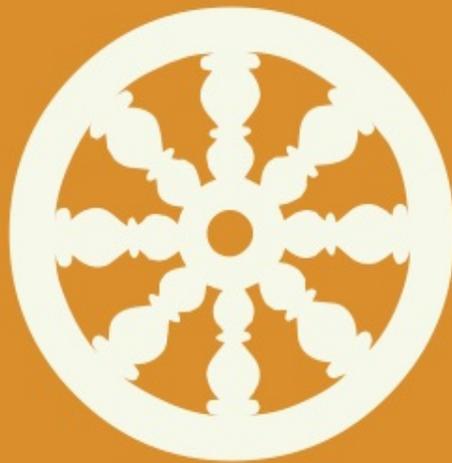


Wheel Publication No. 370/371

SATIPAṬṬHANA VIPASSANĀ

Insight through Mindfulness

Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw



SATIPAṬṬHANA VIPASSANĀ

Insight through Mindfulness

By

Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw

**Buddhist Publication Society
Kandy • Sri Lanka**

The Wheel Publication No. 370/371

ISBN 955-24-0078-3

Reprinted in the Wheel Series with the kind permission of
the Buddha Sāsanānuggaha Association, Rangoon, Burma.

Copyright © 1990

by Buddhist Publication Society

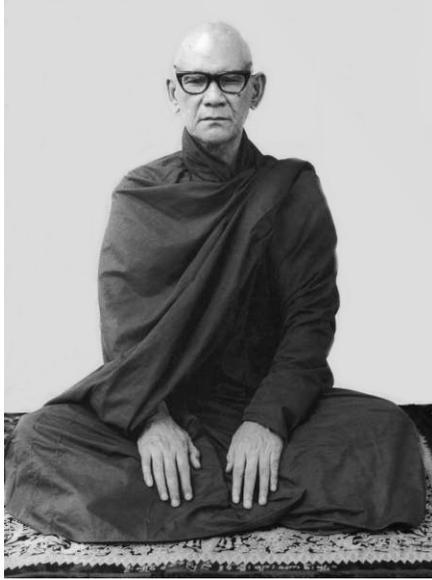
Reprinted 2006

BPS Online Edition © (2011)

Digital Transcription Source: BPS Transcription Project

For free distribution. This work may be republished, reformatted, reprinted and redistributed in any medium. However, any such republication and redistribution is to be made available to the public on a free and unrestricted basis, and translations and other derivative works are to be clearly marked as such.

Contents



Ven. Mahāsi Sayādaw

Introduction

SATIPATṬHANA VIPASSANĀ
Insight through Mindfulness

The Development of Wisdom

Seeing
Hearing, Etc.
Mind
The Beginner's Exercise
Sitting

Rising-Falling
Outline of Basic Exercises
Other Exercises
Summary of Essential Points

About the Author

Introduction

On the personal request of the Honourable U Nu, Prime Minister, and Thado Thiri Thudhamma Sir U Thwin, President of the Buddha Sāsanānuggaha Association, the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw, Bhadanta Sobhana Mahāthera, came down from Shwebo to Rangoon on 10th November 1949. The Meditation Centre at the Thathana Yeiktha, Hermitage Road, Rangoon, was formally opened on 4th December 1949, when the Mahāsi Sayādaw began to give to fifteen devotees a methodical training in the right system of Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā.

From the first day of the opening of the Centre a discourse on the exposition of Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā, its purpose, the method of practise, the benefits derived therefrom, etc., has been given daily to each batch of devotees arriving at the Centre almost every day to undertake the intensive course of training. The discourse lasts usually for one hour and thirty minutes, and the task of talking almost daily in this manner inevitably caused a strain. Fortunately, the Buddha Sāsanānuggaha Association came forward to relieve the situation with an offer of the donation of a tape recorder, and the discourse given on 27th July 1951 to a group of fifteen devotees undertaking the training was taped. Thereafter this taped discourse has been in constant daily

use preceded by a few preliminary remarks spoken by the Mahāsi Sayādaw.

Then, owing to the great demand of many branch meditation centres of the Mahāsi Sati-paṭṭhāna Vipassanā, as well as of the public, this discourse was published in book form in 1954. The book has now run into its sixth edition. As there is also a keen interest and eager demand among many devotees of other nationalities who are unacquainted with Burmese, the discourse is now translated into English.

U Pe Thin (translator)

Mahāsi Yogi

December 1957

SATIPAṬṬHANA VIPASSANĀ

Insight through Mindfulness

Namo Buddhassa

(Honour to the Fully Enlightened One)

On coming across the Teaching of the Buddha, it is most important for everyone to cultivate the virtues of moral conduct (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). One should undoubtedly possess these three virtues.

For lay people the minimal measure of moral conduct is the observance of the Five Precepts. For bhikkhus it is the observance of the *Pātimokkha*, the code of monastic discipline. Anyone who is well-disciplined in moral conduct will be reborn in a happy realm of existence as a human being or a *deva* (god).

However, this ordinary form of mundane morality (*lokiya-sīla*) will not be a safeguard against relapse into the lower states of miserable existence, such as hell, the animal realm, or the realm of *petas* (ghosts). It is therefore desirable to cultivate the higher form of supramundane morality (*lokuttara-sīla*). When one has fully acquired the virtue of this morality, one will be secure from relapse into the lower states and will always live a happy life by being reborn as a human being or a *deva*. Everyone should therefore make it his duty to work for supramundane morality.

There is every hope of success for anyone who strives sincerely and in real earnestness. It would indeed be a pity if anyone were to fail to take advantage of this fine opportunity of being endowed with higher qualities, for such a person will undoubtedly be a victim sooner or later of his own bad karma, which will pull him down to the lower states of miserable existence in hell, the animal realm,

or the sphere of *petas*, where the span of life lasts for many hundreds, thousands or millions of years. It is therefore emphasised here that coming across the Teaching of the Buddha is the unique opportunity to work for path morality (*magga-sīla*) and fruition morality (*phala-sīla*).

It is not, however, advisable to work for moral conduct alone. It is also necessary to practise *samādhi* or concentration. *Samādhi* is the fixed or tranquil state of mind. The ordinary or undisciplined mind is in the habit of wandering to other places. It cannot be kept under control, but follows any idea, thought or imagination, etc. In order to prevent this wandering, the mind should be made to attend repeatedly to a selected object of concentration. On gaining practice, the mind gradually abandons its distractions and remains fixed on the object to which it is directed. This is *samādhi*.

There are two kinds of concentration: mundane concentration (*lokiya-samādhi*) and supramundane concentration (*lokuttara-samādhi*). Of these two, the former consists in the mundane absorptions, such as the four *rūpa jhānas*—the absorptions pertaining to the world of form—and the four *arūpa jhānas*—the absorptions pertaining to the formless world. These can be attained by the practice of tranquillity meditation (*samathabhāvanā*) with such methods as mindfulness of breathing, loving kindness (*mettā*), *kasina* meditation, etc. By virtue of these attainments one will be reborn in the plane of the brahmās. The life-span of a brahma is very long and lasts for one world cycle, two, four,

or eight world cycles, up to a limit of 84,000 world cycles, as the case may be. But at the end of his lifespan, a brahma will die and be reborn as a human being or a deva.

If one leads a virtuous life all the time, one may lead a happy life in a higher existence, but as one is not free from the defilements of attachment, aversion, and delusion, one may commit demeritorious deeds on many occasions. One will then be a victim of his bad kamma and be reborn in hell or in other lower states of miserable existence. Thus mundane concentration also is not a definite security. It is desirable to work for supramundane concentration, the concentration of the path (*magga*) and the fruit (*phala*). To acquire this concentration it is essential to cultivate wisdom (*paññā*).

There are two forms of wisdom: mundane and supramundane. Nowadays, knowledge of literature, art, science, or other worldly affairs is usually regarded as a kind of wisdom, but this form of wisdom has nothing to do with any kind of mental development (*bhāvanā*). Nor can it be regarded as of real merit, because many weapons of destruction are invented through these kinds of knowledge, which are always under the influence of attachment, aversion, and other evil motives. The real spirit of mundane wisdom, on the other hand, has only merits and no demerits of any kind.

True mundane wisdom includes the knowledge used in welfare and relief work, which causes no harm; learning to

acquire the knowledge of the true meaning or sense of the scriptures; and the three classes of knowledge of development for insight (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*), such as knowledge born of learning (*suttamaya-paññā*), knowledge born of reflection (*cintāmaya-paññā*), and wisdom born of meditative development (*bhāvanāmaya-paññā*). The virtue of possessing mundane wisdom will lead to a happy life in higher states of existence, but it still cannot prevent the risk of being reborn in hell or in other states of miserable existence. Only the development of supramundane wisdom (*lokuttara-paññā*) can decidedly remove this risk.

Supramundane wisdom is the wisdom of the path and fruit. To develop this wisdom it is necessary to carry on the practice of insight meditation (*vipassanā-bhāvanā*) out of the three disciplines of morality, concentration, and wisdom. When the virtue of wisdom is duly developed, the necessary qualities of morality and concentration will also be acquired.

The Development of Wisdom

The method of developing this wisdom is to observe materiality (*rūpa*) and mentality (*nāma*)—the two sole elements existing in a living being—with a view to knowing them in their true nature. At present, experiments in the analytical observation of materiality are usually carried out in laboratories with the aid of various kinds of instruments, yet these methods cannot deal with the mind. The method of the Buddha does not require any kind of instruments or

outside aid. It can successfully deal with both materiality and mentality. It makes use of one's own mind for analytical purposes by fixing bare attention on the activities of materiality and mentality as they occur within oneself. By continually repeating this form of exercise, the necessary concentration can be gained, and when concentration is keen enough, the ceaseless course of arising and passing away of materiality and mentality will be vividly perceptible.

The living being consists solely of the two distinct groups of materiality and mentality. The solid substance of body as it is now found belongs to the group of materiality. According to the usual enumeration of material phenomena, there are altogether twenty-eight kinds in this group, but in short it may be noted that body is a mass of materiality. For example, it is the same as a doll made of clay or wheat, which is nothing but a collection of particles of clay or flour. Materiality changes its form (*ruppati*) under physical conditions of heat, cold, etc., and because of this changeableness under contrary physical conditions, it is called *rūpa* in Pali. It does not possess any faculty of knowing an object.

In the Abhidhamma, the elements of mentality and materiality are classified as "states with object" (*sārammaṇa-dhammā*) and "states without object" (*anārammaṇa-dhammā*), respectively. The element of mentality has an object, holds an object, knows an object, while that of materiality does not have an object, does not hold an object, and does not know an object. It will thus be seen that the Abhidhamma has

directly stated that materiality has no faculty of knowing an object. A yogi also perceives in like manner that “materiality has no faculty of knowing.”

Logs and pillars, bricks and stones, and lumps of earth are a mass of materiality. They do not possess any faculty of knowing. It is the same with the materiality which makes up a living body-it has no faculty of knowing. The materiality in a dead body is the same as that of a living body-it does not possess any faculty of knowing. People, however, have a common idea that the materiality of a living body possesses the faculty of knowing an object and that it loses this faculty only at death. This is not really so. In actual fact, materiality does not possess the faculty of knowing an object in either a dead or a living body.

What is it then that knows objects now? It is mentality, which comes into being depending on materiality. It is called *nāma* in Pali because it inclines (*namati*) towards an object. Mentality is also spoken of as thought or consciousness. Mentality arises depending on materiality: depending on the eye, eye-consciousness (seeing) arises; depending on the ear, ear-consciousness (hearing) arises; depending on the nose, nose-consciousness (smelling) arises; depending on the tongue, tongue-consciousness (tasting) arises; depending on the body, body-consciousness (sense of touch) arises. There are many kinds of sense of touch, either good or bad.

While touch has a wide field of action in running

throughout the whole length of the body, inside and outside, the senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting come into being in their own particular spheres—the eye, ear, nose, and tongue—each of which occupies a very small and limited area of the body. These senses of touch, sight, etc., are nothing but the elements of mind. There also comes into being mind-consciousness—thoughts, ideas, imaginings, etc.—depending on the mind-base. All of these are elements of mind. Mind knows an object, while materiality does not know an object.

Seeing

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

To give an example, it is like the case of a person who sits in a house. The house and the person are two separate things: the house is not the person, nor is the person the house. Similarly, it is so at the time of seeing. The eye and seeing are two separate things: the eye is not seeing, nor is seeing the eye.

To give another example, it is just like the case of a person in a room who sees many things when he opens the window

and looks through it. If it is asked, “Who is it that sees? Is it the window or the person that actually sees?” the answer is, “The window does not possess the ability to see; it is only the person who sees.” If it is again asked, “Will the person be able to see things on the outside without the window?” the answer will be, “It is not possible to see things through the wall without the window. One can only see through the window.” Similarly, in the case of seeing, there are two separate realities of the eye and seeing. The eye is not seeing, nor is seeing the eye, yet there cannot be an act of seeing without the eye. In reality, seeing comes into being depending on the eye.

It is now evident that in the body there are only two distinct elements of materiality (eye) and mentality (seeing) at every moment of seeing. In addition, there is also a third element of materiality—the visual object. At times the visual object is noticeable in the body and at times it is noticeable outside the body. With the addition of the visual object there will then be three elements, two of which (the eye and the visual object) are materiality and the third of which (seeing) is mentality. The eye and the visual object, being materiality, do not possess the ability to know an object, while seeing, being mentality, can know the visual object and what it looks like. Now it is clear that there exist only the two separate elements of materiality and mentality at the moment of seeing, and the arising of this pair of separate elements is known as seeing.

People who are without the training in and knowledge of

insight meditation hold the view that seeing belongs to or is “self,” “ego,” “living entity,” or “person.” They believe that “seeing is I,” or “I am seeing,” or “I am knowing.” This kind of view or belief is called *sakkāya-ditṭhi* in Pali. *Sakkāya* means the group of materiality (*rūpa*) and mentality (*nāma*) as they exist distinctively. *Ditṭhi* means a wrong view or belief. The compound word *sakkāya-ditṭhi* means a wrong view or belief in self with regard to *nāma* and *rūpa*, which exist in reality.

For greater clarity, we will explain further the manner of holding the wrong view or belief. At the moment of seeing, the things which actually exist are the eye, the visual object (both materiality), and seeing (mentality). *Nāma* and *rūpa* are reality, yet people hold the view that this group of elements is self, or ego, or a living entity. They consider that “seeing is I,” or “that which is seen is I,” or “I see my own body.” Thus this mistaken view is taking the simple act of seeing to be self, which is *sakkāya-ditṭhi*, the wrong view of self.

As long as one is not free from the wrong view of self, one cannot expect to escape from the risk of falling into the miserable realms of the hells, the animals or the *petas*. Though one may be leading a happy life in the human or *deva* world by virtue of one’s merits, yet one is liable to fall back into the miserable states of existence at any time, when one’s demerits operate. For this reason, the Buddha pointed out that it is essential to work for the total removal of the wrong view of self:

“Let a monk go forth mindfully to abandon view of self”
(*sakkāya-diṭṭhippahānāya sato bhikkhu paribbaje*).

To explain: Though it is the wish of everyone to avoid old age, disease, and death, no one can prevent their inevitable arrival. After death, rebirth follows. Rebirth in any state of existence does not depend on one’s own wish. It is not possible to avoid rebirth in the hell realm, the animal realm or the realm of the *petas* by merely wishing for an escape. Rebirth takes place in any state of existence as the consequence of one’s own deeds: there is no choice at all. For these reasons, the round of birth and death, *saṃsāra*, is very dreadful. Every effort should therefore be made to acquaint oneself with the miserable conditions of *saṃsāra*, and then to work for an escape from *saṃsāra*, for the attainment of Nibbāna.

If an escape from *saṃsāra* as a whole is not possible for the present, an attempt should be made for an escape at least from the round of rebirth in the hell realms, the animal realm, and the *peta* realm. In this case it is necessary to work for the total removal within oneself of *sakkāya-diṭṭhi*, which is the root cause of rebirth in the miserable states of existence. *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* can only be destroyed completely by the noble path and fruit: the three supramundane virtues of morality, concentration, and wisdom. It is therefore imperative to work for the development of these virtues. How should one do the work? By means of noting or observing one must go out from the jurisdiction of defilements (*kilesa*). One should practise by constantly

noting or observing every act of seeing, hearing, etc., which are the constituent physical and mental processes, till one is freed from *sakkāya-diṭṭhi*, the wrong view of self.

For these reasons advice is always given here to take up the practice of *vipassanā* meditation. Now yogis have come here for the purpose of practising *vipassanā* meditation who may be able to complete the course of training and attain the noble path in no long time. The view of self will then be totally removed and security will be finally gained against the danger of rebirth in the realms of the hells, animals, and *petas*.

In this respect, the exercise is simply to note or observe the existing elements in every act of seeing. It should be noted as “seeing, seeing” on every occasion of seeing. By the terms “note” or “observe” or “contemplate” is meant the act of keeping the mind fixedly on the object with a view to knowing it clearly.

When this is done, and the act of seeing is noted as “seeing, seeing,” at times the visual object is noticed, at times consciousness of seeing is noticed, at times the eye-base, the place from which one sees, is noticed. It will serve the purpose if one can notice distinctly any one of the three. If not, based on this act of seeing there will arise *sakkāya-diṭṭhi*, which will view it in the form of a person or as belonging to a person, and as being permanent, pleasurable, and self. This will arouse the defilements of craving and attachment, which will in turn prompt deeds, and the deeds will bring

forth rebirth in a new existence. Thus the process of dependent origination operates and the vicious circle of *saṃsāra* revolves incessantly. In order to prevent the revolving of *saṃsāra* from this source of seeing, it is necessary to note “seeing, seeing” on every occasion of seeing.

Hearing, Etc.

Similarly, in the case of hearing, there are only two distinct elements, materiality and mentality. The sense of hearing arises depending on the ear. While the ear and sound are two elements of materiality, the sense of hearing is the element of mentality. In order to know clearly any one of these two kinds of materiality and mentality, every occasion of hearing should be noted as “hearing, hearing.” So also, “smelling, smelling” should be noted on every occasion of smelling, and “tasting, tasting” on every occasion of tasting.

The sensation of touch in the body should be noted in the very same way. There is a kind of material element known as bodily sensitivity throughout the body, which receives every impression of touch. Every kind of touch, either agreeable or disagreeable, usually comes in contact with bodily sensitivity, and from this there arises body-consciousness, which feels or knows the touch on each occasion. It will now be seen that at every moment of touching there are two elements of materiality—the bodily sensitivity and the tangible object—and one element of mentality—knowing of touch.

In order to know these things distinctly at every moment of touching, the practice of noting as “touching, touching” has to be carried out. This merely refers to the common form of sensation of touch. There are special forms which accompany painful or disagreeable sensations, such as feeling stiffness or tiredness in the body or limbs, feeling hot, pain, numb, aches, etc. Because feeling (*vedanā*) predominates in these cases, it should be noted as “feeling hot,” “feeling tired,” “feeling painful,” etc., as the case may be.

It may also be mentioned that there occur many sensations of touch in the hands, the legs, and so on, on each occasion of bending, stretching, or moving. Because of mentality *wanting* to move, stretch or bend, the material activities of moving, stretching or bending, etc., occur in series. (It may not be possible to notice these incidents at the outset. They can only be noticed after some time, on gaining experience by practice. It is mentioned here for the sake of general information.) All activities in movements and in changing, etc., are done by mentality. When mentality wills to bend, there arises a series of inward movements of the hand or the leg. When mentality wills to stretch or move, there arises a series of outward movements or movements to and fro. They fall away soon after they occur and at the very point of occurrence, as one will notice later.

In every case of bending, stretching, or other activities, there arises first a series of intentions, moments of mentality, inducing or causing in the hands and legs a series of

material activities, such as stiffening, bending, stretching, or moving to and fro. These activities come up against other material elements, the bodily sensitivity, and on every occasion of contact between material activities and sensitive qualities, there arises body-consciousness, which feels or knows the sensation of touch. It is therefore clear that material activities are *pre-dominating* factors in these cases. It is necessary to notice the predominating factors. If not, there will surely arise the wrong view which regards these activities as the doings of an "I"—"I am bending," "I am stretching," "my hands," or "my legs." This practice of noting as "bending," stretching," "moving," is carried out for the purpose of removing such wrong views.

Mind

Depending on the mind-base there arises a series of mental activities, such as thinking, imagining, etc., or generally speaking, a series of mental activities arises depending on the body. In reality, each case is a composition of mentality and materiality, mind-base being materiality, and thinking, imagining, and so forth being mentality. In order to be able to notice materiality and mentality clearly, "thinking," "imagining," and so forth should be noted in each case.

After having carried out the practice in the manner indicated above for some time, there may be an improvement in concentration. One will notice that the mind no longer wanders about but remains fixed on the object to which it is directed. At the same time, the power of

noticing has considerably developed. On every occasion of noting, one notices only two processes of materiality and mentality: a dual set of object (materiality) and mental state (mentality), which makes note of the object, arising together.

Again, on proceeding further with the practice of contemplation, after some time one notices that nothing remains permanent, but that everything is in a state of flux. New things arise each time. Each of them is noted as it arises. Whatever arises then passes away immediately and immediately another arises, which is again noted and which then passes away. Thus the process of arising and passing away goes on, which clearly shows that nothing is permanent. One therefore realises that “things are not permanent” because one sees that they arise and pass away immediately. This is insight into impermanence (*aniccānupassanā-ñāṇa*).

Then one also realises that “arising and passing are not desirable.” This is insight into suffering (*dukkhanupassanā-ñāṇa*). Besides, one usually experiences many painful sensations in the body, such as tiredness, heat, aching, and at the time of noting these sensations, one generally feels that this body is a collection of sufferings. This is also insight into suffering.

Then at every time of noting it is found that elements of materiality and mentality occur according to their respective nature and condition-ing, and not according to one’s wishes. One therefore realises that “they are elements; they

are not governable; they are not a person or living entity.” This is insight into non-self (*anattānupassanā-ñāṇa*).

On having fully acquired these insights into impermanence, suffering, and non-self, the maturity of knowledge of the path (*magga-ñāṇa*) and knowledge of fruition (*phala-ñāṇa*) takes place and realisation of Nibbāna is won. By winning the realisation of Nibbāna in the first stage, one is freed from the round of rebirth in the realms of miserable existence. Everyone should therefore endeavour to reach the first stage, the path and fruit of stream-entry, as a minimum measure of protection against an unfortunate rebirth.

The Beginner’s Exercise

It has already been explained that the actual method of practice in vipassanā meditation is to note, or to observe, or to contemplate, the successive occurrences of seeing, hearing, and so on, at the six sense doors. However, it will not be possible for a beginner to follow these on all successive incidents as they occur because his mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and knowledge (*ñāṇa*) are still very weak. The moments of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking occur very swiftly. It seems that seeing occurs at the same time as hearing, that hearing occurs at the same time as seeing, that seeing and hearing occur simultaneously, that seeing, hearing, thinking, and imagining always occur simultaneously. Because they occur so swiftly, it is not possible to distinguish which occurs first and which second.

In reality, seeing does not occur at the same time as hearing, nor does hearing occur at the same time as seeing. Such incidents can occur only one at a time. A yogi who has just begun the practice and who has not sufficiently developed his mindfulness, concentration, and knowledge will not, however, be in a position to observe all these moments singly as they occur in serial order. A beginner need not, therefore, follow up on many things. He needs to begin with only a few things.

Seeing or hearing occurs only when due attention is given to their objects. If one does not pay heed to any sight or sound, one may pass the time without any moments of seeing or hearing taking place. Smelling rarely occurs. The experience of tasting can only occur while one is eating. In the case of seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting, the yogi can note them when they occur. Body impressions, however, are ever present. They usually exist distinctly all the time. During the time that one is sitting, the body impression of stiffness or the sensation of hardness in this position is distinctly felt. Attention should therefore be fixed on the sitting posture and a note made as "sitting, sitting, sitting."

Sitting

Sitting is an erect posture of the body consisting of a series of physical activities, induced by consciousness consisting of a series of mental activities. It is just like the case of an inflated rubber ball which maintains its round shape through the resistance of the air inside it. The posture of

sitting is similar in that the body is kept in an erect posture through the continuous process of physical activities. A good deal of energy is required to pull up and keep in an erect position such a heavy load as this body. People generally assume that the body is lifted and kept in an upright position by means of sinews. This assumption is correct in a sense because sinews, blood, flesh, and bones are nothing but materiality. The element of stiffening which keeps the body in an erect posture belongs to the group of -materiality and arises in the sinews, flesh, blood, etc., throughout the body, like the air in a rubber ball.

The element of stiffening is the air element, known as *vāyo-dhātu*. The body is kept in an erect position by the air element in the form of stiffening, which is continually coming into existence. At the time of sleepiness or drowsiness, one may drop flat because the supply of new materials in the form of stiffening is cut off. The state of mind in heavy drowsiness or sleep is *bhavaṅga*, the “life-continuum” or passive subconscious flow. During the course of *bhavaṅga*, mental activities are absent, and for this reason, the body lies flat during sleep or heavy drowsiness.

During waking hours, strong and alert mental activities are continually arising, and because of these the air element arises serially in the form of stiffening. In order to know these facts, it is essential to note the bodily posture attentively as “sitting, sitting, sitting.” This does not necessarily mean that the body impression of stiffening should particularly be searched for and noted. Attention

need only be fixed on the whole form of the sitting posture, that is, the lower portion of the body in a bent circular form and the upper portion held erect.

It may be found that the exercise of observing the mere sitting posture is too easy and does not require much effort. In these circumstances, energy (*virīya*) is less and concentration (*samādhi*) is in excess. One will generally feel lazy and will not want to carry on the noting as “sitting, sitting, sitting” repeatedly for a considerable length of time. Laziness generally occurs when there is an excess of concentration and not enough energy. It is nothing but a state of sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*).

More energy should be developed, and for this purpose, the number of objects for noting should be increased. After noting as “sitting,” the attention should be directed to a spot in the body where the sense of touch is felt and a note made as “touching.” Any spot in the leg or hand or hip where a sense of touch is distinctly felt will serve the purpose. For example, after noting the sitting posture of the body as “sitting,” the spot where the sense of touch is felt should be noted as “touching.” The noting should thus be repeated using these two objects of *the sitting posture* and *the place of touching* alternately, as “sitting, touching, sitting, touching, sitting, touching.”

The terms “noting,” “observing,” and “contemplating” are used here to indicate the fixing of attention on an object. The exercise is simply to note or observe or contemplate as

“sitting, touching.” Those who already have experience in the practice of meditation may find this exercise easy to begin with, but those without any previous experience may at first find it rather difficult.

Rising-Falling

A simpler and easier form of the exercise for a beginner is this: with every breath there occurs in the abdomen a rising-falling movement. A beginner should start with the exercise of noting this movement. This rising-falling movement is easy to observe because it is coarse and therefore more suitable for the beginner. As in schools where simple lessons are easy to learn, so also is the practice of *vipassanā* meditation. A beginner will find it easier to develop concentration and knowledge with a simple and easy exercise.

Again, the purpose of *vipassanā* meditation is to begin the exercise by contemplating prominent factors in the body. Of the two factors of mentality and materiality, the former is subtle and less prominent, while the latter is coarse and more prominent. At the outset, therefore, the usual procedure for an insight meditator is to begin the exercise by contemplating the material elements.

With regard to materiality, it may be mentioned here that derived materiality (*upādā-rūpa*) is subtle and less prominent, while the four primary physical elements (*mahā-bhūta-rūpa*)— earth, water, fire, and air—are coarse and more prominent. The latter should therefore have priority in

the order of objects for contemplation. In the case of rising-falling, the outstanding factor is the air element or *vāyo-dhātu*. The process of stiffening and the movements of the abdomen noticed during the contemplation are nothing but the functions of the air element. Thus it will be seen that the air element is perceptible at the beginning.

According to the instructions of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, one should be mindful of the activities of walking while walking, of those of standing, sitting, and lying down while standing, sitting, and lying down, respectively. One should also be mindful of other bodily activities as each of them occurs. In this connection, it is stated in the commentaries that one should be mindful primarily of the air element in preference to the other three elements. As a matter of fact, all four primary elements are dominant in every action of the body, and it is essential to perceive any one of them. At the time of sitting, either of the two movements of rising and falling occurs conspicuously with every breath, and a beginning should be made by noting these movements.

Some fundamental features in the system of *vipassanā* meditation have been explained for general information. The general outline of basic exercises will now be dealt with.

Outline of Basic Exercises

When contemplating rising and falling, the disciple should keep his mind on the abdomen. He will then come to know the upward movement or expansion of the abdomen on

breathing in, and the downward movement or contraction on breathing out. A mental note should be made as “rising” for the upward movement and “falling” for the downward movement. If these movements are not clearly noticed by simply fixing the mind on them, one or both hands should be placed on the abdomen.

The disciple should not try to change the manner of his natural breathing. He should neither attempt slow breathing by the retention of his breath, nor quick breathing or deep breathing. If he does change the natural flow of his breathing, he will soon tire himself. He must therefore keep to the natural rate of his breathing and proceed with the contemplation of rising and falling.

On the occurrence of the upward movement of the abdomen, the mental note of “rising” should be made, and on the downward movement of the abdomen, the mental note of “falling” should be made. The mental notation of these terms should not be vocalised. In *vipassanā* meditation, it is more important to know the object than to know it by term or name. It is therefore necessary for the disciple to make every effort to be mindful of the movement of rising from its beginning to its end and that of falling from its beginning to its end, as if these movements are actually seen with the eyes. As soon as rising occurs, there should be the knowing mind close to the movement, as in the case of a stone hitting a wall. The movement of rising as it occurs and the mind knowing it must come together on every occasion. Similarly, the movement of falling as it occurs and the mind

knowing it must come together on every occasion.

When there is no other conspicuous object, the disciple should carry on the exercise of noting these two movements as "rising, falling, rising, falling, rising, falling." While thus being occupied with this exercise, there may be occasions when the mind wanders about. When concentration is weak, it is very difficult to control the mind. Though it is directed to the movements of rising and falling, the mind will not stay with them but will wander to other places. This wandering mind should not be let alone. It should be noted as "wandering, wandering, wandering" as soon as it is noticed that it is wandering. On noting once or twice the mind usually stops wandering, then the exercise of noting "rising, falling" should be continued. When it is again found that the mind has reached a place, it should be noted as "reaching, reaching, reaching." Then the exercise of noting "rising, falling" should be reverted to as soon as these movements are clear.

On meeting with a person in the imagination, it should be noted as "meeting, meeting," after which the usual exercise should be reverted to. Sometimes the fact that it is mere imagination is discovered when one speaks with that imaginary person, and it should then be noted as "speaking, speaking." The real purport is to note every mental activity as it occurs. For instance, it should be noted as "thinking" at the moment of thinking, and as "reflecting," "planning," "knowing," "attending," "rejoicing," "feeling lazy," "feeling happy," "disgusted," etc., as the case may be, on the

occurrence of each activity. The contemplation of mental activities and noticing them is called *cittānupassanā*, contemplation of mind.

Because people have no practical knowledge in *vipassanā* meditation, they are generally not in a position to know the real state of the mind. This naturally leads them to the wrong view of holding mind to be “person,” “self,” “living entity.” They usually believe that “imagination is I,” “I am thinking,” “I am planning,” “I am knowing,” and so forth. They hold that there exists a living entity or self which grows up from childhood to adulthood. In reality, such a living entity does not exist, but there does exist a continuous process of elements of mind which occur singly, one at a time, in succession. The practice of contemplation is therefore being carried out with the aim of discovering the true nature of this mind-body complex.

As regards the mind and the manner of its arising, the Buddha stated in the Dhammapada (v.37):

*Dūraṅgaṃ ekacaraṃ
asarīraṃ guhāsayaṃ
ye cittaṃ saññamessanti
mokkhanti mārabandhanā.*

Faring far, wandering alone,
Formless and lying in a cave.
Those who do restrain the mind
Are sure released from Māra’s bonds.

Faring far. Mind usually wanders far and wide. While the yogi is trying to carry on with the practice of contemplation in his meditation room, he often finds that his mind has wandered to many far-off places, towns, etc. He also finds that his mind can wander to any of the far-off places which he has previously known at the very moment of thinking or imagining. This fact is discovered with the help of contemplation.

Alone. Mind occurs singly, moment to moment in succession. Those who do not perceive the reality of this believe that one mind exists in the course of life or existence. They do not know that new minds are always arising at every moment. They think that the seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking of the past and of the present belong to one and the same mind, and that three or four acts of seeing, hearing, touching, knowing usually occur simultaneously.

These are wrong views. In reality, single moments of mind arise and pass away continuously, one after another. This can be perceived on gaining considerable practice. The cases of imagination and planning are clearly perceptible.

Imagination passes away as soon as it is noted as “imagining, imagining,” and planning also passes away as soon as it is noted as “planning, planning.” These instances of arising, noting, and passing away appear like a string of beads. The preceding mind is not the following mind. Each is separate. These characteristics of reality are personally perceptible, and for this purpose one must proceed with the

practice of contemplation.

Formless. Mind has no substance, no form. It is not easy to distinguish as is the case with materiality. In the case of materiality, the body, head, hands, and legs are very prominent and are easily noticed. If it is asked what matter is, matter can be handled and shown. Mind, however, is not easy to describe because it has no substance or form. For this reason, it is not possible to carry out analytical laboratory experiments on the mind.

One can, however, fully understand the mind if it is explained as *that which knows an object*. To understand the mind, it is necessary to contemplate the mind at every moment of its occurrence. When contemplation is fairly advanced, the mind's approach to its object is clearly comprehended. It appears as if each moment of mind is making a direct leap towards its object. In order to know the true nature of the mind, contemplation is thus prescribed.

Lying in a cave. Because the mind comes into being depending on the mind-base and the other sense doors situated in the body, it is said that it rests in a cave.

Those who do restrain the mind are sure released from Māra's bonds. It is said that the mind should be contemplated at each moment of its occurrence. The mind can thus be controlled by means of contemplation. On his successful controlling of the mind, the yogi will win freedom from the bondage of Māra, the King of Death. It will now be seen that it is important to note the mind at every moment of its

occurrence. As soon as it is noted, the mind passes away. For instance, by noting once or twice as “intending, intending,” it is found that intention passes away at once. Then the usual exercise of noting as “rising, falling, rising, falling” should be reverted to.

While one is proceeding with the usual exercise, one may feel that one wants to swallow saliva. It should be noted as “wanting,” and on gathering saliva as “gathering,” and on swallowing as “swallowing,” in the serial order of occurrence. The reason for contemplation in this case is because there may be a persisting personal view as “wanting to swallow is I,” “swallowing is also I” In reality, “wanting to swallow” is mentality and not “I,” and “swallowing” is materiality and not “I.” There exist only mentality and materiality at that moment. By means, of contemplating in this manner, one will understand clearly the process of reality. So too, in the case of spitting, it should be noted as “wanting” when one wants to spit, as “bending” on bending the neck (which should be done slowly), as “looking, seeing” on looking, and as “spitting” on spitting. Afterwards, the usual exercise of noting “rising, falling” should be continued.

Because of sitting for a long time, there will arise in the body unpleasant feelings of being stiff, being hot and so forth. These sensations should be noted as they occur. The mind should be fixed on that spot and a note made as “stiff, stiff” on feeling stiff, as “hot, hot” on feeling hot, as “painful, painful” on feeling painful, as “prickly, prickly”

on feeling prickly sensations, and as “tired, tired” on feeling tired. These unpleasant feelings are *dukkha-vedanā* and the contemplation of these feelings is *vedanānupassanā*, contemplation of feeling.

Owing to the absence of knowledge in respect of these feelings, there persists the wrong view of holding them as one’s own personality or self, that is to say, “I am feeling stiff,” “I am feeling painful,” “I was feeling well formerly but I now feel uncomfortable,” in the manner of a single self. In reality, unpleasant feelings arise owing to disagreeable impressions in the body. Like the light of an electric bulb which can continue to burn on a continuous supply of energy, so it is in the case of feelings, which arise anew on every occasion of coming in contact with disagreeable impressions.

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

There is a saying that patience leads to Nibbāna. Evidently this saying is more applicable in the case of contemplation

than in any other. Plenty of patience is needed in contemplation. If a yogi cannot bear unpleasant feelings with patience, but frequently changes his posture during contemplation, he cannot expect to gain concentration. Without concentration there is no chance of acquiring insight knowledge (*vipassanā-ñāṇa*) and without insight knowledge the attainment of the path, fruition, and Nibbāna cannot be won.

Patience is of great importance in contemplation. Patience is needed mostly to bear unpleasant bodily feelings. There is hardly any case of outside disturbances where it is necessary to exercise patience. This means the observance of *khantisamvara*, restraint by patience. The posture should not be immediately changed when unpleasant sensations arise, but contemplation should be continued by noting them as “stiff, stiff,” “hot, hot,” and so on. Such painful sensations are normal and will pass away. In the case of strong concentration, it will be found that great pains will pass away when they are noted with patience. On the fading away of suffering or pain, the usual exercise of noting “rising, falling” should be continued.

On the other hand, it may be found that pains or unpleasant feelings do not immediately pass away even when one notes them with great patience. In such a case, one has no alternative but to change posture. One must, of course, submit to superior forces. When concentration is not strong enough, strong pains will not pass away quickly. In these circumstances there will often arise a mind wanting to

change posture, and this mind should be noted as “wanting, wanting.” After this, one should note “lifting, lifting” on lifting the hand, and “moving, moving” on moving it forward.

These bodily actions should be carried out slowly, and these slow movements should be followed up and noted as “lifting, lifting,” “moving, moving,” “touching, touching,” in the successive order of the process. Again, on moving one should note “moving, moving,” and on putting down, note “putting, putting:” If, when this process of changing posture has been completed, there is nothing more to be noted, the usual exercise of noting “rising, falling” should be continued.

There should be no stop or break in between. The preceding act of noting and the one which follows should be contiguous. Similarly, the preceding concentration and the one which follows should be contiguous, and the preceding act of knowing and the one which follows should be contiguous. In this way, the gradual development by stages of mindfulness, concentration, and knowledge takes place, and depending on their full development, the final stage of path-knowledge is attained.

In the practice of *vipassanā* meditation, it is important to follow the example of a person who tries to make fire. To make a fire in the days before matches, a person had to constantly rub two sticks together without the slightest break in motion. As the sticks became hotter and hotter,

more effort was needed, and the rubbing had to be carried out incessantly. Only when the fire had been produced was the person at liberty to take a rest. Similarly, a yogi should work hard so that there is no break between the preceding noting and the one which follows, and the preceding concentration and the one which follows. He should revert to his usual exercise of noting "rising, falling" after he has noted painful sensations.

While being thus occupied with his usual exercise, he may again feel itching sensations somewhere in the body. He should then fix his mind on the spot and make a note as "itching, itching." Itching is an unpleasant sensation. As soon as it is felt, there arises a mind which wants to rub or scratch. This mind should be noted as "wanting, wanting," after which no rubbing or scratching must be done as yet, but a return should be made to the itching and a note made as "itching, itching." While one is occupied with contemplation in this manner, itching in most cases passes away and the usual exercise of noting "rising, falling" should then be reverted to.

If, on the other hand, it is found that itching does not pass away, but that it is necessary to rub or scratch, the contemplation of the successive stages should be carried out by noting the mind as "wanting, wanting." It should then be continued by noting "raising, raising" on raising the hand, "touching, touching" when the hand touches the spot, "rubbing, rubbing" or "scratching, scratch-ing" when the hand rubs or scratches, "with-drawing, withdrawing" on

withdrawing the hand, “touching, touching” when the hand touches the body, and then the usual contemplation of “rising, falling” should be continued. In every case of changing postures, contemplation of the successive stages should be carried out similarly and carefully.

While thus carefully proceeding with the contemplation, one may find that painful feelings or unpleasant sensations arise in the body of their own accord. Ordinarily, people change their posture as soon as they feel even the slightest unpleasant sensation of tiredness or heat without taking heed of these incidents. The change of posture is carried out quite heedlessly just while the seed of pain is beginning to grow. Thus painful feelings fail to take place in a distinctive manner. For this reason it is said that, as a rule, the postures hide painful feelings from view. People generally think that they are feeling well for days and nights on end. They think that painful feelings occur only at the time of an attack of a dangerous disease.

Reality is just the opposite of what people think. Let anyone try to see how long he can keep himself in a sitting posture without moving or changing it. One will find it uncomfortable after a short while, say five or ten minutes, and then one will begin to find it unbearable after fifteen or twenty minutes. One will then be compelled to move or change one’s posture by either raising or lowering the head, moving the hands or legs, or by swaying the body either forward or backward. Many movements usually take place during a short time, and the number would be very large if

they were to be counted for the length of just one day. However, no one appears to be aware of this fact because no one takes any heed.

Such is the order in every case, while in the case of a yogi who is always mindful of his actions and who is proceeding with contemplation, body impressions in their own respective nature are therefore distinctly noticed. They cannot help but reveal themselves fully in their own nature because he is watching until they come to full view.

Though a painful sensation arises, he keeps on noting it. He does not ordinarily attempt to change his posture or move. Then on the arising of mind wanting to change, he at once makes a note of it as “wanting, wanting,” and afterwards he returns again to the painful sensation and continues his noting of it. He changes his posture or moves only when he finds the painful feeling unbearable. In this case he also begins by noting the wanting mind and proceeds with noting carefully each stage in the process of moving. This is why the postures can no longer hide painful sensations. Often a yogi finds painful sensations creeping from here and there or he may feel hot sensations, aching sensations, itching, or the whole body as a mass of painful sensations. That is how painful sensations are found to be predominant because the postures cannot cover them.

If he intends to change his posture from sitting to standing, he should first make a note of the intending mind as “intending, intending,” and proceed with the arranging of

the hands and legs in the successive stages by noting as “raising,” “moving,” “stretching,” “touching,” “pressing,” and so forth. When the body sways forward, it should be noted as “swaying, swaying.” While in the course of standing up, there occurs in the body a feeling of lightness as well as the act of rising. Attention should be fixed on these factors and a note made as “rising, rising.” The act of rising should be carried out slowly.

During the course of practice it is most appropriate if a yogi acts feebly and slowly in all activities just like a weak, sick person. Perhaps the case of a person suffering from lumbago would be a more fitting example here. The patient must always be cautious and move slowly just to avoid pains. In the same manner a yogi should always try to keep to slow movements in all actions. Slow motion is necessary to enable mindfulness, concentration, and knowledge to catch up. One has lived all the time in a careless manner and one just begins seriously to train oneself in keeping the mind within the body. It is only the beginning, and one’s mindfulness, concentration, and knowledge have not yet been properly geared up while the physical and mental processes are moving at top speed. It is thus imperative to bring the top-level speed of these processes to the lowest gear so as to make it possible for mindfulness and knowledge to keep pace with them. It is therefore desirable that slow motion exercises be carried out at all times.

Further, it is advisable for a yogi to behave like a blind person throughout the course of training. A person without

any restraint will not look dignified because he usually looks at things and persons wantonly. He also cannot obtain a steady and calm state of mind. The blind person, on the other hand, behaves in a composed manner by sitting sedately with downcast eyes. He never turns in any direction to look at things or persons because he is blind and cannot see them. Even if a person comes near him and speaks to him, he never turns around and looks at that person. This composed manner is worthy of imitation. A yogi should act in the same manner while carrying out the practice of contemplation. He should not look anywhere. His mind should be solely intent on the object of contemplation. While in the sitting posture he must be intently noting "rising, falling." Even if strange things occur nearby, he should not look at them. He must simply make a note as "seeing, seeing," and then continue with the usual exercise of noting "rising, falling." A yogi should have a high regard for this exercise and carry it out with due respect, so much so as to be mistaken for a blind person.

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

It is necessary for a yogi to behave like a deaf person also.

Ordinarily, as soon as a person hears a sound, he turns around and looks in the direction from which the sound came, or he turns towards the person who spoke to him and makes a reply. He does not behave in a sedate manner. A deaf person, on the other hand, behaves in a composed manner. He does not take heed of any sound or talk because he never hears them. Similarly, a yogi should conduct himself in like manner without taking heed of any unimportant talk, nor should he deliberately listen to any talk or speech. If he happens to hear any sound or speech, he should at once make a note as "hearing, hearing," and then return to the usual practice of noting "rising, falling." He should proceed with his contemplation intently, so much so as to be mistaken for a deaf person.

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

Other Exercises

Walking

It is therefore to be emphasised that the act of pulling up the body to the standing posture should be carried out slowly. On coming to an erect position, a note should be made as

“standing, standing.” If one happens to look around, a note should be made as “looking, seeing,” and on walking each step should be noted as “right step, left step” or “walking, walking.” At each step, attention should be fixed on the sole of the foot as it moves from the point of lifting the leg to the point of placing it down.

While walking in quick steps or taking a long walk, a note on one section of each step as “right step, left step” or “walking, walking” will do. In the case of walking slowly, each step may be divided into three sections—lifting, moving forward, and placing down. In the beginning of the exercise, a note should be made of the two parts of each step: as “lifting” by fixing the attention on the upward movement of the foot from the beginning to the end, and as “placing” by fixing on the downward movement from the beginning to the end. Thus the exercise which starts with the first step by noting as “lifting, placing” now ends.

Normally, when the foot is put down and is being noted as “placing,” the other leg begins lifting to begin the next step. This should not be allowed to happen. The next step should begin only after the first step has been completed, such as “lifting, placing” for the first step and “lifting, placing” for the second step. After two or three days this exercise will be easy, and then the yogi should carry out the exercise of noting each step in three sections as “lifting, moving, placing.” For the present a yogi should start the exercise by noting as “right step, left step,” or “walking, walking” while walking quickly, and by noting as “lifting, placing” while

walking slowly.

Sitting

While one is walking, one may feel the desire to sit down. One should then make a note as “wanting.” If one then happens to look up, note it as “looking, seeing, looking, seeing;” on going to the seat as “lifting, placing;” on stopping as “stopping, stopping;” on turning as “turning, turning.” When one feels a desire to sit, note it as “wanting, wanting.” In the act of sitting there occur in the body heaviness and also a downward pull. Attention should be fixed on these factors and a note made as “sitting, sitting, sitting.” After having sat down there will be movements of bringing the hands and legs into position. They should be noted as “moving,” “bending,” “stretching,” and so forth. If there is nothing to do and if one is sitting quietly, one should then revert to the usual exercise of noting as “rising, falling.”

Lying Down

If in the course of contemplation one feels painful or tired or hot, one should make a note of these and then revert to the usual exercise of noting “rising, falling.” If one feels sleepy, one should make a note of it as “sleepy, sleepy,” and proceed with the noting of all acts in preparation to lie down: note the bringing into position of the hands and legs as “raising,” “pressing,” “moving,” “supporting;” when the body sways as “swaying, swaying;” when the legs stretch as “stretching, stretching;” and when the body drops and lies

flat as “lying, lying, lying.”

These trifling acts in lying down are also important and they should not be neglected. There is every possibility of attaining enlightenment during this short time. On the full development of concentration and knowledge, enlightenment is attainable during the present moment of bending or stretching. In this way the Venerable Ānanda attained Arahatship at the very moment of lying down.

About the beginning of the fourth month after the Buddha’s complete passing away, arrangements were made to hold the first council of bhikkhus to collectively classify, examine, confirm, and recite all the teachings of the Buddha. At that time five hundred bhikkhus were chosen for this work. Of these bhikkhus, four hundred and ninety-nine were Arahats, while the Venerable Ānanda alone was a *sotāpanna*, a stream-enterer.

In order to attend the council as an Arahats on the same level with the others, he made his utmost effort to carry on with his meditation on the day prior to the opening of the council. That was on the fourth of the waning moon of the month of Sāvāna (August). He proceeded with mindfulness of the body and continued his walking meditation throughout the night. It might have been in the same manner as noting “right step, left step” or “walking, walking.” He was thus occupied with intense contemplation of the processes of mentality and materiality in each step until dawn of the following day, but he still had not yet

attained to Arahatsip.

Then the Venerable Ānanda thought: "I have done my utmost. Lord Buddha has said, 'Ānanda, you possess full perfections (*pāramīs*). Do proceed with the practice of meditation. You will surely attain Arahatsip one day.' I have tried my best, so much so that I can be counted as one of those who have done their best in meditation. What may be the reason for my failure?"

Then he remembered: "Ah! I have been overzealous in keeping solely to the practice of walking throughout the night. There is an excess of energy and not enough concentration, which indeed is responsible for this state of restlessness. It is now necessary to stop walking practice so as to bring energy in balance with concentration and to proceed with the contemplation in a lying position." The Venerable Ānanda then entered his room, sat down on his bed, and began to lie down. It is said that he attained Arahatsip at the very moment of lying down, or rather at the moment of contemplating as "lying, lying."

This manner of attaining Arahatsip has been recorded as a strange event in the Commentaries, because it is outside the four regular postures of standing, sitting, lying, and walking. At the moment of his enlightenment, the Venerable Ānanda could not be regarded as strictly in a standing posture because his feet were off the floor, nor could he be regarded as sitting because his body was already at an angle, being quite close to the pillow, nor

could he be regarded as lying down since his head had not yet touched the pillow and his body was not yet flat.

The Venerable Ānanda was a stream-enterer and he thus had to develop the three, other higher stages—the path and fruit of once-returning, the path and fruit of non-returning, and the path and fruit of Arahathship in his final attainment. This took only a moment. Extreme care is therefore needed to carry on the practice of contemplation without relaxation or omission.

In the act of lying down, contemplation should therefore be carried out with due care. When a yogi feels sleepy and wants to lie down, a note should be made as “sleepy, sleepy,” “wanting, wanting;” on raising the hand as “raising, raising;” on stretching as “stretching, stretching;” on touching as “touching, touching;” on pressing as “pressing, pressing;” after swaying the body and dropping it down as “lying, lying.” The act of lying down itself should be carried out very slowly. On touching the pillow it should be noted as “touching, touching.” There are many places of touch all over the body but each spot need be noted only one at a time.

In the lying posture there are also many movements of the body in bringing one’s arms and legs into position. These actions should be noted carefully as “raising,” “stretching,” “bending,” “moving,” and so forth. On turning the body a note should be made as “turning, turning,” and when there is nothing in particular to be noted, the yogi should proceed

with the usual practice of noting “rising, falling.” While one is lying on one’s back or side, there is usually nothing in particular to be noted and the usual exercise of “rising, falling” should be carried out.

There may be many times when the mind wanders while one is in the lying posture. This wandering mind should be noted as “going, going” when it goes out, as “arriving, arriving” when it reaches a place, as “planning,” “reflecting,” and so forth for each state in the same manner as in the contemplation while in the sitting posture. Mental states pass away on being noted once or twice. The usual exercise of noting “rising, falling” should be continued. There may also be instances of swallowing or spitting saliva, painful sensations, hot sensations, itching sensations, etc., or of bodily actions in changing positions or in moving the limbs. They should be contemplated as each occurs. (When sufficient strength in concentration is gained, it will be possible to carry on with the contemplation of each act of opening and closing the eyelids and blinking). Afterwards, one should then return to the usual exercise when there is nothing else to be noted.

Sleep

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

The scriptures are emphatic on the necessity of developing the qualities of four-factored energy (*caturāṅga-vīriya*) in the practice of meditation: "In the hard struggle, one may be reduced to a mere skeleton of skin, bones, and sinews when one's flesh and blood wither and dry up, but one should not give up one's efforts so long as one has not attained whatever is attainable by manly perseverance, energy, and endeavour." These instructions should be followed with a strong determination. It may be possible to keep awake if there is strong enough concentration to beat off sleep, but one will fall asleep if sleep gets the upper hand.

When one feels sleepy, one should make a note of it as "sleepy, sleepy"; when the eyelids are heavy as "heavy, heavy"; when the eyes are felt to be dazzled as "dazzled, dazzled." After contemplating in the manner indicated, one may be able to shake off sleepiness and feel fresh again. This feeling should be noted as "feeling fresh, feeling fresh," after which the usual exercise of noting "rising, falling" should be continued. However, in spite of this determination, one may feel unable to keep awake if one is very sleepy. In a lying posture, it is easier to fall asleep. A beginner should therefore try to keep mostly to the postures of sitting and walking.

When the night is advanced, however, a yogi may be compelled to lie down and proceed with the contemplation of rising and falling. In this position he may perhaps fall asleep. While one is asleep, it is not possible to carry on with the work of contemplation. It is an interval for a yogi to

relax. An hour's sleep will give him an hour's relaxation, and if he continues to sleep for two, three or four hours, he will be relaxed for that much longer, but it is not advisable for a yogi to sleep for more than four hours, which is ample enough for a normal sleep.

Waking

A yogi should begin his contemplation from the moment of awakening. To be fully occupied with intense contemplation throughout his waking hours is the routine of a yogi who works hard with true aspiration for the attainment of the path and fruit. If it is not possible to catch the moment of awakening, he should begin with the usual exercise of noting "rising, falling." If he first becomes aware of the fact of reflecting, he should begin his contemplation by noting "reflecting, reflecting," and then revert to the usual exercise of noting "rising, falling." If he first becomes aware of hearing a voice or some other sound, he should begin by noting "hearing, hearing," and then revert to the usual exercise. On awakening there may be bodily movement in turning to this side or that, moving the hands or legs and so forth. These actions should be contemplated in successive order.

If he first becomes aware of the mental states leading to the various actions of body, he should begin his contemplation by noting the mind. If he first becomes aware of painful sensations, he should begin with the noting of these painful sensations and then proceed with the noting of bodily

actions. If he remains quiet without moving, the usual exercise of noting “rising, falling” should be continued. If he intends to get up, he should note this as “intending, intending,” and then proceed with the noting of all actions in serial order in bringing the hands and legs into position. One should note “raising, raising” on raising the body, “sitting, sitting” when the body is erect and in a sitting posture, and one should also note any other actions of bringing the legs and hands into position. If there is then nothing in particular to be noted, the usual exercise of noting “rising, falling” should be reverted to.

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

Washing and Eating

Contemplation should be carried out in washing the face in

the morning or when taking a bath. As it is necessary to act quickly in such instances due to the nature of the action itself, contemplation should be carried out as far as these circumstances will allow. On stretching the hand to catch hold of the dipper, it should be noted as “stretching, stretching;” on catching hold of the dipper as “holding, holding;” on immersing the dipper as “dipping, dipping;” on bringing the dipper towards the body as “bringing, bringing;” on pouring the water over the body or on the face as “pouring, pouring;” on feeling cold as “cold, cold”; on rubbing as “rubbing, rubbing,” and so forth.

There are also many different bodily actions in changing or arranging one’s clothing, in arranging the bed or bed-sheets, in opening the door, and so on. These actions should be contemplated in detail serially as much as possible.

At the time of taking a meal, contemplation should begin from the moment of looking at the table and noted as “looking, seeing, looking, seeing;” when stretching the hand to the plate as “stretching, stretching;” when the hand touches the food as “touching, hot, hot”; when gathering the food as “gathering, gathering;” when catching hold of the food as “catching, catching;” after lifting when the hand is being brought up as “bringing, bringing;” when the neck is being bent down as “bending, bending;” when the food is being placed in the mouth as “placing, placing;” when withdrawing the hand as “withdrawing, withdrawing;” when the hand touches the plate as “touching, touching;” when the neck is being straightened as “straightening,

straightening;” when chewing the food as “chewing, chewing;” while tasting the food as “tasting, tasting,” when one likes the taste as “liking, liking;” when one finds it pleasant as “pleasant, pleasant”; when swallowing as “swallowing, swallowing.”

This is an illustration of the routine of contemplation on partaking of each morsel of food until the meal is finished. In this case too it is difficult to follow up on all actions at the beginning of the practice. There will be many omissions. Yogis should not hesitate, however, but must try to follow up as much as they can. With the gradual advancement of the practice, it will be easier to note many more objects than are mentioned here.

The instructions for the practical exercise of contemplation are now almost complete. As they have been explained in detail and at some length, it will not be easy to remember all of them. For the sake of easy remembrance, a short summary of the important and essential points will be given.

Summary of Essential Points

In walking, a yogi should contemplate the movements of each step. While one is walking briskly, each step should be noted as “right step, left step” respectively. The mind should be fixed intently on the sole of the foot in the movements of each step. While one is in the course of walking slowly, each step should be noted in two parts as “lifting, placing.” While one is in a sitting posture, the usual

exercise of contemplation should be carried out by noting the movements of the abdomen as “rising, falling, rising, falling.” The same manner of contemplation by noting the movements as “rising, falling, rising, falling” should be carried out while one is also in the lying posture.

If it is found that the mind wanders during the course of noting “rising, falling,” it should not be allowed to continue to wander but should be noted immediately. On imagining, it should be noted as “imagining, imagining;” on thinking as “thinking, thinking;” on the mind going out as “going, going;” on the mind arriving at a place as “arriving, arriving,” and so forth at every occurrence, and then the usual exercise of noting “rising, falling” should be continued.

When there occur feelings of tiredness in the hands, legs or other limbs, or hot, prickly, aching, or itching sensations, they should be immediately followed up and noted as “tired,” “hot,” “prickly,” “aching,” “itching,” and so on as the case may be. A return should then be made to the usual exercise of noting “rising, falling.”

When there are acts of bending or stretching the hands or legs, or moving the neck or limbs or swaying the body to and fro, they should be followed up and noted in serial order as they occur. The usual exercise of noting as “rising, falling” should then be reverted to.

This is only a summary. Any other objects to be contemplated in the course of training will be mentioned by

the meditation teachers when giving instructions during the daily interview with the disciples.

If one proceeds with the practice in the manner indicated, the number of objects will gradually increase in the course of time. At first there will be many omissions because the mind is used to wandering without any restraint whatsoever. However, a yogi should not lose heart on this account. This difficulty is usually encountered in the beginning of practice. After some time, the mind can no longer play truant because it is always found out every time it wanders. It therefore remains fixed on the object to which it is directed.

As rising occurs the mind makes a note of it, and thus the object and the mind coincide. As falling occurs the mind makes a note of it, and thus the object and the mind coincide. There is always a pair, the object and the mind which knows the object, at each time of noting. These two elements of the material object and the knowing mind always arise in pairs, and apart from these two there does not exist any other thing in the form of a person or self. This reality will be personally realised in due course.

The fact that materiality and mentality are two distinct, separate things will be clearly perceived during the time of noting "rising, falling." The two elements of materiality and mentality are linked up in pairs and their arising coincides, that is, the process of materiality in rising arises with the process of mentality which knows it. The process of

materiality in falling falls away together with the process of mentality which knows it. It is the same for lifting, moving and placing: these are processes of materiality arising and falling away together with the processes of mentality which know them. This knowledge in respect of matter and mind rising separately is known as *nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*, the discriminating knowledge of mentality-materiality. It is the preliminary stage in the whole course of insight knowledge. It is important to have this preliminary stage developed in a proper manner.

On continuing the practice of contemplation for some time, there will be considerable progress in mindfulness and concentration. At this high level it will be perceptible that on every occasion of noting, each process arises and passes away at that very moment. But, on the other hand, uninstructed people generally consider that the body and mind remain in a permanent state throughout life, that the same body of childhood has grown up into adulthood, that the same young mind has grown up into maturity, and that both body and mind are one and the same person. In reality, this is not so. Nothing is permanent. Everything comes into existence for a moment and then passes away. Nothing can remain even for the blink of an eye. Changes are taking place very swiftly and they will be perceived in due course.

While carrying on the contemplation by noting “rising, falling,” and so forth, one will perceive that these processes arise and pass away one after another in quick succession. On perceiving that everything passes away at the very point

of noting, a yogi knows that nothing is permanent. This knowledge regarding the impermanent nature of things is *aniccānupassanā-ñāṇa*, the contemplative knowledge of impermanence.

A yogi then knows that this ever-changing state of things is distressing and is not to be desired. This is *dukkhānupassanā-ñāṇa*, the contemplative knowledge of suffering. On suffering many painful feelings, this body and mind complex is regarded as a mere heap of suffering. This is also contemplative knowledge of suffering.

It is then perceived that the elements of materiality and mentality never follow one's wish, but arise according to their own nature and conditioning. While being engaged in the act of noting these processes, a yogi understands that these processes are not controllable and that they are neither a person nor a living entity nor self. This is *anattānupassanā-ñāṇa*, the contemplative knowledge of non-self.

When a yogi has fully developed the knowledge of impermanence, suffering, and non-self, he will realise Nibbāna. From time immemorial, Buddhas, Arahats and *Ariyas* (noble ones) have realised Nibbāna by this method of *vipassanā*. It is the highway leading to Nibbāna. *Vipassanā* consists of the four *satipaṭṭhāna* (applications of mindfulness) and it is *satipaṭṭhāna* which is really the highway to Nibbāna.

Yogis who take up this course of training should bear in mind that they are on the highway which has been taken by

Buddhas, Arahats, and *Ariyas*. This opportunity is afforded them apparently because of their *pāramī*, that is, their previous endeavours in seeking and wishing for it, and also because of their present mature conditions. They should rejoice at heart for having this opportunity. They should also feel assured that by walking on this highway without wavering they will gain personal experience of highly developed concentration and wisdom, as has already been known by Buddhas, Arahats, and *Ariyas*. They will develop such a pure state of concentration as has never been known before in the course of their lives and thus enjoy many innocent pleasures as a result of advanced concentration.

Impermanence, suffering, and non-self will be realised through direct personal experience, and with the full development of these knowledges, Nibbāna will be realised. It will not take long to achieve the objective, possibly one month, or twenty days, or fifteen days, or, on rare occasions, even in seven days for those select few with extraordinary *pāramī*.

Yogis should therefore proceed with the practice of contemplation in great earnestness and with full confidence, trusting that it will surely lead to the development of the noble path and fruit and to the realisation of Nibbāna. They will then be free from the wrong view of self and from spiritual doubt, and they will no longer be subject to the round of rebirths in the miserable realms of the hells, the animal world, and the sphere of *petas*.

May yogis meet with every success in their noble endeavour.

About the Author

The Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw, U Sobhana Mahāthera, was one of the most eminent meditation masters of modern times and a leader in the contemporary resurgence of vipassanā meditation. Born near Shwebo town in Burma in 1904, he was ordained a novice monk at the age of twelve and received full ordination as a bhikkhu at the age of twenty. He quickly distinguished himself as a scholar of the Buddhist scriptures and by his fifth year after full ordination was himself teaching the scriptures at a monastery in Moulmein.

In the eighth year after ordination he left Moulmein seeking a clear and effective method in the practice of meditation. At Thatön he met the well-known meditation instructor, the Venerable U Nārada, also known as the Mingun Jetawun Sayādaw. He then placed himself under the guidance of the Sayādaw and underwent intensive training in vipassanā meditation.

In 1941 he returned to his native village and introduced the systematic practice of vipassanā meditation to the area.

Many people, monks as well as laymen, took up the practice and greatly benefited by his careful instructions.

In 1949 the then prime Minister of Burma, U Nu, and Sir U Thwin, executive members of the Buddha Sāsanānuggaha Association, invited Ven. Mahāsi Sayadaw to come to Rangoon to give training in meditation practice. He acceded to their request and took up residence at the Thathana Yeiktha Meditation Center, where he continued to conduct intensive courses in vipassanā meditation until his death in 1982.

Under his guidance thousands of people have been trained at this Center and many more have benefited from his clear-cut approach to meditation practice through his writings and the teachings of his disciples. More than a hundred branch centers of the Thathana Yeiktha Center have been established in Burma and his method has spread widely to other countries, East and West.

Ven. Mahāsi Sayādaw also holds Burma's highest scholastic honor, the title of Aggamahā-pañḍita, awarded to him in 1952. During the Sixth Buddhist Council, held in Rangoon from 1954 to 1956, he performed the duties of Questioner (*pucchaka*), a role performed at the First Buddhist Council by the Venerable Mahākassapa. Ven. Mahāsi Sayādaw was also a member of the executive committee that was responsible, as the final authority, for the codification of all the texts edited at the Council.

Ven. Mahāsi Sayādaw is the author of numerous works on

both meditation and the Buddhist scriptures in his native Burmese. His discourses on Buddhist suttas have been translated into English and are published by the Buddha Sāsanānuggaha Association (16 Hermitage Road, Kokkine, Rangoon, Burma).

THE BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

The BPS is an approved charity dedicated to making known the Teaching of the Buddha, which has a vital message for all people.

Founded in 1958, the BPS has published a wide variety of books and booklets covering a great range of topics. Its publications include accurate annotated translations of the Buddha's discourses, standard reference works, as well as original contemporary expositions of Buddhist thought and practice. These works present Buddhism as it truly is—a dynamic force which has influenced receptive minds for the past 2500 years and is still as relevant today as it was when it first arose.

For more information about the BPS and our publications, please visit our website, or write an e-mail or a letter to the:

Administrative Secretary

Buddhist Publication Society

P.O. Box 61 • 54 Sangharaja Mawatha

Kandy • Sri Lanka

E-mail: bps@bps.lk • web site: <http://www.bps.lk>

Tel: 0094 81 223 7283 • Fax: 0094 81 222 3679

Table of Contents

Title page	2
Contents	4
Introduction	6
SATIPAṬṬHANA VIPASSANĀ	7
The Development of Wisdom	11
Seeing	14
Hearing, Etc.	19
Mind	21
The Beginner's Exercise	23
Sitting	24
Rising-Falling	27
Outline of Basic Exercises	28
Other Exercises	43
Walking	43
Sitting	45
Lying Down	45
Sleep	49
Waking	51
Washing and Eating	52
Summary of Essential Points	54
About the Author	60