends.

One major but important point is to begin noting the placing movement at the instant that the foot begins to move downward.

41. Is our knowledge of conventional concepts important in meditation?

Let us consider lifting. We know its conventional name, but in meditation it is important to penetrate behind that conventional concept and to understand the true nature of the whole process of lifting,

beginning with the intention to lift and continuing through the actual process, which involves many sensations.

42. What happens if our effort to be aware of lifting is too strong, or alternatively, too weak?

If our efforts to be aware of lifting the foot is too strong it will overshoot the sensation. If our effort is too weak it will fall short of this target.

43. What happens when effort is balanced?

Precise and accurate mental aim helps balance our effort. When our effort is balanced and our aim is precise, mindfulness will firmly establish itself on the object of awareness.

44. What mental factors must be present for concentration to develop?

It is only in the presence of three factors: effort, accuracy and mindfulness, that concentration develops.

45. What is concentration?

Concentration is collectedness of mind, one-pointedness. Its characteristic is to keep consciousness from becoming diffused or dispersed.

46. What will we see as we get closer and closer to the lifting process?

As we get closer and closer to this lifting process, we will see that it is like a line of ants crawling across the road. From afar the line may appear to be static, but closer up, it begins to shimmer and vibrate.

47. As we get even closer, what will we see?

From even closer the line breaks up into individual ants, and we see that our notion of a line was just an illusion. We now accurately perceive the line of ants as one ant after another ant, after another ant.

48. What is insight?

“Insight” is a mental factor. When we look accurately, for example, at the lifting process from beginning to end, the mental factor or quality of consciousness called ‘insight’ comes nearer to the object of observation. The nearer insight comes, the clearer the true nature of the lifting process can be seen.

49. What is the progress of insight?

It is an amazing fact about the human mind that when insight arises and deepens through vipassanā, or insight meditation practice, particular aspects of the truth about existence tend to be revealed in a

definite order. This order is known as the progress of insight.

50. What is the first insight that meditators commonly experience?

The first insight which meditators commonly experience is to begin to comprehend, not intellectually or by reasoning, but quite intuitively, that a process such as lifting is composed of distinct mental and material phenomena occurring together, as a pair. The physical sensations, which are material, are linked with, but different from, the awareness, which is mental.

51. What is the second insight in the classical progress of insight?

We begin to see a whole succession of mental events and physical sensations, and to appreciate the conditionality that relates mind and matter. We see with the greatest freshness and immediacy that mind causes matter as when our intention to lift the foot initiates the physical sensations of movement, and we see that matter causes mind as when a physical sensation of strong heat generates a wish to move our walking meditation into a shady spot. The insight into cause and effect can take a great variety of forms; but when it arises, our life seems far more simple to us than ever before. Our life is no more than a chain of mental and physical causes and

effects. This is the second insight in the classical progress of insight.

52. What is the next level of insight?

As we develop concentration we see even more deeply that these phenomena of the lifting process are impermanent, impersonal appearing and disappearing one by one at fantastic speed. This is the next level of insight, the next aspect of existence that concentrated awareness becomes capable of seeing directly. There is no one behind what is happening; the phenomena arise and pass away as an empty process, according to the law of cause and effect. This illusion of movement and solidity is like a movie. To ordinary perception it seems full of characters and objects, all the semblances of a world. But if we slow the movie down we will see that it is actually composed of separate, static frames of film.

This talk was given by the Venerable Sayādaw in response to the following questions during a Dhamma discussion at Paṇḍitārama.

The Ovādācariya Sayādaw U
Paṇḍitābhivaṃsa

Q: When subtle thoughts enter repeatedly in one's everyday activities in a practice that has been consistently thought-free and concentrated, should one take some action or simply watch mindfully to learn the nature of the thoughts which arise? Should one try to note the many single subtle thoughts which arise in one's walking meditation and everyday activities, or simply notice them in the background?

A: One may think purposely or one may have thoughts while noting on the objects. Whatever thoughts they are, the nature of the mind is very quick. Within one second one can be thinking about the past, one can be thinking about the future. There will be many thoughts like this within one second. But since the speed of the thinking is very fast, the speed of the *bhāvanā* mind, in other words, your noting mind, cannot catch the thoughts.

Most of us may think that we are not thinking. However, only when our minds fall on our bodies to a high degree will we know that we are having

wandering mind. There are many thoughts that arise in us which we do not realize. The thoughts that we realize are few.

Even when we have good concentration or our concentration is strong, there could still be wandering mind. But as we develop insight, the noting mind can catch up with the thinking mind. At this stage, at the very moment when the thinking tends to arise, you will realize the phenomena. The mind which has now a lot of mindfulness can catch the thinking and if we are strong in noting, we will be able to catch the thinking properly.

When one has not developed concentration and insight, in other words when the mind is not strong yet, there can arise the coarse form of thinking. One may know that the mind has wandered off or one may not know that there has been wandering mind. Even when we are free from the *nīvaraṇa* or hindrances, when our minds become calm, when we develop concentration, even at that time there can be thinking or wandering mind. But at this stage, the thinking will be a subtle form of thinking. This thinking will not be associated with the sensual pleasures. And it is not the everyday thinking whereby we look for a particular sensual object and think about it.

This subtle form of thinking happens without having to think purposely. And when the mind wanders off like this, the noting of the main object such as

rising, falling, sitting, touching will still be there. One will be knowing about the main object although there is this subtle form of wandering mind. At this stage, the yogi may think that even when his mind is calm, there is still a lot of wandering mind. But, it is only now that the yogi realizes that he is having wandering mind. Before he did not know he was having wandering mind.

At this stage, it is not necessary to take action when there is subtle thinking. It is not necessary to catch this type of thinking with mindfulness. If at this stage, the yogi is noting on the main object, or other objects that arise in the body, which are many times more distinct than this subtle form of thinking, his noting on the main object, or other objects, will not lose momentum. Moreover, this kind of subtle thinking will not have any effect on the yogi's noting of the main object or other objects. Therefore, it is not necessary to take any action towards this subtle thinking or to catch the subtle thinking with mindfulness.

What is more important here is to note the object with good aiming and focusing so that there will not be any pollution of the mind or *nīvaraṇa* - the hindrances. It is necessary to pay more attention so that the *nīvaraṇa* or hindrances will not arise. It is not necessary to catch the subtle thinking. But if your noting on the main object or the other objects loses momentum, then you may have to switch and note the thinking.

When the yogis reach this stage, the yogis from the East especially from this country, Myanmar, will report that while they are noting on the main object, in-between they have thoughts. But the noting on the main object does not lose momentum. "There has been thinking" - they will say like that. These yogis from the East such as from Myanmar report in a very clear manner.

But the people from the West, when they experience this, they do not report in the same manner. Rather, they will report that while they are noting on the main object, there is thinking in the background. The Westerners reported like this to the Sayādaw. At the beginning, Sayādaw was at a loss because it was not clear to him. Sayādaw had to further question them and find out what the Western yogis exactly meant to say in their reports. The Westerners do not report like the people from Myanmar.

Now, when concentration becomes strong, while the yogi is noting on the main object, the Myanmar yogi will say, "In-between there are thoughts but the noting on the main object does not lose momentum." Furthermore, their knowing of the thinking is in an automatic manner. On the other hand, since the Westerners do not report like the Myanmar yogis, they say the thinking is in the background.

At this stage of the practice, the yogi's noting on the main object does not lose momentum and at the same time, he is aware of the thinking that arises in-

between. The reason is the seeing is strong. The seeing is wide. In other words, the yogi sees the object that he is noting in a very clear manner. While noting the main object or other objects like this, without having to note purposely, he is aware of the thinking that arises in-between. He does not have to exert effort to know about the thinking that arises in-between the noting. Now, what is meant here is that the yogi is aware of the object that he is aiming for. He is also aware of the thoughts that he does not aim for. He is knowing about the thinking in an automatic manner.

This is what Sayādaw means by wide seeing and strong seeing. You are aware of the main object for which you are aiming while at the same time being aware of other objects such as thinking that arise in-between. Now, you will have this situation when your mindfulness becomes diligent and strong.

When your mindfulness becomes diligent and strong, your seeing will become strong, your seeing will become wide. You are now complete with the energy of mindfulness. So when one becomes strong with the energy of mindfulness, one's seeing will become strong, one's seeing will become wide. Now, in the scientific community, when a scientist does some research on a particular project, he is looking for something out of that project. For example, he may want to know something about a particular material. Similarly, what the meditators here are doing is just like this. During the process of

meditating, we may come across something that we do not really aim for. In the same vein, the scientist may stumble across items during the course of his research that he does not really aim for. At the same time, he may find the actual thing that he had intended to in the first place.

A good example would be the discovery of plastic. Plastic was discovered while scientists were doing research to look for something else. The practice too is like this. While we are noting on and aiming at the various objects, we may discover and be aware of other objects, such as the thinking that arises in-between. When mindfulness becomes strong and steadfast, we will not only come to know about the objects that we are aiming at, we will also come to know about the objects that arise in-between. A good example would be the thinking. We must, however, realize here that the thinking is not something that we aim for. It arises while we are noting on the main object; we become aware of thinking at that point.

In the case of plastic, while the scientists were conducting their research, they were able to not only find the solution they were looking for, they also discovered how to make plastic. In the case of the meditators, we will have this similar situation only when our noting is good and diligent

In Myanmar, we have a saying, "When the noting is diligent and becomes strong, our seeing becomes strong, our seeing becomes wide." So here, when our

mindfulness (*sati*) becomes strong, our seeing becomes strong and wide. Now, when our faculty of concentration (*samadhindriya*) becomes strong, our seeing becomes sharp. We see sharply and in a very sharp manner. And when our faculty of faith (*saddhindriya*) becomes sharp, seeing becomes clear, active and pure.

What the Sayādaw is trying to get at is this: When the yogis effort is strong, even though he may encounter difficulties during the course of his meditation, he does not go backward or surrender. This is due to his strong faculty of effort (*viriyindriya*). He faces the problem with guts and bravery. By facing the various difficulties in this manner, his experiences and awareness will develop and progress.

Briefly, there are these four faculties: the faculty of mindfulness, which gives you strong seeing; the faculty of concentration, which gives you sharp seeing; the faculty of faith which gives you clear and active seeing, and finally, the faculty of effort which allows you to have progress in your seeing. Now, all of these are explained in the scriptures and all of the faculties are good. So, we should therefore strive to acquire all these four faculties.

Actually, the faculties of faith, effort and concentration are not really concerned with the question. However, Sayādaw has mentioned these three faculties because they have a lot to do with the

yogis who are practising at this meditation centre. Some of the yogis have been practising at this centre for quite some time, some for months even. Yet, because their concentration is not so good and their faculty of concentration is not strong, their seeing or experience is not sharp. Their seeing is rather blunt.

Furthermore, the faculty of faith in some yogis is weak and not strong. They do not practise to be free from the *nīvaraṇa* or hindrances. The way they practise is not continuous. That is to say, they practise in a stop-and-go manner. If one practises in this way, stopping for a while and then practising again, the hindrances or *nīvaraṇa* will arise in-between and cause trouble for the yogi. These hindrances pollute the mind and make the mind unclear.

For instance, we may have a pool of water. Beneath the surface, at the very bottom, there can be a layer of mud. If you were to stir up this pool of water, depending how vigorous the stirring is, the water can be muddy. However, if we were to instead keep the pool of water still and not stir it up, the water will of course remain clear. Now, water that has become muddied is sticky, slippery and slimy. Clear water is not like that. We can say that clear water is like a clear and active practice. The muddy water is quite the opposite. These hindrances can weaken the yogi's mindfulness and concentration.

If the yogi is taking frequent and regular breaks in his practice, there will be frequent and regular opportunities for the hindrances to arise. These hindrances will muddy the mind, it will weaken one's wisdom and therefore, one's seeing or experience will not be clear, active and sharp.

In today's world, westerners depend a lot on machines and gadgets. They are used to living in a comfortable manner. Therefore, because of their strong dependence on these gadgets, they are no longer used to facing and overcoming difficulties. They lack the quality of patience and endurance. This is particularly so for them in the meditation practice.

When they encounter a certain meditation experience, they become reluctant to go on. They do not want to practise. They hesitate and are afraid of taking risks. It is worthwhile to remember that when you meet your enemy, if you are to surrender or retreat, your enemy will overcome you. However, if you are able to stand up to your enemy, he will eventually go away.

Therefore, it is crucial and necessary for you to have bravery and guts. If you are brave, courageous and have guts, the armies of *kilesa* will go away. Your mind will then have progress. This is very true for the yogi whose effort is good. When putting in effort, the yogi must do so in stages.

Firstly, you put in the initial effort in order to begin your meditation practice. After that, you boost your effort so that you can overcome sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*). You then increase once again your effort until the goal is reached. If you have this sort of aiming, you will progress.

However, if you fail to develop or possess these faculties, you will not have any progress even if you have meditated for a long time, say one, two or three months. Sayādaw stresses once again that these three faculties out of the four are not really concerned with the question here. However, Sayādaw thinks that it is only appropriate to include them in our discussion here today so that the yogi will understand them and be able to practise better.

To digress, it is necessary for you to be able to note the object that arises. Only in this manner, will you have progress. You can develop concentration only when you are able to note on the object that arises without having the mind wandering off. Furthermore, while noting on the object, you must have mindfulness. You should not think about the object. You should instead note the object in a hurry. If you practise this way, you will be having progress. Your seeing or experience will become strong and wide.

However, if you fail to note the object that arises, your seeing will not become strong and wide. Thus, you will find yourself reporting the same thing over

and over again for almost every interview. Why is this so? This is so because you allow *nīvaraṇa* or the hindrances to come in during the gaps or breaks in your practice. This happens because you take a rest every now and then. During the course of your meditation, if you were to experience something, you would stop and think, "What is this?" If you were to further experience something extraordinary, if the taste of experience is very good, you may cling to it. When this happens, your seeing will become muddy like the example of the pool of water. If you stir up the pool of water, the layer of mud at the bottom will cause the water to become muddy.

If you have faith instead, there can be no muddy water. Therefore, you should ask yourself these questions: "Do I really have the faith? Am I practising in a clear manner, one free from the hindrances? Can I note like this?" If the *nīvaraṇas* come in, your experience or seeing will not be clear.

You should further ask yourself: "Am I practising risking life and limb? Do I believe that this is the only Dhamma that I want? Am I practising risking everything and aiming solely for the Dhamma? While I am noting the objects, should I encounter difficulties, am I able to overcome them? Do I have the aim in my meditation? That is, do I aim for the goal?" These are the things that you need to assess for yourself.

If you do not possess these factors, your seeing or experience will not have progress. The worst thing when you experience something is to think, "Why? What? When?" If you think in this fashion, the hindrances will come in, and your seeing will become cloudy. If you note in this way, you will be able to achieve something by way of thinking only. However, in the practice, you will not have achieved anything. Instead of thinking, it might be better if the yogi were to fall asleep. At least when you are asleep, you will have a nice sleep.

Q: In the sitting practice, if one's sitting posture consistently leans off more and more to one side, should one tend to straighten up as soon as the leaning appears in one's awareness? Or instead, should one allow the leaning to go to its extreme, correcting it just before the body topples over or when the pain becomes unbearable? Should one even sit against a wall to stop such a leaning tendency for a short period?

If one tends to salivate upon oneself during the sitting practice, should one simply be mindful of it, or try to strictly control it?

A: If the mindfulness, concentration and wisdom are not in balance, the yogi may lean during meditation. He may lean to one side, backward or forward. This sort of event can occur. If the posture

of the body is not in balance, if the yogi leans to one side, the weight will shift to that side. At that moment the yogi may find the pain unbearable.

However, even if the body leans to one side, if the yogi can bear it, he can note this leaning posture. But if he is unable to bear it, he should also note this phenomenon. And if this is not enough, if he wants to straighten up, he must first note the intention to straighten up. He must then straighten up his body very slowly, with mindfulness.

When mindfulness, concentration and wisdom are not in balance, a simile can be given. Take the winding of a clock. In the old days, you had to wind the spring. Now through the regular and frequent winding of the spring over some time, the strength of the spring becomes weak. Similarly, when there is an imbalance between mindfulness, concentration and wisdom, the yogi tends to lose some strength. He becomes a little weak. This is why the body leans. The yogi is unable to keep his determination to hold the body straight. If that happens, he has to note it. If he is unable to control the leaning, he has to note it.

Now, the yogi may lean against a wall. The Buddha himself did not lean or support himself against the Bo Tree. The Bo Tree you see behind the Buddha is not a tree he leans against. It is merely in the background.

When Sayādaw was young, he had the habit of leaning against a wall whenever he practised. Now, after some time, he began to think about this, “Now I have this habit of leaning against a wall. As long as there is a wall, I shall be able to practise. I shall be all right because I depend on the presence of a wall. However, if I should happen to practise in a place where there are no walls, then I am going to have trouble.” So from that day onwards, Sayādaw did not lean. Later on, he was able to practise well without the aid of the wall.

Now, some yogis who are not in very good health and who have some health problems are asked to practise leaning against a wall or in a lying posture. These sort of practices are allowed for sick yogis. However, if you are strong and healthy, it is better to do the sitting meditation ninety degrees to the floor.

With regard to salivating, this is a phenomenon of oozing due to the element of *āpo*. If you should find the saliva oozing, you may note ‘oozing, oozing’. If a lot of saliva comes out and gathers, you may note ‘gathering, gathering’. If you intend to swallow, you have to note the intention to swallow and then swallow the saliva while noting ‘swallowing, swallowing’.

You should not control the true phenomena. It would be like attempting to stop a very strong flow of water. Should the salivating become excessive and you desire to spit out the excess saliva, you may do

so at an appropriate place. However, you should still note all the actions performed during the process of spitting out. You must not control their true nature. You must only control the *kilesas*, the defilements of the mind. Should you fail to control the defilements and they arise, you have to then note these defilements.

Guidance For Yogi At Interview

The Ovādācariya Sayādaw U
Paṇḍitābhivaṃsa

Despite instructions given on how to meditate, there are yogis (meditators or retreatants) who are unable to practice properly and to report back on their experiences during interviews with the teacher. Some can practise well but cannot describe properly how they have meditated and what they have experienced. This talk is intended to help such yogis report back properly on how they have meditated, on what they have observed and experienced in the course of their meditative practice or exercise.

As to the mode of the meditation, the late Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw's recorded induction talk (for new yogis) gives the essential instructions beginning with noting or observing the primary object of attention in mindfulness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*) meditation namely, the rising and falling of the abdomen as the yogi breathes.

In terms of scriptural explanation, psycho-physical phenomena are taking place all the time in the yogi's person at the six sense-doors. When a sight is seen, the eye that sees and the sight that is seen are physical phenomena, while the resultant eye-consciousness that makes one aware of the sight is a mental phenomenon. Similarly, with the

experiencing of sound, smell, taste, touch and thought, and of several movements of the body such as folding and stretching of the arms, turning or leaning (inclining) of the body and the taking of steps in walking. Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw has instructed that all these happenings should be closely noted as and when they take place, without missing even trifling incidents.

Although Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw's instructions are given in very clear and simple language, yogis encounter some difficulties when they come to follow them in actual practice. To help yogis overcome such difficulties, meditation teachers at this Centre, have had to explain and demonstrate to beginners how to note or observe the primary object of attention, how to note when other (secondary) objects of attention like thoughts and reflections appear, when feelings or sensation arise, when external stimuli like sights and sounds impinge on the mind or when other acts of behaviour take place.

These explanations have had to be made repeatedly and as simply as possible for these beginners. Even then, some beginners do not quite understand them and cannot put them into practice properly. To obviate such difficulties, the meditation teachers have had to devise maxims or aphorisms which are easier to remember.

The first of these aphorisms is: ***Say how you note the primary object of attention and with what***

result in your consciousness (i.e. what do you come to know?), The primary object of attention to which the mind should be tethered as it were, is the rising and falling of the abdomen as the yogi breathes. This is the primary object of meditative attention in the sense that in the absence of any other marked (pronounced) object of attention, the yogi should be watching or observing it. The mind should also revert to it when a secondary object of attention has been noted and fallen away.

The yogi should be able to tell how he observes or note the movement of the rising of the abdomen from the beginning to the end of it. As he inhales, the abdomen begins to rise somewhat rapidly and goes on rising as he continues to inhale. When the yogi ceases to inhale, the rising movement comes to an end.

When observing or noting the rising movement of the abdomen, the entire movement should be experienced and known. The scriptural texts urge that this should be made a matter of practice (*sabba kāya patisamvedi*). What this exhortation means is that all the physical phenomena involved in the entire rising movement of the abdomen – its beginning, its middle and its end should be noted as continuously as possible (i.e. without a break). The observing or noting mind should fall on and proceed concurrently with the physical movement of the rising abdomen through its three stages – the beginning, the middle and the end. The beginner

would not, of course, be able to notice all the three stages of the movement, but he should strive to be able to do so. He is urged to strive thus lest he go about his meditative practice lightly and come to the end of his retreat without much benefit, and to ensure serious and sufficient concentration of the mind on the object.

The yogi should be able to report if he is able to note the object with enough concentrated attention, if there is enough concurrence between the object and the noting mind, if he is able to notice the movement (of the abdomen) through its successive phases. If he is able to note the object properly, what does he 'see' and what does he encounter (experience)? Not that he should concern himself with and be able to relate other (irrelevant) objects of attention but that he should be able to report (accurately) on the object of his concentrated attention and what (exactly) is the rising movement as experienced by him.

There are two operations involved in this kind of meditative practice or exercise. The first is the activity of observing or noting the object of attention. The second is the resulting consciousness concerning the object of attention noted or observed. Only after these two operations will the yogi be able to say what it is that he has 'seen' or experienced.

Here, with regard to the primary object of attention, the yogi must be able to say if his resulting consciousness or awareness is concurrent (arise

together) with the object of meditative attention (the rising of the abdomen) and its progressive movement. If the two operations are concurrent (take place at the same time) what does he 'see' (becomes aware of)? Is it the abdomen itself, the manner or mode of its rising, or the tension and the movement involved in the rising of the abdomen.

There are three aspects to the material (physical) component or element of the rising abdomen. They are classified into:

- 1) form or shape aspect
- 2) manner or mode aspect
- 3) essential character or quality aspect

The form or shape aspect – This is the form or shape of the abdomen on which the yogi's mind is focused. The whole of the yogi's body is the form or shape of the body. As the abdomen is part of the body, it is also the form or shape aspect of the physical element of the rising abdomen.

The manner or mode aspect - This aspect is constituted by the condition or state of the abdomen at any particular moment. Thus, is the abdomen in a flat, inflated or deflated state? In Pāḷi scriptural terminology, this condition or state is called *ākāra*. As another example of *ākāra*, is the palm closed into a fist or is it just an open palm? As still another example, is the body in a sitting, standing, walking or lying posture?

The essential character or quality aspect - If the yogi intently observes the abdomen in meditation, he will 'see' (become aware of) either the form or the shape or the mode and manner aspect before he 'sees' the **essential character or quality aspect**. But 'seeing' the form and manner aspects is not vipassanic insight. The yogi must 'see' beyond the form and manner aspects, that is, 'see' the essential character or quality aspect, namely, the tension and the motion or movement manifested during the rising of the abdomen. If the yogi observes intently, he will 'see' this character or quality aspect. He must be able to relate (report) it at interview. But he must say so on the basis of actually 'seeing' it, not because he thinks he 'sees' it. The report must be based on his actual own *vipassanā* insight.

The yogi must similarly be able to observe 'see' and report when he exhales and the abdomen falls progressively.

So also when he is doing the walking (*caṅkama*) meditation. As he lifts his foot, is he able to observe concurrently the lifting movement progressively from the beginning to the end of it? If he is so able, what does he 'see'? Does he 'see' the foot or the manner or mode of its lifting, or does he feel the foot becoming light and rising upward or the foot becoming tense and being pushed?

He must be able to report on any of these three aspects and his attention must be concentrated for him to be able to report. When he thrusts his foot forward (in the course of his step-taking) is his mind observing or noting concurrently with the thrusting movement of the foot? Here also, what does he see? Does he 'see' the foot or the manner or mode of its thrusting, or some essential character or quality of this movement such as the foot being pushed from behind and pulled from front? Similarly, when he drops the foot, is he able to observe or note the dropping movement progressively from the beginning to the end till it touches the floor or the ground? If he is, what does he come to know? Does he know the foot, or the manner of its dropping or some essential character or quality of this movement such as the foot becoming light and soft?

Similarly with observing or noting of other objects of attention, such as folding and stretching of the limbs, turning or inclining (leaning) of the body, assuming the sitting posture or the standing posture. With regard to these phenomena also, is the yogi able to observe or note the phenomena concurrently with its appearance from the beginning to the end of its manifestation? It is important for the yogi to confine his reporting to the particular object of attention he is observing in its three aspects as mentioned above, and not to wander off into reporting on stray and random occurrences.

Meditating yogis should understand what is meant by the following three marks or characteristics of psycho-physical phenomena.

- 1) *sabhāva lakkaṇa*
- 2) *sañkhata lakkaṇa*
- 3) *samañña lakkaṇa*

Sabhāva lakkaṇa means the specific or particular mark or characteristic of mental and physical phenomena. For instance, hardness or softness (*paṭhavī dhātu* or the element of extension) is the particular or specific mark or characteristic of the bone and of the flesh respectively. This mark or characteristic belongs only to *paṭhavī dhātu* and not to any of the three remaining elements (cohesion, temperature and motion).

Another *sabhāva lakkaṇa* is *tejo dhātu* (the element of heat and cold). *Āpo dhātu* (element of cohesion and fluidity) and *vāyo dhātu* (the element of motion) are also *sabhāva lakkaṇas*.

The particular mark or characteristic of mind is consciousness or the faculty of awareness. That of *phassa* is colouring the mind and bringing it into contact with another phenomenon. That of *vedanā* is the capacity of feeling.

Each and every particular mark or characteristic of all psycho-physical phenomena has a beginning, a middle and an end. In Pāli scriptural language, these

are termed *uppāda*, *ṭhiti* and *bhaṅga*. *Uppāda* means the beginning or arising of a phenomenon. *Ṭhiti* is duration or continuance or proceeding towards dissolution. *Bhaṅga* is breaking up or dissolution. These three *lakkhana*s (marks or characteristics) are called ***Saṅkhata lakkhana*** (*saṅkhata* = compounded or conditioned).

The third mark or characteristic of all psycho-physical phenomena is called ***samañña*** (general or common). The impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and impersonality of all conditioned phenomena constitute their common or general mark or characteristic.

In Pali scriptural language, these three marks or characteristics (*lakkhana*) are termed *annica lakkhana* (characteristic of impermanence), *dukkha lakkhana* (characteristic of ill, suffering or unsatisfactoriness) and *anattā lakkhana* (characteristic of egolessness or impersonality). These characteristics are common to all physical and mental phenomena which are pervaded by them. They are, therefore, designated as *samañña lakkhana* (common or general marks or characteristics).

To recapitulate, we have to understand the three characteristics mentioned and explained above, namely: *sabbhāva lakkhana* (particular or specific character or property of the phenomenon concerned), *saṅkhata lakkhana* (mark or sign of

conditionedness, namely arising continuance and dissolution), and thirdly *samañña lakkaṇa* (common or general characteristic).

Of these three characteristics, our meditative practice is directed towards realization of the *sabbhāva* characteristic of material and mental phenomena we are observing or noting. How do we go about our meditative effort to realize the character or property of the phenomenon in question? We should observe or note these phenomena as and when they arise. Only when we do so, will we realize their specific or particular character or quality, not otherwise.

As the yogi inhales, the abdomen rises. Before inhalation, there was no rising of the abdomen. The yogi's mind should go on observing the rising movement of the abdomen from its beginning to its end. Only then would the yogi be able to 'see' the real nature of this movement. What is its real nature (character or quality)? With the inbreath, the wind goes in (is indrawn). And what is wind? It is the element of tension, the element of movement. It is this real nature of the movement that the yogi comes to 'see'. He will 'see' it only when he observes or notes the movement as and when it arises and continues till it passes away. If he does not so observe or note, he won't see even its form or shape aspect or its mode or manner aspect, not to speak of its true or essential character aspect; far less will he 'see' it. Continuing to pay concentrated and

concurrent attention to the object of his meditation, that is, the rising and falling of his abdomen as he breathes in and breathes out, he will progressively strengthen his concentrative power. As his concentration strengthens, he will no longer 'see' the form or shape of his abdomen, or the mode or manner of its rising and falling. His insight will go beyond these 'sights' and will enable him to 'see' the tension, the pressure and the movement involved in the movement of the abdomen which he is observing or noting. As he breathes out, he will feel the tension subsiding and the falling movement of the abdomen coming to an end as he comes to the end of his exhalation.

Similarly, with the movements involved in walking meditation, the lifting of the leg, pushing it forward and dropping and placing it on the floor or the ground.

The meditation teacher will not tell the yogi what he is going to 'see' but will instruct him how to observe or note. It is the same as in the doing of an arithmetical sum. The teacher will not give the answer but will teach the working out of the sum.

The same instructions apply in the case of different kinds of bodily movement, sensations experienced in the body and thoughts arising in the mind. All these should be noted as and when they arise in order to ensure that their true nature may be 'seen'.

We have dealt with the first aphorism – true nature will be revealed only when phenomena are noticed as and when they arise.

The second aphorism says: **Only when *sabbhāva* (true nature) is 'seen', will *sañkhata lakkaṇa* (characteristic of conditionality) become manifest**, meaning the phenomenon being noted will be 'seen' to arise, to continue and to pass away. When *sañkhata lakkaṇa* is 'seen', *samañña lakkaṇa* will appear. These two characteristics – *sañkhata lakkaṇa* and *samañña lakkaṇa* will manifest themselves as a matter of course once *sabbhāva lakkaṇa* has been grasped by concentrated and concurrent noting of the object of meditation. *Samañña lakkaṇa*, when it appears, will reveal the impermanent, unsatisfactory and impersonal, involuntary character of the phenomena. So the third aphorism is: **Only when *sankhāta* becomes apparent will *samañña* be 'seen'**.

This will be followed by the fourth aphorism which says: **When *samañña* is 'seen', *vipassanā ñāṇa* (insight knowledge) emerged.**

After its emergence, *vipassanā ñāṇa* will gradually mature and ripen and will be followed by *magga ñāṇa* (path knowledge) which in turn will be succeeded by the *ariyamagga ñāṇa* (noble, full-fledged path knowledge) which will enable the yogi to

realize *Nibbāna* with the cessation of the psycho-physical *dhammas* and of suffering.

It should be repeated that in reporting, the yogi should relate what he has (actually) 'seen', not what he thinks he has 'seen'. Only what he has 'seen' is his own *ñāṇa* (that which he knows), not what he thinks he has, which at best is borrowed (secondhand) knowledge, which is not in conformity with the real nature or character of the phenomenon which he has observed or noted.

While the yogi is sitting in meditation, observing or noting the primary object of attention, namely, the rising and falling movement of the abdomen, various thoughts and objects of mind may occur to him, this being the very nature of mind which is not subject to control. The mind has a tendency to wander, leaving the primary object and so on to all kinds of ideas, some wholesome, others not wholesome. What should the yogi do then? Just note whatever comes into the mind. Are you able to do so or not? You should be. If you do, does the thinking go on or is it arrested or does it vanish altogether? Or does your attention revert to the regular (primary) object of attention? You should be able to report all that takes place in these respects.

The next aphorism is: ***All thoughts observed and known should be related.*** For the novice in meditation, feelings or sensations do not arise yet while he is focusing his attention on the primary

object. But thoughts are likely to occur. Even then, the novice is not able to note all thoughts that arise. In order to minimize such (stray) thoughts, the beginning yogi should focus his attention as closely as possible on the primary object. But when he has sat in meditation for 5, 10 or 15 minutes, certain unpleasant sensations in the body are apt to arise with corresponding effects on the mind. When feelings or sensations arise, they should be noted. When reporting, it is better to describe them in plain everyday language as 'itching', 'aching', 'numb' or 'tingling' and so on, rather than in scriptural language as just '*vedanā*' (feelings). These feelings which arise spontaneously, should be noted in the same manner as above - whether they are intensifying, weakening, stabilizing or disappearing.

So the next aphorism is: ***All feelings (sensations) should be observed, known and related at interview.***

Next, what other phenomena are there to be noted and known? They are sights seen, sounds heard, odours smelled, food tasted. And then mental phenomena such as liking, transgressing, sloth and torpor, distractedness, anxiety, doubt, remembrance, clear comprehension, attention, satisfaction, delight, tranquility, serenity or calm, ease of meditation and so on.

The Buddha has collectively termed them as *dhammārammana* (mind-objects). Suppose a liking

arises, when it is noted, what happens? Liking is followed by craving. The yogis should be able to report this. Take another example. The yogi is experiencing sloth and torpor and feebleness of mind. When he notes these states of mind, distractedness arises. What happens when these are observed or noted in turn? Whenever these mind-objects arise, they should be observed.

In summary, the following are the four objects of attention in *satipaṭṭhāna vipassanā bhāvanā* (insight meditation through mindfulness): (1) acts of bodily behaviour; (2) feelings or sensations; (3) acts of consciousness and (4) mind-objects.

Three events occur in such meditation in successive order: (a) arising of the phenomenon; (b) observing or noting of the phenomenon that arises, and (c) what the yogi comes to know and see. The next aphorism requires all that happens thus to be understood. (b) and (c) are the concern of the yogi.

For every object of attention (belonging to the four categories listed above), it is important to understand the three successive events mentioned above. The yogi's concern is to observe or note (event (b) above)). The aphorism for this is: ***What arises, what is observed and what comes to be known and seen, should be understood completely and related at interviews.***

Brief Way To Practise Vipassanā Meditation

Satipaṭṭhāna
Rules Of Thumb
Helps calm the mind;
Insight- mine!

1. Back straight, seated;
Crossed-legged
Centred on belly.
2. Normal breathing,
Rising, falling
Fixing on the mind.
3. Pure dwells the mind,
Guiltless kind;
Great, fine! Virtue True!
4. Stiff, tense, movement,
Displacement;
Discern all of them.
5. Wandering thoughts,
On the spot,
Miss not, note them all.
6. Good, bad, neutral,
Feeling; world
Bungle not! Note! Note!

7. See, hear, senses;
Consciousness;
Careless – don't. Note! Note!

WHAT TO DESCRIBE DURING VIPASSANĀ
INTERVIEWS

- 1 Describe what you notice of the rising movement (abdomen).
- 2 Describe what you notice of the falling movement (abdomen).
- 3 Describe what you notice of imaginations.
- 4 Describe what you notice of feelings.
- 5 Describe what you notice of ideas.
- 6 Essential to note: object appearing, noting and discrimination.
- 7 Describe each of them clearly and in detail.
- 8 Describe only new experiences and to the point.
- 9 Describe briefly and clearly.
- 10 Do not waste time.

Sabbadānaṃ dhammadānaṃ jināti
The Gift of Truth Excels All Gifts

This *Gift of Dhamma* is printed
In conjunction with

the visit to Vipassana Meditation Centre (Singapore) by
our Chief Religious Advisor,
Ovādācariya Sayādaw U Paṇḍitābhivaṃsa

in March 2007 & sponsored by:

\$1000.00 Teh Leong & family

\$500.00 Fong Lay Lean (IMO Fong Swee Cheong)

\$300.00 Yau Wei Yun & family, Chan Kah Whye & family
(IMO Jun Yoke Lin, Daisy Chan & Aw Fook Khang), Andrew
Bill Scheffer, Koe Lian Sim & family

\$204.10 Anonymous

\$200.00 Teoh Bee Yoke, Patrick Lim (IMO Lim Cheng Chye,
Tan Kim Huat & Gao Choon), Dana Sri Lanka Society, Ronald
Tan & Lye Koon Hui, Khong Koon Sang (IMO Lau Ah Lan &
Khong Sun), Tan Lay Poh & family

\$169.00 Sim Soon Hiang (IMO Sim Kek Khng)

\$100.00 John Tan & Annie Ng, Margaret Ling Lee Ngiok, Mr &
Mrs Lee Eng Heng (IMO Mr Lee Yong Hock & Mr Lum Chiew
Wah), Choy Ji Kit (IMO Lum Wai Fun, Choy Choon On, Cheong
Ah Mui & Chiam Chin Wai), Tan Kean Chai & family, Antonia
Teng, Loke Wei Kow, Lim Li Lian (IMO Peh Eng Seng & Peh
Lian Sen), Ang Bong Chee (IMO Ang Thiam Chin & Ong Ah Lek)

\$50.00 Nelson Lim Hong Yam, Lily Ng, Grace Ho, Eng Li Li,
Tan Kim Swee, Leong Min Sing & family, Lee Boon Chuan (IMO
Cheong Chwee Gim), Jenny Lee (IMO Lee Ah Teng), Ho Mui
Jee, Lim Hui Hui, Wong Lai Ha, Ang Siew Ean (IMO Koe Koon
Chye)

\$40.00 Daw San San Htay, Tay Keng Peng

\$30.00 Lau Ng Siong, U Tin Mya, Lim Shi Ya

\$26.00 Joseph Lee

\$20.00 Jasmine Low, Jansen Joseph Marion, Kok Mun Keet
William (IMO Wong Fong Hoe), Ong Kim Choo

\$10.00 Sai Myo Min Htiike, Lai Yuan Jiun, Yi Feng Za Huo
Shang Dian, Ananda Teh

*May the merits accruing from this Dhammadāna be to the
well-being and happiness of all donors, departed ones and
all beings.*

May all beings be liberated from suffering.

Sādhu ! Sādhu ! Sādhu !

Vipassana Meditation Centre (Singapore) is much encouraged by and appreciative of the support and generosity of the donors for the kind donations to enable this book to be printed for free distribution. Whatever balance of funds, if any, will be channeled towards future publications. We apologise for any inadvertent omissions or misspelling of names.