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John S. Guagliardo, Ph.D., Executive Director
World eBook Library Consortia
P.O. Box 22687
Honolulu, Hawaii 96823
(808) 292-2068
Guagliardo@netlibrary.net

FUNDAMENTALS OF VIPASSANA MEDITATION

By The Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw 1959

Translated by Maung Tha Noe

Buddha-Sasananuggha Organization

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A Word from the Translator

"The Fundamentals of Vipassana Meditation" is a series of lectures delivered by the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw during the New Year Holidays of the Burmese Era 1320 (1959). The lectures first appeared in book form in 1961, and have ever since enjoyed such popularity with the readers that they have run to several editions. This is their first English translation.

As the reader will see in the following pages, the lectures were addressed to lay listeners - people were totally new. As such the Sayadaw took great pains to make his language plain, easy and direct to the point, and led his listeners stage by simple stage from such basic facets as differentiation between calm and insight meditations to such intricate aspects of the Dhamma as reality and concept, process of consciousness and thought-moments, stages of progress in mind development and realization of Nibbana. The listener - or reader in our case - begins with the very first lesson: what insight is, how it is developed. He is then instructed how to begin his work, how to progress, how to be on his guard against pitfalls in the course of his training, and, most important of all, how to know when he "knows". He is thrilled, encouraged, and made to feel as if he were already on the path to bliss.

Buddhism is a practical religion, a creed to live by - not just another system of metaphysical philosophy as most outsiders are wont to imagine it to be. It examines the ills of this sentient life, discovers their cause, prescribes the removal of the cause, and points the Way to the release from all suffering. Anyone desirous of liberation can walk along the Way. But he must make the effort to step and walk. No-one will pick him up and offer him a free ride to Peace Eternal.

You yourself must make the effort.
Buddhas only point the way.
Those who have entered the Path and who meditate
will be freed from the fetter of illusion.

(-Dhammapada 276)

What then is the Way to liberation? The Buddha himself tells us in the Satipatthana Sutta that there is but One Way - the Way of establishing mindfulness. It is this establishing of mindfulness that serves as the corner-stone of the whole system of insight meditation expounded and popularised by the Ven Mahasi Sayadaw for half a century now.

Here one must not forget the fact that preaching Vipassana is quite unlike the preaching of any other aspect of the Buddha's teaching, say, its moral or meta-physical portions. This most scholars versed in the scriptures can do. But Vipassana is something that only experience can convince. The Buddha himself (or, more correctly, the Bodhisatta) searched for the Way, found it, traversed it himself, and only then did he teach it to beings from his experience.

"Even so have I, monks, seen an ancient way, an ancient road followed by the wholly Awakened Ones of olden times....Along that have I gone, and the matters that I have come to know fully as I was going along it I have told to the monks, nuns, men and women layfollowers.....

Sam. ii 105

The Ven Mahasi Sayadaw, on his part, took up the Way pointed out to all of us by the Buddha, realized the Dhamma, and then spoke to his disciples from his experience. They, too, have realized the Dhamma. About this the Sayadaw says in his lectures:

"Here in the audience are lots of meditators who have come to this stage of knowledge. I am not speaking from my own experience alone. No, not even from the experience of forty or fifty disciples of mine. There are hundreds of them." (Today the number is by hundreds of thousands - Translator)

One attribute of the Buddha's Dhamma is that "it is a come-and-see thing (ehipassiko)" Millions came and saw it well over 2500 years ago. And today hundreds of thousands more will follow them, as we can see in the meditation centres the world over. It only remains to the aspirant after liberation to awake and join the multitude in their march. This book sets out the plan of the Way that lies ahead of him. It is, as the noted scholar in the foreword to the Myanmar edition remarks, not the kind of book one reads for reading's sake. It is to be his guide as he ventures from one stage of higherwisdom to another.

In translating this book, I have tried to reproduce in English all that the Sayadaw has to say in his Myanmar lectures. But I have not attempted a literal translation nor have I turned out an abridged, free version. I have avoided repetitions so characteristic of spoken language, and have left untranslated all the mnemonic verses that accompany the Sayadaw's lectures. Excepting these I have kept the word of the Sayadaw intact and every effort has been made to retain his simple, straight-forward and lucid style.

For translation of the Pali texts quoted by the Sayadaw in his work I have relied mostly on such noted scholars as Dr. Rhys Davids, F.L. Woodward, I.B. Horner, Nyanatiloka, Nyanamoli and Pe Maung Tin, with modifications here and there. I must record my indebtedness to them.

M T N

Yangon, 3 March 1981

FUNDAMENTALS OF VIPASSANA MEDITATION

Introductory

Today insight meditation needs no special introduction. Everybody is saying that it is good. The contrary was the case twenty years ago. People thought insight meditation was meant for monks and recluses and not for them. When we began preaching insight meditation we had had a hard time doing so. The situation has changed now. Today people keep asking us to lecture on insight. But when we begin telling them the simple facts of insight meditation, they seem unable to appreciate them. Some even rise and go away. One should not blame them. They have had no grounding in meditation to understand anything.

Some think calm is insight. Some talk of insight meditation as nothing different from calm meditation. The insight meditation as preached by some people, though high-sounding in language, proves just impossible in practice. Their listeners are left in confusion. For the benefit of such people we will talk about the elements of insight meditation.

Calm and Insight

What do we meditate on? How do we develop insight? This is a very important question.

There are two kinds of meditation: meditating to develop calm and meditating to develop insight. Meditating on the ten kasina devices only gives rise to calm, not insight. Meditating on the ten foul things (a swollen corpse, for example), too, only gives rise to calm, not insight. The ten recollections, like remembering the Buddha, the Dhamma and others, too, can develop calm and not

insight. Meditating on the thirty-two parts of the body, like hair, nails, teeth, skin- these too are not insight. They develop only concentration.

Mindfulness as to respiration is also concentration-developing. But one can develop insight from it. Visuddhimagga, however, includes it in the concentration subjects and so we will call it as such here.

Then there are the four divine states, loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy, and equanimity, and the four formless states leading to formless jhanas. Then, there is the meditation on the loathsomeness of food. All these are subjects for concentration-meditation.

When you meditate on the four elements inside your body, it is called the analysis of the four elements. Although this is a concentration meditation, it helps develop insight as well.

All these forty subjects of meditation are subjects for developing concentration. Only respiration and analysis of elements have to do with insight. The others will not give rise to insight. If you want insight, you will have to work further.

To come back to our question, how do we develop insight? The answer is: we develop insight by meditating on the five aggregates of grasping. The mental and material qualities in beings are aggregates of grasping. They may be grasped with delight by craving in which case it is called "grasping of the sense objects" - or they may be grasped wrongly by wrong views - in which case it is called "grasping through wrong views". You have to meditate on them and see them as they really are. If you don't, you will grasp them with craving and wrong views. Once you see them as they are, you no longer grasp them. In this way you develop insight. We will discuss the five aggregates of grasping in detail.

Aggregates

The five aggregates of grasping are matter or form, feelings, perception, volitional activities and consciousness. What are they? They are the things you experience all the time. You do not have to go anywhere else to find them. They are in you. When you see, they are there in the seeing. When you hear, they are there in the hearing. When you smell, taste, touch, or think, they are there in the smelling, tasting, touching or thinking.

When you bend, stretch or move your limbs, the aggregates are there in the bending, stretching or moving. Only you do not know them to be aggregates. It is because you have not meditated on them and so do not know them as they really are. Not knowing them as they are, you grasp them with craving and wrong view.

What happens when you bend? It begins with the intention to bend. Then come the material properties of bending one by one. Now in the intention to bend there are the four mental aggregates. The mind that intends to bend is the consciousness. When you think of bending and then bend, you may feel happy, or unhappy, or neither happy nor unhappy, doing so. If you bend with happiness, there is pleasant feeling. If you bend with unhappiness or anger, there is unpleasant feeling. If you bend with neither happiness nor unhappiness, there is neutral feeling. So, when you think of

bending, there is the 'feeling' aggregate. Then there is perception, the aggregate that recognizes the bending. Then there is the mental state that urges you to bend. It seems as though it were saying "Bend! Bend!" It is the volitional activities. Thus, in the intention to bend, you have feelings, perception, volitional activities and consciousness—all four mental aggregates. The movement of bending is matter or form. It is the material aggregate. So, the intention to bend and the bending together make up the five aggregates.

Thus in one bending of the arm there are five aggregates: You move once and the five aggregates come up. You move again and there are more of the five aggregates. If you have not meditated on them rightly and have not known them rightly, what happens we need not tell you. You know for yourselves.

Well, you think "I intend to bend" and "I bend" don't you? Everybody does. Ask the children, they will give the same answer. Ask adults who can read and write, the same answer still if he will say what he has in his mind. But because he is well-read he may invent answers to suit the scriptures and say "Mind and matter". It is not what he knows for himself. Only inventions to suit the scriptures. In his heart of hearts he is thinking: "It is I who intend to bend. It is I who bend. It is I who intend to move. It is I who move." He also thinks: "This I have been before; am now, and will be in the future. I exist for ever." This thinking is called the notion of permanence. Nobody thinks, "This intention to bend exists only now." Ordinary people always think, "This mind existed before. The same I that have existed before am now thinking of bending." They also think: "This thinking I exists now and will go on existing."

When you bend, or move the limbs, you think: "It is the same limbs that have existed that are moving now. It is the same I that have existed that am moving now. "After moving you again think, "These limbs, this I, always exist." It never occurs to you that they pass away. This too is the notion of permanence. It is clinging to what is impermanent as permanent, clinging to what is no personality, no ego, as personality, as ego.

Then, as you have bent or stretched to your desire, you think it is very nice. For example, as you feel the stiffness in the arm, you move or rearrange it and the stiffness is gone. You feel comfortable. You think it is very nice. You think it is happiness. Dancers and amateur dancers bend and stretch as they dance and think it is very nice to do so. They delight in it and are pleased with themselves. When you converse among yourselves you often shake your hands and heads and are pleased. You think it is happiness. When something you are doing meets with success, again you think it is good, it is happiness. This is how you delight through craving and clinging to things. What is impermanent you take to be permanent and delight in. What is not happiness, not personality, but just aggregates of mind and matter, you take to be happiness, or personality, and delight in. You delight in them and cling to them. You mistake them for self and ego and cling to them, too.

So, when you bend, stretch or move your limbs, the thinking "I will bend" is aggregate of grasping. The bending is the aggregate of grasping. The thinking "I will stretch" is the aggregate of grasping. The stretching is the aggregate of grasping. The thinking "I will move" is the aggregate of grasping. The moving is the aggregate of grasping. When we speak of aggregates of grasping

to be meditated on, we mean just these things.

The same thing happens in seeing, hearing etc. When you see, the seat of seeing, the eye, is manifest. So is the object seen. Both are material things. They cannot cognize. But if one fails to meditate while seeing, one grasps them. One thinks the whole body with the eye is permanent, happy, self, and grasps it. One thinks the whole material world with the object seen is permanent, beautiful, good, happy, and self, and grasps it. So the form eye and the form visible object are aggregates of grasping.

And when you see, the "seeing" is manifest, too. It is the four mental aggregates. The mere awareness of seeing is the aggregate consciousness. Pleasure or displeasure at seeing is the aggregate feeling. What perceives the object seen is the aggregate perception. What brings the attention to see is the aggregate volitional activities. They constitute the four mental aggregates.

If one fails to meditate while seeing, one is inclined to think that seeing "has existed before, and exists now." Or, as one sees good things, one may think "seeing is good". So thinking, one goes after good and strange things to enjoy seeing. One goes to watch plays and films at the expense of money, sleep and health because one thinks it is good to do so. If one does not think it is good, one will not go to waste money or impair one's health. To think that what sees or enjoys is "I", "I am enjoying", is to grasp with craving and wrong view. Because they grasp, the mind and matter that manifest themselves in seeing are said to be aggregates of grasping.

You grasp in the same way in hearing, smelling, tasting, touching or thinking. You grasp all the more to the mind that thinks, imagines and reflects as being the I, the ego. So, the five aggregates of grasping are none other than the mental-material things that manifest themselves at the six doors whenever one sees, hears, feels, or perceives. You must try to see these aggregates as they are. To meditate on them and see them as they are - that is insight knowledge.

Knowledge and Freedom

"Insight meditation is meditating on the five aggregates of grasping." This is in accordance with the teaching of the Buddha. The teachings of the Buddha are called suttas, which means "thread". When a carpenter is about to plane down or saw off a piece of timber he draws a straight line using a thread. In the same way when we want to live the holy life we use the "thread" or sutta to draw straight lines in our actions. The Buddha has given us lines or instructions on how to train in morality, develop concentration and make become wisdom. You cannot go out of the line and speak or act as you please. Regarding the meditation of the five aggregates, here are a few excerpts from the suttas:

"Material shape, monks, is impermanent. What is impermanent, that is suffering. What is suffering, that is not the self. What is not self, that is not mine, that I am not, this is not my self. As it really comes to be, one should discern it thus by right wisdom." (S.ii,19.)

You must meditate so that you will realize this impermanent, suffering, not-self material form is really impermanent,

dreadfully suffering and without a self or ego. You should meditate likewise on feelings, perception, activities, and consciousness. What is the use of looking upon these aggregates as impermanent, suffering and non-self? The Buddha tells us

"So seeing all these things, the instructed disciple of the Ariyans disregards material shape, disregards feeling and so on."
(S.iii,68)

He who realizes the impermanent, suffering, not-self nature of the five aggregates is wearied of material form as he is of feelings, perception, activities and consciousness.

"By disregarding he is passionless"

That is to say, he has reached the Ariyan Path.

"Through passionlessness, he is freed"

Once he has reached the Ariyan path of passionlessness, he has arrived at the Four Fruitions of freedom from the defilements, too.

"In freedom the knowledge comes to be 'I am freed'"

When you are freed, you know for yourself that you are so. In other words, when you have become an Arahant in whom the defilements are extinguished, you know that defilements are extinguished.

All these excerpts are from Yad anicca Sutta and there are numerous suttas of this kind. The whole Khandhavagga Samyutta is a collection of them. Two of these suttas are especially noteworthy: Silavanta Sutta and Sutavanta Sutta. In both suttas the Venerable Maha Kotthika puts some questions to the Venerable Sariputta, who gives very brief but vivid answers. Maha Kotthika asks:

"What things friend Sariputta, should be attended to correctly by a monk of pure moral habit?"

Note the attribute "of moral habit" in this question. If you want to practise insight meditation with a view to attaining the Path, Fruition and Nibbana, the least qualification you need is to be of pure moral habit. If you don't even have pure moral habit, you can't hope for the higher conditions of concentration and wisdom. The Venerable Sariputta answers:

"The five aggregates of grasping friend Kotthika, are the things which should be correctly attended to by a monk of pure moral habit, as being impermanent, suffering, as a disease, as a boil, as a dart, as unwholesome as illness, as alien, as void of self, as decay."

What is the good of meditating like that? In answer the Venerable Sariputta goes on,

"Indeed, friend, it is a possibility that a monk of pure moral habit so correctly attending to these five aggregates of grasping "as impermanent and so on may realize the fruits of Stream-winning."

So, if you want to be a Stream-winner and never to be reborn in the four lower states, you have to meditate on the five

aggregates of grasping to realize their impermanence, suffering and not-self nature.

But that is not all. You can become an Arahant, too. The Venerable Maha Kotthika goes on to ask,

"What things friend Sariputta, should be attended to correctly by a monk who is a Stream-winner?"

The Venerable Sariputta answers that it is the same five aggregates of grasping that should be correctly attended to by a Stream-winner, as impermanent, suffering, not-self. The result? He moves on to Once-returning. What does a Once-returned meditate on? Again the same five aggregates of grasping. He then becomes a Non-returned. What does a Non-returned meditate on? The five aggregates again. Now he becomes an Arahant. What does an Arahant meditate on? The five aggregates again. From this it is clear that the five aggregates are the things one has to meditate on even when one has become an Arahant.

What good is it to the Arahant by meditating so? Will he become a silent Buddha? Or, a Supreme Buddha? No, neither. He will end his round of rebirths as an Arahant and enter Nibbana. The Arahant has no defilements left unremoved or uncalmed. All the defilements have been removed and calmed. So, he has nothing to develop in order to remove the defilements left unremoved or to calm those left uncalmed. Neither has he any moral habit, concentration or wisdom yet to perfect. All the moral habits, concentration and wisdom that ought to be perfected have been perfected in him. So, he has no need to work for the perfection of what ought to be perfected, nor has he any need to increase those already perfected. The insight practice brings no such benefits to the Arahant.

One of the benefits the Arahant receives by meditating on the five aggregates is living with happiness in this world. Notwithstanding his being an Arahant, if he remains without meditation, disquiet and discomfort keep coming up at the six sense-doors, now here, now there. Here, disquiet does not mean mental distress. As the sense-objects keep coming up despite himself, he finds no peacefulness of mind. That is all. Not to speak of, even our meditators of today who are immersed in the practice feel ill at ease when meeting with the sense objects. As they return home from the meditation centre, they see this thing, hear that thing, get engaged in such and such business talks, and there is no peace at all. So they come back to the centre. To others however, the disquiet does not last very long. Just four, five or ten days. Very soon the homely spirit gets the better of them and they are happy with their home life and set to household cares again. The Arahant never returns to his old habits. If he meets with various sense-objects without meditation, only disquiet results. Only when he is absorbed in insight meditation does he find peacefulness of mind. Thus meditating on the five aggregates of grasping brings to the living with happiness in this world.

Again, as he lives in earnest meditation, mindfulness and comprehension of the impermanence, suffering and not-self keep rising in him. This is another benefit. The Arahant in whom mindfulness and comprehension keep rising through meditation is said to be called satata-vihari (one who dwells with meditation constantly). Such a one can enjoy the attainment to fruition at any time and for as long as he desires. For these two benefits- a happy living in the very life and mindfulness and comprehension

the Arahant lives in meditation.

The above are the answers given by the Venerable Sariputta in the Silavanta Sutta. The same answers are found in Sutavanta Sutta too. The only difference is in the terms silavanta, "of moral habit" or "virtuous" and sutavanta, "instructed" or "well-informed". All the other words are the same. Based on these two suttas and other suttas on the aggregate the dictum has been formulated:

"Insight knowledge comes from meditating on the five aggregates of grasping."

Now to come back to the grasping that rises through the six sense-doors.

When people see, they think of themselves or others as being permanent, as having existed before, as existing now, as going to exist in future, as existing always. They think of them as being happy, good, or beautiful. They think of them as being living entities. They think likewise when they hear, smell, taste or touch. This "touch" is widespread all over the body- wherever there is flesh and blood. And wherever touch arises, there arises grasping. The bending, stretching, or moving of the limbs mentioned earlier are all instances of touch. So are the tense movements of rising and falling in the abdomen. We will come to this in detail later.

When one thinks or imagines, one thinks, "The I that has existed before is now thinking; thinking, I go on existing," and thus one thinks of oneself as being permanent, as an ego. One also thinks the thinking or imagining as being enjoyable, as being very nice. One thinks it is happiness. If told that the thinking will disappear, he cannot accept it. He is not pleased. This is because he is clinging to it.

In this way one clings to whatever comes through the six sense-doors as being permanent, as being happy, as ego, as self. One delights with craving and clings to it. One mistakes with wrong view and clings to it. You have to meditate on these five aggregates that can be clung to or grasped.

The Right Method

When you meditate, you have to meditate with method. Only the right method can bring about insight. If you look upon things as being permanent, how can there be insight? If you look upon them as being happy, beautiful, as soul, as ego, how can there be insight?

Mind and matter are impermanent things. These impermanent things you have to meditate on to see them as they really are, as being impermanent. They rise and pass away and keep on oppressing you, so they are dreadful, they are sufferings. You have to meditate to see them as they are, as sufferings. They are processes lacking in a personality, a soul, a self. You have to meditate to see that there is no personality, no soul, no self. You must try to see them as they really are.

So, every time you see, hear, touch or perceive, you must try to see the mental and material processes that rise through the six sense doors as they really are. This you must note 'seeing,

seeing'. In the same way, when you hear, note 'hearing'. When you smell, note 'smelling'. When you touch, note 'touching'. Tiredness, hotness, aches and such unbearable and unpleasant sensations arise from contact too. Observe them: tiredness, hot, pain, and so on. Thoughts, ideas, may also turn up. Note them: 'thinking', 'imagining', 'desire', 'pleasure', 'delight', as they arise. But for the beginner it is hard to observe all that comes up through the six sense doors. He must begin with just a few.

You meditate on this. When you breathe in and out, the way the abdomen moves rising and falling is especially conspicuous. You begin observing this movement. The movement of rising you observe as 'rising'. The movement of falling you observe as 'falling'. This observation of rising and falling is void of the lingo of the scriptures. People who are not used to meditational practice speak of it in contempt: "This rising and falling business has nothing to do with the scriptures. It is nothing." Well may they think it is nothing because it is not done up in scriptural language.

In essence, however, it IS something. The rising is real, the falling is real, the moving air-element is real. We have used the colloquial words 'rising' and 'falling' for convenience's sake. In scriptural terminology, the rising-falling is the air-element. If you observe the abdomen attentively as it rises and falls, the distendedness is there, the motion is there, the conveying is there. Here, the "distendedness" is the characteristic of the air-element, the motion is its property, and the conveying is its manifestation. To know the air-element as it really is means to know its characteristic, property and manifestation. We meditate to know them. Insight begins with the defining of mind and matter. To achieve this the meditator begins with the matter. How?

"The (meditator) should..... comprehend by way of characteristic, function and so on" (Visuddhimagga ii 227.)

When you begin meditating on matter or mind, you should do so by way of either the characteristic or the property (function). "And so on" refers to the manifestation (mode of appearance). In this connection the Compendium of Philosophy is quite to the point.

"Purity of view is the understanding of mind and matter with respect to their characteristics, function (property), mode of appearance (manifestation) and proximate cause."

The meaning is this: insight begins with the analytical knowledge of mind and matter. In the seven stages of purity, first you perfect the purity of morals and the purity of mind, and then you begin the purity of views. To achieve the analytical knowledge of mind and matter and the purity of views, you have to meditate on mind and matter and know them by way of their characteristics, property (function), manifestation and proximate cause. Once you know them thus, you gain the analytical knowledge of mind and matter. Once this knowledge matures, you develop the purity of views.

Here, "to know them by way of their characteristics" means to know the intrinsic nature of mind and matter. To know "by way of property" is to know their function. Manifestation is their mode of appearance. It is not yet necessary to know the proximate cause at the initial stage of meditational practice. So we will just go on to explain the characteristics, function and manifestation.

In both the Path of Purity and the Compendium of Philosophy just quoted it is not indicated that mind and matter should be meditated on by name, by number, as substance of material particles or as incessantly coming up processes. It is only shown that they should be meditated on by way of their characteristics, function and manifestation. One should take careful note of this. If not, one can be led to concepts of names, numbers, particles or processes. The commentaries say that you should meditate on mind and matter by way of their characteristics, function and manifestation, and so when you meditate on the air-element, you do so by way of its characteristics, function and manifestation. What is the characteristic of the air-element? It is the characteristic of support. This is its intrinsic nature. The air-element is just this. What is the function of the air-element? It is moving. What is its manifestation? It is conveying. Manifestation is what appears to the meditator's intellect. As one meditates on the air-element, it appears to the meditator's intellect as something conveying, pushing and pulling. This is the manifestation of the air-element. As you meditate on the rising-falling of the abdomen, all the distended, moving, conveying, become clear to you. These are the characteristic, function and manifestation of the air-element. This air-element is important. In sections on postures and comprehension, contemplation of the body, Satipatthana-sutta, the commentator has laid emphasis on the air-element. Here is the Buddha's teaching:

"Gacchanto va gacchami ti pajanati."

(When he walks, he is aware 'I am walking.')

The Buddha is instructing us to be mindful of the form walking by noting 'Walking, Walking' every time we walk. How knowledge is developed from meditating thus is explained by the commentator:

"The thought I am walking arises. This produces air. The air produces the intimation. The bringing forward of the whole body as the air-element spreads is said to be walking."

The meaning is this: The meditator who is used to meditating 'walking, walking' every time he walks realizes like this. First the idea 'I will walk' arises. This intention gives rise to tense movement all over the body, which in turn cause the material body to move forward move by move. Thus we say "I walk," or "He walks." In reality there is no I or He that walks. Only the intention to walk and the form walking. This the meditator realizes. Here, in this explanation of the Commentary, the emphasis is on the realization of the moving of the air-element. So, if you understand the air-element by way of its characteristics, function and manifestation, you can decide for yourself whether your meditation is right or not.

The air-element has the characteristic of support. In a football it is air that fills and supports so that the ball expands and remains firm. In colloquial speech we say that the ball is full and firm. In philosophical terms the air-element is in support. When you stretch your arm you feel some stiffness there. It is the air-element in support. In the same way when you press an air-pillow or mattress with your body or head, your body or head will not come down but stay high above. It is because the air-element in the pillow or mattress is supporting you. Bricks pile up as the ones below support those above. If the bricks below are not supporting, the ones above will tumble down. In the same way the human body is full of the air-element which gives support

to it so that it can stand stiff and firm. We say "firm" relatively. If there is something firmer, we will call it "lax." If there is something more lax, it becomes firm again.

The function of the air-element is moving. It moves from place to place when it is strong. It is the air-element that makes the body bend, stretch, sit, rise, go or come. Those unpractised in insight meditation often say, "if you note 'bending, stretching', only concepts like arms will appear to you. If you note 'left, right' only concepts like legs will appear to you. If you note 'rising, falling', only concepts like the abdomen will appear to you." This may be true to some of the beginners, but it is not true to think that the concepts will keep coming up. Both concepts and realities appear to the beginner. Some people instruct the beginners to meditate on realities only. This is impossible. To forget concepts is quite impracticable at the beginning. What is practicable is to observe concepts combine with realities. The Buddha himself used the language of concepts and told us to be aware 'I am walking' etc. when we walk, bend or stretch. He did not use the language of realities and tell us to be aware 'It is supporting, moving' etc. Although you meditate using the language of concepts like 'walking, bending, stretching', as your mindfulness and concentration grow stronger, all the concepts disappear and only the realities like support and moving appear to you. When you reach the stage of the knowledge of dissolution, although you meditate 'walking, walking', neither the legs nor the body appear to you. Only the successive movements are there. Although you meditate 'bending, bending', there will not be any arms or legs. Only the movement. Although you meditate 'rising, falling', there will be no image of the abdomen or the body. Only the movement out and in. These as well as swaying are the functions of the air-element.

What appears to be bringing out or drawing in to the meditator's mind is the manifestation of the air-element. When you bend or stretch your arm, it appears something is drawing it in or pushing it out. It is plainer when walking. To the meditator whose concentration is grown sharper by noting 'walking, right step, left step, lifting, putting forward, putting down' this moving forward as if being driven from behind becomes quite plain. The legs seem to be pushing forward of their own accord. How the move forward occurs without the meditator making any effort is very plain. It is so good walking noting like this that some spend a lot of time on it.

So when you meditate on the air-element, you should know it by way of its characteristic of support, its function of moving, and its manifestation of conveying. Only then is your knowledge right and as it should be.

You may ask, "Are we to meditate only after learning the characteristic, function and manifestation?" No. You need not learn them. If you meditate on the rising mind-and-matter, you know the characteristic, the function and the manifestation as well. There is no other way than knowing by way of the characteristic, function and manifestation when you meditate on the rising mind-and-matter. When you look up to the sky on a rainy day you see a flash of lightning. This bright light is the characteristic of lightning. As lightning flashes, darkness is dispelled. This dispelling of darkness is the function of lightning, its work. You also see what it is like- whether it is long, short, a curve, a circle, straight or vast. You see its characteristic, its function, its manifestation, all at once. Only

you may not be able to say the brightness is its characteristic, dispelling of darkness is its function, or its shape or outline is its manifestation. But you see them all the same.

In the same way, when you meditate on the rising mind and matter, you know its characteristic, its function, its manifestation, everything. You need not learn them. Some learned persons think that you have to learn them before you meditate. Not so. What you learn are only concepts not realities. The meditator who is contemplating the rising mind and matter knows them as if he were touching them with his own hand. He need not learn about them. If there is an elephant before your very eyes, you do not need to look at the picture of an elephant.

The meditator who is meditating on the rising and falling of the abdomen knows the firmness or laxity thereof- its characteristic.

He knows the moving in or out- its function. He also knows its bringing in and pushing out- its manifestation. If he knows these things as they really are, does he need to learn about them? Not if he wants the realization for himself. But if he wants to preach to others, he will need to learn about them.

When you meditate 'right step, left step', you know the tenseness in every step- its characteristic. You know the moving about- its function. And you know its conveying- its manifestation. This is proper knowledge, the right knowledge.

Now, to know for yourselves how one can discern the characteristic and so on by just meditating on what rises, try doing some meditation. You certainly have some hotness, pain, tiredness, ache, somewhere in your body now. These are unpleasant feelings hard to bear. Concentrate on this unpleasantness with your intellect and note 'hot, hot, or pain, pain'. You will find that you are going through an unpleasant experience and suffering. This is the characteristic of suffering- going through an unpleasant experience.

When this unpleasant feeling comes about, you become low-spirited. If the unpleasantness is little, there is a little low-spiritedness. If it is great, then low-spiritedness is great too. Even those who are of a strong will have their spirits go low if the unpleasant feelings are intense. Once you are very tired. You can't even move. This making the spirit go low is the function of unpleasant feeling. We have said "spirit" the mind. When the mind is low, its concomitants get low too.

The manifestation of unpleasant feeling is physical oppression. It manifests itself as a physical affliction, something unbearable, to the meditator's intellect. As he meditates 'hot, hot, pain, pain', it comes up to him as something oppressing in the body, something very hard to bear. It shows up so much that you have to groan.

If you meditate on the unpleasant feeling in your body as it rises, you know the undergoing of undesirable tangible object- its characteristic, the withering of associated states- its function, and the physical affliction- its manifestation. This is the way the meditators gain knowledge.

You can meditate on mind, too. Mind cognizes and thinks. So what thinks and imagines is mind. Meditate on this mind as 'thinking, imagining, pondering', whenever it arises. You will find that it has the intrinsic nature of going to the object, cognizing the object. This is the characteristic of mind, as it is said, "Mind has the characteristic of cognizing." Every kind of mind cognizes. The consciousness of seeing cognizes the object, as do the consciousness of hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking.

When you work in collective, you have a leader. Consciousness is the leader that cognizes the object that appears at any sense door. When the visible object comes up to the eye, consciousness cognizes it first of all. It is then followed by feeling, perception, desire, delight, dislike, admiration and so on. In the same way, when the audible object comes up to the ear, it is consciousness that cognizes it first. It is more obvious when you think or imagine. If an idea comes up while you are meditating 'rising, falling', etc. you have to note the idea. If you can note it the moment it appears, it disappears immediately. If you can't, several of its followers like delight, desire, will come in succession. Then the meditator realizes how consciousness is the leader- its function.

"Mind precedes things." (Dhammapada,1.)

If you note consciousness whenever it arises, you see very clearly how it is acting as leader, now going to that object.

Again the following is said in the Commentary: "Consciousness has the manifestation of continuity." As you meditate 'rising, falling' etc., the mind sometimes wanders away. You note it and it disappears. Then another consciousness comes up. You note it and it disappears. Again another consciousness appears. Again you note it and again it disappears. Again another comes up. You have to note lots of such comings up and going away of consciousness. The meditator comes to realize: "Consciousness is a succession of events that come up and go away one after another. When one disappears, another appears." Thus you realize the continuous manifestation of consciousness. The meditator who realizes this also realizes death and birth. "Death is nothing strange after all. It is just like the passing away of each moment of consciousness I have been noting. To be born again is like the coming up of the consciousness I am now noting that has risen in continuation of the one before.

To show that one can understand the characteristic, function and manifestation of things even though one has not learnt about them, we have taken the air-element out of the material qualities and the unpleasant feeling and consciousness out of the mental qualities. You just have to meditate on them as they arise. The same applies to all the other mental and material qualities. If you meditate on them as they arise, you will understand their characteristics, functions and manifestations. The beginner in meditation can meditate on and understand the mental-material aggregates of grasping only by way of these characteristics, functions and manifestations. At the initial stage of analytical knowledge of mind and matter and the knowledge of discerning conditionality, which are elemental in insight meditation, understanding that much is enough. When you come to real insight knowledges like the knowledge of investigation, you know the nature of impermanence, suffering and not-self as well.

What For and What Time?

The question now arises: What do we meditate on the grasping aggregates for? And, as regards time, at what time do we meditate, when they are gone, or before they come up, or when they arise?

What do we meditate for? Do we meditate on the aggregates of grasping for worldly wealth? For relief from illness? For clairvoyance? For levitation and such supernatural powers? Insight meditation aims at none of these. There have been cases of people who get cured of serious illnesses as a result of meditational practice. In the days of the Buddha persons who got perfected through insight meditation had supernatural powers. People today may have such powers if they get perfected. But fulfilment of these powers is not the basic aim of insight meditation.

Shall we meditate on phenomena past and gone? Shall we meditate on phenomena not yet come? Shall we meditate on the present phenomena? Or, shall we meditate on phenomena which are neither past, future nor present, but which we can imagine as we have read about them in books? The answer to these questions is: we meditate not to grasp and we meditate on what is arising.

Yes, people not practised in meditation grasp at the rising mind and matter every time they see, hear, touch, or become aware of. They grasp at them with craving, being pleased with them. They grasp at them with wrong views, taking them as permanent, happy, as the I, or the ego. We meditate in order not to let these graspings arise, to be free from them. This is the basic aim of insight meditation.

And, we meditate on what is arising. We do not meditate on things past, future, or indefinite in time. Here we are speaking of practical insight meditation. In inferential meditation we do meditate on things past, future, and indefinite in time. Let me explain. Insight meditation is of two kinds, practical and inferential. The knowledge you gain by meditating on what actually arises by way of intrinsic characteristics and individual characteristics such as impermanence is practical insight. From this practical knowledge you infer the impermanence, suffering and not-self of things past and future, things you have not experienced. This is an inferential insight.

"The fixing of both (seen and unseen) as alike by following the object....." (-Patisambhida magga)

The Visuddhimagga explains this statement as follows:

".....by following, going after the object seen, visually determining both (the seen and the unseen) as one in intrinsic nature: 'as this (seen) one, so what goes as complex broke up in the past and will break up in the future also'" (The Path of Purity, p786.)

"The object seen" - this is practical insight. And "going after the object seen.....determining both.....in the past.....in the future" - this is inferential insight. But here note: the inferential insight is possible only after the practical. No inference can be made without first knowing the present. The same explanation is given in the Commentary on Kathavatthu:

"Seeing the impermanence of even one contemplated formation, by method one draws the conclusion as regards the others, as 'Impermanent are all formations'"

Why don't we meditate on things past or future? Because they will not make you understand the real nature and cleanse you of defilements. You do not remember your past existences. Even in this existence, you do not remember most of your childhood. So, meditating on things past, how can you know things as they really are with their characteristics and functions? Things of the more recent past may be recalled. But, as you recall them, you think, "I saw, I heard, I thought. It was I who saw at that time and it is I who am seeing now." There is the "I" notion for you. There can even be notions of permanence and happiness. So recalling things past to meditate on do not serve our purpose. You have already grasped them and this grasping cannot be removed. Although you look on them as mind and matter with all your learning and thinking, the "I" notion persists because you have already grasped it. You say "impermanent" on the one hand, you get the notion "permanent" on the other. You note suffering, but the notion "happiness" keeps turning up. You meditate on not-self, but the self notion remains strong and firm. You argue with yourself. In the end your meditation has to give way to your preconceived ideas.

The future has not yet come, and you can't be sure what exactly it will be like when it comes. You may have meditated on them in advance but may fail to do so when they turn up. Then will craving, wrong view, and defilements arise all anew. So, to meditate on the future with the help of learning and thinking is no way to know things as they really are. Nor is it the way to calm defilements.

Things of indefinite time have never existed, will not exist, and are not existing, in oneself or in others. They are just imagined by learning and thinking. They are high-sounding and look intellectual, but on reflection are found to be just concepts of names, signs and shapes. Suppose someone is meditating, "Matter is impermanent. Matter rises moment to moment and passes away moment to moment." Ask him: What matter is it? Is it matter of the past or present or the future? Matter in oneself or in others? If in oneself, is it matter in the head? The body? The limbs? The eye? The ear? You will find that it is none of these but a mere concept, an imagination such as name concept. So we do not meditate on things on indefinite time.

Origination

But the present phenomenon is what comes up at the six doors right now. It has not yet been defiled. It is like an unsoiled piece of cloth or paper. If you are quick enough to meditate on it just as it comes up, it will not be defiled. You fail to note it and it gets defiled. Once defiled, it cannot be undefiled. If you fail to note the mind-and-matter as it rises, grasping intervenes. There is grasping with craving - grasping of sense-desires. There is grasping with wrong view - grasping of wrong views, of mere rite and ritual, of a theory of a self. What if grasping takes place?

"Conditioned by grasping is becoming;

conditioned by becoming is birth;

conditioned by birth, old age and dying,
grief, suffering, sorrow, despair and
lamentation come into being.

Thus comes to be the origination of this
entire mass of ill. (M i 333; S ii 1-2)

Grasping is no small matter. It is the root cause of good and bad deeds. One who has grasped works to accomplish what he believes are good things. Everyone of us is doing what he thinks is good. What makes him think it is good? It is grasping. Others may think it is bad, but to the doer it is good. If he thinks it is not good, of course he will not do it. There is a noteworthy passage in "Of one's work". One never thinks evil of one's work.

"A thief steals because it is good to him to steal. A robber robs people because he thinks it is good to rob. A killer kills because he thinks it is good to kill."

Ajatasattu killed his own father, King Bimbisara. He thought it was good. Deva-datta conspired against the life of the Buddha. Why, to him it was good. One who takes poison to kill himself does so because he thinks it is good. Moths rush to a flame thinking it is a very nice thing. All living things do what they do because they think it is good to do so. To think it is good is grasping. Once you are really grasped you do things. What is the outcome? Well, it is the good deeds and bad deeds.

It is a good deed to refrain from causing suffering to others. It is a good deed to render help to others. It is a good deed to give. It is a good deed to pay respect to those to whom respect is due. A good deed can bring about peace, a long life, and good health in this very life. It will bring good results in future lives, too. Such grasping is good, right grasping. Those who are thus grasped do good deeds like giving and keeping precepts and cause thereby to bring about good karma. What is the result then? "Conditioned by becoming is birth." After death they are born anew. Where are they born? In the Good Bourn, in the worlds of men and gods. As men they are endowed with such good things as a long life, beauty, health, as well as good birth, good following, and wealth. You can call them "happy people." As gods, too, they will be attended by multitudes of gods and goddesses and be living in magnificent palaces. They have grasped by notions of happiness and in a worldly sense, they can be said to be happy.

But from the point of view of the Buddha's teaching, these happy men and gods are not exempt from suffering. "Conditioned by birth are old age and dying." Although born a happy man, he will have to grow into an old "happy" man. Look at all those "happy" old people in the world. Once over seventy or eighty, not everything is all right with them. Grey hair, broken teeth, poor eyesight, poor hearing, backs bent double, wrinkles all over, energy all spent up, mere good-for-nothings! With all their wealth and big names, these old men and women, can they be happy? Then there is disease of old age. They cannot sleep well, they cannot eat well, they have difficulty sitting down or getting up. And finally, they must die. Rich man, king, or man of power, dies one day. He has nothing to rely on then. Friends and relatives there

are around him, but just as he is lying there on his death-bed he closes his eyes and dies. Dying he goes away all alone to another existence. He must find it really hard to part with all his wealth. If he is not a man of good deeds, he will be worried about his future existence.

The great gods, likewise, have to die. Gods too are not spared. A week before they die, five signs appear to them. The flowers they wear which never faded now begin to fade. Their dresses which never got worn-out now appear worn-out. Sweat comes out in their armpits, an unusual thing. Their bodies which always looked young now look old. Having never felt bored in their divine lives, they now feel bored. (Itivuttaka, p.247)

When these five signs appear, they at once realize their imminent death, and are greatly alarmed. In the days of the Buddha, the Sakka (King of Gods) himself had these signs appear to him. Greatly alarmed that he was going to die and lose his glory, he came to the Buddha for help. The Buddha preached the Dhamma to him and he became a Stream-winner. The old Sakka died and was reborn as a new Sakka. It was lucky of him that the Buddha was there to save him. Had it not been for the Buddha, it would have been a disaster to the old great god.

Not only old age and dying. "...grief, suffering, sorrow, despair and lamentation come into being." All these are sufferings. "Thus comes to be the origination of this entire mass of ill." So, the good life resulting from grasping is dreadful suffering after all. Men or gods, all have to suffer.

If the good life resulting from good deeds is suffering, had we better not do them? No. If we do not do good deeds, bad deeds may come up. These can lead us to hell, to the realm of animals, to the realm of ghost, to the realm of Asuras. The sufferings of these lower planes are far worse. Human and divine life is suffering compared with the happiness of deathless Nibbana but compared with the sufferings of the lower states, human or divine life is happiness indeed.

Right grasping gives rise to good deeds. Likewise wrong grasping gives rise to bad deeds. Thinking that it is good to do so, some kill, steal, rob, do wrong to others. As a result they are reborn in bad bourn-in hell, in the realm of animals, in the realm of ghosts. To be reborn in hell is like jumping into a great fire. Even a great god can do nothing against hell fire. In the days of the Kakusandha Buddha there was a great Mara-god by the name of Dusi. He was contemptuous of the Buddha and the members of the Holy Order. One day he caused the death of the chief disciple. As a result of this cruel deed the great god died and was reborn in Avici hell. Once there he was at the mercy of the guardians of purgatory. Those people who are bullying others in this world will meet the same fate as that met by the great god Dusi one day. Then after suffering for a long time in hell, they will be reborn animals and ghosts.

How grasping arises

So grasping is dreadful. It is very important too. We meditate to let this grasping not be, to put an end to it. We meditate not to grasp with craving or wrong view - not to grasp as permanent or happy, not to grasp as self, ego, the I. Those who fail to meditate grasp whenever they see, hear, feel or perceive. Ask

yourselves if you don't grasp. The answer will be too obvious.

Let's begin with seeing. Suppose you see something beautiful. What do you think of it? You are delighted with it, pleased with it, aren't you? You won't say, "I don't want to see, I don't want to look at it." In fact, you are thinking, "What a beautiful thing! How lovely!" Beaming with smiles you are pleased with it. At the same time you are thinking it is permanent. Whether the object seen is a human being or an inanimate thing, you think it has existed before, exists now, and will go on existing forever. Although it is not your own, you mentally take possession of it and delight in it. If it is a piece of clothing, you mentally put it on and are pleased. If it is a pair of sandals, you mentally put them on. If it is a human being, you mentally use him or her and are pleased, too.

The same thing happens when you hear, smell, taste or touch. You take pleasure on each occasion. With thoughts the range of your delights is far wider. You fancy and take delight in things not your own, long for them, and imagine them to be yours. If they are your own things, needless to say, you keep thinking of them and are pleased with them all the time. We meditate to check such taking delight in and grasping.

We grasp with wrong views, too. You grasp with the personality view. When you see, you think what you see is a person, an ego. Your own consciousness of seeing, too, you take as a person, an ego. Without a thorough insight knowledge we grasp at things the moment we see them. Think of yourselves and you will see for yourselves how you have got such a grasping in you. You think of yourself as well as of others as an ego that has lived the whole life long. In reality there is no such thing. Nothing lives the whole life long. Only mind and matter rising one after another in continuation. This mind-and-matter you take as a person, ego, and grasp. We meditate to not let these graspings with wrong views be.

But we have to meditate on things as they come up. Only then will we be able to prevent the graspings. Graspings come from seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking. They come from six places - six doors. Can we cling to things we cannot see? No. Can we cling to those we cannot hear? No. The Buddha himself has asked these questions.

"Now what think you, Malunkya's son? As to those shapes cognizable by eye, which you have not seen, which you have never seen before, which you do not see now, which you have no expectation of seeing in future, have you any partiality, any passion, any affection for such shapes?"

"Not so, my lord" (-S. iv. 72)

What are those shapes you have not seen before? Towns and villages and countries you have never been to, men and women living there, and other scenes. How can anyone fall in love with men and women he or she hasn't ever seen? How can you cling to them? So, you do not cling to things you have never seen. No defilements arise in respect of them. You do not need to meditate on them. But things you see are another matter. Defilements can arise - that is to say, if you fail to meditate to prevent them.

The same is true of things heard, smelt, tasted, touched, thought on.

Meditate Right Now

If you fail to meditate on the rising phenomena and so do not know their real nature of impermanence, suffering and not-self, you may relive them and thus let defilements be. This is a case of latent defilements. Because they arise from objects, we call them "object-latent". What do people cling to and why do they cling to? They cling to things or persons they have seen because they have seen. If you fail to meditate on them as they arise, somehow or other graspings arise. Defilements are latent in whatever we see, hear, taste, etc.

If you meditate, you find that what you see passes away, what you hear passes away. They pass away in no time at all. Once you see them as they really are, there is nothing to love, nothing to hate, nothing to cling to. If there is nothing to cling to there can be no clinging or grasping.

And you meditate right now. The moment you see, you meditate. You can't put it off. You may buy things on credit, but you cannot meditate on credit. Meditate right now. Only then will the clingings not come up. Scripturally speaking, you meditate as soon as the eye-door thought-process ends and before the subsequent mind-door thought-process begins. When you see a visible object, the process takes place like this: First, you see the object that comes up. This is the seeing process. Then you review the object seen. This is the name process. With objects you have never seen before, and so you do not know the names of, this naming process will not occur. Of the four, when the first or seeing process takes place, you see the present form, the reality, as it rises. When the second or reviewing process takes place, you review the past form, the form seen - reality again. Both attend on reality - the object seen. No concept yet. The difference is between the present reality and the past reality. With the third process you come to the concept of shape. With the fourth you come to the concept of names. The processes that follow are all various concepts. All these are common to people not practised in insight meditation.

There are 14 thought-moments in the process of seeing. If neither seeing, hearing, nor thinking consciousness arises, life-continuum goes on. It is identical with rebirth consciousness. It is the consciousness that goes on when you are sleeping fast. When a visible object or any such appears, life-continuum is arrested, and seeing consciousness, etc. arises. As soon as life-continuum ceases, a thought-moment arises adverting the consciousness to the object that comes into the avenue of the eye. When this ceases, seeing consciousness arises. When this again ceases, the receiving consciousness arises. Then comes the investigating consciousness. Then, the consciousness that determines whether the object seen is good or not. Then, in accordance with the right or wrong attitude you have with regard to things, moral or immoral apperceptions arise forcefully for seven thought-moments. When these cease, there comes subsidence into life-continuum like falling asleep. From the adverting to retention there are 14 thought-moments. All these manifest as one seeing consciousness. This is how the seeing process takes place. When one is well-practised in insight meditation, after the arising of life-continuum following the seeing process, insight consciousness that reviews "seeing" takes place. You must try to be able to thus meditate immediately. If you are able to do so, it appears in your intellect as though you were meditating on things

as they are seen, as they just arise. This kind of meditation is termed in the Suttas as "meditation on the present".

"He discerns things present as they arise here and now."

(-M. iii. 227)

"Understanding in reviewing the perversion of present states is knowledge in arising and passing away."

(-Patisambhidamagga)

These extracts from the Suttas clearly show that we must meditate on present states. If you fail to meditate on the present, apprehending process arises cutting off the flow of life-continuum. This process arises to review what has just been seen. The thought-moments included are: apprehending consciousness-1, apperceptions-7, and registering consciousness-2, a total of 10 thought-moments. Every time you think or ponder, these three types of consciousness and ten thought-moments take place. But to the meditator they will appear as one thought-moment only. This is in conformity with the explanations given in connection with the knowledge of dissolution in Patisambhidamagga and Visuddhimagga. If you can meditate (or note) after the apprehending process, you may not get to concepts and may stay with the reality - the object seen. But this is not very easy for the beginner.

If you fail to meditate even at the apprehending, you get to form process and name process. Then graspings come in. If you meditate after the emergence of graspings, they will not disappear. That is why we instruct you to meditate, immediately, before the concepts arise.

The processes for hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, are to be understood along similar lines.

With thinking at the mind-door, if you fail to meditate immediately, subsequent processes come up after the thought. So you meditate immediately so that they may not arise. Sometimes, as you are noting 'rising, falling, sitting, touching', a thought or an idea may come up in between. You note it the moment it arises. You note it and it ends right there. Sometimes a wandering of the mind is about to arise. You note it and it quiets down. In the words of some meditators, "it is like a naughty child who behaves himself when shouted at 'Quiet!'"

So, if you note the moment you see, hear, touch, or perceive, no subsequent consciousness will arise to bring about graspings.

"...you will simply have the sight of the thing seen, the sound of the things heard, the sense of the things sensed, and the idea of the thing cognized."

As this extract from Malunkyaputta Sutta shows, the mere sight, the mere sound, the mere sense, the mere idea is there. Recall them and only the real nature you have understood will appear. No graspings. The meditator who meditates on whatever arises as it arises sees how everything arises and passes away, and it becomes clear to him how everything is impermanent, suffering, not-self. He knows this for himself - not because a teacher has explained it to him. This only is the real knowledge.

Incessant Work

To arrive at this knowledge needs thorough work. There is no guaranteeing that you will gain such knowledge at one sitting. Perhaps one in a million will. In the days of the Buddha there are people who attained to the Path and Fruit after listening to a stanza. But you can't expect such things today. It was then the Buddha himself who was teaching. He knew the disposition of his listeners very well. The listeners on their part were people of perfections i.e. they had accumulated experience in their past lives. But today the preacher is just an ordinary person who preaches what little he has learnt. He does not know the disposition of his listeners. It will be difficult to say that the listeners are men and women of perfections. If they had been, they would have gained deliverance in the days of the Buddha. So we cannot guarantee you will gain special knowledge at one sitting. We can tell you that you can if you work hard enough.

How long do we have to work? Understanding impermanence, suffering and not-self begins with the investigating knowledge. But it does not come at once. It is preceded by purity of mind, purity of views, and purity of transcending doubts. To speak from the level of the present-day meditators, a specially gifted person can achieve this knowledge in two or three days. Most will take five, six or seven days. But they must work assiduously. Those who get lax at work may not gain it even after fifteen or twenty days have passed. So I will talk about working in earnest at the beginning.

Insight meditation is incessant work - meditate whenever you see, hear, smell, taste, touch or think, without missing anything. But to beginners, to note everything is quite impossible. Begin with several. It is easy to observe the moving form in the rising and falling of the abdomen. We have already spoken about it. Note without a let-up 'rising, falling, rising, falling'. As your mindfulness and concentration grow stronger, add the sitting and the touching and note 'rising, falling, sitting, touching'. As you note on, ideas may come up. Note them, too: 'thinking, planning, knowing'. They are hindrances. Unless you are rid of them, you have not got purity of mind and will not have a clear understanding of mind-matter phenomena. So don't let them in. Note them and get rid of them.

If unbearable feelings like tiredness, hotness, pain or itch appear in the body, concentrate on them and note: 'tired, tired' or 'hot, hot' as they arise. If the desire arises to stretch or bend the limbs, note it too, 'desire to bend, desire to stretch'. When you walk, note every step. When you sit down, note it. If you lie down, note it too.

Every bodily movement made, every thought that arises, every feeling that comes up, all must be noted. If there is nothing in particular to note, go on noting 'rising, falling, sitting, touching'. You must note while eating or having a bath. If there are things you see or hear particularly, note them too. Except for the four, five or six hours you sleep, you keep noting things. You must try to be able to note at least one thing in a second.

If you keep on noting thus in earnest, you will, in two or three days, find your mindfulness and concentration quite strong. If not in two or three days, in five or six. Then very rarely do wanton thoughts come up. If they do, you are able to note them the

moment they come. And they pass away the moment you notice them. The object noted like the rising and falling and the mind noting it seem to be well-timed. You note with ease. These are signs that your mindfulness and concentration have become strong. In other words, you have developed purity of mind.

Things Fall Apart

From now on, every time you note, the object noted and the mind that notes it appear two separate things. You come to know that the material form like the rising and falling is one thing and the mental state that notes it is another. Ordinarily, the material form and the mind that cognizes it do not seem separate. They seem one and the same thing. Your book knowledge tells you they are separate but your personal feeling has them as one. Shake your index finger. Do you see the mind that intends to shake? Can you distinguish between that mind and the shaking? If you are sincere, the answer will be "No." But to the meditator whose mindfulness and concentration are well developed the object of attention and the awareness of it are as separate as the wall and the stone that is thrown to it.

The Buddha used the simile of the gem and the thread (D.i.72) Just as when you look at a string of lapis lazuli you know: the gem is threaded on a string; this is the gem, this is the string the gem is threaded on, so does the meditator know: this is the material form, this is the consciousness that is aware of it, which depends on it, and is related to it. The Commentary says that the consciousness here is the insight consciousness, insight knowledge, that observes the material form. The lapis lazuli is the material form and the string is the consciousness that observes. The thread is in the gem as the insight awareness penetrates the material form.

When you note 'rising', the rising is one thing, the awareness is one thing- only these two exist. When you note 'falling', the falling is one, the awareness is one- only these two. The knowledge comes clear in you of its own accord. When you lift one foot in walking, one is the lifting, the other is the awareness - only these two exist. When you push it forward, the pushing and the awareness. When you put it down, the putting down and the awareness. Matter and awareness. These two only. Nothing else.

As your concentration improves further, you understand how the material and mental things you have been noting keep passing away each in its own time. When you note falling, the form falling comes up gradually and then passes away. You also find that the rising as well as the awareness passes away, the falling as well as the awareness passes away. With every noting you find only arising and passing away. When noting 'bending, bending', one bending and the next do not get mixed up. Bends, and passes away, bends, passes away - and thus, the intention to bend, the form bending, and the awareness, come and go each in its time and place. And when you note the tiredness, hotness and pain, these pass away as you are noting them. It becomes clear to you: they appear and then disappear, so they are impermanent.

The meditator understands for himself what the commentaries say, "They are impermanent in the sense of being nothing after becoming." This knowledge comes to him not from books nor from teachers. He understands by himself. This is real knowledge. To believe what other people say is faith. To remember out of faith

is learning. It is not knowledge. You must know from your own experience. This is the important thing. Insight meditation is contemplation in order to know for yourself. You meditate, see for yourself, and knowing this alone is insight.

Regarding Contemplation on impermanence the commentary says:

".....the impermanent should be understood."

".....impermanence should be understood."

".....the discernment of the impermanent should be understood."

(- Visuddhimagga, i. 281)

This brief statement is followed by the explanation: "Here, 'the impermanent' are the Five Aggregates." You must know that the Five Aggregates are impermanent. Although you may not understand it by your own knowledge, you should know this much. Not only that. You should know that they are all suffering, all without a self. If you know this much, you can take up insight meditation. This understanding made by learning is given in Culatanhasankhaya-sutta:

"If, O Lord of devas, a monk has heard, 'All states are not fit for adherence, he understands all the truth.' (-M.i.318)

To "understand" means to meditate on the mind-and-matter and be aware of it. It is the basic insight knowledge of Analytical Knowledge of Conditionality. So, if you have learnt that mind and matter are all impermanent, suffering and not-self, you can begin meditating from the analysis of mind and matter. Then you can go on to higher knowledges like the Investigating Knowledge.

"Understanding all the states, he comprehends all of them."

So, the least qualification required of a beginner in insight meditation is that he must have heard or learnt of the impermanent, suffering, and not-self nature of mind and matter. To Buddhists in Myanmar this is something they have had since childhood.

We say mind and matter are impermanent because they come to be and then pass away. If a thing never comes to be, we cannot say it is impermanent. What is that thing which never comes to be? It is a concept.

Concepts never come to be, never really exist. Take a personal name. It comes into use from the day a child is named. It appears as though it has come to be. But actually people just say it in calling him. It has never come to be; it never really exists. If you think it exists, find it.

When a child is born, the parents give it a name. Suppose a boy has been named "Master Red." Before the naming ceremony the name Master Red is unknown to all. But from the day the boy is named people begin calling him Master Red. But we can't say the name has come into being since then. The name Master Red just does not exist. Let's find it out.

Is the name Master Red in his body? On his head? On his side? On his face? No, it is not anywhere. The people have agreed to call him Master Red and that is all. If he dies, does the name die

with him too? No. As long as people do not forget it, the name will live on. So it is said, "a name or surname never gets destroyed". Only when the people forget it will the name Master Red disappear. But it is not destroyed. Should someone restore it, it will come up again.

Think of the Bodhisatta's names in the Jatakas: Vessantara, Mahosadha, Mahajanaka, Vidhura, Temiya, Nemi..... these names were known in the times of the stories but were lost for millions of years until the Buddha restored them. Four asankheyyas and a hundred thousand kappas ago (asankheyya is a number with the digit 1 followed by 140 zeroes) the name Dipankara the Buddha and the name Sumedha the recluse were well known. They were lost to posterity afterwards. But our Buddha restored them and the names are known to us again. They will be known as long as the Buddha's teaching lasts. Once Buddhism is gone from earth these names will be forgotten too. But if a future Buddha were to speak about them again, they would become known again. So, concepts, names, are just conventions. They never exist. They have never been and they will never be. They never arise, so we can't say they "pass away." Nor can we say they are impermanent. Every concept is like that; no existence, no becoming, no passing away, so no impermanence.

Nibbana, although it is a reality, cannot be said to be impermanent because it never comes to be or passes away. It is to be regarded as permanent because it stands as peace forever.

Impermanence

Realities other than Nibbana - mind and matter - never were in the beginning. They come into being whenever there arise causes. After coming into being they pass away. So we say these realities of mind and matter are impermanent. Take seeing for example. In the beginning there was no seeing. But if the eye is good, the object comes up, there is light, your attention is drawn to it - if these four causes concur, then there is seeing. Once it has risen, it passes away. No more of it. So we say seeing is impermanent. It is not very easy for an ordinary person to know that seeing is impermanent. Hearing is easier to understand. There was no hearing in the beginning. But if the ear is good, the sound comes up, there is no barrier, your attention is drawn to it - if, these four factors concur, then there is hearing. It arises and then passes away. No more of it. So we say hearing is impermanent.

Now you hear me talking. You hear one sound after another. Once you have heard them, they are gone. Listen, SOUND, SOUND, SOUND. When I say s-, you hear it, then it is no more. When I say -ound, you hear it, then it is gone. That is how they come and pass away. The same is true of other psycho-physical phenomena. They come and go. Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, thinking, bending, stretching, moving - all come and go away. Because they keep passing away, we say they are impermanent.

Of these, the passing away of consciousness is very clear. If your mind wanders while you are noting 'rising, falling', you note 'wandering'. As you note it, the wandering mind is no more. It is gone. It has not existed before. It comes about just then. Then it is gone in no time at all when noted. So we say it is impermanent. The passing away of unpleasant feelings, too, is obvious. As you go on noting 'rising, falling, tiredness, hotness', or 'pain', appears somewhere in the body. If you concentrate on it and note 'tiredness, tiredness', etc. sometimes it disappears completely,

and sometimes it disappears at least for the time you are noting. So it is impermanent. The meditator realizes its impermanent characteristic as he notes its arising and passing away.

This realization of the fleeting nature of things is Contemplation on impermanence. It comes from your experience. Mere reflection without personally experiencing it is no true knowledge. Without meditating you will not know what things come up and what things pass away. It is just book learning. It may be a meritorious deed but no real insight knowledge.

Real insight knowledge is what you know for yourself by meditating on things as they come up and pass away. Here in the audience are lots of meditators who have come to this stage of knowledge. I am not speaking from my own experience alone. No, not even from the experience of forty or fifty disciples of mine. There are hundreds of them. Beginners may not have such clear knowledge yet. It is not quite easy. But it is not too difficult to achieve, either. If you work hard enough as we instruct, you can have it. If you don't, you can't. Educational degrees, distinctions, honours all are results of hard work. No pain, no gain. The insight knowledge of the Buddha, too, must be worked for.

As your concentration grows sharper, you will be able to see a great number of thoughts in one single act of bending or stretching of the limbs. You will see large numbers of thoughts coming up one after another as you intend to bend or stretch. The same number when you step. There arise a great number of thoughts in the twinkling of an eye. You have to note all these fleeting thoughts as they arise. If you cannot name them, just note 'aware, aware.' You will see that there are four, five, or ten thoughts arising in succession every time you note 'aware'. Sometimes when the awareness is so swift, even the word 'aware' is no longer necessary. Just following them with your intellect will do.

Now a thought arises, now the mind is aware of it: now another thought arises, now the observant consciousness is aware of it. It is like the saying "a morsel of food, a stroke of the stick." For every thought that arises there is the observant consciousness to be aware of it. When you are thus aware, these arisings and passings away cannot but be very plain to you. The wandering mind that arises as you are noting the rising and falling of the abdomen is caught by the observing consciousness as an animal that falls direct into the snare or an object that is hit by a well-aimed stone. And once you are aware of it, it is gone. You find it as clearly as if you were holding it in your hand. You find thus whenever consciousness arises.

When tiredness arises, you note 'tired', and it is gone. It comes up again, you note it again, and it is gone again. This kind of passing away will be made all the more clearer in higher stages of insight. Tired, noted, gone: tired, noted, gone - they pass away one by one. There is no connection between one tiredness and the next. The same with pain. Pained, noted, gone: pained, noted, gone - each pain is gone at each noting. One pain does not mix with the other. Each pain is distinct from the other.

To ordinary people there is no interruption in tiredness or pain. It seems to tire or pain you continuously for a long time. In fact, there is no tiredness or pain for a long while. One tiredness and the next, one pain and the next, just very short pieces, very separate ones. The meditator sees this as he notes.

When you note 'rising', the rising comes up gradually and passes away by degrees. When you note 'falling', the falling comes up and passes away by degrees. Common people who are ignorant of this fact think of the rising and falling in terms of the absurd abdominal shape. So from their own experience they think the meditators, too, will only be seeing the absurd abdominal shape. Some make accusations to this effect. Don't speak by guess, please. Try and see for yourselves, let us warn. If you work hard enough, you will find out.

When you note 'bending', you see clearly how it moves and passes, moves and passes, one move after another. You understand now the scriptural statement that realities like mind and matter do not move from place to place. Ordinary people think it is the same hand that moves, that has been before the bending. They think the same hand moves inwards and outwards. To them it is ever-unchanging hand. It is because they have failed to see through the continuity of matter, the way matter rises in succession. It is because they lack in the knowledge to see through. Impermanence is hidden by continuity, it is said. It is hidden because one does not meditate on what arises and passes away. Says Visuddhimagga

"Because the rise and fall are not attended to, the characteristic of impermanence does not appear, as long as it is hidden by continuity."

(-Vis. xxi, Path of Purity, p781)

Since the meditator is watching every arising, all things mental and material appear to him as separate, broken pieces - not as things whole and unbroken. From a distance ants look like a line, but when you get nearer you see the ants one by one. The meditator sees things in broken pieces so continuity cannot hide the fact from him. The characteristic of impermanence unfolds itself to him. He is no longer illusioned.

"But when the rise and fall are grasped and continuity is broken, the characteristic of impermanence appears in its true peculiar property." (Ibid.)

This is how you meditate and gain the knowledge of Contemplation on Impermanence. Mere reflection without meditation will not give rise to this knowledge. Once this knowledge is made become, those on suffering and not-self follow.

"To one, Meghiya, who has perceived impermanence the perception of not-self is established." (A.iii,169.)

How will you take what you very know to be capable of rising and passing away to be self, ego, a being? People cling to the self because they think they have been the same person the whole life. Once it is clear to you from your own experience that life is but made up of things that rise and pass away incessantly, you will not cling as self.

Some obstinate persons say that this sutta is meant for Meghiya alone. This is something that should not be said. We fear others will come up who will say what the Buddha said were meant for the people of his days, not for us who live today. But the statement is found not in that sutta alone. In Sambodhi Sutta the Buddha says:

"To one, monks, who has perceived impermanence the perception of not-self is established." (A.iii.165.)

And, if one realizes impermanence, one realizes suffering, too. The meditator who realizes how things are rising and passing away, can see how the two events, rising and passing away, have been oppressing him. The Commentary to Sambodhi Sutta says:

"When the characteristic of impermanence is seen, the characteristic of not-self is seen, too, since when one of the three characteristics is seen the other two are seen too."

So, it is very important to understand the one characteristic of impermanence.

Rediscovery

In this connection let me tell you a story from my own experience as a meditation teacher. It is about a meditator from my native village, Hseikkhun, in Shwebo district. He was none other than a cousin of mine. He was one of the first three persons from the village to take up insight meditation. The three of them agreed among themselves to work very hard. They had brought to the hermitage cigars and betel quids to be taken one each day. But when they returned from the hermitage they took home all the seven cigars and quids - untouched.

So hard did they work that in three days they attained the knowledge of rising and falling and were overjoyed to experience tranquillity and see the brilliance around. "Only at this old age have we discovered the truth," they spoke with great joy. Because they were the first to take up meditation I thought of letting them go with their joys and just told them to go on noting. I did not tell them to note the joys. So although they worked for four more days, they did not get any higher.

After a few day's rest they came again for another week of meditation. That cousin of mine then reached the stage of the Knowledge of Dissolution. Although he was noting 'rising, falling, sitting', he did not see the abdominal shape, and his body seemed to have disappeared, so he had to touch it with his hand to see if it was still there, he told me. And, whenever he looked or saw, everything seemed to be dissolving and breaking up. The ground he looked at was dissolving, and so were the trees. It was all against what he had thought things to be. He began to wonder.

He had never thought such external, season-produced gross material things like earth, trees, logs, etc. could be incessantly breaking up. He had thought they perished only after a considerable length of time. They lasted for quite a long time, he had thought. Now, as insight knowledge gained momentum with meditation, the rising and passing of phenomena appeared to him of their own accord without his specially meditating on them. They were passing away, breaking up, there before him. It was all the reverse of his former beliefs. Perhaps his new vision was wrong. Perhaps his eyesight was failing.

So he asked me. And I told him. The passing away and breaking up he saw in everything were true. As your insight grew sharper and quicker, things appear rising and passing away to you without your meditation on them. These are all true, I explained to him.

Later on he again told me about his own findings as he progressed in insight. Today he is no more. He has long been dead.

When insight knowledge has grown really sharp, it will prevail over wrong beliefs and thoughts. You see things in their true light, as impermanent, suffering, not-self. An uncultured mind or reflection without meditation cannot give you real insight into the nature of things. Only insight meditation can do that.

Once you realize impermanence, you see how they oppress you with their rising and passing away, how you can derive no pleasure from them, how they can never be a refuge, how they can perish any moment, so how they are frightening, how they are suffering, etc.

"...ill (suffering) in the sense of fearful."

You thought, "This body will not perish so soon. It will last for quite a long time." So you took it for a great refuge. But now as you meditate you find only incessant risings and passing away. If no new ones rise up for the mental and material things that have passed away, one dies. And this can happen any moment. To make a self out of these mental and material things that can die any moment and to take a refuge in it is as dreadful a thing as sheltering in an old house which is tumbling down.

And you find that nothing happens as you desire. Things just follow their natural course. You thought you could go if you wished to, sit if you wished to, rise, see, hear, do anything if you wished to. Now as you meditate you find that it is not so. Mind and matter are found to be working in a pair. Only when there is intention to bend is there the form bending. Only when there is intention to stretch is there stretching. There is effect only when there is cause. Only when there is something to see do you see. If there is something to see, you can't help seeing it. You hear when there is something to hear. You feel happy only when there is a reason to be happy. You worry when there is cause to worry. If there is cause, there is effect. You cannot help it. There is nothing that lives and does what it desires. There is no self, no ego, no I. Only process of arising and passing away.

To understand clearly is the most important thing in insight meditation. Of course, you will come across joys, tranquilities, bright lights in the course of your training. They are not important things. What is important is to understand impermanence, suffering and not-self. These characteristics are made clear to you as you just keep on meditating as explained.

Peace at Last

You make things clear to yourself not believing what others tell you. If any of you beginners have not had such self-made knowledge yet, know that you have not reached that stage. Work on. If others can, you can. It will not take very long. The knowledge comes to you as you are meditating. Only when you know for sure that all are impermanent, suffering and not-self will you not cling to sense objects as permanent, happy, beautiful, good. Nor will you cling to them as self, soul, the I. All the graspings are done away with. What then? Well, all the defilements are calmed and Ariyan Path and Nibbana are realized.

"One who has no grasping does not long after things. One who does not long after things is calmed in himself." (M.ii,318)

Whenever you meditate, you have no obsession with the object noted. So no grasping arises. There is no grasping to what you see, hear, smell, eat, touch or are aware of. They appear to rise each in its time and then pass away. They manifest themselves as impermanent. There is nothing to cling to. They oppress us with their rise and fall. They are all sufferings. There is nothing to cling to as happy, good or beautiful. They rise and fall as is their nature, so there is nothing to cling to as self, soul, or I, that lives and lasts. All these are made very plain to you. At that the graspings are done away with. Then you realize Nibbana through Ariyan Path. We will explain this in the light of Dependent Origination and Aggregates.

"The stopping of grasping is from the stopping of craving; the stopping of becoming is from the stopping of grasping; the stopping of birth is from the stopping of becoming; With the stopping of birth then grief, suffering, sorrow, despair and lamentation are stopped. Thus comes to be the stopping of this entire mass of ill." (M.i,337;S.ii,1-3)

One who meditates on the mental and material objects that appear at the six doors and knows their intrinsic nature of impermanence, suffering and not-self does not delight in them. As he does not grasp them, he makes no effort to enjoy them. As he refuses to make an effort, there arises no kamma called "becoming". As no kamma arises, there is no new birth. Where there is no new birth there is no occasion for old age, dying, grief etc. This is how one realizes momentary Nibbana through insight path whenever one meditates. We will explain the realization by Ariyan Path later.

In Silavanta sutta earlier quoted, the Venerable Sariputta explained how, if a monk of moral habit meditates on the five aggregates of grasping as impermanent, suffering, and not-self, he can become a Stream-winner; if a Stream-winner meditates, he can become a Once-returner; if a Once-returner, a Never-returner; if a Never-returner, an Arahant. Here, to realize the four Ariyan fruitions of Stream-winning, Once-returning, Never-returning, and Arahantship means to realize Nibbana through the four Ariyan Paths.

Progress

To get to the Ariyan Path one starts with insight path. And insight path begins with the analytical knowledge of mind and matter. Then one arrives at the knowledge of discerning conditionality. Then, working on, one gains the knowledge of investigation. Here one comes to enjoy reflecting on things, investigating them, and persons of considerable learning often spend a long time doing so. If you do not want to reflect or investigate, you must keep on meditating. Your awareness now becomes light and swift. You see very clearly how the things noted arise and pass away. You have come to the knowledge of rising and passing away.

At this stage noting tends to be easy. Illuminations, joys, tranquilities appear. Going through experiences unthought of before, one is thrilled with joy and happiness. At the initial stage of his work, the meditator has had to take great pains not to let the mind wander this way and that. But it has wandered and for most of the time he has not been able to meditate. Noting has

seemed all right. Some have had to fight back very hard indeed. But with strong faith in one's teachers, good intentions and determination, one has passed all the difficult stages. One has now come to the knowledge of rising and passing away. Everything is fine at this stage. Noting is easy and effortless. It is good to note, and brilliant lights appear. Rapture seizes him and causes a sort of goose-flesh in him. Both body and mind are at ease and he feels very comfortable. The objects to be noted seem to drop on one's mindfulness of their own accord. Mindfulness on its part seems to drop on the object of its own accord. Everything is there already noted. One never fails or forgets to note. On every noting the awareness is very clear. If you attend to something and reflect on it, it proves to be a plain and simple matter. If you take up impermanence, suffering and not-self, about which you have heard before, they turn out to be plainly discernable things. So you feel like preaching. You think you would make a very good preacher. But if you have had no education, you will make a very poor preacher. But you feel like preaching and you can even become quite talkative. This is what is called "the ideal Nibbana" the meditators experience. It is not the real Nibbana of the Ariyans. We may call it "imitation Nibbana"

"It is the immortality of those who know."

Training in meditation is like climbing a mountain. You begin climbing from the base. Soon you get tired. You ask people who are coming down and they answer you with encouraging words like "It's nearer now." Tired you climb on and very soon come to a resting place in the shade of a tree with a cool breeze blowing in. All your tiredness is gone. The beautiful scenery around fascinates you. You get refreshed for a further climb. The knowledge of the rising and passing away is the resting place for you on your climb to higher insight knowledge.

Those meditators who have not yet reached this stage of knowledge may be losing hope. Days have passed and no taste of insight yet. They often get disheartened. Some leave the meditation centre with thoughts that meditation is nothing after all. They have not discovered the "meditator's Nibbana". So we instructors have to encourage newcomers to the centre with the hope that they will attain to this knowledge at least. And we ask them to work to attain it soon. Most succeed as we advise. They don't need further encouragement. They are now full of faith and determination to work on till the ultimate goal.

The "meditator's Nibbana" is often spoken of as *amanusi rati* - non-human delight or superhuman enjoyment (i.e. joy or delight transcending that of ordinary human beings). You derive all kinds of delights from various things - from education, wealth, family life. The "meditator's Nibbana" surpasses all these delights. A meditator once told me that he had indulged in all kinds of worldly pleasures. But none could match the pleasure derived from meditation. He just could not express how delightful it was.

But is that all? No, you must work on. You go on with your noting. Then, as you progress, forms and features no longer manifest themselves and you find them always disappearing. Whatever appears disappears the moment you notice it. You note seeing, it disappears swiftly. You note hearing, it disappears. Bending, stretching, again it disappears swiftly. Not only the object that comes up, the awareness of it too disappears with it in a pairwise sequence. This is the Knowledge of Dissolution.

Every time you note, they dissolve swiftly. Having witnessed it for a long time, you become frightened of them. It is the knowledge of the Fearful. Then you find fault with these things that keep passing away. It is the Knowledge of Tribulation. Then as you meditate on, you get weary of them. It is the Knowledge of Repulsion.

"So seeing all these things, the instructed disciple of the Ariyans disregards the material shapes, disregards feeling."
(M.i,137;S.iii,68.)

Your material body has been a delightful thing before. Sitting or rising, going or coming, bending or stretching, speaking or working, everything has seemed very nice. You have thought this material body of yours to be a dependable and delightful thing. Now that you have meditated on it and seen that everything dissolves, you no longer see your body as dependable. It is no longer delightful. It is just a dull, tiresome business.

You have enjoyed both pleasurable feelings of the body and mental pleasure. You have thought, "I am enjoying," "I feel happy." Now these feelings are no longer pleasurable. They, too, pass away as you notice them. You become wearied of them.

You have thought well of your perception. But now it, too, passes away as you notice it. You feel disgusted with it as well.

Volitional activities are responsible for all your bodily, mental and vocal behaviours. To think, "I sit, I rise, I go, I act," is to cling to volitional activities. You have thought well of them too. Now that you see them passing away, you feel repulsion for them.

You have enjoyed thinking. When newcomers to the meditation centre are told that they must not engage in thinking about things, but must keep noting, they are not at all pleased. Now you see how thoughts, ideas, come up and pass away, and you are tired of them too.

The same thing happens to your sense-organs. Whatever comes up at the six doors is now a thing to disgust, to be wearied of. Some feel extreme disgust, some a considerable amount.

Then arise desires to be rid of them all. Once you are tired of them, of course you want to get rid of them. "They come and pass incessantly. They are no good. It were well if they all ceased." This is the Knowledge for Deliverance. Where "they all ceased" is Nibbana. To desire for deliverance from them is to long for Nibbana. What must one do if one wants Nibbana? He works harder and goes on meditating. This is the Knowledge of Re-reflection. Working with special effort, the characteristics of impermanence, suffering and not-self become all the more clearer to you. Especially clearer is suffering.

After re-reflection you come to the Knowledge of Indifference to Formations. Now the meditator is quite at ease. Without much effort on his part the noting runs smoothly and is very good. He sits down to meditate and makes the initial effort. Then everything runs its course like a clock once wound up goes on ticking of its own accord. For an hour or so he makes no change in his posture and goes on with his work without interruption.

Before this knowledge there may have been disturbances. Your mind may be directed to a sound heard and thus disturbed. Your thought may wander off and meditation is disturbed. Painful feelings like tiredness, hotness, aches, itches, coughs appear and disturb you. Then you have to start all over again. But now all goes well. There are no more disturbances. Sounds you may hear, but you ignore them and go on noting. Whatever comes up you note without being disturbed. There are no more wanderings of the mind. Pleasant objects may turn up but no delight or pleasure arises in you. You meet with unpleasant objects. Again you feel no displeasure or fear. Painful feelings like tiredness, hotness or aches rarely appear. If they do, they are not unbearable. Your noting gets the better of them. Itching, pains and coughs disappear once you attain this knowledge. Some even get cured of serious illnesses. Even if the illnesses are not completely cured, you get some relief while noting in earnest. So for an hour or so there will be no interruption to your notings. Some can go on meditating for two or three hours without interruption. And yet they feel no weariness in the body. Time passes unheeded. "It's not long yet," you think.

On such a hot summer day as this it would be very fine to have attained this knowledge. While other people are groaning under the intense heat, the meditator who is working in earnest with this knowledge will not be aware of the heat at all. The whole day seems to have fled in no time. It is a very good insight knowledge indeed, yet there can be dangers like excess of worry, ambition or attachment. If these cannot be removed, no progress will be made. Once they are removed, the Ariyan Path knowledge is there to be realized. How?

Noble Path

Every time you note 'rising, falling, sitting, touching, seeing, hearing, bending, stretching,' and so on, there is an effort being made. This is the Right Effort of the Noble Eightfold Path. Then there is your mindfulness. It is Right Mindfulness. Then there is concentration which penetrates the object noted as well as remains fixed on it. This is Right Concentration. The three are called Concentration Constituents of the Path. Then there is initial application which, together with concentration, ascends on the object noted. It is the application of the concomitants on the object. Its characteristic is putting the concomitants onto the object (abhiniropana-lakkhana), according to the Commentary. This is Right Thought. Then there is the realization that the object thus attended is just movement, just non-cognizing, just seeing, just cognizing, just rising and disappearing, just impermanent and so on. This is the Right View. Right Thought and Right View together form the Wisdom Constituents of the Path. The three Morality Constituents, Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood, have been perfected before you take up insight meditation - when you take the precepts. Besides, there can be wrong speech, wrong action, or wrong livelihood in respect of the object noted. So whenever you note, you perfect the Morality Constituents of the Path as well.

Thus the eight constituents of the Noble Path are there in every act of awareness. They constitute the insight path that comes up once clinging is done away with. You have to prepare this path gradually until you reach the Knowledge of Indifference to Formations. When this knowledge grows mature and strong, you arrive at Ariyan Path in due course. It is like this:- When the

Knowledge of indifference to Formations has matured and grown stronger, your notings get sharper and swifter. While thus noting and becoming aware, swiftly all of a sudden, you fall into the peace that is Nibbana. It is rather strange. You have no prior knowledge that you will reach it. You cannot reflect on it reaching, either. Only after the reaching can you reflect on it. You reflect because you find unusual things. This is the knowledge of Reflection. Then you know what has happened. This is how you realize Nibbana through the Ariyan Path.

So if you want to realize Nibbana, what is important is to work for freedom from clinging. With ordinary people clingings arise everywhere: in seeing, in hearing, in touching, in being aware. They cling to things as being permanent, as being happy, good, as soul, ego, persons. We must work for a complete freedom from these clingings. To work is to meditate on whatever rises, whatever is seen, heard, touched, thought of. If you keep meditating thus, clingings cease to be, the Ariyan Path arises leading to Nibbana. This is the process.

TO SUM UP:

How is insight developed?

Insight is developed by meditating on the five aggregates of grasping.

Why and when do we meditate on the aggregates?

We meditate on the aggregates whenever they arise in order that we may not cling to them.

If we fail to meditate on mind and matter as they arise clingings arise.

We cling to them as permanent, good and as ego.

If we meditate on mind and matter as they arise, clingings do not arise.

It is plainly seen that all are impermanent, suffering, mere processes.

Once clingings cease, the Path arises, leading to Nibbana.

These, then, are the elements of Insight Meditation.

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

The Young Weaver

Now a few words of encouragement.

When the Buddha preached, his listeners meditated as they listened to him and gained enlightenment. The number of people who thus gained enlightenment at the end of each preaching was very

great indeed. Sometimes as many as eighty-four thousand beings gained enlightenment at the end of a sermon, according to the Commentary. But reading this, you may want to remark, "It appears quite easy to gain enlightenment. But here we are, working very hard and yet unable to gain anything. Why such a difference?"

Here you must remember that the commentary is just giving an account of the occasion and as such does not go into details as to the qualifications of the listeners. The preacher himself was the Buddha and none other. His listeners were people of perfections. As an example let us consider a story.

Once the Buddha was teaching at Alavi, the present-day Allahabad. His theme was mindfulness of death. He told his listeners to remember, "My life is not lasting. My death is sure to come. My life will end in death. Inevitable is my death. My life is uncertain. Death is certain." Then he went back to Savatthi.

Among the listeners at Alavi was a sixteen-year-old girl, a weaver. She developed mindfulness of death since then. Three years later, the Buddha came to Alavi again. As the Buddha sat among his listeners, he saw the girl coming towards him. He asked, "Young lady, where have you come from?" The girl replied, "I don't know, my lord." "Where are you going?" he continued. "I don't know, my lord" was the answer. "Don't you know?" "I do, my lord." "Do you know?" "I don't, my lord."

The people were full of contempt for the girl. She was showing disrespect to the Buddha, they thought. The Buddha therefore, asked the girl to explain her answers. Said she: "Sir, you the Buddha will not engage in small talk. So when you asked me where I had come from, I knew at once you were asking something significant. You were asking me what past existence I had come from. This I do not know and I answered so. When you asked me where I was going to, you meant the next existence I am going to. This again I don't know and so I answered. Then you asked if I don't know I am to die one day. I know I have to die one day, so I answered I do. You then asked if I know when I will die. This I don't know and I answered no." The Buddha said, "Well done" (Sadhu) to her answers.

So, by the third question it is certain that we will die. It is not certain when we will die. Let us ask ourselves the second question "Where are you going?" It is rather difficult to answer, isn't it? But there are ways to make the answer not difficult. Think about your bodily, verbal and mental deeds. Which are greater in number, good deeds or bad deeds? If good deeds, you will go to Good Bourn. If bad deeds, you will be bound for the Bad Bourn. So we must make an effort to do good deeds. The best way is to be engaged in insight meditation, so that you will be freed from the lower states forever. You should try to reach at least the stage of Stream-winning. Is this enough? If you can reach that stage, I will be happy. But according to the Buddha you must work till you attain to the fruition of Arahantship.

Now to go back to the young weaver. She became a Stream-winner at the end of the Buddha's sermon. Clearly, she gained enlightenment as a result of her having developed mindfulness of death for three years. From this we can infer that many people had been like her.

While the Buddha was staying at Jeta Grove at Savatthi there

were dhamma talks everyday. There the citizens of Savatthi came in the evening dressed in clean clothes and bringing offerings of flowers and incense to the dhamma. The same thing may have happened while the Buddha was staying at Bamboo Grove, Rajagaha. So, listening to the dhamma, they must have taken up meditation just as they had taken up the precepts. Even today people listen to a teacher of meditation and begin practising it. It was then the Buddha himself who was preaching. How could they help not practising it? It was these people who had listened to his previous sermons that listened to a sermon and gained enlightenment.

Then there were monks, nuns, lay men and women disciples, all types of people. These people who had the opportunity to listen to the Buddha must have been men and women of great perfections. And when the Buddha preached, he did so to suit the disposition of the listener. Now this is important.

The Dull Young Monk

Once there was one Younger Panthaka who could not learn (memorize) a stanza of 44 syllables in four months. His brother the Older Panthaka got impatient with him and sent him away. The Buddha took him to himself, gave him a piece of cloth, and instructed him to handle it while repeating, "Removal of impurity, removal of impurity." The monk did as instructed, realized the nature of mind and matter in him and became an Arahant. It must have taken him two or three hours at most. He gained enlightenment so easily because he was given a subject of meditation that suited his disposition.

A Disciple of Sariputta Thera

Once a disciple of the Venerable Sariputta meditated on the foulness of the body in vain for four months. So the Venerable Sariputta took him to the Buddha, who brought forth a golden lotus by his supernormal power and gave it to the monk. It turned out that the monk had been a goldsmith for five hundred existences in succession. He liked beautiful things and had no interest in foul things. Now when he saw the golden lotus, he was fascinated and developed jhana while looking at it. When the Buddha made the lotus fade away, he realized the impermanent, suffering and not-self nature of things. The Buddha then taught him a stanza, on hearing which he became an Arahant.

The Elder Channa was not successful in his efforts to gain enlightenment. So he asked the Venerable Ananda for advice. Ananda said to Channa, "You are a person capable of gaining enlightenment." The elder was filled with joy and delight. He followed Ananda's advice and soon gained enlightenment.

Some teachers of meditation of today do not know how to teach to suit the disposition of the would-be meditators. They use words not suitable to them. As a result, the prospective meditators go home discouraged. But some do know how to speak. Their disciples who thought of spending only a few days at the meditation centre were heartened enough to stay on till they finished the course satisfactorily. It is very important to teach to suit the disposition of the listener. No wonder thousands of people gained enlightenment at the end of a sermon by the Buddha.

Here among our listeners can be one or two who have attained perfections as those people in the days of the Buddha. Then there will be those who have matured after days and months of training. These few may gain enlightenment while listening to the dhamma now. If you can't get it now, you will get it very soon as you go on meditating. Those of you who have never meditated before have learnt the right method now, and if you start meditating at some convenient time, you will also gain it. Whether you have gained enlightenment, or just done good deeds, you will all be born in the six deva worlds when you die. There you will meet those Ariyan devas who have been there since the days of the Buddha. You will meet Anathapindika, Visakha and others. Then you can ask them about what they have learnt from the Buddha and practised. It would be a delightful thing discussing the dhamma with good folk in deva worlds.

But if you do not want to be born in the deva world but just want to be born in the world of men, well, you will be born here. Once, that is, about 25 or 30 years ago, a Chinese devotee invited some monks to a feast at his home in Moulmein. After the meal, the presiding monk made a gladdening speech for the occasion. He said how, as a result of his good deed of feeding the monks, the Chinese devotee would be born in the deva worlds, where life is full of delights with magnificent palaces and beautiful gardens. The monk then asked the Chinaman, "Well, devotee, don't you want to be born in the deva world?" "No," the Chinaman replied, "I don't want to be born in the deva world." Surprised, the monk asked, "Why?" "I don't want to be anywhere else. I just want to be in my own house, in my own place." "Well," said the monk, "then you will be born in your own house, in your own place." The monk was right. His kamma will lead him to where he wants to be.

"The aspiration, monks, of a man of morality is realized because of purity." (A.iii,71.)

Now you listeners here are of pure morality. At a time when most people in Yangon are enjoying themselves at this New Year time, you are here to do meritorious deeds, away from the merry-making, some of you donning the yellow robes and training in meditation. Some keep eight precepts and do meditation. So your moral habits are pure. If you want to be born in deva worlds, you will be born there. If you want to be born in this human world, you will.

In this connection there is something that has been a cause of concern to us. Today countries in Europe and America are prospering. We fear those Myanmar who do good deeds get inclined towards those countries and will be born there. I think it is the case already. Some ask, "Although Buddhists do good deeds, why isn't a Buddhist country prospering?" They seem to think, "When a Myanmar dies, he is born in Myanmar only." It is not so. A man of merit can be born anywhere. A Myanmar if he so desires can be born elsewhere.

Those wealthy people in other countries may have been good Buddhists from Myanmar. There are so many people who do meritorious deeds here. But there are not enough wealthy parents to receive them in their next life here. So they will have to be born elsewhere. If you are born there, and if you are just a worldling, you will have to take up the religion of your parents there. This is very important.

So, to be steadfast in your religious faith, you must work

now. You must try to reach a stage in which your faith in the Buddha, the Teaching and the Order will never waver. Such a stage is that of Stream-winning. Once a Stream-winner, your faith in the Three Gems will never waver whatever country you may be born.

These days it is not very good to be born in the world of men. Life is short, disease are plentiful, ideologies are confusing, and dangers abound. So, if you do not want to be born in the world of men, you will be born in the world of devas. Even if you have not gained the Path and Fruit, your good deeds of giving and keeping precepts will take you wherever you want to be. If you attained the Path and Fruit, all the better.

And the world of devas is not very hard to come by. One Indaka of Rajagaha made a gift of a spoonful a rice (to the Order) and was born in the Tavatimsa heaven. Our lay devotees in Myanmar have been making far greater gifts than a spoonful of rice. As regards precepts, observing them for a while has sent people to deva heavens. Some kept eight precepts for half a day and were born in heavens. Now you have observed eight precepts very well and practised meditation very well. If you want, you will easily get to the deva worlds. Why not? Once there, ask the Ariyan devas about the teaching of the Buddha and discuss the dhamma with them. Please do, may I ask you.

Uposatha the Goddess

In the time of the Buddha there was a girl called Uposatha at Saketa, which lies in Kosala region in Central India. She lived by the teachings of the Buddha and became a Stream-winner. When she died she was born in Tavatimsa heaven. There she lived in a magnificent palace. One day the Venerable Moggallana while on a tour of deva worlds met her. The monks in those days were perfect in higher knowledge and had acquired supernormal powers. They could travel to deva worlds or look towards them with their deva-sight or listen to them with their deva-hearing. But today there are no monks known to possess such powers. We cannot go to the deva worlds. Even if we managed somehow to get there, we would not be able to see them. Let alone those devas in the higher planes, we cannot even see devas in this world of men, such as guardians of trees and guardians of treasures.

Well, the Venerable Moggallana often toured the deva worlds by his supernormal powers. It was his intention to get first-hand reports from the devas interviewed as to how they had got there, what good deeds they had performed to deserve the good life there. Of course, he could learn of their stories without going to them. But he wanted their stories as told by themselves. As the Elder went there, he came near to the palace of the goddess Uposatha, who saluted him from her palace. Moggallana asked her, "Young goddess, your splendour is like the brightness of the planet Venus. What good deeds have you done to deserve this splendour and good life?" The goddess answered:

"I was a woman by the name of Uposatha, at Saketa. I listened to the Buddha's teaching, was full of faith in his teaching, and became a lay disciple who went to the Three Gems for refuge."

Putting your faith in the Three Gems, the Buddha, the Teachings, and the Order, is "going for refuge." You do this by repeating the formula: "I go to the Buddha for refuge, I go to the Dhamma for refuge, I go to the Order for refuge."

The Buddha knows all the dhamma. Having himself realized Nibbana, the end of all sufferings like old age, disease and death, he taught the Dhamma so that beings may enjoy the bliss of Nibbana like him. If one follows the teachings of the Buddha, one can avoid the four lower states and be freed from all suffering. Believing this, you go to the Buddha for refuge. When you are ill, you have to put your faith in the physician. You must trust him. "This doctor is an expert. He can cure me of my illness." In the same way, you put your trust in the Buddha knowing that you will be saved from all suffering by following his teachings. But these days some do not seem to know the significance of the formula. They respect them because their parents or teachers make them repeat. This is not the right thing. You must know the meaning, think of it in your mind, and repeat the formula slowly. If you cannot do it often, try to do it at least once in a while.

When you say "I go to the Dhamma for refuge," you are putting your faith in the teachings of the Buddha - teachings of the Paths, the Fruits and Nibbana. You are acknowledging your belief that the practice of these teachings will save you from the four lower states and from all suffering of the round of rebirths.

When you say "I go to the Order for refuge," you are putting your faith in the brotherhood of the holy ones who, by practising the dhamma as taught by the Buddha, have attained or are about to attain the Paths and Fruitions. You are acknowledging the belief that reliance on the Order will lend you freedom from the lower states and the round of rebirths.

A man who has gone to the Three Refuges is called in Pali an upasaka, and a woman an upasika. Being an upasaka or upasika amounts to doing a good deed that will send you to the deva worlds.

"Those who have gone to the Buddha for refuge will not go the lower worlds. Leaving human bodies, They will fill deva bodies." (D.ii,204; S.i,25)

The goddess Uposatha had done other good deeds, too, she continued. I was full of morality. I gave alms. I kept the eight precepts.

Those who do not know Buddhism make fun of keeping the eight precepts and often say, "You fast and get starved. That's all." They know nothing about good and bad deeds. They do not know how by overcoming the desire to eat, which is greed, good consciousness is being developed. But they will know how fasting can be good to sick people. They praise it then. They understand current material welfare only. They are totally ignorant of mind and afterlife. To observe the eight precepts is to prevent bad things from coming up and develop good things like restraint and long suffering day and night. "The holy ones, the Arahants, live avoiding forever bad things like killing, stealing, sex, falsehood, strong drinks, eating at improper times. I will follow their example for one day and honour them by so doing." The Ariyan good folk think like this when they keep the eight precepts. When you feel hungry, you control yourself and try to free yourself of the defilement of hunger. It is a noble act. As noble acts arise in your mind, it gets purified. It is like fasting and cleansing your intestines when you are sick. Since your mind is pure, when you die, a pure continuity of consciousness goes on. This we say "being born a man or a deva".

Truths

The goddess Uposatha continued, "I come to live in this palace as a result of restraint and generosity." Here "restraint" is very important. Even in this world, if there is no restraint in your spending you will become poor. If there is no restraint in your actions, you will contract diseases or get involved in crimes. As for the next life, restraint is important as it can purify the heart. That generosity can lead one to deva worlds is common knowledge among Buddhists.

She said, "I knew the Noble Truths." The Noble Truths are truths to be known by, made known to, the Noble Ones of the Ariyans. Once you understand these truths by yourself, you become an Ariyan. They are the Truth of Suffering, the Truth of the Cause of Suffering, the Truth of the Cessation of Suffering, and the Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering. This is the most important part.

"To know the Noble Truths" does not mean to learn of them from hearsay. It means realization by yourself. You should understand them well, give up what ought to be given up, realize (the end) and make become (the Path) in yourself. So goes the Commentary.

The five aggregates of grasping we have discussed constitute the truth of suffering. So noting the aggregates and understanding them is understanding the Truth of Suffering. As you note, you see how they arise and pass away, how they constitute suffering. Thus you understand while meditating. When you reach the Ariyan Path, you see Nibbana, the end of suffering, and on reflection understand that whatever arises and passes away and has not come to cessation is suffering. Thus you understand at the Path moment. It is not understanding by way of attention to the object, but rather by way of function.

As you meditate, there can be craving for the object meditated on. This is understanding by way of giving up. On reflection, no craving will arise on objects you have seen to be impermanent, suffering and not-self. It has been extinguished. This is how you understand while meditating. When you realize the Ariyan Path and Nibbana, no craving will ever arise with respect to the Path. With the Path of Stream-winning any gross craving that can lead one to the lower states is done away with. With Never-returning, all cravings for sense-pleasures are put away and with Arahantship, all remaining types of craving.

Whenever you note, no defilements, no kamma, so no sufferings will arise in respect of the objects noted. All are extinguished. Such cessation of suffering is experienced with every act of noting. This is how you realize the Truth of Cessation. At the Ariyan Path moment you realize Nibbana. This is obvious now.

Every time you meditate, Right View regarding the true nature of mind and matter arises. Once there is Right View its concomitants such as Right Thought arise too. We have dealt with them above. To make become the eight constituents of the Path is to develop the Path. It is how you understand while meditating. At the Ariyan Path moment the eight constituents arise and Nibbana is realized. The one who has arrived at the Path and Fruition can see on reflection how the Ariyan Path has come to be. He sees. This, too, is understanding.

Thus, if you understand how mind and matter are sufferings, if you have given up craving which is the cause of suffering, if you realize the end of suffering, and if you make become the eight constituents of the Path in you, we can say you know the four truths. So, when the goddess Uposatha said she knew the four noble truths, she meant she had seen the insight path and the Ariyan path by her own experience. In other words, she was a Stream-winner.

Once you know the four truths you know the Ariyan dhammas as well. We will give an excerpt from the suttas.

"..the well instructed Ariyan disciple, one who sees the Ariyans, who is skilled in the Ariyan dhamma"

If you are not an Ariyan, you will not know by right wisdom what kind of a person an Ariyan is. Those who have never been initiated into the Order will not know from personal experience how a monk behaves and lives. Those who have never taken up meditation will not know how a meditator behaves and lives. Only when you yourself are an Ariyan will you discern who an Ariyan is.

According to the Commentary, the Ariyan dhamma consists of the four establishments of mindfulness, four supreme efforts, four means of accomplishment, five faculties, five powers, seven factors of enlightenment, and eight constituents of the Path - seven categories in all. If you know any one of the seven categories, you know the other six. So we have said that if you know the four truths you know the Ariyan dhamma, for the Eightfold Path which is one item of Ariyan dhamma is included in the four truths.

When you try to make become any of the seven categories like the establishment of mindfulness in you, you understand it from your own experience. This is true understanding. Learning from hearsay will not do.

"A monk when he walks is aware 'I am walking'" So the meditator who is going to be an Ariyan, when he walks, walks noting either 'walking, walking' or 'lifting, moving, forward, putting down'. As he so walks, mindfulness arises whenever he notes, as does knowledge that cognizes the object noted. You know how the intention to walk, the material form of walking, and the awareness arise and pass away. The mindfulness and knowledge that arise whenever you note constitute establishing mindfulness by way of contemplation of the body.

"He is aware 'I am feeling a painful feeling' when he feels a painful feeling." The meditator notes 'hot, hot' or 'pain, pain' whenever there arises hotness or pain. Thus he is mindful and he knows how feelings arise and then pass away. This is establishing mindfulness by way of contemplation of feelings.

"He is aware of a passionate mind that it is passionate." Every time such a thought or idea arises, the meditator notes 'clinging, delighting'. He is thus mindful and knows how they arise and pass away. This is establishing mindfulness by way of contemplation of mind.

"One who has existing in himself a sensual desire is aware 'There is in me a sensual desire.'" The meditator notes 'desire, delight' and so on, and is mindful and knows how dispositions like

sensual desire arise and pass away. This is establishing mindfulness by way of contemplation of dhamma objects (=hindrances and so on).

Those of you who have been training here have been meditating and understanding from self-experience. You get skilled in the Ariyan dhamma, the four establishments of mindfulness. At the same time you are making the four supreme efforts, too. As you note, you are making an effort to discard evils that have arisen, or to prevent the arising of those evils not yet arisen, or to develop those good deeds of insight and Path that have not yet arisen, or to augment the insight knowledge that has already arisen. The four means of accomplishment are involved too. When you work, you have to rely on either will, effort, thought or reason. The five faculties of confidence, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom are there too. The five powers are the same as the five faculties. The seven factors of enlightenment, too, are there. When you note, you have mindfulness, investigation (of the dhamma), effort, rapture, quietude, concentration and equanimity. That the Eightfold Path is involved too need not be repeated here.

To go back to the story of the goddess Uposatha. She said, "I kept the five precepts. I was a lay woman-disciple of Gotama the Buddha. I often heard of Nandana and wanted to be there. As a result I came to be born here in Nandana."

Nandana is the name of a garden in the deva world. In those days people talked so much of Nandana as they do of America or Europe these days. Uposatha heard people talk about the deva garden and wished to be born there. So was she born. But now she was not happy there. She got dissatisfied with her lot. She told Moggallana, "I failed to do the Buddha's word. Having turned my mind to this lowly plane, now I am full of repentance."

The Buddha taught us that life - whatever form it takes is no good. It is mere suffering. He told us to work for the end of suffering. But Uposatha had disregarded the Buddha's teaching and longed for life in a deva world. Now she realized she had been mistaken.

You may ask, "Well, why not work for the end of suffering in the deva world?" It is not easy to meditate there. The devas are always singing, dancing and making merry. There is not a single quiet spot there as in the world of men. Well, even in this world of men, when you meditators return home, you can't meditate well, can you? So, work hard now.

The Venerable Moggallana cheered her up with these words, "Don't worry, Uposatha. The Fully Enlightened One has declared that you are a Stream-winner with special attainment. You are freed from the Bad Bourn."

The young goddess is still in Tavatimsa. She has not been there long in the reckoning of the deva world. A century here equals a day there. From the Buddha's time till now it is 2500 years, which is only 25 days according to the Tavatimsa calendar. She is not yet a month old. If you attain enlightenment now, in forty, fifty or sixty years you will be born in the deva world, meet this goddess, and discuss the dhamma with her on an equal level. If you have not got any stage of enlightenment, do not be discouraged. At least you will be born in the deva world. Then ask the Ariyan devas, listen to their teachings, and pay attention to what they teach. Then you will attain to the Path and Fruition.

The corporeality of the devas is very pure. The consciousness that arises depending on this pure matter is keen and swift. So, if you remember what you have meditated on in your human existence, you will understand the arising and passing away of mind and matter and reach the Ariyan Path and Fruition in no time at all.

"The pieces of the dhamma which he has experienced before flow to him in his happiness there. The arising of recollection, monks, is slow. But then quickly does that being reach the attainment of Path, fruition and Nibbana." (A.i,505)

A Sakyan woman, Gopika by name, who was a Stream-winner, died and was born a son of Sakka, the King of devas in Tavatimsa. There he saw three gandhabba gods who had come to dance at his father's palace. On reflection Gopaka (for it was his name now) saw that the three gods had been monks he had worshipped in his former existence. He told them. Two of the gods remembered the dhamma they had practised, meditated on it, and there and then gained jhana, and became Non-returners, and rose to Brahmapuruhita world.

There are lots of gods and goddesses like Uposatha now living in the world of devas, who have practised the dhamma in the Buddha's time. There are gods like Gopaka who have been born gods from women. All of them have practised the dhamma just like you. It is very heartening. This is the ancient road. It is the road taken by the Ariyans. You must know that we are following this road. Every time you note you are walking along this road. As a traveller nears his destination with each step, you come closer to Nibbana with each noting.

If the Path-Fruition were to be reached in ten thousand notings, and if you now have made a thousand notings, then you need nine thousand more notings to reach it. If you have made nine thousand notings already, then you need only a thousand more. If you have 9999 already, then the very next noting could be the Path process. The more you note, the nearer you come to the Path.

May you be able to note

The five aggregates of grasping

whenever they arise at the six doors.

May you realize their impermanence,

suffering and not-self nature.

May you make swift progress in your insight
and realize NIBBANA, the end of all suffering.

3087 words, p114

APPENDIX

Glossary

Action = kammanta

right action = samma-kammanta, it consists of refraining from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct.

wrong action = miccha-kammanta, it consists in killing, stealing and sexual misconduct.

activities, volitional = sankharas. This word is also translated as mental formations. They consist of volition or will and other mental concomitants (cetasikas).

adverting = avajjana. In a thought process it is the moment when mind, or rather, consciousness turns towards the object presented through one of the sense-doors, viz. eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind, or when consciousness becomes conscious of the object.

aggregate = khandha. Khandhas are so called because they have the division into past, present, future, internal, external, etc. Perception for example, though only one is called khandha or aggregate because there can be past perception, present perception and so on.

-of grasping, or of clinging = upadanakkhandha, aggregates that are objects of grasping or clinging (upadanas)

air-element, see element

analysis = vavatthana. Discerning things well defined, seeing which is which. See next.

-of four elements = catudhatu-vavatthana Seeing the four elements clearly and well defined, seeing 'This is earth-element', 'This is water-element' and so on. See element also.

analytical knowledge of mind and matter = namarupaparicchedanana. An insight knowledge which sees mind and matter clearly and well defined as, for example, 'This is mind', 'This is matter.'

apperception = javana. The meaning of this Pali word is 'running, or force, or speed'. In Abhidhamma it is the name given to certain types of consciousness which experience the object forcefully or thoroughly. It is also translated as 'impulsion'.

attainment = samapatti. This means entering into and remaining in a certain state of higher consciousness. There are three kinds of samapatti.

1. Jhapatti-samapatti, entering into and remaining in the state of jhana.

2. Phala-samapatti, entering into and remaining in the state of Fruition consciousness.

3. Nirodha-samapatti, entering into and remaining in the state of cessation of mental activities.

awareness = vinnana. Pure awareness of the object is the characteristic of consciousness (citta or vinnana)

Becoming = bhava. It is also translated as existence.

birth = jati. Arising of mind and/or matter, so it does not necessarily mean to be born as a child only.

body = kaya.

contemplation of the body = kayanupassana. See contemplation

bound = gati. Existence or realms beings go to.

bad bound = duggati, realms of woe, such as hell and animal kingdom

good bound = sugati, realms of happiness, such as human and deva worlds

brahma = higher celestial beings.

Calm = samatha, also translated as 'tranquillity'. Samatha is synonymous with samadhi (concentration).

clear comprehension = sampajanna

compassion = karuna

Compendium of Philosophy, name of the English translation of an ancient Abhidhamma treatise called 'Abhidhammatthasangaha'. It itself is often referred to as Compendium of Philosophy in the present book.

concentration = samadhi. Samadhi is defined as that mental state (cetasika) which places consciousness and its concomitants undistracted and unscattered on a single object. Samadhi is one of the five mental faculties functioning during meditation.

concept = pannatti. Pannatti is explained as having no individual essence, so it is a non-reality.

concomitants of mind = cetasikas. Cetasikas are those mental states or mental factors which arise and perish together with consciousness (citta)

condition = paccaya

confidence, faith = saddha. See also faculty.

consciousness = vinnana or citta, which is defined as the pure awareness of the object. Consciousness (citta) and concomitants of mind (cetasikas) constitute what we call mind.

constituent (of Path) = (magg-) anga. There are eight of them, and they are as a group what is popularly known as the Noble Eightfold Path.

contemplation = anupassana
-of body = kayanupassana
-of dhamma objects = dhammanupassana
-of feelings = vedananupassana
-of mind = cittanupassana

continuity = santati

craving = tanha

Death, dying = marana. Disappearing of mind and matter.

deed = kamma. See kamma.

bad deed = akusala kamma.

good deed = kusala kamma.

defilements = kilesas. Mental impurities such as attachment, ill will and delusion.

Dependent Origination = Paticca-samuppada. The teaching (or law) of conditionality. This word is also translated as 'Conditioned Genesis'.

desire (will) = chanda. Chanda is mere will to do. It can be associated with kusala or akusala.

determining consciousness = votthabbana citta. It is the type of consciousness which determines whether the object presented to the mind and investigated by the previous moment of investigations is desirable or undesirable.

devas = celestial beings. It can mean both lower celestial beings and higher celestial beings called 'brahmas'.

deva-sight = dibba-cakkhu. It is one of the supernormal knowledges; by it one can see things very minute, subtle, far away, hidden and so on. The ability to see beings dying from one existence and being reborn in another is a variety of this knowledge.

deva-hearing or deva-ear = dibba-sota. One of the supernormal knowledges by which one can hear sounds very minute, subtle, hidden, far away and so on.

deva-world = devaloka. The realm of celestial beings.

divine states = brahma-viharas, way of living of brahmas. They are loving-kindness (metta), compassion (karuna), sympathetic joy (mudita) and equanimity (upekkha).

door (sense-door) = dvara. There are six sense doors according to Buddhism, viz., eye-door, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind-door. These are the doors through which objects come into contact with mind.

Effort = vayama. See also faculty.

right effort = samma-vayama.

ego(self) = atta.

element = dhatu. Mental as well as physical properties are called dhatus. There are four great elements of matter, viz.,

1. Earth-element = pathavi-dhatu, solidity of things.
2. Water-element = apo-dhatu, fluidity or cohesiveness.
3. Fire-element = tejo-dhatu, heat or cold, temperature.

4. Air-element = vayo-dhatu, distendedness.

equanimity = upekkha. Upekkha also means indifference or neutral feeling.

establishment of mindfulness = satipatthana. It is also translated as 'foundations of mindfulness'.

Factors of Enlightenment = sambojjhanga or bojjhanga. There are seven of them, viz.

1. Mindfulness = sati
2. Investigation of dhammas = dhamma-vicaya. It is in reality understanding or wisdom.
3. Effort = viriya
4. Joy or rapture = piti
5. Tranquillity = passaddhi
6. Concentration = samadhi
7. Equanimity = upekkha

faculty = indriya. There are 22 of them taught in Abhidhamma. The five mental faculties important in the practice of meditation are confidence, effort, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom.

faith (confidence) = saddha

feeling = vedana

form (matter) = rupa

formless = arupa. The word means 'non-matter', which according to Buddhism comprises consciousness (citta), mental factors (cetsikas), and Nibbana. In most cases, however, it means consciousness and mental factors only. Arupa is synonymous with 'nama'

foul thing = asubha, such as bloated corpse.

fruit(ion) = phala. It is the resultant of magga or Path consciousness, and at the time of enlightenment it immediately follows the Path consciousness and arises for two or three times. In phala-sampatti it arises countless times.

function, property as = kicca. Action done by things of reality. The function of air-element, for instance, is moving.

Going for Refuge = sarana-gamana, taking someone or something as a refuge, as a guide. Only those who take refuge in the Triple Gem are called upasakas or upasikas, followers of the Buddha, or Buddhists.

grasping = upadana. It is the name of attachment and wrong view.

Happiness = sukha.

happy living in this very life = ditthadhamma-sukhavihara.

higher knowledge (superknowledge) = abhinna.

hindrances = nivarana. There are five of them, viz.

1. Sense-desire = kamacchanda.
2. Ill will = byapada
3. Sloth and torpor = thina-middha
4. Restlessness and remorse = uddhacca-kukkuccha
5. Doubt = vicikiccha

In Abhidhamma ignorance (delusion) also is describes as hindrance.

Impermanence = anicca

inferential insight = anumana-vipassana

initial application = vitakka

insight = vipassana. The real meaning of the word 'vipassana' is 'seeing in various ways', i.e., seeing mental and physical phenomena as impermanent, suffering (or unsatisfactory) and not-self (or insubstantial).

intimation = vinnana. There are two kinds of intimation, viz.,

1. Bodily intimation = kaya-vinnatti, gestures, etc.
2. Verbal intimation = vaci-vannatti, mode of speech.

investigating consciousness = satirana citta. It is the type of consciousness which investigates the object presented to mind and accepted by the previous moment whether it is desirable or undesirable.

investigating knowledge = sammasana-nana, one of the stages of vipassana knowledge.

investigation of dhammas = dhamma-vicaya. See Factors of Enlightenment.

Kamma = volition. Technically, kamma is volition, a mental factor. Since it is always with this volition that beings do good or bad deeds, deeds themselves are often referred to as kamma.

knowledge = nana

- analytical, of mind and matter = namarupa-pariccheda-nana
- of desire for deliverance = muncitukamyata-nana.
- of (by) discerning conditionality = paccaya-pariggaha-nana.
- of dissolution = bhanga-nana
- of indifference to formations = sankharupekkha-nana
- of investigation = sammasana-nana
- of re-reflection (re-observation) = patisankha-nana
- of repulsion (disgust) = nibbida-nana
- of rise and fall (rising and passing away) = udayabbaya-nana
- of the fearful = bhava-nana
- of tribulation = adinava-nana

Law = dhamma

life-continuum = bhavanga. It is the inactive moments of

consciousness.

livelihood = ajiva

right livelihood = samma-ajiva

wrong livelihood = miccha-ajiva

loving-kindness = metta

lower states = apaya, literally, states of woe or suffering

Manifestation (mode of appearance) = paccupatthana

matter (material, physical, form) = rupa

means of accomplishment = iddhipada

meditator = yogi

member of enlightenment = bodhipakkiya-dhamma

mental quality (mind, psychological) = nama

mind = mana, citta or nama. 'Mind' is often used to mean citta and cetasikas together.

mind and matter = nama-rupa

mindfulness = sati

-of death = maranussati

mode of appearance = see manifestation

moral habit = sila

Nama = literally that which inclines towards the object or that which makes others incline towards it. It consists of consciousness (citta), mental factors (cetasikas), and Nibbana. But in most cases nama is used to mean citta and cetasikas only as, for example, in the word 'nama-rupa'.

neutral feeling = adukkha-m-asukha vedana

never-returner (non-returner) = anagami

noble one = ariya

Noble Eightfold Path = Ariyo Atthangiko Maggo

non-returner = anagami

notion = sanna

notion of permanence = nicca-sanna

notion of loathsomeness of food = ahare patkula-sanna

Developing the notion that food is loathsome by reflecting in various ways so that one does not get attached to food.

not-self = anatta

object-latent = arammananusaya

old age = jara

once-returner = sakadagami

Order (of noble monks) = samgha

origin (origination, cause) = samudaya

Path = magga. The name given to the group of eight factors of Path such as Right View etc. Consciousness which they accompany is called Path consciousness.

Path of Purity (Purification) = Visuddhimagga

perception = sanna

permanence (-ent) = nicca

pleasant (pleasurable, happy) = sukha

power = bala

practical (personal) insight = paccakkha-vipassana

process (thought-process) = vithi

property = rasa. It has two varieties, viz., as function and as achievement.

proximate cause (immediate occasion) = padatthana

purity = visuddhi

Quietude (tranquillity) = passaddhi, one of the factors of enlightenment

Rapture = piti. Piti is translated differently by different authors, as joy, happiness, rapture, zest, and pleasurable interest.

reality = paramattha

reason = vimamsaa

rebirth = patisandhi. It is also translated as relinking
-consciousness = patisandhi-citta

receiving (recipient) consciousness = sapaticchana citta. It is the type of consciousness which receives the object presented to the mind.

recollection = anussati

refuge = sarana

retentive (registering) consciousness = tadarammana citta. This consciousness always arises twice or none at all. It follows the moments of apperception (javana)

round of rebirths = samsara

Self (ego) = atta

sense-objects = kama

Silent Buddha = Pacceka Buddha. 'Pacceka' literally means separate. They are not Supreme Buddhas, nor are they ordinary arahants. They are lower than the Supreme Buddhas, but higher than the arahants. They appear in the world when there is no Supreme Buddha or no teachings of Supreme Buddhas are available.

specification (analysis) = vavatthana

speech = vaca

right speech = samma-vaca

wrong speech = miccha-vaca

stream-winner = sotapanna

stream-winning = sotapatti

subject of meditation = kammatthana. It also means the practice of meditation.

subsequent (thought-) process = anuvattaka vithi

suffering (ill, misery, pain) = dukkha

Supreme Buddha = Sammasambuddha

supreme effort = sammappadhana

sympathy (sympathetic joy) = mudita

Theory of the self = attavada

thought = citta, sankappa

right thought = samma-sankappa

wrong thought = miccha-sankappa

thought moment = cittakkhana

Three Gems = Tiratana

tranquillity = passaddhi

transcending doubts = kankhavitarana

Unpleasant = dukkha

unwholesome = akusala. 'Akusala' is also translated as immoral, unprofitable and unskilful.

View (wrong view) = ditthi

volitional activities = sankharas

Wholesome = kusala. It is also translated as moral, profitable and skilful.

will (desire) = chanda

wisdom = panna

wrong = miccha

Yogi = meditator

“The Fundamentals of Vipassana Meditation” is a series of lectures delivered by the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw during the New Year Holidays of the Burmese Era 1320 (1959). The lectures first appeared in book form in 1961, and have ever since enjoyed such popularity with the readers that they have run into several editions. This is their first English translation. As the reader will see in the following pages, the lectures were addressed to lay listeners – people to whom the subtle points of Vipassana practice were totally new. As such, the Sayadaw took great pains to make his language plain, and Vipassana meditation, also known as insight or awareness meditation, is best summarized by Socrates’s famous maxim – “To know thyself is the beginning of wisdom.” The goal of vipassana is to give us insight into the true nature of our experiences. 2500 years ago, the Buddha discovered that knowledge, insight and goodness are the only reliable antidotes to dissatisfaction and suffering. Our happiness, he said, doesn’t rely on ever-changing external circumstances. We’re so sure you’ll benefit we now offer you Mindworks Journey Level 1: Meditation Fundamentals course for Free. Click the link below to learn more. Free course – Level 1: Fundamentals. Start your Mindworks Journey to greater well-being today. Limited time offer. Vipassana Meditation, Mumbai, Maharashtra. 142,986 likes · 800 talking about this · 44 were here. The Official Facebook Page of Vipassana Meditation as... Facebook is showing information to help you better understand the purpose of a Page. See actions taken by the people who manage and post content. VIPASSANA RESEARCH INSTITUTE is responsible for this Page. People. 142,986 likes. 44 visits. Related Pages. Vipassana friends around the world. Interest. Pariyatti. Bookstore. Vipassana Meditation (INDIA). Nonprofit Organization. Words of buddha. Religious Organization. Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche. Author. Vipassana Meditation- S.N.Goenka. Public Figure. The Immeasurable. Fundamentals of Vipassana Meditation. by Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw | 24,609 words. Buddhism Theravada. Buy relevant books. Summary: Vipassana means 'insight' or 'perception'. This book helps prepare your mind for meditation. It consists of a series of lectures and is meant for people new to Vipassana Meditation. Source: palikanon.com. Contents of this online book (+ / -). The full text of the Fundamentals of Vipassana Meditation in English is available here and publically accesible (free to read online). Of course, I would always recommend buying the book so you get the lat Fundamentals of. Vipassana meditation. By Mahasi Sayadaw. “The Fundamentals of Vipassana Meditation” is a series of lectures delivered by the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw during the New Year Holidays of the Burmese Era 1320 (1959). The lectures first appeared in book form in 1961, and have ever since enjoyed such popularity with the readers that they have run into several editions.