

**ASHIN JANAKĀBHIVAMSA**

(CHANMYAY SAYADAW)

**THE PROCESS  
OF  
INSIGHT MEDITATION**



**Compiled by**

**Tathāgata Meditation Center**

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## Publisher's Notes

We are very happy to have the book "*The Process of Insight Meditation*" published. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Sayadaw Janakābhivarma, also known as Chanmyay Sayadaw, for giving us permission to publish his book.

Sayadaw Janakābhivarma is one of the greatest chief disciples of the late Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw. In 2014, Tathāgata Meditation Center (TMC) invited Sayadaw to visit the center and give a Dhamma talk at the beginning of the September Special Retreat organized yearly. At the age of 88, Sayadaw gave a succinct and impressive talk on insight meditation practice. Before Sayadaw left the center, he had given us a few copies of his book "*Practical Insight Meditation*." We then requested his permission to reprint it.

While preparing to publish the book, we found that Sayadaw also had two more books on insight meditation: "*Vipassanā Meditation Lectures on Insight Meditation*" and "*Vipassanā Meditation Course*." After having read all three books, we realized that each book uniquely contains certain important teachings regarding insight meditation practice. We thought of compiling all the main teachings from these three books into one so we could have a complete version of insight meditation taught by Sayadaw. We then proceed with our plan.

Much to our delight, the book is now completed. Readers will find this book with the following topics:

- What Insight Meditation is.

- How insight meditation is based on the Four Noble Truths taught by the Buddha in his First Sermon and many others. In a nutshell, all Buddha's teachings are about the Four Noble Truths.
- The benefits we can gain from the practice of insight meditation as taught by the Buddha in *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.
- How to practice insight meditation that basically consists of meditation on sitting, on walking, and on all daily activities
- Seven stages of purification along with the thirteen stages of *vipassanā* insight and *Maggaphala* Knowledge and Reviewing Knowledge.

If you find this book helpful with your practice, Venerable Chan-myay Sayadaw, the author, would feel greatly pleased with our attempt in compiling his teachings into a book. This would be a great honor to us, indeed.

With metta,

Tathāgata Meditation Center



*Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato  
Sammāsambuddhassa*

# THE PROCESS OF INSIGHT MEDITATION

## WHAT IS INSIGHT MEDITATION?

If yogis (meditators) do not understand the purpose of *vipassanā* or insight meditation, they will not try wholeheartedly in their noting of mental and physical processes. As a result, they will not be able to discover the true nature of these phenomena to make progress in their practice. Therefore, yogis need to know correctly what *vipassanā* is and how to practice it.

*Vipassanā* is a *Dhamma* term which is a combination of two words “*vi*” and “*passanā*.” Here, *vi* refers to the three characteristics of mentality (*nāma*) and physicality (*rūpa*), i.e. impermanence (*anicca*), un-satisfactoriness or suffering (*dukkha*), and no-soul or no-self or non-ego (*anattā*). *Passanā* means right understanding or realization through deep concentration, or right understanding of these three characteristics of mentality and physicality.

When we practice *vipassanā* meditation or mindfulness meditation, the purpose is to realize the three characteristics of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anattā* of mental and physical phenomena. By fully realizing these three characteristics of mentality and physicality, we can exterminate every defilement such as lust, greed, desire, craving, hatred, ill-will, jealousy, conceit, sloth and torpor, sorrow and worry, restlessness and remorse. Defilements (*kilesas*) are the cause of suffering. As long as we have any of these defilements, we are sure to experience many kinds of suffering

(*dukkha*). Having destroyed all these defilements, we then attain deliverance or the cessation of suffering.

## BENEFITS OF INSIGHT MEDITATION

There are seven benefits of this mindfulness meditation or *vipassanā* meditation as taught by the Buddha in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the Discourse on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. But before I deal with them, I want to explain briefly the four aspects of Buddhism.

### Four Aspects of Buddhism

They are as follows:

1. Devotional aspect of Buddhism
2. Ethical aspect of Buddhism
3. Moral aspect of Buddhism
4. Practical aspect of Buddhism (including the experiential aspect)

#### 1. Devotional Aspect

The devotional aspect of Buddhism means "rites and rituals," chanting of *suttas* and *parittas*, offering of flowers and incense as well as offering of food and robes. When we perform such good deeds, we do so with *sraddha* (in Sanskrit) or *saddha* (in Pāli).

The word *saddha* is difficult to translate into English. There is no English equivalent for the Pāli word "*saddha*." If we translate *saddha* as "faith" or "confidence," they do not cover the real sense of "*saddha*." We cannot find a single word in English, which can give a complete meaning of *saddha* to me. *Saddha* can be taken to mean *belief through right*

*understanding of the Dhamma*, the teachings of the *Buddha*.

When we perform religious ceremonies, we do it with a belief in the Triple Gem (*ti-ratana*) including the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma* (his teachings), and the *Sangha* (the Order of Buddhist monks). For the *Buddha*, we hold the view that the *Buddha* has eradicated all defilements through his supreme enlightenment and, therefore, is worthy of respect (an *Arahant*). He was *Buddha* not because he learned the *Dhamma* from any teacher but he had strived and was enlightened by himself. In this way we believe in the *Buddha*.

The *Buddha* taught us the way leading to a happy and peaceful life and to the cessation of all kinds of sufferings. So for the *Dhamma*, we believe that if we follow his teaching or his way, we are sure to live happily and peacefully and to get rid of suffering. For this reason, we believe in the *Dhamma*. In the same way, we believe in the *Sangha*. When we say *Sangha*, it mainly means the *Ariya-sangha*, the Noble *Sangha* who have attained any one of the four stages of the Path (*Magga*). But in the general sense, it also refers to the *Sammuti Sangha* (those who are still striving to eradicate the defilements). Thus, we pay homage to the Triple Gem (*ti-ratana*): the *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and *Sangha*.

We also believe that by chanting *suttas* and *parittas* as taught by the *Buddha*, we perform meritorious deeds, which will be conducive to the cessation of suffering. Performing these meritorious deeds forms the devotional aspect of Buddhism. However, we should not be content with this devotional aspect if we want to enjoy the essence of Buddhism and be free

from all kinds of suffering. Therefore, we must proceed to practicing the higher aspects.

## 2. Ethical Aspect

The second aspect of Buddhism is the ethical aspect. This deals with discipline for our actions, speech and thoughts according to the Buddha's teachings.

There are many teachings concerned with this ethical aspect. By following these teachings, we can lead a happy life in this existence as well as in the existences to come. However, they alone cannot help us get rid of suffering totally. The ethical aspects of Buddhism are:

- Refraining from all kinds of evil deeds
- Performing meritorious or good deeds

These are the ethical aspects of what the Omniscient *Buddha* has taught us and they are the exhortations of all the *Buddhas*. If we follow these teachings, we can lead a happy and peaceful life because Buddhism is founded on the Law of Cause and Effect. If we refrain from all kinds of evil deeds, we will not suffer any bad results.

There is the *Mangala Sutta* (*Sutta-nipata*, verses 258-269) with 38 kinds of blessings. In the *Sutta*, there are many ethics which enable us to live happily and peacefully if we follow them. Some are as follows:

- Living in a suitable place, that is to say, where we can be prosperous in every aspect.
- Having done meritorious deeds in the past. (We should do meritorious deeds as much as possible at present, too.)
- Cultivating correct mind-set by watching our deeds, speech, and mind properly.

That means, we should keep our deeds, speech, and thoughts free from defilements. In this way, we have many aspects of ethics to follow so that we can live happily and peacefully.

I want to remind you of the *Ambalatthika Rahulovadasutta* (*Majjhima- Nikāya, Sutta No.61*) which may be familiar to you. In that *Sutta*, the *Buddha* encouraged his son, *Rahula*, who was a seven-year-old novice (*samanera*), to live properly, happily and peacefully. The *Buddha* taught *Rahula* to stop and reflect whenever he intended to do something.

*"Rahula, you must be mindful of what you are going to do and consider whether this deed will be harmful to yourself or to others. By considering thus, if you find that this deed will be harmful to yourself or to others, you must not do it. But if this deed will not be harmful to yourself or to others, you may do it."*

In this way, the *Buddha* instructed *Rahula* to consider what is to be done, to be aware of what is being done, and to reflect on what has been done. So this ethic too is the best way for living happily and peacefully in our daily life. There are innumerable aspects of ethics conducive to a happy and peaceful life. If we try to understand these ethics and follow them, we are sure to live a happy and peaceful life although we cannot yet get rid of all our suffering.

### **3. Moral Aspect: Precepts**

Though these ethics are very conducive to a happy and peaceful life, we should not be contented merely with this aspect of Buddhism. We should proceed to the higher aspect of Buddhism, the moral aspect. In this third aspect, we must observe precepts, five, eight or ten... The ten precepts are for novices (*samaneras*)

while the 227 rules are for monks (*bhikkhus*). In daily life, we must observe at least the five precepts. If we can observe the five precepts perfectly, our morality is purified. When moral conduct is purified, we can practice meditation, either *samatha* or *vipassanā* meditation. Based on the purification of moral conduct, we can concentrate on the object of meditation and gain deep concentration, whereby the mind is clear, serene and happy.

#### **4. Practical Aspect: Purification of Mind**

Next, we have the fourth aspect, i.e. the practical aspect of Buddhism. We must practice meditation to purify our minds so that we can deliver ourselves from defilements and, as a result, attain the cessation of all kinds of suffering.

Here, we practice two kinds of meditation which make up the practical aspect of Buddhism. One is *samatha* meditation that enables us to attain deep concentration and the other is *vipassanā* meditation that enables us to attain the cessation of suffering through the realization of mentality and physicality in their true nature.

With *samatha* meditation, our mind can only be purified while it is engaged in the meditative practice. When it is not, defilements will attack it again. With *vipassanā*, we purify our mind through the realization of the mind-body processes in their true nature. This realization is known as insight knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāna*) which helps reduce defilements such as greed, anger, delusion and so on. *Vipassanā* insight does not uproot mental defilement (*kilesa*) once and for all. However, no defilement can arise again from the physical or mental object that was noted by means of

*vipassanā*. For example, if we enjoy tasty food without mindfulness, we may get attached to its taste. Thus, the attachment to that very taste lies dormant in us (*ārammaṇānusaya*). So the desire for that taste will come again when conditions are met. On the other hand, if we note that taste and know it as it is without identifying it as “mine” or “I,” we won’t get attached to that taste, then the desire for that taste will never come back in the future. In this sense, it is said that certain aspects of defilement, which have been destroyed by means of *vipassanā*, will not be able to attack us again.

We can exterminate all defilements if we have enough *saddha* and put forth greater effort in our practice until we attain the Fourth Path, Arahantship. When the defilements have been totally destroyed and the mind is completely purified, there will not arise any *dukkha* or suffering. Suffering ceases to exist.

The Buddha stressed the second type of meditation, *vipassanā* meditation. If we apply mindfulness to all of our mind-body processes, we are sure to gain the following seven benefits and attain the cessation of suffering.

## **Seven Benefits of Mindfulness Meditation**

In the introductory passage of the *Maha Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* given in *Kuru* province, the Buddha explained the seven benefits which yogis can gain through their own experience of *Dhamma*.

### **1. Purification of Beings**

The first benefit is purification of beings (*sattana visuddhi*). When a person practices mindfulness

meditation, he can purify himself from defilements.

If he is mindful of any mental or physical process and his concentration is good enough, at the moment of deep concentration on the mental or physical process, his mind is purified or free from all kinds of hindrances, all kinds of mental defilements (*kilesa*). The Pāli word "*kilesa*" may be familiar to yogis. It is translated as defilements by Buddhist scholars. *Kilesa* are of ten main kinds:

- *Lobha*: greed, desire, lust, craving, attachment and romantic love.
- *Dosa*: hatred, anger, ill-will or aversion.
- *Moha*: delusion or ignorance.
- *Ditṭhi*: wrong view or false view.
- *Māna*: conceit.
- *Vicikiccha*: skeptical doubt.
- *Thīna-middha*: sloth and torpor. Sleepiness is also included. Sloth and torpor are "old buddies" of yogis and those who listen to the Dhamma.

One time in an interview, all yogis reported the experience: "I am tired, I feel sleepy." At the beginning of the practice, we have to struggle because we have not yet become accustomed to the task of mindfulness meditation. This is a critical stage of meditation, but it will not last long. It may last for two or three days. After three days, yogis will be all right. They will not find it too difficult to overcome these "old buddies," which are obstructing their progress in concentration as well as insight.

- *Uddhacca-kukkucca*: restlessness and remorse.
- *Ahirika*: moral shamelessness. It is the mental

state that arises when one is not ashamed of evil deeds in speech, thought and action.

- *Anottappa*: moral fearlessness. It is the mental state that arises when one is not afraid of evil deeds in speech, thought and action.

These are the ten kinds of defilements, which must be abandoned or removed from our minds by means of *vipassanā* meditation. The *Buddha* said that if one practices mindfulness meditation, one can be purified from all defilements. That means he can attain Arahantship and is completely purified from all kinds of defilements.

This is the first benefit. So to purify one's mind, one has to practice mindfulness or *vipassanā* meditation.

## **2. Overcoming Sorrow**

The second benefit is to overcome sorrow and worry. If yogis note their worry carefully, it would come under control even if it does not disappear right away. Yogis will be totally free from worry and sorrow when they attains the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage of enlightenment by developing continuous mindfulness. This is how mindfulness helps one to totally overcome sorrow and worry.

## **3. Overcoming Lamentation**

Regarding this benefit, the commentary on the *Mahā-Satipatṭhāna Sutta* mentions a story as a proof that one can overcome sorrow, worry and lamentation by means of mindfulness meditation. *Paṭācārā*, a woman whose husband, two sons, parents and brothers had died within a day or two, went mad due to sorrow, worry and lamentation. She was overwhelmed by sorrow over the death of the people she loved.

One day, the Buddha was giving a discourse to an audience at *Jetavana* Monastery near *Sāvatthi*. Then this mad woman, who was going for a stroll, went into the monastery naked and saw the audience listening to the discourse. She approached the audience. An old man, who was very kind to the poor woman, took off his upper robe then threw it to her and said, "Dear daughter, please use my robe to cover your body." At the same time the Buddha said to her, "Dear sister, be mindful." Because of the soothing voice of the Buddha, the mad woman came to her senses. She then sat at the edge of the audience and listened to the discourse. The Buddha, knowing that she had come to her senses, aimed his discourse at her. Listening to the discourse given by the Buddha, the woman's mind gradually absorbed the essence of the teachings. When her mind was well prepared to realize the Dhamma, the Buddha expounded the Four Noble Truths:

1. *Dukkha-sacca* (the Truth of Suffering)
2. *Samudaya-sacca* (the Truth of the Cause of Suffering)
3. *Nirodha-sacca* (the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering)
4. *Magga-sacca* (the Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering).

The Fourth Noble Truth includes advice on how to be mindful of whatever arises in our mind and body as it really is.

*Paṭācārā*, having come to her senses, rightly understood the technique of mindfulness, applied it to whatever arose in the mind-body processes and to whatever she heard. As her mindfulness gained

momentum, her concentration became deeper and stronger. Because her concentration became deep, her insight and penetrating knowledge of the mind-body processes became powerful, and she gradually realized both the specific characteristics and common characteristics of mental and physical phenomena. Thus she progressively experienced all the stages of insight knowledge while listening to the discourse and attained the First Path, *Sotāpatti-magga*.

Through her own personal experience of the *Dhamma* by means of mindfulness meditation, the sorrow, worry and lamentation she had had totally disappeared from her mind, and she became a "new woman." Thus, she overcame her worry, sorrow and lamentation through the *magga* enlightenment, gained by means of mindfulness meditation.

The lesson mentioned by the commentary on the *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* is not only for the people during the time of the *Buddha*, but also for people today. We can overcome sorrow and worry if we practice mindfulness meditation to attain some high stages of insight. Yogis are also included in those people who can overcome sorrow and worry by means of mindfulness meditation.

#### **4. Overcoming Physical Suffering**

The fourth benefit is overcoming physical suffering. Physical suffering is known as *dukkha* in this particular case.

Physical suffering such as pain, stiffness, itchiness, numbness and so on can be overcome by mindfulness during meditation retreats as well as in daily life. During meditation, yogis can overcome pain, stiffness,

numbness, itchiness and all kinds of unpleasant physical sensations by observing them very attentively and closely. Therefore, yogis need not be afraid of pain, stiffness or numbness because these are "good friends" who can help yogis to attain the ultimate cessation of suffering. If yogis observe the pain energetically, precisely and closely, it may seem more severe because they know it more and more clearly. When yogis have comprehended the unpleasantness of this painful sensation, they will not identify it with themselves because the sensation is perceived as just a natural process of mental phenomena. Yogis are not attached to the painful sensation as "I" or "mine" or a "person" or a "being." In this way, they can eradicate the wrong view of a soul, a self, a person, a being, an "I" or a "you" (*sakkāya-ditṭhi* or *atta-ditṭhi*).

When the root of all kinds of defilements, i.e. *sakkāya-ditṭhi* or *atta-ditṭhi*, has been destroyed, yogis are sure to attain the First Path or first stage of enlightenment, *Sotāpatti-magga*. Then they can proceed with their practice to attain the three higher stages of the Path and Fruition. That is why I say that unpleasant physical sensations such as pain, stiffness and numbness are yogis' "good friends" who can help them to attain the cessation of suffering. In other words, this numbness or any painful sensation is a good condition leading to the door of *nibbāna*.

When yogis feel pain, they should feel lucky. Pain is the most valuable object of meditation because it attracts the "noting mind" to stay with it for a very long time. The "noting mind" can concentrate on it deeply and be absorbed in it. When the mind is completely absorbed in the painful sensation, yogis will

no longer be aware of their bodily form or themselves. It means they are realizing the *sabhāva-lakkhaṇa* or the individual characteristic of the painful sensation (*dukkha-vedana*). Proceeding with the practice, yogis will be able to realize the common characteristics of mental and physical phenomena, that is to say, the nature of impermanence, suffering, and no-soul or no-self. Then that will lead them to the progressive *vipassanā* insight until the cessation of all kinds of sufferings. So yogis should feel lucky if they have pain.

In Burma, some yogis, having no more pain at the third stage of insight, were not satisfied with their practice because they missed the pain that helped improve their concentration. So, they even purposely created pain by folding their legs under themselves and pressing them hard. They were looking for their "good friend" who could lead them to the cessation of suffering.

## 5. Overcoming Grief

The fifth benefit is overcoming of grief. Here, grief means mental suffering. Mental suffering is known as *domanassa* in Pāli. When yogis feel unhappy, they should observe that unhappiness insistently, attentively and very closely as "unhappy, unhappy." If they feel depressed, that depression must be observed very attentively and perseveringly. When mindfulness becomes powerful, the unhappiness and depression will cease to exist.

In a full retreat, yogis can do away with grief when mindfulness is developed effectively. Mental suffering is exterminated, done away with, by mindfulness. So the overcoming of mental suffering is the fifth benefit of mindfulness meditation.

So *dukkha* is physical suffering and *domanassa* is mental suffering. When yogis have some experience in the meditation practice, they can overcome their mental and physical suffering to a large extent. Actually, even the *Buddha* and *arahants* cannot overcome physical suffering permanently before *parinibbāna*. However, their minds are by no means afflicted with any kind of suffering. This is why they are said to be free from mental and physical suffering even before *parinibbāna*. As for yogis, they can overcome or reduce mental suffering to some extent by noting it carefully. Their minds also won't be afflicted with physical pain at the moment when they are aware of pain as pain without identifying it as "I" or "mine". In this sense, yogis are also considered to be free from mental and physical sufferings. Moreover, there is evidence that some yogis were totally cured of some chronic diseases during their intensive practice. For sure, yogis will no longer be afflicted with any kind of suffering when they can develop mindfulness and reach the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage of enlightenment.

## 6. Enlightenment

The sixth benefit is the attainment of enlightenment, the Path and Fruition (*magga* and *phala*). In Buddhism, there are four stages of enlightenment which a yogi can attain through his mindfulness meditation after he has completed all the thirteen *vipassanā* insights. The first stage is known as *sotāpatti-magga*. The second stage is known as *sakadāgāmi-magga*. Third stage is known as *anāgāmi-magga*. And the fourth stage is known as *arahatta-magga*. All these four stages of enlightenment can be attained when yogis have thoroughly realized *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (suffering), and *anatta*

(non-self) of bodily and mental phenomena.

Theoretically it's easy to explain the attainment of these four stages of enlightenment but in practice it's very difficult to achieve. These difficulties must be overcome with perseverance. When yogis devote enough time and effort to their mindfulness meditation, they will attain at least the First Path, *Sotāpatti-magga*.

A yogi who has attained *Sotāpattimagga-ñāṇa*, the first stage of the enlightenment, is called a *sotāpanna*. He has uprooted *sakkāya-ditṭhi* (the illusory sense of a person, a being, a self or a soul), *vicikicchā* (skeptical doubt about the Triple Gem), and *sīla-bbata-parāmāsa ditṭhi*, the wrong view that rites and ritual can lead one to the cessation of suffering, *Nibbāna*, as some people believe. Moreover, a *sotāpanna* will never kill any beings, never take what is not given by the owner, always refrains from all sexual misconducts such as adultery, abstains from telling lies all the time, and never takes any intoxicants. These five precepts are naturally observed by the *sotāpanna* and are, therefore, called *ariya-kanta-sīla* (the sīla cherished by Noble Ones). That is why a *sotāpanna* will never be reborn in the four woeful states after he or she dies.

## 7. Nibbāna

Then finally yogis realize *Nibbāna* by mindfulness meditation. *Nibbāna* means the cessation of all kinds of suffering. When mental suffering as well as physical suffering cease to exist then that state is known as *Nibbāna*.

Suffering is all about mind and body and is generated by mental defilements, mainly by delusion and attachment (*avijjā, taṇhā*). All kinds of suffering,

mental and physical, cease to exist when we have eradicated all mental defilements by means of mindfulness meditation. So the attainment of the cessation of suffering, *Nibbāna*, is the seventh benefit of mindfulness meditation.

The Buddha began the *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* with the above-mentioned seven benefits of mindfulness meditation. So yogis are sure to acquire these seven benefits if they put strenuous effort into their practice.

We are lucky because we believe in the Buddha who is enlightened and who teaches the right way which leads to the cessation of suffering. But we should not be complacent. In the Pāli texts, there is a simile:

Suppose, for example, there is a great pond full of clear water with many lotus flowers in it. A traveler, whose hands are dirty, knows that if he washes them in the pond, they will be clean. But though he knows that, if he continues his journey without going to the pond to wash his hands, they are still dirty.

Then the question was asked in the text: "If he passes the pond and his hands remain dirty, who is to be blamed for that, the pond or the man?" Obviously, the man. Though he knew he could wash the dirt away in the pond, he did not do it. Therefore, he is to be blamed. The Buddha teaches us the way of mindfulness. If we know the way but do not practice this mindfulness meditation, we will not get rid of suffering. If we do not get rid of suffering, who should be blamed? The Buddha, the way of mindfulness, or us? Yes, we should be blamed for it. If we practice this mindfulness meditation with strenuous effort, we will purify ourselves from all defilements and get rid of suffering by obtaining these seven kinds of benefit of

mindfulness meditation.

Yogis should remember these seven benefits theoretically and experience them practically.

## **INSIGHT MEDITATION PRACTICE**

After the Buddha had explained the seven benefits of mindfulness, he continued to explain the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. Therefore, when we practice *vipassanā* meditation, we have to follow the *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the discourse on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

## **The Four Foundations of Mindfulness**

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness are:

- *Kayānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*, mindfulness of body,
- *Vedanānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*, mindfulness of feeling,
- *Cittānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*, mindfulness of consciousness,
- *Dhammānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*, mindfulness of *dhamma*.

### **1. Mindfulness of Body**

*Kayānupassanā Satipaṭṭhāna* means contemplation of the body or mindfulness of any bodily process as it occurs.

### **2. Mindfulness of Feeling**

Mindfulness of feeling or contemplation of sensation is known as *Vedanānupassana Satipaṭṭhāna*. Here we need to explain the two kinds of sensation or feeling:

#### **1. Kāyika-vedanā**

## 2. *Cetasika-vedanā*

If the feeling or sensation arises depending on physical processes, it is known as *kāyika-vedanā*. We may translate it as physical feeling or sensation. If the feeling or sensation arises depending on mental processes, it is called *cetasika-vedanā*. We may render it as mental feeling or mental sensation. Actually, every feeling, every sensation is a mental process, not a physical one.

Feeling or sensation is of three types:

1. Pleasant feeling or sensation (*sukha-vedanā*)
2. Unpleasant feeling or sensation (*dukkha-vedanā*)
3. Neutral feeling or sensation (*upekkha-vedanā*)

Pleasant feeling or pleasant sensation is called *sukha-vedanā* in Pāli. *Sukha* means pleasant and *vedanā* means feeling or sensation. Unpleasant sensation or unpleasant feeling is called *dukkha-vedanā*. *Dukkha* here means unpleasant. Neutral feeling or neutral sensation is called *upekkhā-vedanā*. *Upekkhā* means neutral, neither pleasant nor unpleasant.

When pleasant feeling, unpleasant feeling or neutral feeling arises, yogis must be mindful of it as it is. Some yogis think that unpleasant feeling should not be observed because it is unpleasant. Actually, all kinds of feeling must be noted very attentively as they really occur. If we do not observe or note the pleasant or unpleasant feeling or sensation, we are sure to become attached to it or repulsed by it.

In the beginning of the practice, yogis usually feel mostly the unpleasant physical sensations as well as the unpleasant mental feelings. When they feel discomfort in their body, then unpleasant sensation arises. That

unpleasant sensation is called *kāyika-vedanā* because it arises depending on physical processes.

It is natural for yogis to be afraid of unpleasant physical sensation which they experience in their meditation practice. But painful sensation is not a process that should be feared. Pain is a natural process that should be thoroughly understood by being aware of it as it really occurs. When yogis can observe pain successfully with persistent effort, they can realize its true nature - the specific and general characteristics of pain. Then the penetrating insight into the true nature of that pain or unpleasant sensation will lead yogis to the higher stages of insight. Eventually, they could attain enlightenment by developing the mindfulness of this painful sensation.

On the other hand, when yogis have a pleasant feeling or sensation, they may become attached to it. If yogis practice strenuously and perseveringly, their concentration will become deep and strong. When their concentration becomes deep and strong, they feel happy and experience rapture because their mind is, at that moment, quite free from all defilements such as greed, hatred, delusion, conceit and so on. The persevering yogis have attained a very good stage of insight because their mind is now calm, tranquil and serene. If the yogis enjoy it and are satisfied with what they are experiencing, it means they are attached to it. As a result, they cannot progress to the higher stages of insight. Such an experience can happen in the earlier or immature part of the fourth stage of insight.

So, yogis should observe and be mindful of whatever experience they have encountered at this stage. They must not analyze it or think about it. Instead, they

must be aware of the experience as it really occurs in order to realize that this experience of the mental process or mental state is subject to impermanence. Whenever yogis note, they find that the experience is not everlasting. When the "noting mind" becomes constant, sustained, and powerful, it penetrates into the nature of the experience, i.e. the mental state. The mind begins to realize that the experience has disappeared. Whenever it arises, the mind notes it, and again it disappears. Yogis then realize that this pleasant feeling is impermanent (*anicca*) through their own experience of the *dhamma*. Here, *dhamma* means mental as well as physical phenomena. Because yogis have realized that the pleasant feeling or sensation is impermanent, they will not be attached to it. Attachment will not arise when yogis rightly understand the true nature of pleasant experience.

With this understanding, yogis just continue to observe whatever they are experiencing at this stage. They will not become attached to it if they observe their experience very attentively and energetically. When yogis notes it attentively and persistently, that happiness or tranquility or serenity will not be manifested in his mind very distinctly. What they realize at that moment is just feeling that arises and passes away. Then another feeling arises and passes away. Yogis will not differentiate between pleasant and unpleasant feelings; thereby, they become detached from their experience and proceed to practice for a higher stage of insight. Only then, can they go beyond this stage of insight.

## **Chain of Cause and Effect**

When attachment (*tañhā*) does not arise, grasping (*upādāna*) will not arise. When grasping does not arise, that is to say, when one is fully enlightened, his or her actions will no longer form any *kamma*, wholesome or unwholesome. The action that is caused by grasping is known as *kamma-bhava*. This may be wholesome or unwholesome. Wholesome bodily action is *kusala kaya-kamma*. Unwholesome bodily action is *akusala kaya-kamma*. Wholesome verbal action is *kusala vaci-kamma*. Unwholesome verbal action *akusala vaci-kamma*. Wholesome mental action is *kusala mano-kamma*. Unwholesome mental action is *akusala mano-kamma*. These actions or *kamma* arise through grasping which is the result of attachment to pleasant or unpleasant feeling or sensation.

When any bodily, verbal or mental action is carried out, it becomes a cause. This cause has its result which may occur in this life or future lives. So in this way, a being is reborn again through his wholesome or unwholesome action. That *kamma* is formed by grasping, which has attachment as its root. Attachment, in turn, is conditioned through feeling or sensation, *vedana*. In this way, a being has to be reborn in the next existence to experience a variety of suffering because he does not observe his pleasant feelings.

If yogis fail to observe feelings, they will get attached to them. This attachment will bind them to the Chain of Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) or to the torturous cycle of births and death. That is why the *Buddha* teaches us to be mindful of any kind of feeling or sensation whether pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

### **3. Mindfulness of Consciousness**

The third Foundation of Mindfulness is *Cittānupassana Satipaṭṭhāna*, which means mindfulness of consciousness (*citta*) and the mental states (*cetasika*) that arise with consciousness. According to the *Abhidhamma*, every "mind," so to say, is composed of consciousness and its concomitants. Concomitants here mean its associates. Consciousness never arises independently. It arises together with its associates or mental states. In short, whatever "mind" or whatever consciousness or mental state arises, it must be mindfully noted or observed as it really occurs. This is *Cittānupassana Satipaṭṭhāna*.

Whatever the mental state may be, it must be noted as it really is. Therefore, when yogis have consciousness with lust or attachment, they must be mindful of it as it really is. If yogis have consciousness with anger, they must note it as consciousness with anger. Consciousness with anger can be noted as "angry" or "anger" in accordance with the *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. When mindfulness is powerful, anger will disappear. Yogis will then realize that anger is not everlasting; it arises and passes away. By observing anger, yogis have two kinds of benefit:

1. Overcoming of anger.
2. Realization of the true nature of anger (the arising and passing away of anger or the impermanent nature (*anicca*) of anger).

Anger is one of the mental states that can lead yogis to the cessation of suffering if they note it with mindfulness.

## 4. Mindfulness of Dhamma

The fourth Foundation of Mindfulness is *Dhammānupassanā Satipaṭṭhāna*, which means contemplation of *dhamma* or mindfulness of *dhamma*. Here *dhamma* includes many categories of mental or physical phenomena.

The first category is the five *nīvaraṇa* (hindrances):

1. *Kāma-cchanda*: Sense desire - desire for visible objects, sounds, odors, tastes and tangible objects,
2. *Byāpāda*: Anger or ill-will,
3. *Thīna-middha*: Sloth and torpor, sleepiness, mental dullness, heaviness,
4. *Uddhacca-kukkucca*: Restlessness of mind, and remorse about the failure to have done good and to have avoided evil.
5. *Vicikicchā*: Doubts

So long as the mind is defiled, yogis cannot realize any mental process or physical process. Only when the mind is well concentrated on the object of meditation (either mental or physical phenomena), is it free from all kinds of hindrances. Thus, the mind becomes clear and penetrative, so penetrative that it realizes the true nature of mental and physical phenomena as they really are.

So whenever any one of the five hindrances arises in yogis' mind, they must be aware of it. For example, when yogis hear a sweet song from outside and do not note it, they may get attached to the song; they may want to hear and enjoy it repeatedly. That desire to listen to the song is sense desire – *kāma-*

*cchanda*. Therefore, when yogis hear any sweet song, they must note "hearing, hearing." Still, they may be overwhelmed by the song if their mindfulness is not powerful enough. If yogis know that this sense desire for the song can be an obstacle to their progress in meditation, they will note it as "desire, desire" until it has been destroyed by strong mindfulness. When the mindfulness becomes constant and strong, that desire will disappear. The desire disappears because it has been observed very attentively and energetically. When yogis observe or are mindful of their sense desire as it really is, making a mental note "desire, desire," they are following strictly what the Buddha taught in the *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. Being mindful in this manner is *Dhammānupassana Satipaṭṭhāna* or the contemplation of mind objects, i.e. contemplation of the hindrances (*nīvaraṇas*).

*Thīna-middha*, sloth and torpor, actually mean sleepiness. Sloth and torpor are a very "old buddy" of yogis. When yogis feel sleepy, they are likely to enjoy it. Usually when any other pleasant sensation arises, they are able to observe it. But when sleepiness arises, they are unable to be aware of it because they like it. That is why sloth and torpor or sleepiness is an "old buddy" of yogis. It makes them stay longer in the cycle of rebirth. If they are unable to observe sleepiness, they cannot overcome it. Unless yogis have realized the true nature of sloth and torpor or sleepiness, they will be attached to it and enjoy it.

When yogis are sleepy, they should make more strenuous effort in their practice. That means they must observe more attentively, energetically and precisely so that they can make their mind more active and alert.

When the mind becomes active and alert, it will be free from sleepiness. Then yogis can overcome sleepiness.

*Uddhacca-kukucca* is the fourth hindrance. *Uddhacca* is restlessness or distraction, *kukucca* is remorse. Here *uddhacca* means distraction of the mind, restlessness of the mind, wandering of the mind. When the mind wanders or thinks about something else instead of noting the object of meditation, it is *uddhacca*. When the mind wanders, yogis must be aware of it as it really is. At the beginning of the practice, yogis may not be able to observe it. They do not even know that the mind is wandering. They think the mind is staying with the object of meditation, i.e. the abdominal movements or respiration. When yogis are aware that the mind has wandered, they must note "wandering, wandering" or "thinking, thinking." That means *uddhacca-kukucca* is observed.

The fifth hindrance is *vicikicchā*, doubt. Yogis may have doubt about the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, the *Sangha* or about the technique of meditation. Whatever doubt arises, it must be very attentively observed. Yogis must be mindful of it as it really is. This is known as *Dhammānupassana Satipaṭṭhāna*, mindfulness of *dhamma*.

So these are the four Foundations of Mindfulness:

1. *Kayānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*, contemplation of body or physical phenomena,
2. *Vedanānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*, contemplation of feeling or sensation,
3. *Cittānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*, contemplation of consciousness together with its concomitants or associates,

4. *Dhammānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*, contemplation of dhamma.

## The Four Noble Truths

All the teachings of the Buddha are about the Four Noble Truths which the Buddha taught in his first sermon, *Dhammacakkappavatana Sutta* or "The Discourse of Turning the Wheel of the Dhamma." So this *vipassanā* meditation or the Four Foundations of Mindfulness has its basis in the Four Noble Truths.

The Four Noble Truths are as follows:

1. *Dukkha-sacca*, the Truth of Suffering;
2. *Samudaya-sacca*, the Truth of the Cause of Suffering;
3. *Nirodha-sacca*, the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering;
4. *Magga-sacca*, the Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering.

### **1. *Dukkhasacca: Nāma and Rūpa***

The Truth of Suffering, *Dukkha-sacca*, refers to mental and physical phenomena, *nāma* and *rūpa* in Pāli. Both *nāma* (mental) and *rūpa* (physical) arise dependent on their conditions and, therefore, are called conditioned mentality and conditioned physicality.

For example, take the consciousness of seeing. When we see anything visible, consciousness of seeing is present. It arises dependent on four conditions: eyes, visible object, light and attention (*manasi-kāra*). These four conditions cause the consciousness of seeing to arise.

All of these conditions must be present for any seeing to arise. Although we have eyes but when the eye comes in contact with a visible object, and there is no light, the consciousness of seeing won't arise and we can't see. If we have eyes, eye contact, a visible object, and light, but no attention to the object, we simply won't see it. In this case, the consciousness of seeing will only arise when there is also attention.

Because the consciousness of seeing has four conditions, it is known as conditioned phenomenon. In Pāli, anything conditioned is called *saṅkhata*. Any consciousness is conditioned, as are all other mental and physical phenomena. It arises and then it passes away. Why does it pass away? Because it arises. All conditioned things, *saṅkhata*, have the nature of arising and passing away and so have the characteristic of impermanence (*anicca*).

Whereas, the cessation of suffering, *Nibbāna*, is unconditioned. There are no conditions or no cause for *Nibbāna*. That which is unconditioned is called *a-saṅkhata*. It is also known as *a-karaṇa* in Pāli. "Karaṇa" means a condition, and the prefix "a" means no. So *a-karaṇa* means "unconditioned." *Nibbāna* always exists and stands on its own. Because it doesn't arise, it does not pass away. Therefore, *Nibbāna* is not impermanent. It is permanent. When the continuous process of mental and physical phenomena cease to be experienced, *Nibbāna* is experienced.

In his first sermon, the Buddha taught that *Dukha-sacca*, the Truth of Suffering, is *pariññeyya*. It means the truth that must be thoroughly realized. All mental and physical phenomena arise and then pass away. They are impermanent (*anicca*). What is impermanent

is suffering (*dukkha*). That's why the Buddha said that both mental and physical phenomena (*nāma*, *rūpa*) are the Truth of Suffering. This truth is to be fully understood and realized.

### **Three kinds of *Dukkha***

Here, I should mention very briefly the three general kinds of *dukkha*, suffering, according to the Buddhist *Abhidhamma*.

- The first one is *dukkha-dukkha*.
- The second is *viparinnāma dukkha*.
- The third is *saṅkhāra-dukkha*.

*Dukkha-dukkha* is a very common suffering. A few examples would be such things as pain, stiffness, itching, numbness, any illness or physical suffering. Others might be unhappiness, sadness, sorrow, worry or all mental suffering. These states of suffering are very conspicuous and common to all living beings. So they are called *dukkha-dukkha*, suffering of suffering.

The second type is *viparinnāma-dukkha* (the *dukkha* of change). The Buddha regards the so-called happiness as *viparinnāma-dukkha* because it doesn't last very long. It arises and then passes away changing into unhappiness and suffering. Due to this nature of changing into suffering, the Buddha said happiness is *viparinnāma-dukkha*. This change can occur suddenly or somewhat quickly.

Finally, there is *saṅkhāra-dukkha*. *Saṅkhāra* in this case has the same meaning or sense as *saṅkhata*. That is, something that arises due to conditions or causes. So, all mental and physical phenomena are *saṅkhata*

and *sarikhāra*. They are the effects of their causes, their conditions. They arise and very instantly pass away and so are unsatisfactory. Why do they pass away? Again it is because they arise. They are subject to passing away. This suffering of incessant arising and passing away, *sarikhāra-dukkha*, is common to everything that is conditioned.

Thus, mental and physical phenomena (*nāma*, *rūpa*), which are conditioned things, are *Dukkha-sacca*. This Truth of Suffering is to be thoroughly realized (*pariññeyya*) by yogis who want to be rid of suffering.

The first two kinds of suffering (*dukkha-dukkha* and *viparināma-dukkha*) can be experienced and readily understood in daily life even without meditation practice. Yet, unless we practice *vipassanā* meditation, insight meditation, we are unable to thoroughly realize *sarikhāra-dukkha*, the suffering of arising and passing away. *Sarikhāra-dukkha* is very profound, too deep to be realized through theoretical knowledge or analysis. Only with practical, experiential knowledge of the *dhamma* acquired by *vipassanā* meditation, are we able to realize it as the suffering of arising and passing away. As the *Buddha* said, "A person who wishes to attain the cessation of suffering, *Nibbāna*, must rightly understand and realize the true nature of mental and physical phenomena (*nāma* and *rūpa*)."

This is why we practice insight meditation (*vipassanā*). The primary purpose of *vipassanā* meditation is to realize the impermanence or the arising and passing away of mental and physical phenomena, *sarikhāra-dukkha*. When we are unable to realize this, we mistakenly take these phenomena to be permanent. Based on this wrong belief in the permanency of mind

and body, we foster the idea of an ego, a self or a soul, a person, a being, and so on.

When we cling to the idea of a person, a being based on the ignorance of the true nature of body/mind process, we then develop desire or wanting to get something. We may want to be a prime minister, a president, or a wealthy person. This desire arises dependent on the idea that there is a person, a self or a soul. This desire or greed causes many kinds of suffering. When one has a desire to be president, one has to strive for it in so many different ways. Then there is suffering. When one does become president, there is more suffering. There are so very many more things one must now deal with.

## **2. *Samudaya-sacca: Taṇhā***

In this way, the desire and greed to be president is the cause of suffering. Similarly, when one has other desires such as to have a good house, a good car, or good looks, one has to work to acquire them in so many different ways, both wholesome and unwholesome. Again, there is suffering. Desire, attachment, and greed are the causes of suffering. They are called *Samudaya-sacca* in Pāli, the Truth of the Cause of Suffering.

This *Samudaya-sacca* arises dependent on the ignorance of *Dukkha-sacca*, the true nature of *nāma* and *rūpa*. When one is unable to thoroughly realize the true nature of mental and physical phenomena, *Dukkha-sacca*, one is sure to have many negative mental states such as desire, attachment, craving, greed, anger, hatred, conceit and so on. The word *taṇhā* in Pāli is conveyed in English by such terms as greed, desire, craving, attachment, grasping, clinging, and so on. According to the Buddha, once one has

*tañhā* in the mind, suffering will surely follow.

*Tañhā* is *Samudaya-sacca*, the Truth of the Cause of Suffering. It arises dependent on the ignorance of *Dukkha-sacca*, mental and physical phenomena. If one rightly understands the true nature of *nāma* and *rūpa*, one is able to remove the idea of a person, a being, a self or a soul. So in overcoming this idea of a personal entity, desire as well as greed, craving or any of the others do not arise. Then there is no longer suffering.

As the Buddha said in his first discourse, *Samudaya-sacca* is *pahatabba*, the truth that is to be completely removed or abandoned. In completely removing *tañhā*, one is able to experience the cessation of suffering because its cause has been completely destroyed.

### **3. *Nirodha-sacca: Nibbāna***

The Buddha mentions *Nirodha-sacca*, the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering, as *sacchikātabba*. This term means the truth that is to be experienced.

To experience the cessation of suffering, *Nirodha-sacca* or *Nibbāna*, one needs to completely uproot *tañhā*, *Samudaya-sacca*. To accomplish this, one needs to rightly understand and thoroughly realize *Dukkha-sacca*, the Truth of Suffering of mental and physical phenomena.

How can one do this? To rightly understand mental or physical phenomenon, one needs to observe them as they really are. Only when realizing these dual mental and physical phenomena as they really are, will their true nature be rightly understood. Awareness and mindfulness of whatever arises in the body and mind are essential.

If one is able to develop this awareness, gradually

the mindfulness becomes continuous, constant, sharp and powerful. This then causes the mind to deeply concentrate on all mental or physical phenomena as they arise. Constant and continuous mindfulness is the cause of deep concentration. When the mind is deeply concentrated on all observed objects, insight knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) will arise. This *ñāṇa* realizes and rightly understands the true nature of the mental states and physical phenomena.

When that insight realizes the true nature of mental and physical phenomena, attachment to them is overcome. Desire or greed for them does not arise. *Taṇhā* is uprooted by rightly understanding this true nature. One will then experience the cessation of suffering because the cause has been destroyed. One will experientially understand the cessation of suffering, *Nirodha-sacca*, the truth that must be experienced (*sacchikātabba*).

That is why mindfulness of whatever arises in our body and mind as it really occurs is important. This is in accordance with the Discourse of the *Mahasatipatṭhāna Sutta*, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, as expounded by the Buddha.

#### **4. Maggasacca: The Noble Eightfold Path**

By observing and being aware of all mental and physical phenomena, the mindfulness of *Maggasacca*, the Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering, arises. Because of this mindfulness, the Noble Eightfold Path becomes well developed.

As you know, *Maggasacca* is none other than the Noble Eightfold Path which consists of the eight factors:

*sammā ditṭhi*, right understanding, *sammā sankhappa*, right thought, *sammā vācā*, right speech, *sammā kammanta*, right deed, *sammā ājīva*, right livelihood, *sammā vayama*, right effort, *sammā sati*, right mindfulness, and *sammā samādhi*, right concentration. All of these eight factors of the Path combined are called *Maggasacca*, the Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering. It must be fully developed (*bhavetabba*).

One must be mindful of whatever is arising in body and mind. When mindfulness becomes constant, continuous and sustained, it is concentrated deeply on the object. But to achieve this mindfulness, effort must be made. Only by putting forth strong mental effort, is one able to gain awareness of whatever is arising in mind and body. That necessary effort is right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*). Being continuously mindful is right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*). Because of this powerful and constant mindfulness, right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) develops. These three factors are, therefore, causally linked. Right effort leads to right mindfulness which, in turn, causes right concentration to arise.

But sometimes, the mind doesn't stay with the object, either a mental state or physical process. It wanders or thinks about something else. Then one of the mental factors, right thought (*sammā-saṅkhappa*), arises together with mindfulness to keep the mind on the object. In this way, the mind is brought to a deeper concentration on any object it observes.

There are three other factors of the Path that enhance and help the above-mentioned mental factors to properly perform their functions. They are: right speech (*sammā-vācā*), right deed or right

action (*sammā-kammanta*), right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*). Before starting meditation, one has to observe precepts such as the five, eight, nine, or ten precepts for lay people, or 227 rules of the *vinaya* for monks. By observing the precepts, one refrains from unwholesome deeds (*sammā-kammanta*), from unwholesome speech (*sammā-vācā*) and from improper livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*). In this way, by fully observing the precepts, one is endowed with the three factors of morality, *sīla*.

Because morality is purified, the mind is purified from evil actions and speeches. One can develop deep concentration and feel happy. Rapture and tranquility are experienced. With this state of mind, concentration on any object of meditation comes more easily and deeply. So these three factors of *sīla*, right speech, right deeds, right livelihood, help the mind to focus and to concentrate deeply on the objects at hand. They form an important foundation from which right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration arise.

In this way, the observing mind becomes more and more deeply concentrated on mental states or physical processes. There then arise many stages of knowledge or insights (*vipassanāñāṇa*). This progressive realization is the maturing process of the important Path factor, that is to say, Right Understanding (*sammā-ditṭhi*) of the true nature of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering or dissatisfaction (*dukkha*), and no soul or no self (*anatta*) of phenomena. These three characteristics are understood directly and experientially by insightful yogis.

Then, the yogi realizes, "This is just a natural process of mentality and physicality. It's not a person, a soul, a self nor a being." They uproot the idea of a

person, a being, a self or a soul, which is the cause of all mental defilements (*kilesas*). When they have completely removed the idea of a person, a being, a self, a soul (*sakāya-ditṭhi* or *atta-ditṭhi*) then suffering will cease to exist or won't arise at all.

So, yogis cultivate and develop the Noble Eightfold Path, *Magga-Sacca*, by being mindful of all mental states and physical processes as they really occur. Mindfulness is the key. Because of it, yogis are able to fully develop this Noble Eightfold path.

### **Summary**

Every teaching of the Buddha is based on the Four Noble Truths. The path to freedom is found in these Four Noble Truths. The development of *Magga-sacca*, Noble Eightfold Path or insight meditation, by yogis will lead them to a thorough realization of *Dukkha-sacca*, the Truth of Suffering (which refers to mind and matter in the ultimate sense). With this realization, they abandon *Samudaya-sacca*, the Truth of the Cause of Suffering (attachment). When there is no *Samudaya-sacca*, the cause, there is no effect, no suffering. Suffering ceases to exist. Yogis then discover and directly experience the cessation of suffering, *Nirodha-sacca* or *Nibbāna* for themselves. This is how yogis have to understand and apply the Four Noble Truths to their *vipassanā* meditation practice.

## **Practical Insight Meditation**

The principle of *vipassanā* meditation or mindfulness meditation is to observe, to watch, or to be mindful of all mental or physical phenomena as they really are. This mindfulness meditation is simple but very effective

in achieving the cessation of suffering. It is not easy, however. Therefore, before practicing it, there are some preparatory stages yogis should go through.

## **Preparatory Stages**

The first stage, which the Pāli scriptures mention, is when yogis have spoken contemptuously or in jest or malice to or about a noble one (*puggala*), who has attained some state of sanctity or enlightenment, then they should apologize to the *Buddha* and to that noble one. If the noble one is not available or is deceased, they should make apology through their meditation teacher.

The second stage is that yogis should entrust themselves to the Buddha who teaches the technique of *vipassanā* meditation. By entrusting themselves to the Buddha, they can go through their practice happily and peacefully. Though yogis may have unwholesome or dreadful visions in their meditation, they will not fear them because they have entrusted themselves to the Buddha. Also yogis have to place themselves under the guidance of their meditation teacher so he can frankly instruct them without any hesitancy. Otherwise, he may be reluctant to guide them even though they have some defects in their practice.

In addition, yogis must take the precepts to purify moral conduct, should practice the four protective meditations, and remember the preliminary instructions for meditation.

## **Purification of Moral Conduct**

In the teachings of the Buddha, there are three kinds of training: Training in moral conduct (*sīla*), training in concentration (*saṃādhi*), and training in wisdom

(*paññā*). Purification of moral conduct is a prerequisite for yogis to achieve progress in their practice.

When they practice moral conduct, it means they have restraint in speech and actions by observing at least five precepts or eight precepts as for lay people or 227 precepts (*pātimokha*) as for monks. When they abstain from unwholesome actions and speech, they observe these precepts completely. Only then will they be free from a guilty conscience and be able to concentrate during meditation practice.

In a meditation retreat, yogis are required to observe the eight precepts as follows:

1. To abstain from killing.
2. To abstain from stealing and taking things not given.
3. To abstain from sexual misconduct.
4. To abstain from telling lies.
5. To abstain from taking intoxicants.
6. To abstain from taking food after noon.
7. To abstain from dancing, singing, music and unseemly shows, from the use of garlands, perfumes and unguents, and from things for beautifying and adorning.
8. To abstain from using high and luxurious seats and beds.

The first precept, abstention from killing, means refraining from unwholesome actions. The second precepts, abstention from stealing and illegal possession of things not given by the owner, means refraining from unwholesome actions. It is the same with the third and fifth precepts, i.e. abstention from

sexual misconduct and intoxicants. The fourth precept, abstention from telling lies, is refraining from false and unwholesome speech. Therefore, if yogis refrain from unwholesome speech and actions, their moral conduct (*sīla*) is fully observed.

During a meditation retreat, yogis have to observe the eight precepts so that they can have more time to devote to their meditation.

The sixth precept means abstention from taking food after noon (until dawn the next morning). Although yogis must refrain from taking any kind of food during these hours, they can take honey and certain kinds of fruit juice such as orange and lemon juice.

To observe the seventh precept, yogis must refrain from dancing, singing, playing and listening to music and from adorning themselves with anything which will beautify them such as using flowers, perfumes and so on.

The eighth precept is abstention from high and luxurious beds and seats. The third of the eight precepts refers to abstention from any kind of sexual contact, and not just from sexual misconduct.

These are the eight precepts yogis have to observe during a meditation retreat. By refraining from these activities, their speech and actions are pure. So, observing eight precepts means purification of moral conduct, *sīla-visuddhi*. *Sīla-visuddhi* is a prerequisite for yogis to make progress in practice. When moral conduct is purified, yogis never feel guilty. When they do not feel guilty, their mind becomes steady; thereby, they can attain deep concentration of mind (*saṃādhi*) which, in turn, gives rise to insight wisdom (*paññā*).

## **Four Protective Meditations**

After taking precepts, yogis should develop the four protective meditations for a few minutes. These four are:

1. Recollection of the *Buddha's* attributes,
2. Development of loving-kindness towards all living beings (*metta*),
3. Reflection upon the loathsome nature of body,
4. Reflection on the unavoidability of death.

When yogis recollect the attributes of the *Buddha*, they can select one of the nine attributes as the object of their meditation and reflect on it. Here *Araham* is the first attribute. *Araham* means the Buddha who is worthy of honor because he has completely destroyed all mental defilements and attained to the cessation of all kinds of *dukkha*. So he lived in peace and bliss and happiness. Yogis recollect this *Araham* attribute thinking of the achievement of the *Buddha*. When they recollect this attribute or other attributes of the *Buddha*, they feel happy and brave to face any kind of *dukkha* or suffering in the course of their meditation as well as in their daily life. This can be done in about two minutes.

Then they should develop *metta*, the feeling of loving-kindness towards all living beings, wishing them peace, happiness, and freedom from all kinds of mental and physical suffering, *dukkha*. This is an unconditional love. As a result, they feel happy and tranquil, their mind easily concentrated on any object of meditation. This can be done in about five minutes.

Next yogis reflect upon the loathsome nature of

the body, thinking this body is full of impurities and repulsiveness like blood, pus, phlegm, intestines, and so on. The result is they are detached from this body to a certain extent because they find it loathsome or repulsive. This can be done in about two minutes.

Then yogis should reflect upon the certainty or unavoidability of death. Life is uncertain, death is certain. Life is precarious and death is sure. Everyone who is born is subject to death. So all men are mortal. In this way, they think about the surety of death for every living being. They can arouse strenuous effort in their practice by thinking, "I'll have to practice this meditation strenuously before I die."

This is what the Buddhist meditational texts mention as the preliminary stages for both the *samatha* and *vipassanā* yogis. They are neither compulsory nor indispensable. But the texts mention they should be done. Among these four protective meditations, recollection of the *Buddha's* attributes and development of loving-kindness towards all living beings (*metta*) are the most important things for yogis to pacify their distracted mind and also to practice meditation happily and peacefully.

### **Preliminary Instructions for Meditation**

#### **Note mindfully:**

- Note attentively and precisely. It is important to note precisely every mental and physical process which needs to be realized in its true nature. Superficial noting may even make the mind more distracted.
- Note the present, live in the present. The fundamental principle is to observe whatever is

arising at the very moment it arises. If yogis are looking for something instead of noting present phenomena, the mind will be in the future or in the past.

**Labeling:** In the beginning of the practice, when the concentration is weak, the mind has the tendency to skip over things. This can be checked by using the device of "labeling" which is mentally saying along with the noting of the object, i.e. "rising, rising" when observing the rising movement of the abdomen, or "falling, falling" when observing the falling movement of the abdomen. If yogis do not label, they will tend to miss the object.

Labeling is not meditation and is, therefore, not really necessary. It is helpful in the beginning, however. It helps the noting mind to concentrate on the object. Do persist with the labeling until mindfulness becomes very attentive and sharp, concentration deep, and insight penetrating naturally. Labeling is a "good friend" of mindfulness. Unless it becomes a hindrance, do not drop it.

**Choiceless Awareness:** To begin their sitting meditation, yogis may choose the movement of the abdomen as an object for their observation. However, when they are mindful of their mind-body process, they do not need to choose any mental or physical process as the object of their meditation. Let the "noting mind" or the "observing mind" choose the object by itself, i.e. the abdominal movement, a feeling of happiness, or a painful sensation. If yogis choose any mental or physical process as the object of meditation, it means they are attached to it.

Though yogis try to focus their mind on the abdominal movement, the mind does not stay with it if the pain is more distinct or more prominent. The "noting mind" will go to the pain and observe it because the more distinct feeling takes the mind toward it very strongly. When pain disappears through attentive and close awareness, the mind will choose another object which is more distinct. If an itchy sensation on the back is more distinct or more pronounced than the abdominal movement, the mind will go to the feeling of itchiness and yogis are to observe it as "itching, itching, itching." When the itchy sensation has disappeared by means of strong mindfulness and deep concentration, the mind will choose (for example) the abdominal movement as its object because it is more distinct than the other objects. If happiness is more distinct than the abdominal object, the mind will choose happiness as its object and yogis observe it as "happy, happy, happy." So yogis need to choose the object when there is no obvious object but should observe the object that the mind chooses.

**See It As It Is:** The Omniscient Buddha pointed out that by being mindful of mind-body processes as they really are, yogis are able to rightly understand their intrinsic nature. When yogis want to understand something as it really is, they should observe it, watch it as it really occurs without analyzing it, without logical reasoning, without philosophical thinking and without pre-conceptions. Yogis should be very attentive and mindful of it as it really is.

For example, when we do not observe a watch attentively and carefully, we cannot understand it as it is. If our observation is combined with such preconceived

ideas as, "I have seen such a watch before and its brand name is Omega," then, as soon as we see the watch, we will take it to be an Omega. Why? Because we do not observe it attentively and closely. We have used the preconceived ideas when we saw it and the preconceived ideas lead us to the wrong conclusion regarding the watch. If we put the preconceived ideas of "Omega" aside and just observe it attentively and closely, we will understand it as it is: this is a Seiko, made in Japan, with an international time chart, etc.

In the same way, when yogis want to rightly understand the mind-body processes in their true nature as they really are, they must not analyze them or think about them. Yogis must not reason or use any intellectual knowledge or any preconceived ideas. They must leave them aside and pay bare attention to what is happening to the mind-body phenomena. Then, they can see the mind-body processes as they really are. When their body feels hot, yogis should note that feeling of heat as heat. When the body feels cold, they should note it as cold. When yogis feel pain, they should note it as pain. When they feel happy, they should note that happiness as happiness. When they feel angry, they should note that anger as anger. When they feel sorrow, they should be mindful of it as sorrow. When they feel sad or disappointed, they should be aware of their emotional state of sadness or disappointment as it is.

Each and every mental or physical process must be observed as it really occurs so that yogis can rightly understand it in its true nature. That right understanding will lead them to ignorance removal. When ignorance has been removed, then yogis do not take the mind-body processes to be a person, a being, a soul or a self. If

they take these mind-body processes to be just natural processes, there will not arise any attachment. When the attachment has been destroyed, they are free from all kinds of suffering and have attained the cessation of suffering. So, mindfulness of mind-body processes in their true nature is the way leading to the cessation of suffering. That is the way our Omniscient Buddha delivered the discourse on "The Four Foundations of Mindfulness".

In this discourse, the Omniscient Buddha teaches us to be mindful of mental and physical phenomena as they really are. There are many ways by which we have to be mindful of the mind-body processes but they can be summarized as follows:

1. Mindfulness of bodily process (*kayānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*)
2. Mindfulness of feeling or sensation (*vedanānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*)
3. Mindfulness of consciousness (*cittānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*)
4. Mindfulness of mind-objects (*dhammānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*).

## The Practice

The guiding principle in *vipassanā* practice is to observe whatever is arising at the moment of its occurrence. By noting the present phenomenon, one lives in the present. So practicing *vipassanā* meditation or mindfulness meditation is to observe, to watch, or to be mindful of all mental or physical phenomena as they really are.

*Vipassanā* or insight meditation is, above all, an

experiential practice based on the systematic and balanced development of a precise and focused awareness. By observing moment-to-moment mind-body processes from a place of investigative attention, insight arises into the true nature of life and experiences. Through the acquired insights or wisdom, one is able to live more freely and relate to the world around with less clinging, fear and confusion. Thus one's life is lived with clear comprehension and wisdom. This mindfulness meditation is very simple but very effective in achieving the cessation of suffering.

## **Sitting Meditation**

When doing sitting meditation, yogis choose a comfortable position. The most common one is cross-legged. Body should be balanced. Keep back straight. Do not sit leaning against a wall or other support. This weakens right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*) and will make yogis feel sleepy.

Sitting on raised and compressed cushions causes the body to bend forward. This will make yogis feel sleepy, too. Venerable Sāriputta and Moggallāna did not use any cushion to meditate!

In the beginning of the practice, beginners may be confused as to what to note. The late Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw instructed that yogis may start their sitting meditation observing the rising and falling movement of the abdomen, mentally labeling "rising, rising" when observing the outward movement and "falling, falling" when observing the inward movement. Yogis may put their hand on the abdomen if they are unable to feel the movement. This is the primary or home object meaning that when there is no prominent object, yogis

observe this object, or after finishing noting other objects, they come back to this object.

This is in accordance with the chapter on the four elements in the *Mahā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. The movement of the abdomen is *vāyo-dhātu* (wind element). Each element has its individual or specific characteristics:

- The earth element (*pathavī-dhātu*) has hardness and softness as its specific characteristics;
- The water element (*apo-dhātu*) has fluidity and cohesion as its specific characteristics;
- The fire element (*tejo-dhātu*) has heat and cold as its specific characteristics;
- The wind element (*vāyo-dhātu*) has motion, support and vibration as its specific characteristics.

When yogis are mindful of and realize the movement of the abdomen, they can be said to rightly understand the real nature of the wind element.

Breathing must be normal. Do not take quick or deep breaths in order to feel the abdominal movement clearly. Yogis will get tired doing it this way. Relax the mind and body and keep noting the object as long as possible.

If there is a gap between "rising" movement and "falling" movement, fill it with the noting "sitting" and/or "touching." Noting "sitting" means mentally seeing the whole sitting body and "touching" the touch between two body parts such as two hands or between the bottom and the floor.

In Burma, when yogis are instructed to note the sitting posture, some find out the form of the body

such as the shoulder, the leg, the eyes, the nose, the head. Because they are looking for the form of the body they couldn't note the sitting posture. But the Buddha didn't instruct us to note these forms of the body. What the Buddha taught us is to note the upright posture of the body as sitting, because he would like us to realize the supporting nature of *vayo-dhatu*, the wind element. When we sit, there is air, inside and outside the body, which supports the body to sit in an upright position. To realize the nature of the supporting wind element, the Buddha instructed us to note sitting. So yogis should focus their mind on the upright posture of the body and note it as sitting.

Sometimes some yogis misunderstand this instruction. What they note is the contact between the body and the floor or the seat. That is contact or touching, not sitting. Therefore, even though the commentary to the text explains that sitting means the bending posture of the lower body and the upright posture of the upper body, I instructed yogis to be aware of the upright posture of sitting, the upper body, because if yogis are aware of the bending posture of the lower body, their mind tends to go to the contact or touching. Touching means any point of the touching sensation which is more distinct than the other points. It is another object different from sitting. It can be used with sitting in some cases, however.

When yogis are able to note the rising and falling of the abdomen very well and the concentration is somewhat good, the mind tends to go out and wander. This happens because the mind can easily note the two movements of the abdomen and there is gap between the movements. If yogis think they have a

little bit of time between the falling movement and the rising movement of the abdomen, they must fill that gap with more objects so as to make the mind too busy to have any time to go out. Yogis should add either the sitting posture or the touching sensation or both. After yogis have noted the falling movement, they note "sitting" or "touching" or both before they start to note the rising movement. The number of additional objects depends on how wide the gap is. So, the noting, in this case, should be like "rising, falling, sitting" or "rising, falling, touching" or "rising, falling, sitting, touching." Noting this way, yogis will have better and deeper concentration.

When yogis are able to note these four objects constitutively and successively, they must do all four, not two groups separately. Some yogis misunderstand, sometimes they note "rising, falling; rising, falling," sometimes "sitting, touching; sitting, touching." Only when yogis are not able to note all the four constitutively, they should note their rise and fall separately, then sitting, touching. If the abdominal movement is good for yogis to note, they should stay with it. If it's good for some reason, yogis can note the sitting and touching sensations alternately: "sitting, touching; sitting touching."

Sometimes some yogis very easily feel their heartbeat when concentrating on the movement of the abdomen. It is because, when they note the rise and fall of the abdomen, they make too much mental effort breathing. That effort makes the heart beat more obvious and yogis confuse the movement of the abdomen with the heartbeat. For such yogis, the sitting posture and touching sensation are good at the

beginning of the practice. Later on, yogis will be able to note all these four objects very well, systematically and methodically.

In short, if yogis have no problem with the heartbeat, they should continue to note the rise and fall of the abdomen. If they think they need more objects, they should note the sitting posture and touching sensation, too. So they note "rising, falling, sitting, touching;" "rising, falling, sitting, touching." In other words, between the falling movement and the rising movement, yogis should insert the two objects, sitting and touching, so that their mind doesn't have any time to go out. The point is to make the mind quite occupied with the objects.

Although yogis are taught to begin with the watching of the rise and fall of the abdomen, they must not be attached to it. This is not the only object, but only one of many objects of *vipassanā* meditation.

While observing the movement of the abdomen, if sounds are heard, note "hearing, hearing." At first it is not easy but yogis have to note as much as they can. Only when mindfulness of hearing is sufficient, may yogis return to the primary object of meditation (e.g. "rising" and "falling").

### **Noting Mental and Emotional States**

At the beginning of the practice, the mind wanders very often. Whenever the mind wanders, yogis should follow the mind and observe it. If yogis are thinking about their family affairs, that thought must be observed as it is, making a mental note "thinking, thinking, thinking." After the initial thought has disappeared, they should resume their noting of the movements of the abdomen

as usual, "rising, rising," "falling, falling."

If yogis note any mental or emotional state, it must be done somewhat quickly, energetically, and precisely so that the noting mind is continuous and becomes powerful. Then the thinking will stop by itself.

Note the thoughts quickly as if yogis are hitting them with a stick: "thinking, thinking, thinking" or "sleepy, sleepy, sleepy" or "happy, happy, happy" or "sad, sad, sad," not slowly as "thinking ... thinking ..." or "sleepy...sleepy ..."

Unless yogis can note the wandering thought, they do not have a hope of concentrating the mind. If the mind is still wandering, it just means that yogis still do not note energetically enough. This ability is indispensable.

If they are aware of the content of the thought, it will tend to go on. If they are aware of the thought itself, then thinking will cease.

Do not be attached to thinking and theory. Insight comes with deep concentration, not with logical or philosophical thinking.

Eagerness and worry about getting concentration can cause distraction. Curiosity and expectation definitely delay progress. If they arise, do not dwell on them. Give them sharp awareness. Drowsiness can be overcome by putting in more effort. Labeling activities noted also helps. Note sleepiness energetically by doing it in quick repetition.

Do not open eyes while sitting meditation. If yogis do, concentration is broken.

Do not be contented with one hour sitting. Sit as long as possible.

## **Do not shift posture.**

When the abdominal movements are more gradual and clear, yogis may increase the frequency of the noting: "rising, rising, rising," "falling, falling, falling." If the movements are complicated, just note them generally.

## **Pain and Patience**

After sitting for some time, pain may arise. It does not have to inform yogis of its coming. Yogis need to observe it with the right attitude. Pain is observed not to make it go away but to realize its true nature. So do not wish it to disappear when noting it.

Another aspect of the practice is that yogis have a tendency to change position when having unbearable sensation such as pain. Yogis should be patient with the pain and note it attentively and methodically as long as possible. Yogis should not change posture instantly but should proceed with mindfulness of the pain.

If beginners are unable to bear the severe pain, they may change their posture. But before doing so, they must note the intention to change posture as "intending, intending." Then they should change their posture very, very slowly being aware of all the movements and actions involved in the changing of posture. After having changed their posture, yogis should then return to the abdominal movement, the primary object, and note as usual. Yogis can change only once in a sitting.

For those yogis who have pain but could sit through the sitting hour without changing position, they should do so since it is not very beneficial for them to change their posture in this case at all. If the pain becomes

unbearable, yogis should get up and practice walking meditation. That's better because when yogis change the position then their concentration is broken. Even though yogis continue to sit after changing position, they can't get deep concentration.

When pain comes, it should be noted directly but ignored only if it becomes overly persistent. It can be overcome by deep concentration, which is brought about by continuous mindfulness.

When concentration is good, pain is not a problem. It is a natural process no different from "rising, falling." If yogis observe it attentively, the mind will be absorbed in it and discover its true nature.

If there is intense pain while walking, one should stop occasionally and take note of it.

Even though the pain is noted when it occurs during sitting or walking meditation, it may not disappear. Yogis need to have patience. "Patience leads to *Nibbāna*," as a Burmese saying goes. Be patient with anything and everything that stimulates your mind. Pain is a good object since it keeps the mind on it. With persistent noting, mindfulness and concentration will then develop. That is why, in some cases, when the pain disappears, some yogis may cry over it for their friend has gone away. Some yogis even induce pain by folding their legs beneath them. Do not evade it, it can also lead yogis to *Nibbāna*.

If yogis want to achieve something in their meditation, they will have to put more effort into their practice. Actually, the energy to note is always there. The trouble is yogis are reluctant to use it. A positive mental attitude is very important. Don't be pessimistic. If yogis are optimistic, they offer themselves an

opportunity. Then there is satisfaction in every situation and yogis will also have less distraction.

If yogis wakes up at 3.00 A.M., they must get up to meditate. They should not wait until wake-up time as scheduled during retreat. That is not the right attitude.

If yogis are sleepy on waking up, get up and walk. Otherwise, they will enjoy sleeping.

If yogis are sleepy during the day, walk quickly back and forth in the sun.

A human being has a great variety of strengths and the ability to do many things. We must STRIVE, not TRY!

If yogis put in enough effort, they can develop progressive *vipassanā* insight culminating into Paths and Fruitions.

One week of practice is just a learning process. Real practice begins only after that. Every sitting must be preceded by an hour of walking meditation. This may be reduced when not in retreat and the time available is limited. When changing from sitting to walking practice, be mindful and make all the movements very slowly with full awareness. Mindfulness and concentration should not be disrupted.

## **Walking Meditation**

As to walking meditation, the Buddha laid emphasis on awareness of the movement of the foot while walking. The commentary to the discourse *Mahā-satipatṭhāna Sutta* explains how walking meditation should be practiced. Yogis should take the walking meditation seriously. By merely doing walking meditation, one can reach Arahantship as in the case

of Venerable Subhadda, the last *Arahant* disciple of the *Buddha*.

When practicing walking meditation, yogis must not close their eyes. Instead, the eyes must be half-closed (that means, relax and keep your eyes normal) and yogis should look down on the floor or ground about four to five feet in front of their foot. Yogis must not bend their heads too low. If bending their heads too low, they will soon feel tension in their neck or shoulders. They may also have a headache or dizziness.

Yogis must bring their attention to the movement of the foot during walking meditation since, in walking meditation, the movement of the foot is more distinct than the abdominal movement. Labeling or naming is not so important as the observation of the movement of the foot. Note the movement with sharp awareness.

When following the movement of the foot, yogis must not lift the feet too high. Yogis must not look at their foot. If they look at their foot, they cannot concentrate well on the movement. Nor must they look around here and there. Once they look around, the mind goes with the eyes and the concentration breaks. Yogis may have a tendency or desire to look around when they feel that someone is coming towards them or passing in front of them. That tendency or desire to look around must be very attentively observed and noted as "tendency" or "wanting to look" until it has disappeared. When the tendency or desire has disappeared, yogis won't look around. Then they can maintain their concentration. So, please be careful not to look around in order to maintain concentration and make further progress in building up concentration by walking meditation.

The hands should be locked together in front or behind. If yogis feel they should change the position of their hands, they may do so mindfully. First, yogis should note the intention to do as "intending, intending." Even then, they should change the position very slowly and every action and movement involved in the act of changing must be observed. They must not be unmindful of any movement or action. After they have changed the position of their hands, they should continue to note the movements of the foot as before.

The objects to be noted are increased gradually. That is, the number of parts of the step observed is gradually increased. At the beginning, for beginners as well as for experienced yogis, in every walking, the first ten minutes should be spent noting "left step" and "right step." But about after two days or three days of meditation, the experienced yogis should begin walking meditation with just five minutes noting "left" and "right." Though yogis make a mental note "left" and "right," their mind must follow the whole process of the movement of the foot very attentively and closely. And to do that, they have to slow down their stepping. Yogis must walk slowly so that they can be aware of the movement of the foot simultaneously, closely and precisely.

Then yogis may watch the step in two parts about another ten minutes. It means that yogis observe the lifting part and the dropping part of the step. So yogis have to note "lifting, dropping;" "lifting, dropping." But if yogis think they are able to note three parts, they can skip the noting of two parts and go straight to the noting of three parts. That means after yogis have noted the left and right steps for ten minutes, they pick

up three parts of a step: "lifting, pushing, dropping;" "lifting, pushing, dropping." Awareness of two parts of a step is not very good because if right after yogis lift the foot they drop it down, then they have to do the two actions at the same place. Actually, after yogis have lifted the foot, they have to push it forward to a certain extent or for a certain distance before they drop it down. Without noting the pushing movement after the lifting movement, yogis have skipped one process of the pushing movement. In this case, the middle part of the step is lost. So if yogis think they are able to note three parts, they should note them as: "lifting, pushing, dropping;" "lifting, pushing, dropping."

The step must be short. It should be about the length of a foot so that yogis can put their foot down very well and note it very precisely and closely. If the step is long, before yogis put the foot well on the ground or on the floor, then unconsciously they have already lifted the heel of the other foot. Then they note lifting of the heel of the other foot and lose awareness of the previous dropping. That is because the step is long. So yogis' step must not be long. It should be about the length of the foot so that they can concentrate their mind well on its movement very precisely, and also to have a clear experience of its movement. Then after yogis have put down their foot very well, established it in its place, they begin to lift the heel of the other foot. Then they can note it very well and can be aware of the very beginning of the lifting movement. So the stepping should be about the length of a foot, not longer than that. Yogis must be careful.

Afterward, yogis note five parts: "lifting," "pushing," "dropping," "touching," "pressing." When they drop

their foot down, it touches the ground, the floor, or the carpet, they can note it as "touching." In this way, yogis can note "lifting, pushing, dropping, touching." When they are about to lift the heel of the other foot, they have to press the front floor a little bit. Yogis must be aware of that pressing. After yogis have noted the pressure of the foot, their mind goes to the other foot and note it similarly as "lifting, pushing, dropping, touching, pressing."

But the commentary said a step may be noted in six parts. When yogis lift the heel note "lifting;" when they raise the toes note "raising." In this way, "lifting, raising." Then "pushing, dropping, touching, pressing." Yogis have to slow down their step. If they do not slow down the stepping, they are not able to note these parts of the step well. So the six parts are "lifting, raising, pushing, dropping, touching, pressing."

If yogis walk very mindfully noting the six parts of the step as lifting of the foot, raising of the toes, pushing the foot forward, dropping it down, touching, and pressing, as a result, their concentration is good, deep and strong. They will not be aware of the form of the foot nor are they aware of the body or bodily form. What they know is just movement of the foot. The movement may be also light and they may feel as if they are walking in the air. Or, they may feel as if they were lifted in the sky. At this stage, they are having excellent meditation experiences. If yogis do not observe these experiences mindfully, they will like them and may desire more of them. They may become very satisfied with their practice and may think this is *Nibbāna* because this is the best experience they have ever had. All this happens because yogis do not observe

their pleasant experiences and are attached to them. This attachment arises depending on the pleasant feeling or pleasant sensation of the good experience.

But whatever sensation yogis may experience, they must observe it very attentively, energetically and precisely so that they can realize the true nature of that feeling or sensation. The specific and the general characteristics of the feeling must be thoroughly realized so that they will not be attached to it or repulsed by it. This is mindfulness of feelings or sensations. Whenever feeling arises, it must be observed and noted as it really occurs. That attachment or *tanhā* arises depending on the pleasant feeling or sensation. In this case, the pleasant feeling is the cause, and attachment is the effect.

During walking meditation, the eyes are sure to wander off quite a bit. So do not look around here and there while walking. Yogis have had and will have many more years to look around. If yogis do it during the retreat, they cannot attain deep concentration. The wandering eye is a difficult problem for yogis. So note the desire to look around until it has disappeared.

For the practice to be effective, at least six hours of walking and six hours of sitting meditation along with six hours of observing general activities each day are recommended.

The Buddha taught that mindfulness must be applied to the four postures of the body, i.e. walking, standing, sitting and lying down:

- While yogis are walking, they must be mindful of it as it is.
- While yogis are standing, they must be mindful

of it as it is.

- While yogis are sitting, they must be mindful of it as it is.
- While yogis are lying down, they must be mindful of it as it is.

So, in every posture, there must be mindfulness. We instruct yogis to practice walking and sitting meditation alternately so that they can concentrate more easily and hence attain insight into the walking and sitting processes. Every session of sitting must be preceded by walking for the balance of the body. In the beginning of the practice, yogis need walking meditation longer than sitting because they are not yet able to sit for long but can walk longer. Yogis can attain some degree of concentration more easily during walking than sitting. When the meditation practice matures, yogis may then do sitting meditation for a longer period than walking. When yogis have reached the fifth stage of insight knowledge, they may practice sitting meditation for two or three hours and walk for one hour. At that stage, their concentration is good, deep and strong enough to realize the dissolution of mental and physical phenomena (*nāma* and *rūpa*).

Here again I want to tell yogis that this *vipassanā* meditation is practiced to realize body-mind processes in their true nature. So whatever yogis are aware of, bodily processes or mental processes, the aim of awareness is to realize their true nature. Yogis should keep this in their mind when they practice this meditation. It is not just for concentration but also for the realization of mental and physical processes. That realization enables yogis to be free from all kinds of mental and physical sufferings and to live happily and

blissfully. That realization is called *vipassanāñāna*, insight knowledge. Insight knowledge leads yogis to enlightenment which destroys all kinds of suffering.

Every action is preceded by a mental process of wishing, wanting or intention. So is lifting of the foot. Yogis have to note intending or wishing or wanting before lifting of the foot. Usually we instruct our yogis to note "intending, lifting;" "intending, raising;" "intending, pushing;" "intending, dropping;" "touching;" "intending, pressing." When yogis note touching it's not preceded by the intention because, as soon as you drop your foot to the ground, it touches the ground whether there is intention or not. So before touching, yogis need not note intention. So yogis note "intending, dropping; touching; intending, pressing." Again yogis' mind goes to the other foot and notes similarly as "intending, lifting; intending, raising; intending, pushing forward; intending, dropping; touching; intending, pressing," and so on.

Not only lifting of the foot but also all other actions and movements are preceded by wishing or wanting or intention, a mental process. So if yogis are able to note this mental process, they come to realize the relationship between the intention or wishing or wanting, a mental process, and the movement of the foot, a physical process.

To realize how these two processes are related to each other, yogis have to attain deep concentration by being aware of the movement of the foot. And, when they have realized how these two processes are related to each other, they don't have any idea of a person who is walking, a being who is lifting the foot, a self who is pushing the foot forward. What they

realize is that there's an intention or wishing, a mental process, which causes the movement of the foot, a physical process, to arise. Without intention or wishing or wanting, lifting of the foot cannot occur. In this way, yogis come to realize the law of cause and effect in their walking meditation.

As to the awareness of the movement of the foot, I need not explain further to yogis how the commentary mentions it. Yogis should be careful not to look here and there while they are practicing walking meditation. Once they look around, the mind goes with the eyes. If the mind doesn't stay with the movement of the foot, concentration is broken. So yogis have to control their mind. And also before yogis practice walking meditation, they should determine that, "I won't look here and there while I'm practicing walking meditation. Though I may have a tendency or desire to look around, I will note that desire or tendency until it has disappeared." After the desire or tendency has disappeared, yogis won't look around. Then their concentration won't be broken since the mind will stay with the foot. So yogis should be careful to control their eyes.

Yogis must not look at the foot. If yogis do, they will feel tense on their neck or back because the head has to bend too much. So yogis have to keep their eyes looking down to the ground about four or five feet ahead of them. During walking meditation, if their mind goes out they should note: "going out, going out" or "wandering, wandering." If yogis think about anything else, they should note "thinking, thinking" and so on. Whatever thought arises, it must be noted during walking meditation. After the thought has disappeared, yogis return to the primary object of noting: "intending,

lifting; intending, raising; intending, pushing; intending, dropping; touching; intending, pressing" and so on.

What I have so far explained to yogis is how they can be aware of all the movements of the foot so that they can realize them in their true nature. But for beginners, they need not note all these six points or twelve objects of meditation right away. They can gradually increase their noting as follows:

First of all, note the whole movement of each foot as "left step" or "right step" for about ten minutes. This is one-part or one-object noting. Then skip the two parts or two objects of "lifting, dropping" and go to the noting of the three objects "lifting, pushing, dropping; lifting, pushing, dropping" about ten minutes. Then note four objects as "intending, lifting, pushing, dropping; intending, lifting, pushing, dropping" until the end of the walking meditation. For beginners, it is enough to note these four objects or five objects as "intending, lifting, pushing, dropping, touching."

What is the result of the awareness of the movement of the foot? If beginners strive their best, sometimes they may get a headache or feel dizzy because they are not yet accustomed to concentrating on the movement of the foot. They should stand still and note dizziness as "dizzy, dizzy" or "headache, headache" and so on. If the feeling of dizziness has disappeared, resume walking and note the movement of the foot as usual as "intending, lifting, pushing, dropping, and touching" and so on.

Wherever yogis go, they must be aware of their step. When yogis go to and from their room, to and from the dining room, they must be aware of their step, at least "left, right; left, right." If it is possible,

note "lifting, pushing, dropping." They must not go anywhere unmindfully because this meditation needs continuity of mindfulness for the whole day so that concentration becomes deeper and deeper. Through deep concentration, the insight knowledge or realization of mental and physical processes arises. So yogis must not walk fast while they are in a retreat. Wherever yogis go, they must walk slowly and be mindful of their step very attentively.

### **Benefits of Walking Meditation**

The Buddha said that there are five benefits of walking meditation:

1. Stamina for long journeys: Yogis can walk on foot for a very long journey because they have practiced walking meditation.

2. Endurance for hard practice: Walking makes yogis active and alert in their practice. So whatever they do, they put the utmost effort in the work. That's why the Buddha said, if one practices walking meditation, one becomes industrious, perseverant with strenuous effort in practice.

Human beings like sitting better than standing and walking. In other words, they are naturally lazy to walk and often would like to sit. Therefore, if a person trains himself in walking for a very long time, as a result of his exertion, he likes to walk or, at least, is not reluctant to walk. That means he has the energy or effort to do something actively with alertness.

3. Fewer diseases: People are afraid of high cholesterol in their body. So they jog every morning or every evening. When the time comes up, they are not lazy to jog because they have practiced that jogging.

Jogging is a sort of walking practice. So one of the benefits of walking is to have fewer diseases.

4. Better digestion: The fourth benefit of walking is healthiness. If a person practices walking, he is healthier than the person who does not. By practicing walking meditation, yogis can be healthy both mentally and physically. Mental health is much more important than physical health, however. Regarding healthiness, the Buddha said the food taken is easily digested. Because of the digestion, one is healthy. After a lot of food is taken into the stomach, if one lies down or sits, it's somewhat difficult for the food to be digested. On the other hand, if one walks, the food will be easily digested. So healthiness together with digestion is one of the benefits of walking.

5. Long-lasting concentration: The most important benefit of walking is durable concentration. The Buddha said that the concentration one has attained in walking meditation lasts very long. Yogis can easily concentrate their mind on the movement of the foot because, in walking, the object of meditation is more pronounced than in sitting. In sitting, the respiration or abdominal movement is not so distinct to the mind. But in walking, the lifting movement, pushing movement, dropping movement of the foot are very prominent, very distinct to the mind. When the object of meditation is prominent or predominant, yogis can easily note or watch it. Because yogis can easily watch the object, their mind becomes very quickly concentrated on it. That concentration can become so deep that it will last for a long time. Some of yogis practice walking meditation systematically and diligently and have had better concentration than in sitting meditation. Yogis

know this through their own experience.

That is what the Buddha said. Yogis can attain long-lasting concentration by means of walking meditation. So when yogis are aware of each individual movement of the foot, and sometimes also the intention, the mind will become gradually concentrated on the movement of the foot very well. And the more energetically yogis note the movement, the deeper is the concentration of the mind. When concentration becomes deep enough, yogis feel their feet become light as if they were automatically lifted, automatically pushed forward, automatically dropped down. Yogis get startled at the unusual experience of the "automatic" movement of the foot. They may say to themselves, "Hah, what's that? Am I mad or not?" like in the following case.

When I conducted a meditation retreat in England at the Manjusri Tibetan Monastery, the Manjusri Institute in northern England near the border of Scotland, there was a yogi who had put much effort into his practice, both sitting and walking meditations. After about four days of practice, he came to talk to me and then asked a question. "Venerable Sir, my meditation is getting worse and worse," he said. "Now what happens to your meditation?" I asked him. Then he said, "One day, when I was walking, Venerable Sir, gradually I was not aware of myself. The foot was automatically lifted up by itself, it was automatically pushed forward by itself, and then it was automatically dropped down by itself. There was no I nor self. Sometimes though I controlled my foot, the foot didn't stay with the ground. It lifted by itself. Sometimes it pushed forward very long. I couldn't control it. Then sometimes it was getting down by itself. So my meditation is getting worse and

worse. What should I do?" Then eventually he said, "I think I have gone mad."

Such an experience was very amazing. This is a benefit of walking meditation. First of all he said, "I don't know myself. I'm not aware of myself. I don't know my body, my leg." That means the realization of the movement of the foot has destroyed the idea of an "I" or a "you," a "self" or a "soul," a "person" or "being." Here, what he was realizing was the impersonal nature of our bodily process called *anatta*. It is the non-soul, non-ego, non-self nature of our bodily phenomena.

When he said, "The foot was automatically lifted up by itself, it was automatically pushed forward by itself, and it was automatically dropped down by itself," that means there's no person or no being or no self who lifted the foot, who pushed it forward, who dropped it down. It's the realization of the impersonal nature of physical processes or physical phenomena: *anatta*. With this realization, he has destroyed the false idea of an "I" or a "you," a "person" or a "being," a "self" or a "soul."

It was very interesting. Not only this yogi but also many yogis in Burma experienced *anatta* in this way. And sometimes, before yogis experience this stage of insight knowledge, they feel they are walking on waves of the sea. Or they are standing on a boat which was floating on the waves. Sometimes yogis may feel they are walking on a heap of cotton. Sometimes yogis feel they are walking in the air. That is also one of the insight knowledges which penetrates into the true nature of physical process or material phenomena.

In walking meditation, yogis should walk at least an hour. Only after that they should do sitting meditation

again. I have explained to you how a yogi can observe twelve parts of a step, including intention before every action as mentioned in the commentary to the Pāli text. But it depends on each yogi how many of the actions he or she should note. Yogis should watch some objects as comfortably as they feel. If they have to exert or endeavor their utmost to be aware of any number of objects uncomfortably, they should not do that. If yogis do that, they feel tense on their neck or back, sometimes they feel a headache, sometimes they feel dizzy because they have to strain too much to be aware of each part of the step. So it depends on each yogi. Yogis themselves know the number of parts in each step they could do comfortably. Normally, it should be adequate to note four or five objects of a step comfortably without strains or with relaxation: "intending, lifting, moving, dropping," or "intending, lifting, moving, dropping, touching." If yogis are able to observe these four or five objects precisely and very attentively, they can attain a deep concentration on the movement of the foot.

To be aware of these four or five objects very precisely and attentively, yogis have to slow down their stepping. Unless their step is slow, they cannot catch each individual part of the step very well. It's indispensable for yogis to slow down their step so that they can note all these four or five objects thoroughly. Now when yogis are able to note all these four or five objects very well, their concentration gradually becomes better and better. Then, with diligent mindfulness, they can note intention, the lifting movement, the pushing movement, the dropping movement, and the touching sensation very well without looking here and there. In this way, when yogis practice walking meditation

for about three or four days, they can attain a deep concentration.

### **Labeling**

For some yogis, they may need labeling or naming so that they are able to observe any object. When they lift their foot to walk, they should label it as "lifting." When they push it forward, they should label it as "pushing." When they drop it, they should label it "dropping." In this way, they label the stepping process as "lifting, pushing, dropping; lifting, pushing, dropping." Labeling or naming can lead the mind to the object of meditation closely and precisely. It is also very helpful for a yogi to focus his or her mind on the object of meditation.

However, there may be some yogis who need not label or name the object of meditation. In this case, all they need to do is to observe the object without labeling or naming. They should just observe the movement of the foot from the very beginning of the lifting movement up to the end of the dropping movement. The mind must follow the movement of the foot very closely as it is, without thinking or analyzing. In this way, yogis can develop concentration.

### **Mindfulness of Daily Activities**

Mindfulness meditation is the Buddha's way of life. During a retreat, all yogis have to do is to be mindful all day long including sitting meditation, walking meditation, and daily activities. Awareness of daily activities is the life of yogis. Once they fail to observe an activity, they lose their life. That is, they are not yogis, because they are devoid of *sāti* (mindfulness), *saṃādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom).

All yogis, therefore, need to be mindful of each and every daily activity. If yogis cannot be mindful of daily activities, do not expect progress. Not noting daily activities leads to wide gaps of non-mindfulness. Continuity is needed to carry mindfulness forward from one moment to the next. Constant and un-interrupted mindfulness gives rise to deep concentration. Only with deep concentration can yogis gain realization into the intrinsic nature of mental and physical phenomena, which leads them to the cessation of suffering (*dukkha*).

There are many new things to discover everyday if yogis have constant and uninterrupted mindfulness.

As the Buddha said, as soon as yogis are awake they should note the consciousness about wakening: "wakening, wakening, wakening." After that yogis want to open their eyes, they should note: "wanting, wanting" or "wishing, wishing." And then, when they open the eyes, they should note "opening, opening" and so on.

I will summarize the chapter on clear comprehension of the *Mahā-satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* dealing with mindfulness of daily activities for yogis to practice to make progress in their meditation. The Buddha taught that whatever yogis are doing, they must note it. When yogis bend or stretch out arms and legs, put on or take off clothes, they must be aware of them as they are. Even when yogis go to the toilet to answer the call of nature, they should be aware of all the activities involved.

Every day, when yogis eat, they should be aware of every action, every activity involved in the act of eating. When yogis hold the plate or the cup, they must note it as "holding." When they touch it, "touching." When yogis hold the spoon, the sensation of holding must

be observed. When yogis stretch out their arm, they must be aware of the movement of stretching. When the spoon touches the food, the touching sensation must be observed. Or when yogis dip the spoon into the soup, that dipping movement must be observed. When they scoop soup with the spoon, that movement must be observed. When yogis drink water or anything, they must be aware of all the activities involved in the drinking. When yogis chew something, they must note the chewing. When they lick something, they must note the licking. In this way, each and every action involved in the act of eating must be observed as it is.

The Buddha taught that every physical process must be thoroughly realized so as to remove ignorance, which is the cause of false view. So when yogis sit, they must be aware of the sitting posture. When they stand, they must be aware of the standing posture. When they lie down, they must be aware of the lying posture. In Burma, one of the old monks about ninety years of age could walk twenty-four hours, could sit twenty-four hours, could lie down twenty-four hours by being aware of the object without sleeping. If yogis lie down two minutes, they may fall asleep. Two years back, he passed away at the age of ninety-two, I think. He had been meditating since he was forty years of age. I think yogis should imitate him. In lying down, the abdomen movement is very distinct. So when lying down, note "lying, rising, falling;" "lying, rising, falling;" "lying, rising, falling." This is a good medicine for insomnia. When yogis wake up, the first thing of which they are conscious must be noted.

These are the examples yogis should take for awareness of daily activities. The Buddha taught them

to us. The point is to have continuous and constant mindfulness for the whole day. There is not a mental state, emotional state, or physical process of which yogis should not be mindful as it is. To be able to do this, yogis can have a continuity of mindfulness which is the cause of deep concentration on which insight knowledge is built up. Once the insight knowledge of the specific characteristics or general characteristics of mental and physical processes has been developed, yogis go through all thirteen stages of insight knowledge, one after another and higher and higher. After yogis have completed all the stages of insight knowledge, they become enlightened. That means yogis attain the first stage of enlightenment. It's called *Magga*, the Path. When yogis have attained the first stage of enlightenment, they totally uproot the most important defilement, *sakkāya-ditṭhi*, the false view of a person, a being, an "I" or a "you," and also doubt about the Triple Gem. These two mental defilements are uprooted once and for all. Then yogis feel happy and live in peace and happiness.

### **Observing Daily Activities Is Very Much Important**

There are some who have gone through about four or five stages of *vipassanā* insight. There may be someone who has gone through about seven or eight. There may be some who have gone through ten or eleven. I would like all yogis to complete all stages of insight knowledge. Ten-day meditation is just training, just the learning stage. But yogis have some deep concentration occasionally and also some insight which penetrates into reality of the body-mind processes.

When yogis' insight becomes more and more

powerful, more and more penetrating, they experience the higher stages of insight knowledge. Sometimes they may be able to attain Enlightenment by observing daily activities attentively and precisely. In this case, I should mention some impressive stories such as the story of Venerable Ānanda and his attainment of the Final Enlightenment, *Arahatta magga* and *phala ñāṇas*.

The Venerable Ānanda was practicing walking meditation very mindfully at night, observing each movement of the feet very well. Then after walking meditation, he went to his room, observing each step in more and more details. He was mindful of all his actions and movements when he opened the door, when he pulled the door, when he pushed the door and so on. Until he has settled on his bed, he was mindful of all actions and movements attentively and precisely. While he was sitting down to the bed, he was mindful of the movements of the sitting down and touching sensation of the bed. Before he started his sitting meditation, he wanted to take a rest for a while by lying down on the bed for relaxation. He then started to lie down towards the pillow, being mindful of all movements very attentively, making mental note as "lying down, lying down, lying down..." Before his head touched the pillow, while his two feet were just lifted from the ground, he attained three higher stages of enlightenment consecutively, *Sakadāgāmi-magga-ñāṇa*, *Anāgāmi-magga-ñāṇa* and *Arahatta-magga-ñāṇa*. Thus, he attained Arahantship, the final stage of enlightenment before his head touched the pillow.

So the Venerable Ānanda attained Arahantship, not while standing, sitting, walking, or lying. His attainment of Arahantship was out of all the four postures. What

I want to point out is that the Venerable Ānanda, the pious attendant of the *Buddha*, attained Arahanthood by being aware of all actions and movements in the daily activities.

In the same way, the famous *Bhikkhuni Patācārā* also attained Arahanthood by being aware of daily activities attentively. She was practicing walking meditation very mindfully during the night. She attained deep concentration and clear insight into the movements of the feet. Then she wanted to sit in her room. She went to her room by being aware of all actions and movements in the daily activities. When she sat on her bed, she was also aware of the sitting down movements, touching sensation and so on. In the room, there was an oil lamp with the flame. She wanted to extinguish the flame so that she could save the oil and could sit in the dark with deep concentration. She picked up a piece of bamboo stick and gradually stretched her arm towards the oil lamp, observing each movement of the stretching. When the hand reached near the flame, she pressed the wick into the oil with the stick, noting each movement of the pressing. At the moment when the wick has sunk into the oil completely and the flame was extinguished, she attained Arahanthood, uprooting all the *kilesas*, mental defilements.

In this way, yogis can attain Arahanthood if they take awareness of daily activities seriously and strive their best to have continuity of mindfulness by being constantly aware of each action and movement very well.

Attentive and detailed awareness of daily activities is very much important because it can help yogis to attain any stage of enlightenment with Path and Fruition

knowledge. In the teaching of the Buddha, the practice of *vipassanā* meditation is likened to the rubbing of two pieces of wood or bamboo. In the ancient time, people in the forest had to rub two pieces of bamboo or wood against each other constantly and continuously without a break to make fire. Heat is generated on the pieces of bamboo after some time. Gradually the heat increases and the bamboo becomes hotter and hotter. If they stop rubbing, the heat becomes cold. If they rub again, they begin to get the heat again. If they stop again, the heat becomes cold again. They do not get the fire because they do not continuously rub the pieces. If they rub the pieces of bamboo continuously and constantly without a break, the heat becomes hot enough it makes the flame and they get the fire.

That is why meditation teachers say, "Yogis should be constantly and continuously mindful of whatever is arising in their body and mind as it really is." Mindfulness must be constant and continuous so that it becomes sharper and more powerful. Then it makes concentration deeper. When the concentration becomes deeper, there arises the insight which penetrates into the true nature of mental and physical phenomena, *nāma* and *rūpa*.

If yogis are mindful of arising mental and physical processes for about fifteen or twenty minutes, they then take rest for about five minutes without being mindful of physical and mental phenomena occurring at the present moment. Then again, they pick up their effort (*viriya*) and are aware of some movements which arise. In this way, they practice meditation on and off. As a result, they are not able to have continuous and constant mindfulness. Their concentration, therefore,

cannot be deep enough. Because of this, they will not gain the insight knowledge that realizes the true nature of mental and physical phenomena. They cannot remove the wrong view of a person, a being, a self or a soul, *sakkāya-ditṭhi* and *atta-ditṭhi*.

If yogis rightly understand the value of continuous mindfulness and deep concentration, they will observe all actions and movements in sitting, walking, and daily activities. Then their mindfulness becomes continuous and constant. Their concentration becomes deeper and deeper. They are like people who rub the two pieces of wood constantly and continuously without a break. Eventually, the insights arise. They realize the true nature of mental and physical phenomena and they are hopeful to attain the cessation of suffering, *Nibbāna*.

So, the awareness of daily activities is so much important that the *Buddha* taught us *Sampajañña-pabba*, the chapter on Clear Comprehension, in *Mahā-satipatthāna Sutta* to rightly understand the value of daily activities. Yogis should strive to have continuous and constant mindfulness by being mindful of all activities for the whole day, realize all mental and physical phenomena, and attain the cessation of suffering, *Nibbāna*.

During a retreat, all yogis have to do is to be mindful. They need not hurry. The Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw compared a yogi to a sick person who moves about very slowly. Doing things slowly makes the mind concentrated. If yogis intend to achieve something in their meditation, they must get accustomed to slowing down. When a fan is turning fast, we cannot see it as it really is. If it is turning slowly, then we can see each individual blade. So yogis have to slow down to be able

to see clearly the mental and physical processes as they really are.

When being surrounded by people who are doing things in a rush, yogis must ignore the surroundings and energetically note any mental or physical activity. Also, talking is a great danger to the progress of insight. A five-minute talk can wreck a yogi's concentration for the whole day.

Do not read, recite or recollect. They are hindrances to meditation progress.

## **The Five Mental Faculties (*Pañcindriya*)**

Mental faculties are called *indriya* in Pāli. Following are five mental faculties which yogis must be endowed with:

1. *Saddhindriya*: Firm and strong faith based on right understanding.
2. *Viriyindriya*: Strong and strenuous effort in the practice.
3. *Satindriya*: Sustained and uninterrupted mindfulness.
4. *Samadhindriya*: Deep concentration.
5. *Paññindriya*: Penetrative wisdom, insight.

To gain the afore-mentioned seven benefits of insight meditation, what yogis need first is faith or belief or confidence in the Triple Gem, especially in the technique of meditation. This is faith based on right understanding. Blind faith is never encouraged. Faith through understanding is called *saddhā* in Pāli.

*Saddhindriya* is the first mental faculty. It is a

strong and firm faith with understanding. Yogis have to understand the *Buddha's Dhamma* or the technique of meditation to a certain extent to have faith in it. Without understanding it, yogis can't have such a faith. Faith with understanding, *saddhā*, is the basic requirement of yogis for success in their meditation.

*Viriyindriya* is the second mental faculty. It is a strong and strenuous effort in the practice. Faith alone is not enough. Yogis need energy, *viriya*, in their practice. If yogis do not put enough effort into their practice, they can't realize the real nature of any mental or physical phenomena.

*Satindriya* is the third mental faculty. *Sati* is translated as mindfulness or awareness. Mindfulness as a mental faculty is something a yogi must be endowed with. It means that when yogis have strong faith with understanding of the technique of meditation or the *Dhamma*, they put enough energy in their practice then, as a result, they are able to be mindful of any mental or physical process as it really is.

*Samadhindriya* is the fourth mental faculty. *Samadhi* is the concentration of the mind on the observed object. When it becomes a mental faculty, yogis have deep concentration on the object which the mind observes. This happens when mindfulness becomes continuous and constant.

*Paññindriya* is the fifth mental faculty. When the mind is deeply concentrated on any mental or physical phenomenon, there arises insight knowledge or penetrating knowledge or experiential knowledge which penetrates into its intrinsic nature. Then yogis realize specific characteristic of the noted mental or physical phenomenon. Or when yogis experience the passing

away of any mental or physical processes, they come to realize their general characteristic of impermanence (*anicca*). That realization is right understanding or insight or experiential *vipassanā* knowledge. It is known as *pañña* in Pāli which is usually translated as wisdom.

The *Visuddhimagga*, a meditation text, mentions that when these five mental faculties become sharp and are harmonious with each other, yogis are sure to realize either the specific or general characteristics of body-mind processes. So yogis should try to make them sharp and keep them in balance.

### **Nine Ways to Sharpen the Mental Faculties**

According to the *Visuddhimagga*, there are nine ways to sharpen these five faculties which yogis must follow.

1. The first way is *to keep in mind the aim of realizing the impermanence of the mental-physical process*. The commentary says that a yogi must keep in mind that he is going to realize the impermanence of existence or mind-body processes when he observes them as they really are. That should be the attitude of yogis and this is the first way.

Sometimes yogis do not believe that every mental or physical process is impermanent (*anicca*) or subject to arising and passing away. Because of this preconception, they may not be able to realize the true nature of the mind-body process. Though they may gain some concentration, it would only enable them to attain peace and happiness to a limited extent. So yogis must keep in mind that they will realize the disappearance of mental and physical processes when

they practice meditation.

2. The second way is to practice the Dhamma seriously with respect. This means that yogis must treat the cultivation of mindfulness meditation with respect, i.e. they must practice mindfulness meditation seriously. If yogis lack respect for the technique of meditation, they will not put enough effort into their practice. Consequently, they cannot concentrate their mind well on the object of meditation. Then they will not be able to realize the true nature of physical phenomena (*rūpa*) and mental phenomena (*nāma*).

3. The third way is to maintain constant, uninterrupted and continuous mindfulness of mental and physical processes. This can be done by being aware of all daily activities, moment to moment, without a break for the whole day. Only then can yogis attain the deep concentration upon which they can build up the insight knowledge, which penetrates into the true nature of mental and physical processes. This is a very important point, which every yogi must follow.

While yogis are awake, they must constantly and continuously be aware of whatever is arising in their mind and body as it really is. Be mindful for the whole day without a break. When I say "sati," it means constant, sustained and uninterrupted mindfulness.

4. The fourth way is to observe the seven kinds of suitability, which a meditator depends upon, including a suitable meditation hall, food, weather, etc. Whether or not the conditions are suitable, yogis should make effort in their practice. Sometimes yogis are very attached to the fan because of the hot weather. They want to sit under the fan. Actually yogis must be indifferent whether it is cold, warm or hot; they must not choose.

Mindfulness is actually the source of every achievement. By means of mindfulness, yogis can change an "enemy" into a "friend." If they feel hot, they should be mindful of it. If they do so, the heat will gradually become a "friend." Likewise with pain. When yogis observe it, the concentration becomes stronger and the pain may then seem to be more severe. Actually it does not become more severe. It is just that the mind, with deep concentration, becomes more sensitive. So it knows the pain more and more clearly, making it seem more severe. But when yogis come to realize that pain is just a mental process of unpleasant feeling, they will no longer be aware of themselves or their bodily form. What they realize at that moment is just the painful sensation and the mind that notes it. Yogis can differentiate these two phenomena clearly. As a result, they do not identify the pain with themselves, so the pain does not disturb their concentration. It becomes a "friend." Therefore, mindfulness is everything, the source of every achievement. Though yogis know this theoretically, they should also know it practically. By means of mindfulness, yogis can turn an "enemy" into a "friend." Mindful yogis have no enemies at all in the world. All phenomena are "friends" because they are conducive to the attainment of insight or enlightenment, the cessation of all suffering.

5. The fifth way is *to remember the way in which yogis attained deep concentration before*. Yogis must remember that way and practice it repeatedly to attain deep concentration.

6. The sixth way is *to develop the seven factors of enlightenment (bojjhainga)* as and when they are needed. They are: mindfulness, investigation of

states, energy, rapture, tranquility, concentration and equanimity.

7. The seventh way is that *yogis must not be worried about their body or their life*. Sometimes yogis, who strive very hard in their meditation from four in the morning till nine or ten at night without rest, fear they may become weak or ill. They worry that if they continue to exert in that way for a month, they may die because of fatigue or illness. Thus, they will not make sufficient effort in their practice and, therefore, their mindfulness will not be constant, continuous and sustained. When mindfulness is interrupted, it cannot cause deep concentration to arise. When concentration is weak, insight knowledge of the true nature of bodily and mental processes will not unfold. That is why the text says that to sharpen these five mental faculties, yogis must not be concerned about their body or health. Strive to the utmost, practice strenuously for the whole day without taking a rest or a break, without concern for the body.

8. The eighth way is *to overcome physical pain (dukkha vedana) through strenuous effort*. Whenever mental or physical pain arises, yogis should strive to note it by putting more effort into their practice. When pain arises, there is a tendency or desire to change position for it to disappear because yogis are reluctant to note it. Instead, yogis must put more effort into their practice to overcome the pain by being aware of it more energetically, attentively and precisely. Then the pain will become a "friend" because it enables the yogi to attain deep concentration and clear insight.

9. The ninth way is that *yogis must not stop half-way to their goal*. It means that yogis must not stop their

practice of mindfulness meditation until they achieve Arahanthood. Because of their eagerness to achieve Arahanthood, yogis will put proper effort in the practice thereby making these five mental faculties strong and powerful.

### **Balance the Five Mental Faculties**

So, these are the five mental faculties yogis must be endowed with. Moreover, they need to be in balance for yogis to attain *vipassanā* insights.

Faith or confidence must be balanced with wisdom, energy with concentration. Mindfulness need not be balanced with any faculty. The more mindfulness, the better. It is the most important faculty that leads the other four to their goal. According to the commentary, we can never say that *sati* is too strong or too powerful because it is best to be mindful every single moment. When mindfulness becomes constant, sustained, uninterrupted and continuous, it gives rise to deep concentration. When concentration is deep, insight will unfold naturally and yogis will be able to realize the mind and body processes (*nāma* and *rūpa*).

When yogis have some insight knowledge into the physical and mental processes, they know the only way which can lead them to the cessation of suffering is mindfulness meditation. Since they can judge this through their own experience, nobody can deceive them about the method or technique of meditation. So they have faith in the way they practice and do not believe in any other technique. They themselves know it is the right way and, therefore, do not become credulous.

Faith or confidence (*saddhā*) must be balanced with knowledge or wisdom (*paññā*), however. If *saddha* (faith) is strong and *paññā* (wisdom) is weak, yogis may become gullible. We say they are gullible because they have faith without knowledge, wisdom or intelligence, and tend to believe easily any theory or doctrine. If yogis are gullible, they may fall into a false doctrine or theory, which leads them to the wrong path. Therefore, *saddha* must be in balance with *paññā*, knowledge or wisdom. In this way, *saddhindriya* and *paññindriya* must be in balance.

If *saddha* is weak and *paññā* is powerful, yogis may analyze their experience in the course of meditation. In this case, *paññā* refers to intellectual and scriptural knowledge. "While experiencing a mental or physical process, yogis may analyze it, especially when they have a wide bookish or scriptural knowledge of the *Dhamma*. Some yogis want to display their knowledge of Buddhism or *Dhamma*, so they sometimes analyze their experience in their meditation and talk about something contrary to reality. And that analytical knowledge impedes their concentration. Then their concentration will be broken or weakened. They think about their knowledge and have a lot of thoughts which distract them. Then it becomes a hindrance. How can they concentrate their mind on the object?

The true nature of mental and physical phenomena can only be realized by empirical knowledge, but not by logical reasoning or philosophical thinking or analyzing. When a phenomenon is not rightly penetrated, comprehended or realized, yogis may have less faith or disbelief in the teachings as a result of their analytical knowledge of the *Dhamma* or experience. Only with

empirical knowledge of mind and matter can yogis attain enlightenment along with unshakable faith in the Triple Gem.

If yogis believe in the *Buddha* or *Dhamma*, their wisdom or insight knowledge is in balance with firm faith (*saddha*). They can then proceed with their practice without any disturbance from analytical knowledge, reasoning, or philosophical thinking. According to the commentary on the *Visuddhimagga*, faith must be in balance with *paññā* (scriptual or intellectual knowledge) and vice versa.

When I first started mindfulness meditation, my purpose was to test the technique to see if it was right. Before I began my practice, I went through two volumes of "Vipassanā Meditation" written by the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw. At that time, I had not personally met the Venerable Saydaw yet. However, the contemplation of the abdominal movement is very straightforward to those who have learned the meditation technique from the book. I accepted the technique as true and correct because I knew that the abdominal movement is the air element (*vāyo-dhātu*). The other three elements consisting of fire element (*tejo-dhātu*), water element (*āpo-dhātu*) and earth element (*pathavī-dhātu*) are also included in the abdominal movement. As we can contemplate the four elements according to the Buddha's teachings, this technique must be correct.

Traditionally we tend to favor the method of meditation on respiration or breathing meditation (*ānāpāna-sati*). I practiced *ānāpāna-sati* in my days as a novice when I was 17 to 24 years old. Though I now hold that the Mahasi Sayadaw's technique is correct, I could not accept it as satisfactory then because I

was clinging to the traditional method of mindfulness of respiration. That was why I wanted to test the Mahasi Sayadaw's technique, which begins with the contemplation of the abdominal movement.

Although I went to the Mahasi Meditation Center and began to practice the technique, I did it with much doubt. That was in 1953 when I spent my rainy season (*vassa*) there for four months doing an intensive course of meditation. At that time, I was a lecturer at a Buddhist University in Mandalay. I practiced under Venerable U Nandavamsa. He told me: "U Janaka, you have gone through higher examinations and you are now a lecturer in the University. You must put aside your knowledge of the *Dhamma* from books if you want to achieve something out of this meditation."

Having accepted his advice, I put aside my knowledge and practiced. As such, my faith was in balance with my wisdom because I did not analyze the experience or the technique based on my preconceptions or the knowledge that I had learned from books.

That's why I ask yogis to keep aside all thoughts, all analytical knowledge, preconceived ideas, philosophical thinking, and logical reasoning while they are engaged in meditation so that there will not be hindrances to their progress. So wisdom or knowledge (*pañña*) must be balanced with faith (*saddha*). Because of faith, yogis come to practice. So these preconceived ideas or knowledge must be kept aside as long as they are engaged in this mindfulness meditation.

*Samādhi* (concentration) and *viriya* (effort) must be in balance. The commentary says that if effort is stronger or more powerful than concentration, yogis' mind will become restless (*uddhacca*). As a result, they

cannot concentrate well on the object of meditation.

In the beginning of the practice, yogis' concentration is usually weak and, therefore, their mind often wanders. So, they should follow the mind and watch it as it is. If they are too anxious to achieve insight, they may put too much effort in their noting. Excessive effort causes the mind to become restless. As a result, they become unhappy with their practice. So effort must be kept in balance with concentration. To do this, they must reduce their effort, keep their mind calm and stable, and steadily note whatever arises in their mind and body. Then their mind gradually becomes concentrated and its level of concentration increases.

When yogis have practiced meditation for two or three weeks, their concentration becomes very deep and strong. The noting mind notes the object by itself, automatically and effortlessly. Then the effort or energy decreases gradually. Due to insufficient effort, the noting mind will gradually become dull and heavy and yogis get into sloth and torpor. Regarding this situation, the commentary says that if concentration is too strong and effort is too weak, the concentration leads to sloth and torpor or sleepiness (*thina-middha*). To correct it, yogis must make some more effort in their noting.

If the passive posture of sitting makes the mind of some yogis become more dull due to concentration exceeding effort, they should practice walking meditation longer than sitting to keep concentration in balance with effort. However, only a very few yogis fall into this situation.

So concentration must be kept in balance with effort to have a good practice.

## **The Five Factors for Successful Practice** *(Padhaniyanga)*

According to the Buddha, in order for yogis to be successful in their insight meditation practice, they must have the following five factors (*padhaniyanga*):

1. The first one is *faith* (*saddhā*). Yogis must have a firm and strong faith in the Triple Gem including the *Buddha*, *Dhamma*, and *Sangha*, especially in the *Dhamma* which includes the technique of meditation they are practicing.
2. The second one is *good health*. Yogis are considered healthy both mentally and physically to the extent that they can observe the mental and physical process. If they suffer from headaches, dizziness or stomach trouble, it does not mean they are not healthy. As long as they can tolerate food and can observe phenomena occurring at the present moment, they are considered healthy. The food they take must be digestible (i.e. food which does not cause stomach disorders) because if they suffer from indigestion, they will not be able to practice very well.
3. The third one is *honesty*. Yogis must be honest and straightforward. They must not tell lies about their experience to their teacher. They must be frank, open and straightforward regarding their meditational experience.
4. The fourth one is *effort* (*viriya*). It is not ordinary energy but unwavering, strong and firm energy (*padhāna*). When the Buddha explained strenuous effort, the Buddha used three words which should be remembered. One word is *parakkama*,

ever increasing effort. The other word is *dahla viriya* which means firm effort. And the last one is *anikkhitta dhuro*. *Anikkhitta* means not to put down, *dhuro* means task or responsibility. Yogis have responsibility to proceed with their practice until they attain Arahantship. Yogis must have this mental faculty while striving for emancipation. They should never let their effort decrease, but should be perpetually improving or increasing it. When *viriya* or *padhāna* is increasing, mindfulness will become continuous, constant and uninterrupted. As a result, concentration will become deep and strong. Insight will become sharp and penetrative, resulting in a clear comprehension of the true nature of the mental and physical processes.

5. The fifth one is wisdom (*paññā*). It does not mean ordinary knowledge but the insight knowledge of the arising and passing away of mental (*nāma*) and physical (*rūpa*) phenomena. In other words, it is the fourth stage of insight knowledge (*udaya-bbaya-ñāṇa*). The first stage is knowledge of the difference between mentality and physicality (*nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*). The second stage is knowledge of causality or knowledge of the law of cause and effect (*paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa*). The third is knowledge of comprehension (*sam-masana-ñāṇa*). Knowledge of comprehension means knowledge which penetrates and comprehends all the three characteristics of mental and physical processes, namely, impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*) and non-self (*anattā*). The fourth stage is *udaya-bbaya-*

*ñāña* knowledge of arising and passing away of mental and physical phenomena. So the Buddha said that *paññā* here refers to that fourth stage of insight knowledge, which penetrates into the appearance and disappearance of mentality and physicality. Yogis are expected to possess this knowledge. In the beginning, they may not possess this insight knowledge of arising and passing away but they must strive with strong and firm effort (*padhāna*). If yogis possess this insight knowledge and continue to put strong effort in the practice, they are sure to make progress until they attain at least the first Path Knowledge, *Sotapatti-magga-ñāña*. That is why the Buddha said that yogis must possess the fourth stage of insight knowledge, which realizes the appearance and disappearance of mental and physical phenomena.

So these are the five requirements yogis must meet.

When yogis have attained the first stage of enlightenment (*Sotapatti-magga-ñāña*), they uproot both the concept of a soul or a self or personality or individuality (*sakkāya-ditṭhi*) and doubt about the Triple Gem (*vicikicchā*). Before this attainment, if yogis gain the first stage of insight distinguishing between the mental and physical phenomena and realizing the specific characteristics of mental and physical phenomena, they can destroy *sakkāya-ditṭhi* or *atta-ditṭhi* only at that time. However, when they are not experiencing this insight, *sakkāya-ditṭhi* or *atta-ditṭhi* will come back to him, although not strongly. *Sakkāya-ditṭhi* or *atta-ditṭhi* is only uprooted by the first stage of enlightenment, *Sotapatti-magga-ñāña*.

## **SEVEN STAGES OF PURIFICATION Attributed to their Corresponding *Vipassanā* Insights**

The practice of meditation to develop *vipassanā* insights in accordance with the discourse of *Mahā-satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* is the only way for the purification of mind leading to the cessation of suffering, *Nibbāna*. In other words, to attain enlightenment, yogis must go through the following seven stages of purification (*visuddhi*):

1. Purification of moral conduct (*sīla-visuddhi*)
2. Purification of mind (*citta-visuddhi*)
3. Purification of view (*ditṭhi-visuddhi*)
4. Purification by overcoming doubt (*kaṅkhā-vitarana-visuddhi*)
5. Purification of knowledge of path and non-path (*maggā-magga-ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*)
6. Purification of knowledge and vision of the course (*paṭipadā-ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*)
7. Purification of knowledge and vision (*ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*)

### **First Stage: The Purification of Moral Conduct (*Sīla-visuddhi*)**

In order for yogis to develop *vipassanā* insights until the attainment of *Nibbāna*, first of all, they need to purify their morality (*sīla*) which is the basic requirement. To do that, they must fully observe certain precepts. This is the Purification of Moral Conduct (*sīla-visuddhi*), the first stage of purification.

Yogis have to observe at least five precepts if not eight so that they can attain purification of *sīla*. The third of the five precepts is abstention from sexual misconduct, whereas the third of the eight precepts is abstention from all kinds of sexual contact. If yogis do not abstain from sexual contact, their minds will be defiled by the hindrance of sense desire (*kamacchanda nīvarana*). Only when the mind is purified from all hindrances, can yogis realize mental and physical phenomena in their true nature.

Of course, it is better if yogis can observe the eight precepts. Without precepts, they may have desires for taste of food, visible things, audible things, odors and tangible things, five kinds of sense desire (*kammacchanda*). By observing eight precepts, one can purify one's deeds and speech, which is purification of moral conduct (*sīla-visuddhi*). When moral conduct is purified, the mind is also purified to some extent.

When Venerable Uttiya, one of the disciples of the *Buddha* was sick in bed, the *Buddha* visited him and asked about his health. Venerable Uttiya told the *Buddha* about his sickness:

*"Venerable Sir, my sickness is not decreasing but increasing. I do not know whether I can or cannot live out today or tomorrow. So I want to meditate to destroy all kinds of defilements at the fourth stage of enlightenment, Arahantship, before I die. Please give a short instruction which will enable me to develop my meditation to attain Arahantship."*

Then the *Buddha* said:

*"Uttiya, you should cleanse the beginning. If the beginning is purified, then you will be all right, i.e. able*

*to attain Arahantship. What is the beginning? Herein, the beginning is to purify moral conduct or sīla and right view (samma-ditthi). Right view means the acceptance of and belief in the Law of Cause and Effect or the Law of Kamma. Uttiya, you should cleanse your moral conduct and right view. Then, based on the purified moral conduct or sīla, you should develop the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. Practicing thus, you will attain the cessation of suffering."*

The Omniscient Buddha lays stress on the purification of *sīla* or moral conduct because it is the basic requirement for progress in concentration as well as insight. After moral conduct is purified, if yogis cultivate mindfulness, they can concentrate on any object of the mental and physical processes.

So purity of moral conduct is a pre-requisite for yogis to make progress. It is very conducive to attain deep concentration in meditation when morality is purified. So yogis should start their meditation based on purification of morality, *sīla-visuddhi*.

## **Second Stage: The Purification of Mind**

*(Cittta-visuddhi)*

The second stage of purification is Purification of Mind (*cittta-visuddhi*). If yogis want to attain insight knowledge, the mind must be purified from all kinds of defilements. It literally refers to *jhāna* or its neighborhood concentration. In the case of pure *vipassanā*, however, the equivalent concentration is developed by observing mental and physical phenomena moment by moment. When the mind is well concentrated on any mental or physical phenomena, it is free from all hindrances. This

is known as purification of mind, *citta-visuddhi*.

With this purification, the mind can penetrate into the mental and physical processes (*nāma* and *rūpa*) to realize their true nature.

### **Third Stage: The Purification of View**

*(Diṭṭhi-visuddhi)*

**Attributed to the 1<sup>st</sup> Insight**

The third stage of purification is Purification of View (*diṭṭhi-visuddhi*). When yogis penetrate into the true nature of mental and physical phenomena, they do not take them to be a person or a being, a soul or a self. Then they have purified their view, or have attained Purification of View (*diṭṭhi-visuddhi*). This purification of view is attributed to the first insight, the insight into the discernment of mental and physical phenomena (*nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*).

### **The 1<sup>st</sup> Insight: Insight into the Discernment of Mental and Physical Phenomena**

*(nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa)*

When yogis experience the specific characteristics of body and mind (mental and physical phenomena), it means that they realize *nāma* and *rūpa*. If they experience hardness and softness of the body without being conscious of the bodily form, they realize the specific characteristics of the earth element (*pathavī-dhātu*). This is the Insight Knowledge of Discerning Mental and Physical Phenomena (*nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*). Then, they do not identify hardness

or softness with a person, a being, a self or a soul but just a natural process of physical phenomena. Thus, they purify their view by removing the wrong idea of a person, a being, a self or a soul (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi* or *atta-diṭṭhi*) regarding this hardness or softness. So yogis no longer have wrong view. They then attain Purification of View, *diṭṭhi-visuddhi*.

Sometimes they experience the process of the rising movement and the mind that notes it. They realize only these dual processes of mental and physical phenomena. Apart from this pair of subject and object, the noting mind and the physical object, they do not see anything everlasting that is called soul or self. Hence they remove the wrong view of a person, a being, a self or a soul. This is also the Purification of View (*diṭṭhi-visuddhi*).

In the daily activities, when such an activity as stretching of a hand, putting down a leg, sitting down or getting up from the seat occurs, there are many actions and movements involved in it. If yogis are able to note these actions and movements mindfully, attentively and precisely, they will realize that these are the movements of a physical process. Then they realize their noting mind as a mental process. In this way, they differentiate the physical process of the movement and the mental process that notes it. This is also the Insight Knowledge of Discerning the Mental and Physical Phenomena (*nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*).

When they distinguish stretching movement and the noting mind more and more clearly, more and more deeply, they then realize that apart from these dual processes of mental and physical phenomena there is no person, no being, no soul or no self. They do

not identify either stretching movement or the noting mind with a person, a being, a soul or a self. So, they remove the wrong view of a person, a being or the wrong view of a self or a soul (*sakkāya-ditṭhi* or *atta-ditṭhi*). Hence they have purified their view. This is also the Purification of View (*ditṭhi-visuddhi*).

## **Fourth Stage: The Purification by Overcoming Doubt**

*(Kaṅkhā-vitarāṇa-visuddhi)*

**Attributed to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Insight**

The fourth stage of purification is Purification by Overcoming Doubt (*Kaṅkhā-vitarāṇa-visuddhi*). "Kaṅkhā" means doubt, "visuddhi" means purification. When yogis have attained the second insight knowledge, Knowledge of Cause and Effect (*paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa*), they no longer have doubts about their past and future existences. Thus, they overcome doubt. This is purification by overcoming doubt. Hence, this purification is attributed to the second insight.

To attain this insight knowledge, yogis have to observe every intention, wish, or want that leads every action or movement. All actions are preceded by intention, wishing, or wanting. That is why yogis have to be mindful of every intention before every action or movement. When they have an intention to lift their foot, they should note it as "intending, intending," then "lifting, lifting." When they have an intention to bend their arm, they should note "intending, intending," then "bending, bending." While they are eating, they have an intention to open their mouth to take food then, first of all, they should note "intending, intending," then "opening, opening." In the act of opening the

mouth, the intention is the cause and the opening of the mouth is the effect.

Without wishing or wanting to come here, could yogis come here? Then what is the cause and what is the effect? The act of coming is the effect and the intention to come is the cause. Why does one sit on the chair? Yes, it is the intention that makes him sit on the chair. Is there any sitter? If we think there is a person who sits on the chair, we should bring a corpse from the hospital and make it sit on the chair. It cannot sit because there is no intention. It is only intention, the mental process, that causes an action or movement. So is the sitting posture a man, a woman, a novice (*samanera*) or a monk (*bhikkhu*)? It is none of these. In the sitting posture, there is a physical process supported by the internal and external wind element (*vayyo-dhātu*). Sitting is a physical process.

So if yogis want to sit, first of all, they have to note "intending, intending," then "sitting, sitting." All the sitting movements must be observed after yogis have noted intention. When they bend their arm, they must, first of all, note the intention, then the movements of the arm bending. When they stretch out their arm, first of all, they must note the intention as "intending, intending" then the movements of stretching as "stretching, stretching." When their concentration is deep enough, by being aware of intention and the actions that follow it, they come to realize that nothing arises without causes. Everything arises depending on causes.

Therefore, a so-called person, a man or a woman, is just a process of cause and effect. There is no doer, no one that does anything. The belief there is a person who does the sitting is called *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* or *atta-*

*ditthi* (wrong view of a doer). If yogis thoroughly realize the cause and effect relationship, they will see that it is just a natural process. Then there is no "person" that became a president; there is no "person" that became a king. Then what existed in the past? In the past, there existed only a process of cause and effect. Then yogis have no doubt about their past existence. In this way, they can overcome doubts about their past existence. This is known as Purification by Overcoming Doubt (*karikhāvitaraṇa-visuddhi*).

Some yogis find it difficult to observe intention before every action because they are not patient enough. Yogis must be patient with their actions or movements so that they can observe the intention before every action or movement. When they are able to observe intention before lifting their foot, they will come to realize how intention is related to the lifting of the foot. Then again, when they are able to observe intention before the pushing of the foot, they will come to realize how intention is related to the pushing movement of the foot. When they are able to observe intention before the dropping of the foot, they will also come to realize how intention is related to the dropping movement of the foot and so on. When they come to realize this relationship of cause and effect, they have almost completely realized the Law of Cause and Effect. By this realization, they overcome doubt as to whether there is any personality or entity, which is everlasting in us. Then what really exists is just the process of cause and effect.

## **The 2<sup>nd</sup> Insight: Insight knowledge of Conditionality (Paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa)**

The second *vipassanā* insight means the insight knowledge of cause and effect. In other words, it is the insight knowledge of causality or the insight knowledge of conditionality. When yogis strive their best and attain deeper and deeper concentration, they realize the cause and effect of mental and physical phenomena (*nāma* and *rūpa*). They are called persons who have attained the Insight Knowledge of Conditionality (*paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa*).

It is at this stage that yogis realize that the whole world arises dependent on its conditions. Through their own experience of cause and effect, they overcome the doubt about past existences and realize the absence of an everlasting soul or self. This stage is called Purification of Insight by Overcoming Doubt, *kaṅkhā-vitarana-visuddhi*.

In sitting meditation, yogis observe or note the rising movement and the falling movement of the abdomen, making a mental note as "rising, falling; rising, falling" and perceiving actual movements of the rising process and the falling process. When the abdomen rises, they note "rising" as they are aware of the rising movement. When the abdomen falls, they note "falling" as they are aware of the falling movement. When concentration is deep enough, they realize that because there is a rising movement, there arises the mind that notes it; because there is a falling movement, there arises the mind that notes it. In this way, they realize the rising movement, the object, is the cause and the noting mind, the subject, is the effect. So they perceive cause

and effect.

While they are contemplating on the rising and falling movements, occasionally their breath becomes weaker and weaker and gradually fade away. They cannot feel them. Then they get puzzled, thinking, "There are no rising and falling movements. What should I do? What shall I observe?" But they realize that because there is no rising or falling movement, there is no mind that notes them. Here also, they experience cause and effect: the absence of the object is the cause and the absence of the noting mind is the effect.

When the rising and falling movements do not appear, yogis do not note anything because they think there is no object to observe. This is also the realization of cause and effect, but not very clearly. Then, the meditation teacher instructs them, "if you do not find the rising and falling movements, you have sitting posture and touching points to note as an alternative." Then whenever yogis do not see the rising-falling movements very well, they find sitting posture and touching points as objects and note them "sitting, touching; sitting, touching." The objects, sitting and touching points, are the cause and the noting mind is the effect. This is also the Insight Knowledge of Causality.

In the same way, while yogis observe the rising and falling movements, sometimes there arises thought or thinking about something. When they realize there is a thought, they notes "thinking, thinking." Thinking process is the object, the mind that notes it is the subject. Then he notes "thinking, thinking, thinking" attentively and energetically. Suddenly, the thinking stops. Then they do not find any object to note and get puzzled about what to do. Later on, they realize that,

according to the principle of *vipassanā* meditation, if there is no thought to note, they must observe rising-falling movements of the abdomen, the primary object, again. Then they note "rising, falling..." They realize that the thinking process is the cause and the mind that notes it is the effect. When there is no thinking process, there is also no noting-mind. Here also, they realize the cause and the effect.

When yogis practice walking meditation, they note "intention, lifting, pushing, dropping, touching, pressing." If their concentration is deep enough, they very clearly know the intention and the lifting of the foot. Then they feel that the foot is lifted by itself. In this way, repeatedly they experience this nature: whenever they note the intention, the foot is lifted by itself. In the beginning, they feel surprised at their own experience because they have never experienced it before. But later on, when they experience it repeatedly, they realize that the intention is the cause and the lifting of the foot is the effect. Without the intention, there is no lifting movement. Without the intention, there is no pushing movement. Without the intention, there is no dropping movement. Because of the intention, there arises the lifting movement. In this way, gradually they realize that the intention is the cause and the lifting movement, the pushing movement, and the like are the effects. The more they experience these repeatedly, the clearer they understand cause and effect.

While walking, yogis sometimes may feel their body is like a robot, sometimes like a puppet. Initially they do not know that there is the intention. That is why they feel that their body is like a robot or a puppet. They experience that there is no person, no being, or

no I who is walking. But it is the intention that causes the movements of the foot and so the body is pushed forward. When their noting mind is more and more deeply concentrated on each movement of the foot, it is very clear to them that it is the intention that causes the movement of the foot. So the intention is the cause and the movement is the effect. In this way, they realize cause and effect, conditionality of *nāma* and *rūpa* (mental and physical phenomena). In the same way, they gradually realize that the intention is the cause, the pushing movement is the effect, and the intention is the cause, the dropping movement is the effect...

Similarly, in the daily activities they note "intention, getting up;" "intention, sitting down;" "intention, stretching;" "intention, bending" and so on. Then they realize that intention is the cause, the movements are the effects. Whenever their concentration is deep enough, they realize cause and effect clearly. This is the Insight Knowledge of Cause and Effect or the Insight Knowledge of Conditionality (*paccaya-pariggaha-ñāna*).

Because yogis realize cause and effect, they believe in *kamma* and its result. The action or the cause is *kamma*, its result is *kamma-phala*. If they do an evil action, it will produce bad result for them. If they do meritorious deed, it will bring a good result for them. In this way, they believe in cause and effect. Since they believe in cause and effect through their own personal experiences of *Dhamma*, they are unlikely to do any evil deed which will produce bad result for them. As they do not do any bad action or evil deed, they will not be reborn in the four woeful states (*apaya* worlds) in the next existence.

So yogis who have attained *paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa* (who has realized cause and effect) are known as Little Stream-enterer (*cūla-sotāpanna*) and will not be reborn in the four woeful states in the next existence. For the existences after the next, it is not sure whether he'll be reborn in the four *apāya* worlds or not. Those who have attained the first stage of the enlightenment, *Sotāpatti-magga-ñāṇa*, will never be reborn in the woeful states (*apāya* worlds) in future existences. So, for the next existence, the person who has attained *paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa* is similar to the noble person of the first stage enlightenment (*Sotāpanna Ariyapuggala*). This is why he is called *cūla-sotāpanna*.

To attain the second *vipassanā* insight (*paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa*) is not very difficult. If yogis put forth enough effort in their practice and strive to have more continuity of mindfulness, their concentration will be deeper and deeper. Then they can realize cause and effect of mental and physical phenomena. When yogis, who have attained the first stage of insight knowledge (*nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*), proceed with intensive practice, they will be able to attain the second stage of the insight knowledge, *paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa*, in a short time.

During a retreat, many yogis have attained *paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa*, the Insight Knowledge of Conditionality. Those yogis who have attained *paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa*, have also attained *karikhavitarana visuddhi*, Purification by Overcoming Doubt about the so-called everlasting soul or self.

As it is not difficult to attain the second stage of the Insight Knowledge of Conditionality, yogis should strive

their best to be aware of whatever arises in their body and mind so that they have continuous mindfulness, deep concentration, and clear insight into cause and effect and eventually attain the cessation of the suffering, *Nibbāna*.

### **Fifth Stage: The Purification of Knowledge and Vision of Path and Non-path (Maggā-magga-ñāṇa-dāssana-visuddhi)**

**Attributed to The 3<sup>rd</sup> and The 4<sup>th</sup> Insights**

The fifth stage of purification is Purification of Knowledge and Vision of Path and Non-Path (*maggā-magga-ñāṇa-dāssana-visuddhi*). In this stage of purification, yogis have very good experiences: lightness, happiness, tranquility, serenity etc. Sometimes they may feel their body has become light, as if it has been lifted or as if they were flying in the sky. Their mindfulness is very keen and their effort is moderate, firm and steady, neither slack nor vigorous nor rigid. Their concentration is deep. So they experience peace, calmness, serenity, happiness, rapture and so on. This is a very pleasing and inspiring stage that yogis must go through. This stage may be experienced in about two weeks if yogis practice strenuously. But some yogis go through this stage even within a week.

With such good experiences, yogis may think "This must be *nibbāna*. This is great. I have never experienced it before, it is better than having a million dollars. Now I have attained *nibbāna*." Thus, they do not go further because they are clinging to it. They think that if they go further, they will go beyond *nibbāna*. If yogis hold that this stage is *nibbāna*, this is the wrong

path. Therefore, they must continue to meditate and practice strenuously. This is only a very minor and trivial experience as compared with the real *nibbāna* and they should not be content with it. This fourth purification, the Purification of Knowledge and Vision of Path and Non-Path (*maggā-magga-ñāna-dāssana-visuddhi*), is attributed to the two stages of *vipassanā* insight, the third and the fourth.

### **The 3<sup>rd</sup> Insight: Insight into the Three Common Characteristics by Direct Experience (*paccakkha sam-masana-ñāna*).**

The third insight is the Insight into Three Common Characteristics of Mental and Physical Phenomena (*sam-masana-ñāna*). The three common characteristics are impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anatta*).

When yogis proceed with more effort in their meditation practice, gradually mindfulness becomes more powerful and more continuous. As a result, concentration becomes deeper. As they observe the process of the rising and falling movements or stretching movements more attentively and precisely, they realize the movements as a series of tiny broken movements arising and passing away one after another. Then they realize not only individual characteristics of wind element but also common characteristics (*samañña-lakkhaṇa*) of wind element, which include impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), and impersonal nature (*anatta*).

As yogis realize these common characteristics, they attain the third *vipassanā* insight, the Insight

into Three Common Characteristics of Mental and Physical Phenomena (*sam-masana-ñāna*). They then comprehend all the three common characteristics of existence.

In the two previous insights, they realize the individual characteristics of body-mind process together with its cause. In this third insight, thanks to strong concentration, they realize the common characteristics of mental or physical phenomena clearly. But in this stage, they suffer a great deal of physical discomfort (*kāyika-dukkha*) such as pain, aching, stiffening, numbness, etc.

When a pain arises, yogis should observe it more attentively. If possible, the noting-mind should get into the center of the pain and observe it even though the pain becomes more and more severe. Before the first pain has disappeared, there arises another pain. Then they note it more energetically and attentively. They must deal with it with utmost energy, getting into the center of the pain as much as possible. Again, before this pain has disappeared, another discomfort comes up.

What yogis experience here is suffering. When they see the mental and physical processes more deeply and more clearly, they see the pain sometimes exploding or abruptly disappearing, sometimes gradually disintegrating, sometimes dispersing, sometimes gradually decreasing and then finally passing away. It is not everlasting because it is subject to impermanence (*anicca*). Then yogis realize the impermanency of both unpleasant physical and mental sensations.

Then they are able to deal with it successfully. It means that though the physical discomfort may be severe, they are able to observe it and realize its

initial, middle and final phases. In this way, they note one physical discomfort after another and experience their arising and passing away. They realize the impermanence of any mental process or physical process or sensation which is noted.

When yogis clearly see very swift arising and passing away of the unpleasant sensation in the pain, they realize suffering or unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*) in a sense of being constantly oppressed by arising and passing away. Then they do not have any idea of a person, a being, a self or soul regarding the pain and realize its impersonal nature, *anatta*. There is no everlasting self or soul, person or being. What really exists is just the process of mental and physical phenomena which are arising and passing away one after another. They arise disregarding yogis' wish. So they are uncontrollable according to their impersonal nature (*anatta*). In this way, yogis realize the common characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anatta*) of mental or physical phenomena.

This insight knowledge which realizes the common characteristics of mental and physical processes is called Insight into the Three Common Characteristics by Direct Experience (*paccakkha sam-masana-ñāna*).

So in this stage of insight knowledge (*sam-masana-ñāna*), yogis have to be patient with physical discomfort such as pain, aching, stiffening, and numbness. Unless they are patient with it, they do not see the inner nature or their common characteristics. When yogis have thoroughly realized the true nature in the sense of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and non-self, then gradually physical discomfort becomes decreasing

and subsides. Yogis do not have any unbearable painful sensation towards the end of this third stage. Their mind becomes fresh and energetic because there is little or no pain.

At this stage of insight knowledge, yogis' mind becomes concentrated to a large extent and there are only a few thoughts occasionally arising but they can observe them. They can concentrate their mind well on each mental state or physical process which is arising at that moment.

But here *sam-masana-ñāṇa* has another sense also. That is Insight into Three Common Characteristics by Inference (*anumāna-ñāṇa*). When yogis directly experience the arising and passing away of mental and physical phenomena which are observed, sometimes they reflect upon the actual experience and realize the impermanency, suffering, and impersonal nature of the other mental and physical processes which are not observed. So this insight knowledge comes about by inference from what yogis have actually experienced.

Yogis come to judge that just as this mental or physical process, which is observed, is subject to impermanence, so are other mental and physical processes, which are not presently observed, subject to impermanence in the same manner. All the mental states or physical processes in the past, present and future, far or near, internal or external, coarse or subtle are subject to impermanence in the same manner. This knowledge is Insight Knowledge by Inference, *anumāna-ñāṇa* in Pāli. Sometimes we say *naya-vipassanā*, Knowledge by Inference from the actual experience of mental and physical phenomena which are observed.

## **The 4<sup>th</sup> Insight: Insight Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away of Mental and Physical Phenomena (*udaya-bbaya-ñāṇa*)**

The fourth insight is the insight into arising and passing away of mental and physical phenomena (*udaya-bbaya-ñāṇa*). When the third insight is well developed, yogis comprehend the three common characteristics of mental and physical phenomena both by direct experience and by inference. Then gradually their concentration becomes deeper and deeper. So the painful sensation becomes decreasing and eventually it disappears. Then they feel happy and delight at the noting of any mental state or physical process. The concentration becomes deeper and the mind becomes calmer and more serene. Then yogis feel a very sublime feeling of tenderness and happiness; they feel rapture and tranquility. Their mind is not disturbed by anything. Their mindfulness is very good, sharp, agile, pliant, always ready to note any object very easily. The effort also becomes steady, neither tense nor lax, neither strong nor weak. This steady and moderate effort naturally arises, helping the mindfulness to note every object very readily at the moment of its occurrence.

It is at this stage of insight knowledge that yogis see some light, sometimes a brilliant light, sometimes a faint light, sometimes a light like a fluorescent light, sometimes a light similar to the head light of a car and so on. Usually none of these lights last very long. It comes, yogis note it and it goes. But there may be some light which lasts for ten to twenty seconds or so. In this case, though yogis observe the light, subconsciously

they may like it and the light may last long. So if yogis take delight in the lights and are attached to them, the lights will come very often and very brilliantly.

One of the yogis, who was about thirty years old, saw some lights. Gradually the light became brighter and brighter. She felt delighted at it. But when she was instructed to note, she noted it. When she noted it, the light went away. Then very instantly another light came and she noted it. But subconsciously she was attached to it. This lasted for about twenty days. She was disappointed with the light experience. She couldn't get over it. It is like a desire or craving but not so strong. Very stealthily it comes into the mind. Unconsciously it is attached to the object. It is called *nikanti*, one of the ten corruptions of insight knowledge, which means a very subtle attachment.

In the Buddha's time, there was a monk who practiced *samatha* meditation and attained deep concentration. After he had attained *jhāna* concentration, he switched his practice to *vipassanā* meditation, observing bodily and mental processes. He attained until the third stage of the Path knowledge. But after some time, he felt delighted in the attainment of *jhāna* concentration and he had *nikanti*, a very subtle attachment to the *jhāna* concentration. His insight knowledge went up one after another, then again came down because of that attachment to *jhāna* concentration. So he couldn't attain Arahantship. The Buddha said that it was *dhamma-rāga*, *dhamma-nandī*. *Dhamma-rāga* means attachment to *Dhamma*; *dhamma-nandī* means delight in the *Dhamma* that is *jhāna* concentration. In this case, both *dhamma-rāga* and *dhamma-nandī* are *nikanti*. That monk himself did not know it. Only the Buddha

knew it and explained it to the Venerable Ananda that the monk being unable to attain Arahantship.

When yogis have passed over the third stage of Insight Into Three Common Characteristics of Mental and Physical Phenomena, they get into very "bad" good experience in the early part of the fourth stage of Insight Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away of Mental and Physical Phenomena, *udaya-bbaya-ñāṇa*. Because they overcome a very difficult stage, that is the painful stage, gradually the mind becomes clear concentrated, light, happy and rapturous. There are many good experiences in this stage. Because concentration is very good, yogis feel tranquil and calm. The mind is very agile, pliant and subtle. The whole body is suffused with a very tender feeling of rapture and happiness. Then yogis subconsciously are attached to it. They feel delight in these "bad" good experiences. These are called *vipassan'upakkilesa*, the corruptions of Insight.

*Upakkilesa* can be translated literally as defilement. These good experiences defile yogis' insight knowledge a great deal so that they cannot proceed to the higher stages of insight. So they remain stagnant here. The Venerable Nyanaponika Thera translated *upakkilesa* as corruption. Actually there are ten defilements of the insight. The lady yogi I mentioned earlier had wasted her time for about twenty days because of the light which is one of the defilement, *upakkilesa*.

Yogis are taught by their teacher that these are good experiences but they are also hindrances to their meditation. So yogis must not be attached to them. What they should do is to just note them. Then they can get over these good experiences. These are

trivial things compared to the bliss of *nibbāna*. They should proceed with their practice. Since the mind is still concentrated, it can become sharper and more penetrating.

Whatever object yogis observe, they see it disappearing. Whatever feeling or sensation they note, they see it disappearing. Everything they note is disappearing. Then they judge thus: "Whatever arises is subject to passing away." When they note lifting movements of the foot during walking meditation, they experience many broken movements of the foot, arising and passing away incessantly. Here they realize the constant appearance and disappearance of physical phenomena. When a thought arises and they note it, it disappears. Then another thought comes and goes; then another one appears and disappears. They come to judge, "Oh! These thoughts are subject to impermanence. None of these thoughts are everlasting. They are arising and instantly passing away."

It is somewhat difficult to realize appearance and disappearance of thoughts. To realize appearance and disappearance of physical processes such as rising movements, falling movements, lifting, pushing, dropping are not so difficult. This stage of knowledge is called Insight Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away of Mental and Physical Phenomena, *udaya-bbaya-ñāṇa*.

Now I have explained the fourth Insight Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away of Mental and Physical Phenomena (*udaya-bbaya-ñāṇa*). Some of yogis have experienced this knowledge very well. Even the severe pain gives them this knowledge. When they make an attempt to get into the center of the pain attentively and energetically, the mind gradually gets into the

center of the pain. Then the pain cannot stay still, so it explodes or disintegrates. Some yogis experienced this. Sometimes the pain dispersed gradually. Sometimes the pain exploded when the noting mind got into it. It means yogis were realizing arising and passing away of feeling or sensation, *vedana-kkhandā*, aggregate of feeling or sensation. Now that yogis have experienced arising and passing away of mental states or physical processes or both, they are endowed with the fifth factor for successful practice as previously mentioned. They are sure to attain enlightenment if they proceed with their practice intensively.

## **Sixth Stage: The Purification of Knowledge and Vision of The Course of Practice**

*(Paṭipadā-ñāna-dāssana-visuddhi)*

**Attributed to The Nine Insights from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup>**

The sixth stage of Purification is Purification of Knowledge and Vision of the Course of Practice, known as *paṭipadā-ñāna-dassana-visuddhi*. Herein, *paṭipadā* means the course of practice, *ñāna* means knowledge, *dassana* means vision. *Ñāna* and *dassana* are here referred to the same thing. In order to lay emphasis on penetration, the text used the two words in the same sense, knowledge and vision. So, *paṭipadā-ñāna-dassana-visuddhi* means Purification of Knowledge and Vision of the Course of Practice. It means that when yogis have passed the Purification of Knowledge and Vision of Path and Non-Path (*maggā-magga-ñāna-dassana-visuddhi*), they are on the right path which leads to Arahantship or the cessation of suffering.

If yogis were on the wrong path, they would stop at the Purification of Knowledge and Vision of Path and Non-Path (*maggā-magga-ñāna-dassana-visuddhi*). Because they are on the right path, they will have to go through nine more stages of *vipassanā* insight to approach the goal. So they can judge that their course of practice is right. They do not have any doubt about the course of practice. Then there is the Purification of Knowledge and Vision of the Course of Practice (*paṭipadā-ñāna-dassana-visuddhi*).

So, the Purification of Knowledge and Vision of the Course of the Practice, (*paṭipadā-ñāna-dassana-visuddhi*) is attributed to nine progressive stages of insights from the fifth insight to the thirteenth insight as follows:

1. The Insight Knowledge of Dissolution (*Bharigā-ñāna*)
2. The Insight Knowledge of Fearful Nature (*Bhaya-ñāna*)
3. The Insight Knowledge of Misery Nature (*Ādīnava-ñāna*)
4. The Insight Knowledge of Disgusting Nature (*Nibbidā-ñāna*)
5. The Insight Knowledge with Desire for Deliverance (*Muñcitu-kamyatā-ñāna*)
6. The Insight Knowledge with Re-observation (*Paṭisarikhā-ñāna*)
7. The Insight Knowledge with Equanimity (*Sarikhārupekkhā-ñāna*)
8. The Insight Knowledge with Adaptation (*Anuloma-ñāna*)

## 9. The Insight Knowledge on Borderline (*Gotrabhu-ñāṇa*)

### **The Fifth Insight: The Insight Knowledge of Dissolution**

*(Bhariga-ñāṇa)*

When the knowledge of arising and passing away of mental and physical phenomena become clear and mature, whatever yogis note, it is realized as impermanent: arising and passing away. When they note any pain, stiffening, itching or aching, they see the appearance and disappearance of painful sensation one after another very clearly. Sometimes they see it as the appearance and disappearance of waves of unpleasant sensation one after another. When they note the rising and falling movements, they see many broken movements of rising and falling processes very clearly, arising and passing away one after another. Later on, they come to see very swift appearance and disappearance of the noted object.

Then they see the disappearance or passing away more than appearance or arising. Eventually yogis rarely sees the arising or appearing. So they feel that all mental states and physical processes are very instantly passing away, very instantly vanishing. Sometimes they feel very swift disappearance, dissolution of the noticed object. In this stage of knowledge, all forms are lost. Yogis have lost the sense of the form of the body, the hand, the leg, and so on. What they are realizing is just disappearance, dissolution and the very swift vanishing of phenomena.

Sometimes yogis feel that they are unconscious for a second or two and lose their mindfulness. This means

they see both object and subject are disappearing so swiftly that they occasionally experience the subconscious mind. When the concentration is good enough, they are able to see very swift disappearance of the process of consciousness. This is the Insight Knowledge of Dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*).

But yogis do not easily get over this insight knowledge because they need to see the dissolution of mental and physical phenomena very well. So they stay in this stage of insight knowledge for some time. It is very good as there is no painful sensation, no itching and no aching. Although yogis sit for a very long time, they have no tendency to get up. They can sit for three or four hours very easily and comfortably, seeing successive disappearance and dissolution of all mental and physical phenomena which are observed. Occasionally they lose their sense of their bodily form. What they are realizing is just very swift disappearance and dissolution of mental and physical phenomena.

### **The Sixth Insight: The Insight Knowledge of Fearful Nature (*Bhaya-ñāṇa*)**

All conditioned phenomena, *saṅkhāra*, are subject to dissolution, ever passing away. There is nothing that lasts even for a moment or a second. Sometimes yogis feel fear but do not know what they fear about. Actually in their mind, they see the dissolution and the disappearance of the mental and physical phenomena. Gradually they feel and realize that constant dissolution of mental and physical phenomena are fearful. This insight knowledge is called Knowledge of Fearful Nature of Mental and Physical Phenomena (*bhaya-ñāṇa*).

This fear is different from the fear of seeing a tiger. When seeing a tiger, we have aversion to it and fear arises out of aversion (*dosa*). So that fear is *dosa*. *Dosa* is a unwholesome mental state (*akusala*). But this fear in insight meditation (*vipassanā*) is not *dosa*. Though yogis, in this case, take all mental and physical phenomena as fearful, they do not have any aversion to them. They just perceive fear, that's all. This fear is not unwholesome (*akusala*). On the contrary, it is wholesome (*kusala*). It is a kind of insight knowledge that realizes the mental and physical phenomena as just fearful.

### **The Seven Insight: The Insight Knowledge of Misery Nature (Ādīnava-ñāṇa)**

When yogis proceed with his intensive practice, distractions such as thoughts are very few. Even though they arise, yogis observe them and they disappear very instantly. Sometimes yogis come to know a thought is about to arise, they observe it and it does not arise at all. In this way, their concentration becomes deeper and deeper. Then yogis are disgusted with the fearful mental and physical phenomena which are found ever disappearing, ever vanishing. As yogis are disgusted with them, they do not feel delight in them. They feel miserable about these mental formations and physical processes. This is the Insight Knowledge of Misery Nature of Mental and Physical Phenomena (*Ādīnava-ñāṇa*).

Then yogis do not feel happy with their meditation even though they do not have much distractions or thoughts. Most of the time their concentration is good enough but they are not happy with their meditational

experience. They are in a depressed mood, reluctant to do something as if they are disinterested in meditation. Sometimes they think their meditation has gone down. Sometimes they think it is hopeless to go on with their practice. Actually they take interest in it though their facial expression is gloomy. If they attentively observe whatever they feel, it is not very difficult to get over it. Yogis can pass over this stage easily when they observe the situation they are in.

### **The Eighth Insight: The Insight Knowledge of Disgusting Nature (*Nibbidā-ñāṇa*)**

At this stage, yogis feel bored about the formation, also about their life and the world. They could not find any place where they could live happily and comfortably. Sometimes they feel they should leave the meditation retreat and run away. Sometimes they want to throw themselves into the sea or the ravine because they do not find anything satisfactory in the world. Sometimes, in spite of good concentration, they have a tendency to get up after thirty minute's sitting even though they do not have any painful sensation or aching. Concentration is good, meditation is good but they have the desire to get up because they feel sitting meditation unsatisfactory.

Sometimes yogis feel boredom without any obvious reason and want to go back home. So they go to their room and pack their things and come to the meditation teacher to ask for permission to leave. When the teacher says: "Yes, you can go back. Please wait one more day, just observe what you feel." Because the teacher is respected and beloved, so yogis obey him and reply, "Yes Venerable Sir, I'll stay one more day." Then yogis

continue their practice, observing what they feel like "bored... bored," "unhappy... unhappy" and so on. Only one night passed. The next day, the teacher calls them, "Today you are going home?" "I will not go back. Now my meditation is very good," they said. This stage of insight knowledge is very tricky. It is called the Insight Knowledge of Disgusting Nature of Mental and Physical Phenomena (*nibbidā-ñāṇa*).

### **The Ninth Insight: The Insight Knowledge with Desire for Deliverance** (*Muñcitu-kamyatā-ñāṇa*)

Then yogis want to be free from the bondage of existence. However, when they proceed with the practice, they experience various physical discomforts such as pain, aching, stiffening, etc. Yogis were patient with them in the earlier stages of insight knowledge, say the first, second and third stages of insight and observed them. Now they have physical discomforts again. They notice them but have no patience at all. They often have a tendency to change postures or to get up. But actually they do not do so. Yogis proceed with the practice. This is the stage of Insight Knowledge with Desire for Deliverance (*muñcitu-kamyatā-ñāṇa*). So this stage of insight is also very tricky.

When the teacher explains and instructs them to observe what they are experiencing, they do it very well and pass over this *vipassanā* insight.

### **The Tenth Insight: The Insight Knowledge with Re-observation** (*Paṭisainkhā-ñāṇa*)

As yogis want to get rid of these mental and physical

phenomena which are ever arising and passing away, they strive their best to notice whatever object arising attentively. The more they put forth effort in their practice, the deeper their concentration becomes. The deeper their concentration becomes, the more severe painful sensation they experience. But yogis are not reluctant to observe it because they know that unless they observe it, they will not be able to get over this state. Sometimes they feel the painful sensation very intense and severe. But they are not reluctant, they strive their best, observing it. Then, it disappears instantly. So they experience more deeply the three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anatta*). This is the tenth stage of insight knowledge, the Insight Knowledge with Re-observation (*paṭisarikhā-ñāṇa*).

### **The Eleventh Insight: The Insight Knowledge with Equanimity (*Saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*)**

Later on, yogis pass over the tenth stage of insight knowledge. All painful sensations are gone. They do not experience discomfort anymore. They feel tranquil and peaceful. Their concentration becomes deeper and stable but they no longer feel happy. What they experience is the arising and passing away of the observed object all the time. The mind is concentrated on it. In this stage of insight knowledge, even though yogis send their mind out to another object which they like most, the mind does not go out to the object or if it does, it will quickly return to the meditative object. The mind becomes elastic. This is the Insight Knowledge with Equanimity About Formations, *saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*, the eleventh stage of insight knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*).

Because of deep concentration, the insight is penetrating, sharp and clear. So whatever object yogis observe, they see its appearance and disappearance. Every object noted is seen as appearing and disappearing. Also their noting becomes stable. Yogis feel comfortable, tranquil, and serene but they are neither happy nor unhappy about conditioned phenomena, namely, mind and matter (*sarikhāra*).

Yogis may experience this knowledge for about five to ten days, sometimes one month. But it is very near to the goal. I think it is natural for yogis to enjoy such a good stage of insight knowledge before they reach the goal. Some yogis stay in this stage for even one and a half months.

In this stage, yogis have to observe more attentively and energetically so that they will not remain here. If they observe the object normally and steadily, their meditation will get stuck in this stage for one or two months. So, they should observe more attentively and energetically, then they come to experience very swift arising and passing away of mentality and physicality which are observed.

### **The Twelfth Insight: The Insight Knowledge with Adaptation (*Anuloma-ñāna*)**

Then yogis experience the next insight knowledge. This knowledge is in conformity with the previous insight knowledge and the following insight and enlightenments. So it is called Insight Knowledge with Adaptation, *Anuloma-ñāna*. In this stage of insight, yogis experience very smooth and rapid appearance and disappearance of *nāma* and *rūpa* most of the time.

## The Thirteenth Insight: The Insight Knowledge on Borderline (*Gotrabhu-ñāna*)

If yogis continue with their practice, they will come to the borderline in a short time. In two or three thought moments, they have reached the line and stand on it. The border here means the border between the lineage of an ordinary person (*puthujjana*) and the lineage of a Noble Person (*ariya*).

When yogis are on the boundary, do they want to go ahead or go back? If they want to go back, their attentions turn towards the past, but if they want to go ahead, their attentions look ahead. Ahead is the cessation of conditioned things, i.e. the cessation of all kinds of mentality (*nāma*) and physicality (*rūpa*). If yogis want to proceed, standing on the boundary or border, they look ahead with reflection on the past. Then they will know, "If I go ahead, all kinds of suffering will cease to exist. So should I go ahead?" Yogis will think about it. The answer is yes, because they have been suffering for many aeons (*kappas*). The word *kappa* means countless numbers of existences. When yogis are at the boundary, they will also reflect on their past experiences, "I have been suffering for countless existences in this cycle of *dukkha*. I've had enough of this, I must put an end to this suffering."

Their attention is then turning towards the cessation of suffering. That borderline knowledge is known as *gotrabhu-ñāna*. *Gotra* means lineage, which here refers to the lineage of ordinary people (*puthujjana*). Once yogis pass that borderline, they become a Noble One (*Ariya*) because they have cut off the *puthujjana* lineage. Venerable Nyanaponika Thera translates it as maturity

knowledge or knowledge of maturity because yogis' knowledge is mature enough to attain the Path. Actually, we can translate it literally as the knowledge which has cut off the *puthujjana* lineage. When the *puthujjana* lineage has been cut off, yogis attain *Sotapatti-magga-ñāna* and become a Noble One, an Ariya.

## **Seven Stage: Purification of Knowledge and Vision (Ñāna-dassana-visuddhi) Attributed to Magga Enlightenment**

Immediately after the borderline insight knowledge (*gotrabhu-ñāna*), there is Path Knowledge (*Magga-ñāna*) which realizes the Four Noble Truths thoroughly:

1. *Dukkha-sacca*, the Truth of Suffering
2. *Samudaya-sacca*, the Truth of the Cause of Suffering
3. *Nirodha-sacca*, the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering
4. *Magga-sacca*, the Truth of the Way Leading to the Cessation of Suffering.

Because yogis realize these Four Noble Truths, their knowledge and vision of the Truths is purified. This purification is known as *ñāna-dassana-visuddhi*. *Ñāna* is knowledge, *dassana* is vision, *visuddhi* is purification. So *ñāna-dassana-visuddhi* is the Purification of Knowledge and Vision.

This is the seventh stage of purification. It refers to *Sotāpatti-magga-ñāna*, the first knowledge of the Path (*Magga-ñāna*). When yogis have attained this insight

knowledge, they become a *Sotāpanna*. *Sota* means stream and *āpanna* means enterer. So *Sotāpanna* means Stream-enterer. Those yogis who have attained *Sotāpatti-magga-ñāna* have entered into the current of the Noble Eightfold Path. Only then, have they attained Purification of Knowledge and Vision, *ñāna-dassana-visuddhi*.

### **The Fourteenth Insight: Path Knowledge (*Magga-ñāna*)**

When yogis have attained the First Knowledge of the Path, *Sotāpattimagga-ñāna*, the first stage of the Enlightenment, they uproot the wrong view of a person, a being, a self or a soul (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) and skeptical doubt about the Triple Gem (*vicikicchā*). Also, they can uproot the wrong view that rites and ritual can lead them to the cessation of suffering or *Nibbāna* (*sīlabbataparāmāsa diṭṭhi*).

A person who has attained *Sotāpattimagga-ñāna*, the first of the Path Knowledge, will keep the five precepts intact. He will never kill any beings, never take what is not given by the owner, always refrain from all sexual misconducts, abstain from telling lies, and never take any intoxicants. These five precepts are naturally observed by the Stream-enterer and are, therefore, called *Ariya-kanta-sīla*. That is why a *Sotāpanna* will never be reborn in the four woeful states after death.

### **Two More Insights: The 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Insights**

#### **The Fifteen Insight: Fruition Knowledge (*Phala-ñāna*)**

Following the Path Knowledge is the Fruition Knowledge (*Phala-ñāna*). With this knowledge, yogis enjoy the

bliss of enlightenment.

## The Sixteen Insight: Knowledge of Reviewing (*Paccavekkhana-ñāṇa*)

After Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa* and *phala-ñāṇa*), there comes the Knowledge of Reviewing, *Paccavekkhaṇa-ñāṇa*, which reviews what yogis have experienced in their meditative practice.

In summary, there are seven stages of purification yogis have to go through until they have attained their goal:

1. The Purification of Moral Conduct (*sīla-visuddhi*)
2. The Purification of Mind (*citta-visuddhi*)
3. The Purification of View (*ditṭhi-visuddhi*)
4. The Purification by Overcoming Doubt (*kankha-vitarana-visuddhi*)
5. The Purification of Knowledge and Vision of Path and Non-path (*maggā-magga-ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*)
6. The Purification of Knowledge and Vision of the Course of Practice (*patipadā-ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*)
7. The Purification of Knowledge and Vision (*ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*)

The first thirteen stages of insight are mundane knowledge or mundane wisdom (*lokiya-ñāṇa*). If yogis have enough effort and enough time, they can attain Path Knowledge (*Magga-ñāṇa*) and Fruition Knowledge (*Phala-ñāṇa*). These two stages of knowledge (*ñāṇa*)

are supramundane knowledges or supramundane wisdom (*lokuttara-ñāṇa*).

Nowadays, the world is full of mental defilements (*kilesas*) such as greed (*lobha*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). So, it's not easy to attain supramundane knowledge, *lokuttara-ñāṇa*, within seven or ten days or a month. Only if yogis have enough time, says one month, three months or one year, and puts forth enough effort in the practice, they may be able to attain supramundane wisdom, Path and Fruition Knowledge (*lokuttara-ñāṇa*).

# **Summary Table of Seven Stages of Purification**

**Attributed to their Corresponding  
*Vipassanā* Insights**

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**First Stage:** **Purification of Moral Conduct**  
(*Sīla-visuddhi*)

**Second Stage:** **Purification of Mind** (*Citta-visuddhi*)

**Third Stage:** **Purification of View** (*Ditthi-visuddhi*)

1<sup>st</sup> *Vipassanā* Insight: The Insight Knowledge of Discerning Mind and Matter (*Nāma-rūpa pariccheda ñāna*)

**Fourth Stage:** **Purification by Overcoming Doubt**  
(*Kankhavitarana visuddhi*)

2<sup>nd</sup> *Vipassanā* Insight: The Insight Knowledge of Conditionality (*Paccaya pariggaha ñāna*)

**Fifth Stage:** **Purification of Knowledge of Path and Non-path**  
(*Maggāmaggañānanadāssana-visuddhi*)

3<sup>rd</sup> *Vipassanā* Insight: The Insight Knowledge of Clear Comprehension (*Paccakkha-sammasanā-ñāna*)

4<sup>th</sup> *Vipassanā* Insight: The Insight Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away of Mental and Physical Phenomena (*Udayabaya ñāna*)

## **Sixth Stage: Purification of Knowledge and Vision of the Course**

*(Patipada-ñānadassana-visuddhi)*

5<sup>th</sup> *Vipassanā* Insight: The Insight Knowledge of Dissolution (*Bhanga ñāna*)

6<sup>th</sup> *Vipassanā* Insight: Insight Knowledge of Fearfulness (*Bhaya ñāna*)

7<sup>th</sup> *Vipassanā* Insight: Insight Knowledge of Misery (*Adinava ñāna*)

8<sup>th</sup> *Vipassanā* Insight: Insight Knowledge of Disgust (*Nibbidānupassanā ñāna*)

9<sup>th</sup> *Vipassanā* Insight: Insight Knowledge of Desire for Deliverance  
(*Muñcitukamyatā ñāna*)

10<sup>th</sup> *Vipassanā* Insight: Insight Knowledge of Re-observation (*Patisankha ñāna*)

11<sup>th</sup> *Vipassanā* Insight: Insight Knowledge of Equanimity (*Sankhār'upekkhāñāna*)

12<sup>th</sup> *Vipassanā* Insight: Insight Knowledge of Adaptation (*Anuloma ñāna*)

13<sup>th</sup> *Vipassanā* Insight: Insight Knowledge of Maturity (*Gotrabhu ñāna*)

## **Seventh Stage: Purification of Knowledge and Vision (*Ñānadassana visuddhi*)**

14<sup>th</sup> Insight: Path Knowledge  
(*Magga ñāna*)

## **Two remaining insights:**

15<sup>th</sup> Insight: Fruition Knowledge  
(*Phala ñāna*)

16<sup>th</sup> Insight: Knowledge of Reviewing  
(*Paccavekkhana ñāna*)

## SOME IMPORTANT POINTS

### Cūla-Sotāpanna

Some people mistakenly hold the view that *Sotāpanna* are of two kinds: *Senior Sotāpanna* and *Junior Sotāpanna*. It is because *Visuddhimagga* (the Path of Purification) and other commentaries mention that a yogi who has attained the second stage of the Insight Knowledge of Conditionality (*paccaya-pariggahañāṇa*) is a *cūla-sotāpanna*.

The word *cūla*, in some cases, refers to "junior" or "small." That's why some people mistakenly take *cūla-sotāpanna* as a "junior *sotāpanna*" or "small *sotāpanna*." But in this case, the word "*cūla*" in *cūla-sotāpanna* does not mean junior or small. It really means "similar," namely, a *cūla-sotāpanna* is similar to a *Sotāpanna*.

A *Sotāpanna* will never be reborn in the four woeful states or *apaya* worlds in all future existences. One who has attained *Paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa*, the Insight Knowledge of Conditionality, will not be reborn in any of the four woeful states only in the next existence. So for the next existence, *cūla-sotāpanna* is similar to a *Sotāpanna* in this respect. That is the meaning of "*cūla*" in *cūla-sotāpanna*. For this reason, the person who has attained *paccaya-pariggahañāṇa* is called *cūla-sotāpanna*.

### Samatha and Vipassanā

There are two types of meditation in Buddhism. One is *samatha* meditation and the other is *vipassanā* meditation. We should know the difference between

them. Here *samatha* means concentration and *vipassanā* insight or experiential knowledge of bodily and mental phenomena.

The purpose of *samatha* meditation is to attain deep concentration of the mind on a single object. So *samatha* meditation is practiced to attain very strong concentration of the mind such as access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*) or absorption (*appana-samadhi, jhāna*). So when yogis practice *samatha* meditation, they have to concentrate their mind on a single conceptual object (except for two objects taken by the Immaterial Jhānas) but whatever the object may be, the aim of *samatha* meditation is to obtain deep concentration of the mind.

In this practice, yogis have to take a single object and focus their mind on it. They have to make some device or *kasina* as the object of meditation. For instance, to make a color *kasina*, yogis have to make a red circle on the wall about two feet from the floor in accordance with the *Visuddhimagga* commentary. They must make the red circle about the size of a plate and the color must be of pure red, even and smooth. After the device have been made, they have to sit on the floor about two feet from the wall, look at the red circle and concentrate on it.

Gradually the mind will be concentrated on the object. But in the beginning of the practice, the mind does not always stay with the object. Sometimes it just thinks about something else. It wanders and goes astray. Then yogis have to bring the mind back to the red circle object again, then focus and observe it as "red, red, red." Yogis continue this way of practice and, gradually, the mind becomes concentrated on

the object of meditation. This is the way of *samatha* meditation in brief.

As yogis have practiced it for some days or months, the concentration becomes better and better, deeper and deeper. Finally the mind is absolutely concentrated on the object of meditation as it is absorbed into this object. Such a state of mind is called *jhāna* or *appana* in Pāli. When the mind is totally fixed to the object of meditation, it is called fixed mind, *jhāna*. It is also called absorption, *appanā*.

*Jhāna* has four or five stages in accordance with the teaching of the Buddha. In the second stage of *jhāna*, concentration is better than in the first. Then in the third stage, the concentration is better than in the second, etc. As long as the mind is deeply concentrated on the object of meditation, it is free from all mental impurities such as desire, greed, lust, hatred, anger, ignorance, jealousy... Because there are no impurities in the concentrated mind, yogis feel calm, tranquil, happy and peaceful. Tranquillity, serenity and calmness are the results of *samatha* meditation.

But in ancient times there were some devotees who practiced *samatha* meditation with the goal of obtaining supernormal powers such as clairvoyance and clairaudience. These supernormal powers can be attained based on all the *jhānas*. When yogis are skilled in entering any stage of *jhāna*, they can then proceed with their meditation in order to attain psychical or supernormal powers. But though they may be able to attain them through the stages of *jhāna*, they are not able to rightly understand the intrinsic nature of mental and physical phenomena. They are not able to uproot any mental defilements which are the cause of suffering

(*dukkha*). Therefore, they cannot get free from all kinds of suffering, mental or physical. As long as one cannot uproot or exterminate these mental defilements or impurities, he is subject to suffering (*dukkha*).

*Vipassanā* meditation is practiced to attain not only deep concentration of the mind but also liberation from all kinds of mental and physical suffering through the realization of our body-mind processes in their true nature. So the purpose of *vipassanā* meditation is to attain the cessation of suffering through right understanding of mental and physical processes. For this, we need some degree of concentration. This concentration can be attained through constant and uninterrupted mindfulness of the mind-body process. Thus, we have a variety of objects of meditation: happiness is an object of meditation and so are anger, sorrow, painful sensation, stiffness, numbness and so on. Any mental or physical process can be the object of *vipassanā* meditation.

The purpose and the results of *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditation are, therefore, different. So are the methods. Go back to what I explained earlier. When yogis walk, they observe the movement of the foot: the lifting, pushing and dropping. At the beginning of the practice, their mind is not well concentrated on the foot. When the mind wanders, yogis have to observe it as it is until that wandering mind disappears. Only after it has disappeared, do yogis note the movement of the foot again as usual.

When the mind becomes well concentrated on the movement of the foot, what yogis note is the movement of lifting, pushing and dropping, not the form of the foot or the body during walking. When the

foot is lifted, the mind notes it as lifting, when the foot is pushed forward, the mind notes it as pushing, when the foot is dropped, the mind notes it as dropping. When yogis come to realize them as natural processes of movement, they also come to realize the mind that notes them. The lifting movement is one process and the mind that notes it is another process. The pushing movement is one process and the mind that notes it is another process. In this way, yogis thoroughly realize the two processes of mental phenomena and physical phenomena.

Yogis rightly understand this dual process as just natural processes. They do not take them to be a person, a being, and "I" or "you." Then there will not arise any false concept of personality, individuality, soul or self. When this false concept has been destroyed, there will not arise any attachment or desire (*tanha*), which is the cause of suffering (*dukkha*). So, because attachment does not arise, there will not arise any suffering, which is actually the result of the attachment.

As yogis proceed, their mindfulness becomes more constant, uninterrupted and powerful. As the mindfulness becomes constant and powerful, the concentration becomes deeper and stronger. When the concentration becomes deep and strong, then our realization or penetrating insight into mental processes and physical processes becomes clear. So yogis come to realize many series of lifting movements arising and passing away one after another. During such an experience, they come to understand that no part of the process is permanent or everlasting. Every process of movement is subject to impermanence (*anicca*), arising and passing away very swiftly. So it is oppressing.

Then yogis come to realize another one of the three characteristics of the mental and physical process, i.e. unsatisfactoriness or suffering (*dukkha*). When they realize the impermanent and suffering nature of this physical process of movement, then they do not take it to be an everlasting entity - a person, a being, a soul or a self. This is the realization of the impersonal nature (*anatta*) or no-soul, no-self, non-ego nature of bodily and mental processes. So yogis realize the three characteristics of mental and physical phenomena: impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*) and no-soul or no-self (*anatta*).

The aim of *vipassanā* meditation is to free oneself from all kinds of *dukkha*, mental suffering and physical suffering through the realization of the body-mind processes in their true nature. So if yogis are able to realize mental and physical phenomena as they really are, they can do away with all kinds of mental impurities or defilements which arise depending on misunderstanding or ignorance of the true nature of mental and physical phenomena. That's why yogis have to practice *Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā* meditation, insightful mindfulness meditation.

But yogis may first practice *samatha* meditation to gain some deep concentration on which the insight meditation is supposed to be built. Such *samatha* meditation is more beneficial than the *samatha* practice to gain higher concentration and supernormal powers. During the time of the Buddha, practitioners first developed *samatha* to gain access concentration and, if it was possible, absorption concentration (*jhāna*). Then they made these the basis for *vipassanā* meditation or Insight Meditation.

Here access concentration means the neighborhood concentration to absorption concentration. When yogis have attained access concentration, they are sure to attain absorption concentration in a short time. If the purpose of yogis is to practise *vipassanā* meditation based on excessive concentration, they can attain this by means of *samatha* meditation. Such kind of *vipassanā* meditation is known as *vipassanā* meditation preceded by *samatha* meditation.

So *vipassanā* meditation is of two types. The first is *vipassanā* meditation preceded by *samatha* meditation. The second is the pure *vipassanā* meditation without *samatha* meditation. The first type of *vipassanā* meditation is practised by those who have ample time to devote to their meditation. They have to spend maybe three or four months on *samatha* meditation first. And when they are satisfied with their attainment of *jhāna* concentration, they proceed with *vipassanā* meditation.

Pure *vipassanā* meditation is practiced by those who do not have enough time to devote to their meditation. For such yogis, pure *vipassanā* meditation is suitable. That's why we have to conduct much shorter *vipassanā* meditation retreats such as a ten-day retreat. Actually a ten-day meditation is not enough. The period is too short for yogis to have any remarkable experience in their meditation practice. But there are some who have some experience in their practice. When their meditation experience becomes powerful, they can attain the higher stages of insight knowledge of the body-mind processes in their true nature. Although yogis can only have just ten days for their meditation, if they strive to attain deep concentration with strenuous

effort without gaps or breaks in the course of their meditation for the whole day, they are able to have some remarkable experiences in meditation. So the point is to practice intensively and strenuously as much as possible.

*Sabbe sattā sukhitā hontu* - May all beings be well and happy.

# **The Biography of Venerable Janakābhivamṣa**

Venerable Janakābhivamṣa was born on July 24, 1928 in Pyin-ma village, Taung-dwin-gyi Township, Myanmar. His parents are U Phyu Minn and Daw Shwe Yee. He is the 3<sup>rd</sup> son of their nine children.

## **Ordination and Education**

Right after he had passed the 4<sup>th</sup> grade at the Primary School, he started learning the fundamentals of Buddhism at the monastery called Taw-ya Beikman near the town of Taung-dwin-gyi because his grandparents, very dedicated Buddhists, encouraged him to do so. Although he was just 13 years old, his teacher, Venerable Vasavinda, taught him such advanced Pāli text as Mahā-vagga, the second volume of Long Discourses, with the purpose to inspire his faith in Dhamma. So, no wonder he developed very strong faith in Buddha's teachings and joined the Holy Order as a novice monk at the age of 15. His ordination preceptor was U Malāvamīsa, the abbot of Taw-ya Beikman monastery, who gave him the name "Shin Janaka."

As a novice monk, he studied five volumes of Monastic Rules and Regulations (*vinaya*) along with their corresponding commentaries, on top of such basic monastic education as basic Buddhist philosophy (*Abhidhamma*), basic Pāli grammar (*Kaccāyana*), Pāli synonyms and thesaurus (*Abhidhāna*) and the Ornamental Pāli Writings (*Alarikāra*). And, he also studied by himself some other advanced Pāli texts such as Numerical Discourses (*Ārguttara*) and Connected Discourses (*Saṃyutta*). So, although he was still young, he was assigned by his teacher to teach young monks and novices.

He was fully ordained on October 18, 1947 under the sponsorship of the generous couple, U Sein Nyo and Daw Hla Nhit of the Town of Taung-dwin-gyi. The preceptor for his full ordination was the most Venerable Sayadaw Paduma, the then abbot of Taw-ya Beik-man Monastery.

In June 1948, after his full ordination, he moved to Mandalay, the second biggest city of Myanmar, where he continued his studies of Pāli texts with many highly educated teachers including the Most Venerable Sishin Sayadaw and his senior disciples at Visuddhārāma Pāli University. Thanks to his ardent study it took him just a few years to obtain the teaching degree called *Dhammācariya* conferred by Myanmar Government. And later, he obtained Abhivāmsa, the most prestigious degree in the monastic academic field of those days, presumably equivalent to a Ph.D. Thus, he became known as Ashin Janakā-bhivāmsa, and promoted as a lecturer at that very Pāli University.

## **Practice under Mahāsi Sayadaw**

In 1952, he reached a turning point in his life when he read "How to Practice *Vipassanā*" written by Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw. This book greatly inspired him to practice *vipassanā* but the method mentioned there was still strange to him because it uses the rising and falling of the abdomen as a primary object instead of in-and-out breath that is recognized scripturally and publically. However, he realized that this method does not conflict at all with the Pāli texts because the abdominal movement signifies one of the six forms of air-element, a physical phenomenon to be discerned for the development of progressive *vipassanā* insight.

Of course, he was able to prove by himself that this method met what it claimed when he practiced it under the guidance of Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw in June, 1953.

During his four-month intensive retreat, he ardently practiced by following closely the instructions given by the teacher. Even in the first month, therefore, he made remarkable progress and left no doubt about the method. Actually, it is only in the first two months that he had to work hard. In the later two months he practiced smoothly and comfortably since his practice became mature. Having completed his successful retreat he was allowed to learn how to teach meditation to different meditators with different spiritual background. This is how he later became a great meditation master of worldwide repute instead of just an ordinary Buddhist scholar.

### **His Role in the 6<sup>th</sup> Buddhist Council**

In 1955, while he was at Mahāsī Meditation Center, he was offered a post in the Editorial Board of the Pāli texts by the Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Sixth Buddhist Council of Myanmar. Out of respect to the sangha committee, he accepted the offer and had to move to Jambu-dīpa, one of the hostels newly built in particular for the highly educated monks who would participate in such a historic project. Indeed, he, as an editor, took an important part of the Sixth Buddhist Council, one of the biggest Buddhist synod in the world's history.

### **Six Years in Sri Lanka**

In 1957 after the Sixth Buddhist Council, he went to Sri Lanka where he resided for six years at Maha-

visuddārāma monastery, in the capital city of Colombo. While he was there, he studied the development of Buddhism and Indian History, and foreign languages such as English, Sanskrit, Singhalese and Hindi. In 1960, he sat for G.C.E (A Level) examination sponsored by London University and passed some subjects. He got through the remaining subjects when he was back to Myanmar. During his stay in Sri Lanka, he was offered a prestigious post as an Abhidhamma Lecturer by Vijjodaya State University of the Sri Lanka. Unfortunately, his health then was too poor to accept such a heavy job.

## **Helping Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw's Works**

He came back to Myanmar in June 1963. Then again he was invited to edit general Pāli texts by the State Buddha-sāsana Association of Myanmar. He accepted it and had to take residence again at Jambu-dīpa Hostel. During that period the Most Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw asked him to write a preface to his Burmese translation of "Great Commentary on the Path of Purification" (*Visuddhi-magga Mahā-tīkā Nissaya*), one of the most highly respected treatises impossible to translate without profound understanding of dhamma from both scriptural and practical aspects. He carefully read the masterpiece of Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw and wrote a wonderful preface up to forty pages, satisfying to Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw.

In 1966 he went back to his native town, Taung-dwin-gyi and carried out his sāsana duties at his Alma Mater, Taw-ya Beikman monastery. In 1967, he brought his father to Yangon, the capital city of Myanmar at that time, and had him practice meditation under the guidance of Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw at Mahāsī

Meditation Center. While he was there taking care of his father's needs, the Most Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw appointed him as one of the guiding teachers (*nāyaka*) of Mahāsī Meditation Center. Thus, he became one of the earliest meditation masters of Mahāsī tradition. At the Mahāsī Meditation Center he helped Mahāsī Sayadaw's sāsana works in both scriptural and practical aspects. He was the one who had to take over Mahāsī Sayadaw's translation work of the Path of Purification book when Mahāsī Sayadaw had an eye treatment.

Moreover, he was also one of those who had to write counter-articles in response to the article that criticized the method taught by Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw. The criticism was written by a Sri Lankan monk in the World Buddhism Magazine published in Colombo, saying that the Mahāsī meditation technique was not in harmony with Pāli texts. These articles were complied and made into a book entitled *Sati-paṭṭhāna Vipassanā Meditation*.

Under the guidance of the most Venerable Mahāsī Sayadaw, he served as one of the guiding teachers for five years at Mahāsī Meditation Center in the capital city of Yangon and one and half year in Ratanapone Meditation Center, Mandalay, the second biggest city of Myanmar.

## **Own Center and Unique Method**

In 1977, he accepted Chan-myay Meditation Center that was newly established by his dedicated disciples. Since then, he has been carrying out the sāsana duties at this center by giving dhamma-talks, conducting meditation retreats, writing dhamma books, teaching meditation to both local and foreign meditators, and

so on. Thus, under the name of this meditation center he has been known as Chan-myay Sayadaw. The way he teaches at his own center and other places is quite unique because he teaches yogis the practice of *vipassanā* based on the development of loving kindness. Thanks to his method, the meditators under his guidance can practice in peace making progress relatively faster than many others.

## **Talks on BBC**

In 1978, 1979 and 1980, at the request of the Ministry of Religious Affair of Myanmar, he broadcast a series of dhamma talks on BBC. The talks were widely distributed in the book form consisting of three topics entitled as follows:

1. Attainment of Eternal Peace through Right Understanding
2. Realization, Elimination, Experiencing, Developing
3. How to live a Happy Life in accordance with the Teaching of the Buddha

## **A Historic Talk**

He conducts retreats and gives dhamma talks all year round both at home and abroad. A historic talk among his was given to the Kalay Christian Council that comprises seven Christian Associations (Kalay is a Myanmar city close to the Indian border). Over 6,000 people, mostly Christians, attended to this congregation held in three consecutive days from May 3 to May 5 in 1982. The title of this talk was "Peace and Happiness". In appreciation of the talk, Mr. Man Kyint Htan, the

president of the Christian Council, was ordained as a temporary monk and practiced *vipassanā* meditation under the guidance of the Venerable Sayadaw.

On May 29, after this historic talk, he set out his one-year Dhamma mission, travelling to many countries such as Austria, Germany, Netherlands, France, England, and the United States. He spent his three-month rain-retreat of that year in the USA and then continued his missionary tour to Hawaii and then many other countries including Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Philippine, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and lastly Thailand.

In 1983, when he came back from the worldwide missionary tour, the historic talk he had given to the Kalay Christian Council was transcribed from the tapes, made into a book and published up to the 7<sup>th</sup> edition which ran into an amazing number of copies up to 54,000 so far.

## **His Talks at Prestigious Universities**

In 1985, at the request of Yangon University, Myanmar, the Venerable Sayadaw taught *vipassanā* meditation at the University Dhamma Hall for four consecutive Fridays. At the end of his talks he answered to more than 50 questions raised by students, teachers and others. All the talks along with questions and answers were made into a book, and 25,000 copies have been distributed so far. Sayadaw also gave Dhamma lectures at many other universities all over Myanmar, including Hinthada University, Keng Tung University, Pago University and Myit-kyi-nar University, and so on.

He gave Dhamma Lectures at oversea Universities too, such as Oxford University U.K. in 1981 and 1982, Western Illinois University and Hawaii University U.S.A in 1982, Vancouver University Canada in 1982. He also conducted one-day retreat at Oberlin University U.S.A in 1982, and a three-day retreat at Cambridge University, England in 1998.

One of his famous talks among others was the discourse on "Parable of the Log" (Dhārukkhandh'opama Sutta) given at London Buddhist Vihar. This talk was first published in *Buddhist Forum*, from which the devotees copied and made it into a booklet and distributed initially in London, and later in Honolulu, Manila, Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Bangkok and Yangon.

## **Oversea Missionary Works**

He took many oversea missionary tours to almost every part of the globe, 40 tours to 30 countries so far, in Asia, Africa, Europe, and United States. In 1995 he went to Kenya, South Africa and Botswana and taught meditation there to both black and white Africans. He took the second missionary tour to South Africa in 1997 during which he accepted a meditation center named Dhammadaya Myanmar Vihāra that was newly established with dedication to him by Myanmar devotees there. More importantly, he was able to consecrate the first Sīmā<sup>1</sup> in Africa, a historic mission he successfully carried out for sāsanā.

Moreover, he broadcast a Live Interview with a

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<sup>1</sup> *Sīmā is a kind monastic parliament, where Buddhist monks carry out official monastic affairs like ordination, Sabbath congregations, confession of serious offences, and so on. The consecration of Sīmā is the highly complicated task since it needs to meet a lot of requirements according to monastic rules.*

senior officer in the Radio 702, Johannesburg. He was also interviewed by some journalists from Star Newspaper and Pretoria News. At the interview they asked questions about *Vipassanā* Meditation and he gave comprehensive answers to their questions. The interview was published in their newspapers. Thus, he could make *Vipassanā* Meditation widely known to people of South Africa.

And there are also meditation centers abroad established under his guidance. They include Dhammadaya Chanmyay Center near Bangkok in Thailand, Dhammadaya Myanmar Vihara near Durban, South Africa, and Chanmyay Satipatthana Vihara in Springfield, Illinois, U.S.A. Most recently, in January 2009, Venerable Sayadaw inaugurated a new meditation center near Jakarta, Indonesia.

## **His Works at Home**

At home there are many meditation centers established under his guidance in many cities of Myanmar, such as Yangon, Hinthada, Hmawbi, Pyin Oo Lwin, Taunggyi, Leway, and Tamu. Most of his centers are opened all year round, and thousands of yogis from all over Myanmar are practicing under his guidance.

With the purpose of passing the priceless teachings of the Buddha down to the new generations, he has conducted since 1990 the Buddhist Cultural Training Courses for children from 10 to 18 years of age during their summer school holidays in March and April. The Dhamma classes are divided into sixteen levels and teach children fundamentals of Buddha's teachings such as qualities of Triple Gem, five, eight and nine Precepts, and some famous sermons such as the

First Sermon, Non-self Sermon, Fire Sermon, Loving-kindness Sermon, 38 Blessings Sermon, Dependent Origination, Four-Foundations of Mindfulness, and so on. Children of higher levels are also taught the doctrines of different Buddhist schools such as Mahāyāna, Zen, and so on. Of course, they are also taught how to develop mindfulness and progressive *vipassanā* insights through empirical practice.

In 2004, as an honorary professor of International Theravada Buddhist Missionary University established by the Myanmar Government, he gave lectures on *Vipassanā* meditation two days a week. In appreciation of his great contribution to that Missionary University and all the other *sāsana* works he has tirelessly done for more than half a century, the Myanmar Government conferred three prestigious titles on him: Mahā-kammaṭṭhānā-cariya in 1993, Agga-mahā-kammaṭṭhānā-cariya in 1995, and Agga-mahā-saddhamma-jotika-dhaja in 1999.

Actually, the Venerable Sayadaw has been working for the public welfare too by contributing to the construction of schools, roads and bridges, and renovation of the ruined, and so on. During the tragic disaster of Nargis Cyclone in Myanmar, he has contributed about fifty thousand dollars to the victims.

## **A Leading Authority of the Century**

Although Venerable Sayadaw is busy almost all the time carrying out *sāsana* duties at home and abroad, he managed to find time to write as many as 33 books for people from all walks of life. Many of them have been translated into different languages such as English, Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Indonesian, Sri Lankan,

**Thai, Bulgarian and Spanish.**

Now, he is almost ninety, but still making courageous and tireless effort to propagate the Buddha's teachings all over the world. Undeniably, the Venerable Sayadaw would rank as one of the leading authorities and teachers in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, indeed.

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## The Five Factors for Successful Practice (*Padhaniyanga*)

According to the Buddha, in order for yogis to be successful in their insight meditation practice, they must have the following five factors (*padhaniyanga*):

- 1. Faith** (*saddhā*): Yogis must have at least a firm and strong faith in the technique of insight meditation they are practicing.
- 2. Good health:** As long as yogis can digest food (without stomach problems) and can observe the mental and physical phenomena occurring at the present moment, they are considered healthy.
- 3. Honesty:** Yogis must be honest and straightforward regarding their meditational experiences when they report them to their meditation teacher(s) for further guidance.
- 4. Effort** (*viriya*): It is not ordinary effort but unwavering, strong and firm effort (*padhāna*).
- 5. Wisdom** (*paññā*): It does not mean ordinary knowledge but the experiential insight knowledge of the arising and passing away of mental (*nāma*) and physical (*rūpa*) phenomena (the fourth stage of insight knowledge (*udaya-bbaya-ñāṇa*)).

In the beginning, yogis do not possess this insight knowledge but they must be persistent and strive with strong and firm effort (*padhāna*). Once yogis possess this insight knowledge and if they continue to exert strong and courageous effort in their practice, they are sure to make progress until they attain at least the first Path Knowledge, *Sotapatti-magga-ñāṇa*, or the first stage of enlightenment.



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