

Ayutāha Dhamma Sojourn

A Compass on the Path of Tranquillity

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Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassā

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Preface

This book is titled “*Ayutāha Dhamma Sojourn*” in memory of the ten thousand days of my life as a monk. Really I am not an author.

I have been coming here from Myanmar since 1999 with 12 *Vassa* overseas. I have resided at Santisukharama, Kota Tinggi, Malaysia for six years, at Vimuttisukkharama, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah for two *Vassa*, at Nirodharama Meditation Centre, Ayer Tawar, Malaysia for nine years and Satipatthana Meditation Centre, Indonesia for one *Vassa*. While spending *Vassa* in other countries, I have tried my best to propagate the Buddha Dhamma, sharing my knowledge with those who approached me.

I was invited to conduct vipassana meditation retreats in several countries among those being an annual international meditation retreat at MBSC (Mula Buddha Sasana Centre) in Taiwan for ten years. Those retreats were led by Ovadacariya Sayadawgyi U Panditabhivamsa and me. In 2014, Sayadawgyi was not able to come due to his age and health and then I lead the retreat for about 40 days.

After the retreat, many yogis wanted to have the Dhamma talks recorded by the MBSC. Although sound files uploaded on YouTube are easy to access, it is often difficult to spare enough time to listen to them, so they requested that these talks be made into a book. I wished to fulfil their request but I have no ability to write as well as this resultant book.

Luckily, the right people were found to fulfil their wishes. Sayalay Abhijata, Sayalay Jinapali, Niec Li, together with their team have done a very good job to help the propagation of the Dhamma. Now, you have this book on hand named “*Ayutāha Dhamma Sojourn*” — ten thousand days of the Dhamma journey in my life.

Coincidentally, a special edition named “*Footprints on a Tranquil Path: First Decade of Nirodharama’s Dhamma Journey*” comes out at the same time. So, two Dhamma sharing books are available to you.

It is my wish that those who come across this book will come to appreciate the great wisdom of the Buddha’s teachings and whatever little knowledge they get from this book will benefit them in one way or another. Then, our aspiration in compiling this book has been fulfilled.

I humbly apologize for any errors or omissions which have inadvertently occurred in the course of compiling this book. You may correct any mistakes you come across as if it is your own book.

May you and all sentient beings be able to understand the reality of the nature of the Dhamma.

May you all be well, happy, peaceful and enjoy practicing the Dhamma.

May you all reach liberation and the highest goal.

Sayadaw Nandasiddhi

Nirodharama Meditation Centre

Origins and Acknowledgement

For practitioners who wish to purify their minds and confront their defilements, it is important to advance gradually and make steady progress in meditation. This book comprises of the Dhamma talks delivered by Sayadaw Nandasiddhi from Myanmar in 2014, during a 40-day intensive meditation retreat held at MBSC in Taiwan. This book is a guide for meditators, as it covers basic meditation techniques and includes the practice of the Thirty-seven Factors of Enlightenment, all of which are the skillful means used to guide meditators towards the path of liberation.

This is the first time that Sayadaw Nandasiddhi delivered the teachings in Mandarin for the entire 40-day retreat. With his limited Chinese language proficiency and vocabulary, he completed the delivery of all teachings and his effort truly deserves our admiration and praise. Instead of using difficult Buddhist terms, Sayadaw explained the profound meaning of Dhamma in a simple, basic and clear manner, leaving a great impression in people's minds. This book maintains Sayadaw Nandasiddhi's simple style of teaching. Only minor changes were made for the fluency of the contents, which includes the omission of repetitions and the addition of Pali texts.

We are thankful to the many causes and conditions that have helped to accomplish the publication of this book. It

was a tremendous challenge to transcribe the audio file into words. We took quite some time to look for the transcribers. Several people tried, but gave up halfway due to the difficult process involved. Eventually, we found a few transcribers that persisted and completed the work. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the transcribers Yong Chi Yong, Yong Meei Yeng and other five Malaysian youths, who began to transcribe the audio file into words from April 2015. Dealing with unfamiliar pronunciation and slang, they listened to the audio files repeatedly. The process of completing the transcription work resembled a marathon and they successfully completed the Chinese transcript within a very short period of three months. We wish to thank them for their efforts and time. Without their diligence, this book would not have been published. Next, we would like to thank the Chinese proofreader from New Zealand, Niec Li. After we edited the Chinese transcript, she started to proofread the edited texts and conduct the search for information needed to improve the quality of the contents.

To ensure that the Dhamma is transmitted to the readers accurately and to minimize the errors, each Chinese article was translated into English. This is to ensure that Sayadaw Nandasiddhi, who cannot read Chinese, could assess and finalize the contents to ensure that they are accurate. As a result, the English version of the book was produced. We would like to convey our greatest thanks to the English translator from

Malaysia, Deng Zi Mei who volunteered to help us with the translation despite her busy schedule. Within an extremely short period of time, she completed the 120,000 words of translation with persistence and resolve. Her accurate, efficient and high quality translation helped in the publication of the English version, as well as helping to confirm and finalize the contents of the Chinese version. Next, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to the English proofreader from England, Kathy Monaco, for her continued dedication in proofreading the high volume of translated English texts, despite her busy work schedule. She also completed her task efficiently within a short period. Her excellent proofreading skills have ensured that the English version can be presented at its best, as a form of offering to international readers.

Sayadaw Nandasiddhi wished that this book could be published before 16 October 2015, so that its publication would commemorate his 10,000 days as a renunciant. To fulfill his wish, all the volunteers that participated in the editing of this book worked diligently to fulfill their responsibilities. The volunteers, except for Niec Li, have no contact with Nirodharama Meditation Centre and they do not know Sayadaw Nandasiddhi. However, for the sake of propagating the Dhamma, they accepted this volunteering task without hesitation and completed their responsibilities without any conditions. Their time and effort spent was immeasurable. Because of their efforts, readers are able to access the Dhamma

through written texts. We would like to express our deep appreciation to the volunteers for their selfless contribution.

Even though we make affinities with Nirodharama Meditation Centre as yogis who practice for only a short period, we would like to thank Sayadaw for granting us the opportunity to edit this book. Due to the short editing time frame, we only have 4 months from compiling the texts to typesetting. We are inexperienced and are not professionals in editing and typesetting, thus if there are any shortcomings, we seek your kind understanding in this respect. Any form of reductions in errors and improvement in the flow of content, are the result of hard work by the volunteer team. May all merits that arise from this book be transferred to the volunteers and all sentient beings, may they be liberated from suffering and acquire happiness. All omissions and mistakes are due to our carelessness, limited ability and insufficiencies in the knowledge of meditation and Dhamma and we are willing to shoulder the full responsibility for it.

We would like to offer a sincere mind to you. We hope that as you read this book, you will acquire confidence towards the right Dhamma and meditation. May we walk together on the noble path and attain *maggañāna*, *phalañāna* and *Nibbāna* one day.

Editors

Jinapali Shi Liao Jue & Abhijata Shi Liao Chen

Part 1

The Journey Begins



“Do we know ourselves?” This question is not easy to answer. If we don’t know ourselves, we might rely on a fortune teller. We will ask the fortune teller about our past and present lives, why things do not progress smoothly and how to change our destiny etc. But, if we do not know our lives, our bodies and minds, how can we expect others to know?

Vipassana meditation is a method that contemplates the natural phenomena in life and knows how our minds and bodies function. Mind (*nāma*) and form (*rūpa*) have their own distinct characteristics, each characteristic manifests in every moment. It is just that we do not notice it. The Buddha said that sentient beings are conquered by ignorance, thus they do not notice the truth about life.

Contrary to scientists who undertake research on external factors, we practice vipassana meditation to explore within, to contemplate our bodies and minds. Buddha was liberated from suffering through internal exploration. This path towards internal exploration is the method taught by the Buddha, thus, we will also explore the truth of life from within.

Chapter 1

Vipassana Meditation

Instructions



What is vipassana meditation? It involves the knowing and understanding of our lives — the true natural phenomenon and functioning of our minds and bodies. For instance, when someone passes away, due to the lack of mind, the body will not be able to do anything. This is a clear natural phenomenon; when we are alive, if the body and mind function well together, we will live in comfort; if the body and mind do not coordinate themselves, we will suffer and need to seek medical advice. These are realities that we can easily experience in our daily lives.

Individuals who practice vipassana meditation, in order to truly understand their lives, must be cautious and diligent in paying attention and observation. This is required to enable one to see these true natural phenomena, to see how our minds and bodies function, this is very important!

However, a distracted mind is unable to understand the truth of life. Thus, we need to train this mind.

HOW TO TRAIN OUR MINDS?

An untrained mind is distracted, filled with delusions and sometimes many doubts arise. How do we control our minds so that it will not be distracted? The mind needs to catch hold of an object at any moment. If there is no object, the mind will not arise, and this applies also when one is asleep. To control a distracted mind, we need to train it to follow a fixed object.

There are many methods to train our minds, for instance calm (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*). What we want to practice is “insight meditation”, also known as “vipassana meditation”. It possesses the power for concentrating and allows one to understand the phenomena that arise and pass away within the state of concentration.

The sequences of cultivation are morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*). After receiving precepts, we must train our mind to concentrate, for wisdom to arise; if one upholds the precepts without nurturing concentration, the mind remains distracted and wisdom will not arise. Based on Mahasi Sayadaw’s instructions, I will give you basic guidance on how to practice vipassana meditation.

SITTING MEDITATION

(1) Main Object: Rising and Falling of the Abdomen

Every living being needs to breathe in order to stay alive. When we breathe, wind enters and exits from our body. When we breathe in, the abdomen expands; when we breathe out, the abdomen contracts. This is the function of the element of wind (*vāyodhātu*): it causes the movement of the abdomen. When the abdomen moves, we feel its movement — rising, falling, rising, falling. We train our minds to follow the rising and falling of the abdomen as its object.

However, due to our lack of attention, it is very easy for the mind to be distracted. In order to ensure that the mind follows the object for a long period, one will need to note. The function of noting resembles a hook, which ‘hooks’ the mind in order to anchor it on the object. When the abdomen expands, note “expand” or “rising”; when the abdomen contracts, note “contract” or “falling”. We should pay attention to the fact that we are not controlling the object, only following it. Do not alter the manner of your breathing. Neither slow it down, nor make it faster. Breathe steadily as usual and note the rising and falling of the abdomen as they occur.

Everyone has only one mind. When the mind follows its

object, it will not think of other things; if the mind drifts away, it will not follow its object. This is similar to the fact that one cannot read two books simultaneously. Our responsibility is to place our minds on the meditation object, this is our work. As long as we fulfill our responsibility, the mind will “know” and “understand”. This is the mind’s work.

During sitting meditation for one hour, one should place one’s mind on the main object. Perhaps in the beginning one can only focus for 10 to 15 minutes. Sometimes when the mind is able to concentrate, one might be able to focus for half an hour to 45 minutes. Sometimes when the mind is distracted, it is possible for the mind to drift away in only 1 to 2 minutes.

For a distracted mind to learn is difficult, as it cannot note the object clearly, even when it “knows”, it does not “know exactly”. Thus we need to pay attention, be cautious and diligent. If we do not pay attention, the mind drifts away and it will not be able to catch the object. A mind that does not catch hold of the object will not understand these natural phenomena. Because the mind does not know, does not understand, consequently wisdom will not arise.

For instance, when we look at a pot of flowers, if we truly observe with care how many flower petals there are, what color it is and whether it is pretty, we will know very clearly. Why? Because we are diligent in paying attention and thus we

clearly understand it. Thus, if we want to learn, to know, to understand, we need to pay attention. This is very important.

If we wish to understand the natural phenomena of life, we must be able to place our attention on the object accurately. Let our minds follow the main object — the rising and falling of the abdomen, the longer the better, so that our minds will be able to concentrate.

(2) Secondary Object: Sensations

During sitting meditation, we let our minds follow the main object — the rising and falling of the abdomen. If the body has been stung by mosquito and feels itchy, let go first and continue to follow the rising and falling of the abdomen. After sitting for half an hour to 45 minutes, perhaps your body feel the sensations of fatigue, numbness, pain. Now you also need to let go, as we should follow the main object as far as possible. Buddha said, “Patience leads us to *Nibbāna!*” This saying is particularly relevant in meditation practice.

When the sensations of numbness and pain become too intense, the mind is dragged away by the intense pain and is unable to follow the main object. Accordingly we let go of the main object, and note the secondary object — sensations. Remember, do not cling onto two objects by following the main object for a while and then following the secondary

object next. It is in this way that the mind will be distracted, so you must let the mind follow one object accurately.

The sensation of pain arises because of the lack of movement of the body. We must persist and persevere without moving because we want to know more about this pain. Muscle fatigue, numbness and pain are sensations and these sensations arise with the mind. We want to learn about life — our minds and bodies. Sensations are a part of our lives, thus these sensations are what we must understand, to see how they are arising, passing away and changing. We need to persevere and continue to note “pain, pain, pain”, “numbness, numbness, numbness”. If the pain is too intense and goes beyond your tolerance limit, then move your body slightly and the pain will cease. Then you can go back to the main object — the rising and falling of the abdomen.

Try your best not to move your body within the one-hour sitting meditation session. Close your eyes, ignore any sounds, let go of any odor. We must pay attention to the main object and concentration will gradually stabilize. Within the one-hour sitting meditation, the most important point to note is to follow the rising and falling of the abdomen, as well as our sensations. Then our minds will naturally understand.

(3) Secondary Object: Thinking

When the mind is distracted and starts drifting away, we must immediately develop the awareness that our minds have caught hold of another object and we must drag our minds back to the main object. Sometimes when the object that we think of is too attractive and we fail to drag our minds back, we must note “thinking, thinking, thinking”.

When we pay attention to noting, we are not following the object that we are thinking of. In fact we are following the mind that is thinking. When we think, there are two objects: the mind that thinks (knowing) and the object of thinking (thoughts). For instance, if I think of my friend, “the mind that thinks” is knowing and “friend” is the object of thinking. We need to pay attention: we should note the mind that thinks, not the object of this thinking. Where is the mind that thinks? We note “thinking, thinking, thinking”, this is the knowing of the mind that thinks. Once we start to note, the mind that thinks will cease and with it the object of thinking will cease too. We can then return to the main object.

(4) Secondary Object: Drowsiness

The fourth disturbing object is drowsiness. One should be immediately alert when drowsiness appears. When drowsiness

appears, it is accompanied by its friend — ignorance (*avijjā*), i.e. one is experiencing a blurred, drifting and muddled state. This is a neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, also known as a neutral feeling. When one is experiencing this state, the mind can drift for one, two or even three hours. No matter how long you sit, it is a waste of time and there will not be any improvement of concentration and wisdom. Everyone should be careful!

The mind must be able to follow its main object clearly for it to improve. If the mind is blurred and muddled, it is difficult for meditation to progress further.

WALKING MEDITATION

We cannot sit for the whole day. Thus, sitting meditation for one hour, alternated with walking meditation for one hour can be implemented.

During walking meditation, do not look in all directions. However, there is no need to close your eyes, because it is easy for you to bump into someone else. Your eyes should look downwards, not forward. Both your hands should be overlapped and be placed in front of your body or at the back of your body with ease. When you move your feet they should

not be raised too high, or else it is easy to lose your balance. Walk naturally, but slow down. Why? Because if you proceed too fast, the mind will not be able to follow its object in time. By walking slowly, it is easier for the mind to catch hold of its object. Walk naturally, slow down and let your mind follow the object, note and be aware. This is walking meditation.

When walking, place your mind on your feet. Note the steps, whether they are taken with the right or the left foot. When the left foot moves, note “left step”; when the right foot moves, note “right step”. When walking meditation is done slowly, note “raising, lowering”. When the mind is more focused, you can note in greater detail, i.e. “raising, pushing forward, lowering”. You must be aware of all the successive movements involved, from the raising of the foot to the lowering of it.

Note accurately, do not give instructions or control it, just follow it. If you give instructions to move your feet, there is the concept of “I”, which is different from noting the object naturally. Giving instructions to move the feet is the method used by the military. In order to synchronize their movements, they recite the order: “left, right, left, right”. But meditators are different, as we follow the natural object. When the left foot moves, note “left step”; when the right foot moves, note “right step”.

If the mind follows the object, it will not be distracted; if the mind is distracted, it will not be able to follow the object, because we only have one mind. Sometimes we note unconsciously. When we note “left step” it is the right foot that moves. When we note “right step” it is the left foot that moves and this shows that the mind is not following the object. We should check on ourselves from time to time.

During walking meditation, just ignore whatever you see. When something obvious appears and the mind has been dragged away, we should note “seeing, seeing, seeing”. If we do not note, greed will arise when we see beautiful things, anger will arise when we see unfavorable things and ignorance will arise if we do not know clearly what is going on. Greed, anger and ignorance lead to an impure mind and thus we must note.

DAILY ACTIVITIES

In our daily lives, we spend most of our time in motion, for instance, eating, drinking, going to the toilet, bathing, drying clothes, going up and down the staircase, opening and closing doors etc. We should be aware of every single detail in our daily lives, and be mindful of how our minds and bodies interact. No matter what we do, our minds should follow that action. There

is no need to deliberately find a purpose, you just need to note that action in that moment. How to observe? Just note. When you catch hold of the object with your mind and note it, right mindfulness is there. This is how we can control a distracted mind. As we become more skilled, we become aware of every act of mind-wandering until, eventually, the mind does not wander anymore. The mind is then riveted onto the object of its attention. If the mind is not distracted, concentration will arise and when the mind concentrates, wisdom will arise.

The basic instructions of vipassana meditation are as mentioned above.

CONCLUSION

In Myanmar, when meditators at the beginner's level come, we let them listen to Mahasi Sayadaw's meditation instructions. These instructions have been translated into more than 20 languages. Within this meditation instruction, it is mentioned that one should pay attention to what one sees, hears, smells, tastes, touches and thinks, as many things can become our object in meditation. During the actual practice, it is not necessary for one to do so every moment. During sitting meditation, we ignore whatever we hear, see or smell. For beginners, if our minds try to pay attention to all the objects

that arise from our six senses, it is easy for the mind to become distracted. Focus is not easy for a beginner to achieve. Thus, when one begins to meditate, the fewer the objects the better. It is best for the mind to follow just one object. It is the same when there are many books. We must finish reading one book first, before proceeding to the next book.

When the mind is able to follow the object clearly without distraction and is able to concentrate, we will feel satisfied, just like a naughty child who has been tamed. When the mind is concentrating, wisdom arises naturally and we will understand how this body and mind is constantly arising, passing away and changing. This is wisdom, the outcome of diligent practice in meditation.



Chapter 2

Reliance

2.1 Relying on Ourselves

*Buddho loke samuppanno, hitāya sabbapāṇinaṃ;
Dhammo loke samuppanno, sukhāya sabbapāṇinaṃ;
Saṅgho loke samuppanno, puññakkhettaṃ anuttara.
Etena sacca vajjena, sotthi te hotu sabbadā.*

Buddha appears in this world to benefit the sentient beings;

Dhamma appears in this world to deliver peace and happiness to the sentient beings;

Sangha appears in this world as the most supreme field of merit;

By these utterance of truth, may you be in peace always.

As Buddhists we are lucky, because we have opportunities to learn and practice vipassana meditation and the real Dhamma. Therefore we should cherish our opportunities.

There are approximately 7.3 billion people in the world and everyone is seeking security or refuge. Why? Due to fear. People are afraid of afflictions, danger, death, thus they seek security and protection. People worship mountains, trees, oceans and deities to seek protection. However they face an inevitable end as they encounter aging, illness and death. So

long as there is birth, one will progress towards aging, illness, death and face various afflictions. Before the Buddha appeared in this world, many people tried to search for methods to be liberated from birth, aging, illness and death, but they failed in their attempts and this was how many religions were conceived.

Buddha was born in 623 BC. During that time, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism were not present. Hinduism existed during that period. Hinduism recognizes the creator of this world as Brahma and worships Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu. Even though the devotees of Hinduism believe in kamma, practice wholesome deeds and eliminate unwholesome deeds, they still believe that if one commits a mistake, the bad kamma will vanish so long as they worship heaven. However, this does not provide the ultimate solution. Thus, they are still suffering, unable to be liberated from birth, aging, illness and death.

CULTIVATION RELIES ON OURSELVES

In 588 BC, Bodhisatta was enlightened and became the Buddha. He was 35 years old that year. Subsequently, Buddha propagated the Dhamma for 45 years and finally he entered *parinibbāna* when he was 80 years old (543 BC). If we

calculate from the day of his *parinibbāna*, Buddhism has a history of 2558 years to-date (2015); but if we calculate from the day Buddha attained enlightenment, Buddhism has been around for 2603 years.

Buddha is a human being, not a god. He had parents, wife and a son before renunciation. But he was a special person, not an ordinary human being. An ordinary human being can't speak or stand after birth, but the Buddha stood firmly on his feet the moment he was born, not depending on anybody. Being witnessed by many people, deities and Brahma, he faced northwards, walked 7 steps forward, raised his right hand to declare, "I am the most supreme and honorable human being in this world, this is my final birth in this world, I will not be reborn in my next life." Before achieving Buddhahood, Prince Siddhatta (as he was then), married at 16 years old and ascended the throne. At age 29, he sought renunciation in order to seek the method to be liberated from birth, aging, illness and death. After practicing asceticism in the forest for 6 years, he abandoned the ascetics and attained enlightenment. He then taught us the method of his liberation.

Buddha said, "Tathagata is just a guide." We have to walk the path ourselves. There is a useful saying during meditation, "If you rely on the mountain, the mountain will collapse; if you rely on water, the water will flow; if you rely on others,

others will run; it is better to rely on yourself”. We listen to the Dhamma, practice according to the Dhamma to acquire experience. Then we feel satisfied and share our experience with others. Thus, we all should rely on ourselves and not rely on our teachers. The Buddha said, by relying on ourselves in cultivation, we will acquire wisdom. The wisdom we acquire will liberate us from the sufferings of birth, aging, illness and death. The process of training will be tiring, this is normal. When we learn new things, we will need to work diligently, this process will definitely be tiring.

Nowadays people are lazy and afraid of tiredness and so they want a simple way. They believe that no matter what they do, right or wrong doesn't matter, as long as they worship the object they respect and believe in, all issues will be resolved. The confused and ignorant mind follows such teachings till the time of death, but is still unable to be liberated from afflictions.

Buddhism is different, “Buddha appears in this world to benefit all sentient beings.” Regardless of whether you believe or not, pay homage or not, as long as you practice according to Buddha's method, you will be able to progress along the path towards ultimate liberation, according to your actual experience and acquire benefits.

TOLERATE MINOR SUFFERINGS, ACQUIRE GREAT HAPPINESS

“Dhamma appears in the world to deliver peace and happiness to sentient beings.” Please do not feel that, “I am suffering when I am meditating here! My body is very painful!” You should understand this suffering is transient, compared to the suffering of illness and death, these pains are insignificant. “Patience leads to *Nibbāna*”, everyone should be patient!

The Four Noble Truths are the truth of suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the path that leads to the cessation of suffering. The first noble truth is suffering, suffering originates from our greed, attachments and self-views. We must understand the truth of suffering, the greatest suffering in life is the suffering of birth, aging, illness and death. The suffering of meditation cannot be compared to these sufferings. The discomfort in meditation is just a sensation. For instance pain, numbness, heat etc., these sensations will not last, they are impermanent. When we focus on every moment, we will see that these sensations change every moment, they are different every moment, eventually they disappear and pass away. All phenomena arise and pass away so rapidly that they do not last even for the twinkling of an eye. One will come to know this personally as one goes

on noting. One will become convinced of the impermanency of all such phenomena. When we achieve this understanding through our experience, we will be able to liberate ourselves from defilements.

ACQUIRING THE ESSENCE OF CULTIVATION

During the 45 years, from Buddha's enlightenment to his *parinibbāna*, his teachings are recorded in the Tripitaka — *Suttanta*, *Vinaya*, *Abhidhamma*. Even though more than two thousand years have passed, these teachings remain clear without changes. After Buddha entered *parinibbāna*, the Tripitaka was compiled by the Buddha's disciples. First they recited what they had heard during the Buddha's discourses, which formed the first Buddhist council. Eventually there were a total of six Buddhist councils. The first three times occurred in India, the fourth time in Sri Lanka and the final two times in Myanmar. During the fourth Buddhist council, all the Tripitaka in Pali was inscribed on the leaves of palm trees, which was the first time in history that the Tripitaka was recorded in writing. The final two Buddhist councils involved the reassessment of the Tripitaka in Pali, to ensure its purity.

The Myanmar government has made major contributions for the continuity of Buddhism. Every year there are Buddhist

exams to encourage everyone to learn the Dhamma diligently. In Myanmar, there are more than 400,000 monastics, they follow this tradition and study for more than 10 years, passing different stages of exams to attain the qualification of a Dhamma teacher (*Dhammācariya*). After one understands the teachings, it becomes very useful when one begins to practice.

There are many Dhamma texts and the laity is very busy, so how can one find the time to read all the texts? Only read what you need now, do not read those that you don't need for the time being. For instance, the types of medications in this world are many, but we do not use all medications when we are sick. We only need the medication that treats our current condition. Of course, if you are the doctor, you need to know all the medications in order to treat the patient according to his condition. Similarly, in life we have all sorts of suffering. The Buddha is like a doctor, prescribing medications for all sorts of illnesses. Focusing on different defilements, He gave us the various methods of treatment. However, we do not need to know all the illnesses and medications. The most important point is that we want to be liberated from suffering.

Generosity brings wealth and by upholding the Five Precepts one will be reborn in the higher realms. If one practises meditative concentration and maintains it till the time of death, one will be reborn in heaven. Thus different

methods lead to different outcomes. However, what is the highest method? It is vipassana meditation — the method that liberates us from birth, aging, illness and death. All the former Buddhas, Arahants and noble ones realised *Nibbāna* by following this very path. It is a path that liberates us from suffering.

When we do not know our illness, we do not know what medication to consume. Similarly, if our objective of cultivation is unclear, we will not be able to choose the best path for ourselves. Thus, the purpose of learning vipassana meditation is very important, if our goal is to be liberated from the sufferings of birth, aging, illness and death. If you just want to be reborn in heaven, then you only need to cultivate generosity and uphold the Five Precepts.

Buddha taught us to rely on ourselves, thus whom do we want to rely on? We should only rely on ourselves. If we do not uphold the precepts and commit unwholesome deeds, even when we desperately seek help from the Buddha on our deathbed, there is nothing the Buddha can do. Thus, we should cultivate diligently and once our cultivation improves, we will be confident. Once we are confident, we will not need to rely on others, this is very important!

A PROCESS OF BEING FAMILIAR WITH THE MIND

When all of you listen to this Dhamma discourse, you understand the content as you hear it and consequently paying attention plays an important role in this process. If you are thinking of home when I am expounding the Dhamma, you will not understand what I say. What you hear is just a voice, but your mind is not here. Concentration will not arise if your mind is distracted and without concentration, wisdom will not arise. We need to use the meditation instructions to bring peace and concentration to our minds. Once the mind is able to concentrate, one will be able to see the object clearly.

The so-called seeing the object does not mean noting once or twice only. We note the movement of our abdomen hundreds, thousands or even tens of thousands of times. This is like how you meet me; if we meet only once, we may forget each other, but if we meet twice, ten times, one hundred times or every day, you will not forget. Similarly, if one can note the object continuously one will not forget. Then if one does forget it is due to the lack of right mindfulness. Our minds are used to forgetting. Right mindfulness means to follow our object with clarity and certainty, to be careful of drowsiness, to be immediately aware if we are distracted, and then return back

to the main object immediately. One should not forget, then one will be able to note continuously. Even though the process of cultivation can be tiring, we should not worry or be afraid, and neither should we be lazy or lax. We need to be diligent and pay attention to note with care. When we have experience, we will acquire wisdom, seeing our improvements, we will be satisfied. If not, it means that one has encountered some problems in meditation. One can report the problem to the meditation master, who will then give instructions based on his own experience. Once the problem is solved, meditation will be able to progress smoothly.

It is more difficult to cultivate at home. Here, in the presence of a meditation master in the meditation centre, one does not need to worry about lodging and food. In the Buddha's era, living conditions were poor, bhikkhus meditated under the trees and they acquired food through alms-begging. Now, because we have comfortable cushions and good living conditions, we should cherish them. To be born as Buddha's disciples, and to be able to learn the way of liberation in Buddhism, means we are very lucky, so do not waste time, strive on diligently in your meditation.

2.2 Relying on the Dhamma

DHAMMA PROCLAIMED FROM SELF-ENLIGHTENMENT

Most religious teachings do not originate from self-enlightenment, instead these teachings often arise from external inspirations. Buddha's teachings originated from self-enlightenment, just as is recorded in *Dīghanīkāya* of the Pali Tripitaka:

Buddho so Bhagavā bodhāya dhammaṃ deseti.

The Buddha expounds the Dhamma for the sake of enlightening sentient beings.

“Buddho” means the enlightened one, the one that knows-it-all. Before attaining Buddhahood, Bodhisatta was the prince of Kapilavastu in Northern India and His name was Siddhatta. He sought renunciation at age 29. Initially, after practicing asceticism for 6 years in the forest, He abandoned the ascetics. Later while meditating under the Bodhi tree, He subdued *māra* and attained Buddhahood. Through self-enlightenment, Buddha clearly taught us the truth. The Buddha possesses the wisdom of omniscience, He can solve any doubts we have.

Some religions do not allow others to raise doubts about or criticize their teachings, one can only believe and accept whatever is taught. But, does believing in the creator solve life's problems? This is impossible. Even though we are given the ability to think, when we think deeply, we will feel tired. Thus, many people are too lazy to think. Instead, they distance themselves from methods that require them to be diligent. They would rather choose the “shortcut” — to believe that by relying on external forces, their problems will be solved. Easy methods are like cheap goods, seen everywhere, but useless. When we encounter the problems of birth, aging, illness and death, these “shortcuts” will not help us, no creator can save us.

A wise man relies on himself and not on others. Buddha became all-knowing through self-enlightenment and as a result, his teachings are clear and perfect. The Dhamma that he expounded for 45 years cannot be summarized within one book, and the voluminous Tripitaka is something that is difficult for us to learn within our life time.

The target audience of the Buddha are many, including among humans beings, monastics, the laity and heretics. The Buddha continued to expound the Dhamma to heavenly beings at night. Why did the people know that Buddha expounded the Dhamma to heavenly beings at night? During

the Buddha's era, there were no lights, so a moonless night was filled with darkness. The light that emanated from the bodies of heavenly beings was extremely bright and when they came to seek teachings from the Buddha, their presence would light up the entire monastery, a phenomenon that many bhikkhus observed.

So did this mean that the Buddha did not need any sleep? The Buddha would rest, but he did not need to sleep. The Arahants also do not need to sleep, because they can be absorbed in the attainment of fruition (*phalasangāmi*), a meditative state in which a person is absorbed in *Nibbāna* itself. This power of meditative concentration is much better than the quality of sleep. Their minds are free from defilements, and will not be disturbed by the external environment. They are serene, tranquil and at ease. Sleep belongs to drowsiness where the mind remains in a state of weakness, making it a type of defilement. An Arahant free from defilements will not be drowsy. But the Arahant's body is the same as ours, so they will feel physically tired. The Buddha being the same in this regard, also needed to physically rest.

The Dhamma expounded by the Buddha for 45 years is not acquired through thinking nor is it acquired through external inspiration. It is acquired through self-enlightenment and self-experience. Thus, we should cultivate the Buddha's method of vipassana meditation with reverence.

THE SIX WELL-KNOWN HERETIC TEACHERS

The Buddha said, “The Tathagata is one who only shows the way.” The Dhamma taught by the Buddha must be practiced in order to acquire its true benefits. Just like the spiciness of chili, which you can imagine for a hundred years without knowing the truth, but when you bite one, you will know it immediately, so should Dhamma be experienced through practice, because you will not achieve any results merely by reflecting on the teachings.

Before our Buddha achieved Buddhahood, besides the Brahmans in ancient India, there are other famous sects, known as the six renowned heretic teachers. Heretics refer to the other schools of thought in India besides Buddhism. Their teachings originated from the imaginations of their religious teachers and were not derived from their personal experience of the truth in life. Below, is a brief introduction to these six well-known heretic teachers and their teachings.

(1) Pūraṇa Kassapa

“*Pūraṇa*” means perfection, and “*Kassapa*” is his given name. “*Pūraṇa Kassapa*” came by his name because as a result of his birth, the number of slaves in a certain household reached one hundred. Owing to this fact he was never found to be at

fault, even when he failed to do his work satisfactorily. But, in spite of this, he was dissatisfied and fled from his masters. He then had his clothes stolen by thieves and went about naked. People mistook him for an Arahant with no attachments and so he was honoured and provided with food.

Pūraṇa is said to have taught the doctrine of “non-action” (*akuriyavāda*), denying good or bad actions, as well as their result. He considered that doing good or bad is only a physical action. In burning, killing, robbing etc., there is no evil caused and no coming of evil. In generosity, self-control, telling the truth etc., there is no merit that results and no coming of merit.

(2) *Makkhali Gosāla*

Makkhali Gosāla was a slave as well. He was born in a cowshed, which is what “*gosāla*” means. “*Makkhali*” means tripping over. When he worked for his master, he tripped and fell down with a pot of oil and became a naked ascetic after fleeing from his irate master, who managed to grab hold of *Gosāla*’s garment and disrobe him as he fled.

Makkhali Gosāla preached the doctrine of fatalism, which says: Beings are defiled without cause and without requisite condition. Beings are purified without cause and without requisite condition. Having transmigrated and wandered on

through different stages of *samsāra*, the wise and the foolish alike will put an end to pain. The course is all fixed, and will not be changed by any action. Just as a ball of string when thrown, comes to its end simply by unwinding.

(3) *Ajita Kesakambala*

His name was actually *Ajita*, and he was called “*Kesakambali*” because he wore a blanket of human hair (“*kesa*” means hair and “*kambala*” means knitted fabric), which is described as being the most miserable garment. It was cold in cold weather, hot in the heat of summer, evil-smelling and uncouth. According to *Ajita Kesakambala*, as hair grows on the top of a human, so one who wears a hair-knitted garment should be considered the one who surpasses all.

He was a nihilist who believed in neither good nor evil. He taught the doctrine of annihilation at death: With the break-up of the body, the wise and the foolish alike are annihilated, destroyed. They do not exist after death.

(4) *Pakudha Kaccāyana*

According to *Pakudha Kaccāyana*, there are seven eternal “elements”: Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Joy, Sorrow and Life (*jīva*). He further asserted that with their unchangeable quality, these

elements do not interact with one another. *Pakudhaka* held the view of eternalism. He believed that the soul will not be harmed or destroyed when the body is killed, even if one cuts off another person's head. The sword simply passes between the seven substances that constitute a human being, so there is no one taking anyone's life, and no one being killed.

(5) *Sañcaya Belatṭhaputta*

Sañjaya Belatṭhaputta was an agnostic, who refused to make any judgement. As *Samaññaphala Sutta* says:

Sañjaya Belatṭhaputta said to me, “If you ask me if there exists another world after death, if I thought that there exists another world, would I declare that to you? I don't think so. I don't think in that way. I don't think otherwise. I don't think not. I don't think not not.”

This is an example of the evasive way he adopted. Before meeting the Buddha, Venerable *Sāriputta* and Venerable *Moggallāna* both were *Sañjaya*'s disciples.

(6) *Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta*

Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta was the leader of a sect known as the *Nigaṇṭha*, which was devoted to severe austerities.

According to *Nigaṇṭha*, there are beings in water, so it should not be used. That is why a *Nigaṇṭha* is restrained as regards all water. They believe in souls that can be defiled, then degenerate and transmigrate in *samsāra*. By repenting through penance all past misdeeds and by not committing fresh misdeeds, the future becomes cleared. From the destruction of all deeds, one passes beyond the round of existence.

Nigaṇṭha were initially *Acelakas*, which means ‘heretics who wear nothing’. They considered themselves to have no defilements and honest, so with a pure mind, there was no need for any garment to cover themselves up. After the death of *Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta*, the sect divided into two, one continuing to follow the old tradition as *Acelakas*, while the other group wore white to keep warm.

Mentioned above are the six well-known heretic teachers in the Buddha’s era. From the brief introductions above, we can see that their philosophies were not associated with self-enlightenment or personal experience. Most of their teachings originated from their subjective imaginations and superficial understanding of certain phenomena. If we follow such evil views and enter the wrong path, it is not difficult to imagine how dangerous that can be.

When the Buddha achieved Buddhahood, he expounded the true Dhamma to benefit all sentient beings. The virtues of the Dhamma are against the teachings of the heretics.

THE VIRTUES OF THE DHAMMA

Svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo: sandiṭṭhiko akāliko ehipassiko opaneyyiko paccattam veditabbo viññūhī'ti.

The Dhamma is well proclaimed by the Blessed one, visible here and now, not delayed (timeless), inviting of inspection, onward-leading and directly accessible by the wise.

The virtues of the Dhamma are as follows:

(1) The Dhamma is well proclaimed (svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo)

The Dhamma is well proclaimed because it is good in the beginning, the middle and the end, and because it announces the life of purity that is utterly perfect and pure with meaning and with detail. The Buddha's teachings have been around for 2600 years and stand the test of time. As we practice vipassana meditation and deepen our cultivation, we will experience the preciousness of the Dhamma naturally.

(2) The Dhamma can be experienced (sandiṭṭhiko)

When we follow the Buddha's teachings, we will be able to

experience for ourselves the outcome and benefits. This is not merely a matter of hearsay only.

(3) The Dhamma is timeless (akālika)

At any time one may begin practicing the Dhamma; at any time one will acquire the benefits of the Dhamma. There are no limits in terms of timing.

(4) The Dhamma is inviting of inspection (ehipassika)

“Come! This is the path which I acquired through self-enlightenment, cultivate this path, you can experience it yourself.” The Dhamma can give such an assurance to you, so we welcome everyone to come forward to see and inspect for themselves.

(5) The Dhamma leads to Nibbāna (opaneyyika)

When one learns the Dhamma until it is completely understood, the wisdom thus gained will be kept within the mind and carried forward to the next life, until one attains *Nibbāna*. If one attains the level of stream-entry (*sotāpanna*), this achievement cannot be stolen by others, it is unshakeable. Once this life ends, if one is to be human in the next life, one will be a *sotāpanna* baby when born. How does one know

whether this child is a stream-entrant? A stream-entrant has many virtues, one of which is that he does not violate the Five Precepts, even at the important juncture of life and death.

Worldly knowledge can only be used in this life time, once this life time ends, it can no longer be used. However, the wisdom of the Dhamma is not limited to this life time only. Accordingly, even though we have not attained the level of stream-entry, we do not need to worry. Our perfections will be maintained until our next lives, until we attain *Nibbāna*.

(6) The Dhamma is directly accessible by the wise (paccattaṃ veditabbo viññūhī)

The Dhamma can be experienced by every wise man.

SEEKING REFUGE IN THE DHAMMA

Life is impermanent, we may encounter an accident at any time and in any place. Facing death, how do we settle our minds? The news of air disasters is everyone's concern. We should think, if we are on the affected aircraft, what would we do? When the adults and children on the aircraft are all crying with fear, if we are one of them, do we have the ability to control our minds?

We acquire many amulets, however when death comes, do they really protect us? Even the creator that we believe in can't help us. We can only rely on ourselves and rely on Dhamma!

To seek refuge is to rely, to rely on the Dhamma for liberation. We seek refuge in the Dhamma with reverence, we practice vipassana meditation and contemplate our bodies and minds. The mind has feelings (*vedanā*), memory (*saññā*), volition (*cetanā*) and various mental factors (*cetasika*). These are the natural phenomena of life. When we know the natural phenomena of life, we will know many truths. Buddha said that those who could control their minds would be liberated from suffering. When our minds can concentrate without distraction, we will be able to face life and death with equanimity.



Chapter 3

The Truth about Life

DO WE KNOW OURSELVES?

We should know ourselves when practising vipassana meditation. However, “Do we know ourselves?” This question is not easy to answer. If we don’t know ourselves, we might rely on a fortune teller. We will ask the fortune teller about our past and present lives, why things do not progress smoothly and how to change our destiny etc. But, if we do not know our lives, our bodies and minds, how can we expect others to know?

CONQUERED BY IGNORANCE

Vipassana meditation is a method that contemplates the natural phenomena in life and knows how our minds and bodies function. Every mind (*citta*), mental factors (*cetasika*) and form (*rūpa*) have their own distinct characteristics, each characteristic manifests in every moment. It is just that we do not notice it. The Buddha said that sentient beings are conquered by ignorance, thus they do not notice the truth about life.

Ignorance (*avijjā*) is also known as delusion (*moha*). It has two functions:

- (1) It results in a lack of knowledge about the truth
- (2) It results in a wrong perception about the truth

Many times, what we understand is not the actual truth, it is just a concept. What is a concept? Now you see the meditation master, what exactly is a meditation master? Is the hand a meditation master? Is the body a meditation master? Is the monastic robe a meditation master? Actually, all these are concepts. Humans, monks, bhikkhunis, are all only concepts. The mental factors that enable the understanding of truth is wisdom. When wisdom arises, we will understand the truth about natural phenomena. We learn vipassana meditation not for the sake of understanding concepts, but because we want to understand the truth.

KNOWING THE TRUTH

In Pali, “*sacca*” means truth. There are three types of truth:

- (1) Conventional truth (*sammuti-sacca*)
- (2) Ultimate truth (*paramattha-sacca*)
- (3) Noble truth (*ariya-sacca*)

We practise vipassana meditation in order to know all truths. Noble truth (*ariya-sacca*), is not easy for us to understand yet. It is only when we experience it, that we will understand it. Now we need to understand ultimate truth (*paramattha-sacca*), i.e. the actual truth. This is clearly expounded in the *Abhidhamma*.

THE DOMINANT MIND

As we practise vipassana meditation, we contemplate the mind (*nāma*) and form (*rūpa*). When we note the movement of the abdomen, we note “rising, falling, rising, falling”. During walking meditation, we note “raising, pushing forward, lowering”. When we see, we note “seeing, seeing”; when we hear, we note “hearing, hearing”; when we smell, taste and touch, we observe and note. When we note, the mind is aware and focussed on that point and this concentration is known as “momentary concentration (*khaṇika-samādhī*)”. When the mind is focussed on the object, it can know the truth.

It is the mind that knows. What is the mind?

Ārammaṇaṃ cintetī'ti cittaṃ.

vijānāti ti aṭṭho.

The mind is the one that knows the object.

The characteristic of the mind is that it knows the object.

The mind is known as “*citta*” in Pali. The mind knows the object and its function is to perceive the object. The one that knows the object is not me, you or him, but the mind. Does everyone have a mind? We can perceive, thus we have a mind. When we die the mind no longer exists and what is left behind

is a body without consciousness. It can't perceive anything, it can't move, there are no feelings, only form (*rūpa*) is left behind. Is it true that a person should not be moved for eight hours once he is dead? When one loses consciousness, no matter whether the body has been moved or not, one will not be able to perceive or feel anything.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE BODY

Do animals have minds? If we beat the dog, he will run away. All animals have the ability to know and to perceive, thus they have minds. Animals and humans are the same, having minds and bodies. If consciousness no longer exists, is our body the same as an animal's body? It is just form (*rūpa*), so there is no difference between the two.

Humans consume some animals when they die and vice versa. When an animal is slaughtered, you buy and acquire its body, feeling very happy, because you can use it to cook a scrumptious meal. But, when a human dies, who dares to accept his body? This is strange, but this is the reality. When the consciousness is gone, the animal's body seems to be more precious than the human body. An animal body can be sold, but nobody would dare to purchase a human body even

if it was given away for free. Thus, we are too attached to our bodies.

Without consciousness, the animal body is beyond control. The same applies to our bodies, very soon the body will start to decay and stink. The body is like that, this is true natural phenomena.

Verse 147 in the *Dhammapada-aṭṭhakathā* tells this story:

In Rajagaha, there was a bhikkhu whom became infatuated with a beautiful prostitute called *Sirimā*. When *Sirimā* died from an illness, the Buddha requested the king to keep her body. On the fourth day, *Sirimā*'s body began to rot and was filled with maggots. On that day, the Buddha led his disciples to watch *Sirimā*'s body. He requested the king to announce an offer to anyone to pay 1000 pieces of gold to spend the night with *Sirimā*. Even though the price was lowered until it was free of charge, no one was willing to do that. The Buddha began to expound the Dhamma:

*Passa cittakataṃ bimbaṃ, arukāyaṃ samussitaṃ;
Āturaṃ bahusaṅkappaṃ, yassa natthi dhuvaṃ ṭhiti.*

Look at the beautified image,
a heap of festering wounds, shored up:
Ill, but the object of many resolves,
where there is nothing lasting or sure.

The bhikkhu who was infatuated with the beauty of *Sirimā* understood the truth of life after listening to Buddha's teachings, and he subsequently attained the level of stream-entry (*sotāpanna*).

THE SUPREMACY OF HUMANS

What is the difference between humans and animals? The difference lies in the mind. Animals (*tiracchāna*) have three types of needs: to eat, to sleep and the desire for happiness. However, many people also eat, sleep and desire happiness. This type of person is rather similar to animals. Thus, we as humans should know how to choose between wholesome and unwholesome, to know what is beneficial and what is not, to know what should be done and what should not be done. This is very important!

The Buddha said, the characteristic of humans (*manussa*) is:

Hitāhitaṃ manati jānāīti manusso.

Humans understand what is beneficial and what is not.

Those who wish to learn the profound Dhamma—vipassana meditation, are beyond the normal level of human beings

and are at a higher level than others. Why? Because through practising the true Dhamma, when one understands the truth, wisdom will improve, the consciousness level will be higher, our thoughts and views will change and our defilements will be different. Our minds are affected by diseases, greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance, suspicion, jealousy, stinginess etc. There are more than 1500 types of defilements, which lead to impurities in our minds. When we practise more, we will know how to reduce or even extinguish these defilements.

WHERE IS THE MIND?

Everyone has a mind, but where is the mind? If we possess treasure but don't know where it is kept, it is useless.

Is the brain considered as our mind? When I propagated the Dhamma in western countries, I asked them, where is the mind? They answered that it is in the brain. If we assume that the brain and the mind are machines, then the brain is the hardware, and the mind is the software. The brain is just an organ, it can't catch hold of an object. It is the mind that catches hold of the object and thus the mind and the brain are not the same.

We have six sense doors, the so-called "door" meaning

a channel. For instance, sound is transmitted to us through our ears, so that the mind can produce a reaction towards the sound and thus it is known as a “door”. The six sense doors are eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. Two sense doors always work together, i.e. the mind door together with one of the remaining five sense doors.

The “mind” is the one that knows the object, but where is the mind? The mind arises at the sense door. The eye consciousness arises at the eye door, ear consciousness arises at the ear door, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness and mind consciousness all arise at their respective sense doors. For instance, now everyone can hear my voice as I expound the teachings, but from where do you know its presence? From the ears. If there are no ears, can you hear my voice? No. The mind that arises at the ear door is known as the ear consciousness. The mind (*citta*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*) refer to the same meaning.

The eye door’s object is form (*rūpa*), the ear door’s object is sound, the nose door’s object is fragrance, the tongue door’s object is taste and the body door’s object is touch. What then is the object of the mind door?

The eye door can only see the form of the current moment, it will not be able to catch hold of a form in the past. The same applies to the ear door, nose door, tongue door and body

door. They are only able to catch hold of objects in the current moment. Which sense door can capture the object of the past? It is the mind door. The mind door's object is *dhammas*, which includes the physical phenomena, mental phenomena (mind and mental factors), concepts and *Nibbāna*. Thinking (*saññā*) is one of the mental factors (*cetasika*), which belongs to *dhammas*. The function of thinking is to memorize. The past objects of the six sense doors, such as images, sounds and concepts can be memorized. When we recall the past, this is when the mind consciousness acquires past memories as its object.

THE CAUSES AND CONDITIONS FOR THE MIND TO ARISE

When we note with right mindfulness, we will understand how the mind functions.

Now when I am expounding the Dhamma, my voice reaches the ears and ear consciousness arises. Before you hear any sound, ear consciousness does not arise; before any sound is produced, ear consciousness does not arise either. For ear consciousness to arise, four causes are

required: ear-sensitivity¹ (*sota-pasāda*), sound, space and attention (*manasikāra*). When the four causes are fulfilled, ear consciousness arises and then passes away immediately. When I am quiet, nobody hears anything, so ear consciousness does not arise. When I continue to talk, everyone continues to listen and ear consciousness arises continuously. Thus, no one creates your ear consciousness, it arises out of the prevailing causes and conditions.

The arising of eye consciousness also requires four causes: eye-sensitivity, form, light and attention (*manasikāra*). When these four causes and conditions are fulfilled, eye consciousness arises. When one sees and knows the object, eye consciousness exists in the moment, it arises and then passes away immediately.

When the tongue comes into contact with taste, tongue consciousness arises. We know and are aware if the taste changes from moment to moment; one moment it is spicy, another moment it is sour, the next moment it is sweet. When we note with right mindfulness, we will be able to capture the different tastes with every bite.

When the body touches something, body consciousness

¹ Ear-sensitivity (*sotapasāda*): It is to be found inside the ear-hole, “in the place shaped like a finger-stall and surrounded by fine brown hairs”; it is the sensitive substance that registers sounds and serves as physical base and door for ear-consciousness.

arises. There are three types of objects for the body to touch: whatever is hard or soft is the earth element (*pathavīdhātu*); whatever is cold or hot is the fire element (*tejodhātu*); whatever is moving or stationary is the wind element (*vāyodhātu*). The water element (*āpodhātu*) cannot be felt through touch. Even though we can feel the hot and cold, soft and hard, as well as the movement of water, these are not the characteristics of water. In fact these are the characteristics of the earth, fire and wind elements. The function of the water element is to fuse form (*rūpa*) together to prevent it from dissipating. This is recorded in the *Abhidhamma* and we can experience it for ourselves.

IMPERMANENCE AND SELFLESSNESS

Life is represented by the functioning of the six sense doors. Aside from this, there is nothing else. When we are aware of how the mind and body work, we will not be able to find “I”. Which one is “I”? The mind does its work, it knows and is aware of its object; the eyes do their work, they see; the ears do their work, they hear; the body does its work, it touches. Who is seeing, hearing, feeling and thinking?

The Dhamma expounded by the Buddha is clear. However because we are ignorant, we forget the Dhamma as it is our

habit to forget. We are overwhelmed by delusions, so we do not see the true natural phenomena. What we actually see are concepts. Thus, to eliminate delusions, we must know clearly how the object arises, passes away and changes in every single moment.

The movement of the abdomen, the rising of the abdomen of this current moment, is it the same as the rising of the abdomen in the next moment? Some say, “I observe the rising and falling of the abdomen the whole day, it is all the same.” This is noting without care. It is just like noting that the forest is green and assuming that all the trees are the same green colour.

Each rise and fall of the abdomen is different and the mind that knows is also different. The movement of the abdomen may take a longer or shorter time, sometimes the movement can be slow or fast. We should know clearly and be aware of how it arises, passes away and changes. Among these factors there is no “I”. If we understand this, our wisdom will grow.

Who is listening, seeing and eating? When we understand the workings of our bodies and minds, we can no longer find “I”. Without “I”, where is “my wife”, “my home”, “my car”, “my temple”? This body is not “mine” either, because it has its own causes and effects, arising because of causes and conditions. All problems are solved. Once one fully

understands impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and no-self (*anattā*) every moment, one becomes what we call a sage. I can expound the teachings within the Tripitaka to all of you, but you have to train and experience in order for wisdom to arise. Just by listening to the Dhamma there is no certain understanding and without experience, the teachings will not penetrate your minds.

The Dhamma is profound and difficult to encounter. The Buddha said, this type of wisdom surpasses logic, deduction and thinking (*atakkāvacara*). Only the wise can know (*paṇḍita-vedaniya*), only one with true wisdom will understand. Without the Buddha's teachings, we can contemplate for 100 years the causes and conditions related to the arising of the mind, as well as the workings of the mind, without understanding it. Thus we should pay the most sincere respects to the Buddha who is omniscient (*sabbaññutā-ñāṇa*).

The Dhamma's virtue can be experienced and be seen by us. As we practice vipassana meditation and wisdom arises, this wisdom will guide us along the right path of the Dhamma enabling us to grow.

INTERNAL EXPLORATION

Contrary to scientists who undertake research on external factors, we practice vipassana meditation to explore within, to contemplate our bodies and minds. Buddha was liberated from suffering through internal exploration. This path towards internal exploration is the method taught by the Buddha, thus, we will also explore the truth of life from within.

In retreat, we practice the whole day and note every moment with care. When we wake up in the morning, before we open our eyes and move our body, we are aware that the mind is awake, and we note “awake, awake”. The sound of the wooden board touches the ears, “Dong, dong, dong”, and we note “hearing, hearing”. The mind knows, I need to wake up. We should note ourselves slowly opening our eyes, slowly waking up, getting off the bed, standing up, walking, opening and closing the door, washing our faces etc. We should note and observe all the actions. Without noting, our minds will become distracted. We should note during every moment to allow right mindfulness to be maintained throughout the day, until it is time to go to bed. If we do not note with care, we will not be able to understand how our minds and bodies function. What we learn in vipassana meditation is the truth of natural phenomena. This knowledge cannot be acquired immediately.

The longer you learn, the deeper and richer your experience and understanding will become.

DOES THE MIND TRULY EXIST?

When the mind arises, it passes away right away, it does not truly exist. However, many people mistakenly believe that the mind exists eternally and call it the individual soul or “*jīva-atta*”. Buddha said that it is wrong to believe that the mind constantly exists.

Before the Buddha attained Buddhahood, Hinduism was popular in India. Hinduism believes in the presence of the spirit. But it is not known where the spirit comes from. Thus, through deduction and thinking, Hindus conclude that the eternal mind is given by the supreme soul (*paramātmā*). However, if one wishes to know where the supreme soul comes from, they do not have an answer.

Buddhism does not believe in souls, this is a well-acknowledged fact, but some Buddhists still worship souls or spirits in the temple. Some even believe that when a person passes away, the soul remains in the body for another 8 hours and thus one should not move the body. For those who do not possess firm Buddhist beliefs and those who have not acquired

wisdom from meditation, they are unable to understand that the soul does not exist.

After the Buddha achieved Buddhahood, his first Dhamma discourse was recorded in *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. Within this sutta, he mentioned how to cultivate The Four Noble Truths and The Noble Eightfold Path. The Buddha expounded this sutta on the full moon day of July. After that, he delivered a discourse on *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta*.

The Buddha taught about selflessness, which opposed the teachings of “*jīva-atta*” which prevailed at that time. Many heretics came forward to debate with the Buddha. The Buddha said, there are four types of “self” (*attā*), which the heretics believed in:

- (1) *Sāmi atta*: advocates that the body and mind is under the control of “self”. The “self” is the master of the body and mind.
- (2) *Nivāsī atta*: advocates that the “self” lives within the body. Those believing that the “self” exists in the body, believe that the spirit leaves the body when one passes away.
- (3) *Kāraka atta*: assumes that the “self” is walking, sitting, lying down, seeing, hearing and moving etc. All actions contain the “self”.

(4) *Vedaka atta*: assumes that it is the “self” that experiences pleasant feelings or painful feelings. For instance, when a headache is present, they assume that it is the “self” that is having the headache. Such wrong views can only be extinguished when one attains the level of stream-entry (*sotāpanna*).

The speed at which the mind arises and passes away is very fast. The Buddha said, the mind arises and passes away ten trillion times within a single moment. When the mind arises and passes away continuously at high speed, we mistakenly believe that the mind exists eternally. However the reality is that just like river water flowing at a high speed, every drop of water is brand new. Similarly, a mind that maintains continuous awareness is brand new, which is known in Pali as “*nadī soto viya*” (like the river), meaning the instances of the arising and passing away of our mind occur one after the other, just like the flowing water.

How do our minds arise and pass away at a high speed? During this Dhamma talk you see me and can hear my voice simultaneously, yet you can also feel pain in your body etc. We can sense and know many things within the same moment. This is because there are many minds that arise and pass away continuously at a high speed. Just like energy generated by the spinning of a motor, our body can speak and move and

this is the power of the mind.

The mind arises and passes away continuously. Consequently an eternal, permanent mind does not truly exist. Using the lighter as a metaphor, the lighter is formed by the flint stone, gas and lighter wheel, etc. In order to generate fire, many factors are required. If there is no flint stone or other parts that form the lighter, or if one does not turn the lighter wheel, the fire will not appear. But, is there fire within the lighter? If there is fire within the lighter, when we place the lighter in our pockets, it will start burning. Thus, there is no fire within the lighter. Where is the fire? The fire is generated when causes and conditions are fulfilled.

Now we use a candle as an example. We can see that the fire generated by lighting the candle seems to be truly present. In fact that fire is generated by fulfilling all causes and conditions at every moment. Since the wick, wax, oxygen as well as other causes and conditions are fulfilled, the candle continues to burn. We only see the continuity of the flame, but we do not notice the arising and passing away of the flames at every moment. The candle becomes shorter the longer it burns. So the question is, where does the wax go? It has been burnt, extinguished. When the wax burns out, the fire dies out too.

Similarly, the existence of our lives has its own causes and conditions: food, weather, kamma and mind. When all these are fulfilled, life can continue. However if one of the causes is not fulfilled, our lives end. By understanding the natural phenomena of life, wisdom will improve. Once liberated from defilements, eventually one will become a sage.

Chapter 4

The Arising of Wisdom

PRACTICING AND ACTUALIZING THE TEACHINGS

The learning of the Dhamma is divided into three categories, as follows:

- (1) Theory (*pariyatti*): refers to the learning of doctrines within the *Suttanta*, *Vinaya*, and *Abhidhamma*.
- (2) Practice (*paṭipatti*): refers to the practicing based on the Threefold Learning, i.e. morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*)
- (3) Insight (*paṭivedha*): refers to the realization of the Four Supermundane Paths (*magga*), Four Supermundane Fruitions (*phala*) and *Nibbāna*, also known as the Nine Transcendental Dhamma (*nava lokuttara Dhamma*).

THREE TYPES OF KNOWLEDGE

There are three types of knowledge or wisdom (*paññā*):

- (1) Knowledge based on learning (*suta-mayā paññā*): knowledge acquired through listening to the doctrine.
- (2) Knowledge based on thinking (*cintā-mayā paññā*): after one acquires knowledge through learning, this is the wisdom that one acquires through thinking. When there is

a clearer understanding of the doctrine though thinking, confidence will arise.

(3) Knowledge based on mental development (*bhāvanā-maya paññā*): wisdom acquired through actual cultivation. After listening to doctrines about the natural phenomena of life and teachings that describe how body and mind arise and pass away, one practices vipassana meditation. By training, one gradually increases experience in cultivation. This is how we attain *bhāvanā-maya paññā*, which means the wisdom acquired through actual experience.

KNOWLEDGE BASED ON LEARNING

Buddha taught us eight methods on how to attain knowledge based on learning (*suta-mayā paññā*):

- (1) Listening (*suneyya*): listen conscientiously and clearly.
- (2) Thinking (*cinteyya*): think whether what you heard makes sense.
- (3) Raise questions (*puccheyya*): ask questions when you have doubts.
- (4) Recite (*bhāseyya*): recite the teachings several times and remember them in your mind.
- (5) Analyze (*vicareyya*): use logic to analyze and deduce.

(6) Write it down (*likheyya*): use paper and pen to record the teachings.

(7) Practise (*sikkheyya*): train or cultivate.

(8) Memorize (*dhāreyya*): memorize the teachings.

Our memories are poor due to defilements and impurities in our minds. In the Buddha's era, the people's minds were clearer, as they could remember what they heard or saw. The Buddha's attendant, Venerable *Ānanda* was able to memorize and recite all of Buddha's discourses and teachings. If Venerable *Ānanda* was not present when the Buddha gave a teaching, then the Buddha would repeat the teachings that Venerable *Ānanda* missed. This was an agreement between the Buddha and Venerable *Ānanda*.

The Buddha expounded the Dhamma for 45 years and did not have a fixed attendant for the first 20 years. Subsequently, when the Buddha was 55 years old, he called for a meeting with the bhikkhus and said that he needed a trustworthy attendant. Many senior disciples volunteered to become the Buddha's attendant, but the Buddha turned down their proposals. Eventually, Venerable *Ānanda* — Buddha's cousin was chosen. Venerable *Ānanda* raised eight requests, one of which was: if the Buddha delivered a discourse in his absence, he requested that the Buddha should repeat the discourse to him. The Buddha acceded to Venerable *Ānanda*'s request.

Modern scientists may feel that if one is able to remember well, it is due to a powerful brain. In fact, this is related to the mind, because the memory belongs to mental factors (*cetasika*). If the mind is pure, one's memory will be good. So, did Venerable *Ānanda* achieve Arahantship while he was the Buddha's attendant? In fact, Venerable *Ānanda* only achieved the level of stream-entry (*sotāpanna*) at that time. He achieved Arahantship three months after the Buddha entered *parinibbāna*.

Our minds have many defilements and impurities, which is why we often forget what we read. When the mind is distracted, our mind power will be weak. In the Buddha's era, technology was not advanced. There was no internet, telephone, computers or lights; one could only rely on horses, cows or walking in order to reach one's destination. In an era that lacked technological advancements and had material conditions that were poor, people's minds were not attracted to many things. Consequently their mind power was greater than material power. Nowadays, due to the developments in technology, our material conditions are highly advanced. This results in our minds being attracted to various temptations, creating impure minds and so our mind power is weaker than that of our ancestors.

A DIFFICULT PATH AND AN EASY PATH

In this modern society, have you seen an Arahant before? This question is not easy to answer, why? Only an Arahant knows another Arahant, an ordinary person will not be sure. We have not attained Arahantship and so we do not possess the wisdom to determine who is an Arahant. In the Buddha's era, there was a bhikkhu who attained Arahantship. His disciple helped him to wash his robe and alms bowl, as well as preparing his meals without knowing that his teacher was an Arahant. One day, he asked his teacher, "Teacher, I have not seen an Arahant before, what is an Arahant?" His teacher replied, "Yes, it is very difficult for us to know what an Arahant is. Sometimes we don't even realize that an Arahant is just in front of us."

In the Buddha's era, there were many Arahants, but why are Arahants rarely seen or heard of in the modern era? It is very simple, humans often choose the easy way out to acquire the same benefits.

For instance, before the aeroplane was invented, if one wished to travel from India to Taiwan, one would need to travel by land and by sea. The journey would be long and dangerous and one might lose one's life. An easier way would be to meditate under a big tree, closing one's eyes and training the mind. Meditative concentration can develop supernatural

powers such as celestial vision, celestial hearing, the power of knowing others' minds and the power of unimpeded bodily actions etc. When one can control the mind, one can use the power of unimpeded bodily action to travel from India to Taiwan. Usually one would need to travel for 8 to 9 hours by air, but one can reach this destination in 10 minutes using mind power. In the era when material standards were poor and there were no telecommunications, internet or basic technology, which way would be easier? To meditate under the tree was easier. Thus, many people chose this method at that time. They practiced earnestly and were confidently successful in developing supernatural powers using the power of their minds.

In current society, if we want to go to India, we just need to call the travel agency or to surf online, book an air ticket and the ticket will be sent to you. Then, we go to the airport to board the flight in order to reach our destination. In the modern era of sophisticated material power this is the simple way. No one will choose to sit under the tree to meditate anymore. Accordingly, how can we expect to meet Arahants easily?

Nowadays, there are very few true Buddhists left, let alone Arahants. Most of them just wish to rely on external powers. They pray and worship everywhere they go to fulfill their

worldly desires. True Buddhists rely on themselves to achieve final goal of liberation. The true Dhamma has existed for 5000 years and the Buddha entered *parinibbāna* 2600 years ago. The true Dhamma will vanish after another 2000 years. We are all very lucky to come into contact with the true Dhamma. So, do not waste time, we should all be diligent in our cultivation.

KNOWLEDGE BASED ON MENTAL DEVELOPMENT

Through earnest cultivation (*paṭipatti*), we will attain knowledge based on mental development (*bhāvanā-maya paññā*). “*Bhāvanā*” in Pali means development, increase or growth of a particular object. Through practicing vipassana meditation, our experiences will become richer and deeper with more practice and with longer time invested in practice, our wisdom will increase. The Buddha exhorted his disciples to invest continuous effort (*appamādena sampādetha*), that is to practice the Dhamma with right mindfulness.

During sitting meditation, we should not forget to note the movements of the abdomen. When concentration and right mindfulness are present, we will not forget to note the object. Stream-entrants (*sotāpanna*) and once-returners (*sakadāgāmi*) have not perfected their concentration and mindfulness, but

they have perfected their precepts and will no longer violate the precepts. Thus they are known as “ones who fulfill the precepts” (*sīlesu paripūrakārī*). Non-returners (*Anāgāmī*) and Arahants have perfected their mindfulness and concentration. They are able to note clearly how the body and mind arise and pass away every moment and thus they are known as “ones who fulfill concentration” (*samādhismiṃ paripūrakārī*). Since they can memorise every moment without forgetting, these sages will not be controlled by defilements.

As a result, we must also maintain our observation and memorization. Unless we are asleep, our minds should follow the object. When the mind follows the object, the impermanence of every moment will be seen with clarity. Sometimes, the progress that we anticipate does not appear, but what we do not expect comes. One should understand that when there are causes, there will be effects. If the causes are not present, no matter what we expect, it will not be accomplished. On the contrary, if the causes are present, the effects will be produced as well, as this is the way of natural phenomena. Thus, one should invest effort in creating causes and one should accept whatever effects are produced.

FIVE METHODS TO INCREASE KNOWLEDGE BASED ON MENTAL DEVELOPMENT

How to attain knowledge based on mental development (*bhāvanā-maya paññā*) through earnest cultivation (*paṭipatti*)? The Buddha explained five available methods.

(1) To cultivate on a long term basis (cira-kāla-bhāvanā)

Short term cultivation is not enough, we need to spend 2 years, 3 years, 5 years, 10 years and even a life time on our cultivation. In the context of one-day cultivation, to cultivate on a long term basis (*cira-kāla-bhāvanā*) means letting our minds follow the object, the longer the better. If our minds pay attention to the object for a while and become distracted in the next moment, this mind of ours is powerless. Only when we follow the object for a long time, will our knowing of the object be clearer and deeper.

Even when we study the knowledge and skills of the mundane world, we will not be able to master these within a short period of time. If we can persist with our studies every day, every week, every month, every year, eventually we will be able to master the desired knowledge and skills. This is the meaning of *cira-kāla-bhāvanā*.

It has been 2600 years since the Buddha attained

Buddhahood and the true Dhamma taught by the Buddha still exists in this world. We are not sure to what extent our perfections (*pāramī*) have accumulated. Perhaps we practiced and heard about vipassana meditation in our previous lives and as this is the driving force of our perfections (*pāramī*) thus we harbor intentions to learn it. This driving force will motivate us to search for places that allow us to learn vipassana meditation, so that we will encounter this type of Dhamma in this life time. Within 40 days of intensive meditation, if the perfections (*pāramī*) are fulfilled, one will be able to attain stream-entry (*sotāpanna*) very soon. This is the assurance granted by the Buddha.

(2) To cultivate continuously (nirantara-bhāvanā)

Nirantara-bhāvanā refers to continuous cultivation, when one should observe and note every single moment. This is just like the arcade game of hitting the hamster — one must hit continuously in order to attain victory. Similarly, we should note continuously during cultivation in order to improve.

(3) To cultivate with perfection (anavasesa-bhāvanā)

During the practice of vipassana meditation, one should possess the determination to “attain stream-entry (*sotāpanna*) without retreating”. Even if one dies during meditation

it doesn't matter, one should vow to reach ones goal. To accomplish cultivation with perfection (*anavasesa-bhāvanā*), determination is very important. When some people undergo sitting meditation for one hour and experience pain in the body, they have thoughts of giving up and report to their teachers that they can't make it. The sensations of pain and suffering associated with meditation are as nothing compared with the pain and suffering of illness and death. We just need to stand up, then the pain will vanish. If it is the pain associated with severe illness, even with medical treatment, the illness may not disappear. If one cannot endure the pain during meditation, how does one attain *anavasesa-bhāvanā*? Meditators should be determined in accomplishing their final goal.

Before the start of a meditation session, we pay homage to the Buddha and make our resolve, "No matter what happens, I will not rise within one hour!" This resolve will strengthen our minds. When paying homage to the Buddha, we offer our bodies and minds to the Buddha and make a vow in our minds, "Within this one hour, I want to encounter the true Dhamma". Then, when we begin sitting meditation, once we are in a most comfortable position, we will not move. The body no longer belongs to us, as we have offered it to the Buddha. In this way we will be able to let go of our attachments to our body. If we allow our minds follow the object with reverence within one

hour, our meditation will improve.

If there is no major event that occurs within one hour, it is easy to attain *anavasesa-bhāvanā* during sitting meditation. There was one occasion when I had sitting meditation from 5am to 6am and an earthquake occurred at 5.25am. At that time, if I had stood up, I knew that the yogis would begin to panic and make their escape. Nothing fell to the ground so it was not dangerous. I continued to note the rising and falling of the abdomen, “rising, falling, rising, falling”. The second vibration was greater in magnitude, but the third vibration was minor. At 6am, I heard the sound of the wooden board, as the one-hour meditation was completed. *Anavasesa-bhāvanā* was accomplished. Such resolve will strengthen our minds for future meditations.

Confidence is important! The ones that die during meditation will not be reborn in realms of misery. During meditation, we do not commit unwholesome kamma. If we are tranquil, peaceful and at ease, we will be reborn to realms of bliss. Even if we wish to die during meditation, such a wondrous opportunity is hard to come by. If it does happen, we should weep with joy, because this is the best outcome. Car accidents, air disasters and natural disasters may occur, we may die anywhere. If we can die in peace, why not?

Thus, when we cultivate, we should be determined not to

move within one hour. The same principle applies to intensive meditation. If you register to attend the retreat, you should not leave in advance, or else *anavasesa-bhāvanā* will not be accomplished. We must perfect the initial determination, because it belongs to resolution (*adhiṭṭhāna*), one of the ten perfections (*pāramī*). When the perfections are accomplished, we will attain enlightenment.

(4) To cultivate with reverence (sakkacca-bhāvanā)

During cultivation one should be respectful, not careless or negligent. One should slow down every action and note with care. If we are not respectful or confident, we will not improve, as we do not note with care. Buddha said, a person without confidence is like someone who has lost his hands, he will not be able to grasp anything. Thus, confidence is very important.

After listening to the instructions, if we follow them in cultivation with reverence, we will acquire the benefits immediately. When our mind starts to concentrate, we will be able to see the coming and going, arising and passing away, as well as changes of phenomena. These experiences transcend deduction and thinking. When we possess right mindfulness and concentration, wisdom will arise, and we will experience true natural phenomena.

There are many afflictions in our lives, which are due to afflictive hindrances. For example greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance, jealousy, suspicion, evil views, distraction, drowsiness, delusion etc. All these afflictive hindrances penetrate our minds, hence, our minds become impure. An impure, distracted mind filled with defilements will not know the truth. In our lives, we only have this mind and body — if the mind is gone, the man is dead. If our minds follow the object, only the mind that notes and the object that is being observed exist in the moment. We can examine ourselves, when the mind follows the rising and falling of the abdomen and ask, does the mind have greed, anger, arrogance, jealousy, suspicion? If the mind knows clearly, it is not muddled, consequently delusion and ignorance do not exist. This type of mind, free from defilements, is also known as a pure mind (*cittavisuddhi*). A man with an ignorant mind will not see the truth of life.

If we cultivate continuously and follow the rising and falling of the abdomen for 10 minutes, our minds are pure within those 10 minutes; if we note continuously for half an hour, our minds are pure within that half an hour. When this pure state of mind persists for one hour, we will feel a great sense of satisfaction. Buddha said, “Among all offerings, the worship through practice of the Dhamma (*dhammapūjā*) is

the most supreme”. We pay homage to the Buddha, when we offer the Buddha our one hour’s worth of *anavasesa-bhāvanā*.

Buddha said, the mind that notes continuously and is free from afflictive hindrances is equivalent to the mind of an Arahant. Even though we are not like that throughout our lives, nevertheless when our minds are pure, our minds are no different from the minds of Arahants. When we note, only the object and the mind should be there. For instance, during walking meditation, we note “left step, right step” or “raising, pushing forward, lowering”. When our minds follow the object, the concept of whether the foot is pretty or not no longer exists. Usually when we see beautiful things, greed will arise; when we see ugly things, anger will arise; when we do not know what the truth is, ignorance will arise. When the mind follows the object, greed, anger and ignorance will not arise easily.

(5) To cultivate joyfully (abhirati-bhāvanā)

We do not implement strict supervision or control over you. Each one of you comes for intensive meditation based on confidence, so please do not feel pressurized or distressed. We should be fond of cultivation, learn to let go and not be picky. No matter what we do, the most essential thing is to let our minds follow the meditation object. During cultivation,

by solely relying on external encouragement, one will not improve. The important thing is, we must love cultivation, as when we cultivate joyfully we will improve easily. Once we improve, we will feel satisfied. Once we are satisfied, we will acquire the benefits — a pure mind that is peaceful and relaxed. When one sees the truth of life with clarity, then wisdom will arise.

I hope that everyone will cultivate on a long term basis (*cirakāla-bhāvanā*), cultivate continuously (*nirantara-bhāvanā*), cultivate with perfection (*anavasesa-bhāvanā*), cultivate with reverence (*sakkacca-bhāvanā*) and cultivate joyfully (*abhirati-bhāvanā*). May all of you attain the path (*magga*), the fruition (*phala*) and *Nibbāna*!



Chapter 5

Factors of Enlightenment

PRINCE BODHI'S QUESTION

The perfection (*pāramī*) varies from individual to individual, so it is not easy for us to know when we will be able to attain enlightenment.

In the Buddha's time, there was a Prince Bodhi (*Bodhirājakumāra*). Once he said to the Blessed One:

“Venerable sir, when a bhikkhu finds the *Tathāgata* to discipline him, how long is it until by realizing for himself with direct knowledge, he here and now enters upon and abides in that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which clansmen rightly go forth from the home life into homelessness?”

He might have expected that the Buddha would tell him a guaranteed period within which one would attain enlightenment, maybe one month, maybe two months. However, the Buddha asked him a question in return.

“As to that, prince, I shall ask you a question in return. Answer it as you choose. What do you think, prince? Are you skilled in the art of wielding a goad while riding an elephant?”

“Yes, venerable sir, I am.”

“What do you think, prince? Suppose a man came

here thinking: ‘Prince Bodhi knows the art of wielding a goad while riding an elephant; I shall train in that art under him.’ If he had no confidence, he could not achieve what can be achieved by one who has confidence; if he had much illness, he could not achieve what can be achieved by one who is free from illness; if he was fraudulent and deceitful, he could not achieve what can be achieved by one who is honest and sincere; if he was lazy, he could not achieve what can be achieved by one who is energetic and putting in effort; if he was not wise, he could not achieve what can be achieved by one who is wise. What do you think, prince? Could that man train under you in the art of wielding a goad while riding an elephant?”

“Venerable sir, even if he had one of those deficiencies, he could not train under me, so what of the five?”

“What do you think, prince? Suppose a man came here thinking: ‘Prince Bodhi knows the art of wielding a goad while riding an elephant; I shall train in that art under him.’ If he had confidence, he could achieve what can be achieved by one who has confidence; if he was free from illness, he could

achieve what can be achieved by one who is free from illness; if he was honest and sincere, he could achieve what can be achieved by one who is honest and sincere; if he was energetic and putting in effort, he could achieve what can be achieved by one who is energetic; if he was wise, he could achieve what can be achieved by one who is wise. What do you think, prince? Could that man train under you in the art of wielding a goad while riding an elephant?”

“Venerable sir, even if he had one of those qualities he could train under me, so what of the five?”

“So too, prince, there are these five factors of striving. What five? Here a bhikkhu has confidence and he places his confidence in the *Tathāgata*’s enlightenment thus: ‘That Blessed One is accomplished, fully enlightened, perfect in true knowledge and conduct, sublime, knower of worlds, incomparable leader of persons to be tamed, teacher of devas and humans, enlightened, blessed.’”

“Then he is free from illness and affliction, possessing a good digestion that is neither too cool nor too warm, but medium and able to bear the strain of striving.”

“Then he is honest and sincere, and shows himself

as he actually is to the teacher and his companions in the holy life.”

“Then he is energetic and makes a strong effort in abandoning unwholesome states and in undertaking wholesome states; steadfast, launching his effort with firmness and persevering in cultivating wholesome states.”

“Then he is wise; he possesses wisdom regarding arising and disappearance that is noble and penetrative and leads to the complete destruction of suffering. These are the five factors of striving.”

WHEN WILL ONE BE ENLIGHTENED?

Then the Buddha explained further as follows.

“Prince, when a bhikkhu who possesses these five factors of striving finds a *Tathāgata* to discipline him, he might dwell seven years before realizing for himself with direct knowledge, he here and now enters upon and abides in that supreme goal of the holy life for the sake of which clansmen rightly go forth from the home life into homelessness.”

“Let alone seven years, prince. When a bhikkhu who possesses these five factors of striving finds a *Tathāgata* to discipline him, he might dwell six years... five years... four years... three years... two years... one year... Let alone one year, prince,... he might dwell seven months... six months... five months... four months... three months... two months... one month... half a month... Let alone half a month, prince,... he might dwell seven days and nights... six days and nights... five days and nights... four days and nights... three days and nights... two days and nights... one day and night.”

“Let alone one day and night, prince. When a bhikkhu who possesses these five factors of striving finds a *Tathāgata* to discipline him, then being instructed in the evening, he might arrive at distinction in the morning; being instructed in the morning, he might arrive at distinction in the evening.”

Here, “arrive at distinction” refers to Arahantship, not just the level of a stream-entrant (*sotāpanna*). The conversation between Buddha and Prince Bodhi was recorded in the *Majjhima Nikāya Sutta*: MN 85, *Bodhirājakumāra Sutta*.

¹ Part of the translation is refer to the translation of Bodhirājakumāra Sutta by Bhikkhu

In conclusion, everyone should be confident that with the perfection of these five factors that lead to enlightenment, namely, confidence, health, sincerity, effort and wisdom, one will soon attain enlightenment in due course. We have Buddha's guarantee on this matter.

5.1 Confidence

CONFIDENCE IS THE FOUNDATION OF WHOLESOME KAMMA

It is very important for us to have confidence (*saddhā*) in the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha and ourselves. Dhamma can bring peace and happiness to everyone. Our confidence will be established when we practice and being able to control our distracted minds through training, we can then experience and understand natural phenomena. When confidence is established, other wholesome kamma will arise, because confidence is the foundation of wholesome kamma. Generosity (*dāna*) is the easiest to achieve from all the wholesome kamma. However if one does not possess confidence, one will realize that even the easiest wholesome deeds are difficult to carry out. Slightly more difficult than generosity is upholding the precepts which the laity should maintain. If we do not practice donating there will not be any danger, but if we do not uphold the Five Precepts, we will encounter many obstacles and troubles in our lives.

We will uphold the precepts due to our confidence in

Buddha's teachings. The Buddha taught us not to kill. Regardless of whether this precept was laid down by the Buddha, a man with wisdom will think: if he kills me, will I suffer? We do not wish to be killed, robbed, be deceived by others or to encounter the betrayal of loyalty by our husband or wife. Based on empathy, we understand that one should not violate or harm others, because this will bring suffering to them. We realize that one should not become drunk, because alcohol muddles the mind, and leads us towards committing the offenses of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and false speech. We should not harm sentient beings, as this is the same as not wishing to be hurt ourselves.

The difference between humans and animals lies in the quality of the mind. Humans know how to distinguish between wholesome and unwholesome, what is beneficial and what is not and without such characteristics, humans are no different to animals. Whether the Buddha laid down the precepts is not the main issue, because the Five Precepts constitute a level of basic morality for humans. They should be maintained by all, and not only by Buddhists. If all humans uphold the Five Precepts, our world will be peaceful and happy. Nowadays, there are terrorists that attack schools and the masses. Their attacks leave many innocent people dead or injured and in the process they often sacrifice their own lives. What benefit

is there to gain? Sometimes animals are better than humans, particularly when specially trained to provide help to humans in many aspects.

During the Buddha's era in Savatthi, there were 70 million people in the town that the Buddha lived, 50 million of them were sages that had attained stream-entry (*sotāpanna*), and they would not violate the Five Precepts. Another 20 million were the kind ordinary people. They often listened to the Dhamma, possessed right views and understood right and wrong. Accordingly, they dared not violate the precepts. One would not need to lock the doors at night in such a peaceful and harmonious place, because no one would steal from the others. However, in our current society, there are evil minds everywhere and human minds will become even more depraved in the future.

It is important to be confident in the precepts. Monastics have their own precepts and the laity must respect and protect their own precepts. If we violate the precepts, we will not be at peace or happy during meditation. Without strict observance of the precepts, we will not be able to concentrate and confidence will not arise easily. If we lack confidence, we will not be able to increase our wholesome kamma, so it is vital that we should establish our confidence in order for wholesome kamma to grow.

CONFIDENT IN OUR WHOLESOME KAMMA

We will possess a powerful mind if our confidence is sufficient. To be confident is to believe in our own kamma and to possess right views; bad deeds, as well as good, may rebound upon the doer. When we produce wholesome kamma, our confidence will increase. No one will wish to receive karmic retribution, but why do we need to endure it? Because we can't control our minds. There are three circumstances where unwholesome kamma is created: (1) unwholesome kamma is created when one is careless; (2) unwholesome kamma is created without one's knowledge; (3) unwholesome kamma is created without shamefulness. Our lives may be smooth-sailing at certain times and difficult at other times. This is due to the wholesome kamma and unwholesome kamma created by us in the past. This is the principle of cause and effect.

Some people committed many unwholesome deeds (kamma) in this life time, such as fraud, drug-trafficking etc., but they are wealthy as an immediate result. Does this comply with the fact that "bad deeds, as well as good, may rebound on the doer"? The fruits of kamma do not mature instantly. Kamma is like a seed — the seed planted will not sprout, grow, flower and reach fruition immediately. Time is needed for causes and conditions to mature, thus, it is not that there is no karmic retribution, it is just because the time is not ripe yet.

Of course, if the kamma is heavy, there are times when the fruits of kamma mature instantly, which was what occurred in *Mahāduggata*'s case.

MAHĀDUGGATA'S DONATION

During Kassapa Buddha's era, there was a man who invited the Buddha's monastic order to receive offerings in the city. He announced to all that the families should make offerings to the bhikkhus according to their abilities. For example, some might wish to make offerings to 10, 20 or even 100 bhikkhus etc. It was required that each man record on a leaf the number of bhikkhus that he would be making offerings to.

During that time, there was a very poor man in the city, called *Mahāduggata*, who stood among the crowd. The man saw him and asked, "*Mahāduggata*, I have invited the Buddha's monastic order to receive offerings in the city tomorrow, made by the residents. How many bhikkhus do you wish to make offerings to?"

Mahāduggata replied, "Sir, I do not have the ability to make offerings to the bhikkhus. Only the wealthy can do that. I only have a small amount of coarse rice at home, which is not sufficient even to feed myself, so how on earth will I be

able to make offerings to the bhikkhus?”

The man encouraged him, “My dear *Mahāduggata*, in this city there are many wealthy families that you could work for to earn money. You should think, ‘in the past I did not cultivate merits, thus I am poor in this life’. So why don’t you start cultivating merits now? You are young and strong, why don’t you work to earn money, and then donate according to your ability?”

Due to his persuasion and encouragement, *Mahāduggata* developed a sense of fear. He said, “Please register one bhikkhu on the leaf. I will go to work, but no matter how much I earn, I will make offerings to one bhikkhu!”

The man thought; “Only one bhikkhu, there is no need to register!” Thus, he did not record it.

In order to make offerings to a bhikkhu on the next day, *Mahāduggata* and his wife went to the city to find work. They worked diligently at a wealthy elder’s house and completed all tasks assigned to them by the elder and his wife. They worked with tremendous joy. After *Mahāduggata* chopped the firewood, the elder gave him four *nāḷi*² of rice as his wages. As the elder was very satisfied with his work, he accordingly gave him an extra four *nāḷi* of rice. After *Mahāduggata*’s wife pounded the rice, the elder’s wife gave her a cup of butter,

2 *Nāḷi*: a measure of capacity.

a bowl of milk curds, some spices and one *nāli* of fine rice. Thus, they had nine *nāli* of rice. They exchanged the rice for milk curds, cooking oil and spices in preparation for the offering to the bhikkhu.

The next morning, *Mahāduggata* went happily to the riverside, singing as he collected leaves. He met a fisherman who asked him to help to sell his fish. When he completed this task he was given four salmon fish as his wages.

After making arrangements for the food preparation, *Mahāduggata* went to the man that allocated the donors and said, “Please send a bhikkhu to me!” The man told him, “I am so sorry, I forgot to register the bhikkhu that you wish to make an offering to.”

Mahāduggata was devastated when he heard what the man said. He grabbed the man’s arm and cried, “Sir! Why do you exclude me? Yesterday you encouraged me to donate, thus my wife and I worked the whole day to earn money. In addition, this morning I went to the riverside to collect leaves. I have just returned. Please assign a bhikkhu to me!”

The man replied anxiously, “*Mahāduggata*, please do not resent me! I am very sorry. All bhikkhus have been claimed according to what is recorded on the leaf. I do not have any extra bhikkhus in my household either. At this very moment the king, the prince and the generals are waiting outside the

Buddha's *gandhakuṭi*. When the Buddha comes out, they will receive the alms bowl given by the Buddha and lead him to the palace or their homes. All Buddhas have compassion for the poor, so you can go to the monastery and tell the Buddha, "Blessed One, I am a poor man, please grant me some benefits!" If you have good fortune and virtues, you will receive the Buddha's compassion and he will accept your offerings."

Thus, *Mahāduggata* came to the Buddha's *gandhakuṭi*, he struck his forehead on the door sill and paying homage, he said, "Blessed One, no one in this city is poorer than me, please become my refuge, please grant me some benefits!"

The Buddha opened the door of the *gandhakuṭi* and placed his alms bowl in *Mahāduggata*'s hands. Instantly, *Mahāduggata* seemed to attain the radiance of a universal monarch (*cakkavattī*). The king, the prince and the rest looked at each other in amazement. When the Buddha handed his alms bowl to someone, no one would dare to seize it from them. They said, "*Mahāduggata*, please give us Buddha's alms bowl! We will give you money. You are poor, take the money! Why do you take the alms bowl?"

Mahāduggata said, "I will not give the alms bowl to anybody. I don't want money, I just want to make food offerings to the Buddha."

Mahāduggata led the Buddha to his house. At that time, *Sakka*, the king of devas in the heaven of *Tāvatiṃsa*, transformed himself into a middle-aged man. He was the one who helped to cook the porridge, rice, vegetables and soup etc., and he also helped to prepare the Buddha's seat.

Mahāduggata told the Buddha, "Blessed One, please come in!" *Mahāduggata*'s home was tiny and normally the Buddha would not have been able to enter. However, all Buddhas can enter houses without lowering their heads, as the earth will lower itself or the house will increase its height automatically. This is due to the wholesome kamma produced from generosity of the past. When the Buddha would leave, everything would be restored to its original state. Thus, the Buddha entered *Mahāduggata*'s home walking upright and sat on the seat prepared by *Sakka*. *Sakka* offered the food to the Buddha. He stood at the Buddha's side and served him with reverence. After the meal and a brief Dhamma discourse, the Buddha rose from his seat and prepared to leave. *Sakka* hinted to *Mahāduggata*, so *Mahāduggata* held onto Buddha's alms bowl and followed the Buddha.

Sakka stayed behind and stood at the entrance of *Mahāduggata*'s house. He looked up at the sky. At that moment, the rain of seven treasures fell from the sky, filling all of the vessels available and their entire house. Due to the

lack of space, his wife held the hands of his children and stood outside.

Mahāduggata escorted the Buddha back to the monastery. He saw his children standing outdoors when he returned, so he asked them, “Why are you standing there?” His children replied, “Father, our entire house is filled with the seven treasures, so we have no place to go!”

Mahāduggata thought, “I just donated today, and I received the fruits of kamma immediately.” Later, he asked the king to use 1000 vehicles to transport the treasures to a place of storage and the king conferred the title of a wealthy elder to *Mahāduggata*.

Even though *Mahāduggata*’s wages were small, the intention in his mind to make offerings was great and incomparable with others. Besides that, the things that he offered were acquired through legitimate means; he acquired them as a result of his labour, not through stealing. The person that received his offerings was no ordinary person, it was the Buddha with perfect merits. When all causes are fulfilled, the fruits of kamma will mature instantly.

DEATH AND REBIRTH

Kamma resembles a seed in that when it is planted, it will produce flowers and fruits. Wholesome kamma created now is not without its fruits, it is just that the fruits have not ripened. We may receive the fruits of kamma in this life time, or it may appear during the next life. The current fruits of kamma are due to the causes created from the past. Our fruits of kamma maybe good or not good. Everyone's life will not be smooth-sailing all the time, however no one's life will be filled only with suffering. There are happy moments even for beggars who have to live on the streets. No matter whether our lives are happy or painful, we are attached to them. If we can be without attachments and desire, we have already attained Arahantship and will not be reborn again. Everyone's birth is due to the attachment to a new life.

Meditators will notice the moment we hear when ear consciousness arises, so we know and understand, then the ear consciousness passes away instantly. The mind that passes away is no longer present, because the mind that continues to know, is the arising of another mind. The mind arises and passes away at every moment, like the river water that flows downstream and the burning candle. As the mind and body interact with each other, the mind continues to arise and pass away, until this body no longer possesses the causes and

conditions that result in the arising of the mind. It is then when this life time ends.

Let's take the eye consciousness as an example. When we are healthy, the eyes can see, when causes are fulfilled — eye-sensitivity, form, light, attention (*manasikāra*) — eye consciousness will arise. Before one dies, eye-sensitivity is damaged and the mind that knows form — i.e. eye consciousness will not arise. Thus one will not be able to see anymore. Similarly, before death, the ears gradually lose their hearing, the nose and tongue cease to function and when one touches the body there is no feeling. The sense doors are gradually damaged, leaving only the last sense door — i.e. mind door, which refers to “the mind that thinks”. This means that we can still ‘know’ through our minds. Prior to death, the mind catches hold of three types of objects: kamma, sign of kamma (*kamma-nimitta*) and departing sign (*gati-nimitta*). Kamma refers to the wholesome and unwholesome kamma created in the past. The sign of kamma (*kamma-nimitta*) refers to objects or images related to the wholesome or unwholesome kamma. The departing sign (*gati-nimitta*) refers to some symbols of the place of future rebirth. For instance, those that will be reborn in heaven may see the scenery of heaven etc.

Those who touch the dead body will feel that the body is icy cold after the person has passed away for a period of time. At

this time, people will remember, “We should invite monastics to recite the sutta”. However, when the monastics recite the sutta, they are not sure whether the deceased can hear them. People only remember monastics during the most difficult times. When they are healthy, they forget about monastics.

The kamma created prior to death can be easily recalled, such as generosity and listening to the sutta, as during that time one can still see, hear and know. Gradually, as the five sense doors become inoperative, the mind door may catch hold of recently created kamma as its object, because it still remembers. If the object calms the mind, a departing sign (*gati-nimitta*), such as the palace in heaven or heavenly beings coming to receive one, may be seen. The mind arises and passes away continuously and when the mind, prior to death, is attached to the departing sign (*gati-nimitta*), the moment this mind passes away, is when this life time ends. What follows immediately is the arising of the first mind in the next life time. There is no space in between. When the mind arises in another place, it is the next life. If one is reborn in heaven, one will become a heavenly being immediately, with all sense doors fulfilled. One will look 16 or 17 years old and will not need to undergo 10 months of pregnancy, infancy and childhood.

RECALLING WHOLESOME KAMMA BEFORE DEATH

Perhaps you might think that everyone wants to be born in heaven. Who would want to be born in hell? But a man who commits evil deeds will not be born in the realms of bliss. When the five sense doors fail to function, the mind door will catch hold of past objects. If one has not created wholesome kamma in the past, the object caught hold of by the mind will not be good. For instance, memories of killing or being ridiculed or scolded by others may arise. When these objects appear, one will see darkness and feel frightened, saying to those at the bedside, “I am afraid, I see a lot of bad things!” People like this will not be reborn in the realms of bliss.

If we meet people that encounter a similar situation, we must tell them, “You need to think about how you practiced generosity in your life, about how you practiced meditation in the meditation centre before. Remember that you also listened to the Dhamma expounded by the monastics and your mind was tranquil and joyful at that time. Remember these wholesome deeds.” We want him to recall the wholesome kamma that he created, this is very important! When he recalls his wholesome kamma, his mind will change and the dark and fearful images will be gone with the wind. The mind

is unique, it changes very fast. Now, let us look at the story of Venerable *Soṇa*'s father.

Venerable *Soṇa*'s father used to be a hunter and when he grew old, he sought renunciation at Venerable *Soṇa*'s monastery. One day, when he was sick and lying in bed, he saw a frightening image: many huge dogs ran down from mountain and surrounded him, as if they wanted to attack him. He was extremely frightened. When Venerable *Soṇa* heard what his father had seen, he knew that this vision was the departing sign (*gati-nimitta*) of hell. Thus, Venerable *Soṇa* asked the samanera to bring fresh flowers, which they sprinkled on the platform of the stupa and Bodhi tree as a form of offering. Then, he brought his father to the stupa's platform and told him these were the offerings made on his behalf, so that his father could pay homage to the Buddha piously and feelings of joyfulness and pure confidence would arise in his mind. At that time, the image of the savage dogs was gone and was replaced by the image of heaven. His father saw the gardens of heaven, the palace and heavenly beings. This meant that the wholesome kamma created prior to his father's death had changed his departing sign (*gati-nimitta*), enabling him to be reborn in heaven.

We have been upholding the Eight Precepts and practicing meditation diligently. The merits of upholding precepts are

greater than generosity; the merits of cultivating concentration are greater than upholding the precepts; the merits of cultivating wisdom are greater than the cultivation of concentration. Thus, we have created the best wholesome kamma in this life. If we can think about this wholesome kamma prior to death, any inauspicious images will disappear and we will be reborn in the realms of bliss, due to attachments to this wholesome kamma. If we are unable to recall the wholesome kamma and become attached to horrifying images, we may be born in the realms of misery. Everyone will have attachments and greed, as we have not been liberated. Consequently we must be reborn.

Once one attains Arahantship, one extinguishes desire and attachment and as a result, one will no longer be reborn. Without rebirth, there will not be aging, death, sorrow, sadness, suffering, anxiety or vexations. An Arahant is free from the sufferings of birth, aging, illness and death.

If there is afflictive hindrance as the cause, one will need to continue on to a new life for the fruits of kamma to ripen. If there is no afflictive hindrance, once this life time ends, there will not be another life time. Kamma is like a seed, it needs sunshine, soil and water in order to produce flowers and fruits. If one of the causes and conditions is not fulfilled, the seed will not sprout.

LET THE BOAT OF WHOLESOME KAMMA CARRY THE ROCK OF UNWHOLESOME KAMMA

No matter whether it may be wholesome or unwholesome kamma, if the strength of the kamma is powerful, the fruits will mature instantly. This applies to the case of *Mahāduggata*. The worst unwholesome kamma, such as the Five Heinous Crimes — killing one's father, killing one's mother, killing an Arahant, shedding the Buddha's blood and causing division amongst the harmony of the Sangha — these five types of unwholesome kamma will immediately result in bad karmic retribution. One will descend to hell in the next life.

We all create wholesome kamma, as well as unwholesome kamma. In our lives, which type of kamma is created more by us? We can examine this ourselves. Usually, those with wholesome kamma will enjoy a smooth and comfortable life; those with unwholesome kamma will face more setbacks and obstacles. How do we prevent the seeds of unwholesome kamma from sprouting? For instance, imagine that the unwholesome kamma resembles a rock, whereas the wholesome kamma resembles a boat. If you throw the rock into the ocean it will sink, but if you place it on a boat, it will be carried by the boat. Of course, if the weight of the rock exceeds the weight which the boat can bear, it too will

sink. Thus, if our wholesome kamma is too weak and the unwholesome kamma is too strong, the boat of wholesome kamma will not be able to carry the rock of unwholesome kamma and we will still be reborn in the realms of misery. On the contrary, if the boat of wholesome kamma is able to bear the weight of the rock of unwholesome kamma, we will be able to continue sailing ahead, until we reach the opposite shore of enlightenment.

In our lives, it is impossible for us not to commit unwholesome kamma, because our afflictive hindrances have not been extinguished and we have not been liberated. Sometimes we commit unwholesome kamma due to carelessness or without realizing that we have done so. There are also times when we commit it without shamefulness, when our minds are not pure, resulting in defilements and unwholesome kamma. During meditation, if we recall the unwholesome kamma that we created, we may worry and have regrets which will hinder our cultivation. If such a situation arises in our mind, we should continue to note and it will disappear. We should imagine unwholesome kamma as a rock. We know that meditation creates the greatest wholesome kamma which we can imagine as a large boat that we are joyfully sitting in. Because everything is impermanent, the unwholesome kamma we have created has become the past,

and one should let it go.

Of course, this does not mean that we are not afraid of committing unwholesome kamma. We should avoid and be fearful of unwholesome kamma, because we believe that unwholesome kamma will result in bad karmic retribution. We do not want bad karmic retribution. What should we do with our unwholesome kamma of the past? We should create more wholesome kamma. As we have been taught, the more wholesome kamma there is, the bigger the boat that can carry the rocks of our unwholesome kamma while sailing along. We will thus be able to continue with our cultivation, until we achieve enlightenment and our final goal. When we attain Arahantship, the unwholesome kamma withers away. If a man in the ocean does not know where the opposite shore is, he will need a good boat for sailing in order to find the opposite shore. He will be in danger if the boat is not seaworthy, or if the boat hits the reefs or should the rocks on the boat increase.

The Buddha shows us the path that leads us to the opposite shore through the Noble Eightfold Path and Thirty-seven Factors of Enlightenment. There is no doubt that we will reach the opposite shore by following His instructions. When we reach the opposite shore safely, there is no water on the shore and so the rocks will not cause our boat to sink. When an Arahant attains *Nibbāna*, all future kamma that matures in

future lives will become ineffective kamma (*ahosi kamma*). It will no longer produce any effect, nor does it result in karmic retribution and because Arahants do not have afflictive hindrances, they will not be reborn. Without afflictive hindrances generating causes and conditions, all kamma that matures in future lives will not bring karmic retribution.

The most obvious example is *Angulimāla*, who during Buddha's era, killed thousand of people and committed the greatest unwholesome kamma. However, due to Buddha's influence, *Angulimāla* attained Arahantship. He extinguished greed, anger and ignorance and would not be reborn in the four realms of misery. He was free from the sufferings of birth, aging, illness and death and would not undergo rebirth again.

We must have confidence. Confidence is very important! The Buddha guided us to this path, so we should follow him with confidence, knowing that one day we will reach our destination. We should practice more and practice continuously, remembering that the bigger the boat, the safer it is, so that it can withstand strong wind and waves. When our minds are settled, our confidence will be greater and it will not be easy for us to violate even the most minor precepts.

FOUR TYPES OF CONFIDENCE

Confidence can be defined as belonging to four different types:

(1) Confidence through Belief (pasāda-saddhā)

Confidence through belief (*pasāda-saddhā*) belongs to a basic form of confidence. There is the Buddhist's confidence in Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, confidence towards causes, effects and karmic retributions as well as confidence in ourselves. All these are confidence through belief. Confidence through belief also exists in other religions, for instance, confidence in the creator or the doctrine. However, as basic confidence can arise easily, it can also decline with ease. Basic confidence is insufficient in helping us to face adversity. For example, suppose someone wants to go to the monastery to make offerings to the monastics, but he encounters a car accident on the way. He may think, "This is not a good sign. I have encountered an accident on my way to the monastery, so I am not going anymore." Thus, he has lost his confidence in making offerings. If he strongly believes that making offerings is a wholesome kamma and that one will attain good karmic fruits by this good deed, he will insist on going to the monastery.

Anāthapiṇḍika was a wealthy elder during Buddha's era who

possessed strong confidence in the Triple Gem and generosity. The Jeta Grove in Savatthi was offered by *Anāthapiṇḍika* and he would invite two thousand bhikkhus to receive offerings in his house every day. There was a period when *Anāthapiṇḍika* became poor as a result of unwholesome kamma created by himself and as a result the food that he offered became much simpler than before. Buddha asked him, “*Anāthapiṇḍika*, why do you feel unhappy?” *Anāthapiṇḍika* answered, “World Honoured One, I am unhappy not because I lost my wealth, I am unhappy because I am unable to provide the best food to the monastic order”. This was *Anāthapiṇḍika*’s confidence in charity. He could afford to let go of his wealth, but he was concerned that he couldn’t provide the best for the monastics. The Buddha expounded on the concept of impermanence in this world, saying that wealth was not real. You might lose what you possess and you might regain what you had lost. *Anāthapiṇḍika* felt a sense of joy after listening to the Dhamma. He made offerings and transferred his merits. The devas, overhearing *Anāthapiṇḍika*’s aspirations, helped him. Thus, whatever property that had been lent to others was returned, *Anāthapiṇḍika*’s business improved and he became wealthy again. This was the result of cause and effect. *Anāthapiṇḍika* was a stream-entrant (*sotāpanna*), so his confidence no longer belonged to confidence through belief (*pasāda-saddhā*), but was the confidence of attainment (*adhigama-saddhā*).

(2) Confidence that is Unshakable (okappanā-saddhā)

Confidence that is unshakable (*okappanā-saddhā*) refers to unwavering confidence, a firm confidence that has been infused into our lives. Buddhists with strong conviction in the religion will rather forgo their lives than abandon the Triple Gem. This is a type of unwavering confidence. If meditators possess confidence that is unshakable, they will be able to overcome most hindrances. By contemplating on impermanence, they know that everything will change. When one is in pain, one just needs to be patient and note continuously. When one overcomes pain, one will be happy and satisfied. When our experience of overcoming obstacles increases, we will gain more confidence and eventually we will attain enlightenment.

(3) Confidence through Attainment (adhigama-saddhā)

Confidence through attainment (*adhigama-saddhā*) is the confidence of a sage. The confidence level of an awakened one is different from the confidence level of an ordinary person, as the type of confidence involved is above the level of confidence that is unshakable (*okappanā-saddhā*). A sage has seen the true Dhamma and has possessed personal experience of the Dhamma and *Nibbāna*. This type of confidence through attainment persists through many life times. A person that

possesses confidence through attainment will no longer violate the precepts, he will possess confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, causes, effects and karmic retributions. The confidence towards kamma refers to absolute confidence in causes, effects and karmic retributions and accordingly one would not dare to commit evil deeds. An ordinary person does not have sufficient confidence in causes, effects and karmic retributions, thus he may commit evil deeds because he feels that this does not matter at all. A person that possesses confidence through attainment is absolutely sure of what can and cannot be done.

If a stream-entrant (*sotāpanna*) continues with his cultivation, he will achieve the levels of once-returner (*sakadāgāmī*), non-returner (*anāgāmī*), followed by Arahantship, since the door leading to the path of enlightenment is wide open without obstacles. No matter whether a stream-entrant (*sotāpanna*), once-returner (*sakadāgāmī*), non-returner (*anāgāmī*) or Arahant, the objects that they contemplate are the natural phenomena of their minds and bodies, but their level of understanding will be different. If we tell young children, “This body is form (*rūpa*), but that which knows is the mind (*nāma*)”, the children will understand the difference between body and mind. Some samaneras are only 9 or 10 years old, when taught to note the movements of the abdomen during

meditation. They will experience for themselves that the body is *rūpa* and the mind is *nāma* through actual cultivation. Meditators that cultivate earnestly will also realize this. The difference lies in those that cultivate for 1 year, 2 years, 3 years — their levels of understanding will be different.

The commentary has such a metaphor: Among a heap of rubbish there was a precious ruby, which a chicken pecked on while searching for food. It threw the ruby away angrily using its claws because it was very hard and couldn't be consumed. This ruby rolled to the roadside and was picked up by a young child who thought it was a marble and played with it. A man that knew the value of precious stones passed by and knowing that this was a ruby, he bought it from the child for a price of 100 dollars. The child happily sold the ruby to him. The man took the ruby to the goldsmith and sold the ruby for tens of thousands of dollars. From the perspectives of the chicken, the child and the man that knew precious stones, all of them acquired the ruby. However, due to their different understanding about the value of the ruby, the level of benefits reaped by each of them was totally different.

Now, we note the rising and falling of our abdomen and we note the Five Aggregates of this body and mind. This object is similar to the object noted by a stream-entrant (*sotāpanna*), just like the ruby. However, our level of understanding about

the Five Aggregates is different from that of the stream-entrant. A meditator attains stream-entry through continuous noting of his own body and mind. He does not attain stream-entry through noting someone else's body and mind. Similarly, a stream-entrant (*sotāpanna*) continues to note his own body and mind and attains the succeeding levels of once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*), non-returner (*anāgāmi*), followed by Arahantship. Again, his object remains the same, he does not note another's body and mind. The object is the same, but the level recognized by wisdom is different, as are the components of defilements. An ordinary person has many defilements, the defilements of sages are few, whereas Arahants are completely free from defilements.

The Buddha had to endure stomachaches, headaches and other physical sufferings, because he had the Five Aggregates. The Five Aggregates are form, sensation, perception, mental formation and consciousness; form refers to *rūpa* or our body; sensation, perception, mental formation and consciousness are *nāma*. *Nāma* includes the mind and mental factors (*cetasika*). The mind and mental factors arise and pass away together, as they follow the same object. For instance, if the mind follows *rūpa* as its object, the mental factors will also follow *rūpa* as their object; if the mind follows sound as its object, mental factors will also follow the sound as their object.

Along with the improvements in meditation and development of wisdom, we will gain greater insight into the truth of our lives. We will be clearly aware that “I” does not exist, only the Five Aggregates function in our lives. There are eight types of sages, also known as “the four types when taken as pairs, the eight when taken as individual types (*cattāri purisayugāni aṭṭha purisapuggalā*)³”, their confidence is exactly the same and will not decline.

(4) Confidence of Bodhisattas (*agamana-saddhā*)

Confidence of Bodhisattas (*agamana-saddhā*) is the faith of Bodhisattas. The Bodhisatta mentioned here does not refer to ordinary individuals praised by us, for instance, “living Bodhisatta” or “old Bodhisatta” etc. The real Bodhisatta is someone who has attained the bestowal of predictions by the Buddha, following encounters over at least four incalculable eons (*asaṅkheyya-kappa*) and 100 thousand major *kappa* before achieving Buddhahood. Confidence of Bodhisattas is the confidence developed when the Bodhisatta is nurturing his perfections (*pāramī*). This type of confidence cannot be simply achieved by us. The Buddha entered *parinibbāna*

3 *Cattāri purisayugāni aṭṭha purisapuggalā*: the Ariyan Sangha consists of stream-entrants and those practicing to realize the fruit of stream-entry; once-returners and those practicing to realize the fruit of once-returning; non-returners and those practicing to realize the fruit of non-returning; Arahants and those practicing for Arahantship.

more than 2600 years ago. In this time we can't meet a living Buddha, so no one can obtain the bestowal of predictions by the Buddha in order to become a Bodhisatta. Even though we may make an inner vow to become a Buddha, this belongs to our own confidence and we cannot be considered a Bodhisatta. Confidence of Bodhisattas is acquired through obtaining the bestowal of predictions from the Buddha.

From these four types of confidence, we can achieve the first three. Before attaining confidence through attainment (*adhigama-saddhā*), we must have confidence that is unshakable (*okappanā-saddhā*), as it will lead to the achievement of confidence through attainment (*adhigama-saddhā*). Just as is mentioned in *Bodhirājakumāra Sutta*, when we have perfected the five conditions of confidence, health, sincerity, effort and wisdom, we will soon attain enlightenment. This is the assurance granted by the Buddha.

5.2 Health

A healthy body is one of the factors of enlightenment. Even if a person possess confidence, but is lying in hospital, it is not easy for him to continue with his cultivation and thus health is very important. We participate in intensive meditation, even though we might have some minor ailments, but we are able to endure them. If you are seriously ill to the point where you are bedridden and comatose, it is not possible to learn meditation.

HOW AN ILLNESS EVOLVES

*Tayo rogā pure āsum, icchā anasanaṃ jarā;
Pasūnañca samārambhā Aṭṭhānavutimāgamuṃ*

~*Suttani 313*

There were formerly three diseases: desire, hunger and decay, but from the slaying of cattle there came ninety-eight.

During the early formation of the world, there were only three types of illnesses in human beings; overeating (*icchā*, which means desire), hunger (*anasana*) and aging (*jarā*). Hunger is

an illness because one will die from hunger if one does not consume medication, food being the medication used for the treatment of hunger. Overeating that results in discomfort is also a form of illness. Lastly, no one is able to avoid aging, which is an illness as well.

There are 98 types of illnesses in the modern era. The 98 types of illnesses can be divided into three main categories: illnesses related to the blood, illnesses related to the phlegm and illnesses related to the wind element (*vāyodhātu*). Our body is divided into 32 parts⁴ and each type of illness is divided into 32, making a total of 96 types of illnesses related to the blood, phlegm and wind element. Another two illnesses are related to the mind and mental factors, totaling 98 illnesses.

When humans began to consume meat, the three basic types of illnesses gradually evolved to form 98 illnesses. Thus, vegetarians are healthier than meat eaters, this being recorded in the suttas.

⁴ The 32 Parts: In this body there are the following: hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, muscle, tendons, bones, bone marrow, spleen, heart, liver, membranes, kidneys, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, gorge, feces, gall, phlegm, lymph, blood, sweat, fat, tears, oil, saliva, mucus, oil in the joints, brain.

ABOUT VEGETARIANISM

The Buddha did not lay down the rules for one to become a vegetarian, but the Buddha did expound on the benefits of being a vegetarian.

In the Buddha's era, most monastics went alms-begging. If a donor is confident in making offerings but the bhikkhus reject their food offerings or only accept vegetarian food, the donors will feel it is too difficult to support the bhikkhus. Thus, the Buddha taught his disciples to accept all food offered to them, except for food that was prohibited by the code of monastic discipline (*Vinaya*).

In the *Vinaya*, the Buddha allows monastics to consume three types of pure fish and meat, i.e. unseen (*adiṭṭha*), unheard (*asutam*) and unsuspected (*aparisaṅkitam*). “Unseen” means the bhikkhu does not see that the meat offered by the donor comes from the killing of animals, fish or prawns specifically to serve the purpose of making offerings; “Unheard” means the bhikkhu does not hear that the meat offered by the donor comes from the killing of animals, fish or prawns specifically to serve the purpose of making offerings; “Unsuspected” means that the bhikkhu knows that the meat offered is not seen, not heard and not suspected to come from the killing of animals, fish or prawns specifically to serve the purpose of making offerings.

In Myanmar, Thailand and some other countries, the tradition of alms-begging is still practiced. This is a very good tradition, despite the fact that some people do not understand the underlying motivation and feel that is similar to beggars begging for food. This is not true, the monastics are not beggars who beg. The fruit of generosity is to receive wealth and many poor people do not have the ability to make offerings. They are ashamed of offering only a teaspoonful of rice and vegetables. However, if the monastics beg for alms in front of people's homes and each family offers one teaspoonful of food, this will not impose any burden on the donor, yet it will confer benefits on them. Accordingly, many people are grateful to the monastics who give them a chance to accumulate merits.

Buddha did not request the monastics to become vegetarians and as mentioned above, the monastics ate whatever that was offered to them, the exception being, of course, if it was suspected that the food was provided by killing and violating the precepts. Then, it couldn't be consumed. If one's body is not adjusted to the consumption of meat, that is a private matter, which has nothing to do with religion or precepts. I am a vegetarian because my body is not adjusted to meat consumption. If I eat meat, I develop skin allergies. This does not mean that I have to consume vegetables no matter what.

If there is only meat available and I do not have any other options, it does not matter if I consume meat once or twice.

Our health has an important connection with food. Meat consumption can induce illnesses easily, so for us to be healthy, becoming a vegetarian is the best option. When we are healthy, we as meditators will be able to perfect the second factor for enlightenment — health.

HEALTH AND MEDITATION

To practice meditation, how healthy should one be? So long as one can sleep well and eat well, it is sufficient. If one does not eat well, one will be hungry; if one does not sleep well, one will be drowsy; both these factors will lead to poor cultivation. Thus, one should sleep well, eat well in order to cultivate well.

Whether the food is tasty or not is not important, the food should be suitable for you and be consumed in an appropriate quantity. No matter how good the food is, we can only taste it when it touches our tongues. After it travels beyond our esophagus, we cannot taste it anymore. Unsuitable food will cause gastric problems, so meditators should be careful in their choice of food, by consuming only food that is suitable

for their bodies. Besides that, ensuring a proper amount is important, as either eating insufficient food or overeating will affect meditation. Low consumption will lead to hunger and excessive consumption results in drowsiness. It is essential to consume the right amount, by “exerting control when one is eating”. This is why it is so important to maintain right mindfulness during meals.

During meditation, if one develops a cold and starts to cough, one will suffer and even disturb others. Therefore, our health is important, as if we are unhealthy, it is not easy for us to improve our meditation.

5.3 Sincerity

Religion is one's faith and reverence towards the deities, often involving compliance in beliefs and rites. Usually, people view the Buddhist community as a religion. Buddhism is known as one of the three major religions of the world, together with Christianity and Islam. However, true Buddhists will understand that the Buddha's teachings do not belong to any religion or faith, because his teachings do not include faith and reverence towards the deities, nor are there ceremonies or prayers. We pay homage to the Buddha as a form of respect and as a way to express our gratitude, because Buddha's teachings guide us towards liberation from suffering. The benefits of the Dhamma cannot be obtained through religious ceremony. Instead, the path guided by the Buddha requires us to train and to practice.

The Buddha is just like a famous physician in that he treats us according to the illnesses we have. If we are confident in the physician, even though we pay homage to his portrait and recite the prescription every day, but we do not consume the required medication, our illness will not be cured. Additionally if we do not follow the suggested dosage for the medication and only take it whenever we remember to do so, it also won't work for us. Ironically then, if one does not derive benefit

from the medicine, one blames the physician and medication without reflecting on how we did not follow the physician's instructions. This is not right. Similarly, the Dhamma is good for us, but if we do not follow it and practice it correctly, how can we expect to acquire benefits from it?

CULTIVATE WITH SINCERITY

When one is taught the method of practicing vipassana meditation, one should practice sincerely according to the given method. This is very important! If one knows the method yet only practices part of it, this shows a lack of sincerity. Sometimes when we learn different methods of meditation from various places, but we do not achieve depth in our cultivation, it shows that we have not achieved *anavasesa-bhāvanā*, this being cultivation with perfection. Without *anavasesa-bhāvanā*, unwholesome kamma will result, as one will draw criticism to oneself.

We must know the natural phenomena of life. So long as we are alive and our minds and bodies are functioning, we can learn from them through meditation. When we read, we can deduce, think and analyze, but when we meditate, we should let go of our thinking. We should let our minds observe the object and note the rising and falling of the abdomen, as well

as our feelings etc. When the number of times that we observe the object is too few, we will often forget; but if we note the object every day and every moment, we will gradually become more familiar with the practice. There is no need to think, we just need to note the current experience.

The direct experience of the current moment surpasses any form of discussion and analysis. Just like one who has not tasted chili before, even though he may imagine how spicy the chili is, he may do so for 100 years without knowing the actual truth. However, he just needs to take one bite and he will know the taste of chili immediately. Meditation is the same. We don't have to recall past experiences, only the experience of the current moment is real. Exactly as one experiences the spiciness of the chili, one cannot be absolutely sure of the things that one "thinks" of.

TO REPORT WITH HONESTY

Meditation must be sincere and the same applies during the interview. Meditators do not need to report what they have learnt from books, or what was heard or talk about the experience of others. They just need to talk about their feelings and experiences related to the object noted by themselves. The meditation teacher, having taught tens of thousands of

meditators before, can clearly distinguish whether a meditator is reporting his own experience or quoting information read in books.

The meditation instructions given, can be implemented with ease without thinking or imagining. It is necessary only to practice directly, breathe naturally, move simply and note. Place your mind accurately on the object; this is known as the “initial application” (*vitakka*). When the mind continuously focuses on the object, this is known as “sustained application” (*vicāra*). *Vitakka* and *vicāra* are the factors of the first absorption (*jhāna*). When our minds continuously focus on an object for a period of time, we should pay attention that noting the object at short intervals should not be done, because continuity is the emphasis here. When the mind can be controlled without distractions or thinking, our minds will be satisfied and “zest” (*pīti*) and “happiness” (*sukha*) will arise. Letting go of the feelings of zest and happiness, we continue to note. The mind will now be focused; this is known as “one-pointedness” (*ekaggatā*). All these are the factors of the first absorption (*jhāna*). When the mind is within the state of one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*), we will truly understand the object noted by us and we will no longer be limited by concepts. We can understand that our bodies are formed from the Four Elements, i.e. earth, water, fire and wind. The movement of

the body is the wind element (*vāyodhātu*), which is known as the ultimate (*paramattha*) Dhamma. This is the real object of vipassana meditation.

If the meditator continues to let his mind follow the object and notes how body and mind function, they will experience and understand the various characteristics of ultimate (*paramattha*) Dhamma; for instance, the fire element's characteristic is hot and cold; the wind element's characteristic is movement; the earth element's characteristic is softness and hardness. Descriptions in books are not important, what is important is the meditator's personal experience.

The object changes at every single moment, and one must follow it. When the abdomen expands, our minds will know that it is expanding; when the abdomen contracts, our minds will know that it is contracting. The mind is the one that knows the object, the mind arises and passes away instantly, not truly existing. The mind arises at the six sense objects, i.e. eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness and mind consciousness. When the mind arises, it will know. When we acquire fundamental knowledge, we will understand our experience. Then we will also understand what are mind (*nāma*) and form (*rūpa*) as well as their characteristics of suffering (*dukkha*), impermanence (*anicca*) and selflessness (*anattā*). In this way,

we will be able to verify whether what is written in books is indeed true. It is only after we attain understanding that wisdom will arise.

The Buddha did not want us to believe what he said without doubt, because he wanted us to believe in our own experiences and in what we saw. When the five conditions of enlightenment are fulfilled, we will be enlightened. Thus, a sincere mind is very important. We should not pretend or assume that we are smart as this will only become a hindrance, which will waste our time.

When the mind follows the object tens of thousands of times, once we are sure, doubt will no longer arise. If during the interview, you report to the meditation master, “I experience this, is this correct?” This shows that you are not sure. There is no need to ask others because our experience is not the experience of others. When we note our own object, we should be sure of it. The mind is aware of the object and if the mind does not know the object, then there is a problem with this mind. What is the problem? The mind has been obscured by ignorance or drowsiness and consequently it will know nothing.

A person who practices vipassana meditation attains understanding through personal experience, so there is no need to ask others. But, sometimes our understanding may be

wrong, so it is very important to refer to the knowledge that we have acquired from listening to the Dhamma. Sometimes, what we have experienced is actually a creation of our thinking or minds. When meditators report such situations, the meditation master will instruct you to ignore this object. Wrong understanding will lead to hindrances in meditation.

There is a classical allusion about this in the sutta. There were two men who competed in growing sugarcane. They wanted to see whose sugarcane was sweeter. One of them thought that if the sugarcane juice was mixed with water it would not be sweet. Accordingly, he refused to water the sugarcane plants, which withered away as a result. Thus, our experience may apply to certain situations only, but not to all situations. Thus, we should not feel that “It must be like that”. In fact, nothing must be like that. In every single moment, there will be different situations and different experiences. Yesterday we were peaceful yet today we are distracted. Why? We must understand that yesterday had its own causes and effects. The same principle applies today, so it is impossible for every day to be the same. One should note the current moment with sincerity.

OUR DUTY IS TO NOTE

Our duty is to note, which means to place our minds on the object and observe. When we note, we must have an object. If we note the “rising” and “falling” of our abdomens, yet we do not know where our minds are, concentration will not arise. The same applies to walking meditation; if we don’t note with care, one may note the “right step” when in fact it is the “left step” that is raised and vice versa. It is at this moment that the mind is distracted, it is not observing. When the mind is distracted, it will not possess clear understanding. This is far from wisdom, without wisdom, one will not see *Nibbāna*.

Our duty is to note; the duty of the mind is to know; the duty of wisdom is to understand the truth. We just need to perform our duties well, knowing that the mind will perform its duty and wisdom will perform its duty too, so we do not need to worry.

If we keep asking, “Why is this so? Why is that so?” and we neglect our duty, we will not improve. Our duty is to follow the object and to note, to pay attention and to sustain right mindfulness. If right mindfulness is present, the object will be clear; if right mindfulness is absent, the object will not be clear.

We only have one mind and it has two sides — one black,

the other white. Just like a soccer tournament, there are 11 team members in each team, one team being black, and the other team white. They attack each other and whoever scores a goal will achieve victory. Our right mindfulness, confidence, concentration, wisdom, compassion, joy etc. belong to the white team; drowsiness, greed, anger, ignorance, distraction, suspicion, arrogance, jealousy etc belong to the black team. There is only one ball, just as there is only one mind. When our attention, effort and right mindfulness carry the ball and score a goal, we win. But, if we are intercepted halfway by drowsiness, we will become muddled and allow the black team to gain victory, which will be a waste of our time. In order to be persistent, we must put in effort, right mindfulness and concentration and then wisdom will perform its duty.

When wholesome kamma continues to grow, our minds will be purified. A pure mind will not be polluted by unwholesome kamma and in this way our minds will improve. A pure mind will be able to note clearly and understand how an object comes, goes and changes every single moment. What we notice about impermanence is just a concept. For instance, the major changes that we encounter from childhood up to today, demonstrates the fact that life at every single moment is different. The truth about the impermanence of life can only be understood and experienced through practicing vipassana meditation.

Every day we recite “May the merits of upholding the precepts become the favorable condition that helps us to attain *Nibbāna*”, but if we just recite orally without practicing meditation, *Nibbāna* will not come. One should make vows, practice, achieve understanding and improve, so that *Nibbāna* will be closer to us.

5.4 Effort

HOW TO IMPROVE OUR EFFORT

Without effort, we do not feel like learning anything. A lazy person is often bored and does not show interest in the world around him, thus he will not improve. We should develop interest in noting, for as we note with reverence, our effort will improve. However, if boredom arises, how do we improve our effort? The Buddha taught us to contemplate on the eight occasions that arise spiritual urgency (*aṭṭha mahāsaṃvegavatthūni*) and motivate us to improve our effort:

*Aṭṭha mahāsaṃvegavatthūni nāma
jātijarābyādhimaraṇaṃ cattāri apāyadukkhānīti,
atha vā jātijarābyādhimaraṇāni cattāri,
apāyadukkhāṃ pañcamāṃ, atīte vaṭṭamūlakāṃ
dukkhāṃ, anāgate vaṭṭamūlakāṃ dukkhāṃ,
paccuppanne āhārapariyeṭṭhimūlakāṃ dukkha'nti.*

~*Sutta Nipāta-atthakatha 177*

The eight occasions inducing spiritual urgency refer to birth, aging, illness, death and the sufferings of the four realms of misery (apāyadukkhā); or it can

refer to birth, aging, illness and death as on the first four occasions; the four realms of misery as the fifth; followed by the suffering of the past rooted in the cycle of rebirth, the suffering of the future rooted in the cycle of rebirth and the suffering of the present rooted in the search for food.

(1) Contemplate on the Suffering of Birth (jāti-dukkha)

Life is full of suffering; the first noble truth from the Four Noble Truths is the truth of suffering. We are attached to our lives because we do not understand that life is full of suffering. Life begins with suffering; it is just that everyone forgets about it. When we are still in our mother's womb, we cannot stretch or move our arms and legs, not just for 1 or 2 hours, but for 9 to 10 months; when our mother moves, we can feel vibrations resembling an earthquake, but we have no way of complaining. During birth, as one's body comes into contact with the external wind, the infant cries, exclaiming, "Oh suffering! Oh suffering!" The suffering of birth has been experienced by everyone, but due to delusions (moha), we forget about this experience. Infants cry when they are born, none of them are born smiling. Only the ones that suffer cry, those that do not suffer will not cry. When we contemplate on the suffering of birth, our effort will improve.

(2) Contemplate on the Suffering of Aging (jarā-dukkha)

After being born for 1 day, 2 days, 1 month, 1 year, we gradually grow up to 10 years old, 20 years old, 40 years old, 80 years old. We age gradually and without exception each one of us ages after we are born. We say, “We don’t want to grow old!” Is this possible? We might put on make-up and take care of our complexion, but even though we do not look old, we still grow old, as we cannot stop the process of aging. There is only one way to stop aging and that is to die. If one dies today, there will be no further aging. As long as you haven’t died, you will definitely age! We contemplate, “When I grow old, I will not have the physical strength to meditate; so, before I age, I should be diligent in my practice!” If you contemplate like this, your effort will improve.

(3) Contemplate on the Suffering of Illness (byādhidukkha)

It is impossible for one not to be ill within a life time and we will fall ill when we age. If we lie in bed, it is difficult for us to cultivate. Thus, before we fall ill, we should at least attain the level of stream-entry (*sotāpanna*); we should have confidence. If we contemplate this way, our effort will improve.

(4) Contemplate about the Suffering of Death (maraṇa- dukkha)

If we attain stream-entry (*sotāpanna*) before we die, we will receive assurance in our lives, because we will not descend into the four realms of misery. We will only be reborn in the human realm or in heaven at the most for 7 more times in order to fulfill our perfections (*pāramī*). There will not be an 8th rebirth and we will be able to attain Arahantship. This is what is mentioned in *Ratana Sutta*.

*Ye ariyasaccāni vibhāvayanti,
gambhīrapaññena sudesitāni,
kiñcāpi te honti bhusappamattā,
na te bhavaṃ aṭṭhamaṃ ādiyanti.*

However exceedingly heedless they may be, those who have comprehended the Noble Truths well taught by Him of deep wisdom, do not take an eight rebirth.⁵

If we have not attained stream-entry, we cannot be sure of our future destination. If we contemplate this way, our effort will improve.

⁵ Translated from Pali by Sayadaw U Silananda.

(5) Contemplate on the Suffering of the Four Realms of Misery (apāya-dukkha)

The four realms of misery refer to hell, hungry ghosts, animals and asura. We should contemplate the suffering in each realm of misery; we should understand that if we do not cultivate, we will not be liberated from the suffering in these four realms of misery. When we contemplate this way, our effort will improve.

(6) Contemplate on the Suffering of the Past Rooted in the Cycle of Rebirth (atīte vaṭṭadukkha)

Since beginningless time, we have been in the wheel of rebirth. We have been reborn for countless eons and we have experienced countless times the suffering of rebirth. When we contemplate on the suffering of past rebirth, our effort will improve.

(7) Contemplate on the Suffering of the Future Rooted in the Cycle of Rebirth (anāgate vaṭṭadukkha)

If we do not cultivate in this life time, we will not know how long we will be caught in the wheel of rebirth. This is great suffering indeed. When one contemplates on the suffering of future rebirth, one's effort will improve.

***(8) Contemplate on the Suffering of the Present
Rooted in the Search for Food (paccuppanne
āhārapariyeṭṭhidukkha)***

Living in this world, we have to satisfy our needs for food, accommodation, security etc. In order to sustain basic living conditions, we need to work to earn money to pay for the things we require. Thus, we should contemplate on the sufferings related to earning a living. When we wish to be liberated from this type of suffering, our effort will improve.

The eight types of contemplations to improve one's effort are mentioned above.

THE REASONS FOR LAZINESS

Lazy people become deprived for six reasons:

(1) Too Hot

Lazy people will refuse to meditate due to hot weather. He will say, "I am sweating, my body is itchy, I can't meditate." However, a diligent meditator will not be affected by extreme weather conditions, they will just continue to note.

(2) Too Cold

Lazy people will refuse to meditate due to cold weather. He will say, “The cold weather is suitable for sleeping, I am too drowsy, I can’t meditate.” However, a diligent meditator will continue to practice earnestly.

(3) Too Early

Lazy people will feel that the time for cultivation is too early. If it is time to wake up in the morning, he will say, “It is still early, it is just 4 am, I can still sleep for another 15 minutes”, and he continues to lie in bed. Or he might say, “We are still young, there is no need to cultivate too early.” Young people cannot feel the sufferings of aging, illness and death. They travel for leisure, but who can give them assurance when they age? Besides, there are those who die young. He might say, “I will meditate tomorrow, there is still a lot of time.” Day after day, these are the reasons given by lazy people. Diligent meditators will seize the right causes and conditions to cultivate earnestly.

(4) Too Late

Lazy people will feel that they do not need to cultivate when it is too late. They will say, “Today I am very tired, it is too

late now. Never mind! I will do it tomorrow!” Many people are like that. However, the Buddha wanted us to accomplish what we need to do and not to procrastinate.

In *Bhaddekaratta Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya, Uparipaññāsa*, 272, Buddha said,

*Ajjeva kiccamātappaṃ,
ko jaññā maraṇaṃ suve;
Na hi no saṅgamaṃ tena,
mahāsenena maccunā.*

Ardently doing
what should be done today,
for — who knows — tomorrow death?
There is no bargaining
with Mortality & his mighty horde.⁶

Life and death are impermanent, who can be certain that we will be alive tomorrow? We can't plead to death, “Wait a minute! I have not accomplished my task, I can't die today.” We can't bribe death and say, “I will give you ten thousand dollars, I need to accomplish this task, I can't die!” Or even say, “My wife is waiting for me, I can't die!” When death comes, we do not have any reasons or methods to escape death.

⁶ Translation from the Pali by Thanissaro bhikkhu.

This is why the Buddha advised us to accomplish all tasks today. A diligent person will say, “Today I want to reach *Nibbāna*, I must work hard every moment today, because death will come at any time!” If we have time today, we should work hard today and not feel that, “I registered for a 10-day meditation and only 3 days have passed, so I still have 7 days.” There is a possibility that you may achieve enlightenment today, if you attain stream-entry (*sotāpanna*) today, you will be able to enjoy the fruition of a stream-entrant. So, do not procrastinate, one should be diligent with immediate effect.

(5) Too Full

Lazy people will refuse to meditate when they are too full. They will say, “My stomach is too full, I can’t meditate.” We should exercise control over our food consumption and should not overeat. If we do overeat, we should not complain or be lazy.

(6) Too Hungry

Lazy people will refuse to meditate when they are too hungry. They will say, “I am very hungry today, I can’t meditate.” If you feel hungry, drink water to cope with the hunger, do not pay too much attention to it, continue to practice.

The six reasons given by lazy people are mentioned above. We should not use the reasons above to avoid meditation; we should be diligent, so that our effort will improve.



5.5 Wisdom

OPENING THE EYES OF WISDOM

True wisdom involves seeing the coming and going as well as the arising and passing away of natural phenomena. The object changes every single moment, providing that we observe, note and understand; if we do not possess such fundamental wisdom, it is difficult for us to become enlightened. During meditation, we close our physical eyes, meaning that the so-called “seeing how the object changes” refers to seeing with the eyes of wisdom. Sometimes, a person with delusions will not be able to see the changes in the object.

WHEN WILL WE BECOME ENLIGHTENED?

The Buddha said that if a person who has perfected the five conditions for enlightenment (the main emphasis is on “perfection”), receives meditation instruction in the morning, he will achieve enlightenment before the sun sets; should he receive meditation instruction after the sun sets, he will be enlightened before the sun rises again. This is the assurance given by the Buddha.

How should one practice? One should implement the five methods to increase knowledge based on mental development (*bhāvanā-maya paññā*). One should practice on a long term basis, which in the context of a day, refers to practicing from morning until the sun sets, which amounts to more than 10 hours of practice. Similarly, one should practice continuously, i.e. one should note continuously for more than 10 hours, this applying to both sitting meditation and walking meditation. In all waking moments, one should be noting all daily activities continually and without interruption or stopping. Venerable *Ānanda* practiced this way and attained Arahantship within one night on the eve of the first Buddhist council. He was practising the whole night, noting his steps, right and left, raising, pushing forward and lowering of the feet; noting, event by event, the mental desire to walk and the physical movements involved in walking. Although this went on until it was nearly dawn, he had not yet attained Arahantship. Realising that he had practised walking meditation to excess and that, in order to balance concentration and effort, he should practise meditation in the lying posture for a while, he entered his room. He sat on the bed and then lay down. While doing so and noting, ‘lying, lying’, he attained Arahantship in an instant. Besides that, we should practice joyfully, practice with reverence and practice with perfection. Through such

continuous practice, we will achieve enlightenment.

The time required for training differs for each individual; one week, one month, seven weeks, seven months, but in not more than seven years, one would achieve enlightenment. This was how the Buddha encouraged Prince Bodhi. When we listen to the Buddha's discourse, we should understand that the path we cultivate is supreme indeed.

EFFORT WITHOUT WISDOM

Wisdom also includes our basic knowledge, this being knowledge based on learning (*suta-mayā paññā*) and is very important. If our knowledge based on learning (*suta-mayā paññā*) is insufficient, we will end up investing extra effort with little result and we will not be able to reap the benefits. It is not ideal for one to invest too much effort when one has too little knowledge.

In the *Jataka Sutta*, there is a story:

In the ancient times, when King Brahmadata was ruling Baranas, it was customary for the people to hold festivities at the beginning of every month. When they heard the sound of the drums of celebration, they would all come out to enjoy the festive season.

During that time, there was a large group of monkeys living in the imperial garden. The gardener thought, “They are having a celebration in the city. I will ask these monkeys to water the plants, so that I can also participate in the festivities.” Thus, he went to the monkey king and said, “My dear monkey king! This garden is beneficial to you, as you can consume the flowers and fruits here! They are having celebrations in the city, which I also want to enjoy. Before I return, can you please water the plants for me?” “No problem! We will water the plants for you.” “Then, do not be careless.” He passed the leather bag and wooden bucket used for watering plants to the monkeys and left. The monkeys began to water the plants. The monkey king said, “Hey monkeys! We should conserve water! When you water the plants, pull out each plant to check how deep the roots are. If the roots are long, water more; if the roots are short, water less. Once you pour out the water, you can’t retrieve it.” The monkeys replied, “Yes sir!” and followed the instructions of the monkey king.

At that time, a wise man was in the imperial garden and he saw how the monkeys were watering the plants. He said, “Hey monkeys! Why do you pull out the plants and water according to the length of the roots?” They replied, “These are the instructions given by our monkey king.” The wise man thought, “Oh dear, these foolish fellows think that they are

doing well, whereas in fact, they are doing a bad thing.” He then recited a verse:

Na ve anattakusalena, atthacariyā sukhāvahā.

Hāpeti atthaṃ dummedho, kapi ārāmiko yathā.

~Jataka 46

If one can't distinguish between right and wrong,
It will be difficult to accomplish good deeds,
Just like the foolish monkeys,
That pull out the roots to water the trees.

The wise man used this verse to reprimand the monkey king, and he left the garden with his followers. This wise man was the Buddha in a previous life.

You see, the monkeys had confidence and sincerely followed the instructions to pull out the roots of the plants, in order to water the plants according to their length. They worked diligently but they destroyed the entire garden.

If one possesses confidence, sincerity, health and diligence, yet lacks knowledge, one will not acquire any benefits. This explains the importance of knowledge.

THE IMPORTANCE OF WISDOM IN CULTIVATION

We receive meditation instructions and acquire knowledge based on learning (*suta-mayā paññā*). The instructions say, no matter what we see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think of, we should observe and note. However, we should know how to think wisely. When we observe the rising and falling of the abdomen and we also hear sounds and then proceed to note “hearing, hearing”, how do we note the rising and falling of the abdomen? The Buddha taught us the method of cultivation, i.e. morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*). Without concentration as a foundation, wisdom will not arise, thus we must nurture right mindfulness and concentration because if there are too many objects, concentration will not develop easily.

The meditation instructions that I give you now will only have four objects to be noted. There is the primary object — the rising and falling of the abdomen, which we should follow precisely. Secondary objects such as sensations, thinking and drowsiness, we will only follow at certain times, because they do not always occur. Noting the body’s movement (rising and falling of the abdomen) is contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*); noting pain, numbness and muscle

fatigue is contemplation of feelings (*vedanānupassanā*); noting thinking and distracted mind is contemplation of the mind (*cittānupassanā*); noting drowsiness, suspicion and the five hindrances is contemplation of *dhammas* (*dhammānupassanā*). The greatest disturbance in meditation is thinking, followed by drowsiness. When drowsiness appears, the object will be muddled, the mind will drift away and enter a state of delusion. At that time, the meditator will experience neither-painful-nor-pleasant feelings. They can sit for 2 to 3 hours, but their minds are in a state of ignorance. Wisdom will not arise and it is just a waste of time. If we can follow these meditation instructions and note the four objects continuously, we will improve easily.

Of course, the sounds we hear are one of the objects we note and the same applies to form (*rūpa*). I do not say that sounds and form (*rūpa*) are not the objects of meditation. Insight meditation or *satipaṭṭhāna* (contemplation of the body, feelings, mind and dhammas) has many objects of meditation.

The knowledge that we can acquire is extensive, but we do not need to use all of it, as we only need that which will be helpful to us. The Buddha has many ‘medications’, and we only need to consume the medication used for the treatment of our illnesses. If one is coughing yet takes the medication meant for cancer treatment, what will the outcome be? Thus,

when we are coughing, we should take a cough remedy; when we are running a fever, we should take the appropriate medication for a fever. It is essential to have such knowledge or common sense. If we do not have this aspect of knowledge, we will be similar to those monkeys that water the plants. Even though we follow the teacher's instructions sincerely, we are still unable to achieve enlightenment. We may make a vow to attain *Nibbāna* in 10 years, and when this is not achieved, the same situation may go on for another 20 to 30 years, this is not right.

THE PURIFICATION OF THE MIND

To like something is greed, to dislike it results in anger and to not know anything is ignorance. A defiled mind results from the invasion of impurities, so we should purify our minds.

When we see beautiful things, if we do not note, a mind of craving will arise. When we pay attention to eye consciousness, and note “seeing, seeing”, the mind of craving will not arise. A mind of craving is unwholesome Dhamma and an unwholesome mind is a defiled mind. We observe and note so that the unwholesome mind will not arise and this will maintain the purity of the mind. When we meet people that previously harmed us, we will instinctively

become angry. Anger is also an unwholesome Dhamma, so we should note “seeing, seeing”. When we note in this way, we will be able to let go. Sometimes we see and hear many things in the current moment, but we do not need to know. We just need to pay attention to the object of meditation. For instance, “raising, pushing forward, lowering” in walking meditation. We can ignore the other objects. Note the object clearly and continuously and the mind will sustain its purity. When the mind is pure, at ease and relaxed, we will gain greater understanding, leading to greater wisdom, which is improvement.

We must have wisdom and when it is acquired through listening it is known as knowledge based on learning (*sutamayā paññā*). Then, using knowledge based on learning as fundamental knowledge and attaining knowledge based on mental development (*bhāvanā-maya paññā*) through actual cultivation, means that when we acquire thorough understanding, our wisdom will not be forgotten or destroyed.

A TRUE EXPERIENCE WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN

We record what we learn because we are afraid that we will forget, but how can one forget something that one has

mastered? This shows that we have not mastered what we thought we had learned. We should apply what we learn in our lives. Wisdom is something that one knows and is absolutely sure of every single moment and can apply anywhere. If one only remembers it for 1 or 2 days, how does one apply wisdom in life?

There is no need to be afraid that you will forget, just note repeatedly. You do not need to report anything that you will forget during the interview. Why? If you report what you wrote, after your report, you will forget. Those that record too much are those that are afraid of forgetting and will forget everything by the end of the meditation anyway. Those things that you forget cannot be used.

If we truly know, experience and are absolutely sure, we will not forget. We do not contemplate for a short period only, we contemplate day by day, we know and we understand. Unforgettable wisdom can be applied in our lives, like impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and no-self (*anattā*) — how body and mind arise, pass away and change. The moment we face them, we will know because such wisdom is engraved in our minds. Wisdom belongs to a type of mental factor (*cetasika*), that arises with the mind.

A person who practices vipassana meditation should not forget. He must be absolutely sure of obtaining indestructible and unforgettable wisdom.



Chapter 6

The Ten Perfections



During the Buddha's era, there are examples of immediate enlightenment. During the night when Buddha turned the Dhamma wheel for the first time, he expounded the Dhamma to five bhikkhus one of whom, named *Koṇḍañña* attained stream-entry (*sotāpanna*) immediately. *Koṇḍañña* was a great disciple (*mahāsāvaka*) who had already accumulated perfections (*pāramī*) for 100 thousand *kappas*. Accordingly, after listening to the Buddha's discourse, he attained stream-entry immediately.

After *Koṇḍañña* listened to the discourse when Buddha first turned the Dhamma Wheel, he became enlightened immediately. Why aren't we enlightened yet? This is because we have not perfected our perfections. There are ten types of perfections, each of which we can examine to determine our own personal level of accomplishment.

THE TEN PERFECTIONS

(1) Perfection in Generosity (dāna pāramī)

The fruits of generosity are wealth. If one lacks basic daily needs, one will not have the opportunity to attend an intensive meditation retreat, because one will need to earn money. Someone that needs to work every day in order to get sufficient food to survive will not be able to meditate. So, we can examine if our perfection in generosity (*dāna pāramī*) is sufficient. If you can come to the meditation centre to participate in an intensive meditation retreat, this shows that you are not lacking the perfection in generosity.

(2) Perfection in Morality (sīla pāramī)

An individual with insufficient perfection in morality (*sīla pāramī*) will either be in prison or in hospital. If he has committed acts of killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying or consuming intoxicants, which harmed others, he will be punished by the law and sent to prison. The fruits of killing are that one will have a short lifespan and suffer from poor health. If one kills often, one's body will be tormented by illness. Now, as you are free and healthy, have sufficient to eat well and sleep soundly, you can be assured that your perfection in morality is sufficient.

(3) Perfection in Renunciation (nekkhamma pāramī)

Renunciation refers to leaving the secular home. Meditators who participate in an intensive meditation retreat have all left their secular homes to come to the monastery or meditation centre, where they lead the lives of a renunciant. This is renunciation. At home you can see, listen, smell, eat, and touch in any way you desire, satisfying all six senses. In the monastery or meditation centre you are not allowed to do so. This is renunciation. From this point of view, it shows that our perfection in renunciation (*nekkhamma pāramī*) is sufficient.

(4) Perfection in Effort (virīya pāramī)

We should examine ourselves as to whether we lack perfection in effort (*virīya pāramī*). Effort appears nine times in the Thirty-seven Factors of Enlightenment, showing the importance of effort. One can invest effort until one dies and if one should die during meditation, one will be reborn in the realms of bliss. Death aside, sometimes when pain appears, you think, “Oh dear, meditation is so difficult!” If you suffer from a cold, you think, “It is not easy to cultivate today!” In fact, if you make sufficient effort, you don’t have to worry, just be diligent and you will be able to overcome these obstacles.

If you have a slight fever, the best option is to drink hot

water and continue to cultivate. The fever will subside through sweating, but you need to change your clothing after sweating to prevent yourself from becoming chilled and then catching a cold. From my own personal experience, this method is very effective in managing a fever, and for other minor illnesses. Nowadays most medications will induce confusion, dizziness and drowsiness, making it difficult to meditate if you take them. Of course, if severe illness is involved, you must see a doctor. However, if just a minor illness arises and we choose not to take medication, we should overcome it with our mind power; this is effort. To ascertain whether your perfection in effort is sufficient, please examine yourselves.

(5) Perfection in Wisdom (paññā pāramī)

Perfection in wisdom (*paññā pāramī*) means to know or understand the truth. There are differences in the levels of wisdom, the highest being the path (*magga*) and the fruition (*phala*). Knowledge based on learning (*suta-mayā paññā*) and knowledge based on thinking (*cintā-mayā paññā*) can be easily forgotten, because it has not been deeply integrated into our lives. However, the knowledge based on mental development (*bhāvanā-maya paññā*) that we gain through practice is higher and more stable.

Careless practice will not result in the attainment of

knowledge based on mental development. Consequently we must be sure, careful and diligent. We should note continuously every single moment and then our minds will understand, “Oh! So truth is like that!” Not just to see it once or twice, but as we continue to observe it countless times, we will know, understand and be sure. By using this type of experience as a foundation, when wisdom improves continuously, we will eventually obtain penetrating wisdom, i.e. the wisdom of a stream-entrant (*sotāpanna*). We will not forget such wisdom in this life time and for many lifetimes thereafter, until having been reborn seven times, we will attain Arahantship.

(6) Perfection in Patience (khantī pāramī)

Perfection in patience (*khantī pāramī*) is very important. “Patience leads to *Nibbāna*”; without patience, *Nibbāna* will not be achieved. The objects of patience are many: to be patient with ourselves, others, the environment and the weather etc. When you go to the meditation centre to uphold the Eight Precepts, you refrain from seeing beautiful things, hearing wonderful sounds, eating delicious food or sleeping on a high (meaning luxurious) bed. You need to be patient! During meditation, when sensations of pain, tightness and fatigue arise, you should be patient! If you have a cold or feel dizzy, you should continue to be patient!

Sometimes you might think, “I am feeling a bit giddy, I am a bit worried, I might as well go to sleep.” You should not do this. Dizziness is just a sensation, it comes and goes, so you should note it and let go, and then it will disappear. We are often overly concerned about ourselves, but this is not necessary. Meditation is the best wholesome kamma. When we are working outside and feel dizzy, we will usually just ignore it and continue with our work, and after a few minutes it will disappear on its own. However, during meditation, our minds are calm, resulting in our sensations becoming more sensitive. In fact, such situations often occur in our daily lives, but we become extra worried during meditation. Thus, to be patient is the best method. Do not pay too much attention to any particular sensation, continue to be patient and you will overcome it, because it is impermanent! Patience is very important and we should perfect it.

(7) Perfection in Loving-kindness (mettā pāramī)

Perfection in loving-kindness (*mettā pāramī*) is loving-kindness and compassion. Loving-kindness is different from craving, because it places others first, focusing on the benefit to others as the main priority. “May you be free from danger and suffering and be happy always.” We show our loving-kindness to others, wishing them to be happy. If we make our

own advantages the main priority or take advantage of other people, they will not be happy.

Meditators live within the same quarters, so it is here that we should practice loving-kindness and be considerate. For instance, “Everyone is resting, I should be as quiet as possible when I go to the toilet”, or “It is raining. I don’t know who hasn’t brought in their laundry, but I will retrieve it on their behalf.” We should have empathy and not disturb others. If we do not practice loving-kindness and think only of ourselves, we will lose our friends and be unable to coexist in harmony with other people. If unsatisfactory feelings arise in our minds, it will disturb our meditative practice and cause our meditation to regress. Feelings of dislike and dissatisfaction arise from our minds. As we know, when we are not happy we will suffer. We should not disturb each other and should be less concerned with worldly affairs. We should be happy while meditating. We stay together due to the affinities and wholesome kamma we have produced in our previous lives, so we should treat each other with loving-kindness.

(8) Perfection in Truthfulness (sacca pāramī)

Perfection in truthfulness (*sacca pāramī*) refers to the language of truth. During an intensive meditation retreat, the meditators remain silent and it is in this way that they possess sufficient

perfection in truthfulness. The only opportunity for you to talk is during the interview. At that time, you should speak the truth and not give a report based on what you have read or heard. All that you report about your own experience should be done with sincerity. If there is improvement it is good, if there is no improvement it doesn't matter. No one will punish you, as this is a part of what happens during training. Improvement will come when you continue to practice. Above all, we should be sincere, this is perfection in truthfulness.

(9) Perfection in Resolution (*adhiṭṭhāna pāramī*)

Perfection in resolution (*adhiṭṭhāna pāramī*) refers to determination. Before meditation, we resolve to sit for an hour, promising not to rise from our seat if the time is not up — this is resolution. It doesn't matter if there is an earthquake or lightning strikes. Even if we should die during meditation it doesn't matter, as such confidence and resolution is very important.

It is rare for one to die in peace during meditation. Before one expires, most people will suffer from an illness and very few die in peace. Especially in the hospital, where strong pain killers are often administered, one becomes muddled and dazed. This is a dangerous state to be in, as if one dies with such a state of mind, one may be reborn as an animal. As

far as possible, avoid the administration of such medications. Meditators should know the body's sensations. Naturally when the condition of the body deteriorates, one will experience pain. But, painful feelings are impermanent, we know that they come and go. How painful feelings arise and pass away, come and go, the mind will know. The mind also knows, it is no-self (*anattā*), so who is in pain? Only the sensation arises, changes and passes away. In this way, we will acquire peace. When a peaceful mind arises, we will be reborn in the realms of bliss when we die.

(10) Perfection in Equanimity (upekkhā pāramī)

Perfection in equanimity (*upekkhā pāramī*) means equanimity and being in the state of neither suffering nor happiness. As we continue to contemplate, our minds will be balanced. We need to let go of everything, it doesn't matter, do not be selective, with a mind of equanimity, we will be content with our lives. Carelessness and balance are different. Carelessness refers to hastiness and thoughtlessness, balance means we clearly know and endure.

CONCLUSION

How many types of perfections (*pāramī*) do the meditators lack? In general, we lack a bit of effort, patience and resolution. If there is sufficient patience, effort and resolution, we will improve.

It is difficult to judge the condition of each individual's perfections (*pāramī*). Everyone's perfections are different. You should practice on your own to perfect your own perfections. You will not be able to help others to perfect their perfections. My responsibility is to teach you all that I have learnt; your responsibility is to follow Buddha's method of cultivation. Once you experience and understand the truth, you will achieve enlightenment.

Most of us lack effort. We think that we have plenty of time. We rationalize that it doesn't matter if we don't participate in this year's intensive meditation retreat, as we can participate next year when the meditation master comes. But we don't know whether the meditation master will still be alive next year, nor are we sure whether we will be alive either.

We have one elder who is 80 years old. He is a very famous meditation master and has travelled to Singapore, Malaysia, USA and Australia. Recently, he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, and the cancer cells had spread to his liver.

During that time, he was still leading meditation, when all of a sudden he lost his appetite, so he went to the hospital in Singapore for a checkup. When his diagnosis was confirmed, he was informed that he had two months to live. He had many devotees in Singapore and when they invited him to deliver a Dhamma discourse, he delivered the discourse as usual. When he returned to Myanmar, he told his master Sayadaw U Pandita, “The doctor said I have two months to live. As I am already 80 years old, to most people, I am old enough. I have created a lot of merit, it doesn’t matter if I die now.” It is not easy for one to say so. Subsequently, he continued to do what he usually did every day. He took his meals, he bathed and sustained his mindfulness, he contemplate his body and mind. He cultivated diligently without performing other tasks, because his time was limited.

The time we die is uncertain, thus we are not diligent. If someone ascertains that we only have 6 months to live, we will worry and begin to prepare for death. But there is no one to ascertain when we will die! If you have time today, cultivate today, tomorrow is uncertain. Thus, to have this kind of mindset, together with effort, resolution and patience is very important in the practice.

Chapter 7

Five Types of Rarity



Bhikkhave, appamādena sampādetha, dullabho buddhuppādo lokasmiṃ, dullabho manussattapaṭilābho, dullabhā sampatti, dullabhā pabbajjā, dullabhaṃ saddhammassavana.”nti.

~ Dighanīkaya, Sīlakhanda Atthakatha, pg.47

Bhikkhus, we should accomplish without self-indulgence; it is rare for the Buddha to appear in this world; it is rare for us to attain this human body; it is rare for us to have conviction; it is rare for us to seek renunciation; it is rare for us to listen to the true Dhamma.

The Buddha reminded his disciples every day, he advised them not to forget about right mindfulness and to avoid self-indulgence. In this world, there are five types of rarity (*dullabho*).

FIVE TYPES OF RARITY

(1) It is Rare to Encounter a Buddha (dullabho buddhuppādo lokasmim)

The Buddha said that for a Buddha to appear in the world is rare. When a person becomes a Bodhisatta after receiving the bestowal of predictions by a living Buddha, he will need to encounter four *asaṅkheyya* and 100 thousand major *kappas* to master his perfections (*pāramī*) and become a Buddha. There are 10 types of perfection (*pāramī*): generosity (*dāna*), morality (*sīla*), renunciation (*nekkhamma*), wisdom (*paññā*), effort (*virīya*), patience (*khanti*), truthfulness (*sacca*), resolution (*adhiṭṭhāna*), loving-kindness (*mettā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*).

How long does an *asaṅkheyya* last? *Asaṅkheyya* means incalculable. Masters of the *Abhidhamma* defined *asaṅkheyya* as ten, followed by 140 zeros, i.e. 10^{140} . However, in the context of the time required for a Bodhisatta to master his perfections (*pāramī*), this does not refer to an actual number, but rather to an extremely long period without the appearance of a Buddha. Since it is incalculable, surely one *asaṅkheyya* is sufficient, so why do we need four *asaṅkheyyas*?

Before Sakyamuni Buddha achieved Buddhahood, he

received the bestowal of predictions from Dipamkara Buddha. From Dipamkara Buddha's era till now, four *asaṅkheyyas* and 100 thousand major *kappas* have passed. There have been 24 Buddhas that appeared in many worlds during this period, together with our Sakyamuni Buddha, making a total of 25 Buddhas.

During the *asaṅkheyya* after Dipamkara Buddha, there were no Buddhas during this extremely long period; at the last *kappa* of the first *asaṅkheyya*, Kondanna Buddha appeared and his appearance was followed by another *asaṅkheyya*; at the last *kappa* of the second *asaṅkheyya*, Mangala Buddha, Sumana Buddha and another two Buddhas appeared, followed by another *asaṅkheyya*; at the last *kappa* of the third *asaṅkheyya*, Anomadassi Buddha and another two Buddhas appeared, followed by another *asaṅkheyya*; at the last *kappa* of the fourth *asaṅkheyya*, Padumuttara Buddha appeared. A total of four “incalculable eons” were encountered, i.e. four *asaṅkheyyas*. One hundred thousand *kappas* later, another 11 Buddhas will appear. During our current *kappa*, 4 Buddhas have appeared to-date, with Sakyamuni Buddha being the fourth one.

We have waited for so long for the appearance of one Buddha, thus we should know that the appearance of a Buddha in this world is extremely rare. Without Buddha's teachings,

sentient beings will not know and understand the actual truth of life and they will not know how life functions. Thus, the Buddha reminded his disciples every day that it is extremely rare for a Buddha to appear in this world, so they should not forget about right mindfulness and should not become self-indulgent. One should be enlightened when the Buddha and the Dhamma exist in this world.

(2) It is Rare to Attain the Human Body (dullabho manussattapaṭilābho)

It is rare for someone to be born as a human being. Currently, the human population is 7.3 billion in this world; however, the animals surviving on land, in water and in the sky are countless. In *Paṭhamachiggaḷayuga Sutta*, *Saṃyutta Nikāya* and the *Mahāvagga*, Buddha said,

“Bhikkhus, suppose a man would throw a yoke with a single hole into the great ocean, and there was a blind turtle which would come to the surface once every hundred years. What do you think, bhikkhus, would that blind turtle, coming to the surface once every hundred years, insert its neck into that yoke with a single hole?”

“If it would ever do so, venerable sir, it would be only after a very long time.”



“Sooner, I say, would that blind turtle, coming to the surface once every hundred years, insert its neck into that yoke with a single hole than the fool who has gone once to the nether world (would regain) the human state. For what reason? Because here, bhikkhus, there is no conduct guided by the Dhamma, no righteous conduct, no wholesome activity, no meritorious activity. Here there prevails mutual devouring, the devouring of the weak. For what reason? Because, bhikkhus, they have not seen the Four Noble Truths. What four? The Noble Truth of suffering... the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering.”¹

From this example, we can see how rare it is for us to be reborn as humans! We acquire the human body as a result of our past wholesome kamma; without wholesome kamma, it is difficult to be reborn as a human. Thus, we should know the value of our lives, and should not waste our precious human life.

¹ Translated from Pali by Bhikkhu Bodhi.

(3) It is Rare to Acquire Confidence (dullabhā sampatti)

To be born as human and to possess confidence are rare. Without confidence, we will not come here to learn vipassana meditation and to experience suffering (*dukkha*). The Buddha expounded on the Four Noble Truths — the truth of suffering, the cause of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the truth of the way that leads to the cessation of suffering. What is “*dukkha*”? If we come here to learn, we will truly understand. Many people do not wish to know due to a lack of confidence; without confidence, it is difficult for one to learn.

In *Akkhaṇa Sutta*, the Eight Inopportune Occasions (*aṭṭha akkhaṇa*) are mentioned. These occur at the time a Buddha exists, but one has been reborn (1) in hell; (2) as an animal; (3) in the realm of ghosts; (4) among the formless devas; (5) in a rural district where the Dhamma is not known; (6) in a central region² but as one who holds wrong views; (7) in a central region but as one mentally deficient and/or deaf and mute; (8) in a central region and as a wise person, but at a time when the Buddha is not present in this world.

The first three Inopportune Occasions belong to the realms of misery, one that is reborn in the realms of misery will not

² The country of Central India which was the birthplace of Buddhism and the region of its early activities. “Dictionary of Pali Proper Names”, G.P. Malalasekera, pg. 418.

be able to attain enlightenment. If one is reborn in heaven as a formless deva, one will only possess consciousness; there is no body, no eyes or ears, thus one cannot listen to the Dhamma and achieve enlightenment. If one is reborn as a deva of the unconscious ones (*asaññāsattā devā*), there is only form (*rūpa*) and no consciousness (*nāma*) exists, thus one cannot be enlightened. Additionally, if one is reborn as a human in a rural district where the Dhamma is not known, there will be no chance of being enlightened; for instance, when the Buddha propagated the Dhamma in India those that were born in the Americas had no chance of hearing the Dhamma. If we see the Buddha, yet we possess wrong views and insist on believing in the presence of a soul, it is also impossible for us to attain enlightenment. Finally, even though one is reborn as human, if one is mentally deficient and without wisdom, one will also not have a chance to be enlightened.

Among the Eight Inopportune Occasions, the 7th inopportune occasion is connected to wisdom. Wisdom differs from IQ (intelligence quotient) because IQ is dependent on memory. People with high IQs have very good memories and perception (*saññā*), but they do not know where the mind is. A person that practices vipassana meditation knows where the mind is — this is wisdom (*pañña*). People with a high IQ are often arrogant, self-centered and jealous; they often

compete and fight with their colleagues, they lack joy and loving-kindness and commit much unwholesome kamma. They maybe smart in this world, but they will need to endure bad karmic retributions when this life time ends. High EQ (Emotional quotient) means that one has wisdom. This type of person helps and loves his colleagues, he is able to handle and control his feelings and emotions. If one has 100% control over ones' own emotions, this is the wisdom of an Arahant. It means that regardless of whether circumstances are easy or difficult, the mind remains stable and in equilibrium.

People in the modern era focus on the training of IQ. Very few people bring their children to the monastery for learning. They only send their children to elite schools. This is due to the lack of confidence in the Dhamma. In Myanmar, we follow our grandparents to the meditation centre and receive positive influences, eventually seeking renunciation. Of course, parents should use skillful means to encourage their children to go to the monastery. They should capture the minds of their child, so as to lead them towards the path of wisdom. Nowadays, the adults are busy with their work, and they may place their children in a nursery, where they are not sure of what their children are learning. When these children grow up, their parents will be worried as good habits have not been nurtured since they were young. If they are taught

to distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad, they will be sensible when they grow up and their parents will be at ease. This is confidence towards the wholesome Dhamma.

Thus, we are lucky to acquire the human body and to encounter the Dhamma. It will be rare if one can develop confidence to learn about the Dhamma and vipassana meditation.

(4) It is Rare for One to Seek Renunciation (dullabhā pabbajjā)

Is it difficult for one to seek renunciation? To become a sincere renunciant is difficult. Most people have many desires, so to truly let go is difficult. Thus it is rare for one to seek renunciation.

(5) It is Rare for One to Listen to the Dhamma (dullabhaṃ saddhammassavanam)

A Dhamma discourse that involves story-telling can be obtained easily, but it is difficult to encounter Dhamma that can be applied to our lives. One may feel bored if one does not understand the discourse that teaches about the essence of the Dhamma and the truth of life. It doesn't matter if you are bored, you should be diligent and listen attentively. Once you

understand, you should start to cultivate, as wisdom will arise when you acquire understanding through cultivation. Such wisdom can be applied to our entire lives.

The devas love listening to the true Dhamma. During Buddha's era, many devas achieved enlightenment after listening to the Buddha's discourse. In *Pañcapubbanimitta Sutta, Khuddaka Nikāya, Itivuttaka*, Buddha said,

“Monks, when a deva is about to pass away from the company of devas, five omens appear: his garlands wither, his clothes get soiled, sweat comes out of his armpits, a dullness descends on his body, he no longer delights in his own devaseat. The devas, knowing from this that ‘This deva-son is about to pass away’, encourage him with three sayings: ‘Go from here, honorable sir, to a good destination. Having gone to a good destination, earn the gain that is good to achieve. Having earned the gain that is good to achieve, become well-established.□□

What is a good destination, earn the gain that is good to achieve and become well established? The Buddha said,

“The human state, monks, is the devas’ reckoning of going to a good destination. Having become a

human being, acquiring conviction in the Dhamma and Vinaya taught by the *Tathāgata*: this is the devas' reckoning of the gain that is good to achieve. When that conviction is settled within, one-rooted, established, & strong, not to be destroyed by any brahman or contemplative, deva, *Māra*, or brahma, or anyone else in the world, this is the devas' reckoning of becoming well-established.”³

Devas with immense merits will be able to predict their next destination before they die, if they know they will be reborn as humans. Followed by a subsequent rebirth in heaven, they will say, “I go to the human realm for a while”. The Realm of the Four Great Kings (*cātumahārājika devaloka*) is nearest to the human world. Here, one day is equivalent to 50 years in the human world, thus it is “a while” only. Some devas with great merits can choose the destination of rebirth, thus, the other devas will suggest, “Choose to be reborn as a human! Bring back the Buddha's true Dhamma.” To be reborn as human is considered a good destination for the devas.

The true Dhamma are the teachings that enable one to attain the path (*magga*), fruition (*phala*) and *Nibbāna* — i.e. the Thirty-seven Factors of Enlightenment. The devas like

³ Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

this type of Dhamma. In fact, there is nothing special about the Thirty-seven Factors of Enlightenment. Whatever method you are practicing now, all are mentioned in the Thirty-seven Factors of Enlightenment. If you can thoroughly understand the truth of life in this life time, when you are reborn in heaven, you can deliver a Dhamma discourse to the other devas.



Part II

A Guide on the Path of Tranquillity

The Essentials of the Thirty-Seven Factors of Enlightenment

The Thirty-seven Factors of Enlightenment are also known as the Thirty-seven *Bodhipakkhiya-dhammas*. “Bodhi” means enlightenment, “*bodhipakkhiya-dhammas*” means the factors of enlightenment. The Buddha possessed the knowledge of the dispositions and underlying tendencies of sentient beings (*āsayānusayañāṇa*). Consequently, he could see the perfections (*pāramī*) accumulated by sentient beings in their previous lives and this enabled the Buddha to know which Dhamma to expound in order to enlighten these sentient beings. Aiming at the different capabilities of sentient beings, the Buddha employed different methods of teaching and these were compiled as “The Thirty-seven Factors of Enlightenment”. In *Dīgha Nikāya, Mahāvagga, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, Buddha expounded the Dhamma,

*“Katame ca te, bhikkhave, dhammā mayā
abhiññā desitā, ye vo sādhukaṃ uggahetvā
āsevitabbā bhāvetabbā bahulīkātabbā, yathayidaṃ
brahmacariyaṃ addhaniyaṃ assa ciraṭṭhitikaṃ,
tadassa bahujanahitāya bahujanasukhāya*

lokānukampāya atthāya hitāya sukhāya devamanussānaṃ. Seyyathidaṃ — cattāro satipaṭṭhānā cattāro sammappadhānā cattāro iddhipādā pañcendriyāni pañca balāni satta bojjhaṅgā ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo. Ime kho te, bhikkhave, dhammā mayā abhiññā desitā, ye vo sādhukaṃ uggahetvā āsevitabbā bhāvetabbā bahulīkātabbā, yathayidaṃ brahmacariyaṃ addhaniyaṃ assa ciraṭṭhitikaṃ, tadassa bahujanahitāya bahujanasukhāya lokānukampāya atthāya hitāya sukhāya devamanussāna”nti.

“Now, O bhikkhus, I say to you that these teachings of which I have direct knowledge and which I have made known to you — these you should thoroughly learn, cultivate, develop, and frequently practice, that the life of purity may be established and may long endure, for the welfare and happiness of the multitude, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, well being, and happiness of gods and men.”¹

“And what, bhikkhus, are these teachings? They are the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right

¹ “Last Days of the Buddha”, translated from the Pali by Sister Vajira & Francis Story.

efforts, the four paths to spiritual power, the five spiritual faculties, the five spiritual powers, the seven awakening factors, and the Noble Eightfold Path. These, bhikkhus, are the teachings of which I have direct knowledge, which I have made known to you, and which you should thoroughly learn, cultivate, develop, and frequently practice, that the life of purity may be established and may long endure, for the welfare and happiness of the multitude, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, well being, and happiness of gods and men.”

The Thirty-seven Factors of Enlightenment can be divided into seven groups: The Four Foundations of Mindfulness, The Four Right Efforts, The Four Paths to Spiritual Power, The Five Spiritual Faculties, The Five Spiritual Powers, The Seven Factors of Awakening and The Noble Eightfold Path. In summary, they are:

(1) The Four Foundations of Mindfulness

1. The contemplation of the body
2. The contemplation of feelings
3. The contemplation of the mind
4. The contemplation of *dhammas*

(2) The Four Right Efforts

1. The effort to abandon arisen evil states
2. The effort to prevent unarisen evil states from arising
3. The effort to cultivate unarisen wholesome states
4. The effort to sustain arisen wholesome states

(3) The Four Paths to Spiritual Power

1. Will
2. Effort or energy
3. Mind or consciousness
4. Investigation (i.e. wisdom)

(4) The Five Spiritual Faculties

1. Faith
2. Effort or energy
3. Mindfulness
4. Concentration
5. Wisdom

(5) The Five Spiritual Powers

1. Faith



2. Effort or energy
3. Mindfulness
4. Concentration
5. Wisdom

(6) The Seven Factors of Awakening

1. Mindfulness
2. Investigation of states
3. Effort or energy
4. Zest or joy
5. Tranquillity
6. Concentration
7. Equanimity

(7) The Noble Eightfold Path

1. Right view
2. Right thought
3. Right speech
4. Right action
5. Right livelihood
6. Right effort

7. Right mindfulness
8. Right concentration

THE CATEGORIZATION OF PARAMATTHA DHAMMA OF THE THIRTY-SEVEN FACTORS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Even though there are Thirty-seven Factors of Enlightenment, in fact there are only 14 types of ultimate (*paramattha*) Dhamma.

In the Thirty-seven Factors of Enlightenment, the most common topic expounded by the Buddha was effort. It appeared nine times, thus proving that effort is very important. Most meditators know that if one lacks effort, one will not be able to control the mind and will be distracted and drowsy. A diligent meditator will not be subdued by the Five Hindrances. Other ultimate (*paramattha*) Dhamma repeated several times include right mindfulness, wisdom, concentration and faith, confirming that these four types of *paramattha* Dhamma are very important. Sayadaw U Pandita used the five types of *paramattha* Dhamma, i.e. faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, wisdom and morality, as Panditarama's emblem.



Chapter 8

The Practice of

Mindfulness

8.1 Mindfulness

Mindfulness in Pali is “*sati*” or “*appamāda*”. “*Pamāda*” means heedlessness, negligence, carelessness, and “*appamāda*” is the opposite. Every day the Buddha reminded his disciples: “*Appamādena sampādettha*”, which means to succeed by means of vigilance and mindfulness. The Tripitaka expounded by the Buddha can be summarized as “*appamāda*”, thus from this aspect we know the importance of mindfulness.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MINDFULNESS

The characteristics (*lakkhana*) of mindfulness (*sati*) is not drifting but sustaining.

(1) Not Drifting

The characteristic of *sati* is not drifting (*apilāpana*). This means that *sati* can penetrate and go deeply into the object. If you throw a ball into water, it will float on the surface of the water; if you throw a rock into water, it will sink. Similarly, *sati* will go down into the object. If one is continuously focusing on the main object — the rising and falling of the abdomen during sitting meditation, as well as noting the left

step and right step during walking meditation, the mind will quieten and enter into the object. It will experience the various immediate phenomena with clarity, which is the characteristic of *sati*.

A person with *sati* will not be disturbed by any circumstances. He is firm and sure of his object and mind, as he continues to note. One must know clearly when noting. In the beginning, when mind power is strong, one will be able to focus. As time passes by, the mind becomes bored, and it is easy to shift attention to other objects; then, the mind becomes distracted. One must pay attention not to be distracted and continue to note. Then the mind can be kept under control and will no longer drift away. It is also very important to continue to note when you like what you perceive and when you dislike what you perceive; this is the best method of learning. Whether you like it or not, you need to ignore your preference. For instance, when a child goes to school, we tell him, “No matter whether you like it or not, you must go to school!” Parents should not pamper the child by saying, “I grant you the freedom of choice, you may go to school if you want to, but if you don’t want to go, it is also fine!” Similarly, when we establish *sati*, we should focus our attention firmly on the object, so that our focus will not begin floating away from the object — this is very important.

(2) Sustaining

Another characteristic of *sati* is sustaining (*upagaṇhanā*). *Sati* will support other associated mental factors in arising, e.g. effort, concentration, right thought, etc. and make them stronger. Thus, a person with *sati* is confident and is absolutely sure that what he does will not go wrong. We are confident towards matters that we are very certain will succeed and such self-confidence is very important. When we are confident, we will not ask other people; “Is my method of cultivation correct?” because we are secure in this aspect.

THE FUNCTION OF MINDFULNESS

The function (*rasa*) of *sati* is the absence of confusion (*asammosana*) or non-forgetfulness. A person with *sati* will not forget or lose the object that he notes. A person with *sati* will not forget his own experience. After noting the object tens of thousands of times, one who truly sees clearly will not forget; if one forgets, it is due to a lack of certainty and *sati*.

THE MANIFESTATION OF MINDFULNESS

When mindfulness appears, how do we feel? This is the meaning of the manifestation (*paccupaṭṭhāna*) of *sati*.

(1) The Arising of Guardianship

Sati is manifested as guardianship (*āraṅkha*). *Sati* can protect the mind from the invasion of defilements. If there is *sati*, we will feel protected. For instance, when we walk along a dangerous path and there are fierce dogs ahead, with *sati*, we will be alert to this danger and be prepared for it. In this way we can protect ourselves even when we are on a dangerous path. If, without *sati*, we unthinkingly enter a dangerous path, we will be attacked by the dogs. Thus, if we lack *sati*, we will encounter danger and trouble; with *sati*, we will be very safe.

(2) Confronting the Object

Sati is manifested as the state of confronting an objective field (*visayabhimukha bhāva*). Our main object is the rising and falling of the abdomen. When *sati* is present, it will enable our mind to stay with the object and to face the object directly. If our mind focuses precisely on the rising and falling of the abdomen, we will be able to clearly observe this process.

THE PROXIMATE CAUSES OF MINDFULNESS

The closest factor related to the arising of *sati* is known as “*padatṭhāna*”. The proximate causes of *sati* are as follows:

(1) Strong Memory

The proximate cause of *sati* is strong perception (*thirasaññā*), or what we call strong memory. During mental noting, we will not forget. Once a strong memory is developed, *sati* will arise. Sometimes, the memory may be weak; for instance, the meditator may note the movement of the abdomen as “rising, falling, rising, falling”, but his mind is distracted and he forgets about his object; as a result, *sati* will not arise. Thus, when we note, we should catch hold of the object and note or label it with a name. If we have a strong memory, we will be certain of our object and once the object is certain, we will not forget.

(2) The Four Foundations of Mindfulness

Another proximate cause of *sati* is the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*cattāro satipaṭṭhāna*), which refers to contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), contemplation of feelings (*vedanānupassanā*), contemplation of the mind (*cittānupassanā*) and contemplation of the dhammas

(*dhammānupassanā*). *Sati* itself is the proximate cause. *Sati* protects our body, feelings, mind and the dhammas. When *sati* protects our mind, it will not be defiled, and will be free from greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance, jealousy, suspicion and other defilements. Once our mind is pure, we will be very safe. The Buddha said, “One endowed with mindfulness is auspicious at all times (*satimanto sadā bhaddam*)”. Thus, how great it is for one to sustain mindfulness.

8.2 Mindfulness Eliminates Perversions

Meditators practicing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness will be able to extinguish wrong views that originate from 12 types of perversions (*vipallāsa*).

THE CATEGORIZATION OF PERVERSIONS

There are four types of perversions. These four are as follows: To regard what is impermanent (*anicca*) as permanent; what is painful (*dukkha*) as pleasant; what is without a self (*anattā*) as a self; what is impure (*asubha*) as pure. They can also be divided into three groups — perversion of perception (*saññā-vipallāsa*), perversion of mind (*citta-vipallāsa*) and perversion of views (*ditṭhi-vipallāsa*); each group has four types of perversions as mentioned above, which make 12 in total.

(1) Perversion of Perception (saññā-vipallāsa)

Perception (*saññā*) is one of the mental factors, the function of which is memory. Accordingly, perversion of perception

(*saññā-vipallāsa*) refers to the perversion of memory when we have the wrong memory of permanence, happiness, self and purity. It occurs when we remember impurity as purity, suffering as happiness, impermanence as permanence and no-self as a self. A person who practices vipassana meditation can overcome the perversion of perception because he learns to observe every single moment and he sees the truth of natural phenomena. As a result he does not have perverted perception.

(2) Perversion of Consciousness (*citta-vipallāsa*)

Perversion of mind (*citta-vipallāsa*) refers to the perversion of knowing. It is the mind that knows the object. Perversion of mind (*citta-vipallāsa*) contains the wrong knowing of permanence, happiness, self and purity. The mind mistakenly knows impurity as purity, suffering as happiness, impermanence as permanence and no-self as a self.

If there is craving, it is hard for one to be liberated, as the greater the attachment, the more suffering there is. For instance, when someone passes away, if this person is unrelated to us, we will not suffer, but if this person is a relative or friend, we will certainly suffer. This is due to attachment. The same applies to husband and wife. The more attached they are, the more difficult it is for them to let go. Attachment applies to both people and objects. We are often worried that the new

purchase we made will be damaged and this attitude is because we are over attached to it. Attachment is greed and greed is the cause of suffering. However, when what our mind knows is opposite the truth, then this is the perversion of mind.

(3) Perversion of Views (*diṭṭhi-vipallāsa*)

Perversion of views (*diṭṭhi-vipallāsa*) refers to the perversion of understanding. It contains the wrong views of permanence, happiness, self and purity: to view impurity as purity; to view suffering as happiness; to view impermanence as permanence; to view no-self as a self.

A meditator will understand that the mental factors of memory, mind and views arise together. When one notes, one has a firm memory. A firm memory forms the proximate cause for the arising of mindfulness (*sati*). Once mindfulness arises, we will clearly know and understand and our mind will be able to know the truth. At every single moment we note, we understand the truth of natural phenomena, so that we will be liberated from wrong views. A single moment of knowing, results in a single moment of liberation. Thus, when we note and contemplate clearly, we will be liberated from perversion of perception (*saññā-vipallāsa*), perversion of mind (*citta-vipallāsa*) and perversion of views (*diṭṭhi-vipallāsa*).

THE FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS ELIMINATES WRONG VIEWS

When we sustain mindfulness of the body, feelings, mind and *dhammas*, we will be able to see the truth and consequently right views will arise to eliminate the following wrong views: (1) to view the body as a pure form; (2) to view feelings as a source of happiness; (3) to view the mind as permanent; (4) to view all phenomena as having a self.

The Body is Impure

Those that practice the contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), observing the body clearly, noting the rising and falling of the abdomen, the steps taken during walking meditation, as well as all daily activities can be sure that right views will arise. We possess wrong views about our bodies and regard our bodies as clean and attractive. When the mind is pure, the meditator will understand that the body is impure. Even though we need to take care of this impure body at all times, we still love and are attached to it. When we practice the contemplation of the body, we truly see the impurity of this body. As a direct result of understanding this truth, our attachments will lessen and we will no longer support other defilements such as self-centeredness, arrogance, self-conceit etc.

Ten Phenomena that Follow the Body

In the suttas, it is recorded that there are 10 types of phenomena that follow our bodies. This does not only apply to humans, but applies to all sentient beings which possess a body. These are:

- (1) Cold (*sīta*): Sometimes the body will feel cold. Cold or heat belong to the fire element and we are always aware of this.
- (2) Hot (*uṇha*): Sometimes the body will feel hot.
- (3) Hunger (*jighacchā*): Hunger will follow the body at any time. No matter how much we eat, we will automatically feel hungry after some time. This applies to our entire lives.
- (4) Thirst (*pipāsā*): Our body will often feel thirsty and again this need follows our body at all times.
- (5) Defecation (*uccāra*): We need to defecate regularly, as our bodies need to eliminate internal wastes.
- (6) Urination (*passāva*): We need to urinate, as our bodies need to eliminate internal wastes.
- (7) Sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*): The body needs to sleep regularly and even when one has had sufficient sleep, one will still feel like sleeping.
- (8) Decay (*jarā*): Decay follows us every day, as our bodies age until we die.

(9) Illness (*byādhi*): If we do not take good care of our bodies, we will inevitably fall ill. For instance, one will catch a cold when one becomes wet and chilled in bad weather.

(10) Death (*maraṇa*): Every sentient being will die eventually.

These are the ten phenomena that follow our bodies throughout our lifetime.

When we observe this body with right mindfulness, we will truly know and understand the impurity of our bodies. The deeper our understanding is about the impurity of our bodies, the more the defilements of greed, anger, ignorance, attachment, self-conceit and arrogance will lessen. The many troubles we experience in our lives originate from defilements. When defilements are many, there are many problems; when defilements are less, there is more peace and happiness. Thus, when practicing the contemplation of the body, we need to produce right views to eliminate the wrong views that regard the body as a pure entity. It is very important to truly know our body and see its' impurity.

Feelings are Suffering

There are three types of feelings: painful feelings, pleasant feelings, neither-painful-nor-pleasant feelings.

When painful feelings arise, we think, “Ah! This is so troublesome, this is true suffering indeed!” In the past, we felt that life was wonderful and peaceful. However during meditation, we truly learn about the suffering in life. Every day, we are used to saying hello to each other, “Good morning!” “Good afternoon!” “Good evening!” Is it good this way? Nobody will tell us the truth. “There are sufferings in the morning!” “There are sufferings at night!” We mistakenly see life as being peaceful and happy whereas in fact, it is filled with suffering.

Now, let us select the most comfortable sitting position and after settling ourselves we shall not move, just note and observe. The truth will present itself, “Hey! I am suffering like this.....” fatigue, numbness, swelling and pain will be presented to us. When we see the truth of suffering, our attachments to our bodies will reduce, causing our minds to become purer.

We should pay attention to this practice of the contemplation of feelings (*vedanānupassanā*). Most meditators only note the painful feelings, but when pleasant feelings arise, the meditator will forget about noting and drift away, so when a pleasant feeling arises, we should also be aware and note it.

The Mind is Impermanent

The contemplation of mind (*cittānupassanā*) is to observe the mind. The arising and passing away of the mind is very fast. The moment it arises, it passes away immediately. Thus, we understand impermanence. We assume that many things are permanent. Will the meditation master be the same tomorrow? We feel that he is the same but in fact, every moment changes occur. Similarly, we may assume that the meditators who gave a report during yesterday's interview remain the same today, i.e. they do not improve. In fact, they are not the same, as the experience of meditators changes continuously. Thus, our thoughts are not only pervasive, but we think that everything is permanent. Yet as we know, all phenomena is impermanent. A person who practices the Four Foundations of Mindfulness should eliminate pervasive and wrong views.

All Phenomena is without A Self

The objects found beyond the first three foundations of mindfulness are contained within the contemplation of phenomena or *dhammas* (*dhammānupassanā*). What we see, hear, smell, taste, touch and think of, all such objects belong to the contemplation of phenomena or *dhammas*. Sometimes, we will have doubts, wondering how on

earth do we practice the contemplation of *dhammas*? As an example, consider drowsiness. It does not belong to contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), contemplation of feelings (*vedanānupassanā*) or contemplation of the mind (*cittānupassanā*). Anything that does not fall within the first three foundations of mindfulness belongs to contemplation of *dhammas*.

A person who has not attained stream-entry (*sotāpanna*) will have a “self” in his thoughts and he will not clearly know about “no-self”. Now when everyone listens to the Dhamma, who is expounding the Dhamma? Ordinary people think that this “self” is expounding the Dhamma. In fact, this is just the outcome of mind and body working together. When one expounds the Dhamma, where does the sound come from? From the mouth. The mouth is form (*rūpa*). However, if the mind does not arise, the mouth will not produce any sound, it will not talk, just like a dead person. Thus when form (*rūpa*) and mind (*nāma*) interact with one another, sound is produced.

The Dhamma transcends thinking and logic (*atakkāvacara*), because it is profound and cannot be known through thinking. Who can know the Dhamma? Our meditators know, not through thinking, but through experiencing it in the moment. Remember the analogy of the chili? Although we may think about how spicy a chili is, we can ponder for 100 years without

truly knowing and yet with a single bite, we will understand completely how spicy it is.

Two thousand six hundred years ago, the Buddha expounded this method. When we haven't acquired the knowledge of how the mind and body works, or the relationship of cause and effect, we will believe in the presence of a "self". Whereas in fact, all phenomena are no-self. Just like the fire does not exist within the lighter, being produced only when causes and conditions are fulfilled, so equally the soul does not truly exist. If we truly experience it, we will never forget. Without personally experiencing this type of wisdom, we will not be able to remember it. Every day, every single moment that we maintain the wrong view of a "self", this obscures our inherent wisdom, because our pervasive and wrong views have become deeply rooted in our minds.

CONCLUSION

Our wrong views are just like a large tree. At first, we only have our small knife of observation in order to cut down this tree. Even though it is just a small knife, with every cut our memory, knowing and understanding of wrong views will be reduced. With every cut, we move closer to the goal of cutting the tree down. Patience leads to *Nibbāna*. As long as

we persist in our efforts, one day, the tree will fall. So we must be patient, we must endure. The accomplishment of worldly Dhamma can easily be attained, but transcendental Dhamma is not easy to obtain, so one needs to be patient.

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness expounded by the Buddha are unsurpassable and most supreme, being the true Dhamma (*saddhamma*) that the devas wish to learn. We are so lucky to have the opportunity of learning it now, so we must be diligent and not waste time. If you contemplate on the truth of your body, feelings, mind and *dhammas* in every single moment, eliminate pervasive and wrong views, you will attain the path (*magga*), the fruition (*phala*) and *Nibbāna* eventually.

Chapter 9

The Essentials of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness

9.1 The Four Foundations of Mindfulness

The “Foundation of Mindfulness” in Pali is “*satipaṭṭhāna*”. “*Sati*” means mindfulness, awareness of what is occurring at the moment, and “*paṭṭhāna*” means something that goes down into, or enters into or spreads over the object. Therefore, *satipaṭṭhāna* means the type of mindfulness that has gone down into the object, that has entered into the object and that has spread over the object.

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness are all about one ultimate (*paramattha*) Dhamma — “Mindfulness (*sati*)”. In this case, mindfulness (*sati*) is applied to four different kinds of objects, so it is referred to as the “Four Foundations of Mindfulness”. Namely, contemplation of the body, contemplation of feelings, contemplation of the mind and contemplation of *dhammas*.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

Contemplation of the Body (kāyānupassanā)

Contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*) is to take the physical body as an object of meditation.

Contemplation of Feelings (vedanānupassanā)

Contemplation of feelings (*vedanānupassanā*) is to take feelings as an object of meditation. Where are these feelings? In our bodies. We feel that our feelings and bodies cannot be separated. Sometimes we might experience a headache, but where is the pain? The pain is a feeling. Pain will change and move but the head will not move to another place. A headache is just a concept, with the reality being that the head and the pain are two different things; the head is materiality (*rūpa*) whereas the pain is mentality (*nāma*). Among the 16 types of insight knowledge, the first is the “analytical knowledge of mind and matter” (*nāmarūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*), which is the ability to define mentality and materiality, or mind and body.

Contemplation of the feelings (*vedanānupassanā*) refers to observation of the feelings. One feels pain during sitting meditation. Why? Because we do not move, thus, there is pain.

If one moves only slightly, the painful sensation will change and vanish. During sitting meditation, once we have found the most comfortable position, we do not need to move anymore, as the natural phenomena of the body will appear and present itself as a form of suffering. We just need to observe and note “pain, pain, pain”, “suffering, suffering, suffering”.

We love our bodies and are attached to our own lives, because we do not understand that this body is suffering and is a burden to us. We put on cosmetics and apply perfume to conceal the impurity of our bodies. However, during intensive meditation, we will realize that this body will experience pain and that this is suffering. Once our realization deepens, attachments and craving will reduce. The cravings for pleasant feelings and rejection of painful feelings will cause us much distress and this is why contemplation of our feelings is very important.

Contemplation of the Mind (cittānupassanā)

Contemplation of the mind (*cittānupassanā*) is also known as contemplation of consciousness. We only have one mind, so how do we contemplate the mind? The mind that arises subsequently notes the mind that arises previously. The occurrences of the arising and passing away of the mind are very fast. It is said that the mind arises and passes away ten

trillion times within a single moment. The mind cannot arise alone, but does so together with mental factors (*cetasika*), as when a king goes on inspection, he will be accompanied by his ministers.

When we are distracted, we need to pay attention and note “thinking, thinking, thinking” and then the mind that notes will not be distracted. Why? Because there is only one mind, so it is impossible for two minds to arise at the same time. If the distracted mind arises, the mind that notes disappears; if the mind that notes arises, the distracted mind disappears.

Contemplation of Dhammas (dhammānupassanā)

No matter what we see, hear, smell, taste, touch or think of, all these objects are included in the contemplation of *dhammas* (*dhammānupassanā*).

The Four Noble Truths are not included in the Thirty-seven Factors of Enlightenment, because the factors of enlightenment refer to the path of cultivation, whereas the Four Noble Truths is the destination of the path. We use the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) mentioned within the Thirty-seven Factors of Enlightenment, so that we can see, know and understand the true quality of suffering. In every single moment of our lives, we become slaves to our bodies. At all times we must take care of it, for if we are

careless, our bodies will give us problems. When we wake up in the morning, we need to wash our faces and go to the toilet; when we are hungry, we must eat. If we have one day without food, we will suffer. Thus, the sages feel that taking care of our bodies and minds is a heavy burden. However ordinary people enjoy doing so and this is the difference in views held by the sages versus the ordinary people. The sages possess right views while average folks are often attached to evil views. When we attain the path (*magga*), fruition (*phala*) and *Nibbāna*, we will also develop aversion to our bodies and minds, saying “Ah! This mind and body is suffering, I want to be liberated from this burden!”

May all of you be able to let go of the heavy burden of your bodies and minds and attain *Nibbāna*.

9.2 The Benefits of Practicing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness

THE ORIGINS OF MAHĀSATIPAṬṬHĀNA SUTTA

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) is found in *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. The Buddha expounded this sutta in Kammasadhamma City of Kuru. The Buddha chose this place to expound the Four Foundations of Mindfulness because he knew that the residents maintained alertness and mindfulness while at work and would possess the ability to understand the teachings. To thoroughly understand and practice the Four Foundations of Mindfulness is not easy, because our minds are often deluded and distracted. Thus, to learn this true Dhamma is a difficult task to accomplish.

THE BENEFITS OF PRACTICING THE FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

The *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* begins with the Buddha's discourse on the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness:

*Ekāyano ayaṃ, bhikkhave, maggo sattānaṃ
visuddhiyā, sokaparidevānaṃ samatikkamāya,
dukkhadomanassānaṃ atthaṅgamāya, ñāyassa
adhigamāya, nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya, yadidaṃ
cattāro satipaṭṭhānā.*

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.

(1) Purifying Sentient Beings

The Buddha said that if all sentient beings wish to purify their own lives, be free from defilements and attain purity (*visuddhi*), The Four Foundations of Mindfulness is the only effective method (*ekāyano ayaṃ*). Practitioners of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness are truly able to purify their lives, this being a prerequisite to making progress on the Noble Path and towards *Nibbāna*. There are no other ways available.

(2) Overcoming Sorrow and Lamentation

By practicing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, one can

overcome sorrow (*soka*) and lamentation (*parideva*). In our lives, when unwholesome kamma matures, we will experience grief and sadness, which can only be overcome by practicing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

(3) Extinguishing Pain and Grief

By practicing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, one can extinguish pain and worry. Pain refers to physical suffering (*dukkha*); worry refers to the suffering of the mind (*domanassa*). By practicing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, these sufferings of the body and mind can be eliminated (*atthaṅgamā*).

During the Buddha's era, there was a rich merchant's daughter in Sravasti, named *Patācārā* who eloped with her family's servant. Her husband died after being bitten by a poisonous snake, this happening during the night she gave birth to her second child. Without anyone to depend on, she went home with her two children. When crossing the river, one of her children died after being attacked by an eagle and the other child drowned in the river. She was devastated. She decided to return to her hometown, and when she came to the outskirts, she asked a passerby about her parents. She was told that her parents and brothers had died when their house collapsed during a storm, and now their bodies were being

cremated. She was so devastated that she lost her sanity and started walking around naked.

The Buddha was expounding the Dhamma in Jeta Grove, when he saw her and said, “My daughter, please regain your mindfulness.” Hearing the Buddha’s voice, she regained her sanity. Someone threw a cloth to her, which she wrapped around her body and approached the Buddha. She prostrated in front of the Buddha and told him her sad story.

The Buddha expounded the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, told her that no one could help her to extinguish her suffering, not even her son, parents or brothers. If one wants to overcome all suffering, one needs to practice the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, this is the only way. Buddha ended his teachings with the following verse:

There are no sons to give shelter,
no father, no family
for one seized by the Ender,
no shelter among kin.
Realizing this force of reasoning,
the wise man, restrained by virtue,
should make the path pure –right away–
that goes all the way to Unbinding.

~*Dhammapada* 288, 289¹

¹ Translated from Pali by Bhikkhu Thanissaro.

Patācārā was able to fully understand that all phenomena are impermanent and all feelings are suffering. Her sorrow ceased, her mind became calm and only the mind and object remained. As her mind followed the object, she saw that it changes continuously, arising and passing away, arising and passing away, arising and passing away and eventually it neither arose nor passed away. She had perfected her perfections (*pāramī*) for 100 thousand *kappas* and eventually she attained stream-entry (*sotāpanna*). Thus, she sought renunciation under the Buddha and became a bhikkhuni that was foremost in upholding the precepts.

This is one of the examples of extinguishing suffering and worry through the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

(4) Reaching the Noble Path

To reach the noble path refers to attaining the wisdom of a sage. Every day we make a vow: may the merits I attained become the favorable conditions that will support me in attaining the knowledge of the path (*maggañāṇa*) and the knowledge of the fruition (*phalañāṇa*)². *Maggañāṇa* and *phalañāṇa* are two states of mind. One should remember: the mind knows its object. What object does path consciousness

² *Idaṃ me puñña magga-phala-ñāṇassa paccayo hotu.*

(*maggacitta*) and fruition consciousness (*phalacitta*) know? Both know about *Nibbāna*, which is also a type of object. The mind that knows *Nibbāna* is also known as supramundane consciousness (*lokuttaracitta*)³. There are eight types of supramundane consciousness, being the four types of path consciousness (*maggacitta*) and the four types of fruition consciousness (*phalacitta*), which only focus on *Nibbāna* as their object.

As we practise vipassana meditation, the level of understanding deepens gradually. As beginners of meditation who observe the abdomen, what we know about the abdomen is only a concept. For instance, it has a shape and position etc. As our concentration deepens, we no longer hold on to the concept of the abdomen's shape or position, we only know the feeling of rising and falling movements. Some people that do not understand will comment, “Mahasi Sayadaw's meditation

³ There are eight types of supramundane consciousness. These pertain to the four stages of enlightenment—stream-entry, once-returning, non-returning, and Arahantship. Each stage involves two types of consciousness, i.e., path consciousness and fruition consciousness. All supramundane consciousness take as object the unconditioned reality, *Nibbāna*, but they differ as paths and fruits according to their functions. The path consciousness has the function of eradicating (or of permanently attenuating) defilements; the fruition consciousness has the function of experiencing the degree of liberation made possible by the corresponding path. The path consciousness is a *kusalacitta*, a wholesome state; the fruition consciousness is a *vipākacitta*, a resultant. Each path consciousness arises only once, and endures only for one mind-moment; it is never repeated in the mental continuum of the person who attains it. The corresponding fruition consciousness initially arises immediately after the path moment, and endures for two or three mind-moments. Subsequently it can be repeated, and with practice can be made to endure for many mind-moments, in the supramundane absorption. (Quoted from “*A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*”, originally edited and translated from Pali text by Mahāthera Nārada, and translation revised by Bhikkhu Bodhi.)

method will not lead to enlightenment, because the rising and falling of the abdomen is a concept and there should not be any concepts with vipassana meditation.” A commentator like this has not practiced this method diligently and just simply comes to a conclusion regarding this matter. We feel a great sense of regret when we encounter such comments. It is explained very clearly in the sutta, the contemplation of the body is to observe the body. How can there be any mistake if one uses the body as an object of meditation? The object of vipassana meditation is not a concept, something that individuals who practice with sincerity will understand. The object of vipassana meditation is the truth of natural phenomena — ultimate (*paramattha*) Dhamma. For instance, when we drink water, we know that the cup is the vessel that holds the water, but the water is what we truly need. People without a clear concept will say, “Look, he is drinking the cup.” They do not see the water in the cup. Similarly, we note the rising and falling of the abdomen as our object, the movement of the abdomen being the Four Elements and the Four Elements being ultimate (*paramattha*) Dhamma. We should be confident of the Dhamma we practice.

When the mind is able to concentrate, the meditator does not have the concept of the abdomen, he only knows movement. The mind knows its object, which in this instance is movement, i.e. the characteristic of the wind element

(*vāyodhātu*). The mind notes rising and falling, rising and falling. It is not muddled and greed, anger and ignorance are absent. If the mind follows the object for an hour, the mind is purified for an hour — this is the right way. Those that obtain insight knowledge (*vipassanāñāṇa*), have minds that are often focused on the object, making them feel satisfied and joyful. When one understands that only the mind and object are present, one will harbor feelings of disgust and will wish to be liberated from this type of suffering. The way to be liberated from suffering is to practice diligently. One must balance confidence and wisdom together with effort and concentration. One should adjust the balancing with mindfulness. When balance is reached, meditators will reach a state of equanimity. During this moment, suffering and pain can be overcome. One can sustain one's mindfulness when one meditates for 3 hours or even 6 hours.

When the object is something that is conditioned (*saṅkhāra*), the object changes every single moment and the mind should know every single moment; when the object is something unconditioned (*asaṅkhārā*), i.e. *Nibbāna*, the path consciousness (*maggacitta*) and the fruition consciousness (*phalacitta*) will know and this is the wisdom of a sage. Path consciousness and fruition consciousness only focus on unconditioned things as their object, like *Nibbāna* which neither arises nor passes away.

(5) Attaining Nibbāna

When the knowledge of the path (*maggañāṇa*) and the knowledge of the fruition (*phalañāṇa*) arise, one will attain *Nibbāna* (*nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya*). *Maggañāṇa* and *phalañāṇa* are mind, *Nibbāna* is the object, which the mind focuses on. “What is *Nibbāna*?” A person that truly sees will understand, it is not too difficult. When we are on the right path, the mind of *maggañāṇa* and *phalañāṇa* catches *Nibbāna* and then we will attain enlightenment.

Thus, our mind should be pure, this is very important. If our minds are distracted, unstable and filled with worries and suspicion, we will not be able to see *Nibbāna*. Thus, just ignore everything, it is sufficient as long as the mind follows the chosen object. When one knows this object, the mind is not ignorant. When one forgets about the object, the mind simply catches hold of other objects and becomes distracted. Do not allow this to happen, the object should be clear and absolute.

Practicing the Four Foundations of Mindfulness will bring you five types of benefits. If you divide overcoming sorrow and grief as two types, as well as extinguishing the suffering of body and mind as another two types, there will be seven types of benefits.

When the Buddha expounded on the benefits of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, his listeners were joyful and interested in the teachings. Subsequently, the Buddha explained in detail the 21 chapters on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

Chapter 10

**Contemplation of the
Body**



“*Kāyānupassanā*” is contemplation of the body. “*Kāyā*” is the body; “*anu*” is once and again; “*passati*” is see; “*anupassati*” is to see many times repeatedly; thus, “*kāyānupassanā*” means to contemplate the body repeatedly as an object.

The Buddha divided the meditation objects of the body into 14 parts. It is difficult to practice all 14 parts. We only have one mind, so we should focus our mind on the most prominent object. Once you understand an object, you will understand the others. For instance, a person who has never seen the ocean needs only to be brought to the seaside — you do not need to take him to the center of the ocean. He will not exclaim, “Oh! The ocean is so wide, I can’t see its end!” Or, “The water in the ocean is salty, I wonder if the water at the center of the ocean is salty as well!” He will understand. One just needs to understand one part, as the rest is the same and so one will understand.

10.1 Mindfulness of Breathing

The first part of the object of the body that the Buddha identified is mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpāna*). “*Anāpāna*” means breathing in and out. This method of cultivation is to pay attention to our breathing.

THE PLACE TO PRACTISE MINDFULNESS OF BREATHING

*Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu arañña*gato vā
rukhamūlagato vā suññāgāragato vā.....

Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu having gone to the forest, to the foot of a tree, or to a secluded place.....

The Buddha said that individuals who practice mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpāna*) should select one of the following places:

- (1) A forest (*arañña*)
- (2) The foot of a tree (*rukhamūla*)
- (3) A secluded place (*suññāgāra*)

Nowadays, one can hardly find tranquillity in a forest or at

the foot of a tree, since many people go there for recreation and to take photos. A secluded place may be one's own room, where one can close the doors and windows, as well as switch off the mobile phone and then it can be considered a quiet place. The meditation conditions of current meditators are much better than the conditions during the Buddha's era; in the past, no one provided such ideal meditation centres and there was no interview session either. If someone asked the Buddha, "World Honoured One, how do I meditate?" The Buddha would expound briefly, "Contemplate your body and understand its characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and no-self (*anattā*), i.e. the Three Dhamma Seals". It is recorded in the sutta that before the rains retreat, many disciples requested Buddha's instructions on meditation. The Buddha knew all sentient beings' capacity. If his disciple had contemplated upon the repulsiveness of the body in the past, he would give instructions on the contemplation on the repulsiveness of the body; if his disciple had practiced mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpāna*) in the past, he would provide instructions on the practice of mindfulness of breathing. After giving instructions, the Buddha would remind his disciples, "Maintain your mindfulness, be vigilant (*appamāda*) and continue to contemplate the function of the body and mind". His disciples replied, "Yes, World Honored

One”. Then, his disciples would find a quiet place to practice in solitude. They sustained their daily lives by begging for alms. A life like this is carefree, relaxed and comfortable, without any form of burden.

I lived in the forest for several months together with three bhikkhus. At 4 am, we left the forest, when the sky was still dark, using handheld lamps to see. We had to walk for up to one hour in order to reach the nearest village for alms-begging. Around 6 am, we returned to our huts in the forest and ate some food for breakfast, after offering it first to the Buddha. Then, we started to read and meditate. At approximately 11 am, we ate again. If we couldn’t finish the food, we would give the remainder to the squirrels and birds. Life in the forest is quiet and carefree and here it is easy for the mind to maintain a state of tranquillity and peace.

The Buddha said there were many benefits of living in a forest that one would not understand without experiencing it. During the Buddha’s era, there were times when the Buddha stayed at the monastery and had many visitors. Some Arahants stayed in the forest during the day and returned to the monastery when the sun set, because they did not like to stay in places filled with people. They realized that the more people there were, the more trouble there would be. Nowadays, it is not easy to find a quiet place. We are so fortunate to have

a very good opportunity to come to a meditation centre that is comfortable and where there are volunteers taking care of our food etc. Such opportunities are rare, you should cherish them.

NOTING OUR BREATHING

*Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu araññagato vā
rukhamūlagato vā suññāgāragato vā nisīdati
pallaṅkaṃ ābhujitvā ujum kāyaṃ pañidhāya
parimukhaṃ satim upatthapetvā.*

Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu having gone to the forest, to the foot of a tree, or to a secluded place, sits down cross-legged, keeps his upper body erect, and directs mindfulness toward the object of meditation.

The Buddha said, once you chose a place, you should sit down cross-legged, with your body erect and focus your mindfulness on your breathing. There is no special explanation on the location of the breath as the commentaries have this explanation. During that time, the disciples paid attention to the breathing near the nostrils. When the breath enters the body and touches the nostrils, one will feel a sensation of softness. People in the past had pure minds, thus they did not forget their

meditation object easily. Now, if we focus our minds near the nostrils, as the object is very fine, the mind drifts away easily. Mahasi Sayadaw gave us meditation instructions — to focus on the rising and falling of the abdomen as the object. When wind enters the body, the abdomen will expand or rise, this is prominent. It is much easier for the mind to catch hold of a prominent object, so that the mind can know clearly. For instance, in order to look for a person in a crowd, if the person waves at us, we will find him easily. A moving object will attract attention more easily than a motionless object.

So satova assasati, satova passasati. Dīghaṃ vā assasanto ‘dīghaṃ assasāmī’ ti pajānāti, dīghaṃ vā passasanto ‘dīghaṃ passasāmī’ ti pajānāti. Rassaṃ vā assasanto ‘rassaṃ assasāmī’ ti pajānāti, rassaṃ vā passasanto ‘rassaṃ passasāmī’ ti pajānāti.

Ever mindful, he breathes in, ever mindful, he breathes out. Breathing in a long breath, he knows, ‘I breathe in long’; breathing out a long breath, he knows, ‘I breathe out long.’ Breathing in a short breath, he knows, ‘I breathe in short’; breathing out a short breath, he knows, ‘I breathe out short.’

As we practice Mahasi Sayadaw’s method, we know his method corresponds with the Buddha’s method. We breathe

in and out with mindfulness; we know that when we breathe in, the abdomen rises and when we breathe out the abdomen falls; this is the same, the only difference lies in the location that one pays attention to. The Buddha said, when one breathes in a long breath, one knows that one is breathing in a long breath; when one breathes out a long breath, one knows that one is breathing out a long breath; when breathing in a short breath, one knows that one is breathing in a short breath; when breathing out a short breath, one knows that one is breathing out a short breath. Our breathing maybe long or short, sometimes its soft, sometimes it is very fine; there are also times when it feels like breathing has stopped. No matter how the object changes, we must note clearly and note continuously.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL BODY

Iti ajjhattaṃ vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati, bahiddhā vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati, ajjhattabahiddhā vā kāye kāyānupassī viharati.

Thus he dwells contemplating the body in the body internally, or he dwells contemplating the body in the body externally, or he dwells contemplating the body in the body internally and externally.

By focusing on the body internally (*ajjhataṃ vā kāye*), we will be able to contemplate with ease. But the Buddha said the external part of our body is also the object of vipassana meditation, so how do we note the external object? People that focus on the surface meaning of words will tend to misunderstand. The commentaries said, the so-called external part, refers to other people. How do we know about the breathing of others? We know through deduction (*anumāna*) that if, “I am breathing, he is also breathing”. By noting the internal part of our body, we will know the external part of the body.

THE THREE TYPES OF “PRESENT”

Seize the moment, live in the present and we will understand the truth of natural phenomena. There are three types of “present” (*paccuppana*).

(1) Momentary Present

Momentary Present (*khana-paccuppanna*) refers to the mind and consciousness in the present moment. It includes arising (*uppāda*), presence (*ṭhiti*) and passing away (*bhaṅga*), this is the true present moment. With a click of our fingers, the

mind goes through the stages of arising and passing away ten trillion times. The commentary says we cannot note the single moment between arising and passing away.

(2) *Flowing Present*

Flowing Present (*santati-paccuppanna*) refers to a period of time, such as the continuity of second after second or minute after minute. We can note the Flowing Present.

We are unable to note the Momentary Present because it is much too fast, so how do we note? The solution is to practice the natural way, by noting the Flowing Present. For instance, the rising and falling of the abdomen takes one second and within this one second, the mind has arisen and passed away countless times. The Flowing Present is the entire process of the abdomen's expansion, from the beginning to the middle and to the end and the process of the abdomen's contraction, from the beginning to the middle and to the end. We can note the one second or half a second in the Flowing Present, as long as the mind follows the object continuously without shifting to another object. Then we can say that the mind is focused in the present moment.

One is not living in the present moment if one is thinking or distracted. Sometimes when a meditator has a certain type of experience during his practice, he will tend to reminisce

about it by the end of the experience. However, one does not live in the present moment if one starts reminiscing. Because form (*rūpa*) and mind (*nāma*) change every single moment continuously arising and passing away, as soon as we start to think, we are no longer living in the present moment. For instance, in order to look at flowing water in a river, for instance, we will need to stop at a place and look continuously. If we change places, when we move, we will not be able to see the section of the flowing water that we had been observing and consequently we will not know how the flowing water might have changed. Thus, do not reminisce or think, as we must know how the body and mind functions. Continue to note how the object arises and passes away, comes and goes; note how physical phenomena and mental phenomena flow. When you see, know and understand, you will know the cause and the effect.

The mind's duty is to know; we should not allow our minds to be distracted and simply catch hold of various objects. We should place our minds on the main object, i.e. on our bodies. For example, if the mind focuses on the body, when a mosquito or fly touches the body, the meditator will know immediately. If the mind is distracted, one will not notice even when one is bitten by a mosquito, because the mind is not focused on the body.

The mind's duty is to know its object; we should focus our minds on our bodies in order to observe the function of our minds and bodies. For instance, in order to look at flowing water in a river, do not be nervous and run around, you just need to sit by the flowing water, as the water flows by. It is then that we will be able to catch hold of the moment, this is very important.

(3) Enduring Present

Enduring Present (*addhā-paccuppanna*) refers to a longer period. There are four seasons in a year and here winter lasts for three months. We might say during this time “It is winter now”. Since we are still within the three months of winter and it has not passed, this is Enduring Present. Today has 24 hours and this means that morning is today, afternoon is today and night is today — this is also Enduring Present.

If you can note the Flowing Present, it is much easier to note the Enduring Present, because it is a longer period. For example, based on the changes within five years, we will know we have aged. During the interview, one does not report the situation during the interview, one should report on the progress of meditation for the past two days. The past two days are considered as the present. However, for an individual that does not practice correctly, it is difficult to note the Enduring Present, not to mention noting the Flowing Present.

BREATHING IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS OUR LIVES

We should know our own lives. Everyone must breathe; we can't live without breathing. Breathing is the most important part of our life and this is why we focus on breathing as the main object of meditation.

If the abdomen arises without falling, we will pass away. When death is not too far away, we are not able to ascertain whether tomorrow will come first or our next life will come first. Once our breathing stops, this life time ends and we do not have tomorrow. If we contemplate this way, our effort will arise.

Nobody is able to guarantee that we will be alive tomorrow, not even ourselves. Before death arrives, since we still have good health and stamina, we should be diligent in purifying ourselves, so that we will be liberated from suffering and defilements. We must contemplate this way to improve our efforts.

It is essential to continue to note every single moment; when we continue noting, the power of our mind will increase. Ten minutes of noting leads to a pure mind for ten minutes; one hour of noting leads to a pure mind for one hour. This type of pure mind is the same as the mind of an Arahant. An

Arahant's mind is free from afflictive hindrances, the same as our pure mind in that single moment which is also free from afflictive hindrances. It is carefree, pure and tranquil. In order to experience the same mind as an Arahant, *satipaṭṭhāna* is the only method to practice.

The virtue of Dhamma can be personally experienced (*sandiṭṭhiko*), it is not limited by time (*akāliko*); when you practice now, you will be able to attain the benefits of the Dhamma in the present moment. People who are diligent will gain experience, at least experiencing a short period of tranquillity and peace. Why is the mind distracted? Because of craving, the mind craves for another object. A craving mind is an unwholesome mind, it is a mind far from *Nibbāna*. If one maintains noting, craving will not arise. Sustain your noting no matter whether it is good or bad, as both good and bad conditions are impermanent; do not worry if the object drifts away, be mindful immediately and refocus your mind on the object; to worry or to resist are a form of anger. If you become muddled or dazed, you will not be able to know the object clearly, this is ignorance. If you want the mind to be pure, you will need to avoid the defilements of greed, anger and ignorance. A mind that notes does not harbor feelings of greed, anger and ignorance; the mind just notes only. "Rising,

falling, rising, falling”. When we note continuously, our minds will maintain their purity and this is how we will encounter *Nibbāna*.

10.2 The Postures of the Body

The second part of the objects of the body that the Buddha identified is the postures of the body (*iriyāpatha*). The postures of the body include walking, standing, sitting and lying down. When one practices sitting meditation for a long period of time, one needs to stand up; after standing for a long time, one needs to walk and when one is tired from walking, one needs to practice sitting meditation again. At night, when it is getting late and time for sleep, one needs to lie down and rest.

NOTING THE FOUR TYPES OF BODY POSTURES

Puna caparaṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhu gacchanto vā ‘gacchāmī’ ti pajānāti, ṭhito vā ‘ṭhitomhī’ ti pajānāti, nisinno vā ‘nisinnomhī’ ti pajānāti, sayāno vā ‘sayānomhī’ ti pajānāti. Yathā vā panassa kāyo paṇihito hoti, tathā naṃ pajānāti.

And again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu knows, ‘I am going□, when he is going; he knows, ‘I am standing□, when he is standing; he knows, ‘I am sitting□, when he is sitting; he knows, ‘I am lying down□, when he is lying down; or just as his body is disposed so he knows it.

In this quotation, “bhikkhu” refers to an individual who is capable of extinguishing afflictive hindrances (*kilesa bhindati*). When the meditator starts to note every single moment, he too, will be able to extinguish afflictive hindrances gradually. Thus, the meditator is also a person that is capable of eliminating afflictive hindrances. In this way the Buddha expounded the Dhamma to all practitioners, not only to the bhikkhus.

The Buddha said, when one walks, one should know clearly that one is walking; the same applies when one is standing, sitting and lying down. One should clearly know the body’s movements, including the changes in postures. For instance, one should pay attention to the process of changing from a sitting to a standing posture. How does one know? The Buddha did not give further explanation on this aspect.

THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF VENERABLE ĀNANDA

It is very important to note with care and detail the process of changing postures, as the following incident shows. The night before the first Buddhist council, Venerable *Ānanda* practiced diligently. At that time, Venerable *Ānanda* was a stream-entrant (*sotāpanna*), so he still had not extinguished his defilements.

Some criticized him for having desires and he agreed with them. There was only one day left before the first Buddhist council was to be held and if he did not attain Arahantship before it began, he would not be allowed to attend. This was because only Arahants were permitted to attend the meeting. Venerable *Mahākassapa* had called together 499 Arahants for the first Buddhist council. He needed 500 Arahants, but as he knew Venerable *Ānanda* would attain enlightenment during the night, he kept a place for him.

Venerable *Ānanda* cultivated *satipaṭṭhāna* throughout the night. He practiced sitting meditation and walking meditation, “raising, pushing forward, lowering” Sometimes his mind was distracted. There were times when he was worried as he thought of the criticisms raised by others. He only had one night. Due to the imbalances in his effort and concentration (i.e. too much effort, too little concentration), the more diligent he was, the more distracted he became. He did not rest the entire night. When the sun rose, he let go. He no longer cared about other’s criticisms. It was time to rest! He entered his room, sat on the bed and was about to lie down. His feet were off the ground, his body had not yet touched the bed. During the process of changing postures from sitting to lying down, he extinguished all his defilements and attained Arahantship. The path (*magga*) and the fruition (*phala*) are attained within

a moment only. During the single moment when an Arahant's *Magga* arises, all defilements are extinguished.

There must be a balance between effort and concentration. When there is too much effort, one should relax; yet one should not be too relaxed either, as too much relaxation will lead to drowsiness and confusion. Once balance is achieved between effort and concentration, the mind will be able to note the object clearly. Most meditators lack effort, but the opposite occurred in Venerable *Ānanda*'s case, when he exerted too much effort in his practice. As soon as he balanced effort and concentration, he achieved Arahantship.

TO KNOW THE PRESENT MOMENT THROUGH NOTING

The meditator's work begins when he rises from his bed in the morning with a mind that is awake. He notes his body lying on the bed, followed by gradually rising and sitting up; he notes getting off the bed; he notes when he stands up and then walks; he notes his left step and right step. One should be observant of all actions in one's daily life. Throughout the day, we spend most of the time sitting, walking or standing, generally lying down only at night. At mealtimes, one should note the action of getting food. Details are very important and

should not be neglected. There should be continuous noting by our minds. When we see food, note “seeing, seeing” and then note “taking, taking” and then “putting down, putting down”. So long one can sustain noting, a craving mind will not develop. It is difficult to have a mind free from craving. When we see delicious food, we want to taste it. To want something is a form of greed and this is when the craving mind arises. When we note, the craving mind passes away. Therefore, when the craving mind arises, it should be subdued by the noting mind that arises and the same process repeats itself. The noting mind is wholesome, the craving mind is unwholesome. As long as we continue to note, the craving mind will not have any opportunity to arise. When we note continuously, our minds will become purer.

The Buddha said, “When the bhikkhu is walking, he knows, ‘I am walking’”. When we are walking, we must know that we are walking and in order to know this we must have mindfulness. The proximate cause of mindfulness is a strong and firm memory. Therefore, by following the Buddha’s teachings, we give the following meditation instructions: when you walk, you should note “left step, right step”; when your left foot moves, you know it is “left”; when your right foot moves, you know it is “right”. When we walk slowly, we note in greater detail, i.e. “raising, pushing forward, lowering”. The most

important part is for the mind to follow the object in order to avoid distraction. During cultivation, sometimes we forget or note incorrectly. We might note “left step” when our right foot is moving, or “right step” when our left foot is moving. This is because we are careless.

TRANSCENDING CONCEPTS

Vipassana meditation is learning about our own lives and learning how our minds and bodies function. In fact, each of us consists of form (*rūpa*) and mind (*nāma*). But each one of us has a different name, which is just a concept. Concepts obscure the truth of natural phenomena. When we first begin to practice vipassana meditation, we will not understand this, because we are still using concepts. For instance, when we are walking, we note “raising, pushing forward, lowering”. So, what is raising? The foot is raising, “foot” being a concept. If the mind is focused, we will be aware of the truth of natural phenomena regardless of what action is involved—i.e. ultimate (*paramattha*) Dhamma. During ‘raising’, we will be able to sense the strength needed to pull the foot upwards; when ‘pushing forward’, we can sense the strength needed to push the foot forward; when ‘lowering’, we also can sense the strength involved in lowering the foot. We will

be aware that our footsteps may be light or heavy. These are the characteristics of the four great elements, i.e. *paramattha*.

If the mind does not exist, can one walk? Where will the strength come from? The strength originates from the mind. The mind produces the wind element, i.e. the wind element arises from the mind. The characteristic of the wind element is movement. If the mind does not exist, the body will not move. There should first be an intention, in order to produce a behavior or action. Intention is mind (*nāma*), not form (*rūpa*). All intentions come from the mind. When the intention to move arises, then our bodies move. Just like walking meditation, one should have the intention to raise the foot before the foot is actually raised. Sometimes the intention to move arises, followed immediately by an intention of “don’t feel like moving” and then the body will not move. But, we do not need to purposely seek intention, our minds just need to follow the movements in the present moment. The underlying intention of actions do not belong to contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), they belong to contemplation of the mind (*cittānupassanā*).

We should not think or reminisce. We just need to note the object in the present moment. When we note continuously, our minds will understand. “Oh! So it is like that”. Different action exists in every single moment; different intention exists

in every single moment; different mind exists in every single moment. The mind knows its object. When the practitioner raises his foot, he knows “raising”; when pushing the foot forward, he knows that “the mind that notes raising” is gone and now it is the mind that knows “pushing forward”. So, where is the mind that knows about raising the foot? It has passed away. During sitting meditation, one notes the rising and falling of the abdomen. When the abdomen rises, one knows it is rising; when the abdomen falls, one knows that “the mind that notes rising” has gone. The phenomena of any moment is different, it comes and goes, arises and passes away. Every single moment is brand new. It is very interesting. Such experience cannot be attained through thinking, one needs to practice alone. The truth of natural phenomena is in the present moment.

One should seize the present moment and live in the present moment. One should see, know and understand. This is true vipassana meditation.

10.3 Clearly Knowing

The third part of the objects of the body is “clearly knowing” (*sampajāna*). Clearly knowing stands for an intensified form of knowing. It means to know consciously, to know clearly and to know with certainty.

WHEN DO WE NEED MINDFULNESS WITH CLEARLY KNOWING?

Puna caparaṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhu abhikkante paṭikkante sampajānakārī hoti, ālokite vilokite sampajānakārī hoti, samiñjite pasārite sampajānakārī hoti, saṅghātipattacīvaradhāraṇe sampajānakārī hoti, asite pīte khāyite sāyite sampajānakārī hoti, uccārapassāvakamme sampajānakārī hoti, gate thite nisinne sutte jāgarite bhāsīte tuṅhībhāve sampajānakārī hoti.

And again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu in going forward and in going back, [he] applies clearly knowing; in looking straight ahead and in looking away from the front, [he] applies clearly knowing; in bending

his limbs and in stretching his limbs, [he] also applies clearly knowing; in wearing the three robes, and in carrying the bowl, [he] applies clearly knowing; in eating, drinking, chewing and savouring, [he] applies clearly knowing; in walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking, speaking, and in keeping silent, [he] applies clearly knowing.

When one goes forward or goes backwards, one should know clearly; When looking forward or looking to the side, one should know clearly; when bending the limbs or stretching the limbs, one should know clearly. Referring to monastics, when wearing the robes and holding the alms bowl, one should know clearly. Then, when one eats, drinks, chews and savours, one should know clearly. During defecation and urination, one should know clearly. During walking, standing, sitting, sleeping, waking, speaking and keeping silent, one should know clearly.

All the items listed above require our awareness and these nearly cover all the details of our lives. The conclusion is: no matter what we do or what actions we make, we should know clearly. This is a part of learning about our lives and learning how our bodies and minds function.

TO VIEW WITH CLEARLY KNOWING

When we see the object, we recognize it. Just as when we see a flower, we recognize the flower. But the flower we know is just a concept, it is not the truth. The concentration of beginners is insufficient, because what they see are all concepts.

What the eyes saw were just form (*rūpa*). They were not concepts such as flower, man, woman, bhikkhu or bhikkhuni. *Rūpa* does not differentiate between man and woman or beautiful and ugly. How do we achieve the state of just seeing form only? We should see with the eyes of wisdom. When we see, we should observe and note “seeing, seeing”. Arahants only see form or a visual object. For them there is no differentiation between beauty and ugliness and as a result greed, anger and ignorance do not arise. When we cultivate, we should observe like this.

When eye consciousness arises, it needs four types of causes: eye-sensitivity, a visual object, light and attention. If one cause is lacking, the eye consciousness will not arise and the eyes will not be able to see. We understand that “seeing” is just a process of continuity involving cause and effect. When the four causes are fulfilled, eye consciousness arises as an effect, enabling us to see. This is clearly knowing.

However, when our mindfulness and concentration are not

strong enough, it is difficult to clearly see the visual object, because the cognitive process (*cittavīthi*) work very fast. The message of the visual object will be processed, integrated and nominated immediately. As a result, we will acquire a concept very quickly and begin to evaluate the object. Subsequently, greed, anger and ignorance arise. Thus, if we do not raise our awareness and note when we see, we will not be able to stop the arising of greed, anger and ignorance and the cognitive process of the mind will continue. We should continue to note and be aware that greed arises when we see something we like; that anger arises when we see something we dislike; that ignorance arises when we do not know what is happening. If we continue to contemplate this way, even though greed, anger and ignorance arise, they will not endure. They will only temporarily arise and pass away, because the unwholesome mind of greed, anger and ignorance will be replaced by the wholesome mind of contemplation.

CLEARLY KNOWING BODILY ACTIVITIES

When the limbs stretch or bend, who is stretching or bending? It is form that is involved. Before any bodily movement is produced, there must be an intention. Just as when there is an intention to drink water, the wind element (element of motion)

will arise in the mind and the hand will then move to grasp the glass. This is cause and effect. We must know the intention and movement with clarity, this is clearly knowing.

When taking food, we must be clear about the actions of taking, putting, chewing and swallowing. When we take food, our minds think, “I like this food!” If we note continuously, we will be aware that craving arises, this is clearly knowing. When we know greed arises, this is contemplation of the mind (*cittānupassanā*). When we continue to note greed, it will no longer arise. Greed has ceased. Therefore, we will not take an excess amount of food because of greed. When we place the food in our mouths, the taste comes into contact with the tongue’s sensitivity and we will be able to savour the food’s taste. Our tongues are approximately 3 inches long and when we chew, we sense sourness, sweetness, bitterness and spiciness etc. Once the food is swallowed and enters the throat, we no longer taste it, this is a natural phenomenon.

In addition to this, we should maintain the mind of clearly knowing during walking, standing, sitting and lying down.

CLEARLY KNOWING DEFECATION AND URINATION

Can we meditate in the toilet? The Buddha said we should know clearly when we visit the toilet. You may think, “The toilet has a really bad odour, so what benefit can we gain from meditating in the toilet?” The toilet is a good place because it allows us to recognize our bodies’ impurities. Our bodies have nine orifices that often excrete impurities: the eyes, ears and nose excrete tears, ear wax and nasal mucus respectively; our mouths produce saliva and phlegm; another two orifices excrete feces and urine. These are the impurities of the nine orifices. As soon as anything wonderful enters our body, it becomes disgusting. Delicious food that is chewed in the mouth for a while and then spat out, becomes revolting. Whatever food enters our stomach, it changes completely and becomes unsightly, once it is excreted. A good factory can produce high quality edible products, but as soon as they have been consumed, what comes out is all waste. Therefore we need to contemplate what is so good about this body that we still wish to conceal the truth by applying perfume to cover up its bad odours?

The more we understand about the truth of our bodies’ impurity, the attachment and craving towards the body will

lessen. Each one of us love ourselves the most. We can vow to love our girlfriends, boyfriends, wives and husbands, but all these are lies, we love ourselves the most. We are most attached to ourselves. It is not easy to eliminate self-attachment.

When the meditator enters the toilet, he should maintain the mind of clearly knowing. He should know the function of the body and mind clearly. This is contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*). With such a deep understanding of natural phenomena like the impurities of our bodies and our sufferings, the attachment towards our bodies will slowly weaken.

LESS GREED, LESS SUFFERING

During the Buddha's era, people's lives were simple, making it easy for them to achieve enlightenment. Unfortunately in our current world, there are too many desires and people's attachments are far too deep, which means that it is difficult to calm the mind. Thus, it is not easy for one to be enlightened in this modern age.

People that understand natural phenomena will know that what they truly need is very little. As long as there is suitable food and clothing, our basic survival needs are met. The body

only needs simple food in order to survive, yet we are very particular about our food. It is sufficient for one to have three to five items of clothing, but people often complain that their wardrobe is not large enough. One pair of shoes is sufficient to fit a pair of feet, but there are many people who have so many shoes that a whole shoe cupboard is insufficient. What we truly need is not much, yet what we want is never ending, demonstrating that it is our minds that are unsatisfied!

Craving is the cause of suffering. Therefore, when there is less greed, suffering will reduce. Monastics are simple people who wear the monastic robe, so there is no need for them to choose what to wear each day. Even though they wear the same robe every day, nobody will say that they don't look good. When you lead a simple life, wisdom will arise easily. The main reason that wisdom does not arise is because we have many defilements, making our minds impure. An impure mind will not be able to observe the truth clearly. As a result of this, we do not understand and furthermore we are uncertain and do not believe. When true confidence arises, we will feel that we cannot survive without cultivation, because it is only with such a method that we can improve our lives.

Therefore, we must know clearly how our minds and bodies function. The method to know clearly is awareness. We should maintain clear awareness towards all matters. In this way, we

will understand the truth of life. This will transform our lives making them purer and simpler. When we lead a simple life, there will be less issues and troubles for us to deal with.

A person that lets go easily will not harbour attachments before he dies. A person that is reluctant to let go will have many attachments before death, making it is easy for such a person to be reborn in a realm that resonates with his quality of mind. For instance, he may be reborn as a hungry ghost, because it is easy for one to be reborn in that realm if one is greedy. A mind filled with attachment is a dangerous mind, which is why we should maintain a mind of clearly knowing and practice diligently. Our target is the cessation of form (*rūpa*) and mind (*nāma*), in order to achieve *Nibbāna*.

UNDERSTANDING THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

*Yeneva yanti nibbānam Buddha desanca sāvaka
ekāyanena maggena satipathānā sanninā.*

All the Buddhas and their Arahant disciples made their way to *Nibbāna* following a path; that path is the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

In the past incalculable *kappas*, there were many Buddhas and

their Arahant disciples that appeared, their numbers being as many as the sands of the Ganges River. They accomplished the holy path by following the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). Now, as we are also walking on this unique path towards liberation, we should strive hard and be diligent.

*Idha catusampajaññaapariggāhikā sati dukkhasaccam,
tassā samuṭṭhāpikā purimatanhā samudayasaccam,
ubhinnaṃ appavatti nirodhasaccam, vuttappakāro
ariyamaggo maggasaccam.*

~*Aṭṭhakathā of Dīgha Nikāya*

Herein, possessing the four kinds of mindfulness of clear comprehension is, namely, with mindfulness penetrating the Truth of Suffering, which is originated from the preceding craving — the Truth of the Origin, the non-occurrence of both — the Truth of the Cessation, and the Noble Path with above said qualities — the Truth of the Path.

The Dhamma reveals the truth of natural phenomena to all of us — the ultimate truth of life. Eventually, we will attain the four kinds of clear knowing (*catusampajañña*), i.e. clearly understanding the Four Noble Truths.

When we possess mindfulness, we will understand “suffering”. Even though our lives are filled with suffering,

with every single moment changing and passing away, we are still very attached to our own lives. For instance, if we were offered free housing to live in alone, on condition that we were not allowed to sell the house and knowing that if we live in this house, we will die immediately, would we still dare to accept this gift? In fact, our minds and bodies are just like this house. They arise and pass away every single moment, dying every single moment. However, because we are still deeply attached to this body, we do not see that it is arising and passing away every single moment. Therefore, those that do not understand the truth will remain attached to the body.

Every day there are tens of thousands of people that die, which we may read about in the newspapers or see on TV, but we do not feel a thing. But, if others tell you, “your beloved one has passed away”. How do you feel? This is suffering! Why? It is due to attachment. Other people have died, that is their kamma. So when your beloved one died, isn’t that his or her kamma? Why can’t you let go? Attachment is the cause of suffering.

If one cannot extinguish the cause of suffering, there will be no end to suffering. If one extinguishes the cause of suffering, there will not be an effect of suffering. When there is a cause, there will be an effect. Thus, when there are lesser causes, there will be lesser effects. When the cause ceases, the effect ceases

as well. What is cessation? This refers to *Nibbāna*. But how do we reach *Nibbāna*? The Buddha said, there was only one path, i.e. the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*).

The Buddha and Arahants had extinguished their defilements and they knew the Four Noble Truths. They understood that this body and mind are a burden. Therefore, we should follow the path of the Buddhas and Arahants in order to practice *satipaṭṭhāna* thoroughly, so that we can let go of the burden of our bodies and minds.

10.4 Reflection on the Repulsiveness of the Body

THE THIRTY-TWO CONSTITUENT PARTS OF THE HUMAN BODY

The fourth part of the objects of the body concerns the reflection on the repulsiveness of the body (*paṭikūlamanasikāra*). The reflection on the repulsiveness of the body is also known as the thirty-two constituent parts of the human body.

Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, ubhatomukhā putoli pūrā nānāvihitassa dhaññassa, seyyathidaṃ sālīnaṃ vīhīnaṃ muggānaṃ māsānaṃ tilānaṃ taṇḍulānaṃ. Tameṇaṃ cakkhumā puriso muñcitvā paccavekkheyya — ‘ime sālī, ime vīhī ime muggā ime māsā ime tilā ime taṇḍulā’ ti.

Evameva kho, bhikkhave, bhikkhu imameva kāyaṃ uddhaṃ pādatalā adho kesamatthakā tacapariyantāṃ pūraṃ nānappakārassa asucino paccavekkhati — ‘atthi imasmiṃ kāye kesā lomā nakhā dantā taco, maṃsaṃ nhāru aṭṭhi aṭṭhimiñjaṃ vakkāṃ, hadayaṃ yakanāṃ kilomakaṃ pihakaṃ

*papphāsam, antaṃ antagaṇaṃ udariyaṃ karīsaṃ
matthaluṅgaṃ, pittaṃ semhaṃ pubbo lohitaṃ sedo
medo, assu vasā khelo siṅghāṇikā lasikā mutta' nti.*

As if there were a double-mouthed provision bag filled with various kinds of grain such as hill paddy, paddy, green grain, cowpea, sesame, husked rice, a man with sound eyes, having opened it, should examine it thus, ‘This is hill paddy, this is paddy, this is green grain, this is a cowpea, this is a sesame, this is husked rice’.

Just so, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu reflects upon his very body, upward from the soles of his feet, downward from the tips of his hair, enclosed by the skin and full of diverse impurities, thus, ‘There are in this body, head hair, body hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, intestines, spleen, lungs, bowels, stomach, undigested food, faeces, brain, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, lymph, saliva, nasal mucus, oil of the joint, urine.

If we pay attention to the thirty-two constituent parts of the human body, we will not be able to find the presence of “I”. Now you see Sayadaw Nandasiddhi, exactly which part of the body is Sayadaw Nandasiddhi? The head? The chest? The

hands? The feet? It is difficult to answer such a question. If the entire body works together, we may be able to comment, but if the body parts are separated, there is nothing to talk about.

What we see with the naked eye is the whole entity that cannot be separated. But if we observe using the eyes of wisdom, we will be able to separate the thirty-two constituent parts of the human body. Individuals who are new to this practice, might need to familiarise themselves with the thirty-two constituent parts of the human body. If they are not sure of the actual location of each body part, it doesn't matter. The most important point is that we pay attention to these body parts when we recite. We should focus our minds on the impurities of each body part, in order to eliminate the meditator's attachment towards the body.

During recitation, our minds should focus on the oral recitation and in this way our minds will not be distracted and concentration will be achieved. After reciting once, you should repeat the recitation after an hour. If you recite when you are sitting and walking, you will produce mindfulness by observing the thirty-two constituent parts of the human body. This is the practice of mindfulness centred on the body (*kāyagatā-sati*). The mind should follow the object and when mindfulness continues and concentration is stable, we will

understand the truth. As a result, our concepts will diminish. At present, Sayadaw Nandasiddhi is a concept. When he is divided into the thirty-two constituent parts of the human body, you will not find Sayadaw Nandasiddhi.

THE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS OF KING MILINDA AND VENERABLE NĀGASENA

“*The Questions of King Milinda*” (*Milindapañha*) record the impressive debate between King Milinda and Venerable *Nāgasena*. King Milinda, a Greek, was a Bactrian king who ruled the northeast of India during the latter half of the 2nd Century B.C., with Sagala as its capital city. During King Asoka’s era, many bhikkhus were sent there to propagate the Dhamma. The king learnt the Dhamma and was also well versed in philosophy. He often raised questions to challenge the bhikkhus and as a result many of them were afraid to see him as they were unable to answer his questions. One day Venerable *Nāgasena* led eighty thousand bhikkhus to debate with King Milinda. When the king brought his five hundred followers to the place where the debate was held, Venerable *Nāgasena*’s eighty thousand followers were terrified. This was a psychological tactic. Part of their debate follows below:



Then Milinda began by asking: “How is your reverence known, and what sir, is your name?”

“O king, I am known as Nāgasena.”

“Now what is that Nāgasena? Is it the hair?”

“I don’t say that, great king.”

“Is it then the nails, teeth, skin or other parts of the body?”

“Certainly not.”

“Or is it the body, or feelings, or perceptions, or formations, or consciousness?”

Still Nāgasena answered: “It is none of these.”

“Then, ask as I may, I can discover no Nāgasena. Nāgasena is an empty sound. Who is it we see before us? It is a falsehood that your reverence has spoken.”

“You, sir, how did you come here, by foot or in a chariot?”

“In a chariot, venerable sir.”

“Then, explain sir, what that is. Is it the axle? Or the wheels, or the chassis, or reins, or yoke that is the chariot? Is it all of these combined, or is it something apart from them?”

“It is none of these things, venerable sir.”

“Then, sir, this chariot is an empty sound. You spoke falsely when you said that you came here in a chariot.”

“Venerable sir, I have spoken the truth. It is because it has all these parts that it comes under the term chariot.”

“Very good, sir, your majesty has rightly grasped the meaning. Even so it is because of the thirty-two kinds of organic matter in a human body and the five aggregates of being that I come under the term ‘Nāgasena’. As it was said by Sister Vajira in the presence of the Blessed One,

‘Just as it is by the existence of the various parts that the word “Chariot” is used, just so is it that when the aggregates of being are there we talk of a being.’¹

If we lack true cultivation, we will be arrogant, self-centred and develop attachment towards our bodies. If we understand the truth, wisdom will improve. Thus, greed, anger and ignorance will lessen.

¹ Abridged from “The Debate of King Milinda” by Bhikkhu Pesala.

MUNDANE AND SUPRAMUNDANE DHAMMA

The Thirty-seven Factors of Enlightenment describes the way leading towards the path (*magga*), the fruition (*phala*) and *Nibbāna*, i.e. the path towards supramundane Dhamma. Supramundane and mundane Dhamma oppose each other. We are attached to our mundane affairs. Therefore, when we listen to the Dhamma that leads us towards liberation from defilements, we tend to feel bored and sleepy. We enjoy indulging ourselves in pleasure-seeking and entertainment, but we feel bored when it comes to learning the true Dhamma.

We should develop an interest in the true Dhamma. Do not feel sleepy, because there is only one path that can lead us towards liberation from defilements and can help us to achieve *Nibbāna*. There is no other way. When we practise sitting meditation, it is so painful! This is a natural phenomenon, it comes and goes, arises and passes away. When causes and conditions are fulfilled, it arises; when causes and conditions are absent, it passes away. When we see it, it comes and goes, arises and passes away; when we don't see it, it comes and goes, arises and passes away as well. When pain comes, we feel a sense of disgust, saying "I am suffering, I want to be free from suffering, I want *Nibbāna*", but when pain leaves, we become comfortable. It is at this point that we become attached and reject *Nibbāna*. It is difficult to achieve improvement in our

meditation in this way.

As long as we are not liberated from the mundane Dhamma, we will need to go through the cycle of birth and death and face aging, illness and death. All of us have experienced birth before, suffering when we were born. If not, why did we all cry when we were born? It is just that we have forgotten this experience. The Buddha said, the nature of life is suffering. The first among the Four Noble Truths is the truth of suffering, suffering is the truth. If we do not face this, we will never understand. This puts us at the risk of becoming confused and starting to regard suffering as happiness, which we will be reluctant to relinquish when we are attached to this perverted form of “happiness”.

Because we do not view suffering as suffering and do not know the truth of it, accordingly we suffer. If we know about suffering, it is easier for us to let go gradually. Not knowing suffering is a form of delusion, also known as ignorance. Delusion obscures the truth, so we cannot see the actual nature of suffering. The mundane Dhamma is subject to destruction and cessation every single moment; nothing is permanent, all is impermanent; continuously being frustrated by this phenomenon of arising and passing away, we suffer. In this continuum of arising and passing away, there isn't a permanent form which is present, and this is something that

we call no-self (*anattā*). Because we are reluctant to face the truth of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and no-self (*anattā*), we remain attached to our mundane world and thus we suffer.

DO NOT CRITICIZE THE TEACHINGS

The teachings may vary and if we have not achieved a thorough understanding of them, we may resort to criticise others by saying, “Your teachings are wrong”. The Buddha’s teachings comprise of many skilful means and methods. If we criticise the teachings without actually understanding them, creating a fuss and reprimanding with a jealous mind, we have in fact, criticised the Buddha indirectly.

Cultivation is like climbing a mountain, the ultimate destination is the peak. There are many ways leading to the peak. The Buddha said, only one path leads to the peak, i.e. The Noble Eightfold Path that comprises morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*). When we first begin to climb the mountain, there are many roads available. The mountaineer should know how to choose the right path and be dedicated in climbing. When the right path is found, the mountaineer should overcome all difficulties and obstacles ahead. However, just like when we first climb a mountain, we

may expend great effort without achieving results; beginners in meditation maybe diligent and invest a lot of energy in their practice without seeing improvements and eventually, they become easily exhausted. When you encounter difficulties and obstacles, going downhill in search of new methods is not the best way to problem-solving. Every road has its own obstacles and difficulties. You need to overcome them, because if you go downhill to search for other methods, you will only end up wandering at the foot of the mountain, with the peak remaining far beyond your reach.

When we walk on a path, even though we may encounter some difficulties, we should strive hard to transcend them. Once we have, we will reach the next, higher level. The more we succeed, the more encouraged we will be, our level of confidence will rise and our understanding of the Dhamma will deepen. When we continue to climb eventually reaching the peak, we will be able to see, “Oh, this person comes from this road, whereas that person arrives from that path”. We will see it all, clearly and indisputably.

Meditators should have confidence, be healthy, sincere, diligent and wise. They should move forward to overcome all obstacles and difficulties. Therefore, we do not need to search for or try various paths. Of course, before cultivation, we should possess sufficient knowledge in order to make the

right choice. After we select our path with confidence, we must persevere to the end, so that we will be satisfied. If we wander halfway up this path and don't participate in in-depth cultivation, it is very dangerous, for as mentioned above, we may resort to criticism and end up by criticising the Buddha. Therefore, do not judge others. What is most important is to ensure that the path we take is the correct one. If the path of cultivation is correct and the more diligent we are in our cultivation, our afflictive hindrances will lessen and our level of satisfaction and confidence will increase. Such a path is considered the correct path, this is very important!

Do not waste time, as the method to reach the goal requires self-practice and personal experience. Pay attention to every single moment, be cautious, be diligent and you will improve gradually. In meditation, it doesn't matter that some days are good and some days are poor. We hope that everything goes smoothly when we meditate, but things may not always be within our control, am I right? It has its own cause and effect. When the result of meditation is good, one should know it is good; when the result of meditation is poor, one should know it is poor. Both good and bad results are impermanent and will only last for a while. No matter whether our conditions are good or bad, we should face them, accept them and continue to move forward. Do not forget, "Patience leads to *Nibbāna*".

10.5 Reflection on the Material Elements

THE EIGHT INSEPARABLE MATERIAL QUALITIES (AVINIBBHOGA-RŪPA)

In Pali, reflection on the material elements is known as *dhātumanasikāra*. “*Dhātu*” refers to elements, which are the ultimate constituents of a whole. It refers to the four great elements, which are also known as the four great essentials (*mahābhūta*), i.e. earth, water, fire and wind.

All matter (*rūpa*) is made up of eight elements, namely earth, water, fire, wind, visible form, smell, taste and nutriment. These eight elements are named the Eight Inseparable Material Qualities (*avinibbhoga-rūpa*). They are bound together and are inseparable and indivisible. The characteristic of the earth element is hardness or softness; the characteristic of water is flow and cohesion; the characteristic of the fire is heat or cold; the characteristic of the wind element is support and propulsion; visible form refers to the colors and shapes presented by *rūpa*; smell refers to the odours of *rūpa*; taste refers to the flavours of *rūpa* and finally nutriment refers to the nutritious qualities of *rūpa*.

For example, does a flower possess “fire”? The characteristic of the “fire element” is heat or cold, in other words, temperature. If you touch the flower and feel a cold sensation, this is the characteristic of the flower’s “fire element”. The flower is able to sustain an upright position due to the support by the “wind element”. When you touch the flower’s petals, you will probably feel a sensation of softness, which is the “earth element”. The flower has colors and fragrance and you can also taste it. Nutriment is nutrition and although we generally do not eat flowers, the insects do, as flowers give them nutrition. The “water element” cannot be felt through touching. The water element is responsible for the cohesion of objects, keeping them in their particular form and preventing them from disintegrating or collapsing. By observing the cohesion of *rūpa*, we will know the presence of the water element.

All *rūpa* possess these eight elements. Sometimes people will say that a particular flower does not have any fragrance. This is incorrect. Any substance will produce fragrance, whether strong or weak, just like any substance will possess temperature, which may be cold or hot. The same applies to taste. There are people that say water is colourless and tasteless, so how can this be explained? The Buddha said that as the eyes register color, if the eyes can see water, then the

water has a color. When you drink water, can you taste it? It certainly does possess a taste and finally we know that just by drinking water without consuming food, we can survive for many days. So effectively, water is nutritious as well.

In the past, when the Buddha was still a Bodhisatta, there were self-proclaimed Buddhas that taught people as follows; “The world is formed by earth, water, fire, air, joy, sorrow and life (*jīva*). The same applies to men, women, dogs, cats, flowers, grass and trees”.

When the Bodhisatta became a Buddha, he possessed supreme wisdom and his teachings were considered the right view. The Buddha said, “Conditioned Dhammas” in this world are comprised of two types; physical phenomena (*rūpa*) and mental phenomena (*nāma*). Are earth, water, fire and air *nāma* or *rūpa*? We know that the mind recognizes its object, but do the “four great elements” know? No, they don’t as they do not possess a mind and thus they are *rūpa*.

When our concentration is not strong enough, we will view the eight inseparable elements of *rūpa* as one. However as we practice, our developing wisdom will separate them. Just like individuals who have not practiced before will view the Five Aggregates as one, whereas practitioners will understand that form is form, feelings are feelings, perception is perception, volition is volition, consciousness is consciousness. As our

concentration improves and we begin to note every single moment, we will know. Thus, wisdom will separate them naturally.

REFLECTION ON THE MATERIAL ELEMENTS (DHĀTUMANASIKĀRA)

The Buddha expounded the Dhamma in the chapter of reflection on the material elements (*Dhātumanasikārapabbam*):

*Puna caparam, bhikkhave, bhikkhu imameva kāyaṃ
yathāñhitam yathāpañhitam dhātuso paccavekkhati
— ‘atthi imasmim kāye pathavīdhātu āpodhātu
tejodhātu vāyodhātū’ ti.*

And again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu reflects upon this very body just as it is placed or disposed, with regard to its primary elements, ‘There are in this body the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the air element.’

The Eight Inseparable Material Qualities (*avinibbhoga-rūpa*) cannot literally be separated, but during meditation we can separate them using our wisdom. Among *rūpas*, the four great elements are the most prominent, with the wind element

predominating. This means that we can feel easily and we can feel movement with ease. Our minds catch hold of a prominent object with ease and this is why we use the rising and falling of the abdomen as the object of noting. When our minds are calm, at ease and relaxed, we will be clearly aware of the four great elements. When we note the rising and falling of the abdomen, we will be aware of movement and sometimes, there are moments when we feel tension. These are the characteristics of the wind element. Sometimes, we will feel hot or cold, this is the fire element. Sometimes we feel hardness or softness, that is the earth element. All these are what we truly feel and experience regarding the characteristics of the four great elements. This is the practice of reflection on the material elements.

Every *nāma* and *rūpa* has its own characteristics, function, manifestation and proximate cause. Characteristics refer to its various features and unique qualities. All these principles are clearly explained in the *Abhidhamma*. Needless to say, without the Buddha's teachings, we would not be aware of such principles.

When we learn, we should know the details. Not knowing the details means that we are confused, unclear and have not truly learnt something. For example, when you learn about computing, you should know about hardware and software as well as other details, so that if you wished, you

could become a teacher of this subject. The same applies to wisdom. Buddha said, “Wisdom is understanding from various perspectives” (*pakārena jānāti’i paññā*). *Pakārena* refers to different perspectives and different methods. *Jānāti* refers to understanding the details.

When learning to be effective, we should be careful, as the resultant level of awareness can be either in-depth or superficial. For instance, we know that water can be drunk. Students majoring in chemistry will learn that water is in reality, “H₂O”, i.e. the water molecule is formed by two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom. They also know that not all water can be drunk, as drinking water must be pH 7, which means it should be pH neutral. Thus, their level of understanding is totally different. Meditation is the same as this; the more you practice, the more you know, resulting in the depth of learning and level of understanding continuously improving.

*Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, dakkho goghātako vā
goghātakantevāsī vā gāviṃ vadhitvā catumahāpathe
bilaso vibhajitvā nisinno assa, evameva kho,
bhikkhave, bhikkhu imameva kāyaṃ yathāññitaṃ
yathāpañihitaṃ dhātuso paccavekkhati — ‘atthi
imasmīṃ kāye pathavīdhātu āpodhātu tejodhātu
vāyodhātū’ ti.*

As a skillful butcher and his apprentice, having slaughtered a cow and divided it into portions, were sitting at the junction of four highways, just so, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu reflects upon this very body just as it is placed or disposed, with regard to its primary elements, ‘There are in this body the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the air element.’²

There was only *nāma* and *rūpa*, there was no man, no woman, and no sentient beings. This teaching seems difficult for us to understand. The commentary explains it as follows: When a butcher is feeding a cow or is nourishing it, and then takes it to the slaughtering place, ties it to a post and kills it, he still has the notion that it is a being, a cow. If someone would ask him what he is doing, he would say, “I’m feeding the cow” or “I’m killing the cow”. Even after having killed it, before he cuts it up into pieces, he still maintains the notion that it is a cow. But when, after cutting the slaughtered cow into pieces, he takes and puts the pieces on a table at the crossroad, from that point on, he loses the notion of a cow. If someone would ask him what he is selling, he would not say, “I’m selling a cow”. So, after cutting the cow into pieces, he loses the concept of a cow.

² Quoted from “The Four Foundations of Mindfulness” by Sayadaw U Silananda.

In this metaphor, the meditator is just like a butcher. The concept of sentient beings is just like the concept of a cow. The four postures of the body are just like the connection point of four major paths. If we observe the body based on the concept of the four great elements, it is just like sitting at the connection point of the four major paths and placing the pieces of meat on the table, that have been cut into pieces over there.

Before we observe the body from the perspective of the four great elements, our minds retain the concept of sentient beings or humans. What we see are you, me, him, man, woman, mountain, river, trees etc. But when we start to observe the body from the perspective of the four great elements, the concept of sentient beings vanishes and what arises in our minds is the concept of the four great elements. When we focus on the movement of the abdomen, we no longer feel the abdomen, we only sense its movement and this is just the wind element. At that moment, where am I? Where are sentient beings? Where is the soul? This is the wisdom of true understanding. Of course, we only achieve partial understanding.

We should continue to practice. A true meditator will understand how *nāma* and *rūpa* function. When he gains

insight of the truth, he will be liberated from these concepts and wrong views. When we extinguish wrong views, we will attain stream-entry (*sotāpanna*). As a stream-entrant, we will not possess wrong views or doubts.

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE LAW OF KAMMA

The conditioned Dhamma includes all materiality and mentality i.e. *rūpa* and *nāma*. Does *rūpa* know? For instance, does the earth have a mind? If it has a mind, it will suffer a lot. We tread on the earth, we dig into it, build houses on it and we dispose of our trash everywhere. If it has a mind, it will know all this, isn't that so? But when our bad actions become excessive won't it be angry, resulting in an earthquake? The earth does not possess a mind, so why are there earthquakes? This is just the manifestation of the law of kamma. In 26 December 2004, the Indian Ocean tsunami occurred. This sudden disaster, caused a massive loss of life and financial loss in countries like Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, India and Maldives etc. This too, is the manifestation of the law of kamma.

In the Buddha's era, after King *Viḍaḍḍubha* led his army to kill the Sakyan clan, on his way back to Kosala, they spent

the night at the riverbank of the Aciravati River. During that night, the king and his followers were swept away by a massive flood. Does the flood possess a mind? No, it does not. King *Viḍaḍūbha* and his followers drowned in the flood due to the unwholesome kamma committed by themselves. This is the manifestation of the law of kamma.

DIVINE EYE AND MEDITATIVE CONCENTRATION

During the Buddha's era, Arahants with their divine eye will be able to see through cause and effect. They know why earthquakes and tsunamis occur. There are six types of "higher powers" (*abhiññā*), with five of them being mundane powers. These powers are magical powers (*iddhi-vidha*), penetration of the minds of others (*ceto-pariya-ñāṇa*), divine ear (*dibbasota*), divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*) and remembrance of former existences (*pubbe-nivāsānussati*). These five mundane powers are attainable through the utmost perfection in mental concentration (*samādhi*). However, the achievement of these powers does not lead us to supramundane Dhamma. We still can't be liberated from birth, aging, illness and death in this way. The final type of "higher power" belongs to the

supramundane world, being the extinction of all cankers (*āsavakkhaya*). This supramundane power is only attainable through practicing penetrating insight.

Before the Buddha attained Buddhahood, he practiced meditation. At that time, *Alāra Kālāma* and *Uddaka Rāmaputta* were famous masters that possessed deep meditative concentration powers and outstanding supernatural powers. They could see forty *kappas* in the past and the future. The Bodhisatta became their disciple and mastered their teachings. Within a short time, he accomplished the absorption of nothingness and the absorption of neither perception nor non-perception. However, even though he attained the highest level of meditative concentration, the Bodhisatta felt that these accomplishments would not lead him towards tranquillity, enlightenment and *Nibbāna*. He would still not be liberated from the suffering of birth, aging, illness and death. Thus, he bid farewell to these masters and continued with his exploration. After six years of ascetic practice, the Bodhisatta abandoned ascetic practice and extinguished all defilements through self-enlightenment, thus attaining Buddhahood. He expounded the truth with clarity to enlighten other sentient beings.

THE BUDDHA IS ENDOWED WITH FIVE CATEGORIES OF EYES

The Buddha is endowed with five categories of eyes, that is, the physical eye (*maṃsacakkhu*), the divine eye (*dibbacakkhu*), the eye of wisdom (*paññācakkhu*), the eye of all-round knowledge (*samantacakkhu*) and the eye of a Buddha (*buddhacakkhu*). The physical eye is the same as we have; the divine eye, one of the six supernatural faculties, is knowing others' karmic destinations. The eye of wisdom is also possessed by all Arahants who have uprooted their defilements and the eye of all-round knowledge refers to the Perfect One's omniscient knowledge (*sabbaññutaññāṇa*). This is one of two categories, possessed only by a Buddha, the other being the eye of a Buddha, which sees the knowledge of degrees of maturity in the faculties of sentient beings (*indriyaparopariyattañāṇa*) and the knowledge of the dispositions and underlying tendencies of sentient beings (*āsayānusayañāṇa*).³

3 A Buddha is endowed with fourteen categories of knowledge, namely: the knowledge of suffering, the knowledge of the origin of suffering, the knowledge of the cessation of suffering, the knowledge of the path leading to the cessation of suffering, the analytical knowledge of the true meaning, the analytical knowledge of the law, the analytical knowledge of language, the analytical knowledge of ready wit, the knowledge of degrees of maturity in the faculties of sentient beings, the knowledge of the dispositions and underlying tendencies of sentient beings, the knowledge of the miracle of the double appearances, the knowledge of the attainment of great compassion, omniscient knowledge and the knowledge of no obstacles. The first eight kinds of knowledge can be attained by the Buddhas' disciples, and the remaining six are unique to the Buddhas.

With this knowledge, the Buddha can for example know whether your perfections (*pāramī*) are mature and if not, when they will mature. He also knows what you are lacking and what you need. If your perfections are not mature yet, the Buddha will wait for a suitable time when he will expound a few words and you will then attain enlightenment. *Aṅgulināla* is a classical example. Some might say, that if he killed approximately 1000 people, why didn't the Buddha expound the Dhamma to him earlier, so that he would not have killed so many people? But, is this possible? Before that, *Aṅgulināla*'s perfections had not yet matured, so even though the Buddha had expounded the Dhamma to him at an earlier stage, he would not have been able to accept the teachings. Only when his perfections had matured, would he understand the Buddha's words. Only the Buddha possesses the wisdom that involves the knowledge of dispositions of sentient beings. Neither Venerable *Sāriputta*, who was foremost in wisdom nor Venerable *Moggallāna*, who was foremost in supernatural powers, possessed such wisdom, not to mention the other disciples of the Buddha.

We have now been informed about the five chapters on the contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), namely mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpāna*), the postures of the body (*iriyāpatha*), clearly knowing (*sampajāna*), the reflection

on the repulsiveness of the body (*paṭikūlamanasikāra*) and reflection on the material elements (*dhātumanasikāra*). When the Buddha expounded the Dhamma, he explained these principles one by one. However, when we practice, we practice as a whole. For instance, our mindfulness of breathing is found when we note the rising and falling of our abdomen, which expands when we inhale and contracts as we exhale, known to us as breathing in and out. When we are sitting, we should know this clearly, because of the teachings on the postures of the body. When we know this clearly, we are in fact practicing the third of the five chapters of contemplation of the body — clearly knowing. Being clearly aware of the movement of the abdomen, we also experience the characteristic of the wind element, which is the reflection on the material elements. Therefore, all the principles are applied together, making these cultivation methods inseparable.

When we note continuously, the mind will know clearly once it has calmed down and wisdom will arise naturally. Because concentration is the cause of wisdom, when the causes are fulfilled, the effect arises. When wisdom arises, we will understand that all phenomena is impermanent, continually coming and going. I explained that if someone gives you a house, on condition that if you choose to live in that house, you will definitely die in it, nobody will be willing

to accept the house. In fact, our bodies resemble that house, in which we will definitely die. When we are aware of such a truth, our defilements such as greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance, suspicion, jealousy and stinginess will lessen. Eventually, when the knowledge of the path (*maggañāṇa*) and the knowledge of the fruition (*phalañāṇa*) arise, we will encounter *Nibbāna*. The function of the path consciousness (*maggacitta*) is to extinguish or lessen all defilements; the function of the fruit consciousness (*phalacitta*) is to experience a certain level of liberation produced by the path consciousness, i.e. to experience the benefits of a state where all or part of the defilements are fully extinguished or diminished.

May all of you attain *maggañāṇa*, *phalañāṇa* and *Nibbāna*!

10.6 The Nine Cemetery Contemplations

There are 14 methods of cultivation for the contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*). We have so far discussed five of these methods, with the remaining nine methods being The Nine Cemetery Contemplations (*navasīvathikā*), all of which belong to the same chapter. In this chapter, Buddha expounded about matters relating to the external body and not the internal body as discussed earlier. The external body refers to the corpse and this external object can also become the object of noting.

THE NINE CEMETERY CONTEMPLATIONS

*Puna caparaṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhu seyyathāpi
passeyya sarīraṃ sivathikāya chaḍḍitaṃ
ekāhamataṃ vā dvīhamataṃ vā tīhamataṃ vā
uddhumātakam vinīlakam vipubbakajātaṃ.....*

*Puna caparaṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhu seyyathāpi
passeyya sarīraṃ sivathikāya chaḍḍitaṃ kākehi vā
khajjamānaṃ kulalehi vā khajjamānaṃ gijjhehi vā*

*khajjamānaṃ kaṅkehi vā khajjamānaṃ sunakhehi vā
khajjamānaṃ byagghehi vā khajjamānaṃ dīpīhi vā
khajjamānaṃ siṅgālehi vā khajjamānaṃ vividhehi
vā pāṇakajātehi khajjamānaṃ.....*

*Puna caparaṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhu seyyathāpi passeyya
sarīraṃ sivathikāya chadditaṃ aṭṭhikaṅkhalikaṃ
samaṃsalohitaṃ nhārusambandhaṃ...pe...
aṭṭhikaṅkhalikaṃ nimaṃsalohitamakkhitaṃ
nhārusambandhaṃ...pe...aṭṭhikaṅkhalikaṃ
apagataṃsamaṃsalohitaṃ nhārusambandhaṃ...pe...
aṭṭhikāni apagatasambandhāni disā vidisā vikkhittāni,
aññena hatthaṭṭhikaṃ aññena pādaṭṭhikaṃ aññena
goppakaṭṭhikaṃ aññena jaṅghaṭṭhikaṃ aññena
ūruṭṭhikaṃ aññena kaṭiṭṭhikaṃ aññena phāsukaṭṭhikaṃ
aññena piṭṭhiṭṭhikaṃ aññena khandhaṭṭhikaṃ
aññena gīvaṭṭhikaṃ aññena hanukaṭṭhikaṃ aññena
dantaṭṭhikaṃ aññena sīsakaṭṭhikaṃ.....*

*Puna caparaṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhu seyyathāpi
passeyya sarīraṃ sivathikāya chadditaṃ aṭṭhikāni
setāni saṅkhavaṇṇapaṭibhāgāni...pe... aṭṭhikāni
puñjakitāni terovassikāni...pe...aṭṭhikāni pūtīni
cuṇṇakajātāni. So imameva kāyaṃ upasaṃharati
— ‘ayampi kho kāyo evaṃdhammo evaṃbhāvī
evaṃanatīto’ ti.*



And again, bhikkhus, as if a bhikkhu sees a body one day dead, or two days dead, or three days dead, swollen, blue, and festering, discarded in the charnel ground,.....

And again, bhikkhus, as if a bhikkhu sees a body discarded in the charnel ground, being devoured by crows, by hawks, by vultures, by herons, by dogs, by leopards, by tigers, by jackals, being devoured by various kinds of worms,.....

And again, bhikkhus, as if a bhikkhu sees a body discarded in the charnel ground, reduced to a skeleton, held together by the tendons, with some flesh adhering to it,.....reduced to a skeleton, held together by the tendons, blood-smearred, fleshless,.....reduced to a skeleton, held together by the tendons, without flesh and blood,.....reduced to loose bones scattered in all directions—here bones of the hand, there bones of the foot, shin bones, thigh bones, pelvis, spine and skull.....

And again, bhikkhus, as if a bhikkhu sees a body discarded in the charnel ground, reduced to bleached bones of shell-like colour,.....reduced to bones more than a year old, lying in a heap,..... reduced to rotten bones, crumbling to dust, he then

applies [this perception] to his own body, ‘Truly, this body too is of the same nature. It will become like that and will not go beyond that nature.’

When someone dies, they are reborn in another place and a new phase of life begins immediately. The body that lost its consciousness and life faculty will slowly decay. This chapter discusses the nine contemplations on the corpse. After being dead for one day, two days or three days, the corpse will be swollen, blue and festering, pus will form and the corpse will be very smelly. Then, various birds, animals and worms will devour the corpse. In India, the corpse is discarded at the charnel ground to allow the birds to access it, as some big birds love to eat the flesh of a corpse. In the beginning, the corpse still has flesh and blood, but eventually, the flesh has gone, the blood has gone, the bones are scattered here and there, or lie in heaps and they will crumble to dust after several years.

When we see the changes in the corpse, we should compare our bodies to the corpse and contemplate, “I am also like this. The nature of my body is the same, it will become like that. Such an outcome is inevitable”. The Buddha said, “*Rūpa* is so called because it undergoes and imposes alteration (*ruppatīti rūpaṃ*).” Our bodies will reach such an outcome eventually. If we contemplate this way, we will be able to let go of our

attachments, cravings, arrogance and other defilements.

The Buddha spoke about the reflection on the repulsiveness of the body, when he mentioned the thirty-two constituent parts of the human body that refer to our internal body. The nine images of the corpse mentioned here, refer to our external body. We should develop aversion towards both our internal and external body and we must also avoid craving and attachment. We should let go of our attachments towards our bodies and other people's bodies. For example, the attachment between husband and wife is also a form of greed.

ASSAKA JATAKA

The Buddha told this story about a monk who was distracted by the recollection of his former wife, while staying in Jetavana. He asked the monk whether he was really lovesick. The monk replied briefly; "Yes." "With whom are you in love?" asked the Buddha. "My late wife" was the reply. Then the Buddha said, "This has not been the first time that you have been full of desire for this woman. In olden days her love brought you to great misery." And the Buddha told the following story:⁴

⁴ Assaka-Jātaka No.207 of "Stories of the Buddha's Former Births" Volumn II, translated from the Pāli by W.H.D. Rouse, and edited by E.B. Cowell. A few abridgements have been made.

Once upon a time, there was a king Assaka reigning in Potali, which is a city of the kingdom of Kasi. His queen consort, named *Ubbarī*, was very dear to him. She was charming, graceful and had a beauty that surpassed that of other women, though she was not as fair as a goddess. When she died, the king was plunged into grief and became sad and miserable. He had the body laid in a glass coffin, embalmed with oil and ointment and laid beneath his bed, where he lay without food, weeping and wailing. In vain did his parents and kinsfolk, friends and courtiers, priests and laymen, bid him not to grieve, since all things pass away. They could not move him, so he lay there in sorrow as seven days passed by.

Now the Bodhisatta was at that time an ascetic, who had gained the five supernatural powers and the eight attainments of absorption, while dwelling at the foot of the Himalayas. As he looked around India with his heavenly vision, he saw this king lamenting and immediately resolved to help him. By his miraculous power he rose in the air and alighted in the king's park, sitting down on the ceremonial stone like a golden image.

A young brahmin of the city of Potali entered the park and seeing the Bodhisatta, greeted him and sat down. The Bodhisatta began to talk pleasantly with him and asked about the king. The young man said: "Why do you not free the king

from this great grief? Virtuous beings like you should be able to overcome the king's sorrow.”

“I do not know the king, young man,” said the Bodhisatta; “but if he were to come and ask me, I would tell him the place where his late wife has now come into the flesh again and make her speak for herself.”

“Then, holy Sir, stay here until I bring the king to you.” He hastened to the king and told him what the Bodhisatta had said. “You should visit this being with divine insight!” He urged the king.

The king was overjoyed at the thought of seeing *Ubbarī* again and so he got into his chariot and drove to the park. Greeting the Bodhisatta, he sat down on one side, and asked, “Is it true, as I am told, that you know where my queen has come into being again?”

“Yes, I do, my lord king,” replied the Bodhisatta.

Then the king asked where she was.

The Bodhisatta replied, “O king, she was so intoxicated with her beauty, that she fell into negligence and did not do fair and virtuous acts. As a result, she has become a little dung-worm in this very park.”

“I don't believe it!” said the king.

“Then I will show her to you, and make her speak,”

answered the Bodhisatta.

“Please make her speak!” said the king.

The Bodhisatta commanded — “Let the two that are busy rolling a lump of cow-dung, come forth before the king.” By his power he made them do it and they came. The Bodhisatta pointed the one out to the king: “There is your queen *Ubbarī*, O king! She has just come out of this lump, following her husband the dung-worm. Look and see for yourself. ”

“What! My queen *Ubbarī* a dung-worm? I don’t believe it!” cried the king.

“I will make her speak, O king!”

“Pray make her speak, holy Sir!” said he.

The Bodhisatta by his power gave her speech. “*Ubbarī!*” said he.

“What is it, holy Sir?” she asked in a human voice.

“What was your name in your former character?” the Bodhisatta asked her.

“My name was *Ubbarī*, Sir” she replied, “the consort of king Assaka.”

“Tell me,” the Bodhisatta went on, “who do you love best now — king Assaka, or this dung-worm?”

“O Sir, that was my former birth,” said she. “Then I lived with him in this park, enjoying shape and sound, scent, taste

and touch; but now that my memory is confused by rebirth, what is he? Why, now I would kill king Assaka and would smear the feet of my husband the dung-worm with the blood flowing from his throat!” Then in the midst of the king’s company, she uttered these verses in a human voice:

“Once with the great king Assaka,
who was my husband dear,
Loving and beloved,
I walked about this garden here.
But now new sorrows and new joys
have made the old ones flee,
And dearer far than Assaka
my Worm is now to me.”

When king Assaka heard this, he repented on the spot and immediately had the queen’s body removed from his bed chamber and washed his head. He saluted the Bodhisatta and went back to the city where he married again and ruled in righteousness. The Bodhisatta, having instructed the king and set him free from sorrow, returned again to the Himalayas.

When the Buddha had ended this discourse, he explained to the lovesick monk who the characters were in this story:

“Your late wife was *Ubbarī*; you, the lovesick Brother, were king Assaka; *Sāriputta* was the young brahmin; and the anchorite was myself.” At the conclusion of these revelations, the lovesick monk attained stream-entry (*sotāpanna*).

WHAT CAN ONE TAKE AWAY WHEN ONE DIES?

Just like Assaka, sometimes people are very attached to the dead bodies of their loved ones, as it was in the past, so it continues to be this way now. The majority of the Chinese used to place the dead body of their relative at home for a long period, and they would burn many things. In Malaysia, when the brother of a member from one Buddhist organization passed away, I was invited to recite the sutta at the funeral service. I saw a house, car, TV, mobile phone and passport... all made of paper. I asked the relatives, “Why do you buy all these things? How are you going to give them to him?” “We are going to burn them.” I continued to ask, “But if you burn them, they will all turn into ash, so how is he going to receive them?” “I don’t know, Sayadaw.” However, even though they did not know, they still believed in this ritual, otherwise why would they spend so much money in burning those things?

I remember a story. A rich man, who also believed that one could take things away with one to the next life when one died, did not trust his family members. Therefore, he asked a monk, “Dear master, when I pass away, can you help me to arrange my funeral service? I will pay you 50 thousand dollars in advance.” Then, he told the doctor, “Dear doctor, I do not trust my relatives and friends, instead, I trust you. When I pass away, please take care of me and I will pay you 50 thousand dollars in advance.” Finally, he asked his lawyer, “Dear lawyer, when I pass away, please be my witness and I will pay you 50 thousand dollars in advance.”

Eventually, he did pass away. Who would be the first to know? The monk, am I right? His family would inform the monk first. Everyone is like that, when something tragic happens, they will think of the monastics. So the monk came and paid all the costs of the coffin and cremation in advance. When the doctor arrived, the monk said, “The funeral service cost 20 thousand dollars, leaving a balance of 30 thousand dollars, which I will place in his coffin.” The doctor added, “His medical fees were only 10 thousand dollars, leaving 40 thousand dollars, which I will also place in his coffin.” Later, when the smart lawyer joined them he thought, “I did not do anything. Does this mean that I have to place all 50 thousand dollars I was given in advance, in the coffin?” A

thought flashed through his mind and he said, “Please give me the 30 thousand from the master and the 40 thousand from the doctor. Together this 70 thousand plus my 50 thousand, makes a total of 120 thousand dollars. I will write a cheque, so that he can withdraw the money from my bank account in his next life.” Then, he signed his cheque and placed it in the coffin. See, who is the smartest? It is the lawyer, because he made off with all the money.

As you can see, attachments will not bring you any true benefits. If one does not know and is not willing to learn and one does not reason or think, it shows that one lacks the ability to analyze and reflect. How can this bring true benefit to one’s own life.

We will only be aware of the truth of life through practice and cultivation. When we clearly know how this mind and body function, we will no longer be attached to this body and to evil views. In this way, we will be able to bring true benefit to our lives.



Chapter 11

Contemplation of

Feelings

CONTEMPLATION OF FEELINGS (VEDANĀNUPASSANĀ)

Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu sukhaṃ vā vedanaṃ vedayamāno ‘sukhaṃ vedanaṃ vedayāmī’ ti pajānāti. Dukkhaṃ vā vedanaṃ vedayamāno ‘dukkhaṃ vedanaṃ vedayāmī’ ti pajānāti. Adukkhamasukhaṃ vā vedanaṃ vedayamāno ‘adukkkhamasukhaṃ vedanaṃ vedayāmī’ ti pajānāti.

Here, bhikkhus, when experiencing a pleasant feeling, the bhikkhu knows, ‘I experience a pleasant feeling’; when experiencing a painful feeling, he knows, ‘I experience a painful feeling’; when experiencing a neutral feeling, he knows, ‘I experience a neutral feeling’.

THREE TYPES OF FEELINGS

Feelings can be divided into five types¹ or three types. The

¹ There is another way of categorization, which is known as the five types of feelings. The five types of feelings are divided based on body and mind: (1) bodily pleasant feeling (sukha vedanā), refers to the comfortable feeling experienced by the body; (2) bodily painful feeling (dukkha vedanā), refers to the feeling of suffering experienced by the body; (3) mentally pleasant feeling (somanassa vedanā), refers to the feeling of happiness within the mind; (4) mentally painful feeling (domanassa vedanā), refers to the feeling of suffering within the mind; (5) neutral feeling (upekkhā vedanā). Bodily painful feeling and mentally painful feeling belong to the feelings of suffering among the three types of feelings; bodily pleasant feeling and mentally pleasant feeling belong to the feelings of pleasure among the three types of feelings. Neutral feeling carries the same meaning as neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling among the three types of feelings.

simpler and more common categorization consists of three types: painful feeling (*dukkha vedanā*), pleasant feeling (*sukhā vedanā*) and neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling (*adukkhamasukha vedanā*). Neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling is also known as neutral feeling (*upekkhā vedanā*), i.e. one's experience towards the object is neutral, where neither the feelings of good nor bad are prominent. We experience these three types of feelings in our daily life.

HOW TO NOTE OUR FEELINGS

Why is feeling important? Feeling is one of the Five Aggregates, which are form, feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness. Form refers to our body; feeling refers to our sensations, which are a type of mental factor; perception refers to our memory, which is also a type of mental factor; mental formation including volition (intention) refers to the remaining 50 types of mental factors; and finally consciousness refers to our minds. Form is *rūpa*, whereas feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness are *nāma*. Consciousness is the mind, as it implements the function of recognizing the target, while mental factor means “belonging to the mind”, which can be seen as a partner of consciousness. The mind cannot arise alone, just like a king

needs his followers. The mind and mental factors arise and pass away concurrently and grasp the same object.

Feeling and perception are both very important and are also prominent, something which is easy for one to sense.

“Perception” is a type of mental factor, with the function of remembering and it also refers to the strength of one’s memory. When one’s “perception” is indolent, we will be forgetful, making it difficult for us to improve. If one forgets both the good and bad, such an individual is confused and is similar to an animal, in that most animals’ mental factors of perception are weak and they tend to forget easily. Why is mental ability higher in humans? The power of memory is very important. A strong and firm memory is the proximate cause for right mindfulness. A person with a strong and firm memory will not forget the object, for when the mind follows the object, it will know clearly. Such an experience is beneficial in improving the quality of our lives.

“Feeling” is also a type of mental factor, being the sensation of a particular experience. Before the Buddha appeared in this world, there was a type of “self-view” known as “*vedaka atta*”, which meant that “I” was experiencing a painful feeling or a pleasurable feeling. People that held such evil views felt that “feeling” was a type of “I”. Whether “feeling” is “I” or “no-self”, we, as meditators will understand easily.

Feeling is ultimate (*paramattha*) Dhamma, it is a true natural phenomenon. When we let our bodies and minds settle down, the truth will reveal itself naturally. So long as we do not do anything, i.e. we sit comfortably and stop moving (even though there may be discomfort) and just pay attention by noting, the truth of natural phenomena will appear.

One of my teachers say that people watch the external TV daily, but they do not watch the ‘internal TV’ of the Five Aggregates. We see the external screen with our physical eyes, and we observe the internal one with our eyes of wisdom. What are the eyes of wisdom? What we feel or perceive when we close our eyes is what is seen by our eyes of wisdom. When we note the rising and falling of the abdomen, we close our eyes, so how do we see? We depend on our feelings, because without them, the mind will not know.

Some people say they can’t find the rising and falling of the abdomen. If your mind is not focused on the object, how can you find it? Everyone breathes, because if we stop breathing, we will die. Breathing is simple and natural, involving the inward and outward movement of the wind only. The cause of feelings is touch, “conditioned by touch, feelings arise” (*phassa-paccayā vedanā*). When the wind blows on our faces, we feel it easily. This is how the wind touches our body, which, conditioned by touch, results in the arising of feelings

and so we feel the wind's touch. When we inhale, wind enters our body, expanding the abdomen. As the wind touches our internal body, we feel the expansion of our abdomen and this is when we should observe and note "rising, rising". As we exhale, the wind exits, the abdomen contracts and we should observe and note "falling, falling". What type of feelings are these sensations of "rising, falling, rising, falling"? It is the neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling.

OVERCOMING PAINFUL FEELINGS

Sometimes, during the interview meditators will say, "My abdomen is painful when it rises and falls". Painful feeling, pleasant feeling, neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, all these are only feelings. It doesn't matter what feeling it is, as long as we feel it, this is sufficient. The mind and mental factors arise and pass away concurrently and grasp the same object. Therefore, the feeling and mind are together; as you feel it, your mind is there as well. The mind and feelings are both ultimate (*paramattha*) Dhamma, it is the real Dhamma, it is the truth. The mind recognizes the object and the feelings sense the object.

But when pain becomes too prominent, affecting the noting of the abdomen, let go of noting the rising and falling of the

abdomen and begin noting the painful feeling. Because we only have one mind, we can't read two books simultaneously. Accordingly, if we note the rising and falling of the abdomen as well as the sensation of pain, the mind will be confused and will not be able to know either object clearly. We cannot be dazed when we note, we must be sure, because it is in the knowing clearly that there is true knowledge. Therefore, when our mind has been dragged away by the pain, we should note the pain. When the sensation of pain is no longer prominent, then we can refocus our mind on the rising and falling of the abdomen. Why should we focus our attention on the rising and falling of the abdomen as the main object? Because it is there all the time. Without the distraction of other objects, we will follow the main object.

If we don't assign an object to the mind, the mind will catch hold of objects on its own and distraction will occur. The mind's duty is to find an object. Without an object the mind will not arise, thus it finds objects every single moment. For instance, the ear-consciousness detects sounds, but without the presence of sounds, the ear consciousness will not arise. Of course, for the ear consciousness to arise, besides the sound, other causes must be fulfilled, i.e. ear-sensitivity, space and attention (*manasikāra*). Object and consciousness are present in pairs; form, sound, smell, taste, touch and *dhammas*

(six types of objects) are paired with eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness and mind consciousness (six types of consciousness). Some people may say, “When I savour the taste, I can smell a fragrance.” The tongue savours the taste, whereas the nose smells the fragrance, each performing their own duties. When you possess right mindfulness, you will be able to divide the different areas of feelings. Is the mind there? Yes, it is there. Does the mind exist? No, it does not exist. Why? Because the moment the mind arises, it passes away immediately; the mind arises and passes away continuously. Feelings and the mind are together, arising and passing away simultaneously. The mind is very fast, it arises and passes away a trillion times in a click of our fingers. The same applies to feelings. Thus, we should continue to note, so that we can experience more.

Everyone has experienced physical pain before. Sometimes we think, “This is so painful. This pain will not cease, as it has been ongoing for a long time.” Why? Because we do not see it’s arising and passing away. Pain will arise and pass away and with it, at every single moment the mind will also arise and pass away. Feelings will arise and pass away, therefore pain will also arise and pass away. If we can see how pain changes — for example: severe pain, pain due to swelling, pain due

to numbness — how it arises, becoming severe, becoming weaker or vanishing, if we can know this clearly, it is very easy to overcome pain. Pain is pain, the mind is the mind, the body is the body, *nāma* and *rūpa* are clearly distinguished. When we develop such awareness, insight truly begins.

Can we compare the pain experienced during meditation with pain associated with illness? Which type of pain is more severe? It is very troublesome even having a cold with a runny nose, yet the pain in meditation will vanish once you move your body a little. Thus, if we can't endure such pain, what are we going to do when we fall ill? What can we do when death is approaching? We should contemplate this way and be diligent in overcoming the pain associated with meditation. This is very important.

Next, I shall tell a story about a person who overcame physical pain and attained *Nibbāna*.

THE STORY OF TISSA THERA²

A householder in Sri Lanka had two sons. After the death of their father, the elder son Tissa Thera gave all his inheritance

² Quoted from “The Great Chronicle of Buddhas” Volume I, Part One, written by The Most Venerable Mingun Sayadaw Bhaddanta Vicittasārābhivamsa, translated into English by U Ko Lay U Tin Lwin.

to his younger brother and became a bhikkhu, practising meditation at a jungle monastery. Then the younger brother's wife thought to herself: "Now we get all the wealth because the brother-in-law became a bhikkhu. If he decides to return to a layman's life we will have to give him back half the wealth. There is no knowing whether he will do so or not. We will have peace of mind only when he dies." With this thought she engaged some men to kill the Thera.

The men came to the jungle monastery and seized the Thera in the evening. Tissa Thera told them that he possessed nothing which they might want. The men explained, "We do not come here to get your wealth. We come here to kill you at the instance of your sister-in-law." The Thera said, "I possess pure precepts (*sīla*), but I have not yet attained *Arahattaphala*. As I want to achieve Arahantship depending on this pure precepts, allow me to practise vipassana meditation before dawn." The men replied "We cannot grant your request. If you run away during the night we will have to take the trouble of catching you again." Saying, "I will let you see clearly how I cannot run away." The Thera broke his two knees himself with a big stone.

When both knees were completely broken thus, the Thera said, "Now you have seen my condition. By no means can I run away from you. I abhor to die as a worldling with sensual

lust. I feel ashamed of it.” Only then did the men give him permission to practise meditation. Then the Thera depending upon his precepts which was not tarnished by lust, made efforts throughout the night until dawn, when he attained Arahantship.

BEFRIEND YOUR PAIN

Befriend your pain. If anger arises in response to the pain this results in rejection and aversion, which will bring you more suffering and cause you to be anxious and uneasy. Once you are distracted in this way, it will be even more painful. If the mind cannot be at ease and as a result cannot concentrate, joy will not arise. Without joy, the pain will become more severe.

The physical pain associated with fractured legs is intense, but Tissa Thera’s precepts were pure and his mind was very pure. Thus, Tissa Thera relied on his pure precepts and joy arose. It was in this way that he overcame the physical pain with joy, while his mind harboured neutral feelings — feelings of neither pain nor pleasure. He began insight meditation with these feelings as a foundation and attained Arahantship within one night, after extinguishing all defilements.

Therefore, it is possible to overcome the suffering of

breaking our own knees. In comparison, the physical pain that we experience during meditation is minor, so we should be patient. In the beginning, if we can't endure the pain, we can move our bodies a little. By moving slightly, the pain will vanish, but it will return again. If we can overcome the pain, the next time it will not come. It is not that the pain is not there, it is just that the pain no longer disturbs you. Remember, patience leads us towards *Nibbāna*. Noting our feelings will bring us to *Nibbāna*.

CONCLUSION

One will never forget the true wisdom acquired from meditation, because it is imprinted on one's mind and can be applied in our lives. Life is filled with suffering, isn't that so? However, for a wise person, life can be beautiful and happy. The wise live in the moment easily and advance towards the ultimate liberation — the elimination of all defilements. However, the prerequisite is that one should be diligent in cultivating vipassana meditation. We should not forget this.

Chapter 12

Contemplation of the Mind

CONTEMPLATION OF THE MIND (CITTĀNUPASSANĀ)

Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu sarāgaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘sarāgaṃ citta’ nti pajānāti, vītārāgaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘vītārāgaṃ citta’ nti pajānāti. Sadosaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘sadosaṃ citta’ nti pajānāti, vītadosaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘vītadosaṃ citta’ nti pajānāti. Samohaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘samohaṃ citta’ nti pajānāti, vītamohaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘vītamohaṃ citta’ nti pajānāti. Saṅkhittaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘saṅkhittaṃ citta’ nti pajānāti, vikkhittaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘vikkhittaṃ citta’ nti pajānāti. Mahaggataṃ vā cittaṃ ‘mahaggataṃ citta’ nti pajānāti, amahaggataṃ vā cittaṃ ‘amahaggataṃ citta’ nti pajānāti. Sauttaraṃ vā cittaṃ ‘sauttaraṃ citta’ nti pajānāti, anuttaraṃ vā cittaṃ ‘anuttaraṃ citta’ nti pajānāti. Samāhitaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘samāhitaṃ citta’ nti pajānāti, asamāhitaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘asamāhitaṃ citta’ nti pajānāti. Vimuttaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘vimuttaṃ citta’ nti pajānāti. Avimuttaṃ vā cittaṃ ‘avimuttaṃ citta’ nti pajānāti’.

Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu knows the consciousness with lust as consciousness with lust, the consciousness without lust as consciousness without lust, the

consciousness with hate as consciousness with hate, the consciousness without hate as consciousness without hate, the consciousness with delusion as consciousness with delusion, the consciousness without delusion as consciousness without delusion, the constricted consciousness¹ as constricted consciousness, the scattered consciousness as scattered consciousness, the consciousness that has become great² as consciousness that has become great, the consciousness that has not become great as consciousness that has not become great, the surpassable consciousness³ as surpassable consciousness, the unsurpassable consciousness as unsurpassable consciousness, the concentrated consciousness as concentrated consciousness, the unconcentrated consciousness as unconcentrated consciousness, the freed consciousness as freed consciousness, the fettered consciousness as fettered consciousness.

1 “Constricted consciousness” refers to a type of consciousness you have when you are oppressed by sloth and torpor. “Scattered consciousness” refers to a type of consciousness you have when you are restless.

2 “The mind has become great” means “jhāna consciousness”. “The mind that has not become great”, means the other type of consciousness pertaining to the sense-sphere.

3 “Surpassable consciousness” means types of consciousness pertaining to the sense-sphere and the form-sphere. “Unsurpassable consciousness” means type of consciousness pertaining to the formless-sphere.

The Buddha said, when the mind of lust arises, one should be aware of this mind of lust (*sarāgaṃ citta*); when the mind of hatred arises, one should be aware of this mind of hatred (*sadosaṃ citta*); when delusion arises, one should be aware of the deluded mind (*samohaṃ citta*). When does delusion arise? Delusion appears when our mind is bored and drifting about. At the moment when we clearly know these minds, they have already ceased. Why? We only have one mind. When the mind of awareness arises, the mind of greed, hatred and ignorance ceases.

The Buddha's teachings are simple. All we need to do is to follow and practice according to his teachings and be clearly aware of our own mental state in the moment. When we possess clearly knowing, it means that one possesses right mindfulness. Right mindfulness will be together with the wholesome mind. A mind that harbours greed, hatred and ignorance is an unwholesome mind. It is impossible for the wholesome and unwholesome to arise together. Just like a bridge that can only allow one person to walk on it, when the wholesome mind is on it, the unwholesome mind will not be there. If we allow the unwholesome mind to walk on the bridge by mistake, the wholesome mind will not be there. Therefore, continuous cultivation is very important, continue to note, sustain right mindfulness and the wholesome mind

continuously, so that the unwholesome mind that harbours greed, hatred and ignorance will not have the opportunity to arise.

There are five types of meditation methods which we should not forget, i.e. to cultivate on a long term basis (*cirakāla-bhāvanā*); to cultivate continuously (*nirantara-bhāvanā*); to cultivate with perfection (*anavasesa-bhāvanā*); to cultivate with reverence (*sakkacca-bhāvanā*); to cultivate joyfully (*abhirati-bhāvanā*). If we can note continuously, our mind will become more and more stable. This is *samāhitam citta*, a mind with concentration (*samādhi*). We note continuously, when the freed consciousness (*vimuttam citta*) arises, we know clearly, “Oh! We have been freed!” When we have been freed, we will know clearly, these are our own minds! Liberation is the attainment of the knowledge of the path (*maggañāṇa*) and the knowledge of the fruition (*phalañāṇa*). The mind of suspicion and evil views has been extinguished, thus, one has become a stream-entrant (*sotāpanna*).

The path consciousness (*maggacitta*) has the function either of eradicating or of permanently attenuating defilements. The fruition consciousness (*phalacitta*) has the function of experiencing the degree of liberation made possible by the corresponding path. Each path consciousness arises only once, whereas fruition consciousness can be repeated. This

is the same as after you have been to Taipei once, you will be familiar with the place and you will then be comfortable in visiting Taipei more often.

It is not easy for us to control the mind. The mind functions rapidly and becomes distracted rapidly. However, it can also achieve enlightenment rapidly.

SEVEN KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE ENDOWED BY A STREAM-ENTRANT

A stream-entrant (*sotāpanna*) has cut the first three of the five lower fetters⁴, which are self-identity views (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), doubt (*vicikicchā*) and grasping at habits and practices (*sīlabata-parāmāsa*). He is endowed with unwavering confidence in the Triple Gem and the law of kamma. His adherence to the basic principles of morality is unshakable and he is consummate in virtue (*sīla*). He naturally abstains from breaking any of the five precepts. As a stream-entrant he has eliminated all wrong views and accordingly he is said to be an individual

⁴ There are ten fetters. The sotāpatti-magga uproots the first three fetters, which are self-identity views, uncertainty and grasping at habits and practices. The sakadāgāmi-magga uproots passion and aversion. The anāgāmi-magga uproots desire and ill will, which is the total ending of the five lower fetters. These are so-called lower fetters, because the sensuous sphere is lower compared to the world of form and the formless world. The Arahatta-magga uproots all the five higher fetters, which are passion for form, passion for what is formless, conceit, restlessness and ignorance. These are so-called higher fetters, because the world of form and the formless world is higher compared to the sensuous sphere.

who is consummate in view (*ditṭhisampanno puggalo*).

According to *Kosambiya Sutta*⁵ in *Majjhima Nikāya*, a stream-entrant is endowed with seven qualities which are noble, transcendent and not held in common with run-of-the-mill people.

(1) Letting Go of Defilements with Ease

When he considers thus: “Is there any internal enthrallment unabandoned in me that, enthralled with which, my enthralled mind would not know or see things as they actually are?”□

He discerns that, “There is no enthrallment unabandoned in me that, enthralled with which, my enthralled mind would not know and see things as they actually are. My mind is well directed for awakening to the truths.□ This is the first knowledge attained by him that is noble, transcendent, not held in common with run-of-the-mill people.

Here, enthrallment refers to five hindrances, namely, sense-desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, doubt, being absorbed in speculation about this world and other

⁵ Sutta translation is abridged from “Into the Stream – A study Guide on the First Stage of Awakening” by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

worlds, being given to arguing, quarrelling and disputing and injuring others verbally. The lay person will find it difficult to let go of his defilements, especially greed and hatred which will persist for a long time. But, the stream-entrant knows there is cause and effect. With the eradication of self-identity views, a stream-entrant is endowed with discernment of arising and passing away, as well as penetrating knowledge of the Truth. Although greed, ill will and delusion may still arise in him, which will be easily dismissed, he will never do any evil action that will lead to rebirth in a woeful state.

(2) Profound Beliefs in the Law of Kamma

He discerns that, “When I cultivate, develop, and pursue this view, I personally obtain serenity, I personally obtain Unbinding.□ This is the second knowledge attained by him that is noble, transcendent, not held in common with run-of-the-mill people.

The stream-entrant possesses unwavering confidence towards the law of kamma, regardless of whether circumstances are favourable or unfavourable. He will contemplate that it involves merely the maturation of wholesome or unwholesome kamma and will not be too attached to it. For instance, if a

man has been framed by others and he tries by all means to take revenge, such burning hatred will make him suffer. If a stream-entrant encounters such circumstances, he will understand that this is just the maturation of unwholesome kamma, so he will accept the situation and let it go.

(3) Firm Belief in the Triple Gem

He discerns that, “There is no other contemplative or Brahman outside [the Dhamma and Vinaya] endowed with the sort of view with which I am endowed.□ This is the third knowledge attained by him that is noble, transcendent, not held in common with run-of-the-mill people.

He possesses unwavering confidence towards the Triple Gem. The Triple Gem is his refuge and he will not seek other sources of refuge. Even though we possess firm belief in the Triple Gem in this life time, as long as we have not attained the level of a stream-entrant, we will not be sure whether we will still seek refuge under the Triple Gem in our next lives. But stream-entrants are different; because their confidence is immutable, they will still seek refuge with the Triple Gem in their next life.

(4) To Repent with Ease When Committing a Mistake

He discerns that, “I am endowed with the character of a person consummate in view.□ What is the character of a person consummate in view? Just as a young, tender infant lying on his back, when he has hit a live ember with his hand or his foot, immediately draws back; in the same way, this is the character of a person consummate in view: although he may commit some kind of offence for which a means of rehabilitation has been laid down, still he immediately confesses, reveals, and discloses it to the teacher or to wise companions in the holy life; having done that, he undertakes restraint for the future. This is the fourth knowledge attained by him that is noble, transcendent, not held in common with run-of-the-mill people.

Sometimes, it is difficult for us to admit our mistakes, right? We are not morally completely upright and honest. In fact, everyone commits mistakes, isn't that so? If the stream-entrant commits a mistake, he will repent with sincerity. He will not make others listen to him, as if “he must win”; no, he will not do that. He is clearly aware of causes and conditions, right and wrong, with reason and without reason.

(5) Do Not Violate the Five Precepts

He discerns that, “I am endowed with the character of a person consummate in view.□ What is the character of a person consummate in view? Just as a cow with a new calf watches after her calf all the while she is grazing on grass, in the same way, this is the character of a person consummate in view: Although he may be active in the various affairs of his companions in the holy life, he still has a keen regard for training in heightened virtue, training in heightened mind, and training in heightened discernment. This is the fifth knowledge attained by him that is noble, transcendent, not held in common with run-of-the-mill people.

The stream-entrant is perfect in upholding the precepts and he will not violate the Five Precepts. No matter how much he delights himself with self-indulgence, he will not be reborn the 8th time, but will continue to advance towards the ultimate liberation. Both stream-entrant and once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*) are perfect in upholding the precepts. A non-returner (*anāgāmi*) has perfected the cultivation of meditative concentration and an Arahant is a sage that has achieved perfection in the cultivation of precepts, meditative concentration and wisdom.

(6) Paying Attention When Listening to the Dhamma

He discerns that, “I am endowed with the strength of a person consummate in view.□ What is the strength of a person consummate in view? When the Dhamma and Vinaya proclaimed by the Tathagata is being taught, he heeds it, gives it attention, engages it with all his mind, hears the Dhamma with eager ears. This is the sixth knowledge attained by him that is noble, transcendent, not held in common with run-of-the-mill people.

A stream-entrant is very focused when listening to the Dhamma. He enjoys listening to the Dhamma and often contemplates on the Dhamma.

(7) Gaining Understanding of the Meaning and Benefits of the Dhamma

He discerns that, “I am endowed with the strength of a person consummate in view.□ What is the strength of a person consummate in view? When the Dhamma and Vinaya proclaimed by the Tathagata is being taught, he gains understanding in the meaning, gains understanding in the Dhamma,

gains gladness connected with the Dhamma. This is the seventh knowledge attained by him that is noble, transcendent, not held in common with run-of-the-mill people.

After hearing the Dhamma, he can understand its meaning and benefits, he is thus filled with Dhamma joy. Therefore, his entire life will become more bountiful and mature. Stream-entrants have closed the door that leads to the four realms of misery and they will not be reborn to the evil realms. They will attain Arahantship and *Nibbāna* after being reborn seven times.

ASITĀBHŪ-JATAKA⁶

The Buddha told this story about a young girl, while staying at Jetavana.

Tradition tells us that a certain man at Savatthi, a servant of the Buddha's two chief disciples, had one beautiful and happy daughter. When she grew up, she married into a family as good as her own. The husband, without consulting anybody, used to enjoy himself elsewhere at will. She took no notice

⁶ Asitābhū-Jataka No.234 of "Stories of the Buddha's Former Births" Volumn II, translated from the Pali by W.H.D. Rouse, and edited by E.B. Cowell. Abridgements and a few amendments according to the Pali original have been made.

of his disrespect. Instead she invited the two chief disciples, made offerings to them and listened to their preaching, until she reached the level of stream-entry. After this, she spent all her time in the enjoyment of the path and the fruit. At last, thinking that as her husband did not want her, there was no need for her to remain in the household, she determined to embrace the holy life. She informed her parents of her plan, carried it out and became an Arahant.

Her story became known amongst the Brotherhood and one day they were discussing it in the Hall of Truth. While they were talking, the Buddha came in and asked what they were discussing. They told him and he said, “This is not the first time, brethren that she seeks the highest; she did so in olden days as well.” and then he told a tale from long ago.

Once upon a time, when Brahmadata was king of Benares, the Bodhisatta was living as an ascetic in the Himalayas. He had cultivated the five supernatural powers and the eight attainments of absorption. Then the king of Benares, observing how magnificent the lifestyle of his son Prince Brahmadata was, was filled with suspicion and banished his son from the realm.

The youth with his wife *Asitābhū* made his way to the Himalayas and took up abode in a hut of leaves, with fish to eat and all manner of wild fruits. He saw a woodland sprite

(*kinnarī*) and became enamoured of her, saying “I will make her my wife!” and without thinking of *Asitābhū*, he followed the sprite. His wife seeing this, was filled with anger. “The man cares nought for me,” she thought: “what have I to do with him?” So she went to the Bodhisatta and paid him homage. She concentrated her full attention on the visible object as a preparatory image, then perceiving and concentrating on its mental reflex, she developed the five supernatural powers and the eight attainments of absorption. She then bade the Bodhisatta farewell and returning stood at the door of her hut of leaves.

Now Brahmadata followed the sprite, but did not succeed in seeing which way she went. Frustrated in his desire he set off again for the hut. *Asitābhū* saw him coming, and rose up in the air. Poised upon a plane in the air of the colour of crystal, she said to him — “My young lord! ‘tis through you that I have attained this ecstatic bliss!” and she uttered the first stanza:

“Now desire has gone,
Thanks to you, and found its ending:
Like a tusk, once sawn,
None can make it one by mending.”

So saying, as he looked, she rose up and departed to another place. When she had gone, he uttered the second stanza, lamenting:

“Greed here and there, unrestrained,
overwhelmed by on-going lust,
Steals our good away,
Even as now my wife I am losing.”

And having made his complaint in this stanza, he dwelt alone in the forest, and when his father died he received the sovereignty.

After this discourse was ended, the Buddha identified the Birth: “These two people were then the prince and princess and I was the hermit.”

Asitābhū realized that seeking refuge in her husband was not reliable, but to seek refuge in external means would not provide an ultimate resolution. Thus, she searched for happiness within her inner self and attained a state of bliss. Eventually, she was liberated from all sufferings.

A DIRECTIVE MIND

The mind has another characteristic — directing and leading. If for example one has not previously experienced seeing, hearing or tasting, the mind will not be able to direct or lead that experience. If we see and hear every day, when it comes to familiar objects, even though we are not aware of it, our

minds will direct that experience. The same applies to the wholesome and unwholesome states of mind. If we are used to committing unwholesome deeds, our mind will direct us towards the unwholesome path; if we are used to committing wholesome deeds, our minds will direct us towards the wholesome path. The directed mind used, follows familiar objects.

During the Buddha's era, before the Buddha achieved Buddhahood, many cultivators did not achieve enlightenment, because their minds directed them towards the cultivation of supernatural powers and not towards liberation. Supernatural powers focus on the external perspective. They can visualize a country no matter how far away it is located, for instance, U.S. or China. If they observe the internal parts of the body, they only know the concepts, such as the physical locations of the heart and stomach etc. Supernatural powers do not provide a clear view of the various features of our bodies and minds, it does not show us how our bodies and minds interact with each other. When the Buddha achieved Buddhahood, he explained the functioning of our bodies, minds and mental factors. He taught us how to use natural phenomena as the meditation object, in order to attain liberation. Individuals that possess supernatural powers also have very strong meditative concentration and they can concentrate with ease when the Buddha is expounding the Dhamma. When the Buddha

explains how the body and mind function and its cause and effect, their minds will direct them towards *Nibbāna*. They note in the moment itself and can attain enlightenment rapidly.

The mind functions rapidly. When we are able to control our minds, we can attain concentration (*samādhi*), supernatural powers, knowledge of the path (*maggañāṇa*), knowledge of the fruition (*phalañāṇa*) and *Nibbāna* rapidly. Therefore, we must train our minds. Within this month of meditation, everyone is clear about the training method. However, meditation should not be practiced only at a meditation retreat or meditation centre. One should also practice at home and at the office. We should possess right mindfulness in life and at work. When we possess right mindfulness, we will not be careless when we come and go, eat and speak. If we do not maintain this level of mindfulness when we die, we will be in danger as our future destination will be uncertain. Right mindfulness will arise together with the wholesome mind, a mind without right mindfulness is unwholesome. If we do not die in a state of right mindfulness, it means that we have died with an unwholesome mind and the chance for us to be reborn in a realm of bliss will be rather slim. Thus, we must train our minds, so that we are clear about what we are doing every single moment in our lives. If we possess such awareness, we will commit less unwholesome deeds, our defilements will

lessen and it will be easy for us to settle down to a pure life.

If we use the explosion of a hand grenade as an analogy to depict the attainment of *Nibbāna*, the hand grenade will be the favourable condition that helps us to achieve enlightenment, with the act of pulling the pin being the direct cause. Previously we discussed the five types of rarity (*dullabho*): It is rare to encounter a Buddha (*dullabho buddhuppādo lokasmim*); it is rare to attain the human body (*dullabho manussattaṭṭapaṭilābho*); it is rare to acquire confidence (*dullabhā sampatti*); it is rare for one to seek renunciation (*dullabhā pabbajjā*); it is rare for one to listen to the Dhamma (*dullabhaṃ saddhammassavanaṃ*). Each one of you left your homes to attend the meditation retreat and so you are just like renunciants. Thus, we have encountered the five types of rarity and our conditions are fulfilled. However, we do not know when the conditions will mature — we do not know when we will pull out the pin of our hand grenade. Therefore, everyone should be diligent, as once the conditions mature, the pin will be pulled out, “Hoo!”, *Nibbāna* arrives.

May all of you attain *maggañāṇa*, *phalañāṇa* and *Nibbāna* one day.



Chapter 13

Contemplation of

Dhammas

13.1 Hindrances

The contemplation of the *dhammas* (*dhammānupassanā*) has five sections: (1) Hindrances (*nīvaraṇapabbam*) (2) Aggregates (*khandhapabbam*) (3) Sense-bases (*āyatanapabbam*) (4) Factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅgapabbam*) and (5) Noble truths (*saccapabbam*).

THE FIVE HINDRANCES (NĪVARAṆA)

Hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) carries the meaning of obscuration. It refers to defilements that obscure the pure mind and prevent the production of wholesome Dhammas. The five hindrances are: (1) sense-desire (2) ill-will (3) sloth and torpor (4) restlessness and remorse and (5) doubt. There is also a 6th hindrance known as ignorance.

(1) Sense-Desire (*kāmacchanda nīvaraṇa*)

Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu santam vā ajjhataṃ kāmacchandaṃ ‘atthi me ajjhataṃ kāmacchando’ ti pajānāti, asantaṃ vā ajjhataṃ kāmacchandaṃ ‘natthi me ajjhataṃ kāmacchando’ ti pajānāti.

Here bhikkhus, when sense-desire is present in him, the bhikkhu knows, ‘There is sense-desire in me’, or when sense-desire is absent in him, he knows, ‘There is no sense-desire in me’.

Sense-desire (*kāmacchanda nīvaraṇa*) refers to a state of attachment to craving without a sense of contentment. The body does not generate desire, desire originates from the mind. However, desire does not exist all the time, desire exists when it arises; desire is absent when it does not arise.

When our eyes see an object that we favour, such as seeing a pretty woman or a handsome man, a mind of greed (*sarāga citta*) arises. When we are satisfied with our meditation progress, a state of joy arises. Sometimes we will develop attachment and craving towards the state of tranquillity, bliss and ease and forget to note, which is how a mind of craving obscures the pure mind. When we are immersed in a state of joy that we have not experienced before, we may feel anxious or a little strange. At this moment, the mind is in an imbalanced state, making it difficult to continue with our observation. If the mind is imbalanced, it will be easily distracted and the body will be disturbed as well. The mind must be balanced in order to see clearly. Do not be attached to the state of joy associated with meditation. Our responsibility is merely to continue with noting. A craving mind leads to a

defiled mind, therefore, when a craving mind arises, we must be fully aware of it. When we note, a craving mind will not arise, but even if it does arise, it will not persist.

(2) Ill-will (*byāpāda nīvaraṇa*)

Santaṃ vā ajjhattaṃ byāpādaṃ ‘atthi me ajjhattaṃ byāpādo’ ti pajānāti, asantaṃ vā ajjhattaṃ byāpādaṃ ‘natthi me ajjhattaṃ byāpādo’ ti pajānāti.

When ill will is present in him, he knows, ‘There is ill will in me’, or when ill will is absent in him, he knows, ‘There is no ill will in me’.

Ill-will (*byāpāda nīvaraṇa*) refers to anger that is produced in response towards a state of displeasure. Anger, fear, resentment and sorrow are ill-will and include different levels of aversion, rejection and resistance towards the object. This can range from the extreme of murdering people under intense anger to minor irritation, anxiety, restlessness and worrying. Ill-will is not present all the time. Sometimes it is present and sometimes it is not. We must recognize and know the influence and disturbance generated by ill-will when it arises.

(3) Sloth and Torpor (*thīnamiddha nīvaraṇa*)

Santaṃ vā ajjhattaṃ thinamiddhaṃ ‘atthi me ajjhattaṃ thinamiddhaṃ’ ti pajānāti, asantaṃ vā ajjhattaṃ thinamiddhaṃ ‘natthi me ajjhattaṃ thinamiddhaṃ’ ti pajānāti.

When sloth and torpor are present in him, he knows, ‘There is sloth and torpor in me’, or when sloth and torpor are absent in him, he knows, ‘There is no sloth and torpor in me’.

Sloth and torpor (*thīnamiddha nīvaraṇa*) refer to a state of mind that is dull, listless, confused and stagnant. During meditation, effort and concentration must be balanced. If effort is weak and concentration is high, one will enter a state of sloth and torpor easily. When sloth and torpor penetrate one’s mind, the mind will start to drift and will not be able to recognize the object with clarity. With this state of mind it is difficult for one to improve. At times like this, we must invest greater effort to overcome sloth and torpor.

(4) Restlessness and Remorse (uddhaccakukkucca nīvaraṇa)

Santaṃ vā ajjhattaṃ uddhaccakukkuccaṃ ‘atthi me ajjhattaṃ uddhaccakukkuccaṃ’ ti pajānāti,

asantaṃ vā ajjhataṃ uddhaccakukkuccaṃ 'natthi me ajjhataṃ uddhaccakukkuccaṃ' ti pajānāti.

When restlessness and remorse are present in him, he knows, 'There is restlessness and remorse in me', or when restlessness and remorse are absent in him, he knows, 'There is no restlessness and remorse in me'.

Restlessness and remorse (*uddhaccakukkucca nīvaraṇa*): restlessness is agitation, whereas remorse means regretting doing something that should not have been done or regretting something that should have been done. A distracted mind is restless and consequently the mind catches hold of the object it prefers. When training the mind, we assign an object to it and we should also nurture and protect it. When the mind is accustomed to focus on the assigned object, it will attain tranquillity. However, if the mind forgets to return its' focus to the assigned object, it will be distracted and start to produce random thoughts.

A distracted mind with remorse may arise together, especially when we reminisce on past wrongdoings. It is impossible for everyone's life to be absolutely free from defilements and sometimes we will commit unwholesome kamma. When we are distracted, we will remember our wrongdoings and feel a sense of remorse. At such times, we

should repent of our transgressions to the Buddha. We should seek refuge in the Buddha and prostrate in front of him for an hour. We should pray for the Buddha to forgive us and vow not to repeat the same mistake again. This method will be able to resolve a mind of remorse.

(5) Doubt (*vicikicchā nīvaraṇa*)

Santaṃ vā ajjhattaṃ vicikicchaṃ ‘atthi me ajjhattaṃ vicikicchā’ ti pajānāti, asantaṃ vā ajjhattaṃ vicikicchaṃ ‘natthi me ajjhattaṃ vicikicchā’ ti pajānāti.

When doubt is present in him, he knows, ‘There is doubt in me’, or when doubt is absent in him, he knows, ‘There is no doubt in me’.

Doubt (*vicikicchā nīvaraṇa*) refers to uncertainty, indecisiveness, qualms and perplexity. When the mind is distracted, doubt will arise easily. “Is it appropriate to cultivate in this manner?” When the mind of doubt arises, it will obscure the pure mind. Therefore, we must note in order to overcome these hindrances.

The sixth hindrance is ignorance (*avijjā nīvaraṇa*). Calm meditation and insight meditation can temporarily subdue

the five hindrances, but concentration (*samādhi*) meditation is unable to eliminate ignorance. When insight-wisdom (*vipassanāñāṇa*) matures, knowledge of the path (*maggāñāṇa*) and knowledge of the fruition (*phalañāṇa*) will then arise and ignorance can be reduced or extinguished. Only when the path to emancipation (*arahattamagga*) arises, it will uproot and eliminate ignorance.

THE FIVE HINDRANCES THAT STEAL OUR SPIRITUAL WEALTH

When the five hindrances come, we must overcome them. How can we achieve this? By remaining alert, as we should do for instance, when sleeping in a strange place. If we are not careful, a thief may come and steal our belongings when we are sleeping. The five hindrances are just like a thief, coming when we lose our mindfulness and stealing the seven types of noble wealth (*sattavidha-ariyadhana*).

The seven types of noble wealth (*sattavidha-ariyadhana*) are confidence (*saddhā*), good conduct (*sīla*), a sense of shame (*hirī*), fear to do wrong (*ottappa*), learning (*suta*), generosity (*cāga*) and wisdom (*pañña*). Greed will steal our confidence, causing us to forget about the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, as well as forget about the need to cultivate. Greed will also

steal away our good conduct. For instance, greed will create the urge to eat unnecessarily, resulting in our forgetting about upholding the Eight Precepts and consuming biscuits at night, even when we are not allowed to do so. When the thief of the five hindrances invades our minds, we lose the noble wealth of the sages. However, if we are alert, the thief will not dare to enter our house and he will go to other places. Therefore, do not be dazed, careless or drowsy during cultivation. Maintain your alertness and awareness at all times. If we are careful and diligent, we will be alert when the five hindrances arrive, with the result that it will leave. If we are drowsy, dazed, lack mindfulness and concentration, the thief will steal all our noble wealth. If our minds continue to be confused, dazed and drifting, precious time is wasted. Thus, we must beware of the invasion by the five hindrances.

THE FIVE FACTORS OF THE FIRST ABSORPTION

These five factors of the first absorption can be used as an antidote to cure the five hindrances. The five factors are: (1) application (*vitakka*); (2) sustained application (*vicāra*); (3) zest (*pīti*); (4) happiness (*sukha*) and (5) one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*).

(1) Application (vitakka)

The duty of application (*vitakka*) is to direct the mind to the object. Application can be used as an antidote for sloth and torpor. The function of application is to let the mind focus on the object continuously, when noting. When the mind is focused on the object, there will not be sloth and torpor. For the mind to focus on the object continuously, effort and attention are required. If effort and attention are inadequate, the mind drifts away from the object, followed by sloth and torpor. Thus, short term effort and attention are insufficient. It is necessary to invest persistent effort and attention for the mind to follow the object, so that sloth and torpor can be eliminated.

(2) Sustained Application (vicāra)

The function of sustained application (*vicāra*) is to sustain the mind on the object, i.e. to focus and stabilize the mind on the object. Sustained application can be used as an antidote for doubt. Unless we have an unclear, uncertain and doubtful mind, when the mind is stabilized on an object, we will know the object clearly and doubt will not arise. There is no need to ask others, you should be sure of your own mind. We just need to focus our minds on the object and note continuously. Sometimes if our mind power is insufficient, the object that we note may not be clear. Many people lack patience, seeking

another object when the observation is initially unclear. There is no need to search for another object, we should follow our initial object accurately and continue to note and then the object will become clear. “Patience leads to *Nibbāna*”, when we follow the object earnestly and are absolutely sure, we will be able to overcome doubt.

(3) Zest (*pīti*)

Zest (*pīti*) refers to joy, delight and contentment. Zest can be used as an antidote for ill-will. When a mind of contentment and joy arises, ill-will, fear and dissatisfaction will not arise. When the mind enters a state of *samādhi*, “zest” will arise.

(4) Happiness (*sukha*)

Happiness (*sukha*) refers to pleasure and bliss. “Happiness” can be used as an antidote to cure restlessness and remorse. When zest arises, happiness will also arise. When the mind is happy and is interested in the object of noting, it will not be distracted nor remorseful. As a result, restlessness and remorse are overcome. We all know there are people that play mahjong or watch TV all night long, with happy and focused minds. They do not feel tired even though they don’t sleep through the night. Of course, when the mind is focused on such objects, it is not beneficial.

(5) One-Pointedness (*ekaggatā*)

One-pointedness (*ekaggatā*) refers to a state where the mind only grasps one object and stays in a state of tranquillity. One-pointedness can serve as an antidote to cure sense-desire. When the mind enters a state of *samādhi* or one-pointedness, sense-desire will not arise. When desire arises, the mind will not settle down, but becomes distracted. When we train our minds continuously, meditative concentration will improve and the mind will gradually settle upon the assigned object.

WISDOM ELIMINATES IGNORANCE

The five factors of the first absorption can subdue the five hindrances, but we are not able to achieve enlightenment yet, because these five factors of the first absorption are not able to eliminate ignorance. Before the Buddha achieved Buddhahood, many ascetics attained absorption (*jhāna*) but they were not enlightened, because they had not eliminated ignorance. Which factor can eliminate ignorance? Wisdom. Insight meditation uses mindfulness as its foundation. Remember that mindfulness and wisdom arise together. If we possess mindfulness, we will know and understand the truth and as a result, wisdom will arise.

Among all the principles which the Buddha expounded in the Thirty-seven Factors of Enlightenment, the most important principle is the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). This is because the Four Foundations of Mindfulness convey all the principles in the Thirty-seven Factors of Enlightenment. If one does not have mindfulness, wholesome Dhamma will not arise. Therefore, the Buddha reminded his disciples with this verse every day, “*Appamādena sampādeṭha*”, to accomplish without negligent and not to forget mindfulness. The essence of the Buddha’s 45 years of Dhamma propagation lies in “mindfulness”. Without mindfulness our practice of the *Suttanta*, *Vinaya* and *Abhidhamma* will not be perfected. Without mindfulness, the teachings cannot be remembered.

When the mind is settled and free from the five hindrances, the mind is very pure. A purified mind will be able to see clearly how it continually arises and passes away. One will not forget nor lose the wisdom gained from experience. We must train our minds with insight meditation and not only in the meditation centre. We should cultivate throughout our entire lives, because meditation will bring us long term benefits, not just in this life, but in many future lives. Therefore, no matter whether we feel that we have time or not, we must train our minds.

13.2 Aggregates

THE FIVE AGGREGATES (KHANDHA)

Aggregate means a “group or heap”. There are five aggregates: the aggregates of material form (*rūpakkhandha*); the aggregates of feeling (*vedanākkhandha*); the aggregates of perception (*saññākkhandha*); the aggregates of mental formations (*saṅkhārakkhandha*); and the aggregate of consciousness (*viññāṇakkhandha*).

(1) The Aggregates of Material Form (rūpakkhandha)

Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu – ‘iti rūpaṃ, iti rūpassa samudayo, iti rūpassa atthaṅgamo.’

Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu knows, ‘This is material form, this is the arising or cause of material form, this is the passing away or cause of passing away of material form’.

The aggregates of material form (*rūpakkhandha*) refer to our bodies. Vipassana meditation is about learning how the mind and body function in our lives. When we pay attention to our bodies and contemplate on material form (*rūpa*), we note the

rising and falling of the abdomen as our object. During noting, we should know clearly about the cause leading to the arising of material form. We should also understand how material form arises, changes and passes away and we must know the different characteristics of material form. For instance, the characteristic of “wind” is movement, which is one of its own characteristics (*sabhāva-lakkhaṇa*). Material form’s common characteristic (*sāmañña-lakkhaṇa*) is the Three Dhamma Seals, being suffering (*dukkha*), impermanence (*anicca*) and no-self (*anattā*). When our minds are focused on the rising and falling of the abdomen, we will clearly observe that the rising of the abdomen is formed by several single moments, as is the falling of the abdomen.

We must pay attention, be meticulous and note continuously, as when we forget about the object, the process of noting will be interrupted. If our mind power is insufficient, we will not be able to note with clarity; we will not know how the object arises and passes away and as a result, we will not acquire wisdom. However, when we see, know and understand every single moment, we will improve and our wisdom will develop.

(2) The Aggregates of Feeling (vedanākkhandha)

Iti vedanā, iti vedanāya samudayo, iti vedanāya atthaṅgamo.

[a bhikkhu knows], ‘This is feeling, this is arising or cause of feeling, this is the passing away or cause of passing away of feeling’.

Feelings are divided into painful feelings, pleasant feelings and neither-painful-nor-pleasant feelings. We must note how feelings arise and pass away. When a painful feeling arises, we must know that this is just a feeling. It is not “I” that is suffering, the painful feeling is merely a sensation. The same applies when we note pleasant feelings and neither-painful-nor-pleasant feelings. In every single moment, we should note the arising, changing and passing away of feelings, for as we know this truth, our wisdom will increase.

(3) The Aggregates of Perception (saññākkhandha)

Iti saññā, iti saññāya samudayo, iti saññāya atthaṅgamo.

[a bhikkhu knows], ‘This is perception, this is the arising or cause of perception, this is the passing away or cause of passing away of perception’.

We “think” as we remember, random thoughts being produced when our minds are distracted. When we are thinking, we know “I am thinking”. The process of thinking arises and

passes away continuously as well. When thinking arises, we know it and as we note it, “thinking” passes away. Then, we should continue to note the rising and falling of the abdomen.

(4) The Aggregate of Mental Formations (saṅkhārakkhandha)

Iti saṅkhārā, iti saṅkhārānaṃ samudayo, iti saṅkhārānaṃ atthaṅgamo.

[a bhikkhu knows], ‘These are mental formations, this is the arising or cause of mental formations, this is the passing away or cause of passing away of mental formations’.

The aggregate of mental formations (*saṅkhārakkhandha*) consists of 50 mental factors out of a total of 52 mental factors. The most prominent mental factor is “volition”. “Volition” refers to aspiration and intention and its function is to accumulate kamma. It is the leader of the mind, able to stimulate or promote the action of body, speech and mind. During meditation, we feel peaceful, serene and joyful and we would like to share such feelings with our loved ones. This intention of wanting to share and the confidence in meditation belong to the “mental formation” aggregate. If we note, “mental formation” as it is perceived, it will pass away.

(5) *The Aggregate of Consciousness (viññāṇakkhandha)*

Iti viññāṇaṃ, iti viññāṇassa samudayo, iti viññāṇassa atthaṅgamo.

[a bhikkhu knows], ‘This is consciousness, this is the arising or cause of consciousness, this is the passing away or cause of passing away of consciousness’.

Consciousness refers to all our “minds”. The mind is the one that knows the object. You can hear my voice, because the ear consciousness arises, thus you know what you hear. When the voice is absent, the ear consciousness passes away. The ear consciousness is the mind; the eye consciousness is the mind; the nose consciousness is the mind. Those that know the object, are the mind.

Without the Buddha’s teachings, we will not understand the body and mind through the five aggregates. Ordinary people rely on logic, deduction, thinking and judgment. Therefore they will not understand the truth of life. They are unable to divide and separate feelings, perception, mental formations and consciousness. The Buddha said, our bodies and minds are just aggregates, i.e. the five aggregates, which can be divided and possess different characteristics. Material form is our body; feelings, perception, mental formation and

consciousness belong to the mind. The mind and body, i.e. the *nāma* and *rūpa* are separated. Through the truth expounded by the Buddha, we attain knowledge based on learning (*sutamayā paññā*), we establish fundamental right views and cultivate according to the Dhamma. It is in this way, that we will be able to observe the truth with ease.

Our duty is to note, the mind's responsibility is to know. If someone asks, "Who knows?" It is not "I" that knows, it is the "mind" that knows. If the "mind" is absent, we will not know anything. Focus your mind on the object, observe the object and note it. If we can note continuously, the mind will not have the opportunity to form random thoughts. When the mind is settled, with the presence of mindfulness, concentration and effort, the mind will follow the object and the meditator will know clearly how the object and mind function, arise and pass away. The permanent "I" does not exist, only the mind, object, i.e., *nāma* and *rūpa* are present. This shows that one has attained analytical knowledge of mind and matter (*nāmarūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*). If we become distracted, our concentration will not improve, wisdom will not arise and we will not be able to differentiate between *nāma* and *rūpa*. Thus we will still be attached to "I" and uphold the views that "I" am feeling, "I" remember, "I" want, "I" know. The more we think, the more confused we will become resulting in the

arising of suspicion, causing us to continue to struggle within the stream of evil views. Thus, we should practice according to the Dhamma and nurture our concentration so that wisdom will arise. This is very important.

THE APPLICATION OF THE FIVE AGGREGATES IN OUR LIVES

Even though our awareness of the five aggregates has not reached the level of arising and passing in vipassana meditation, we can still benefit from our fundamental knowledge about the five aggregates. How do we apply the principles of the five aggregates in our lives?

The Requirements of the Aggregates of Material Form

We know that the aggregate of material form is our body, but what does the body require? Our bodies require food, clothing, housing and health. These basic requirements of the body will not bring us major problems, but when the mind of greed arises, our lives will become very troublesome. Although normal housing that offers us shelter against wind and rain is sufficient, we will crave for large houses that are luxurious and comfortable. Despite a bowl of rice being sufficient to

sustain our lives for one day, we will crave for delicious and scrumptious meals. This is how a mind of craving makes life difficult. In fact, with appropriate food, clothing, housing and health, the requirements of the body are fulfilled. If we are contented with few desires, it is easy to take care of our bodies. If we are not satisfied and indulge ourselves in more cravings, our sufferings will increase. Accordingly, if we want to be free from suffering, we must be less greedy.

The Requirements of the Aggregates of Feeling

What is the requirement for “feeling”? “Feeling” requires happiness. Everyone wishes to be happy and nobody wants to suffer. However, why are we unhappy? When we see, hear, taste, smell and touch a favourable object, we are happy. When we see, hear, taste, smell and touch an unfavourable object, we suffer. Everyone wants to be happy, but as we all know, everything has its wonderful aspect and its imperfect aspect. The same is true for people, everyone has his own strengths and weaknesses, no one is totally good or totally bad. Most of the time we prefer to pick on the mistakes, shortcomings and bad habits of others and refuse to see their good side, because we do not wish to be defeated by others. When we know the cause of suffering, we will be able to live our lives with greater ease.

“Feeling” requires happiness. If we wish to be happy, we should not find fault with other people. We should see the strengths of others. We should learn to see the good side of others and praise them with “Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!” As we rejoice with them, we will feel happy. When we pick on others, the first to suffer is ourselves. Due to jealousy, pettiness and stinginess, we will promote the weaknesses of others and such inner defilements will lead to unhappiness. Therefore, we must train with care, by rejoicing in the good aspects of others by concealing their weaknesses and promoting their strengths. This will ensure that we will always be happy. Since “feeling” requires happiness, we should fulfil its needs, so that it will have happiness. This is the right way to take care of “feeling”.

The Requirements of the Aggregates of Perception

What does “perception” require? The duty of “perception” is to remember, thus “perception” requires knowledge. To acquire knowledge, one must be able to memorize and remember, because if one is forgetful, knowledge will not be acquired. If there is a lack of knowledge, we will not be able to distinguish between wholesome and unwholesome and we will develop suspicion towards good and bad. If we can memorize we will have knowledge, which will enable us to differentiate between right and wrong, wholesome and unwholesome.

However, the foundation of memorization is right mindfulness, which is activated by paying attention and by being absolutely sure of the object. If we apply these qualities we will be able to memorize without forgetting. As we now know, true knowledge will lead us to *Nibbāna*, so we need to listen to the instructions and practice accordingly, without being hasty or careless. When we possess right mindfulness, attention, certainty and memory, we will be able to fulfil the requirements of “perception”.

The Requirements of the Aggregate of Mental Formations

What does “mental formations” require? Mental formations change every single moment, giving us the opportunity to change every single moment. Therefore, the requirement of mental formations is to improve and achieve a better outcome. Tomorrow must be better than today and since we uphold the Five Precepts today, we should uphold the Eight Precepts tomorrow. When we commit wrongdoings, we turn over a new leaf and vow not to repeat the same mistake next time. Mental formations are the action that leads to the formation of kamma. We commit wholesome kamma and avoid committing unwholesome kamma. In order to fulfil the requirements of mental formations, we should perform more wholesome kamma.

The Requirements of the Aggregate of Consciousness

What does “consciousness” require? The requirement of consciousness is knowing. The mind recognizes its object and then the mind must know its object. What kind of object does the mind want? The mind hopes to be approved by others and be favoured by others. Even a robber hopes that everyone thinks that he is a good man. This is the requirement of the mind.

If we want others to think we are good, we must uphold the precepts and practice concentration and cultivate wisdom. If we possess morality, concentration and wisdom, we will not need to worry that others might think we are not good enough. If we uphold the precepts with purity and possess meditative concentration, we will not generate unwholesome kamma related to our speech, action or thoughts. If we possess the wisdom to distinguish between right and wrong, wholesome and unwholesome, we will know the appropriate time and place to perform the appropriate task. In this way, everyone will love you and everyone will think you are a good person. This is the requirement of our minds.

By training ourselves in cultivating morality, concentration and wisdom, we will be able to fulfil the requirements of the five aggregates and by doing this, we will be able to

live our lives with ease. Insight meditation involves living in the moment and seizing the moment. It reminds us not to recollect the past or plan for the future, as we should be diligent in noting. When improvement comes, our minds will be satisfied. As long as we practice and train more according to the Dhamma, our lives will continually improve.

13.3 Sense-Bases

Puna caparaṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhu dhammesu dhammānupassī viharati chasu ajjhattikabāhiresu āyatanesu. Kathañca pana, bhikkhave, bhikkhu dhammesu dhammānupassī viharati chasu ajjhattikabāhiresu āyatanesu? Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu cakkhuñca pajānāti, rūpe ca pajānāti..... Sotañca pajānāti, sadde ca pajānāti..... Ghānañca pajānāti, gandhe ca pajānāti..... Jivhañca pajānāti, rase ca pajānāti..... Kāyañca pajānāti, phoṭṭhabbe ca pajānāti..... Manañca pajānāti, dhamme ca pajānāti.

And again, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu dwells contemplating the Dhamma in the dhammas in the six internal and the six external sense-bases. And how bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu dwell contemplating the Dhamma in the dhammas in the six internal and the six external sense-bases?

Herein, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu knows the eye, knows visible forms, ... He knows the ear, knows sound, ... He knows the nose, knows smells, ... He knows the tongue, knows flavours, ... He knows the body, knows tactile objects, ... He knows the mind, knows the dhammas.

Sense-bases (*āyatana*) means dwelling place and region. The sense-bases are divided into the six internal sense-bases (*cha ajjhattikāyatanāni*) and the six external sense-bases (*cha bāhirāyatanāni*). The six internal sense-bases are: (1) eye (*cakkhu*); (2) ear (*sota*); (3) nose (*ghāna*); (4) tongue (*jivhā*); (5) body (*kāya*); (6) mind (*mano*). The six external sense-bases are: (1) visible object of form (*rūpa*); (2) sound (*sadda*); (3) odour (*gandha*); (4) taste (*rasa*); (5) tangible object (*phoṭṭhabba*); (6) cognizable object (*dhamma*). Twelve sense-bases are formed when the six internal and the six external sense-bases are added together.

WHERE IS THE MIND DOOR?

The mind does not exist within the brain, as the brain is different from the mind, something which true cultivators will know about. When we feel angry, do the feelings of anger arise in the brain? No, they arise in the heart. The heart warms up — you have experienced it before, am I right? Such sensations are “feelings”. Most of the things we know have feelings as their foundation, even the rising and falling of the abdomen is a form of feeling.

What is the feeling of lovers during their first meeting? It is reported that when lovers meet, the craving mind arises,

resulting in the arising of happiness within the heart as both parties are infatuated with each other. There is a potential affinity between every individual, especially for individuals who have performed wholesome deeds together with another in their previous lives. When they meet in this life, they will feel the difference, i.e. there will be a sense of familiarity between them. I remember when Sayadaw U Pandita visited, there was a female disciple who wept when she saw him. Such feelings do not arise within the brain, these are feelings that arise in the heart which lead to one's weeping.

Therefore, if we notice the details in our daily lives, we will know that the mind door lies within the heart. With advancements in meditation and the deepening of comprehension, meditators will see for themselves and be absolutely sure about such phenomena.

THE MUTUAL EFFECTS OF THE SENSE-BASES

The mind door is also a sensory organ, as the mind that arises at the mind door is known as mind consciousness. The mind door is present, but mind consciousness does not exist eternally, because our mind consciousness arises and passes away continuously. The same applies to eye-consciousness. The eye door is present, but once the eyes are closed, eye-con-

sciousness will not arise and therefore the eye-consciousness does not exist all the time. When we can see, it is due to the functioning of two doors, i.e. the eye door and the mind door. Thus, when we see, we also know and remember simultaneously. If we possess sufficient concentration and note every single moment, we will be able to experience all of this for ourselves.

The exterior consists of the six external sense-bases (also known as dust or sense-object) and the interior consists of the six internal sense-bases (also known as root or door). Door, sense-base, root — only the names vary, yet all refer to the same ultimate (*paramattha*) Dhamma, in that the location where they come into contact with the sense-object is similar. The six sense-objects (*ārammaṇa*) are visible object of form, sound, odour, taste, tangible object and cognizable object (*dhammas*). Other than the first five sense-objects, the rest belong to *dhammas*. Now, as we search for *Nibbāna*, we find that it cannot be seen by our eyes, it cannot be heard by our ears and it cannot be smelled by our nose. It can only be understood by the mind and thus, *Nibbāna* belongs to *dhammas*.

As our cultivation improves and our minds become purer, we will be able to understand the mutual effects of the external and internal sense-bases, when one collides with the other

and the corresponding consciousness arises. For instance, when form collides with the eye door, eye-consciousness arises. Of course, besides the most fundamental eye door and form, other causes must be present, i.e. light and attention (*manasikāra*). If the eyes are present, but the light is absent, eye-consciousness will not arise. Similarly if we do not pay attention, eye-consciousness will not arise either. If we note conscientiously, we will understand the underlying cause and effect and how consciousness arises.

The mind is the one that recognizes the object. When various causes are fulfilled, the mind arises and we will know. But during the process of recognizing the same object, the mind that recognizes the object will arise and pass away continuously. As one mind arises, it recognizes the object and passes away instantly, immediately followed by the next mind that arises and the same process repeats itself. The most prominent example is sound; as we hear a sound once and understand it, we hear and we understand. When the sound vanishes, our ear-consciousness disappears as well. When we understand the causes and effects involved, we will understand how the mind arises.

WHO CREATES THE MIND?

Who creates the mind? When causes and conditions are fulfilled, the mind arises, and thus there is no such thing as a creator of the mind. If there is no cause, the mind will not arise. If the causes are fulfilled, the mind will arise continuously. The mind that arises continuously is brand new. However, as the mind arises and passes away so rapidly, we often mistake it as being eternally present. The mind stream resembles a river that flows continuously, making us think that the river exists eternally without change. In fact, the river is formed by countless drops of water and it flows continuously. This means that every single moment we see a brand new river. Similarly the mind arises and passes away ten trillion times within a single moment. The only way to know the truth, is to focus our minds on the object and note continuously. In time, we will be more and more certain and we will know and understand with greater clarity. If we are unable to note continuously, then our minds will not become settled, which as we know, means that a distracted mind will not be able to know the truth with any degree of certainty.

13.4 Factors of Enlightenment

Factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*) refers to factors of wisdom. There are a total of seven types of factors, known as the “seven factors of enlightenment”, i.e. mindfulness (*sati-sambojjhaṅga*), investigation (*dhamma-vicaya-sambojjhaṅga*), energy (*virīya-sambojjhaṅga*), joy (*pīti-sambojjhaṅga*), tranquillity (*passaddhi-sambojjhaṅga*), concentration (*samā-dhi-sambojjhaṅga*) and equanimity (*upekkhā-sambojjhaṅga*).

If we wish to improve and perfect these seven factors of enlightenment, we must eliminate the five hindrances. For instance, imagine that a group of soccer players are divided into a black team and a white team. The five hindrances belong to the black team and the seven factors of enlightenment belong to the white team. During meditation, if mindfulness, energy, tranquillity and concentration can arise continuously, the white team will be in the lead. The team of five hindrances will not achieve its goal, meaning that the black team will not acquire any opportunity to score points.

As we note continuously, our concentration will increase, our minds will be satisfied and joy, tranquillity and happiness will arise. As a result, we will meditate with joy. When we are diligent, this results in our cultivating joyfully (*abhirati-bhāvanā*). When we are satisfied during meditation, we will

develop confidence, resulting in our cultivating with reverence (*sakkacca-bhāvanā*). As we continue to note, hour after hour, we are motivated to maintain our practice of cultivation (*nirantara-bhāvanā*). When we are determined to meditate for an hour and accomplish our mission, this is known as cultivating with perfection (*anavasesa-bhāvanā*). The longer we meditate, the better it is. If one hour is insufficient, you may add another half an hour. When the mind is balanced and stable, you can add another two hours. This is known as cultivating on a long term basis (*cirakāla-bhāvanā*). However, this is not the case where one sits in meditation with a frown on ones face for 2 to 3 hours. This shows that the mind lacks concentration, and dissatisfaction will arise, so this is just a token of *cirakāla-bhāvanā*. Meditators that perfect the five types of meditation mentioned above will improve.

Individuals who are certain in the noting of their objects can be detected. For instance during walking meditation, their mind and legs are coordinated and stable. “Raising, pushing forward, lowering”. When the mind and object are synchronized, it is just like hitting the bull’s eye — we will be satisfied and joyful. When the mind is focused continuously on the object, we will be satisfied and happiness will arise. This is joy (*pīti-sambojjhaṅga*). Then tranquillity (*passaddhi-sambojjhaṅga*) will arise and we will feel relaxed and serene.

When the mind is serene, concentration is produced and the mind is still, this is concentration (*samādhi-sambojjhaṅga*). These factors of enlightenment arise step by step with causes followed by effects. They do not occur by chance.

If we do not cultivate with care, we will feel bored very soon. For the mind to truly understand, it must recognize the object. To recognize the object, the mind must come into contact with the object, thus we must place our minds accurately on the object. Only with diligence and hard work, will we be able to place our minds on the object with the accuracy of hitting the bull's eye. When we note continuously, we will truly understand, as wisdom will arise. By training this way, we will improve and with improvement comes satisfaction.

13.5 Noble Truths

The noble truth (*sacca*) is the Four Noble Truths, i.e. suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the path leading to the cessation of suffering. Suffering is not only present in the current moment, it is present from the beginning of life, especially when one is still a foetus. Every single one of us cried when we were born, so how can we be happy if we cried during our birth? Our lives begin with suffering and once you understand this, your attachment will lessen.

Our attachments do not reduce because we have forgotten about suffering. Why do we forget? Because we are blinded by ignorance. Due to the presence of ignorance, we are ignorant of the truth or misunderstand the truth. No one wishes to suffer, yet suffering is always present in our lives. However, suffering is impermanent, it comes and goes, arises and passes away and changes every single moment. If we do not see the arising, passing away and changes related to suffering, we will not know that suffering is impermanent and we will then become entangled by suffering. If we can note the arising, passing away and changes related to suffering, we will be liberated from suffering and attain *Nibbāna*.

Basically, we know that the origin of suffering or the cause of suffering is craving. This knowledge is sufficient for the

start of our practice. The cessation of suffering is *Nibbāna*. The path leading to cessation of suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path. By cultivating the Noble Eightfold Path, we will know about suffering and its cause and it is in this way that we can extinguish the cause and attain *Nibbāna*.

The explanation about the Four Foundations of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) ends here.

Chapter 14

The Four Right Efforts

Within the Thirty-seven Factors of Enlightenment, effort appears nine times. It is the ultimate (*paramattha*) Dhamma that appears the greatest number of times and is also the most important among the factors of enlightenment. The Four Right Efforts (*cattāri-sammappadhānā*) refer to the four types of energy detailed below.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR RIGHT EFFORTS

(1) Abandon Arisen Evil States

Uppannānaṃ pāpakānaṃ pahānāya vāyāmo.

To invest efforts to abandon arisen evil states.

“*Uppanna*” means arisen; “*pāpaka*” is evil; “*pahāna*” means to eliminate; “*vāyāma*” is effort. How does one invest effort to abandon arisen evil states during a meditation retreat? For example, as you hear the sound of the wooden board being struck in the morning, you think, “I don’t feel like getting out of bed”. An indolent mind is an unwholesome mind and without effort one will not be able to eliminate indolence. An individual with effort will think, “I must wake up immediately

and be diligent”. To invest effort to abandon arisen evil states is the first right effort.

Three Causes that Lead to the Creation of Evil States

In our past lives, we have all created much unwholesome kamma — no one is completely free from defilements. We know that good will be rewarded with good and evil will be rewarded with evil. No-one wishes to receive evil rewards, so why do we create unwholesome kamma? The Buddha said there were three causes:

- (1) Inability to distinguish between good and evil: not knowing what is good and what is evil.
- (2) Carelessness: although one knows about unwholesome kamma, one still creates it due to carelessness. For instance, one may step on and kill an insect due to carelessness. One does not harbour the intention to kill, yet due to negligence and a lack of mindfulness, one commits the act of killing. If one possesses mindfulness and is careful, one will not commit such unwholesome kamma.
- (3) Lack of remorse: one does not have a sense of remorse and has no sense of shame, therefore one continues to commit evil deeds. For example, we know that consuming alcohol is bad, yet we still increase our drinking capacity by competing with others. A lack of remorse will lead us

towards the creation of unwholesome kamma.

The unwholesome kamma of violating the Five Precepts will result in our rebirth in the four realms of misery. We are not certain whether we have committed unwholesome kamma that will lead to the rebirth in the four realms of misery in our past lives. But in this life, we can be certain and so we should seize the moment and uphold the Five Precepts. If we are diligent in cultivation in this life time until we attain stream-entry (*sotāpanna*), the door leading to the four realms of misery will close. Thus, we will not descend to the four realms of misery. Instead we will be reborn not more than seven times before attaining Arahantship. After that, there will not be any future lives and this is the merit of effort.

Overcoming Unwholesome Karmic Retribution through Effort

As we cultivate diligently, unwholesome kamma created in the past will disturb us. In order to overcome it we should note it.

A young Burmese woman came to learn meditation. During the interview, she reported having headaches during meditation. Generally, for most meditators, we will teach them about noting to overcome the pain. But this young woman had continuous headaches for two weeks without ever overcoming

the pain. Accordingly, I asked her what she had done in the past. Regretfully she said that she was a fishmonger. In order to maintain the freshness of the fish, she would keep them alive and would only kill them by hitting them on the head, when the customers wanted to purchase a fish. She had been a fishmonger for several years and had forgotten how many fishes she had killed. She experienced severe headaches during meditation, with an unusual level of pain, all due to the unwholesome kamma she had been creating.

When unwholesome kamma disturbs us, we should make three types of effort:

- (1) The effort required to commence a task (*ārambha vīriya*): refers to the initial effort invested when one faces difficulties.
- (2) The effort required to sustain action while performing a task (*nikkhama vīriya*): refers to when one continues to strengthen your effort to face the challenges ahead and is determined not to give up.
- (3) The effort that enables one to continue until the completion of a task (*parakkama vīriya*): represents the effort invested to overcome all the obstacles and difficulties ahead.

Citing an intensive meditation retreat as an example, when one hears that an intensive meditation retreat is available, one

should register immediately. This is the initial effort. After registration, one begins to make preparations for work and family. This is known as the effort required to commence a task (*ārambha vīriya*). When intensive meditation begins, one invests effort to overcome laxity, distraction, sloth and pain and this is known as the effort required to sustain action while performing a task (*nikkhama vīriya*). By overcoming various obstacles, one continues to note and complete the intensive meditation. This is known as the effort that enables one to continue until the completion of a task (*parakkama vīriya*). Sometimes we will encounter difficulties and choose to give up halfway, which is mostly due to insufficient effort.

Once we attain stream-entry (*sotāpanna*), we will not descend to the realms of misery. All the past evil doings that may lead to our rebirth in the four realms of misery will no longer have any potential force. In other words they will not exert any effect and the door leading to the four realms of misery is closed. This should be our goal. When we begin to meditate, we should first invest effort to eliminate laxity and indolence, followed by more effort in the overcoming of pain. When unwholesome karmic retributions arrive, there will be sufferings and difficulties, but with more effort, attention and patience, such difficulties can be overcome. This is the first right effort.

(2) Prevent Unarisen Evil States from Arising

Anuppannānaṃ pāpakānaṃ anuppādāya vāyāmo.

To invest efforts to prevent unarisen evil states from arising.

“*Anuppanna*” refers to not yet arisen, “*pāpaka*” is evil, i.e. unarisen evil, that we must invest effort to prevent arising. For example, when you uphold the Eight Precepts, you must be supported by effort, because if you are not scrupulous in your effort, you may violate the Eight Precepts by for example, consuming food at night when you are hungry. During cultivation, sometimes sloth and torpor will arise. As soon as you discover this, you should invest robust effort in noting, in order to prevent their invasion. If there is insufficient effort, the mind will start to drift and forget its object. We should prevent these evil states from arising by continuing with our noting, maintaining our diligence and meticulousness.

As we know, we do not have two minds, which means that there is a constant battle between unwholesome and wholesome mental factors that aim to seize our mind every single moment. When we continue to sustain our efforts in noting and paying attention, mindfulness, concentration, wisdom, effort, confidence, joy and tranquillity, will all arise

and the unwholesome mental factors will be rejected. This is the second right effort.

(3) Cultivate Unarisen Wholesome States

Anuppannānaṃ kusalānaṃ uppādāya vāyāmo.

To invest efforts to cultivate unarisen wholesome states.

“*Kusala*” refers to a wholesome state, which we should strive to cultivate while still unarisen. When we have not yet arrived at the meditation centre for cultivation, this is an unarisen wholesome state. We come to the meditation centre with the intention of wanting to practice and acquire knowledge. As we listen to the meditation instructions, understand the cultivation method and start to practice, we continue to note with sincerity every single moment. Then our minds will know, our wisdom will deepen, wholesome kamma will continue to arise and the arising of evil states will be terminated. This is the third right effort.

(4) Sustain Arisen Wholesome States

Uppannānaṃ kusalānaṃ bhīyyobhāvāya vāyāmo.

To invest efforts to sustain arisen wholesome states.

“*Bhiyyobhāva*” means growth, which in this context means we should promote the growth of arisen wholesome states. Many meditators experience balance, comfort and tranquillity that arise in meditation, yet when a craving mind arises, an attachment towards the joyful feelings experienced during meditation will form, sadly resulting in a regression of progress for the meditator. Therefore, when we encounter such circumstances in meditation, we should strengthen our efforts. When we are tranquil, we should continue to invest and sustain our efforts meticulously, by continuing to note.

To like something is greed; to dislike something is anger; not knowing what is happening is ignorance. Greed, anger and ignorance are unwholesome states, which defile the mind when they arise. When the mind is defiled, wholesome states will regress. We meditate not for the purpose of pursuing a good feeling, but for the aim of generating wisdom, thus we learn “insight meditation”. Some individuals are sufficiently satisfied with the experience of joy alone, so they do not strive to attain a level of wisdom. They wish to be free from suffering in the current moment, yet they do not strive to be liberated from the sufferings of birth, aging, illness and death.

A true meditator is not afraid of suffering in the current moment, as the suffering experienced during meditation can be resolved without consuming medication. Such suffering is

minor, so you do not need to be afraid. The suffering related to birth, aging, illness and death is major and consequently to be liberated from this major suffering, we must endure the minor suffering. For instance, in order to attain 1000 dollars, we should be patient when losing 1 dollar. One will not accomplish anything without endurance and as we know, nothing is free in this world. Therefore one should be diligent in continually making right effort, thus effort is very important!

EFFORT (VIRIYA)

(1) The Characteristic of Effort

- Striving, exertion (*ussāhana*)

Effort possesses the characteristic of exertion and directing.

(2) The Function of Effort

- Support, encouragement (*upatthambhana*)

Effort supports its corresponding mental factors. When effort arises, it benefits the mental factors that arise along with it, providing support for the activity of the mental factors.

(3) The Manifestation of Effort

- Sustainability, never give up (*asaṃsīdanabhavā*)

When effort manifests, one will not be depressed or dispirited. One will strive on diligently with courage, regardless of what difficult circumstances may lie ahead.

(4) The Proximate Cause of Effort

- Sense of urgency (*saṃvegavatthu*)

The proximate cause that leads to the arising of effort is the sense of urgency. There are eight types of contemplations that stimulate the arising of effort, i.e:

- (1) Contemplation on the suffering of birth.
- (2) Contemplation on the suffering of aging.
- (3) Contemplation on the suffering of illness.
- (4) Contemplation on the suffering of death.
- (5) Contemplation on the suffering in the four realms of misery.
- (6) Contemplation on the suffering of the past rooted in the cycle of rebirth.
- (7) Contemplation on the suffering of the future rooted in the cycle of rebirth.

(8) Contemplation on the suffering of the present rooted in the search for food.

By contemplating this way, we will generate a sense of fear and urgency, thereby arising our effort.

FACING DEATH WITH A SMILE

Everyone experienced the immobile state within our mother's womb for 10 months and then due to the suffering involved, we cried during birth. Our family and friends smiled as they welcomed our birth and everyone laughed as we cried. However, as we are dying, when everyone weeps, we should smile.

In this life time, we practice generosity, uphold the precepts and meditate, we accumulate many merits, so therefore we must smile. If others cry, let them be, we can just ignore them. Since you benefit others in this life, not just your family, many people adore you. Due to your loving-kindness and compassion, everyone is going to feel sad at your departure. Since you have created much wholesome kamma, you should depart with a smile. On the other hand, if you have been harming others throughout your life, your departure will be a joyful event for them. Because you chose an unwholesome path, you will go to a place of suffering. In which case, you

cried when you came into this world and you will weep again when you leave; this is not a good life. We can't control ourselves when we come to this world, thus we cried, but when we depart, we should depart with a smile! This is very important.

Meditators should not waste time, instead, you should cultivate immense effort and diligence. If you wish to attain benefits, you must note continuously. Do not succumb to delusions, ignore the others, let your minds follow meditation object, be peaceful and tranquil. Then you will know and understand with clarity and wisdom will arise. When we walk on the right path, we will reach our final destination.



Chapter 15

The Four Paths to Spiritual Power

The four paths to spiritual power (*cattāro iddhipādā*) are also known as the four methods of improvement, i.e. will (*chandiddhipādo*), effort (*vīriyiddhipādo*), mind (*cittiddhipādo*) and investigation (*vīmaṃsiddhipādo*). Among the 52 types of mental factors, the function of these four types of mental factors is to seek unlimited improvement.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR PATHS TO SPIRITUAL POWER

(1) Will (chandiddhipādo)

Will (*chanda*) refers to intention, desire and determination. The characteristic of will is the desire to do something (*kat-tukamyatā lakkaṇa*). It is the kind of desire that evokes the thought, “If I do not attain this accomplishment in this life, I shall not rest content. It is better that I die rather than not attain it”. Will is different from greed. Will wants the object whereas greed attaches to the object.

The function of ‘will’ is to look for an object or sense-object (*ārammaṇa pariyesanā*). If an object has not been attained, then ‘will’ motivates the search for the object. But the motivation of ‘will’ or intention does not attach to the

object. It will be satisfied once the object is attained.

When ‘will’ arises, it seeks the object every moment (*ārammaṇena atthikatā paccupaṭṭhāna*), regardless of whether the object is good or bad. Thus, sometimes ‘will’ follows a good object and sometimes it will follow an evil object. When ‘will’ follows a good object, it can even accomplish Buddhahood. However when it follows an evil object, it can become so evil that it leads one to the depths of hell.

The proximate cause of ‘will’ is a sense-object or material object (*ārammaṇa padaṭṭhāno*). It will want to get the object when it sees it. This is the meaning of will or intention.

‘Will’ includes wanting to see, wanting to hear, wanting to smell, wanting to taste, wanting to touch or wanting to possess something. In and of itself, it is neither good nor bad — it merely pursues the object, being neutral in nature. If one wishes to commit wholesome deeds, this is righteous will (*Dhamma chanda*). However, if one wishes to pursue desire, this is greed.

(2) Effort (*vīriyiddhipādo*)

The function of effort is also to improve without limitation. When indolence arrives, one will not improve. When we say, “our stamina and mental power are insufficient”, this is due to indolence. A diligent person will make continuous, unlimited

effort which lasts until the final moment of death. He is not discouraged even though he has to undergo great hardships. He is not discouraged even though he has put forth great effort for many days, months and years.

The Buddha possessed such unlimited effort, shown by the resolution he made under the Bodhi tree, “I will not rise from this seat unless I attain Buddhahood!” Eventually, the Buddha achieved ultimate supreme enlightenment.

A Meditating Bhikkhu that was Reborn in Heaven

In the past, there was a bhikkhu that emulated the Buddha, in that he invested tremendous effort and was determined not to rise from his seat until he attained enlightenment. He cultivated diligently in a sitting position and endured much pain and suffering until he died. However, he did not achieve enlightenment. Death for him was not a terrifying state, with rebirth after death being similar to waking up every day from sleep. Therefore, even though he died during meditation, he did not realize that he was already dead. Although he had been reborn in heaven, he continued to maintain his posture in sitting meditation.

When he meditated in the human world, he closed his eyes, thus when he was reborn as a heavenly being, he continued to meditate with his eyes closed. Many heavenly maidens

surrounded him, puzzled as to why this heavenly being sat with his eyes closed and chose not to enjoy the bliss in heaven. The heavenly maidens thought perhaps this heavenly being did not know he was no longer residing in the human world, so they created a disturbance beside him while holding onto a mirror. He thought it was the children who had come to the forest to play, so he ignored them and continue to note his object with the intention of reaching *Nibbāna*. But when these noises became too strange, he opened his eyes. Then the other heavenly beings told him that he was no longer a bhikkhu, but a heavenly being. They further explained that heaven is not a place for meditation, but a place to enjoy bliss.

He wept bitterly and thought, “My goal of cultivation is to attain *Nibbāna*, but why am I born in heaven?” This was not what he had wanted, but more like someone who wished to obtain first prize in a competition, but ended up acquiring the consolation prize of a water spinach instead. His mind was still yearning for the Dhamma, since he had overcome the intense feelings of suffering before he died in the human world. Thus he possessed strong concentration and did not crave for heavenly bliss. He thought, since he had the power now, he should visit the Buddha. Thus, he came back to the human world, paid his respects to the Buddha and told the Buddha about his experience in cultivation. The Buddha

expounded upon the Three Dhamma Seals — suffering (*dukkha*), impermanence (*anicca*), no-self (*anattā*). Upon listening to and contemplating on this Dhamma, he attained enlightenment.

There is no limit to effort. Even death cannot stop a diligent Dhamma seeker from meditation.

(3) Mind (cittiddhipādo)

The mind has the ability for great absorption, or engagement with whatever it desires. It is like the absorption of the alchemist engaged in the transmutation of the baser metals into gold or silver. Such an alchemist has no interest in anything else but his alchemy. He forgets to sleep or eat, or whether he had slept or eaten. This is the quality of absorption of the mind.

(4) Investigation (vīmaṃsiddhipādo)

Investigation is the type of wisdom that can clearly perceive the enormity of the sufferings of hell and of the sufferings attendant upon the round of rebirth. It is the knowledge generated from an ‘investigative’ mind that can dwell on the deep and difficult Dhamma and on natural phenomena. The more profound the Dhamma, the greater ones’ desire to attain complete understanding.

With the presence of will, effort, mind and investigation, anything can be accomplished. The four paths to spiritual power will not arise together. One of them will serve as the leader and be accompanied by the other three paths. For instance, if ‘will’ is the leader, the mind, effort and investigation will follow. If ‘mind’ is the leader, the other three will follow. The four paths to spiritual power are focused on continuous improvements without any limitations and serve to overcome laziness.

FULFILLING THE SIX TYPES OF CONDITIONS POSSESSED BY A NOBLE ONE

If one wishes to become an individual that possesses the ability to achieve enlightenment (*bhabba puggala*), one will need to fulfil the following six factors:

(1) Do not commit the five heinous crimes

We may not commit the five heinous crimes, i.e. killing one’s father, killing one’s mother, killing an Arahant, causing division within the harmonious Sangha and shedding the Buddha’s blood.

(2) Possess confidence that is unshakable

We must have confidence, i.e. confidence that is unshakable (*okkapana-saddhā*). We must have confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha. We should also develop confidence towards our wholesome kamma and in its completion, as has already been accomplished by others. It is in this way that we will be able to overcome obstacles.

(3) Do not have evil views

We believe evil kamma leads to evil rewards and good kamma leads to good rewards. This is the law of cause and effect and is the fundamental right view. If one harbours evil views (*micchādiṭṭhi*) and violates the Five Precepts without remorse, it will be difficult indeed for one to attain enlightenment. With right views, we will be able to distinguish between right and wrong and we will not commit unwholesome deeds.

(4) Possess will and effort

We must possess will and effort. Without will and effort, it is difficult for one to achieve enlightenment.

(5) Possess the three wholesome root conditions (tīhetuka)

The first mind that arises at the beginning of life is known as the rebirth consciousness. The rebirth consciousness has all three wholesome root conditions (*tīhetuka*), i.e. non-greed, non-hatred and non-ignorance, meaning that the conditions for enlightenment are already fulfilled. Non-greed, non-hatred and non-ignorance are wholesome roots; greed, hatred and ignorance are unwholesome roots. A person without wholesome roots (*ahetuka*) will not be reborn as a human and even if he is reborn as a human, he may be mentally or physically disabled. Individuals with two root conditions (*dvīhetuka*) lack the wisdom root. They are not intelligent, generally being confused and dazed and it is difficult for them to understand the truth of life. Individuals without any wholesome roots or who only possess two root conditions will not be able to attain enlightenment in this life.

The Story of Culapanthaka¹

It is difficult for us to judge and ascertain whether an individual does not possess the three wholesome root conditions.

¹ Abridged and adapted from “The Dhammapada: Verses and Stories”, translated by Daw Mya Tin, M.A., and edited by Editorial Committee, Burma Tipitaka Association Rangoon, Burma, 1986.

While residing at the Veluvana monastery, the Buddha spoke verse 25 of the *Dhammapada*, with reference to Culapanthaka, a grandson of a banker of Rajagaha.

The banker had two grandsons, named Mahapanthaka and Culapanthaka. Mahapanthaka, being the elder, used to accompany his grandfather to listen to religious discourses. Later, Mahapanthaka joined the monastic order and in course of time became an Arahant. Culapanthaka followed his brother and became a bhikkhu. But, because in a previous existence in the time of Kassapa Buddha, Culapanthaka had made fun of a bhikkhu who was very dull, he was born a dullard in the present existence. He could not even memorize one verse in four months. Mahapanthaka was very disappointed with his younger brother and even told him that he was not worthy of the order.

About that time, Jivaka came to the monastery to invite the Buddha and the resident bhikkhus to his house for a meal. Mahapanthaka, who was then in charge of assigning the bhikkhus to meal invitations, left out Culapanthaka from the list. When Culapanthaka learnt about this he felt very frustrated and decided that he would return to the life of a householder. Knowing his intention, the Buddha took him along and made him sit in front of the *gandhakuti* hall. He then gave a clean piece of cloth to Culapanthaka and told him

to sit there facing east and rub the piece of cloth. At the same time he was to repeat the word “*Rajoharaṇam*”, which means “removal of dirt”. The Buddha then went to the residence of Jivaka, accompanied by the bhikkhus.

Meanwhile, Culapanthaka went on rubbing the piece of cloth, all the time muttering the word “*Rajoharaṇam*”. Very soon, the cloth became soiled. Seeing this change in the condition of the cloth, Culapanthaka came to realize the impermanent nature of all conditioned things. From the house of Jivaka, the Buddha through supernormal power learnt about the progress of Culapanthaka. He sent forth his radiance so that (to Culapanthaka) the Buddha appeared to be sitting in front of him, saying:

“It is not the piece of cloth alone that is made dirty by the dust; within oneself also there exists the dust of passion (*rāga*), the dust of ill will (*dosa*) and the dust of ignorance (*moha*), i.e., the ignorance of the Four Noble Truths. Only by removing these can one achieve one’s goal and attain Arahantship.

Culapanthaka got the message and kept on meditating and in a short while attained Arahantship, together with Analytical Insight. Thus, Culapanthaka ceased to be a dullard.

At the house of Jivaka, they were about to pour libation

water as a mark of donation, but the Buddha covered the bowl with his hand and asked if there were any bhikkhus left at the monastery. On being answered that there were none, the Buddha replied that there was one and directed them to fetch Culapanthaka from the monastery. When the messenger from the house of Jivaka arrived at the monastery he found not only one bhikkhu, but a thousand identical bhikkhus. They had all been created by Culapanthaka, who by now possessed supernormal powers. The messenger was baffled and he turned back and reported the matter to Jivaka. The messenger was sent to the monastery for the second time and was instructed to say that the Buddha summoned the bhikkhu by the name of Culapanthaka. But when he delivered the message, a thousand voices responded, “I am Culapanthaka”. Again baffled, he turned back for the second time. Then he was sent to the monastery for the third time. This time, he was instructed to get hold of the bhikkhu who first said that he was Culapanthaka. As soon as he did this all the rest disappeared and Culapanthaka accompanied the messenger to the house of Jivaka. After the meal, as directed by the Buddha, Culapanthaka delivered a religious discourse confidently and bravely, roaring like a young lion.

Later, when the subject of Culapanthaka cropped up among the bhikkhus, the Buddha said that one who was diligent and

steadfast in his striving would certainly attain Arahantship.

Then the Buddha spoke in verse as follows:

Uṭṭhānenappamādena,

Samyamena damena ca.

Dīpaṃ kayirātha medhāvī,

Yaṃ ogho nābhikīrati.

Through effort, vigilance,

Restraint and self-control,

The wise person can become an island,

No flood will overwhelm.

~*Dhammapada* verse 25

Culapanthaka was not able to memorize 32 words in four months, yet he attained Arahantship. Therefore, we cannot be certain that people who are mentally dull will not achieve enlightenment. People that are too smart can be arrogant and be filled with self-attachment and jealousy, all of which are major obstacles in meditation. Thus, a smart person must have wisdom as well, or else the smarter you are, the more annoying you can become. A wise man will let go and possess loving-kindness and compassion, he practices according to the Dhamma and will attain enlightenment easily.

(6) Seeing the phenomena of arising and passing away

We must possess knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbayañāṇa*). We should be able to see arising and passing away as the truth of natural phenomena. Individuals that can note how physical phenomena (*rūpa*) and mental phenomena (*nāma*) arise and pass away with clarity will achieve enlightenment.

We should cultivate the four paths to spiritual power as a form of self-improvement, as with continuous improvement we will attain enlightenment. Thus, we cannot be indolent or lazy, or permit boredom to arise. One must have will, effort, mind and wisdom. Then with patience and determination, we will gradually improve.

Chapter 16

The Five Spiritual Faculties

The Five Spiritual Faculties (*pañcīndriyāni*) are faith (*saddhindriya*), effort or energy (*vīriyindriya*), mindfulness (*satindriya*), concentration (*samādhindriya*) and wisdom (*paññindriya*).

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIVE SPIRITUAL FACULTIES

(1) Faith (*saddhindriya*)

Faith (*saddhindriya*) is confidence. Confidence resembles our hands, as without them we will not be able to grasp anything. Confidence is very important! Faith or confidence (*saddhā*) has the characteristic of placing faith or of trusting (*sampasādana-lakkhaṇa*). Its function is to clarify (*pasādana-rasā*), as a water-clearing gem causes muddy water to become clear. It is manifested as clarity, i.e. the removal of the mind's impurities, or as resolution. Its proximate cause is something to place faith in (*saddheyyavatthu-padaṭṭhāna*), or the hearing of the Dhamma, etc.

As we note the truth of natural phenomena, the more we note and the stronger our confidence will become. Noting does not mean observing carelessly; noting means observing

accurately, like hitting the bull's eye. When the object is incorrect, our confidence will not arise. Our confidence will only arise when the object is correct.

There are four types of confidence, namely confidence through belief (*pasāda-saddhā*), confidence that is unshakable (*okapana-saddhā*), confidence through attainment (*adhigama-saddhā*) and the confidence of Bodhisattas (*āgamana-saddhā*). From these four types of confidence, we must possess confidence that is unshakable. If we only possess confidence through belief, when we encounter the eight worldly conditions (*aṭṭha lokadhammā*), our confidence will waver and regress.

Such eight worldly conditions are gain (*lābha*) and loss (*alābha*), fame (*yasa*) and slander (*ayasa*), praise (*pasamsā*) and blame (*nindā*), happiness (*sukha*) and pain (*dukkha*). In our lives, while sometimes we will acquire wealth, there are also periods when we will lose our property. There are times when we are surrounded by followers, yet there are moments of solitude. Sometimes we will receive lots of praise, but there are occasions when we will be slandered by others. As there are times of happiness, there are also times of suffering. These are the worldly conditions.

Half of the eight worldly conditions are favourable whereas the other half are unfavourable. When facing the unfavourable

worldly conditions, such as loss, slander, blame and pain, confidence through belief will regress. We will wonder why we encounter unfortunate events despite creating wholesome kamma. Such a level of confidence will not lead us towards enlightenment. Thus, we must possess confidence that is unshakable, such confidence that runs through our veins like our blood. A higher level of confidence is confidence through attainment, which is acquired after one personally experiences the Dhamma. Such confidence is possessed by sages.

King *Ajātasattu* regretted killing his father and afterwards he was unable to eat or sleep due to deep remorse. He visited the Buddha and repented in front of him. When the Buddha expounded the Dhamma to him, his mind regained its tranquillity and he experienced the arising of unshakable confidence. Thereafter, he protected the Triple Gem throughout his life. Among ordinary people, King *Ajātasattu* had the greatest confidence in the Buddha. During the first Buddhist council, King *Ajātasattu* was the greatest supporter of the event.

Killing one's father belongs to one of the Five Heinous Crimes and those that commit the Five Heinous Crimes will not be able to achieve enlightenment in this very life. The Buddha felt pity on behalf of King *Ajātasattu*, as if he had not become friends with Devadatta and committed the

crime of killing his father, he would have been able to attain stream-entry (*sotāpanna*) after the Buddha expounded the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* to him. Therefore, the verse “do not approach the ignorant ones” as mentioned in the *Mangala Sutta* (*āsevanā ca bālanam*) is very important! If we mingle with ignorant or evil beings, our lives will encounter various problems.

(2) Effort or Energy (vīriyindriya)

Effort (*vīriyindriya*) also refers to energy. In the Thirty-seven Factors of Enlightenment, effort appears nine times and thus it is a very important ultimate (*paramattha*) Dhamma.

If we possess confidence, our effort will arise. For instance, if someone called us to come and sign some papers in order to collect one million dollars, once we believed it, our effort would immediately arise. We would not hesitate to hire a cab and proceed to collect the money. The mundane Dhamma is like that. When it comes to supramundane Dhamma, Sayadaw says, “If you practice this way, you will attain *Nibbāna*.” We think, “Is it true?” Due to our lack of confidence, our suspicions arise. Insufficient confidence will result in indolence, boredom and the inability to stimulate effort. Most of us lack effort, which is regrettable as if we possessed effort, we would be able to improve without limitation.

(3) Mindfulness (satindriya)

Mindfulness is the most important among the Five Spiritual Faculties, as it cannot be omitted and it will not maintain its intensity at all times. When we invest too much effort, we will be exhausted and agitated. When our concentration is too strong, we will be confused and dazed, resulting in the appearance of sloth, torpor and delusion. Another obstacle that occurs when concentration is too strong, is that the strength of mindfulness will weaken, leading to a lack of understanding and as a result, wisdom will not arise. For meditation to improve, effort and concentration must be balanced and mindfulness is required to fine tune this balance. Besides that, confidence and wisdom must also be balanced. If confidence is strong but wisdom is weak, superstition or blind faith will arise and one will be easily deceived. If on the other hand wisdom is strong yet confidence is weak, suspicion and criticism will be produced.

In the past, when I was teaching meditation to the Sangha in Myanmar, I realized that those with poor confidence but who excelled academically, often develop suspicion towards the teachings. They liked to judge and compare, making it difficult for them to calm their minds and focus on meditation. This was especially true if they had also attained a similar qualification as a Dhamma teacher. Then they would think, “If you can’t answer my question, I will not believe in your teachings.”

Those that excel academically will not achieve enlightenment easily as they are too calculating, demonstrating that being extreme is merely a waste of time. Let go of the knowledge in books and learn with sincerity; this is the way to improve. Therefore, confidence and wisdom must be balanced.

Mindfulness is just like a scale, it maintains our balance. Mindfulness can lead us towards *Nibbāna*. We need mindfulness at all times. When we lack mindfulness, we will be forgetful. For instance, during walking meditation, when we are disturbed by a noise, we will forget whether it's the left step or right step that we should be noting. With mindfulness we will not forget. Also, a mind that notes continuously does not harbour thoughts of greed, anger, ignorance, arrogance or jealousy; such a state of mind is pure.

(4) Concentration (samādhindriya)

Concentration (*samādhindriya*) is one-pointedness of mind and arises from mindfulness. We note the object with certainty and as we note continuously, concentration will arise. The mind will no longer be distracted, instead it should be focused and stable, giving us feelings of peace, serenity and tranquility. When there is concentration, wisdom will arise.

(5) Wisdom (*paññindriya*)

Wisdom (*paññindriya*) means to know clearly through details and with different perspectives. Our confidence will be stronger as we know more about the truth of natural phenomena. Our lives come and go, arise and pass away every single moment. How can a life that changes every single moment be stable? When we see impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), no-self (*anattā*) and impurities, our attachments will lessen. We suffer due to our attachments.

We are attached to others as well as to ourselves, but there is only one person who we love the most, and that is ourselves. We might declare that our love for others is more than the love we have for ourselves, but in fact there is a limit to this. When our dignity has been violated, we will focus on ourselves first. You can observe this for yourselves if you don't believe my words. Wisdom will arise when one knows the truth with clarity.

THE NINE FACTORS THAT WILL SHARPEN THE FIVE SPIRITUAL FACULTIES

There are nine factors that will sharpen the Five Spiritual Faculties. They are:

(1) Seeing the phenomena of arising and passing away

If we wish to sharpen the Five Spiritual Faculties, we must be able to see arising and passing away. If not, attachments will develop easily and it will be difficult to sharpen the Five Spiritual Faculties. For beginners in meditation, when pain arises, one can note for a while and the pain will disappear. When it passes away, this is followed by another sensation of pain. Our minds are not sharp enough to capture every single moment, but when our minds improve, we will be able to capture the arising and passing away of every moment.

(2) Respect

We must respect the Dhamma and cultivate with reverence. We should not be careless. Because meditation will give us the greatest benefits, we need to cultivate meticulously, otherwise how could we acquire these great benefits? This is the same as keeping expensive objects in a secure location. It is only by doing this and not missing out any detail that we can sharpen our Five Spiritual Faculties.

(3) Continuous cultivation

Another factor that sharpens the Five Spiritual Faculties is continuous cultivation; one should practice continuously in order to improve.

(4) Suitability

In order to sharpen the Five Spiritual Faculties, there are seven types of causes and conditions associated with suitability.

Āvāso gocaro bhassam, puggalo bhojanaṃ utu.

Iriyāpathoti sattete, asappāye vivajjaye.

~ *Visuddhimagga*

Abode, resort, and speech, and person,
The food, the climate, and the posture
Select and cultivate of each
The kind that is most suitable.

(a) Abode (*āvāsa*)

The abode (*āvāsa*) must be suitable, as without a suitable living place, it will be extremely difficult to sharpen the Five Spiritual Faculties, let alone achieve enlightenment. We need a peaceful place for cultivation. The Buddha advised that the best location is the forest, yet even the forest is noisy

nowadays. A meditation centre is a suitable place, with sitting cushions and other basic needs fulfilled; thus it is a suitable abode for meditators.

(b) Resort (*gocaro*)

Resort (*gocaro*) refers to the villages where the meditators beg for alms. A suitable living place will be a location that is near to a village so that it is easy to obtain a regular supply of food. During the Buddha's era, no one took care of the meditators, so the monastics had to go for alms begging. When they had acquired sufficient food, they would return to their living quarters to eat. After washing their alms bowl after their meal, they would continue with their cultivation. The following day they would again go for alms begging. There was no burden associated with their practice.

Nowadays, everyone proceeds to the dining hall after they hear the sound of the wooden board and by then, the food is ready. To organize such a large scale meditation retreat is not easy; we need a lot of manpower, resources and finances. We will not be able to accomplish this task if we do not have confidence. Compared to the Buddha's era, each one of us is lucky. But enlightenment is not achieved, because it is too comfortable and no suffering is experienced. Without suffering, we become attached and as a result our minds are

filled with defilements and we waste a lot of precious time. The same applies to bedding. When the bed is too comfortable, it is difficult to wake up in the morning, am I right?

(c) Speech (*bhassa*)

Speech also refers to expounding or delivering the Dhamma. It is difficult for me to know whether the Dhamma is suitable for an individual. Only the Buddha possesses *āsaya-anusaya-ñāṇa* and *indriya-paropariyatti-ñāṇa*. *Āsaya-anusaya-ñāṇa* is the wisdom that knows a particular sentient being's characteristics, behaviour and underlying tendencies. *Indriya-paropariyatti-ñāṇa* is the wisdom that knows whether the sentient being's faculties are strong or weak. The Buddha knew the needs and faculties of sentient beings and consequently he was able to expound the Dhamma that was most suitable for them. This meant that those that listened to the Dhamma he taught, would be enlightened immediately. To expound suitable Dhamma is very important. I do not know what the most suitable Dhamma is for every person. I do not know what the listener lacks. Therefore, I can only do my best by telling everyone what I have learnt and what I know. If your perfections (*pāramī*) are mature, you will be enlightened if you encounter the Dhamma which is suitable for you.

(d) Person (*puggala*)

If the people that we practice with are not suitable, we will encounter difficulties as we practice. This is why we must treat each other with compassion and loving-kindness. It is difficult to coexist with selfish people. Our cultivation will improve if we can coexist in harmony with other people.

(e) Food (*bhojana*)

The food (*bhojana*) must be suitable. If we do not acquire suitable food, it is difficult to sharpen our Five Spiritual Faculties. Some people are suited to consume sweet foods while others are suited to sour foods. When the food is suitable, it is easy to sharpen the Five Spiritual Faculties.

(f) Climate (*utu*)

The changes in climate, whether good or bad, will affect our cultivation. When the climate is too hot, we will encounter difficulty in our meditation progress. The same applies when the climate is too cold. Therefore, when the climate is suitable, the Five Spiritual Faculties can be sharpened easily.

(g) Posture (*iriyāpatha*)

There are four types of postures (*iriyāpatha*): walking, standing, sitting, lying down. A suitable posture is very important.

Venerable *Ānanda* achieved enlightenment between the postures of sitting and lying down. When we cultivate vipassana meditation, it is not compulsory for one to sit in a cross-legged position. As long as it is the most comfortable and most suitable posture, it can be accepted. During sitting meditation, once you begin to sit in a comfortable position, do not move your body and see how long it can last. If it is less than an hour, then natural phenomena will appear. Painful Feelings arise, change and pass away. When sensations of pain and numbness appear, they will allow you to see them as natural phenomena. This is very important.

Once you fulfil the seven types of suitability as mentioned above, you will realize that it is easy to sharpen the Five Spiritual Faculties and meditation will improve easily as well.

(5) Cultivators of concentration in the past

For cultivators of concentration (*samādhi*) in the past, their Five Spiritual Faculties could be easily sharpened. Two thousand five hundred years ago, before the Buddha achieved Buddhahood, many people cultivated calm meditation and not insight meditation. Their concentration allowed them to attain absorption (*jhāna*) and develop supernatural powers. Supernatural powers originate from the cultivation of concentration. However, absorption and supernatural powers

belong to the mundane Dhamma and not the supramundane Dhamma.

(6) The growth of the Seven Factors of Awakening

The Seven Factors of Awakening refer to mindfulness, investigation of states, effort, zest, tranquillity, concentration and equanimity. When the Seven Factors of Awakening grow, the Five Spiritual Faculties will sharpen easily and meditation will improve rapidly.

(7) To stay away from thinking

If we stay away from thinking, we will improve easily and our Five Spiritual Faculties will sharpen as well. We like to think, to ponder, to contemplate, to reminisce. During meditation, when we encounter any special experience, we think; “Why is it so? Is this correct? This is strange.” It is difficult for us to improve in this manner. Therefore, we continue to remind you to live in this moment, do not reminisce about the past and do not plan for the future. If you continue to note, you will overcome and then you will understand and attain liberation.

(8) Effort

Effort can overcome all obstacles. In the beginning, it is easy for us to invest effort, yet after sometime, we tend to become indolent and lazy. This is like climbing a mountain halfway.

When you encounter an obstacle and feel tired, this is when you feel like stopping to rest. We must overcome the obstacle and continue climbing upwards. Most people seek other ways when they encounter obstacles, which is due to insufficient effort. Everyone will encounter obstacles and when they appear, we must overcome them with effort. Effort will drive us forward. It doesn't matter whether it is too hot, or too cold, or hunger arises. You need to make the resolution: "I will overcome any difficulty!" Such effort will sharpen the Five Spiritual Faculties easily.

(9) No falling back

A mind of not falling back will sharpen the Five Spiritual Faculties. We must cherish the opportunity to cultivate. We need to realise; "I cannot give up such an opportunity!" We must seize the opportunity to perfect our cultivation and with such a mind-set, our Five Spiritual Faculties will sharpen with ease.

There are a total of nine factors involved in sharpening the Five Spiritual Faculties. Whereas my responsibility is to facilitate your understanding, your responsibility is to train yourselves. You must train diligently, so that you will reap the benefits.

Chapter 17

The Five Spiritual Powers

Power (*bala*) refers to strength or competence. A competent individual will obtain victory with ease and thus it is important to be competent. The Five Spiritual Powers are faith (*saddhābala*), effort (*vīriyabala*), mindfulness (*satibala*), concentration (*samādhibala*) and wisdom (*paññābala*).

THE POWER THAT OVERCOMES DEFILEMENTS

The ultimate (*paramattha*) Dhamma of the Five Spiritual Faculties and the Five Spiritual Powers are the same. Some individuals understand the concept of “faculty” and thus the Buddha would explain to them about the concept of the Five Spiritual Faculties. Other people were able to grasp the concept of “power” better, therefore the Buddha would expound to them the concept of the Five Spiritual Powers. Faith (*saddhābala*) is the strength of confidence and when facing defilements, how much strength of confidence is needed? The greater the strength, the better we are able to overcome defilements. We must examine ourselves to see how much strength we possess in terms of effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. If we are strong, we will overcome defilements.

Sometimes you create a lot of excuses for yourselves, such as lack of stamina, the ease of catching a cold during rainy days, lack of sleep, or feeling too drowsy. Sloth and torpor is a form of indolence and laziness, so it is due to laziness when you say you lack stamina. Everyone sleeps and eats well, so we do have sufficient stamina. What is lacking is the mind's strength. Our bodies and minds are connected. If the body and mind are separated, neither will be able to function independently. Using the metaphor of a blind man and a physically handicapped man to describe the function of our bodies and minds, we can understand that the handicapped man can't walk and the blind man can't see. Thus, both of them need to work together, in order to function successfully. When the handicapped man climbs onto the back of the blind man, he can start to direct the way while the blind man begins to walk. The mind and the body are like that, neither can accomplish anything if they are alone. Therefore, when we have good stamina, we should also take care of the strength of our minds. Just like a general, who, with the strength of his army of trained soldiers can defeat the enemy. The enemy that we wish to defeat is defilement. If we have strength, we will stand a good chance of winning.

THE THREE FORMS OF DEFILEMENTS (KILESA)

We must recognize that defilement is our enemy. If we did not have an enemy, we would not be able to test our own strength. With the presence of our enemy, we will be able to utilize our strength. Defilements can be found in three forms:

(1) Defilements of Transgression (vītikkama kilesa)

Defilements of the transgressive form (*vītikkama kilesa*) are a type of explosive defilement, i.e. a form of defilement that has been presented through behaviour or language. Does a normal person harbour feelings of cravings and anger? In fact, most ordinary person will have these defilements. When opposing conditions do not appear, greed and anger will not arise. Even though opposing conditions appear, for instance when one sees someone you dislike, if the counterpart does not come forward to create a disturbance, only feelings of unhappiness will arise within the mind. However, if the person comes to disturb and trigger feelings of anger in the counterpart, there is a possibility that he will use verbal abuse (transgressive defilements presented in speech), which could then be followed by a physical assault (transgressive defilements presented through the body). Under the influence of extreme anger, it is possible that someone might be killed. Such defilements pre-

sented through the body and speech are known as “*vītikkama kilesa*”.

We must possess faith (*saddhābala*), in the sense that if we believe bad kamma produces bad rewards and good kamma produces good rewards, we will not let our defilements explode and bring bad karmic retribution to ourselves. We must maintain our mindfulness. Then, when the unwholesome mind arises, we will be vigilant and stop the defilement right there, preventing it from becoming a transgressive defilement. Meditators should note at all times and then our ability will improve. When the Five Spiritual Powers improve, we will possess the ability to control our defilements and we will no longer create bad kamma associated with our body and speech. We will also be able to prevent ourselves from committing bad kamma related to our minds.

(2) Defilements of Obsession (*pariyutthāna kilesa*)

Defilements of the obsessive form (*pariyutthāna kilesa*) refer to the defilement presented at the mind door which has not manifested through the body and in our speech. If we have sufficient ability, we should be able to control our defilements, so as to prevent them from exploding in the form of actions or speech. Defilements arise within the mind, this is “*pariyutthāna kilesa*”.

If we have greater ability, we will be able to control our obsessive forms of defilements (*pariyutthāna kilesa*). “Patience leads us to *Nibbāna*”, so we must have patience. If someone tries to harm me, it is the result of my own unwholesome kamma. In my previous lives I have hurt others, so now I will need to shoulder the karmic retribution of my past wrongdoings. If we believe in the law of kamma, transgressive defilements (*vītikkama kilesa*) will not arise. However, the burning of defilements within our minds make us suffer. Meditators that have undergone training before are able to overcome such suffering with ease. They need to note the suffering continuously. When anger arises, use the same method by noting “anger, anger, anger”. Note continuously for five minutes. We know that the mind arises and passes away rapidly. Consequently if we truly possess ability, the retention of these feelings of anger within our minds for one minute can be considered a very long period. The meditator clearly knows the natural phenomena of arising and passing away. Thus, when ability is strong, the feelings of anger vanish rapidly.

Transgressive defilements (*vītikkama kilesa*) appear through the body and in speech. As this is obvious to others, especially when we are weak, other people can persuade, stop or help us. However, the obsessive forms of defilements

(*pariyutthāna kilesa*) reside in our minds, which are not immediately apparent to others, making it difficult for them to help us. Accordingly, we can only help ourselves. Individuals that have not learnt meditation before will find it difficult to overcome obsessive forms of defilements, as they do not disappear if one does not note. They can cause us to lose our sleep and disturb us for days and years. Some people commit suicide when they can't overcome a particular obsessive form of defilement. For instance, some people experience excruciating pain due to a broken relationship and as a result, they kill themselves. Exactly who is the enemy that kills them? It is the craving mind. The craving mind says, "I can't stand it anymore, what is the point of continuing to live?" An individual who lacks wisdom and ability will not understand the truth of life.

We should possess confidence towards the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha and our own kamma. We must believe in the law of kamma, so that when karmic retribution of the past matures, we will be able to face it, accept it and get to know it. When the meditator notes accordingly and sees arising and passing away, he will see what is impermanent.

Defilements of obsession, or the second form of defilements (*pariyutthāna kilesa*), can be conquered by those with ability.

(3) Defilements of Dormancy (anusaya kilesa)

Defilements in the dormancy form (*anusaya kilesa*) refer to defilements that lie static in the mind stream, not yet having encountered the causes and conditions required for their arising. All ordinary people have this type of defilement, for as long as one has not attained Arahantship, one will not be liberated from them. Because defilements of this stage lie dormant in our lives, it is not easy to notice their presence. When you listen to the Dhamma attentively, there is no attachment, anger or confusion and thus you will say, “We do not have any defilements associated with greed, anger and delusion.” But, one never knows what defilements lie dormant, waiting for their appropriate causes and conditions, when they will arise.

If the Buddha had not expounded this Dhamma, we would not know about our dormant defilements and neither would we be able to identify them. Without his teachings we may contemplate intensely, but without understanding anything further. We may ponder for 100 years, yet we will never know anything more. The Buddha clearly taught us that defilements present themselves in three forms and He also explained the causes and effects associated with their arising. He taught us how to extinguish and eliminate these defilements, so that we can be liberated from them.

ANTIDOTE FOR DEFILEMENTS

How do we confront defilements? The 45 years of Dhamma expounded by the Buddha has been compiled as the Tripitaka, i.e. *Suttanta*, *Vinaya*, *Abhidhamma*. The *Vinaya* teaches the study of precepts, the *Suttanta* teaches the study of concentration and the *Abhidhamma* teaches the study of wisdom. All natural phenomena (*paramattha* Dhamma) are recorded in the *Abhidhamma*. The Buddha taught us to use morality, concentration and wisdom to confront the three forms of defilements.

(1) Confronting Transgressive Defilements (vītikkaṃma kilesa) with Morality

Monastics have precepts to observe and the same applies to the lay person. Precepts can prevent unwholesome kamma related to the body and speech. Unwholesome kamma related to our bodies are killing, stealing, sexual misconduct and consuming intoxicants. Unwholesome kamma related to speech are lying, provocative speech, slander and mindless chatter. Lying refers to the language of a liar, whereas provocative speech causes division between individuals. Slander is the language of reprimanding others. Sometimes though, there can be exceptional circumstances prevailing, when, for example if a disciple makes a mistake, the teacher may worry

that his disciple will suffer as a result of choosing the wrong path. To avoid this, he reprimands him out of compassion, which reprimand is not a form of slander. Mindless chatter is a form of meaningless language, covering topics of conversation concerning politics, family and work, none of which help us in achieving enlightenment. During meditation, our minds will be distracted by these meaningless topics of conversation and this is why it is better to avoid mindless chatter. All unwholesome kamma concerning our body and speech can be controlled by observing the precepts. Therefore, “morality” can overcome transgressive defilements (*vītikkaṃa kilesa*).

(2) Confronting Obsessive Defilements (pariyutthāna kilesa) with Concentration

Obsessive defilements (*pariyutthāna kilesa*) reside in our minds, which we can confront with concentration (*samādhi*). Concentration can be improved through training. How do we train in order to enhance our concentration? During practice, ignore other objects and focus your mind on the rising and falling of the abdomen. The longer the period of noting, the better it is. A distracted mind will not know clearly, so in order to know the object clearly, the mind must pay attention and note the object. Noting once or twice is insufficient, as one needs to note thousands and millions of times continuously.

When our minds stop drifting aimlessly and begin to settle down, we can control our minds. By training in this way, we will allow our minds to cultivate the habit of paying attention. As a result, our concentration will be enhanced and our observation will be more powerful.

When we are used to calming our minds, we will have the power to overcome the enemy that invades our minds. When defilement appears, we note it continuously, until the defilement gradually fades away and ceases. Thus, to defeat obsessive defilements (*pariyutthāna kilesa*), it is important for one to possess concentration. If we have sufficient ability and our minds are under good control, defilements will not emerge from our bodies or speech. If our ability is insufficient to handle the invasion by our enemy, obsessive defilements (*pariyutthāna kilesa*) will develop to become transgressive defilements (*vītikkama kilesa*).

When concentration is too strong, sloth and torpor will arise, which is why effort and concentration must be balanced. Confidence and wisdom must be balanced as well, but need to be fine-tuned with mindfulness. When we note with mindfulness, concentration arises within our minds and we can clearly see how the object arises, passes away and changes. Such concentration is not absorption (*jhāna*), but is in fact known as momentary concentration.

When the sensation of pain arises, we note the pain. Minor pain does not produce obvious effects, whereas severe pain allows us to note the object more clearly. When our minds possess power, the meditator will be aware that the pain noted during the first noting experience is different from the pain noted during the second experience. We should train ourselves to possess such awareness.

(3) Confronting Dormant Defilements (anusaya kilesa) with Wisdom

The essence of Dhamma is wisdom; to know the natural phenomena of the mind and body and to understand how the body and mind interact with each other in our lives. If we understand how the mind and body function, we will not be able to discover the presence of “I” and we will then understand the nature of no-self (*anattā*).

Most people believe in souls created by the creator. However, meditators can experience no-self (*anattā*) personally. The Dhamma expounded by the Buddha does not originate from thinking, it is the truth that came from his personal experience and practice. Thus, if you do not believe, everyone can come forward to see. When you come to see and practice personally, you can experience and understand the truth of life.

Wisdom is awareness of natural phenomena. It refers to

gaining insight on the arising and passing away of every single moment and involves recognizing that the mind is not present eternally. The mind arises and passes away, with mental factors and the mind arising and passing away together. Knowing that the mind (which arises and passes away continuously) is not truly present, is wisdom. Since the mind is not truly present, then is defilement truly present? If defilement is not truly present, then why does defilement arise? When there is a cause, there will be an effect. If the cause is not fulfilled, the effect will not arise. For instance, as there is no fire within the lighter, where does the fire come from? When causes and conditions are fulfilled, the effect will arise. When causes such as gas, a flint stone and a striking wheel are fulfilled, only then can the fire be produced. When causes are not fulfilled, the fire will not be produced. A true practitioner will understand this clearly and this understanding is what constitutes wisdom.

The many troubles and problems in our lives are created by defilements. If a general has the ability to defeat the enemy, then the meditator will also be able to defeat his defilements. By using the Buddha's method, we will defeat defilements with our Five Spiritual Powers, i.e. faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom.

Such methods are only available in the Buddha's teachings — you won't find them in other religions. Therefore, do not



forget, do not leave the Five Spiritual Powers at the meditation centre. You should internalize them and apply them in your lives and you will then acquire their benefits.

Chapter 18

**The Seven Factors of
Awakening**

The Seven Factors of Awakening are known as “*bojjhaṅga*” or “*bodhi-aṅga*” in Pali. “*Bodhi*” means enlightenment, “*aṅga*” is division. The Seven Factors of Awakening (*satta bojjhaṅga*) refer to the Seven Factors of Enlightenment. Most meditators will have experienced these before, however the difference can be found in the level of experience.

The Seven Factors of Awakening are mindfulness, investigation of states, effort or energy, zest or joy, tranquillity, concentration and equanimity.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SEVEN FACTORS OF AWAKENING

(1) Mindfulness (sati-sambojjhaṅga)

“*Sati*” is mindfulness and its meaning has been explained many times. Mindfulness is the state where one is clearly aware of the object, so that the observation is stable, absolute and unforgettable. When we continue to note the object, our minds will settle down. When we practice according to the meditation instructions, we will have many experiences related to this ultimate (*paramattha*) Dhamma. Previously, we have provided instructions on the characteristics, function,

manifestation and proximate cause of mindfulness. Please do not forget these teachings.

(2) Investigation of states (dhamma-vicaya-sambojjhaṅga)

Investigation of states refers to wisdom or knowledge based on mental development (*bhāvanā-maya paññā*). One can acquire wisdom through listening to the Dhamma and contemplation, but these do not belong to “investigation of states”. Investigation of states refers to wisdom acquired through personal experience or wisdom that arises from observation of the current moment. It is not wisdom acquired through contemplation or recollection of memory.

When we enter a state of deep observation, we will see that the object arises and passes away, comes and goes. We will understand naturally that it does not truly exist. The same applies to suffering. When we observe pain, for the first time, second time, third time, fourth time... as we continue to note, we will observe how the pain changes: sometimes it is sore, sometimes it is warm, sometimes the location changes etc. When we clearly observe, we will realize that “pain” is “pain”, “awareness” is “awareness” and “changes” are “changes”. Each of their characteristics can be clearly separated with the

observation of wisdom. “Pain” is merely a sensation, if we note continuously, we will no longer feel pain and this is a very special experience. Meditators that have experienced this will understand, whereas those that have not experienced before will not understand easily. They will say “I am in pain”, not understanding that in fact, it is not “I” that is in pain, it is merely the arising of “sensation”. Pain belongs to painful feelings which the mind can feel.

What we mentioned above is the investigation of states. If we have not experienced it, it is because we have not trained ourselves properly. This can be remedied by working harder and quite soon you will be able to experience the investigation of states.

(3) Effort or energy (viriya-sambojjhaṅga)

Among the Seven Factors of Awakening, one should not lack effort, but unfortunately, most people do. The opportunities to organize intensive meditation retreats are few and therefore everyone should cherish this opportunity, making use of the valuable time available to invest effort in meditation, so that life will be meaningful. When effort arises, we should let our minds follow the object, focusing our attention on the object without being distracted and eventually we will be satisfied with our progress in meditation.

(4) Zest or joy (pīti-sambojjhaṅga)

Zest refers to happiness. When our meditation improves, we will feel happy. Beginners in meditation may initially experience suffering when painful feelings arise and joy does not arise. However, if one persists in this practice for 7 to 10 days, then joy will arise and the suffering will diminish. In fact, the meditator will be filled with feelings of satisfaction and happiness. Just like target practise; if we can hit the bull's eye often, we will feel happy and satisfied.

There are different levels of satisfaction and joy comprising of four types, namely:

(a) The joy of the five desires (kāmamisa pīti)

Through fulfilling the Five Desires, i.e. seeing, listening, smelling, tasting, touching, joy arises. Most people have experienced this before, such as seeing beautiful scenery, listening to lovely music, tasting good food, smelling fragrances etc. As a result of these experiences, joy arises. Regarding bodily contact, the most joyful experience involves the contact between male and female bodies. In the mundane world, the man is the best sense-object for touch by woman and vice versa. A joy of the Five Desires will arise and usually such “joy” will produce attachments that are deep and intense.

(b) Worldly joy (*lokamisa pīti*)

When our dreams are fulfilled, worldly joy will arise. For instance, passing exams and reaching our goals, causes us to experience joy in our minds. If one possess the wish to become a renunciant, yet is still burdened by worldly responsibilities, when the time is ripe and one fulfils ones wish to become a monastic, the mind will be filled with satisfaction and joy. This is worldly joy which most people have already experienced.

(c) The joy of *saṃsāra* (*vaṭṭamisa pīti*)

The joy of *saṃsāra* (round of rebirths) refers to the joy associated with accomplishing wholesome deeds. When we practice generosity, our minds will be filled with joy. For instance, if you are going to provide lunch for the destitute on the following day, your mood will be different from usual on that day. When you see everyone enjoying the food, your mind will produce the joy of *saṃsāra*. Such “joy” arises from the production of wholesome kamma. Wholesome kamma generates wholesome fruits that create better future lives for us. As we plant the seeds of goodness now, these seeds will produce flowers and fruits in days to come.

Those that are wise and listen to the Dhamma should

understand the importance of making vows. We often recite “*Idaṃ me puññam, nibbānassa paccayo hotu*”, which means, “May these merits become the favourable conditions that help us to attain *Nibbāna*”. However, what do we gain after attaining *Nibbāna*? In this life we usually make vows for the sake of gaining material benefits, i.e. to attain wealth, health, a beautiful voice, rebirth in heaven etc. If we make a vow to attain *Nibbāna*, what we will gain instead is infinitely more valuable being “liberation from suffering”. When we let go of our greed and attachment towards this life, we will be liberated from *saṃsāra*.

Sometimes, although we recite “May these merits become the favourable conditions that help us to attain *Nibbāna*...”, in fact, in our minds we wish for wealth, for a better life, a better voice, to be free from danger etc. We can deceive others, but not ourselves. Accordingly, we should examine our own mental states. Meditators come to the meditation centre for intensive retreats with different goals; some for the sake of acquiring experience, some just wish to try out meditation, some wish to seek liberation from suffering and some vow to attain *Nibbāna*. We practice generosity, uphold the precepts, meditate and observe the Eight Precepts every day. With this wholesome kamma we vow to attain *Nibbāna*. When we make such vows with sincerity, our wholesome merits will lead us

towards *Nibbāna*. If we do not vow to attain *Nibbāna*, the joy of *samsāra* that arises as a result of our wholesome kamma will lead us towards the cycle of birth and death, which is the law of kamma.

Even if we have the causes and conditions to learn meditation in this life, we must nevertheless face the sufferings of birth, aging, illness and death. If we still yearn for worldly benefits, even though we may have wealth and health, the sufferings of birth, aging, illness and death are unavoidable, as we are still struggling within the ocean of *samsāra*. As we cultivate, we should gain something, if we don't gain something, we might lose something! For instance, one might become boastful about one's diligence and effort in meditation, when one boasts to the master during the interview, "Master, I can sit for 2 hours longer than he can!" I say, "Then you suffer more than him!" If you harbour the intention of boasting about your own performance, your intentions are not pure and this is not right. Even if we practice generosity, uphold precepts but meditate with the wrong intention, we will neither gain anything, nor will we be liberated.

Of course, even though we do not gain anything, wholesome deeds can create a sense of joy and satisfaction. For example, a wealthy person who makes an offering to finance the building of a new temple, will invite well-known people to the opening

ceremony of the temple as a form of publicity, to inform the world of his wholesome deed. His mind will feel satisfied and this is the joy of *saṃsāra*.

The ordinary person may possess some sense of vanity. But if the sense of vanity is too strong, one may become calculating and refuse to contribute without gaining benefits. Thus we should be careful of the defilements associated with vanity. The joy of *saṃsāra* will only bring us a longer *saṃsāra*, as we will continue to exist within the cycle of birth, aging, illness and death, unable to be liberated from suffering.

(d) The joy of meditation (bhāvanā pīti)

The joy of meditation (*bhāvanā pīti*) refers to the rapture that arises from meditation. During meditation, if you possess mindfulness, effort and your mind is calm and settled, “rapture” will arise naturally. Most meditators have experienced this joy of meditation, which is divided into five types:

(i) Minor Rapture (khuddakā-pīti)

Minor rapture will arise when the mind follows the object accurately and feels satisfied. Minor rapture will cause an erection of the body hair, which lasts for a short period of time. Such minor rapture will usually occur a couple of times an hour.

(ii) Momentary Rapture (*khaṇikā-pīti*)

Momentary rapture (*khaṇikā-pīti*), feels just like coming into contact with electricity. It is easy for momentary rapture to arise, within the period of one hour, when the mind follows the object accurately and overcomes painful feelings. The arousal of momentary rapture requires the fulfilment of continuous cultivation (*nirantara-bhāvanā*), in that the mind will need to follow the object for 5 to 10 minutes continuously. If we continue to note, defilements will distance themselves from us. The mind that notes in the moment is pure. It is not defiled by greed, anger or ignorance. If we regard one second as the time required for the abdomen to rise and fall once, then there will be 300 times of noting in 5 minutes and 600 times of noting in 10 minutes. As we continue to note, our minds are not distracted. Instead they are stable and tranquil and as a result, momentary rapture arises. Many meditators have experienced momentary rapture before. If you have not experienced it yet, you can work on the five types of meditation methods explained previously. You will find that as you continue to practice in a relaxed mode, momentary rapture will occur many times and your meditation will undergo significant improvement. We can all experience the taste of Dhamma through practice.

(iii) Wavelike Overwhelming Rapture (okkantikā-pīti)

When momentary rapture arises many times and becomes stronger, wavelike overwhelming rapture (*okkantikā-pīti*) will arise. Wavelike overwhelming rapture resembles the waves lapping the shore as they break and recede. Sometimes you feel a cooling sensation of the body, sometimes you can feel a warm sensation, both of which are very comfortable. Sometimes the feeling of arising oscillates like the waves. Beginners may develop a sense of fear as the body becomes warm rapidly, but when it cools down again as you continue to note, one feels joy. As these are unusual sensations compared to what one normally feels, one may feel apprehensive. In fact, this is wavelike overwhelming rapture, something that one will not be able to imagine without experiencing it beforehand. After wavelike overwhelming rapture arises and ends, the meditator will feel very comfortable and satisfied. Usually after practicing for one month, a diligent meditator will experience such joy.

(iv) Uplifting Rapture (ubbegāa-pīti)

Uplifting rapture (*ubbegāa-pīti*) refers to intense joy. The body pulsates on its own and it may even float in the air or start to fly. During meditation, sometimes our hands or legs may suddenly pulsate. This is not due to our deliberate

movement, but is due to the body's natural pulsation. After the pulsation ends, one feels joyful and this is "uplifting rapture". Meditators don't need to be fearful, but it is likely that those who have not experience such "joy" may feel terrified.

However, for people whose body pulsates as a habit, this is not rapture. If one is used to movement, it is an obstacle in meditation. When we first begin to learn meditation, (I will remind you all,) we need to control our bodies, we should not simply move them as we wish. If you can't control your body and cultivate the habit of moving it to find the most comfortable position, this is not any form of rapture. There are some people who move their bodies because of old illnesses. The meditation master will need to know whether a meditator's body response is due to progress in meditation or due to bad habits. Thus, when each of you is meditating, I will come to inspect your posture in order to understand the situation.

Rapture will persist only for a short period of time. After it ends, our bodies and minds will regain tranquillity. When "wavelike overwhelming rapture" arises continuously, "uplifting rapture" will arise, but once it arises, it will pass away rapidly. It is just a matter of arising and passing away.

(v) *Pervading Rapture (pharaṇā-pīti)*

Pervading rapture (*pharaṇā-pīti*) refers to very strong and

forceful joy. When we experience “pervading rapture”, we no longer feel the presence of the body. It is as if we are floating in air. We lose the sensation of sitting and there are no feelings of suffering either. When pervading rapture arises many times, we feel a sense of equanimity. Such joy brings tranquillity, as the entire body feels like a ball of cotton soaked in oil — there is no disturbance. When the meditator experiences pervading rapture many times, he will experience a neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling. He can meditate for 3 to 6 hours and still feel comfortable. This is not a state of sleep, it is also not a state where one is dazed. It is the state where one clearly knows the truth of arising and passing away. At this point, one’s mind is very peaceful.

(5) Tranquillity (passaddhi-sambojjhaṅga)

When rapture appears many times, tranquillity will arise. Tranquillity is presented as the peace and serenity of the mental factors and the mind. After we experience tranquillity and stability, i.e. the taste of Dhamma, we will not be able to give up on meditation. If we do not meditate, we will not be able to sleep, thus we will want to meditate every day. For example, we bathe every day and if we do not bathe for one day we do not feel right; we have our meals every day, if we do not eat

we will feel hungry. This is not attachment, which is unwholesome Dhamma. On the contrary, this is righteous will, which will lead us towards the growth of wholesome Dhamma.

When we are lazy and bored, we usually look for friends to entertain ourselves. But, when we have “Dhamma” as our friend, we will no longer be lonely. Instead we will enjoy the happiness of being alone. This is the feeling of tranquillity that enables us to overcome distraction, boredom and indolence with meditation.

(6) Concentration (samādhi-sambojjhaṅga)

When tranquillity (*passaddhi-sambojjhaṅga*) arises, the mind will not be distracted. A mind without distractions will produce concentration (*samādhi-sambojjhaṅga*). This belongs to right concentration, which serves to enhance the level of the mind.

(7) Equanimity (upekkhā-sambojjhaṅga)

Equanimity (*upekkhā-sambojjhaṅga*) is balance. The stages of arising for the Seven Factors of Awakening are clear, namely: mindfulness, effort, zest, tranquillity, concentration and equanimity. If the meditator reaches a state of balance

and experiences neither suffering nor happiness, it is possible for him to sit for a period of three sessions where each session lasts for 3 hours. When our minds are concentrated, we forget about the time and the concept of time vanishes. When our minds are focused on the object, time flies with the blink of an eye.

Meditation lasts only for 3 hours due to the physical need to visit the rest room. If this is not necessary, then the timing can be extended further. A clear and stable mind continues to note clearly for 3 hours and this does not involve enduring torment during sitting meditation. If one feels tormented during a 3 hour sitting meditation, this will not lead to any actual benefits. When your meditation improves and you are able to sit for three hours continuously, time will pass rapidly.

It was recorded in the suttas that Venerable *Sāriputta* and Venerable *Moggallāna* did not sleep for 30 years. When I read this, I was doubtful and wondered, “Is this possible?” Thus I asked my teacher, who did not give me a direct answer. He just said, “You can practice on your own!” When I began to practice, I finally understood that it was possible for one not to sleep for 30 years. Why? The Buddha’s noble disciples did not lie down. Their backs did not touch the ground. They entered the state of fruition attainment (*phalasamāpatti*) in a meditating position, with their minds focused on *Nibbāna*

as their goal. Such a state is even better than sleeping. The disciples possessed deep concentration (*samādhi*), mindfulness and wisdom, which is why they could sit for up to 12 hours, or even longer. Their eyes, ears, nose and five faculties were all in a state of rest, their minds were not distracted and for them the concept of time had vanished. For instance, they usually prepared to start sitting meditation at 8am. Before meditation, they would have the intention in their minds, “I will only rise from my seat at 8pm, unless the Buddha or the monastic order need my presence.” If there were no affairs disturbing their practice, they would indeed rise from their seats at 8pm. Thus, under such peaceful and stable conditions, there was no problem if one did not sleep. We have practiced and experienced this and thus we know that it is possible that they did not sleep for 30 years. This Dhamma is something that you can experience on your own.

We are very lucky to be born as humans and encounter such supreme Dhamma. To be able to listen to the right teachings and to learn the actual way of practice, is a very rare opportunity indeed! We should invest hard work and persistence in our meditation and eventually we will be satisfied with what we have learnt. We will then also be aware of the different spiritual levels that exist and attain ultimate liberation.

Chapter 19

The Noble Eightfold Path

Buddha's first Dhamma discourse is recorded in the *Dhamma Cakka Pavattana Sutta*, and is about the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. Buddha's last Dhamma discourse before he entered *parinibbāna* is recorded in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, and its content also concerns the Noble Eightfold Path, with Subhadda involved as the questioner.

The night before Buddha entered *parinibbāna*, Subhadda came forward to ask the Buddha questions related to the Dhamma. He asked:

“Venerable sir, these Brahmans and contemplatives, each with his group, each with his community, each the teacher of his group, an honoured leader, well-regarded by people at large — i.e., Purana Kassapa..... Do they all have direct knowledge as they themselves claim, or do they all not have direct knowledge, or do some of them have direct knowledge and some of them not?□

The Blessed One asked him to put this question aside, and said:

“In any doctrine and discipline where the noble eightfold path is not found, no contemplative of the first... second... third... fourth order [stream-entrant, once-returner, non-returner, or Arahant] is found. But in any doctrine and discipline where the noble

eightfold path is found, contemplatives of the first... second... third... fourth order are found. The noble eightfold path is found in this doctrine and discipline, and right here there are contemplatives of the first... second... third... fourth order. Other teachings are empty of knowledgeable contemplatives. And if the monks dwell rightly, this world will not be empty of Arahants. □¹

The Buddha said that as long as the teachings of the Noble Eightfold Path are present, sages will be present. If there are no teachings of the Noble Eightfold Path, there will not be any sages present. Sages include the stream-entrant (*sotāpanna*), once-returner (*sakadāgāmi*), non-returner (*anāgāmi*) and Arahant. A stream-entrant has eliminated evil views and suspicion; a once-returner has reduced greed, anger and other defilements; a non-returner has extinguished anger and greed related to the pleasure of the sense organs, but is still attached to a pure and carefree way of life; an Arahant has eliminated all defilements, including sloth and torpor, distraction, delusions etc. Arahants do not need to sleep, but they still need to rest because the physical body will feel fatigue and so they rest while maintaining their mindfulness.

1 “The Great Discourse on the Total Unbinding” (Mahāparinibbāna Sutta), translated from Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

The body is form (*rūpa*). The Buddha said, “*Rūpa* is so called because it undergoes and imposes alteration (*ruppatiṭi rūpaṃ*).” All physical phenomena will change and deteriorate. When form (*rūpa*) deteriorates, we will suffer. The arising of defilements originates from the resistance and rejection of painful feelings. If you note the coming and going, as well as the arising and passing away of painful feelings, you do not feel attached to nor feel any rejection of feelings. Then the painful feelings are merely a type of sensation, they are not a defilement. We must know the truth of life clearly. In order to do this it is necessary that you do not reject or fear painful feelings. We should on the other hand be fearful of defilements, because they lead us to hell i.e. greed, hatred, ignorance, attachment, arrogance, pride, jealousy, stinginess and many others.

The night before Buddha entered *parinibbāna*, he expounded the Dhamma to Subhadda. As a result of this final teaching, Subhadda achieved Arahantship and became the last disciple taught by the Buddha.

THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH AND THE THREEFOLD LEARNING

The Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya-aṭṭhāṅgika-magga*) comprises of right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. The Noble Eightfold Path can be divided into three sections based on the threefold learning, i.e., morality, concentration and wisdom:

- (1) Morality: right speech, right action, right livelihood
- (2) Concentration: right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.
- (3) Wisdom: right view, right thought

INTRODUCTION TO THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH

(1) Right Speech (sammāvācā)

Right speech (*sammāvācā*) refers to distancing ourselves from unwholesome and crude language, so that we can perfect our speech. What is unwholesome speech? Lying, provocative

speech, slander and mindless chatter. These are the four types of unwholesome speech.

During an intensive meditation retreat, besides the interview, meditators are required to maintain silence. Therefore, the meditators will not have a chance to utter unwholesome speech. In this way, we perfect our speech as part of our efforts in observing the Noble Eightfold Path.

(2) Right Action (sammākammanā)

Right action (*sammākammanā*) refers to the avoidance of committing unwholesome deeds. Unwholesome deeds are killing, stealing and sexual misconduct.

During an intensive meditation retreat, we uphold the Eight Precepts and thus we will not commit unwholesome deeds such as killing, stealing and sexual misconduct. If you borrow something from a friend knowing that he won't mind, this is not stealing. But, if your friend is looking for the item that you borrowed, you should not keep quiet, you should return the item you borrowed, as this is honest behaviour.

If we no longer commit these three types of unwholesome deeds, then we have perfected our actions. Precepts can prevent unwholesome kamma associated with our body and speech, but our minds are not controlled by precepts. When

we can distance ourselves from unwholesome kamma related to the body and speech, we have practiced two of the Noble Eightfold Paths.

(3) Right Livelihood (sammājīva)

Right livelihood (*sammājīva*) refers to making a living in the proper way. In *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, *Pañcaka-nipāta*, five types of improper ways to make a living are mentioned: (1) Selling poisons, including insecticides that are toxic to living beings; (2) Selling drugs, including alcohol and producing alcohol; (3) Producing and selling knives, guns, arms and ammunition; (4) Human trafficking; (5) Raising and selling animals meant for slaughter.

If you do not commit the three types of unwholesome kamma related to the body and the four types of unwholesome kamma related to speech, then your life is pure. Meditators eat whatever is prepared by others and receive offerings freely. Such easily satisfied minds are the purest form of life, known as “right livelihood”. During an intensive meditation retreat, our lives are very pure.

The same applies to our mundane lives, where we should only use items that we have acquired through legitimate means. In other words, we should not use items that are acquired illegally. In business, if the cost of something is 10

dollars and you sell it for 12 dollars, this is acceptable. But if the cost is 10 dollars yet you sell it for 120 dollars, this is not right. We can make a legitimate and reasonable profit, but should not be so greedy that we inhibit the benefits to others, which could invite trouble upon our lives. We must be sincere and should not deceive others, this is important. Do not violate the three types of unwholesome deeds related to the body and the four types of unwholesome deeds related to speech. Work hard with sincerity and make a legitimate living; this is right livelihood.

Right speech, right action and right livelihood all belong to the study of morality. Meditators that practice these three noble paths during an intensive meditation retreat will acquire full points!

(4) Right Effort (*sammāvāyāma*)

Right effort (*sammāvāyāma*) is a mind that strives on resolutely. When effort arises, we will be able to focus our minds on the object and note the object clearly.

(5) Right Mindfulness (*sammasati*)

Right mindfulness (*sammasati*) means to be aware with clarity. If right mindfulness and right effort arise simultaneously, our

minds will not be distracted and as a result will be able to focus clearly on the object.

(6) Right Concentration (*sammāsamādhi*)

Right concentration (*sammāsamādhi*) refers to the mind focusing on the object. Unfortunately, our minds are used to distraction, just like a monkey jumping here and there, so it is not easy to control our minds. Thus, we must train this mind.

Right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration belong to the study of concentration. These are the methods that we use continuously to train our minds during an intensive meditation retreat.

(7) Right View (*sammādiṭṭhi*)

Right view (*sammādiṭṭhi*) means correct opinion. Those that walk on the Noble Eightfold Path will reach *Nibbāna* and become sages. By cultivating vipassana meditation, our wisdom will gradually improve, even though we do not possess the great wisdom that leads us to enlightenment. During the Buddha's era, many disciples were able to let go of everything after listening to the Dhamma and thus they were easily liberated. We may listen and understand the Dhamma,

but we still harbour too many attachments. Our eyes of wisdom are obscured by delusions and so we cannot achieve enlightenment. However, we must persist in our cultivation. This is like sweeping — as we sweep, we will be able to eliminate some dust and if we continue, eventually all the dust or delusions will be swept away. This is the method of the Noble Eightfold Path

(8) Right Thought (sammāsaṅkappa)

Right thought (*sammāsaṅkappa*) means to focus the mind on the object. The mind should be fixed on the object continuously so that it will know the object with utmost clarity.

Right view and right thought belong to the study of wisdom.

FIVE TYPES OF IGNORANCE

If we do not know the Noble Eightfold Path, our minds will be confused and dazed. Ignorance in Pali is “*sammoha*”, with its ultimate (*paramattha*) Dhamma being “delusion” or “ignorance”. Ignorance means lacking understanding of the truth of natural phenomena or a wrong perception of the truth. There are five types of ignorance:

(1) Ignorance of Kamma (kamma-sammoha)

Ignorance of kamma (*kamma-sammoha*) refers to the lack of understanding about the law of kamma and uncertainty about whether it is possible to achieve enlightenment in this life time. Due to the presence of ignorance, no ordinary person can truly know about their kamma. If we continue to cultivate and gradually reduce our level of ignorance, we can experience the wisdom of insight and see our path of cultivation clearly. This is considered good progress.

Many people do not know about kamma, or whether the kamma created is wholesome or unwholesome. For instance, some people believe that killing cows is a form of wholesome kamma, which is definitely not the case. Their misapprehension is due to their ignorance of kamma. Some feel that smoking and drinking liquor is wholesome kamma

and again this mistaken idea is due to their ignorance. Some people are confused and cannot differentiate between right and wrong, good and bad, what is beneficial and what is not, what can be done and what cannot be done. All these confusions are as a result of ignorance of kamma.

(2) Ignorance of Dhamma (Dhamma-sammoha)

“Dhamma” refers to the truth of natural phenomena. Our lives are a result of our minds and bodies functioning together. This is the truth of life. However, most of us are confused and feel that there is a real “I” that is present. Even though the Buddha talks about no-self (*anattā*), ordinary people still feel the presence of “I”. Due to our ignorance, we do not know the truth and this is ignorance of Dhamma (*Dhamma-sammoha*).

All ordinary people have ignorance of Dhamma. Through cultivation, we slowly become aware that our lives are only an interaction between the object and our mind. As we understand more about the truth of natural phenomena, our ignorance of Dhamma will be reduced.

(3) Ignorance of the Characteristics of Existence (lakkhana-sammoha)

The characteristics of existence are divided into own characteristics (*sabhāva lakkhaṇa*) and common characteristics

(*sāmañña lakkhaṇa*). Common characteristics refers to the common characteristics of all Dhamma, i.e. the Three Dhamma Seals — impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and no-self (*anattā*). Own characteristics refers to the individual characteristics of all Dhamma. The mind knows the object, but we mistakenly think that it is “I” that knows. In fact, only the mind and body are functioning and there is no presence of an independent “I”. This is because we do not understand the characteristics of the mind which arise and pass away continuously and consequently are not permanently existing entities.

During sitting meditation, all phenomena that arise from our bodies and minds prove the presence of the Three Dhamma Seals every single moment. However, due to the presence of ignorance, we do not know the characteristics of all Dhamma clearly, resulting in ignorance of the characteristics of existence.

(4) Ignorance of Causality (*paccaya-sammoha*)

Ignorance of causality (*paccaya-sammoha*) means the lack of understanding about cause, condition and effect. When there are causes, there will be effects. For instance, during walking meditation, we raise the foot, push forward and lower the foot. If there is no intention, the foot will not produce the action of

raising. In every single moment, when there are causes, there will be effects that are produced. The mind needs many causes and conditions in order to arise, as does the arising of eye and ear consciousness. If we lack even one of the causes and conditions required, the mind will not arise.

If we do not develop penetrating insight about causes and effects, we will believe that a creator creates the mind and soul. The Buddha explained about the different conditions in the universe and the world in *Paṭṭhāna*. We can examine and comment on it through reading and learning. Among the virtues of the Dhamma, it is mentioned that; “the Dhamma is directly accessible by the wise (*paccattam veditabbo viññūhī*)”, as one can experience it personally through practice.

(5) Ignorance of Nibbāna (Nibbāna-sammoha)

Ignorance of *Nibbāna (Nibbāna-sammoha)* means that one is ignorant of the concept of *Nibbāna*.

Those that have previously experienced *Nibbāna* have become stream-entrants. A stream-entrant will not be born for the eighth time in the desire realm, as their rebirth is limited to a maximum of seven times. Some stream-entrants may only experience rebirths once or twice before attaining Arahantship. For stream-entrants, the door leading to the

four realms of misery are closed, as bad kamma produced in the past will not generate karmic retribution. For one to be reborn in the realms of misery, defilements are required as a condition. If there are no defilements, then the kamma is cancelled out. Just like *Aṅgulimāla*, who killed many people, generating karmic retribution that would lead him to hell, because he attained Arahantship in this life and extinguished all defilements, he no longer needed to be reborn, as for him there was no next life.

The Buddha guides us towards the treasures of Dhamma and this is why we should train ourselves according to the Dhamma, in order to acquire the benefits.

THE SEVEN CONDITIONS THAT PREVENT DECLINE

During the process of training the mind, sometimes we will feel bored and lazy and as a result, our meditation will regress. The Buddha taught us the seven conditions that prevent decline. These are recorded in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya, Sattaka Nipāta*. We should cultivate diligently so that we will not regress in our practice.

(1) Delight in decreased activities (na kammārāmā)

Meditators should develop a delight in a decreased level of activity (*na kammārāmā*). The fewer the chores, the better it is, as too many activities will affect meditation. Sometimes we feel like performing chores such as sweeping the floor and helping out with various affairs etc. If we perform such activities, our minds will not be able to note, which is a condition that results in decline. The Buddha says shaving the head, trimming nails and washing monastic robes are all obstacles, so let go of these chores! During training, there should be less chores.

(2) Delight in not talking (na bhassārāmā)

Meditators should develop delight in not talking (*na*

bhassārāmā), so that their meditation will improve easily. If you like to talk and discuss personal experiences and reports during the interview, this may cause your meditation to regress.

(3) Delight in not sleeping (na niddārāmā)

Meditators that develop delight in not sleeping (*na niddārāmā*), will easily achieve positive progress in their meditation. Four hours of sleep is sufficient for a meditator. However, if one does not sleep the whole night resulting in mental fatigue, it is difficult for meditation to progress further. When the mind is distracted, sloth and torpor will arise, but if the meditator truly notes, sloth and torpor will not arise easily. Meditators that indulge themselves in sleep will regress easily.

(4) Delight in keeping away from others (na saṅgaṇikārāmā)

Meditators that develop a delight in keeping away from other people (*na saṅgaṇikārāmā*) will not regress easily. If the meditator likes to make friends and inquire after people's well-being, this will form an obstacle to meditation.

(5) Resisting the power of cravings (na papicchā)

Meditators without evil desires do not crave things and are soon satisfied. Accordingly they will not regress easily in their cultivation. A calculative and picky person who is not satisfied and mentally craves for many things, does not find it easy to achieve improvement in cultivation. Our goal that justifies the letting go of minor affairs, is the supreme destination of *Nibbāna*.

(6) Not associating with bad companions (na pāpamittā)

Meditators do not associate with bad companions (*na pāpamittā*), as bad company will form an obstacle to cultivation. In the Buddha's era, many disciples cultivated alone and became enlightened alone. Things are simpler with fewer people and undoubtedly disputes arise when there are many people present. Among Dhamma friends we may help one another and good company will provide encouragement when we lack confidence. However in the presence of bad company, we will be disturbed when we make even slight progress in cultivation. It is in this way that we will regress in our cultivation.

***(7) Persistence in cultivation despite minor achievement
(na oramattakena visesādhigamena antarāvosānaṃ
āpajjissanti)***

Meditators do not come to a stop midway in their development because they have attained a minor achievement. (*na oramattakena visesādhigamena antarāvosānaṃ āpajjissanti*). Meditators do not rest as a result of minor achievements. Indolence is the condition that leads to decline, therefore we must have the determination and motivation to say to ourselves; “As long as we have not reached our goals, we will not give up”, even when it means sacrificing our own lives. Those that possess confidence and effort will attain *Nibbāna* and enlightenment easily.

THE PROGRESS OF INSIGHT

We have reached the beginning of insight knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) when we cultivate to the level that we can clearly differentiate mind (*nāma*) and body (*rūpa*). During the early stages of an intensive meditation retreat, we remind meditators to know clearly how the mind and body interact. When we note the functioning of the body and mind and clearly distinguish the difference between *nāma* and *rūpa*,

this is analytical knowledge of body and mind (*nāmarūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*). The meditator knows the mind is *nāma*, the body is *rūpa*. Those that clearly distinguish *nāma* and *rūpa* know what is no-self (*anattā*).

When the meditator sees the functioning process of the body and mind and knows the causes and effects involved, this is knowledge by discerning conditionality (*paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa*). The meditator's knowledge of no-self (*anattā*) becomes deeper, because it is understood that there is no creator among the various phenomena. It is only the causes and effects of *nāma* and *rūpa* that exist.

When the meditator knows cause and effect and sees arising and passing away in actions and feelings, he will understand the truth of “all is impermanent”. This is knowledge by comprehension (*sammasana-ñāṇa*). He will know the Three Dhamma Seals clearly — impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and no-self (*anattā*).

When the meditator acquires knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*) during noting, his mind clearly observes the arising and passing away of the object, regardless of the rising and falling of the abdomen. It can be seen no longer as an individual movement, as it is formed by a series of movements, with every single movement passing away immediately, the moment it arises.

As this phenomena of passing away becomes more prominent, the meditator then clearly notes the vanishing of the object. This is knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*).

When the meditator observes a series of body and mind phenomena that pass away rapidly, he becomes terrified. This is knowledge of awareness of fearfulness (*bhayatu paṭṭhāna-ñāṇa*).

As the meditator becomes terrified of the misery of life, the knowledge of the contemplation of misery (*ādīnavānupassanā-ñāṇa*) is acquired.

After understanding about the misery of life and discovering that all phenomena will deteriorate, the meditator develops disgust and unhappiness. This is knowledge of contemplation of disgust (*nibbidānupassanā-ñāṇa*).

A mind that wishes to be liberated arises as a result of disgust and such a condition is known as knowledge of desire for deliverance (*muñcitukamyatā-ñāṇa*).

To fulfil one's wish for liberation, the meditator will need to cultivate satipatthana in order to attain liberation. This is knowledge of re-observation (*paṭisaṅkhā-ñāṇa*).

In order to be liberated from suffering one becomes

diligent and as a result, effort, satisfaction, zest, tranquillity, concentration and equanimity arise. Under the state of equanimity, it is known as knowledge of equanimity about formations (*saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*). Balance is re-established as mindfulness becomes extremely agile, picking up objects quickly before the mind can be perturbed by pleasantness or unpleasantness. There is a sense of coolness and steadiness in the absence of reactions.

Continuing to note arising and passing away, when the Five Spiritual Faculties and the Five Spiritual Powers are balanced, is evidence that insight wisdom is mature and one will see nibbāna immediately. At this time, knowledge of adaptation (*anuloma-ñāṇa*), maturity knowledge (*gotrabhū-ñāṇa*), path knowledge of stream-entry (*magga-ñāṇa*) and fruition knowledge of stream-entry (*phala-ñāṇa*) will arise sequentially. The meditator sees *Nibbāna* and become a stream-entrant.

In our lives, by cultivating vipassana meditation taught by the Buddha, we can transcend worldliness and attain holiness. May you all attain *maggañāṇa*, *phalañāṇa* and *Nibbāna*.

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Glossary

A

abhiññā: higher powers
abhirati-bhāvanā: to cultivate joyfully
absorption: *jhāna*
addhā-paccuppanna: enduring present
adhigama-saddhā: confidence through attainment
ādīnavānupassanā-ñāṇa: knowledge of the contemplation of misery
adhiṭṭhāna: resolution
agamana-saddhā: confidence of Bodhisattas
aggregate: *khandha*
akusala: unwholesome
ānāpānāsati: mindfulness of breathing
anattā: no-self
anavasesa-bhāvanā: to cultivate with perfection
anuloma-ñāṇa: knowledge of adaptation
anger: *dosa*
anicca: impermanent
anupassanā: contemplation
anusaya: latent tendency
anussati: recollection
arising: *samudaya*
ariyadhana: noble wealth
ariyasacca: noble truth
asankhēyya: incalculable
attention: *manasikāra*
aversion: *byāpāda*
avijjā: ignorance
avinibbhoga: inseparable
awakening factor: *bojjhaṅga*
awareness: *sati*
āyatana: (sense-)sphere

B

bahiddhā: external
bala: power
bhaṅga-ñāṇa: knowledge of dissolution
bhāvanā: development
bhāvanā-maya paññā: knowledge based on mental development
bhayatu paṭṭhāna-ñāṇa: knowledge of awareness of fearfulness
body contemplation: *kāyānupassanā*
bojjhaṅga: awakening factor
byāpāda: ill-will

C

calm: *samatha*
cessation: *nirodha*
cetasika: mental factors
chanda: desire, will
cintā-mayā paññā: knowledge based on thinking
cirakāla-bhāvanā: to cultivate on a long term basis
citta: mind, state of mind
cittassekaggatā: unification of the mind
clearly knowing: *sampajāna*
clinging: *upādāna*
clinging to particular rules and observances: *sīlabbataparāmāsa*
cognition: *saññā*
concentration: *samādhi*
conceptual proliferation: *papañca*
confidence: *saddhā*
consciousness: *viññāṇa*
contact: *phassa*
contemplation: *anupassanā*
craving: *taṇhā*

D

dāna: generosity
defilement: *kilesa*
delusion: *moha*
dependent co-arising: *paṭicca samuppāda*
desire, will: *chanda*
desires: *abhijjhā*
Dhamma: the teaching of the Buddha
dhamma: mental object
dhammānupassanā: contemplation of
dhammas
dhammavicaya: investigation of *dhammas*
dhātu: element
direct path: *ekāyano*
dispassion: *virāga*
distortion: *vipallāsa*
diṭṭhi: view
domanassa: discontent
dosa: anger
doubt: *vicikicchā*
dukkha: unsatisfactory, suffering
dullabha: rare

E

effort: *vāyāma*
ekāyano: direct path
element: *dhātu*
enduring present: *addhā-paccuppanna*
energy: *viriya*
envy: *issā*
equanimity: *upekkhā*
ethical conduct: *sīla*
evil: *pāpa*
existence: *bhava*
external: *bahiddhā, bāhira*

F

faculty: *indriya*
false speech: *musāvāda*

feeling: *vedanā*
flowing Present: *santati-paccuppanna*
form: *rūpa*
formation: *saṅkhāra*

G

generosity: *dāna*
good: *puñña/kusala*
gotrabhū-ñāṇa: maturity knowledge
greed: *lobha*

H

happiness: *sukha*
hindrance: *nīvaraṇa*
hirī: a sense of shame

I

iddhipāda: path to power
ignorance: *avijjā*
ill-will: *byāpāda*
impermanent: *anicca*
indriya: faculty
insight: *vipassanā*
internal: *ajjhata*
investigation: *vīmaṃsā*
investigation of *dhammas*: *dhammavicaya*
iriyāpatha: the postures of the body

J

jhāna: absorption
jhāna-aṅga: factor of absorption
joy: *pīti, somanassa*

K

kāmacchanda: sensual desire
kāyagatāsati: mindfulness directed to the
body
kāyānupassanā: body contemplation
khandha: aggregate



khaṇa-paccuppanna: momentary present
khaṇikā-pīti: momentary rapture
khanti: patience
khuddakā-pīti: minor rapture
kilesa: defilement
knowledge: *ñāṇa*
knowledge based on learning: *suta-mayā paññā*
knowledge based on mental development:
bhāvanā-maya paññā
knowledge based on thinking: *cintā-mayā paññā*
kukkucca: remorse
kusala: wholesome, skilful, good

L

latent tendency: *anusaya*
liberated: *vimutta*
liberation: *vimokkha*
lobha: greed
logical reasoning: *ākāraparivitakka*
loving kindness: *mettā*
lust: *rāga*

M

magga: path
manasikāra: attention
material form: *rūpa*
mano: mind
mental application, initial: *vitakka*
mental application, sustained: *vicāra*
mental factors: *cetasika*
mental object: *dhamma*
mettā: loving kindness
middha: torpor
mind: *citta* or *mano*
mindfulness: *sati*
mindfulness directed to the body:

kāyagatāsati
mindfulness of breathing: *ānāpānasati*
minor rapture: *khuddakā-pīti*
moha: delusion
momentary rapture: *khaṇikā-pīti*
momentary present: *khaṇa-paccuppanna*
muñcītukamyatā-ñāṇa: knowledge of desire
for deliverance

N

nāmarūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa: analytical
knowledge of body and mind
navasīvathikā: the nine cemetery
contemplations
nekkhamma: renunciation
neutral: *adukkhamasukha*
nibbidānupassanā-ñāṇa: knowledge of
contemplation of disgust
nimitta: sign, cause
nirāmisā: unworldly
nirantara-bhāvanā: to cultivate continuously
nīvaraṇa: hindrance
noble: *ariya*
noble truth: *ariyasacca*
noble wealth: *ariyadhana*
non-returner: *anāgāmi*
no-self: *anattā*
nutriment: *āhāra*

O

okappanā-saddhā: confidence that is
unshakable
okkantikā-pīti: wavelike overwhelming
rapture
once-returner: *sakadāgāmi*
oral tradition: *anussava*
ottappa: fear to do wrong

P

paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa: knowledge by discerning conditionality
paccuppanna: present
padaṭṭhāna: a proximate cause
pajānāti: he knows
paññā: wisdom
paññāvimutti: freedom by wisdom
pāpa: evil
papañca: conceptual proliferation
pāramī: perfection
pariyatti: theory
pariyutthāna: obsession
pasāda-saddhā: confidence through belief
passaddhi: tranquillity
 passing away: *atthagama*, *vaya*
 pasture: *gocara*
 path: *magga*
 path to power: *iddhipāda*
paṭicca samuppāda: dependent co-arising
 patience: *khanti*
paṭikkūla: repulsive
paṭipatti: practice
paṭisaṅkhā-ñāṇa: knowledge of re-observation
paṭivedha: insight
paṭṭhāna: foundation, cause
pīti: joy
phala: fruit, result
pharaṇā-pīti: pervading rapture
phassa: contact
 pleasant: *sukha*
 power: *bala*
 presence: *upaṭṭhāna*
puñña: good, meritorious
 purification: *visuddhi*

R

rāga: lust
 recollection: *anussati*
 remorse: *kukkucca*
 renunciation: *nekkhamma*
 repulsive: *paṭikkūla*
 resolution: *adhiṭṭhāna*
 restlessness: *uddhacca*
 right: *sammā*
 right action: *sammā kammanta*
 right concentration: *sammā samādhi*
 right effort: *sammā vāyāma*
 right livelihood: *sammā ājīva*
 right mindfulness: *sammā sati*
 right speech: *sammā vācā*
 right thought: *sammā saṅkappa*
 right view: *sammā diṭṭhi*
rūpa: form

S

saddhā: confidence
sakkacca-bhāvanā: to cultivate with reverence
samādhi: concentration
samatha: calm
sammā: right
sammā ājīva: right livelihood
sammā diṭṭhi: right view
sammā kammanta: right action
sammā samādhi: right concentration
sammasana-ñāṇa: knowledge by comprehension
sammā saṅkappa: right thought
sammā sati: right mindfulness
sammā vācā: right speech
sammā vāyāma: right effort
sampajañña: clear knowledge
sampajāna: clearly knowing

samudaya: arising
saṃvegavatthu: sense of urgency
saṅkhāra: volition, formation
saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa: knowledge of equanimity about formations
saññā: cognition
santati-paccuppanna: flowing Present
sati: awareness, mindfulness
satipaṭṭhāna: presence of mindfulness
sense-sphere: *āyatana*
sensual desire: *kāmacchanda*
sign: *nimitta*
signless: *animitta*
sīla: ethical conduct
sīlabbataparāmāsa: clinging to particular rules and observances
skilful: *kusala*
sloth: *thīna*
state of mind: *citta*
stream-enterer: *sotāpanna*
sukha: happiness
supatiṭṭhita: well established
suta-mayā paññā: knowledge based on learning

T

taṅhā: craving
tevijjā: threefold higher knowledge
thīna: sloth
thought: *vitakka*
torpor: *middha*
tranquillity: *passaddhi*
transgression: *vītikkama*
truth: *sacca*

U

abbegāa-pīti: uplifting rapture
udayabbaya-ñāṇa: knowledge of arising and passing away

uddhacca: restlessness
unification of the mind: *cittassekaggatā*
unity: *ekatta*
unsatisfactory: *dukkha*
unwholesome: *akusala*
unworldly: *nirāmisā*
upatthambhana: encouragement, support
upaṭṭhāna: presence
upekkhā: equanimity
ussāhana: exertion, striving

V

vaya: passing away
vāyāma: effort
vedanā: feeling
vicāra: sustained mental application
vicikicchā: doubt
view: *diṭṭhi*
vikkhitta: distracted
vīmaṃsā: investigation
vimutta: liberated
viññāṇa: consciousness
vipallāsa: distortion
vipassanā: insight
virāga: fading away, dispassion
virīya: energy
vitakka: initial mental application
vītikkama: transgression
volition: saṅkhāra
vāyodhātu: the wind element

W

wavelike overwhelming rapture: *okkantikā-pīti*
wholesome: *kusala*
wisdom: *paññā*
worldling: *puṭhujjana*

Transference of Merits

May all the sponsors and individuals
that help with the publishing of this book,
cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path
and the Seven Factors of Enlightenment.

May they be liberated from suffering
and attain ultimate bliss.

May all the readers attain true benefits from the
Dhamma and cultivate the *satipaṭṭhāna* diligently.

May all sentient beings enjoy
the benefits of the Dhamma.

May all sentient beings share in the merits gained;

May they be free from hatred and suffering,

May they be free from illness and live happily,

May all sentient beings,

Be liberated from the sufferings of body and mind,

And fulfill the attainment of *Nibbāna*.

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!

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