

AGGAMAHAPANDITA
BHADDHANTA DR. REWATA DHAMMA



EMPTYING THE ROSE-APPLE SEAT

A day-to-day guide to Buddhist meditation methods
as taught by a renowned meditation master

FOREWORD BY JOSEPH GOLDSTEIN

The **Ven. Dr. Rewata Dhamma** was born in Myanmar in 1929. He passed the highest examination in Buddhist studies at the age of 23 and has studied under several eminent scholar monks and meditators in his country.

In 1956, the Government of Myanmar awarded him a State Scholarship to study in India. He studied Indian Philosophy and Mahayana Buddhism in Varanasi, obtaining an M.A. in Sanskrit in 1964 and his Ph.D. in 1967. His Hindi translation and commentary on the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* was published by the Sanskrit University of Varanasi in that year and was awarded the Kalidasa Prize by the Hindi Academy as one of the outstanding books of the year.

In 1975, he moved to England where he eventually established the Birmingham Buddhist Vihara as his base and now teaches Buddhism and Vipassana Meditation all over the world. The Ven. Dr. Rewata Dhamma's books and papers published in English include: The First Discourse of

(continued on back flap)

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*A guide to Buddhist meditation methods:
the clear exposition of the teachings in
accordance with the practice.*

Aggamahapandita Bhaddanta
Dr. Rewata Dhamma

Foreword by Joseph Goldstein

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Rose-Apple (*Syzygium jambos*)

Preface

I first met Ven. Dr. Rewata Dhamma in India, over thirty years ago. His profound understanding of the Dhamma and his exemplary life as a Buddhist monk has been a great inspiration to me on my own Dhamma path. In a way that is so helpful for these times, Dr. Rewata Dhamma has combined a deeply rooted commitment to the earliest teachings of the Buddha with an openhearted respect and appreciation for other traditions.

We are now very fortunate to have available his latest book, *Emptying the Rose-Apple Seat*. It is an in-depth and practical presentation of both concentration and insight meditations, and it offers wonderful guidance for people who wish to explore these paths of practice. The simple and direct style of writing explicates and makes accessible the core teachings of the Buddha as they apply to our own lives and meditation practices. *Emptying the Rose-Apple Seat* shows how we can experience these teachings for ourselves. It also reveals nuances of understanding that will enhance the wisdom and insight of both beginners and more experienced practitioners. Dr. Rewata Dhamma is an accomplished guide and this book will be of great benefit to many people.

Joseph Goldstein
Barry, Massachusetts

Introduction

It is said that the practice of meditation goes back a long time in Indian religious history. The evidence for it is rather more meagre than you would expect, however. Something like it is mentioned in the Vedas, parts of which date back to about 1500 BCE, but there is no indication of exactly how it was practised. It is very obvious that religion was mainly bound up with rituals and sacrifice. If there really was meditation, it was probably little more than contemplation of the divine or philosophical speculation.

We are unable to read the script of the Indus Valley Civilisation which flourished for a thousand years and more before the Aryan migrations into the region. There is a statue of an antlered figure seated in the full lotus position that suggests there were yogic practices even then and these might have included meditation. In the past Indians have not always written things down. Indeed, it was not until the Buddha's time that writing was reinvented. The earliest inscription in this new script happens to be that on the stupa raised over their portion of the Buddha's ashes by his home clan, the Sakyas. Again, the earliest documents which give any sense of the history of the time are the Buddhist Scriptures, and even these were not written down until some centuries after the events they record. They are not, therefore, accurate historical accounts.

Obviously there must have been a synthesis between the religious ideas of the original inhabitants of the Indus Valley area (who may have been Dravidians) and the incoming Aryans. One huge catalyst for religious change was the new belief in rebirth that the Aryans encountered. There is no mention of this in the Vedas. The belief there seems to be that after

death one rises to join the gods in the upper regions of light providing that the right rituals had been performed and that one's behaviour had been dutiful. If one is reborn, however, if the realm of the gods is only one possible sphere of rebirth and is as subject to dissolution as the rest, then the rituals are useless. As the idea spread, it must have had a calamitous effect and set off ever new rounds of speculation to answer the demand for more certain knowledge. Priests whose competence was limited to Vedic learning would no longer have been popular.

In fact they were already unpopular in some quarters for a quite different reason. So long as the struggle for land and rule continued between the invaders and the indigenous population continued, the warrior clans (the germ of the Kshatriya caste) were obviously of prime importance. It was for this reason that their divine patron, Indra, was given primacy over the original priestly sky gods, *Diu Pitr* (the Shining Father) and Varuna, whom we know under the Greek names of Jupiter and Uranus. The priests assisted the warriors in their special way but were only of secondary importance. Until the struggle was over, that is. Then rulers continued to be chosen from the among the warriors, but it was from the priestly clans that their advisers were chosen since people's present and future welfare was dependent on the priests' speciality. It was then caste which now was the most important.

The warriors never forgave them. Indeed, it was largely due to Kshatriyas that alternative traditions were pioneered and adopted. They co-ordinated the philosophical opposition to the priesthood. The ways they taught were many, ranging from scientific scepticism to monotheistic devotion in place of pluralistic propitiation. On two factors most of them agreed, however. Firstly, religion was a matter of personal practice that was hindered by the interposition of a priestly middleman. Secondly, and as a result, a man's religious worth was a matter of personal development. What makes a person holy is not the accident of being born into a particular clan or caste but the practice of morality.

Out of this, ferment grew the tradition of a personal search for truth, often through the medium of meditation, which resulted in the writing of a new set of scriptures known as *Upanishads*. These moved towards what is known as Theism in the West. Plurality of gods is an illusion since God is unitary; they are only different iconic aspects of the one reality (*Tatva*) or of the Absolute. This Absolute was given the name of Brahma, but

Brahma also went by many other names - *Rudra, Shiva, Narayana*. Philosophically, an Absolute cannot admit alterity, therefore what appears to be our separation from it, our sense of alienation, is illusory. One is encouraged to meditate on the divine object in order to bring about reunion. The mechanics of this was explained in terms of the *ātman*, a spark of the divine intelligence which leads one back to the ultimate source, the Supreme Being (*Paramātman*).

It was in the heyday of this era of religio-philosophical speculation that the Buddha-to-be was born. The century before, a religious teacher called Kapila had contributed towards what was to develop into the Sāṃkhya teaching, the philosophical basis of the yoga meditation practice of the time. It had little place for speculation about the divine. The proper goal of meditation, according to this practice, was to understand the true nature of human beings. It is generally agreed that the court guru of the Buddha's Sakya clan was of this school. Their capital was called Kapilavastu (Kapila's town) and after his renunciation of home life, the religious aspirant Siddhattha Gotama became a follower of the two principal teachers of Raja Yoga, *Alāra Kālāma* and *Udaka Rāmaputta*.

Raja Yoga, then as now, teaches a technique of deep trance which reappears in Buddhist tradition under the name of *Jhāna*. Gotama became fully proficient in the practice but ultimately it left him dissatisfied. Whatever he attained, however intense and profound, was still part of mundane experience and subject to change. It bears its Kammic result but does not bring the sequence of rebirth to a close. It was not the total liberation that the Buddha was seeking because the latent tendencies (clinging, aversion, illusion) remained. It was not until after his enlightenment experience that full penetration of the meaning of this occurred.

The Buddha's teaching as a result of his new understanding took him beyond contemporary speculation in a very important respect. The deepest level of trance, that of neither perception nor non-perception, had been taken by most schools to be the achievement of union with the Absolute, with which one merged after death by re-manifesting in the Brahma World. The Buddha perceived that nothing had fundamentally changed on emerging from trance because a sense of self remained. The refined Brahma world of the meditators was, as a consequence, still part of the conditioned and conditioning world of illusion. It was not the goal that he, and others in his time, defined as 'unborn, unbecome, uncreated, uncon-

ditioned'. For the Buddha that was the experience of Nibbāna after the three basic tendencies had been eradicated:

There is that sphere where there is neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor wind; neither sphere of the infinitude of space, nor sphere of the infinitude of consciousness, nor sphere of nothingness, nor sphere of neither perception nor non-perception; neither this world, nor the next world, nor sun, nor moon. And there, I say, there is neither coming, nor going, nor stasis; neither passing away nor arising: without stance, without foundation, without mental object as support. This, just this, is the end of suffering. (Udāna VIII.1)

By the two levels of mundane and supra-mundane states, the Buddha meant the world of *Samsāra*, on the one hand, and liberation from suffering within this existence on the other. Not all beings are capable of achieving the latter in this one lifetime since it depends on having fulfilled the Perfections. That may require many lifetimes to accomplish. The teaching of Generosity, Morality and Meditation (*Dāna, Sila, Samādhi*) therefore encompasses also the creation of good kamma and thus gaining a more favourable rebirth for the attainment of the final goal. It might be described as the mundane path in that it is chiefly concerned with accumulating personal merit. The Eightfold Path also has its supra-mundane goal and may be followed by those ready to apply it earnestly with liberation from selfhood as their aim.

Mental development (*bhāvanā*), that is to say the development of meditation, is integral to the Buddha's teaching. Up to this day Buddha's reputation in Indian thought is as a great Yogi. His instructions, however, are scattered through his discourses and are not particularly detailed. What may well have been obvious in the Buddha's day is far from so in ours. Or perhaps those who recorded the teachings only did so in brief. His first discourse, for example, the *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta*, can be recited in a matter of ten or fifteen minutes, but the teaching must have filled an entire evening. Indeed, I have devoted a whole book to its explanation which would take considerably more than an evening to read aloud! The Sanskrit word for such a discourse is *sutra*; the Greek-derived English word from the same root is *suture*, and both mean 'thread'. What remains of the teaching is the thread on which the main exposition is strung, a

framework consisting of the important heads of discourse upon which a teacher can elaborate.

This must be borne in mind when we look at those discourses in which the Buddha specifically mentions meditation, such as the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna* and *Ānāpānasati Suttas*. Even here the explanation of meditation technique is sketchy. The Buddha must assuredly have gone into it at greater length. In other discourses we are given tantalising glimpses of how things were done. In one, for example, the Buddha mentions the austere practices he followed as an ascetic, including the painful and dangerous technique of breath retention still practised in India now, but never recommended as useful by himself.

The Discourses are chiefly useful, then, as indicating what kinds of meditation the Buddha taught as effective in developing awareness and wisdom. It is not until a millennium later that we find anything like a complete guide to contemporary meditation techniques in the *Visuddhimagga* of Buddhaghosa. The detail we lack here is about its author. We know he was a scholar who came to Sri Lanka in the 5th century CE and systematized Buddhist teaching there. His provenance, however, is variously claimed as from South India, Bodhgaya in the North and even Myanmar. A Sri Lankan chronicle also records that he was formerly a Vedic scholar and was converted to Buddhism while expounding Patañjali's *Yoga Sutra* in a certain monastery. This would certainly explain the greater prominence he gives *Jhāna* meditation techniques in his work.

The *Path of Purification* (which is how *Visuddhimagga* translates) became the foundation of the later Theravadin tradition of exposition. It systematizes all that was then known about meditation but its interpretations are rather literal and it seems clear that this is a work of scholarship rather than the fruit of actual experience. Furthermore, although it is a useful guide, it touches more on what is to be done rather than precisely how to do it. As time passed, too, meditation was largely confined to monasteries and not widely practised elsewhere. The belief grew among lay people that it was impossible for them to become enlightened, and so they concerned themselves more with their well-being in this life and the next. A situation was rapidly developing in which Buddhism became more a matter of form, of rites and rituals, rather than a living practice.

It was not that the majority of monks were practising meditation themselves, so far as we know. Their respect for the teachings, however,

ensured that they continued to live according to the rule and to emphasise morality in their own teaching. This is the reason why Westerners, on first encountering Buddhism in its Theravadin form, described it as primarily an ethical system. For them it was Hinduism, with its continuing system of Yoga, that was the religion of meditation. Another aspect of the monastic devotion to the Buddha's word was that they carefully preserved the Scriptures, along with the Commentaries and Sub-commentaries that Buddhaghosa and others had done so much to systematize. This meant that they remained available to scholars and it was thanks to them that emphasis was given once more to the importance of meditation as part of Buddhist practice.

In Myanmar, it was Ledi Sayadaw (1846-1923) who led this movement in the second half of the 19th century. He encouraged meditation not only among monastics but lay people as well. As one of the greatest scholars of his time he won the respect of Myanmar people and British colonisers alike. He was the author of many manuals, including several on meditation, written both in Pali and in the Myanmar language. Some of these were translated into English and are still available. Nevertheless, their language is very scholastic and technical and his work is not accessible to more than a few. His glory, however, is to have re-established meditation as a central practice in Myanmar.

The type of meditation that Ledi Sayadaw favoured was Insight (*Vipassana*). In contemporary Sri Lanka, as one would expect of the land in which Buddhaghosa had flourished, there was still a strong Samatha meditation tradition. The veteran Mahānāyaka Thera Ananda Maitreya, who died in 1998 at the age of 101, has recorded that he remembers seeing two monks levitating when he was young. Indeed, the black magician Alastair Crowley claimed that he witnessed Allan Bennett accomplishing the same feat in a Burmese (Myanmar) monastery in 1902. Bennett, who by coincidence had the same name in its Pali form, Ananada Metteya, had first trained in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) but taken the robe in Burma (Myanmar) - one of the first Englishmen to do so. Crowley also claimed that under Bennett's tutorship he achieved *Jhānic* trance. Although his stories are not to be relied on, they are evidence that this kind of meditation also was commonly in practice at the time.

By the beginning of the 20th century there were several Vipassana teachers in Myanmar and from that land the practice of Insight meditation

spread to other Theravadin countries. There too it soon became popular and they began producing meditation masters of their own. Thailand's Achaan Chah will be particularly remembered since he went out of his way to cater for Westerners in his monasteries and contributed so much towards establishing native Sanghas in the lands from which they came.

The influence of those early Myanmar masters is still strong. I have known several and record here my deep sense of obligation to them all. Among them is Mingon Sayadaw, who emphasized cultivating moment to moment awareness of the four *Satipathāna* objects (body, sensation, mind and mental objects) with breath as the base. He was also the first monk to introduce systematic walking meditation. There was also Sunlun Sayadaw, who was formerly a farmer and became interested in meditation through reading Ledi Sayadaw's books. It is said that he obtained the highest *Jhānic* states prior to achieving Insight. He introduced a technique of strong breathing with moment to moment awareness of strong sensations as its aim.

One of the most influential masters following World War II was Mahasi Sayadaw. A scholar as well, he originally studied meditation under Mingon Sayadaw and introduced the new technique of using the rise and fall of the abdomen during breathing as the base. He also systematized the technique and divided the progress of insight into a number of stages. Because of him, Insight meditation became popular throughout Myanmar, where his movement had four hundred branches. It was not long before a host of emulators arose and so contributed to the universalisation of Insight practice. During his visit to my centre in 1979, he told me how pleased he was to have so many rivals in view of the results. From 1954 onwards his centres also spread to other Theravadin countries and his technique is still widely followed in both the East and the West.

Another important teacher was Mogot Sayadaw, equally popular as a meditation master with hundreds of centres. He taught that elimination of the eternalist view (*sassata diṭṭhi*) and annihilationist view (*uccheda diṭṭhi*) must precede the elimination of the concept of self (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*). As a preliminary to meditation one must understand the sequence of Dependent Origination (*Paticca Samuppāda*) and to this end he developed a Myanmar version of the Tibetan Wheel of Life as a teaching device. He emphasised awareness of the process of consciousness and divided the

Insight process into three stages (rather than the ten cited by Mahasi Sayadaw and others). These were seeing things as they really are (*yathā-bhāta*), disgust (*nibbida*) and path-insight (*magga*).

There have also been prominent lay meditation teachers. U Ba Khin was a highly placed civil servant who had studied under Ledi Sayadaw's disciple, Saya Thet Gyi. His centres drew many lay people and also catered for Westerners, who in turn exported his method to their own countries. Equally important is the former businessman S. N. Goenka, of Myanmar origin but based in India. His one hundred centres throughout the world attract thousands annually. He emphasises sensation in the body and has evolved a technique of systematically sweeping it from head to toe and back. Thorough understanding of the rise and fall of sensations leads to insight into the impermanent nature of all phenomena. He has tended to teach his method as a way of life rather than as a religious exercise. In this way he has managed to break down the religious boundaries and teachers trained by him are to be found in Iran and the Gulf sheikhdoms as well as in the usual Eastern and Western countries. Happily, Goenkaji is still with us and honoured our pagoda with a visit during his teaching tour in the summer of 2002.

Since my arrival in England in 1975 I too have been conducting meditation courses of varying lengths, not only here and in Europe but in both North and South America. During these I have tried to explain the Buddha's teaching in conjunction with the practice of meditation, emphasizing especially that the nature of impermanence, suffering and not-self is an accessible experience. Rather than being just interesting academic or philosophical concepts, they arise directly out of the meditation experience, as can be proved in the course of a ten-day retreat. The final section of this book represents the substance of the teaching I give then. Students have asked me to publish it so as to benefit others, as well as giving them a permanent record to which they can return.

Currently, there seems to be a growing interest in Samatha meditation techniques among my students, including those at my centre in Birmingham. The reaction in the East against the use of these techniques for worldly ends has caused many to undervalue the fact that the attainment of Insight is relatively fast for those who have attained the Jhānic states. In addition, many of these techniques were developed in order to counter specific defects of character. In this way they serve the require-

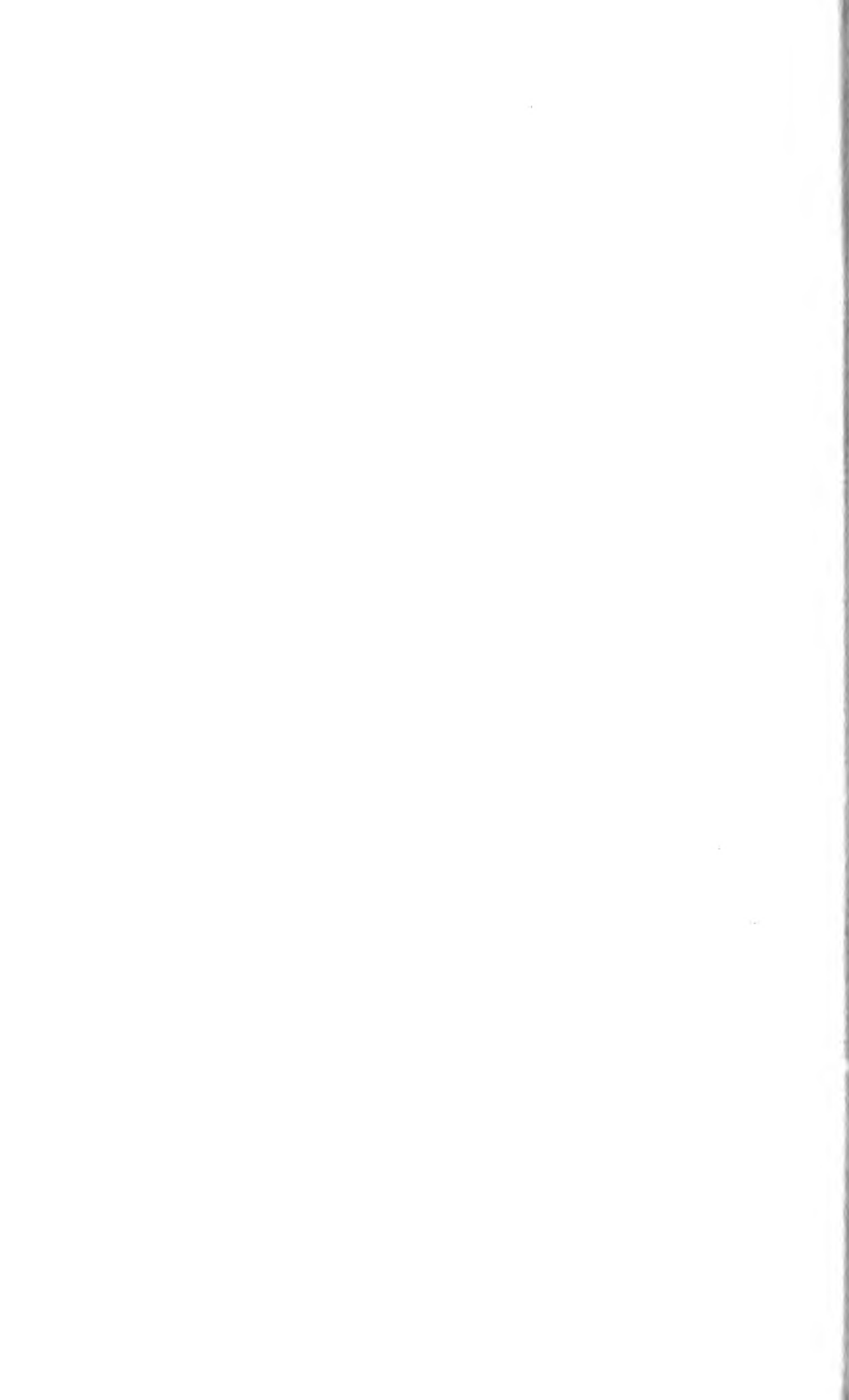
ments of the sixth factor of the Noble Eightfold Path. I have written the central part of this book, therefore, to cater for an interest which has yet to be adequately satisfied. My preference has been to model it around the forty traditional subjects as found in *The Path of Purification*. I am well aware, however, that variations upon these have been developed in other Buddhist lands. Passed down from teacher to student, they are not generally publicised. I hope that the short introductory manual provided here will be enough to satisfy those interested in mental development through these means.

I am greatly indebted to several of my disciples who have willingly helped me in the writing of this book. I have been grateful for assistance with the first draft from Upasaka Karunabodhi (Keith Perks), who read through it and made several useful suggestions. I am indebted to Upasaka Nyanaloka (Yann Lovelock) who agreed to edit the final version and has made a thorough job of reading it through and revising it. Part of this work he undertook during his short stay in the robe after the opening of the Sangharama Monastery. I am also grateful to him for permission to adapt his article on offerings, which originally appeared in our *Lotus Review*, as I am to Ann Lovelock, of whose articles on Posture and Walking Meditation I have availed myself as well. The Paths to Purification section from Day Nine of my course has also appeared in the *Lotus Review* and more recently on our website at www.birminghambuddhistvihara.org.

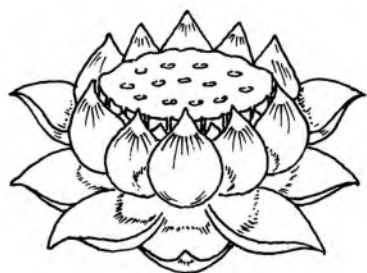
Again, I am especially thankful to Linda Tomlinson for formatting this book for publication and to her daughter, Dea Paradisos, for her illustrations. I acknowledge all the students who have attended my meditation retreats over the years. Thanks to them I have been able to refine my technique and the teaching that accompanies it, in addition to developing the Perfections. Last, but not least, I am grateful to Joseph Goldstein for taking time from his busy schedule to read my book and write a preface for it. He is one of the foremost and best known meditation teachers in the West and this happy meeting of East with West is an auspicious sign for perpetuation of Buddha's teaching.

May all be happy, and may the readers of this book be inspired to fresh effort and eventually reach the final goal of liberation.

Rewata Dhamma
Birmingham Buddhist Vihara,
March 11, 2003



Aspiring to the Practice



Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa

Patthana

1. *Ye ca buddhā atitā ca, ye ca buddhā anāgatā;
paccuppannā ca ye buddhā, ahaṃ vandāmi sabbadā.*
2. *Natthi me saraṇaṃ aṇṇaṃ, buddho me saraṇaṃ
varaṃ; etena saccavajjena, hotu te jayamaṅgalaṃ.*
3. *Ye ca dhammā atītī ca, ye ca dhammā anāgatā;
paccuppannā ca ye dhammā, ahaṃ vandami sabbadā.*
4. *Natthi me saraṇaṃ aṇṇaṃ, dhammo me saraṇaṃ
varaṃ; etena saccavajjena, hotu te jayamaṅgalaṃ.*
5. *Ye ca saṅghā atītā ca, ye ca saṅghā anāgatā;
paccuppannā ca ye saṅghā, ahaṃ vandāmi sabbadā.*
6. *Natthi me saraṇaṃ aṇṇaṃ, saṅgho me saraṇaṃ
varaṃ; etena saccavajjena, hotu te jayamaṅgalaṃ.*
7. *Jayanto bodhiyā mūle, sakyaṇaṃ nadiyaḍḍhano;
evameva jayo hotu, jayassu jayamaṅgale.*
8. *Apparājikapallaṅke, sīseputhu vipukkhale;
abhiseke sabbabuddhanaṃ aggapatto pamodati.*
9. *Sunakkhattaṃ sumaṅgalaṃ, suppaḥhātaṃ suvuṭṭhitaṃ;
sukhaṇo sumuhutto ca, suyūṭṭhaṃ brahmacārisu.*
10. *Padakkhiṇaṃ kāyakammaṃ, vācākammaṃ
padakkhiṇaṃ; padakkhiṇaṃ manokammaṃ,
paṇīdhite padakkhiṇe.*
11. *Padakkhiṇāni katvāna labhantatthe padakkhiṇe;
te atthaladdhā sukhitā viruḥḷā buddhasāsane.
arogā sukhitā hotha saha sabbehi ñātibhi.*

Homage to the Blessed One, the Perfected One, the Fully Self-enlightened

Aspiration

1. The enlightened of the ages past, the enlightened that are yet to come;
The enlightened of the present age, humbly I revere each day!
2. No other refuge do I seek, my matchless refuge is in them;
By might of truth in these my words, may joyous victory be yours!
3. The teachings of the ages past, the teachings that are yet to come;
The teachings of the present age, humbly I revere each day!
4. No other refuge do I seek, my matchless refuge is in it;
By might of truth in these my words, may joyous victory be yours!
5. The holy saints of ages past, the holy saints that are to come;
The holy saints of the present age, humbly I revere each day!
6. No other refuge do I seek, my matchless refuge is in them;
By might of truth in these my words, may joyous victory be yours!
7. Just as the Lord enhanced the happiness of the Sakyas by being victorious
at the foot of the Bodhi-tree, so may this victory be yours and may you
ever be victorious in all blessings!
8. On the unvanquishable seat, above the summit of the most sacred earth,
being consecrated by all the enlightened, the Lord had attained the
Supreme Stage and rejoiced. (So may you too attain it and rejoice).
9. May good stars, good auspices, a good morning, a happy awakening,
a pleasant moment, a joyous instance, and offerings given by Holy Ones
be pure offerings to you.
10. May the physical act be sacred, the verbal and the mental act be sacred.
May you be established in these sacred things.
11. Having done these sacred deeds, may the sacred gains be yours; and
having obtained the sacred results, may you be happy and prosper in the
Buddha's dispensation. May you, together with all your kinsmen, be free
from all diseases and be happy.

First Step

In keeping with the Theravada tradition, before we do any good deed it is customary to pay homage to the Triple Gem: the Enlightened One (*the Buddha*), his teaching (*the Dhamma*) and the community of his realised disciples (*the Sangha*), the ultimate refuge for all who seek truth. To venerate such worthy objects is a wholesome action, productive of great merit. Merit accumulates in the mind and has the power to purify and strengthen your mental state. It enables you to ward off any obstacles that threaten to hinder the successful completion of virtuous undertakings.

Before we can begin to practise the Noble Eightfold Path, there are some helpful steps that must be taken if we are to complete our task successfully. In the course of reading the Buddhist Scriptures, or accounts of the Buddha's life, you may have come across references to Māra, the Evil One, who on a number of occasions came to tempt the Buddha and dissuade him from pursuing his chosen course. For example, it is said that Māra appeared and tried to entice the Bodhisatta Gotama away from his goal when he renounced his home and family; and again just before he attained Enlightenment, and yet again before he preached his first sermon. We too are liable to meet with difficulties, temptations and obstructions whenever we try to do good. This is Māra at work though he may appear under the most ordinary and, indeed, familiar of disguises.

In order to protect his pupils and himself from temptations and hindrances, a teacher traditionally recites a protective chant. He will send loving-kindness (*Mettā*) to all beings, visible or invisible, and thereby ensure that all will dwell in harmony, free from disturbances during practice. It is also important to do this when we start to meditate in a new place in order to establish an harmonious and friendly atmosphere. I choose to chant the verses quoted above before beginning meditation, but you may select whichever passages you wish from the Scriptures and chant them in a spirit of good-will and compassion. This is how we can best refine the atmosphere in the place where we intend to meditate.

In Myanmar it is customary to practise forgiveness prior to meditating. It is important to perform this cleansing of the heart since any of our previous transgressions against friends, neighbours or spiritual persons (*ariyas*) can be a hindrance to our establishing real peace of mind and

achieving our goal of liberation. It is also most important that we do not neglect to forgive others for their offences against us, lest we harbour any anger or bear grudges towards those who have offended us in the past. This must be done in order to create not only a peaceful atmosphere but also a pure heart for meditation. It is also the main reason why meditators take the appropriate precepts as a matter of course before beginning to practise Insight Meditation (*Vipassana*). Lay meditators will take either five or eight precepts. Monks and nuns will purify their monastic precepts by confessing their faults according to the monastic rule.

The Refuges

When the time came for the Buddha's disciples to spread the teaching, he sent them in all directions to preach the doctrine for the benefit and happiness of all. He made it quite clear, however, that they should teach only when they were asked to do so. Therefore, in order to uphold this tradition, before I can begin to lead a meditation retreat I must be asked to do so. This is done formally using the following formula:

*"Mayaṃ bhante saṃsāra-vaṭṭa-dukkhato mocanatthāya
kammaṭṭhānaṃ yācāma, anuggahaṃ katvā kammaṭṭhānaṃ
detha mayaṃ bhante."*

(Venerable Sir, we request a subject of meditation to overcome the wheel of repeated suffering. Out of compassion, give us a subject of meditation.)

The word *Kammaṭṭhāna* normally means 'work-place' or 'workshop' but here it has a figurative meaning. The word *kamma* is understood to mean 'the act of meditation'; *ṭhāna* (place) implies a subject of meditation. It is where the meditator's concentration will be, what he will be working at during the retreat. In due course we shall be looking at a variety of such techniques.

First, however, it is customary to take the Three Refuges prior to repeating the training rules, saying -

Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gaccāmi
(literally, to the Enlightened One for refuge I go)

Dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

(to the Teaching for refuge I go)

Saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi

(to the Holy Community for refuge I go)

Those who have not been on a meditation retreat before may think that by taking these refuges they are being converted. This is not the case. Although, taking refuge in the Triple Gem is part of the ceremony by which one formally becomes a follower of the Buddha, in the context of training in meditation it is an expression of confidence in a teacher (in this case the Buddha, the first teacher of these techniques) whose guidance one has found beneficial. To take refuge in the teaching means one makes a firm commitment to apply it diligently. To take refuge in the community of achieved disciples means that one is intent on following those already liberated from the round of suffering because they followed this practice sincerely.

Many Buddhists regard the Buddha as a great physician who was able to diagnose mankind's spiritual maladies and prescribe the right 'medicine' for them. The Buddha himself said that there are two kinds of disease in human society, physical and mental. The word disease means 'want of health, a disorder in mind or body'. The adjective 'diseased' means not being at ease. So if something is not at ease in our body or mind, then we are bound to suffer. The Buddha also said that although there may be a few people in this world who are free from physical disease for a moment, for a day, a week, a month, a year or maybe even a hundred years, yet there is no one who is free from mental dis-ease.

Whenever any sense object comes into contact with our senses, for example, we will react to it either with a feeling of liking or of dislike. Depending on which way we have reacted, we will then experience either happiness or sorrow. There are also times when we experience feelings of anger, hatred, jealousy, or have desires, cravings and attachments. All these kinds of mental feelings arise because of disease; in other words, our minds are afflicted by the latent tendencies of greed, anger and delusion. Because of these latent tendencies and our reaction to a given stimulus, we will experience mental turbulence, whether it is what we call pleasant or otherwise. If, however, our minds are not so afflicted, then surely we will not react so extremely but will experience calm and quiet instead. It is not

until we reach the ultimate state of sainthood (*arahata*), where all these tendencies have been eradicated, that our minds will be completely free from their effects. Figuratively speaking, when we go to the Buddha for refuge we do so as a sick person might go to a doctor for a diagnosis of his illness.

The medicine that the Buddha prescribed as the cure for human suffering was the practice. For us to take refuge in the Enlightened One means we accept his guidance as medicine to be used in our daily lives. When you join a meditation retreat it is an ideal opportunity to learn how to put the teaching to use. In this context the practice includes moral discipline (*silā*), the mental discipline of concentration (*samadhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) or purification of the mind. In our tradition the practice of morality for a lay person involves taking the five precepts. In other words, one undertakes not to kill or harm any living being; not to steal; not to misuse the senses; not to speak untruthfully or in ways that cause harm to others; and not to make recreational use of intoxicating drinks or drugs. Morality relates to whatever we do or say. These five precepts are violated any time we cause harm or unhappiness either to ourselves or to other living beings.

Control of the mind means we have to discipline our thoughts, emotions or feelings whenever they arise. Any unwholesome action or speech stems from a lack of control over our thoughts and emotions. To have wisdom means we understand right and wrong; the law of cause and effect; clearly perceive the three universal characteristics, which are impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and absence of self; and grasp the Four Noble Truths as a whole. These three trainings or disciplines of morality, concentration and wisdom are encapsulated in the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path. Later on, these will be explained in terms of the Path. In the broadest sense, taking refuge in the Buddha and his teaching simply means applying ourselves wholeheartedly to following the Noble Eightfold Path and everything it implies.

What does it mean, then, to take refuge in the realised disciples? The word Sangha is defined as 'assembly' or 'community'. In a technical sense its original meaning was little more than what we mean by 'quorum' and referred to the number of ordained disciples present that made a decision or action of theirs binding. In the present context, however, the word does not pertain only to those who are part of the ordained community of monks and nuns. It also includes any lay person who is committed to

practising sincerely the three trainings of *silā*, *samadhi* and *paññā*, with the aim of reaching at least the first stage of sainthood, that of stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*). Such a person is said to belong to the holy community. Therefore, taking refuge in the Sangha implies that one is going to follow the same Noble Path that its members have followed to realization.

To return to the analogy of the practice as a medicine; suppose a man was suffering from a severe migraine and was told that if he were to take a certain kind of medicine, only then would his pain cease. He decides to take the medicine and his headache disappears. It is the same for all of us with regard to the problem of human suffering and the way to overcome it. Everyone experiences suffering in their lives but there are those who, through having practised and trained themselves in the three disciplines, have succeeded either in reducing the defilements to some degree or have eradicated them entirely and attained the state of sainthood. If we wish to do the same then we need to follow their example. This is the root meaning of taking refuge in the community.

The Buddha never said he could grant salvation to anyone. He taught that each of us has to work out our own salvation and explained how it is to be done. He prescribed the practice as a medicine to cure the suffering which afflicts all beings, knowing that it would work as effectively for them as it had for himself. If we merely worship the Buddha and fail to apply his medicine, then we will not be able to cure ourselves and will go on suffering. Not to follow the teaching means that we are not going to Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha for refuge. Whereas, the moment we begin to practise is the moment when we actively take refuge in the Triple Gem. Practice is essential, otherwise there is no remedy for the plight we are in.

Eradicating the Defilements

I have used the technical word defilements (*kilesa*) above. In that one of our aims in meditation is to lessen their power over our behaviour, I shall have to explain a little about them in order to put the practice in its human context. There are three kinds of defilement to which we are all prone. They can arise in the mind at any time and there they accumulate. The first type is known as *vītikāma-kilesa* and refers to any transgression of the moral training. It manifests itself in wrong bodily and vocal actions.

The way to counteract it is to keep more closely to the spirit of the following five precepts.

1. *Pānātipātā veramaṇi sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*
(I undertake the rule of training to refrain from killing living beings.)
2. *Adinnādānā veramaṇi sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*
(I undertake the rule of training to refrain from taking what is not freely given).
3. *Kamesu micchācārā veramaṇi sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*
(I undertake the rule of training to refrain from misuse of the senses.)
4. *Musāvāda veramaṇi sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*
(I undertake the rule of training to refrain from wrong speech.)
5. *Surā-meraya-majja-pamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇi sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*
(I undertake the rule of training to refrain from taking drinks or drugs that tend to cloud the mind.)

The five precepts are a means to develop positive qualities through moral action. One begins by promising the very minimum: to refrain from causing harm to others in a variety of ways. Avoiding this much is good, but ultimately not enough. We should really be actively seeking the good of others. We do not kill or harm living beings as a first step towards developing compassion. When we refrain from stealing, we acknowledge how attached to possessions people are and then move on to developing generosity, even so far as to give our life for others. In the same way, we do not allow our greed or sensuality to cause social harm or damage to the environment. We try to be upright members of society and peace-makers within it. We try not to weaken the control needed in this training out of mere self-indulgence. As we realise the positive good such qualities will bring, we will put more energy into developing them.

The second kind of defilement is known as *Pariyuṭṭhāna-kilesa*. It only ever arises in the mind and can manifest as feelings of desire, craving, anger, hatred and so forth. These feelings are not acted upon, nor are they expressed in words or deeds, but they are nonetheless unwholesome. This defilement can best be eliminated through putting more energy into the practice of concentration.

The third kind of defilement is called *anusaya-kilesa*, which means underlying tendency. It is the most subtle type of all and lies latent in the mind. This kind of defilement can best be uprooted by developing wisdom. As long as our minds harbour these tendencies we are prone to react instinctively to some situations with desire or anger or other such negative emotions, and then act or speak wrongly. The main purpose of meditation is purification of the mind through the development of insight and wisdom. If our minds are impure and defiled, then we are not able to live a pure and spiritually healthy life and we are bound to suffer. Merely to confine ourselves to the practice of disciplining our minds and behaviour, however, is not sufficient in itself to achieve insight. For this we also need to cultivate wisdom. Moreover, none of these three disciplines ought to be developed in isolation, but simultaneously if we are to reach our goal of Enlightenment. Indeed, each facilitates and reinforces the other in a continuous spiral of interaction.

Offerings

Quite often it is people of the intellectual type who are drawn to meditation. Their great need is to slow the mind down, to put a stop to its pointless round of speculation and comment so as to enter a state of stillness from which they can observe how things really are, free of misconceptions and prior judgements. Those who are naturally devotional, on the other hand, risk remaining content simply with that. However, devotional practices alone are not enough. Meditation is needed in order to deepen progress in the Buddha's training. Devotional practices are really teaching devices that point towards the necessity of giving oneself wholly to that training. It is for this reason that devotional practices may be appreciated by the intellectual type too. Understood in this manner, they serve to strengthen motivation, reminding one in the simplest of ways of what should be uppermost in our mind. They are an object lesson to set at the very beginning of our meditation practice.

The commonest offerings are those of light, incense and flowers. Each of these represents one aspect or other of the practice that should be brought to mind at the moment of presentation. Lighting a candle, for instance, one remembers that, though the word *Buddha* means 'awake', its

developed meaning is 'Enlightened One', and that we follow his teaching in order to attain his qualities. The spiritual ignorance which is the cause of our suffering is a form of darkness. Indeed, the root meaning of *avijjā*, the technical term for it, carries within itself the idea of not seeing. The point of the practice is to dispel this state of not seeing clearly by bringing light into the darkness.

When offering incense, having lit the stick from the candle, one joins one's hands respectfully in the *añjali* pose illustrated by Albrecht Durer's well-known drawing of praying hands. Holding the incense between the joined forefingers and the palms at the base of the thumbs, one touches the forehead before placing it in the incense holder. What we reflect on at this moment is the influence of our actions (*kamma*). No matter how private or insignificant, each has its result personally and within the world generally. The thin thread of smoke looks a weak thing and yet its perfume swells to fill a room and lingers long afterwards. A verse from the Dhammapada, a popular scriptural collection of the Buddha's sayings, expresses this beautifully:

One should not think lightly of doing good, imagining 'A little will not affect me'; just as a water-jar is filled by falling drops of rain, so also the wise man is filled with merit by accumulating it little by little. (V-122)

The 'good deed' in this case is meditation. But our practice will be made purer if the motivation is unselfish. Certainly we will gain personal benefit from meditation, but that should not be all. Our purified conduct, our calmer demeanour, will also contribute to making the world a better place. Indeed, it is in order to fulfil our duty to make it so that we should practise with diligence. In addition, just as the incense was lit at the candle of wisdom, so for our deeds to be truly effective they need to be guided by the wisdom of insight that arises out of meditation.

The offering of flowers also inspires us to diligence, but from a different point of view. They are a reminder of death. This would be particularly so in India where, no matter how freshly cut they are, the heat withers them in a day. Our life is uncertain and therefore the time to practise with energy is right now. There is a Buddhist saying, 'Practise as if your hair were on fire'. When that happens to you, what you do not do is leave putting it out until tomorrow. You run as fast as you can for the nearest source of water. Right now we are engulfed by the flames of suffering. As the

Buddha taught in his famous Fire Sermon, our senses are on fire. Our eyes, our ears, our tongue, our nose and our bodily feelings are all burning with desire. They do not rest and they will not allow us rest. Our only resource, our only refuge, the only point of stillness, is found in the practice of meditation. That is the symbolic meaning of the flowers.

Each offering, then, reminds us that we are disciples under training, but the most effective offering of all is to give ourselves to the practice. This is what we are doing when we bow before an image of the Buddha. It looks like an act of worship, but it is in fact an Indian form of politeness. There (and wherever Indians are to be found, on the very pavements of Birmingham even) one shows respect to a teacher, a parent or an elder, by touching their feet. Symbolically, we are doing so before our teacher as a sign of submitting ourselves to his training.

The Theravadin form of doing this is called the 'three-pointed bow' because three parts of the body come in contact with the floor. You begin by kneeling and joining the hands in the gesture of respect. With these you touch the brow, the lips and the heart as a sign of dedicating yourself to the practice of the teaching in body, speech and mind. Then you bow from the hips, touching the floor with the brow and the hands. Do it smoothly and gently, trying not to lift your bottom in the air as if you were a duck dabbling under the water. Then come upright and repeat the process twice more. Doing things three times is yet another Indian form of manners and indicates sincerity.

Like everything else in the practice, why we do something is always more important than what we do. If we only bow or make offerings out of habit, they become merely empty forms of ritual. Our heart must be in it and we must do it with understanding. After all, one of the ends of meditation is always to be aware, both of what we are doing and of the motivation for our acts. So bowing and making offerings is a way of reminding ourselves of the importance of what we are doing. They are both a preliminary to meditation and an act of meditation in themselves.

The time of your life

With our hearts thus readied we can now proceed to the method of meditating itself. Who are we exactly, though? It is seldom that meditators bring their children with them on retreat. Many Westerners assume

that serious practice is only for adults. This is probably the fault of the books they read, which are hardly accessible to youngsters. One question seldom answered there, though asked often enough by visitors to our Pagoda in Birmingham, is at what age meditation is taught to children. The answer is given by events in the Buddha's own life. It is recorded that the young prince Gotama attended a harvest festival at the age of seven and, sitting under a rose-apple tree, began spontaneously to concentrate on his breathing. When his attendants came to him, he had already passed into a meditative trance. This was the second important event that happened to the apprentice to enlightenment beneath a tree. He had been born under a shady sal tree in the Lumbini Gardens. Eventually his enlightenment came while meditating beneath a leafy banyan, later called the enlightenment (bodhi) tree in honour of the event. Exactly forty-five years later the Buddha passed away in a sal grove, thus completing the circle.

Seven, then, is the traditional age at which one begins intensive religious training. At that age until about eleven, many young people are able to give their whole attention to meditation practice (for a while, anyway) and achieve levels of concentration far beyond adult beginners. Seven is also the earliest age at which one can enter a monastery as a novice. This too is sanctioned by the story of the Buddha's son, Rahula. Born the day his father set out on his seven years of religious quest, Rahula did not see him again until he visited the capital city, Kapilavattu, some time after his enlightenment. Then Rahula's mother Yasodhara encouraged her son to ask the Buddha for his royal inheritance. But the former prince now counted himself as of the lineage of the ancient Buddhas rather than of the royal Sakyan clan and gave his son a monastic training instead!

Three of the Buddha's discourses to his son are recorded. Soon after Rahula had joined his father, the Buddha emphasised to him the importance of always being absolutely truthful and then went on to say that it was important to review all actions of body, speech or mind before, during and after doing them. Even that early, then, he was training the youngster in Right Awareness, which is not just the seventh factor of the Eightfold Path but the one most nearly allied to the practice of Insight.

When Rahula was in his teens, the Buddha lectured him on the dangers of materiality and enjoined him to practice mindfulness of breathing. In

addition he counselled developing the Four Illimitables (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity), the meditation on the corruptibility of the body and the perception of impermanence. All of these, of course, are meditations leading to absorption, as well as being prescribed to correct certain character defects - in Rahula's case too keen a sense of the self. The young man had been day-dreaming about the life he might have led had the Buddha granted him the royal inheritance he had originally requested.

A further discourse on impermanence, after he had ordained fully as a monk at the age of twenty, freed him finally from the taints and established in him the experience of Nibbana. Even as his father had done, Rahula in turn composed an extempore poem to mark the occasion:

*Fortunate on both sides, they call me 'Lucky Rahula'.
I was the son of the Buddha, myself a seer of truths.
My corruptions are all destroyed,
There is for me no more rebirth.
I am an Arahant, worthy of offerings;
A possessor of the threefold knowledge I am,
A seer of the Deathless.
Blinded by sense desires, enmeshed in a net,
I was shrouded in craving,
Bound by the 'kinsman of heedlessness'
Like a fish caught in the mouth of a funnel-net.
The sense-desires are burnt,
The bonds of Mara cut.
With craving pulled up by the root,
Now I am cool at last, now I am free.*

(Theragāthā vv 295-298)

While one is young (or relatively so) is a good time to begin one's training. Indeed, the Buddha exhorted his monks, when distractions came to hinder their practice,

Reflect thus: "I am now young, a youth, young in age, black-haired, in the prime of youth, in the first phase of life. A time will come when this body will be in the grip of old age. But one who

is overpowered by old age cannot easily contemplate on the Teachings of the Buddha; it is not easy for him to live in the wilderness or a forest or jungle, or in secluded dwellings. Before this undesirable condition, so unpleasant and disagreeable, approaches me, prior to that, let me muster my energy for achieving the unachieved, for attaining the unattained, for realizing the unrealised, so that, in the possession of that state, I shall live happily even in old age."

And further, monks, reflect thus: "I am now free from sickness, free from disease, my digestive power functions smoothly, my constitution is not too cool and not too hot, it is balanced and fit for making effort. But a time will come when this body will be in the grip of sickness. And one who is sick cannot easily contemplate upon the Teachings of the Buddha; it is not easy for him to live in the wilderness or a forest or jungle, or in secluded dwellings. Before this undesirable condition, so unpleasant and disagreeable, approaches me, prior to that, let me muster my energy for achieving the unachieved, for attaining the unattained, for realizing the unrealised, so that, in the possession of that state, I shall live happily even in sickness."

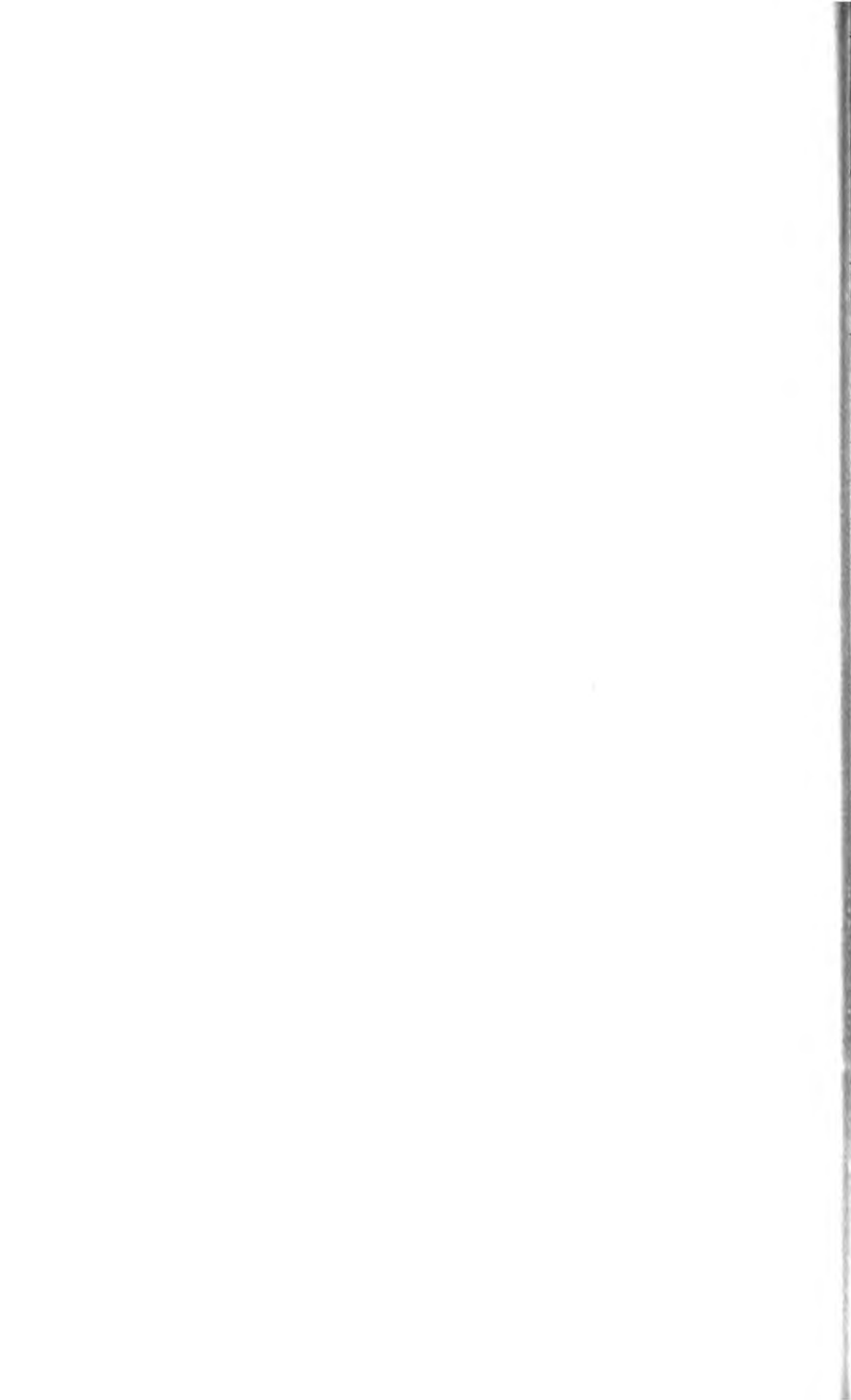
Nevertheless, one begins when one can. Old age is no bar. The prime example here is Malukyaputta, one of several in the Buddha's lifetime who asked him for a condensed version of the teaching. The Buddha looked at him askance and remarked that he was now 'a broken down old man, near to death', so what was the use? 'Try out my understanding,' Malukyaputta invited, and the Buddha obliged by questioning him concerning the reception by the senses of data unexperienced before. Grasping his gist, the old man then summed it up in the well-known formula for the technique of paying bare attention, 'In the seeing, just the seeing; in the hearing, just the hearing,' greatly to the Buddha's approval. What it had taken Rahula fourteen years to master, Malukyaputta had fathomed in as many minutes.

Do not delay, seize the moment. Remember death is near to you and it may come at any time and that moment may be now. Remember, the lesson of the flowers and profit from it while you still can.



Meditation Practices





1. AN OVERVIEW

The practice of meditation is an essential teaching of the Buddha. Without it one cannot achieve the goal of liberation. Traditionally there are said to be two types of meditation practice in Theravāda Buddhism: *Samatha* and *Vipassana*. The dictionary definition of *Samatha* is 'calm' and denotes quietude or tranquillity of mind. It is synonymous with *Samādhi* (concentration). Through the practice of *Samatha* meditation one's mind becomes absorbed with the object and attains the Jhānic states of concentration. The word *Vipassana* is defined as 'insight' and means seeing things as they truly are, not as they seem to be. Through the practice of Insight Meditation one comprehends the three characteristics of all phenomena: that they are impermanent, connected with suffering and absent of self. This realization leads to purification of the mind and attainment of the state of Nibbānic peace.

The Forty Meditation Objects

According to the *Visuddhimagga*, a Theravadin manual on the practice of meditation written in the 5th century CE, there are forty objects of *Samatha* meditation all of which can be used for the development of concentration. They comprise the following seven groups:

1. The Ten Kasina Objects

The ten Kasiṇas are explained in many Pāli discourses as well as in *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*. *Kasiṇa* means 'whole', 'complete'. It is so called because the object should be observed in its totality in meditation. The shape of the meditation object should be circular with its diameter equal to one span and four fingers, i.e. about a foot. *Maṇḍala*, literally 'circle', is the word used for a Kasiṇa-device in *The Path of Purification*.

There are ten kinds of *Kasiṇa*. The first four are elemental: *Pathavī-Kasiṇa*, the earth-circle, i.e. pure earth or dawn-coloured clay spread in a tray of the specified size. *Āpo-Kasiṇa*, water-circle, i.e. water placed in a suitably shaped vessel or container. *Tejo-Kasiṇa*, the fire-circle, which may be prepared by placing evenly burning charcoal on an old tray and fixing one's concentration in the middle of its glow. *Vāyo-Kasiṇa*, the air-circle, in which one concentrates on the wind which blows the ends of one's hair or the tips of grass, or the air which touches one's cheek. One may also concentrate on a series of coloured circles: *Nīla-Kasiṇa*, a blue circle of paper or cloth on a white background; *Pīta-Kasiṇa*, yellow or golden-coloured and prepared as above; *Lohita-Kasiṇa* (red); *Odāta-Kasiṇa* (white on a black background). Next there is the circle of light (*Āloka-Kasiṇa*), developed by concentrating on the morning or evening sun, on the moon, or on a circle of light cast on the floor or wall by sunlight entering through a hole in the wall. And finally the circle of space (*Ākāśa-Kasiṇa*), developed by looking through a hole in the wall towards open space.

2. The Ten Kinds of Foulness (*Asubha*)

These refer to corpses viewed in various stages of decay. In ancient India, bodies could be seen lying in cemeteries, neither buried nor cremated but left to be devoured by flesh-eating creatures such as dogs, wolves and vultures. These days any kind of corpse (including a dead animal) which shows the loathsomeness of the body is a suitable object.

3. The Ten Recollections (*Anussati*)

The Ten Recollections comprise: reflection on the virtues of the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha; on the perfection of one's own moral conduct (*Silānussati*); on one's own liberality, (*Cāga-nussati*); on one's virtues, with consideration of the qualities of spiritual entities as an example (*Devatā-nussati*); on the virtue of Nibbānic peace (*Upasamā-nussati*); on one's mortal nature (*Maraṇā-nussati*); on the thirty-two parts of the body (*Kāyagatāsati*); and finally mindfulness of one's breathing (*Ānāpānasati*).

4. The Four Illimitables (*Āppamaññā*)

The four boundless states are alternatively known as the divine abodes (*Brahma-vihāra*). Brahma, in the Buddhist cosmology, is the highest in the order of living beings, one who dwells in meditative absorption practising loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity towards all others without limit or obstruction.

Kindness is far from carnal love or personal affection and is defined as a mental disposition to wish others well from a softened heart. It is

dedication to the good, safety and happiness of all beings and culminates in breaking down the barrier between oneself and others. The Buddhist quality of compassion is not mere pity but is defined as that which makes the hearts of the noble quiver when others are subject to suffering and wish to remove its cause. It embraces sorrow-stricken beings with the ardent wish to free them from all sufferings. It is the complement of sympathetic gladness or appreciative joy whose chief characteristic is to be happy at the well-being, prosperity and success of others. It prevents the arising of jealousy and dislike and embraces beings with the ardent wish that their prosperity may last for a long time.

Compassion and sympathetic joy are tempered by equanimity. The term *Upekkhā* literally means to view impartially, with neither attachment nor aversion. It is not hedonistic indifference, nor is it blandness. It denotes the well-balanced and non-judgemental mind. It remains unshaken amidst the eight vicissitudes of life - gain and loss, fame and defame, praise and blame, happiness and sorrow. Equanimity embraces all kinds of beings and eliminates both passion and callousness, clinging and aversion.

5. *The One Perception (Saññā).*

The perception of the loathsomeness of food (*Āhāre patikūlasaññā*) corrects the craving for food that is one of the hindrances to the development of concentration. The Buddha advised his disciples to develop this interesting practice while eating. When various dishes of food are present, they appeal to one's appetite, but if they are all mixed up together their attraction is reduced. This may be the reason why monks have to collect their alms food in a bowl from which certain of them afterwards eat, having mixed the food. The practice is one of the austerities the Buddha allowed his Order to follow if they so wished. I well remember one very young novice here in Birmingham who stirred ice cream into his food on hearing of this practice just to see what it was like - but only the once!

The perception's aim is to dispel attraction to the sensual aspect of food. According to the practice of mindfulness meditation, one has to be conscious of the whole process of eating when engaged in it. For example, while eating mindfully one concentrates on the chewing and notices that saliva and other digestive juices are produced at the bottom of the tongue and that the tongue is mixing them with the food, which then becomes sticky and loathsome. In time, digested food becomes excrement, which is equally loathsome. The meditator seeks to discipline his eating so as to take just sufficient to keep the body healthy rather than for enjoyment, or out of vanity or greed.

6. *The One Analysis (Vavatthāna).*

The analysis of the Four Elements (*Catu-dhātu vavatthāna*) is another

subject for investigation. The four essential elements are earth (*Pathavī*), water (*Āpo*), fire (*Tejo*) and air (*Vāyo*). They form the basis of all material phenomena and their characteristics or qualities must be understood through practice. The body is made up of twenty-one units called *kalāpas*; each unit comprises the four essential elements and their four material qualities of visible form (*vaṇṇa*), odour (*gandha*), taste (*rasa*) and nutriment (*ojā*). When one gives attention to the body, one can observe the quality of earth as hardness and softness; the quality of water as cohesion and fluidity; the quality of fire as heat and cold; the quality of air as motion and movement. One should investigate these qualities in the body and meditate on them in order to develop concentration.

7. The Four Immaterial States (*Arūpa*).

The Four Immaterial States are infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness, and neither perception nor non-perception. These are the objects by means of which the immaterial absorptions are developed. At first these four states are taken as objects of meditation in order to develop one of the five fine-material (*rūpa*) states; afterwards one progresses to the higher absorptions by merging mentally with these four qualities.

2. BASIC FACTORS

The main aim of Buddhism is the extinction of suffering and release from conditioned existence that can be achieved through mental purification. The Sāṅkhya meditation system taught by Kapila prevailed in India just before the Buddha. He himself practised according to it before his enlightenment. Its aim was to gain supernatural powers and liberation (*mokṣha*) or union with the Absolute. The Buddha did not teach meditation for the purpose of gaining supernormal powers. These he regarded as a mundane falling short of final liberation from universal suffering. In order to gain that, one has to develop mental concentration as the foundation of further practice.

It is true that certain psychic faculties capable of a worldly application, such as clairvoyance, clairaudience, the projection of the astral body and other paranormal powers, are developed in the course of sustained concentration. They arise out of the *jhānic* states as the meditator progresses along the path leading to ultimate realization. The Buddha and some of the Arahantas possessed such powers and when need arose exercised them. However, the Buddha prohibited their use to those not yet fully emancipated from worldly delusion. Then there is the danger of attachment to

such powers and of their misuse. According to the Buddha, to embark on meditation in order to obtain supernormal powers is a wrong intention of great danger to oneself. If all power corrupts, then the supernormal power can corrupt superlatively. The Buddha only demonstrated his supernormal power on two occasions. He preferred to spread the Dhamma by the miracle of teaching and the self-propagating power of truth.

In order to distinguish one's progress properly, it is important for the meditator to be aware of the following topics before endeavouring any kind of practice.

Signs (*Nimitta*)

During meditation, three kinds of image or object appear in the mind and are signs of one's strengthening concentration.

1. The preparatory sign (*Parikamma-nimitta*) is the mental image of the meditation object, the use of which prepares one for meditation (*parikamma-bhāvanā*).
2. The acquired sign (*Uggaha-nimitta*) develops as the meditator finds that he or she can visualise the object without needing any longer to look at it directly. At first the image is still unsteady and unclear. This is because the concentration is not yet strongly developed.
3. The counter sign (*Paṭibhāga-nimitta*) appears when concentration reaches the access (*upacāra-samādhi*) stage. This acquired sign suddenly changes into a bright, clear and steady image. It is similar to the original object, but more sharply defined and entirely free from any defects such as unevenness, graininess, etc. It manifests wherever the eye is fixed. As soon as this clear image arises the stage of access meditation (*upacāra-bhāvanā*) and access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*) is achieved. The preparatory and acquired signs are associated with all forty meditation objects; the counter sign only manifests in connection with the two sets of ten material objects and two of the ten recollections, namely awareness of the parts of the body and of the breath.

Temperament (*Carita*)

Taken together, the seven groups of meditation subjects above constitute the traditional forty subjects of Samatha meditation. Not all of them are considered suitable for all types of people, however; it depends on their temperament. There are six types of these: the lustful, the hateful, the deluded, the faithful, the intellectual and the discursive. One's temperament is said to be one's underlying disposition (*carita*) or one's

character as demonstrated by one's personal qualities and conduct. Differences in temperament are due to previous kamma and one's reproductive kamma (*janaka*).

Of the six types, the lustful and the faithful types form a parallel pair since both of them involve a favourable attitude towards an object, one of which is wholesome whilst the other is unwholesome. So too, the hateful and the intellectual types of temperament form a parallel pair: hate turns away from its object in an unwholesome way, whilst intelligence directs itself towards it and gives rise to wholesome thoughts. The deluded and the discursive types of temperament also form a parallel pair owing to the fact that a deluded person's thoughts drift owing to superficiality whilst a discursive type of person's does so due to facile speculation.

To counter their disposition, lustful types should meditate on the ten kinds of foulness and also contemplate the thirty-two parts of the body. The person possessing a hateful temperament should practise the four illimitables and the four coloured *kasinas* (circles): blue, yellow, red and white. The person of deluded temperament and the discursive type should practise mindfulness of breathing. The person of faithful temperament should practise the recollection of the qualities of the three jewels - the Enlightened One, his teaching and the community of his enlightened disciples - and of morality, liberality and virtue. The person of intellectual temperament should practise the recollections of death, the peaceful nature of *Nibbāna*, the perception of the loathsomeness of food, and analysis of the four primary material elements. Meditation on the earth, water, fire and air *kasina* and the four immaterial states is suitable for all types of people.

Hindrances

There are five kinds of hindrances (*Nīvaraṇas*) which often arise during meditation: sensuous desire (*kāmacchandā*), ill-will (*byāpāda*), sloth and torpor (*thina-middha*), restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkuca*) and sceptical doubt (*vicikicchā*). Sensuous desire pulls the mind away from the meditation objects. Ill-will agitates the mind by dissatisfaction at what one is achieving. Sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and sceptical doubt blind and disturb the mind and one's practice. The Buddha compared sensuous desire with water mixed with various dyes which distort a reflection; ill-will is like boiling water; sloth and torpor is like water overgrown with slime or choked with plants; restlessness and worry are like water agitated by the wind; and sceptical doubt is like muddy water. Just as in such water one cannot see one's reflection clearly, so in the presence of these five hindrances one cannot see things as they are.

Various ways of overcoming them were taught by the Buddha. Most methods centre on raising awareness that they are only temporary states of mind and recognising them as the hindrance they are to one's progress.

Then one may be able to refocus one's attention; failing that, one resolves to have no more to do with such distractions and energetically forces the attention back to its proper meditation object. In order to counter ill-will, another means is to cultivate its opposite by practising the four illimitables for a while. To counter restlessness and worry, concentration on the breathing will steady and calm the mind.

In the case of sleepiness, which is particularly a by-product of sloth and torpor, the Buddha is eminently practical. It may be a result of genuine weariness, in which case one is counselled to lie down mindfully and go on with the practice immediately on waking. Before that, however, there are several other ways of rousing oneself. Changing the practice to walking meditation is one of these. Other physical methods include rubbing the limbs and pulling the earlobes or else bathing the eyes in cold water and turning them in various directions. If one prefers to sit it out, then the advice is to try reciting passages from the scriptures so as to make the mind active again, or to visualize light.

Three Stages of Development

The development of meditation has three stages according to the progress of concentration. They are:

1. **Preparatory development** (*Parikamma-bhāvanā*). Whatever object is chosen is called the preparatory image (*parikamma-nimitta*). By observing it steadfastly one develops stronger concentration. It paves the way for the arising of full concentration but falls short of it. There may be a feeling of ease at this stage that is in fact associated with alpha-waves in the brain. It is very tempting to stop short here, but, in order to develop one must apply more mental energy. Learning to recognize one's personal rhythms and how to apply oneself so as to move further on is the key to opening up successive levels of development.
2. **Access meditation** (*Upacāra-Bhāvanā*). The word *upacāra* here means 'neighbourhood' and refers to concentration that touches the fringes of full absorption (*Jhāna*). A sign known as the counter-image often appears at this stage. It resembles a luminous dot and is visible whether the eyes are closed or open.
3. **Absorption** (*Appanā-Bhāvanā*). Here the mind remains fixed on its object without hindrance or discursiveness. Passing beyond the counter-image stage, it reaches towards the path leading towards Nibbana and its fruition.

All forty meditation subjects are suitable for the preparatory stage. Eight of the recollections, the perception of loathsomeness of food and the

analysis of the Four Elements take one no further than access. Full absorption may be obtained by means of the remaining thirty subjects - the ten *Kasiṇas*, ten kinds of foulness, four illimitables, four immaterial states, perception and analysis.

There are twenty-five meditation subjects by which one can attain the first *jhānic* state - ten *kasiṇas*, ten kinds of foulness, awareness of the breath and of the parts of the body, development of loving-kindness, compassion and equanimity. Fourteen meditation subjects lead to the second, third and fourth *jhānic* states - ten *kasiṇas*, awareness of the breath, and the three aforementioned illimitables. Twelve meditation subjects lead on to the first fine material *jhānic* state - ten *kasiṇas*, awareness of the breath and development of equanimity. The remaining fine material states are achievable only through their respective objects.

Absorption (Jhāna)

Absorption takes a very prominent place in meditation practice. The aim of tranquillity meditation is to achieve the *jhāna* states. In fact, meditations leading to these are found in the Yoga system of Hindu meditation as well. The Buddha himself practised that kind of meditation before he discovered the Vipassanā technique. *Jhāna*'s Sanskrit form is *dhyāna* and the literal meaning is 'to fix the mind on something', or 'to contemplate'. However, as defined in Buddhism, it is 'applying the mind closely' (*upanijjhāyati*) and 'burning negative states' (*paccanikadhamme jhāpeti*). *Jhāna*'s extended meaning is therefore to dissipate the hindrances and observe the object of meditation attentively. The resulting state of consciousness combined with the factors of absorption (*jhānanga*) is *jhāna*. The factors are five in number:

1. *Vitakka* - initial application that directs the mind towards the object.
2. *Vicāra* - sustained application that examines the object again and again.
3. *Pīti* - joy or pleasurable interest in the object.
4. *Sukha* or *upekkhā* - two kinds of feeling experienced as respectively mentally pleasant and peaceful.
5. *Ekaggatā* - one-pointedness of mind, concentration.

The *Jhānic* factors help the mind to stay fixed on the object, since they enable it to eliminate the mental hindrances one by one. Just as initial application directs the mind towards the object, suppressing sloth and torpor; sustained application, by examining the mind again and again, suppresses sceptical doubt for some time. Joy takes pleasurable interest in the object and so dispels ill-will, while pleasure or calm engage with the object and temporarily quell restlessness and worry. One-pointedness of mind is the factor that dispels sensual desire among the mental hindrances.

Normally, the human mind is not tranquil, it is constantly agitated by the hindrances. Sensuous desire distracts the mind by bringing up discursive thought connected with sense objects. Ill-will agitates the mind by taking notice of disagreeable things. Sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt, blind the mental vision or engender distrust of the method and ends of meditation.

When the five factors of absorption arise in the mind and combine to eliminate the five hindrances, the first stage of *Jhāna* is attained. The meditator may then continue the same meditation with determination to attain the second stage. By eliminating the first two factors of initial and sustained application, the meditator brings the mind to a state of serenity; one-pointedness of mind produces feelings of bliss and happiness. Nevertheless, this second stage is conditioned by the concentration leading to the first. The meditator may then proceed to the third. With the elimination of bliss, the meditator remains in equanimity experiencing bodily happiness. At this stage the mind becomes balanced; bliss has disappeared, but a feeling of happiness akin to joy is still present. The meditator then uses every effort to gain release from this kind of happiness in its turn. When his effort succeeds, the fourth *Jhānic* state is attained, which is the culmination of mental concentration in this method of meditation. At this stage the meditator experiences equanimity: neither pain nor pleasure, but only pure mindfulness.

According to the *Abhidhamma* scripture there is a fivefold division of the factors of absorption, said to be the result of particular individual dispositions. For some, reviewing the first *jhāna*, initial application is the first factor to appear gross, while the other four factors are retained. The second *jhāna* then has four factors, that is without initial but with sustained application, along with bliss, happiness and equanimity. In that system, then, initial and sustained application are eliminated in successive stages instead of simultaneously. The process of elimination then continues in the manner already described. The difference in this system is more one of methodology than of method.

Five Kinds of Ability (Vasitā)

The meditator who has attained the first *Jhānic* state should develop abilities, so that he or she can establish absorption firmly and go on to achieve higher states:

1. The ability to reflect on the *jhānic* factors quickly
(*Āvajjana-vasitā*);
2. The ability to attain *jhāna* quickly
(*Samāpajjana-vasitā*);

3. The ability to remain in it as long as one wishes (*Adhiṭṭhāna-vasitā*);
4. The ability to come out from the state at a predetermined moment (*Vuṭṭhāna-vasitā*);
5. The ability to re-observe the jhānic factors quickly (*Paccavekkhaṇa-vasitā*).

Higher Knowledge (Abhiññā)

Those who achieve mastery of the trance states may further develop five mundane supernormal knowledges by practising in various ways. They include:

1. The power of creating forms, the ability to fly through the air, walk on water, dive into the earth, project an astral body, etc (*iddhividha-abhiññā*).
2. Clairaudience which enables one to hear subtle or coarse sounds far or near (*dibbasota-abhiññā*).
3. Telepathy that penetrates the states of mind and thoughts of others (*paracitta vijānana*).
4. The ability to remember one's former existences (*pubbeni-vāsānussati*).
5. Clairvoyance that enables one to see subtle or coarse things far or near and also the celestial worlds and the lower abodes (*dibba cakkhu-abhiññā*). This ability of 'the divine eye' may be extended to two further supernormal powers - (a) to see beings in the thirty-one planes of existence, and to know the respective karmas which have given rise to their rebirths (*yathākammūpaga-ñāna*); and (b) knowing future existences and future worlds (*anāgatamsa-ñāna*).
6. Beyond these there is the supramundane knowledge of the achieved Arahant (*āsavakkhaya-ñāna*). It should be understood that the mundane supernormal knowledges are attainable through the perfection of mental concentration at the culmination of *Samatha* meditation. The Arahanta's knowledge is only attainable as the culmination of the practice of Insight. It is special in that there is realization of the arising of its condition (*Nibbana*) without, as with the other powers, a personal application. There cannot be the thought of an achieving 'I' in this case since the essence of the goal is to leave that kind of ego delusion behind. Understanding this paradox in its fullness, as a matter of experience, is the guarantee of its authenticity.

3. CONCENTRATION PRACTICES

Through the practice of *Samatha* meditation, it is possible to achieve the highest state of meditative absorption. This achievement is the form of concentration known as *Samādhi* and is described as one-pointedness of mind. Its path leads towards emancipation because this state is free from mental hindrances and manifests tranquillity and knowledge. Buddhist trance is a positive state, as opposed to passive and unconscious absorption, such as that experienced in a drugged or hypnotic state of mind. *Jhāna* is also the supporting foundation for the development of insight, the realization of the true nature of things, and for total purification of the mind.

Getting Started

Before one begins, it is important to choose the right place to meditate. In the Buddha's day this would generally be under a forest tree or in a cave, but any quiet and secluded place will do. It is also emphasized that the place should be freshly cleaned, especially if it is in a building, and that the body should be clean as well. Even before one begins, one is setting the object of meditation at the forefront of the mind. When the Buddha spoke of the practice he often referred to it as 'purifying the mind', getting rid of defilements, and banishing spiritual ignorance. An enlightened mind is perfectly pure. Body and mind work together, so when one begins to meditate it is important that the body is clean and relaxed.

Similarly with the mind. Mental purity comes through mental development and moral behaviour. Right up to the time of his death the Blessed One emphasised that the foundation for success in meditation is moral practice. This means mindful observance of the Five Precepts which are: to refrain from harming living beings, from taking what is not freely given, from misusing the senses, from wrong speech that harms or misleads others, and from the recreational use of consciousness-changing drugs and drink. How can one control the mind if one cannot control one's behaviour? The mind that is habitually and willingly given to violence, self-seeking and indulgence will constantly intrude thoughts and images connected with such behaviour so that no progress in meditation can be made.

One of the Buddha's followers was a converted mass murderer called Angulimala. At first, even though he had ceased killing, his mind constantly dwelled on his violent past. Every time he closed his eyes to meditate, the image of his victims arose before him and he heard again their dying screams. He found it impossible to concentrate. It was only after a long period of self-restraint that his thought-patterns began to change. The first he was aware of this change was when he felt compassion for a woman in

the throes of a difficult labour. Talking this over with the Buddha, he was taught to cease thinking of himself as a killer and realise that he was now a different person, made so by the power of his moral practice. With his mind now at peace, he was at last able to discipline the mind and settle down to meditation.

Sitting Position

Statues of the Buddha meditating show him seated in the lotus-position, with feet tucked up resting on the thighs and the body held upright but not stiff. The hands rest in the lap, palms turned upwards, with the right hand resting on the left and the tips of the thumbs gently touching. Yet many statues of Metteya, the next Buddha to come, have him seated on a chair or bench. There is nothing wrong with meditating on a chair so long as you hold your body in the right way. It is just that Indians are used to sitting on the ground. It must be admitted, however, that it is easier to get oneself balanced while sitting there and besides, there is less distance to fall if you happen to go to sleep!

The essence of the correct meditation position is having a straight back. That's what you are usually told at the beginning, but this is not easy to achieve without an intuitive awareness of your body. Worse still is being told that the lotus position is the best because it gives a firm base and positions the pelvis correctly so that the spine is automatically lengthened. That is all very well, but most Westerners will find it painful. Firm base, correctly positioned pelvis and lengthened spine are essential, but there are other ways of achieving them. One also needs to be relaxed so that little effort is needed to maintain the preferred posture. The half lotus (sitting with only one foot up on the opposite thigh) is definitely not recommended since it is unbalanced.

If you do sit cross-legged on the floor, then the easiest position is to have both heels in line with the centre of the body. Do not sit in such a way that one leg rests on the other and the blood supply gets cut off so that your leg goes to sleep. To ensure that the pelvis is correctly tilted, sit on sufficient cushions so that you do not feel discomfort in the lower back. If you are stiff in one hip and both knees do not rest on the floor, put a cushion under the raised knee so that it has a base to rest on, or else adopt a kneeling position. This is easiest on a meditation stool. It should be about 15cms off the floor and the seat should slope forward. There is no need to make any adjustment then as the spine is automatically tilted forward and there is no pressure on the calf muscles. If it is very painful on the knees, rest the whole of the knees and shins on a folded blanket.

When there is no meditation stool available, kneel on the floor with the knees together and a pile of cushions placed between the legs. Experiment until you get the correct height. Too high and you will have too much

pressure on the knees; too low and your pelvis will not be tilted and there will be pressure on the calves. To release this, put your thumbs in the crease of your knees and slide your hands towards your feet, pulling the calf muscles to the outside.

If you prefer sitting on a chair, you need to make sure that your feet can rest flat on the floor, that your thighs are parallel to the floor and your shins at right angles to the thighs. If the chair is too high for you, put cushions underneath your feet; if too low, then sit on a cushion. Do not rest your back against the back of the chair. The idea is to have the body as you want your mind to be, relaxed but alert. A sack of potatoes is relaxed all right, but it isn't particularly mindful.

Whatever position you have adopted, make sure that you are sitting on your buttock bones. Press down firmly and evenly on both sides. The action of pressing down causes the upper body to feel light and free. If your shoulders are rounded and slumped forward, don't be tempted simply to pull them back as this causes tension. It is better to bring them forward by pressing the lower spine inward. It is amazing how a small adjustment in the correct area of the lower spine holds the back upright so that the shoulders fall automatically into the right position.

Now pay attention to the head. It is very heavy and needs to be positioned correctly. The top of the head should be facing the ceiling (or the sky). When this is the case, the chin will be slightly downward and not sticking out. If the head is too far back, there will be tension in the neck and the spine will be shortened; if too far forward, the whole body will slump. Make sure that your shoulders are relaxed too. To do this, create as much space as possible between the ear lobes and the shoulders. If you are sitting correctly you shouldn't feel pain or tension in any part of the body.

When you are sitting comfortably, fold your hands in your lap with the dominant one underneath - i.e. if you are right-handed, that should be underneath the left. This is because we usually carry the dominant shoulder slightly forward. Making the adjustment suggested in the position of the hands corrects this. It also breaks unthinking habits and thus reminds us that the aim of meditation is ultimately moment by moment awareness, breaking habits inherited over lifetimes.

Sitting with a straight back or lengthened spine ensures that you stay alert. There will be no restriction of blood to the major organs. In particular, if the head is balanced correctly there will be a good supply of blood to the brain. Body and mind are linked and this influences the result of the meditation. That was a lesson the Buddha once taught a Veena-player. Too taut a string, he said, one that is too tense, gives a sharp note; a slack string gives a flat note or none at all. The instrument (as actors sometimes refer to their bodies) must be finely tuned for a good performance. It is the same for the meditator. For an alert mind the body must not be slumped; for

right concentration it must not be too tense. You should need very little energy to maintain your chosen posture. If pain arises during the meditation only small adjustments should be needed; relaxing the shoulders, pressing in at the base of the spine, pressing down evenly with both buttock bones. Unfortunately, however, there will always be a certain amount of pressure on the knees if adopting a kneeling position for any length of time.

At the end of a session, you might follow the advice given by a Japanese Zen Master: bow forward with joined hands and when the head is resting on the floor (or as near as you can comfortably get) let any tension that has developed during the session dissipate.

Walking

It is usual during meditation retreats to have alternate periods of sitting and walking. This enables you to retain concentration while at the same time stretching the legs and releasing body tensions that have developed while sitting. Little instruction is given for walking meditation. The impression is sometimes given that walking is not as important as sitting, but it can be rewarding. There is no specific instruction in the scriptures on how to practice walking meditation but the Buddha referred to it on various occasions. For certain kinds of people, commentaries say, this may become their regular practice. Maintaining proper awareness of it is even said to be a route towards enlightenment.

The meditation object in this kind of practice is the actual position, movement and contact of the feet with the ground; the attention (but not one's eyes) is on the feet. It is necessary, therefore, to explain a bit about how to do the practice as well as talking about posture. There are three stages: standing, walking and turning. If practising indoors, it is usual to walk across the meditation room, turn round and then walk back. If you are outside, then you will have to decide where your turning point will be.

Stand in a relaxed manner facing into the room by the wall where the walking is to begin. Take a few minutes to adjust your posture, being aware of the body at all times. Your feet should be placed on the floor parallel with each other, about 18cms apart, and the arms should be hanging loosely by your side. First of all, adjust your balance to ensure that it is evenly placed between both feet; then between the heel and sole of each foot: the point of balance should be over the arch of the foot. Next, bring your awareness to your knees and make sure that they are directly above your ankles and that they are not tense, then pull up the thigh muscles.

The secret to a good standing posture is in the position of the hips. While maintaining the correct balance on the feet, carefully adjust the pelvis until the spine feels erect without the stomach protruding or the shoulders slouching forward. For most people this will be obtained by

slightly moving the hips backwards. Make sure that all the tension is released in the shoulders by letting the arms fall by your sides with the palms facing inwards and the hands relaxed. Then create space between ear lobes and shoulders and adjust the head if necessary so that it isn't thrown back or the chin protruding. If you have made all the correct adjustments there should be no tension in the body. Stay in this position for a few moments to get used to the feel of the posture. You will probably have to keep checking from foot to head since often every time you make an adjustment at one place something goes wrong elsewhere.

When doing walking meditation the mind has to be totally absorbed in what is going on. Before there is movement, therefore, be aware of the intention to walk and which foot is going to be the first to move. Transfer all your weight to the foot that is going to remain on the ground. Next raise the heel and then the sole of the other foot off the ground, becoming aware of the loss of contact with the floor. Maintain awareness of the movement of the foot in the air as you lift it up, move it forward and then start to lower it towards the ground. Good walking practice dictates that the heel is placed on the ground first, then the sole, but whichever part of the foot you first put on the ground be aware of the moment of contact and then of the whole foot being placed on the ground.

With both feet grounded, adjust your weight evenly between the feet before repeating the process with the other foot. Continue to walk across the room, making the position of the foot the object of concentration, whether it is in the air or in contact with the floor. On reaching the other side of the room stand awarely for a moment before turning. The eyes should never be on the feet or wandering since this will distract the attention. Just cast them downwards and keep them focused about a metre in front of you. The same goes for the standing position as well. If your eyes wander (or even if you close them), then you are liable to fall over!

Again, before starting to turn be aware of the intention to turn and the direction in which you are going to turn. One meditator told me that she always makes a point of not having her back to the Buddha image. Turning is achieved by lifting and putting down at a slight angle first one foot then the other. The steps are very small and the foot is only raised an inch or two off the ground. When the rotation is complete and you are facing in the opposite direction, take a few moments to stand and be aware of your posture and adjust it if necessary.

Many meditators find that they become fascinated with the detailed process of walking and with all the small movements that are required. This is not the object of the exercise, however, and it does not maintain the necessary concentration for the practice to be beneficial if you let your mind go wandering all over your body while moving. Just keep your mind on what the feet are doing, on the sensation of them doing it, nothing more.

By concentrating on the movement of the feet in such detail you will automatically walk very slowly. But there is also a technique of fast walking that is usually employed if one is outdoors. It is only 'fast' in comparison to the method described above; it is still slow compared to normal walking. You walk up and down as above but the difference is that you will only maintain awareness of which foot is in movement, left or right.

Even before you begin a practice, then, there is a lot of preparation required. Place, body and mind must all be properly prepared. Once they have been, you are ready to select a method and apply yourself to it. We will now look at the chief of them in more detail:

4. CONCENTRATION SUBJECTS

Concentration practice is called *Samatha Bhāvanā*. *Samatha* means calm, as we have seen, while *bhāvanā* comes from the verb 'to become' and here means mental development. There are three stages to it: preliminary development, access concentration and absorption. Meditators should choose one of the forty meditation subjects appropriate for their type of temperament or be assigned one by their teacher. Several popular subjects are outlined for those wishing to practise and develop the tranquillity of mind which they can bring.

The Kasinas

a) Meditation on the earth-circle (*Pathavī-kasina*)

The earth-circle is a device traditionally used when practising *Samatha* meditation. It is prepared by covering a tray or other circular object about 25 centimetres in diameter with dawn-coloured clay. If there is not enough clay of the right colour, it should cover the surface at least, and some other clay may be placed underneath. The surface of the clay should be made as smooth as possible. Place this earth device at a suitable height about a metre away from the place where you are going to sit. The meditator should sit comfortably, keeping the upper part of the body erect, then look at the earth-circle attentively, mentally repeating 'earth, earth' or the Pali equivalent, '*pathavī, pathavī*'.

It may be weeks or months before you can close your eyes and visualize the image of the earth *kasina* as vividly as if you were seeing it with open eyes, but this is the object of the practice. This mentally visualized object or acquired image is called the learning sign. As soon as the

acquired image appears, it is no longer necessary to keep looking at the original earth-circle. You now concentrate on the acquired image instead, still repeating 'earth, earth' or '*pathavī, pathavī*'.

When concentration remains uninterrupted, what is technically known as the arising of preliminary development (*parikamma-bhāvana*) occurs. It is at this point that the five kinds of mental hindrances will arise in the mind and must be countered or avoided. When the meditator's concentration reaches the level of access (*upacāra-samādhi*), the acquired image changes into a steady point of luminescence called the counter-image. It is similar to the original image, but many times brighter and clearer. At this stage all five hindrances disappear, and the five *Jhānic* factors arise and become strong. These will dispel the hindrances one by one. Thus, initial application dispels sloth and torpor, sustained application dispels doubt, joy dispels anger, happiness dispels restlessness and worry and one-pointedness of mind dispels sensual craving. The mind is now well concentrated on the counter-image.

While concentrating thus, the meditator carries on his meditation noting in the mind 'earth, earth', as before. When the counter image becomes stable and steady, it is made to expand inch by inch by will-power until it completely fills all directions. Concentrating on this new abstract image, one keeps up the repetition. If the meditator is an intelligent, quick-witted person, he or she may soon achieve the first stage of absorption. If slow-witted, then one must try hard to retain the counter image, and with perseverance the first stage of absorption will sooner or later be attained.

If one wishes to achieve higher *jhānic* states, one should develop the five kinds of abilities already mentioned with special respect to that absorption. When able to direct the mind immediately to the five *jhānic* factors, one realizes the coarse nature of initial and sustained application since these can divert the mind towards a sensuous object and thus destroy absorption. Having contemplated the subtle nature of the second stage which is free from this, one concentrates on the counter image of the earth circle without letting applied effort associate with the mind. The culmination of this practice is the attainment of the second absorption which is associated with only three *jhānic* factors. For the development of the third absorption, one dispels bliss in a similar way, and then happiness for the fourth. Thus one attains the fine material absorptions with unshakeable concentration.

When one wants to attain the higher stage of formless absorption, one needs to develop the five abilities with respect to the fourth absorption of the fine material stage. One then contemplates the faults of the initial material form (the *kasīna*-device) in order to eliminate one's attachment to materiality. Eliminating the device from one's attention, one observes the space which is left after its removal. The meditator should also contem-

plate the subtle and calm nature of the immaterial *jhānic* state and aspire to achieve it. Then one develops the fine material absorptions one by one by means of the earth circle and, without paying any attention to the counter sign, concentrates on space instead, repeating 'space is infinite, space is infinite'.

This is the preliminary meditation for the arising of higher development. The counter sign will be in front of one as long as there remains a subtle desire for it. When that desire disappears, then the counter sign vanishes and infinite space unfolds. If one keeps on meditating earnestly and strenuously, one soon reaches the state of attainment-development (*appanā bhāvanā*) and the first immaterial absorption (*ākāsānañcāyatana jhāna*).

To develop the second formless state, one contemplates the unsatisfactoriness of the first as being close to the material stages and so coarse compared to the next formless state. Then one takes the consciousness of the first as meditation object and focuses awareness on infinite space, repeating 'Consciousness is infinite, consciousness is infinite'. When subtle clinging to the first disappears, one comes to access development (*upacāra-bhāvanā*) and eventually attains the second (*Viññānaññāyatana jhāna*). Similarly by practising the preliminary meditation on the non-existence of the consciousness of the first formless absorption, mentally repeating 'There is nothing whatsoever' or simply 'nothingness', the third state (*Ākiñcaññāyatana jhāna*) is attained. Furthermore, by practising on the consciousness of the third, mentally repeating 'This consciousness is calm! It is excellent!' the meditator finally arrives at the fourth (*Nevasaññānāsaññāyatana*).

This is the last and very subtle state of consciousness one can reach through the practice of *Samatha-bhāvanā*. In this type, the factor of perception has become so subtle that it can no longer perform its decisive function. The state cannot therefore be said to have perception, yet perception is not altogether absent but remains in a residual form. This is how it gains its name of 'Neither perception nor non-perception.'

Having attained these material and immaterial meditative states, one can practise in order to attain the higher mental powers or supernormal knowledge (*Abhiññā*). Alternatively, one may follow the Buddha's example and turn these developed mental abilities into the examination of themselves, which is the way of Insight Meditation (*Vipassana*). At this level of attainment it is possible to reach the end of the path and its fruit (*Nibbana*) relatively quickly.

b) Preparing the remaining *Kasinas*

The method for developing concentration by means of the various devices is much the same in all cases, but the devices themselves differ. The water circle is made by filling a clear vessel with clean water, on the

surface of which one then concentrates. For the fire circle, flames are viewed through a circular hole cut in matting or some other screening material. The difference here is that the element viewed is in movement and this holds good for the air circle too. In fact, as was mentioned earlier, it is only the effect of air in movement that is observed. One fixes one's attention on reeds, branches, grass or other motile things as they shift in the wind; alternatively one concentrates on the feeling of one's hair or the sensation on the skin as the draft affects them. The counter sign, when it comes, is always motionless, however.

To construct the colour circles, one uses appropriately coloured cloth - blue, yellow, red or white - bunched in or stretched over a circular tray or basket, or one can paint the circle on a wall. What one repeats to oneself in these cases is simply the name of the colour. For the light circle, sunlight or moonlight on a wall or floor or, if one is outside, through a gap in the foliage, acts in place of a constructed device; it is the luminosity on which one concentrates in this case. Obviously this works best in sunny lands with generally cloudless skies. Elsewhere lamplight passing through a circular hole to shine on a wall will have to do. A hole cut in some screening device and placed opposite a window or other opening serves to make the space circle.

It is said of all these that if one has practised in a former life, the sign will arise spontaneously when one comes in contact with a manifestation of the appropriate subject. Ploughed earth, a pond or a flickering lamp might be the catalyst. In the case of Bhaddiya the Dwarf, it is related that a woman in a passing carriage laughed at his squat shape; fixing his attention on the whiteness of her teeth, he very soon attained a high degree of sainthood.

The Recollections

a) Awareness of Respiration (*Ānāpānasati*)

The word *Ānāpānasati* is a compound of three technical terms: *ānā* means in-breathing, *āpāna* means out-breathing, *sati* means awareness or mindfulness. Awareness of inhalation and exhalation is regarded as the main and initial practice for the development of concentration or the *Jhānic* absorptions. It is claimed that the technique greatly helped not only the present Buddha Gotama, but all Buddhas preceding him, in winning supreme enlightenment. Mindfulness of breathing may, therefore, be regarded as the original subject of meditation in the *Theravāda* tradition. Unlike other meditation subjects, it is suitable for the development of both absorption and insight. Furthermore, it is beneficial in two ways. In the first place, it is used in combination with other practices as an indispensable means of obtaining calmness of body and mind; and it can also be used

as an independent subject specially recommended for those whose minds are imaginative or continually disturbed by sensory emotions. Again, it is most effective in ensuring a pure and healthy body and the clarity of mind which is the indispensable foundation for developing concentration and insight.

The Method of Meditation

When one is practising for the development of concentration, it is best to choose a quiet, deserted place and sit down crossed legged, keeping the body upright but not stiff. Breathe normally, concentrating on where the breath passes in and out at the tip of the nose or strikes the area just beneath the nostrils. When the breath is a long one, be aware of the long breath in; breathing out long, be aware of the long breath out; breathing in short, be aware of the short breath in, and so on. One notes unwaveringly simply what is there at the moment. The meditator concentrates, noting precisely the whole breath as it comes and goes through the tip of the nostrils. As the breath grows calmer, note that too. Just as a skilful carpenter's attention is kept at the cutting edge of his saw, so the meditator should develop his own skills of observation on a particular area.

If the meditator has a problem keeping his or her mind on the breathing, then there are several methods which can help to develop concentration. Counting the breaths is a good method for beginners not accustomed to concentrate the mind on one point. Be aware of in-breath and out-breath as one whole breath, counting only at the end of the process, then count one to five; start again, counting one to six, then one to seven, one to eight, one to nine, one to ten. If you lose count somewhere in the middle, then you must start again from the beginning until you have achieved an unbroken series. If you count less than five whole breaths, then the mind grows restless, whereas if you count more than ten, you will begin to dwell on the numbers rather than on the breath. After one or two repetitions of this, the concentration should be stronger and you can go back to simply noting the breaths.

Another recommended method is to follow the breath process. In this practice one should be aware of the three stages of breathing: the start, the middle and the end. The meditator has to give full attention to the nostrils, aware of the variations in sensation at each stage. Alternatively, the awareness is fixed on the nostril at the beginning stage of breathing in, on the chest area at the middle stage and the navel area at the end; when breathing out, reverse the process with awareness on the navel at the start, the chest in the middle and the nostril at the end.

The meditator may eventually see some kind of sign, shape or form connected with the breath, or some colour or luminosity. If one is concentrating on the primary object of respiration or the sign of the preparatory

object, this is called the application of the mind to the object of mindfulness. One can see the breath as vividly in the mind as if one were seeing it with one's open eyes. This visualized object or acquired sign is the learning sign already discussed. When you are concentrating on the acquired sign, keep on meditating with uninterrupted attention. When the meditator reaches the level of access concentration, the acquired sign becomes clear and steady. With the appearance of this counter sign (as it is called), the meditator has attained the first of the *Jhānic* stages and should proceed in the same way as that described under the earth-circle *Kasina*.

When one's aim is to attain the *Jhānic* absorptions, one should not be concentrating on the touch feeling of the breaths but only on the process of the breath itself. If the aim of meditation is to achieve insight, then one must concentrate on the touch feelings of the breath as a means of realizing the nature of impermanence.

b) *Recollection of the Virtues of the Buddha (Buddhānussati)*

Anyone who wishes to develop mindfulness and experience the qualities of the Buddha within oneself should practise recollection of his virtues. These are nine in number: *Arahāṃ* (the One who is free from defilements); *Sammāsambuddho* (the fully self-enlightened); *Vijjācaraṇa-sampanno* (endowed with knowledge and good conduct); *Sugato* (having happily proceeded on the way); *Lokavidū* (knower of the worlds); *Anuttaropurisadammasārathi* (the peerless charioteer of men to be tamed); *Satthā devamanussānaṃ* (the teacher of gods and men); *Buddho* (the spiritually awakened one); *Bhagavā* (blessed one). The meditator should choose just one of these qualities as a meditation subject. Those who want to practise all of them, however, may take them in sequence. In general *Arahāṃ* and *Buddho* are the most popular choice for this kind of meditation.

The Method of Meditation

A statue or picture of the Buddha should be placed at a suitable height about a metre away from the place where one is going to sit. Sit comfortably, keeping the upper part of the body erect, then look at the Buddha image and repeat mentally '*Arahāṃ, Arahāṃ*' (or '*Buddho, Buddho*'), keeping the meaning of the word in mind. After meditating for some time, it may be weeks or months, it should be possible to visualize the virtues of the Buddha within oneself. The meditator sees the virtues of the Buddha, but not the image. As soon as the virtues appear, it is no longer necessary to look at the original statue or picture.

One carries on concentrating on the acquired virtues, repeating '*Arahāṃ, Arahāṃ*'. When concentration remains uninterrupted, then what is technically known as the arising of the preliminary development occurs prior to gaining access concentration.

One understands the virtue of the Buddha as the perfected one in several ways:

- (a) He is perfect because he is without vices or defilements, having destroyed all the vices together with their innate tendencies or the traces of their previous existence by means of the Noble Path that led him to enlightenment.
- (b) He is perfect because he has overcome the foes; that is, he has destroyed the vices of desire, hatred and delusion by means of the realization of the Noble Path.
- (c) He is perfect because he has broken the wheel of becoming, whose nave is made of ignorance and craving for existence; whose spokes are the constituent elements; whose rim is decay and death; whose axle is made of the cause which produces the taints; whose body is the threefold existence. At the foot of the Bodhi tree, with the power of virtue and knowledge, he stopped the wheel's turning and for this reason he has earned the title of *arahanta*.
- (d) He is perfect because he is worthy to be worshipped with the best offerings, worthy to be honoured by gods and men, worthy to be revered with greatest reverence. Thus he is perfected by virtue of his worthiness, which truly deserves to be given the name of *Araham*.
- (e) He is perfect because he does no evil whatever, not even in secret, unlike those in the world who, claiming themselves virtuous, yet do evil in secret for fear of reproach. Thus the Buddha is called perfect in the sense of the absence of secret evil-doing (*a-raha*)

Thus the Blessed One is far (*ārakā*) from vice, one who has destroyed the foes of vice (*ari-hat*), who has cut off the spokes of the wheel of existence (*ara-han*), who is worthy (*araha*) to be honoured, who does no evil, not even in secret (*a-raha*); for these reasons he is *Araham*.

One who wishes to recite the virtue of the Buddha as spiritually awakened should understand the meaning as follows. The word *Buddho* is generally understood as Awakened One. This is the title due to the Blessed One in recognition of his knowledge of emancipation. It is the first and foremost of all titles. Tradition defines the word Buddha as one who has understood the Four Noble Truths and who helps others understand too. The Buddha, at the foot of the Bodhi tree, attained that omniscience through which he realized all things, past, present and future. In this way he is the enlightened one. He is also named the enlightener (*Bodhetā*) who makes truths clear to others. Thus he is self-enlightened and an enlightener for others.

When recollecting the virtues of the Buddha in this way, the mind visualizes the Buddha as if one were seeing him face to face. With the

mind entirely filled with these qualities, it cannot be invaded by either lust, hatred or delusion, and so the mind is temporarily free from these defilements and the hindrances. The thought process running towards the object of meditation keeps the mind upright and steadfast, intensifying the state of concentration. There arise in the meditator, wholly occupied with and penetrated by the virtues of the Buddha, the *Jhānic* states of initial and sustained application. Joy follows, producing bodily and mental calm. Happiness is established in its turn, producing physical and mental bliss. The mind in its blissful state, having the Buddha as its object, reposes and becomes serene. Thus, in the course of meditation all the *jhānic* factors arise spontaneously. It is said, however, that one cannot proceed beyond access to full *Jhānic* absorption or the ecstatic state because the virtues of the Buddha are so very profound.

Those who apply themselves to this meditation acquire true respect and reverence for the Buddha and experience his pure qualities within themselves. Their faith is abundant and their mindfulness firmly established; rapturous and full of joy, they overcome fear and dread and are able to bear pain. There arises in them a feeling of a certain intimacy with the Buddha, for they keep their mind constantly identified with his virtues. The mind is directed towards Buddhahood. The body is, as it were, inhabited by a mind continually recollecting his virtues and thus it becomes worthy of adoration, as if it were a shrine. When the possibility of sinful action arises, one abstains, feeling shame and fear of blame as though in the presence of the Buddha himself.

The state of concentration obtained through this meditation serves two purposes: purification of the mind and induction of insight. By virtue of its practice the disciple is assured of a happy destiny, even if he fails to reach the highest states on the path to perfecting himself in this present life. The meditation is one of the most important and most frequent practices among Theravadin Buddhists and the virtues are recited at least twice a day as part of the daily round. The Buddha himself recommended it as a protection for monks who dwell in the forest at the foot of a tree or in a deserted place (*Dhajagga Sutta S.i. 220*).

The Remaining Virtues

As is obvious from the discussion above of the Buddha's perfections, a great deal of cloistered ingenuity has gone into studying the verbal and allied roots of the words in Pali. Some Westerners might prefer to stick to their own languages when practising this recollection in view of the importance of bearing its actual meaning in mind. Unfortunately, words are not like Euros, they are not equally valid between different countries and cultures.

While 'perfected' is a good enough approximation of *Araham*, another preferred alternative is 'accomplished', which has the advantage of carrying several meanings in English and so may serve the same purpose as the verbal word-play accorded the Pali. While *Buddho*'s developed meaning is 'enlightened', its root meaning actually is 'awake' (in the spiritual sense). Here too is a fruitful field in which to dig for the core meaning of this particular virtue. Most people are too ready to accept the Buddha's title without really giving much thought to what it means at an experiential level. This would therefore be a good exercise to shake one out of lazy mental habits and freshen the motivation of one's practice.

For the remainder of the virtues we shall not be taking the traditional Pali-based approach but will try and arrive at something of the actual meaning of the various titles. The next virtue after *Araham* is *Sammā-sambuddho*, which means 'completely self-enlightened' and is the technical term which distinguishes the Buddha of our era from all other kinds of enlightened being. These are of two kinds. First there are those who gain liberation through being a disciple. At the end of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the Buddha's main teaching on the Insight technique, he claims that after seven years of intense practice it is possible to achieve emancipation. Then, in a remarkable series of diminutions, he brings this limit down to seven days, only if the conditions are right. Even so, though an enlightened being (an *arahanta*) may be the end result, it is always said of one who has achieved this stage through guidance that such persons have forever the status of pupils.

There are also those who achieve some degree of sainthood by following other ways or to whom an enlightenment experience comes, spontaneously. There are many cases of the latter documented in the psychological literature; nowadays they are even being discussed on the Internet. The technical term for such people is *paccekkabuddha*, which is often translated as 'Private Buddha'. The adjective is apt as these Buddhas make no great contribution or difference to the world, since they do not teach. 'Private' describes them in a nutshell.

When the Buddha Gotama passed away, his final message to his disciples was to remind them that 'all compounded things are subject to decay'. Now words too come under this category, and so it means that even the Buddha's teaching will become corrupted, will dwindle, eventually be forgotten. When the time is ripe, when there is an era in which all trace of the original Way is lost, such a trained being is reborn whose task is to rediscover by himself the practice which leads to final liberation; and not only that but, out of compassion, to dedicate the remainder of his life to re-establishing that practice in the world 'for the benefit of many'. Such a being is not only heroic, he also bears a unique responsibility. It is these qualities of the wholly self-enlightened one that we contemplate.

Having fulfilled the perfections and achieved insight, the enlightened being is *Vijjasaranasampanno*, endowed with wisdom and (virtuous) conduct. The word *vijja* (*vidya* in Sanskrit) contains within it the Indo-European root that gives us such words as video and vision. It has also been translated as 'clear vision'. Buddhas aspire, as does the sincere meditator, to go beyond conventional knowledge as it is encoded in language and, as a matter of practical experience, see things as they really are. The condition for, and ground of, such wisdom that arises out of the mental discipline of meditation is an initial moral training. The Ten Perfections in which a Buddha-to-be must train himself are generosity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, effort, forbearance, truthfulness, determination, loving-kindness and equanimity. The essence of this particular virtue that we contemplate is therefore the discipline which is known by its results.

Following on from his enlightened status, the Buddha may then be described as *Sugato*. This is prefixed by the word for 'good', 'well' (*su*), also found in other combinations such as the word for happiness (*sukkhā*). *Gata* means gone and comes from the ancient Indo-European root which gives the word 'go' to many of the Germanic and Scandinavian languages. In what sense, then, is the Buddha well-gone? Certainly not in that of the monk Subhadda, whose reaction on hearing of the Buddha's death was 'Good riddance! Now we can do as we like, we shall not have to keep all those rules'. Rather it means that he has walked the path well, he has arrived at his goal and is free from taint. In another sense, also, he has now gone from the world of finite phenomena. Having realized Nibbana, Gotama's spiritual ignorance was gone, and gone too his sense of individual separateness that was the result of ignorance.

The Buddha is also *lokavidu*, the knower of worlds. In his day there was a good deal of inspired cosmological speculation with which Western astronomy has only just caught up and is now confirming. Buddhas are traditionally said to be all-knowing, so insight into such matters might be considered part of the package. On the other hand, what the Buddha and many other contemporary sages taught was that the whole universe is subject to endless physical recurrence and that the knowledge we really need to acquire is how to escape our own ceaseless round of becoming within it. What traps us in *Samsāra* is ignorance of the phenomenal and ultimately transient nature of all its transformations, cultivating desire for aspects of which locks us into their cycle. Realization of this truth goes back millennia, but it requires rather more than respectful reception of the spiritual insights of others to effect liberation. We have to experience the arising of such insight in ourselves for that to be possible.

What is unique about the Buddha Gotama is that his teaching does not proclaim such mystical insights as a doctrine of salvation. Instead he advises methods of practice whereby we can attain that essential liberating

knowledge. 'It is in this fathom-long body, with its perceptions and its consciousness, that I make known the world, its arising and cessation and the way leading thereto', he tells us. The world we experience and desire is of our own creation, it does not lie outside us but is mind-produced. Therefore by practising Insight meditation we can catch ourselves at our own creative work and, what is more, bring it to an end. We too, like the Buddha, must be *lokavidu*, not worldly-wise but wise to the worlds of our making in order to escape their trammels.

Because this self-help aspect of his teaching is so unique, the Buddha is *anuttaro purisadammasārathi*, the incomparable leader of men to be tamed. In contemplating this particular virtue, the meditator finds a space for him or herself. Human rebirth, the Buddha taught, was to be preferred since it is characterized by rationality, the ability to reflect on one's actions and rise above both appetite and circumstance. It is the peculiar quality of humanity that they have this capacity to tame themselves and so profit most from the Buddha's teaching. There would be little point in fixing the mind on this quality of the Buddha unless one actually is prepared to be tamed. Indeed, the very fact that one is meditating on it is proof of his right to the title.

The Buddha's exalted (incomparable) status is further underlined by the last two of his titles that have to be examined. He is, first of all, *satthā-devamanussānam*, the teacher of gods and men. This is a timely reminder that, although the human realm may be special, there are other spheres of birth and that the Buddha was mindful of them all. The blanket phrase covers every type of being as understood in his time - denizens of hellish and ghostly realms, animals, humans, various types of spiritual and even bodiless being. All, in their various modes, are capable of being instructed. In some versions of the Tibetan 'Wheel of Life' (of which there is also a Myanmar equivalent), a small picture of the Buddha is inset within each of the realms of rebirth to illustrate this very point. What this quality reminds us of particularly is that all being is interdependent. The illusion of separation is a sign of ignorance and the cause of suffering, both of which curses the Buddha saw it as his task to dispel. In times of ecological breakdown like ours, therefore, this title of the Buddha is specially inspiring and should act as a personal spur to action. As sons and daughters of the Buddha, it is our duty to do our utmost to be like him, to seek the welfare of all life and protect it from the harm bred of greed, hatred and delusion.

Finally, the Buddha is *bhagavā*, blessed. The word has a variety of uses, from an aspirant to sainthood in the Catholic Church to divine *avatāra* among Hindus. The bearer of that description is specially and conspicuously holy and yet bears a human form. For the Buddhist, the title again comes home to the meditator. It is the fact of the Buddha's humanity which

is our inspiration. There was no divine intervention at his birth, no Supreme Being singled him out for special attention. He was a human being, born of a proud family that wanted him to continue serving their interests and did their utmost to insulate him from religious matters. But it did not work out that way. From that unpromising beginning he aspired to and gained the highest blessing that can befall anyone, freedom from suffering through the attainment of Enlightenment. If he could be so blessed, then why should we not be, too?

c) *Mindfulness of Death (Marañānussati)*

Mindfulness of death is a Vipassana practice that the meditator should develop while holding the perception of impermanence, suffering and the phenomenality of selfhood in mind. It is one of the four subjects grouped among the ten recollections that are most suitable for a person of intellectual disposition. In the context of rebirth, death is defined as the cutting off of the life-faculty of one form of existence. Therefore, the word is not intended to denote any of the following three types of death: complete cessation of life, that is the passing of the Arahant's final manifestation in the world of change; momentary dying, that is, the moment to moment breaking up of the mental and physical processes; the death of non-breathing objects, an expression commonly used in speaking of a dead tree, inert metal and so on.

According to the *Abhidhamma*, the advent of death is fourfold:

- 1) Through the expiration of the life span (*āyukhaya*). This is the kind of death that comes about for beings in those realms of existence where the life-span is bounded by a definite limit. In the human realm this should be understood as death in advanced old age due to natural causes. If the productive kamma is still not exhausted when death takes place, then the kammic force can generate another rebirth on the same plane or on some higher plane according to how one has lived previously.
- 2) Through expiration of the productive kammic force (*kamma-khaya*). This is the kind of death that take place when the kamma generating rebirth expends its force though the normal life-span and there are otherwise favourable conditions for the prolongation of life.
- 3) Through the simultaneous expiration of both (*ubhayattha*).
- 4) Through the intervention of a destructive kamma (*upeccheda-kamma*). This is a term for the death that occurs even before the expiration of the life-span.

The advent of death is formally defined as the cutting off of the life faculty included within the limits of a single existence. The first three

types of death are known as timely death, the last as untimely. An oil lamp, for example, may be extinguished owing to the exhaustion of the wick, the exhaustion of the oil, the simultaneous exhausting of both, or some extraneous cause, such as a gust of wind.

The Method of Meditation

Both kinds of death are contemplated in this practice and their recollection constitutes mindfulness of death. In order to develop it, one should sit in seclusion and focus attention on the thought, 'death will take place, the life-faculty will be cut off', or more simply 'death, death' (*marañam, marañam*). The repetition of any of these terms will form the preliminary exercise. To practise rightly, one's mindfulness should be accompanied by a sense of urgency, as of a 'life or death situation'. One should avoid recalling the death of individuals, whether loved ones, enemies or those towards whom one was indifferent. Sorrow arises in recalling the death of beloved ones; gladness or an unsympathetic feeling arises in recalling the death of hostile persons; the feeling of urgency does not arise in recalling the death of people towards whom one is indifferent; but fear arises at the thought of one's own death. By proceeding in the right way, the hindrances disappear, mindfulness is established with death as its object and, access concentration is attained.

If this is of no benefit, one may contemplate death in these eight ways:

1. It should be borne in mind that just as an armed murderer comes upon one saying 'I'll kill you', so death approaches and threatens all living beings.
2. Or one may consider, 'As all prosperity and achievement in this world comes to an end, so too does a prosperous life'.
3. One may infer one's own death from that of others. 'All the great ones in the past who had magnificence, merit, might, power and learning, have passed away in death; those who attained the highest state of spiritual progress, like Buddhas and Arahants, have passed away too; like those, I myself have also to die.'
4. 'At all events, death is inevitable because this body is subject to all the causes of death, such as the many hundreds of diseases as well as other external dangers. At any moment any of these may beset the body and cause it to perish.' Thus death should be recollected by way of the body and its liability to many dangers.
5. The life of beings is bound up with inhalation and exhalation, with the four postures, with the proper temperature and with food. Life continues only while it is supported by the regular functioning of the breath; when this process ceases, one dies. Life proceeds while it is supported by walking, standing, sitting and lying down; it also

requires just the right measure of heat and cold and it must be supported by food. If any of these conditions are unbalanced or fail, life comes to an end. Thus should death be recollected by considering the frailty of life and its dependence upon these things.

6. Life in this world is uncertain because it cannot be determined as regards time, cause, place or destiny. It cannot be reduced to rule. Life may fail at any point or any moment. Sickness also cannot be determined, as for example 'Of this type of sickness alone beings die but not another', for people die of any kind. The time of death is also unknown since it cannot be determined. The place where the body should lie is also unknown and the place one will take rebirth. Thus death should be recollected by considering that these five things are uncertain.
7. The life of human beings is of short duration. Even if one were to live to a hundred, it still comes to an end.
8. The life of a living being lasts only for the period of a single thought moment. As soon as that thought has ceased, the being is said to have ceased.

*Life, personality, pleasure and pain
Are joined in a single conscious moment;
Suddenly it passes, never to return.*

(Visuddhimagga VIII.38)

As long as continuity of consciousness lasts, the continuity of a life proceeds. When the consciousness ceases to function in an individual organism, life also ceases. Thus should mindfulness of death be developed by concentrating on the nature of consciousness and the little deaths and births it brings moment by moment.

When the meditator contemplates death in one of these eight ways, mindfulness is established with death as its object; the hindrances disappear and the *jhānic* factors bring tranquillity. Death being a natural occurrence, and often the cause of anxiety, mindfulness of it is productive only if access concentration and the *jhānic* factors do not lead to absorption. Even a moment of this meditation practice with proper attention bears great fruit. One who devotes himself to this meditation is always vigilant and takes less delight in the phenomenal world. One gives up hankering after life; one censures evil doing. One is free from craving as regards the requisites of life; one's understanding of impermanence becomes lucid. In consequence of these things one realizes the suffering and impersonal nature of existence. At the time of death one is devoid of fear and remains mindful and self-possessed. If one fails to attain to the deathless (*nibbāna*)

in this present life, upon the dissolution of the body one is bound for a happy destiny.

d) *Mindfulness of the Body (Kāyagatā sati)*

The practice of mindfulness of the body is an essential teaching of the Buddha and there are a whole series of practices using it in various ways as an object of meditation. The method under discussion here, however, had never been practised before him, nor does it come within the scope of any other religious system. In several discourses the Buddha praised it in a number of ways. This meditation is conducive to great happiness, benefit and freedom from bondages. It helps one to develop abiding mindfulness and self possession and, in this very life leads to the attainment of insight and realization of the ultimate peace. As he said, *'Those who do not enjoy mindfulness of the body do not enjoy deathlessness; those who enjoy mindfulness of the body enjoy deathlessness, those who have neglected mindfulness of the body have neglected deathlessness, those who have not neglected mindfulness of the body have not neglected deathlessness'*. (A.1.43)

In the Discourse of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Buddha described this method as a means of attaining *Nibbāna*. It is called 'Contemplation of the Body', and contains fourteen parts. It is different from the technique described in the *Kāyagatā Sati Sutta* (Majjhima Nikāya 3. 89). As a subject of Samatha meditation, it is recommended for those of a lustful inclination. Of the fourteen divisions, three of them (the four postures, the fourfold self-possession and contemplation of the four elements) are also subjects for Insight meditation, as are the cemetery contemplations next to be considered. Of those prescribed for Samatha meditation, awareness of breathing has already been dealt with. Here only contemplation of the thirty-two parts of the body will be explained.

The meditator, the Buddha directs, *'consider this body, limited by the skin from the sole of the foot upwards, from the crown of the head downwards, as full of impure things of various kinds; there are in this body hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow; kidneys, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs; intestines, intestinal tract, stomach, excrement, brain; bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat; tears, grease, saliva, mucus, fluid of the joints, urine.'*

The body, as the seat of consciousness, supports the mind in its various activities. If it is not understood properly, then it becomes a hindrance and a fetter, just as an instrument made for a good purpose becomes a fatal weapon if used the wrong way. Those who have been misled by various passions and misconceptions have been deluded by the illusory appearance of the physical body. Thus arise selfishness and lustfulness, bringing torment to the physical body. Attachment to it becomes the chain which binds beings to the wheel of continual becoming. Moreover, people see the

physical parts of the body as desirable, they set up standards of beauty to which they respond with passionate attachment; it also fetters them to the conception of individual personality.

When one analyses the constituent parts of the body, however, one becomes dispassionate and realizes its impermanent and undesirable nature. *'This body of the four elements, covered with the skin, is not made of anything pure or valuable such as pearl, ruby, gold or silver; nor of saffron, camphor and fragrant scents; it is made of those things which, when they are taken separately and considered as they are, lead one to regard them as loathsome and putrid. When a person analyses this body with mindfulness, one finds its constituents are humble elements of various kinds such as hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, bones and so on, the intrinsic nature of which is not only impure and disgusting but subject to illness.'*

The Method of Meditation

There are two ways of practising mindfulness of the thirty-two parts of the body: recitation and contemplation. The list containing the thirty-two parts of the body is so arranged that each part may be taken as a separate meditation object. In the *Visuddhimagga* they are arranged in six groups: the first four are solids and contain five parts each, while the last two are liquids and contain six. For the purposes of recitation one memorizes them by group in this way -

1. For the first division, one recites '*Kesā* (hair of the head), *lomā* (hair of the body), *nakhā* (nails), *dantā* (teeth), *taco* (skin)' in direct order then reverse order.
2. For the second division, one recites '*Mamsam* (flesh), *nhāru* (sinews), *aṭṭhi* (bones), *aṭṭhimijjā* (marrow), *vakkam* (kidneys)' in direct order and then to the reverse order one adds those in the first division; having reached *Kesā*, one then runs forward to the beginning of the second division.
3. For the third, one recites '*Hadayam* (heart), *yakanam* (liver), *kilomakam* (pleura), *pihakam* (spleen), *papphāsam* (lungs)' in direct order then returns through the second and first divisions; having reached *Kesā*, one then runs forward to the beginning of the third division.
4. For the fourth, one recites '*Antam* (intestines), *antagunam* (intestinal tract), *udariyam* (stomach), *karisam* (excrement), *matthalungam* (brain),' in direct order then reverses to the first division and returns to the starting point, as before.
5. For the fifth, '*Pittam* (bile), *semham* (phlegm), *pubbo* (pus), *lohita* (blood), *sedo* (sweat), *medo* (fat)' then backwards and forwards as before.

6. For the sixth, '*Assu* (tears), *vasā* (grease), *khelo* (saliva), *siṅgālikā* (mucus), *lasikā* (fluid of the joints), *muttam* (urine)', then backwards and forwards as before.

The meditator should keep up this recitation until he or she is familiar with the subject and the mind does not wander. The parts of the body become clear and appear in a series as if they were a chain held in the hand. The meditator should recite the formula both verbally and mentally. Verbal recitation helps one to remember the parts in order, and mental recitation helps penetration into their characteristics. The meditator will eventually need to note their colour, shapes and their location in the body.

It is important for those practising this meditation to understand the nature of the physical body. If they comprehend all thirty-two parts together with their function, they will realize that there is no unchanging individual there. If one is of a lustful disposition, a sense of the body's undesirable nature will become clear. The mind becomes free from passions and induces the attainment of the first *jhāna*, which forms the path of calm leading to insight. Meditation taking the bodily parts as colour objects induces the four *jhānas*. Contemplating the body's loathsome aspect leads only to the first *jhāna*. One of my students, whose disposition was more intellectual than physical, and who had also had experience working in a hospital operating theatre, once did this meditation for twenty minutes every morning for three months. He reported to me that contemplating the purificatory work of the body made him very happy; it was with the unruly nature of his mind that he grew disgusted!

The *Visuddhimagga* also gives these instructions:

1. While reciting verbally, the meditator should contemplate the thirty-two parts one after the other, not sporadically. If one's mind is wandering one cannot recite them in succession and will leave out some parts; strong concentration is necessary for success.
2. One should not proceed too fast or too slow; each part should be visualized clearly and then attention passes on to the next parts.
3. One should stay alert and mindful and not allow the mind to be disturbed by external objects. Distraction causes the subject of meditation to dwindle and disappear.
4. When contemplating the body's loathsome nature, the meditator should not dwell on the parts as concepts but steadfastly retain the thought of their undesirability. The repetition of such words as '*kesā*, *lomā*' is only useful until they become manifest in the mind; afterwards it should be abandoned, because even naming is related to the notion of individuality and obscures the true facts of existence. Concepts still have the power of arousing clinging or aversion.

5. When reflecting upon the thirty-two parts, any particular part not clearly seen may be omitted so that one can continue concentrating on what does become clear.
6. Meditation on any one of the thirty-two parts may lead to the *jhānic* state

It is a common practice in the Theravāda tradition to grasp the signs of the first five parts ending with the skin. For example, taking out or cutting off one or two hairs and placing them on the palm of the hand, the meditator notes their colour. If they are black, one should observe them as black; if they are white, as white; if they are brindled, the predominating colour. This formula is still recited by those seeking admission to the Order, either as a novice or a monk. Having grasped the sign, one should meditate on their loathsomeness by way of colour, shape, smell, origin and position. Meditation on the other parts is conducted in the same way. The sign of the first five is to be taken by sight; the rest will require study for those without medical experience. The sign grasped from each of the thirty-two parts should be developed with the repetition of 'loathsomeness, loathsomeness,' not too fast, not too slow, but at a moderate pace.

After realizing the whole body as a combination of these thirty-two parts, they may appear simultaneously, just as thirty-two beads of various shades of colour, strung on a single thread, appear as a whole. When the meditator observes the bodies of other people, animals and other creatures, all appear to be just so many heaps of parts, not as men or animals. Thus the mind becomes free from the notion of individuality. As one continues this meditation accordingly, the hindrances disappear and the first *jhānic* factors arise. The meditator who has attained the first *jhāna* by concentrating on loathsomeness may afterward attain other *jhānas* by visualising shape and colour and so gain access to higher knowledge, the supernatural powers or, by developing Insight attain the final liberation of *Nibbāna*. Thus this subject is of great benefit. Anyone wishing to experience either tranquility or purity of mind should practise this recollection earnestly.

e) *Meditation on the impurities (Asubha Bhāvanā)*

There are three mental dispositions which bind living beings to the wheel of becoming: sensuous desire (*kāma-tanhā*), desire for existence (*bhava-tanhā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*). Beings living in the sensual world are dominated by craving (*tanhā*) which arises through the contact of external objects with the sense doors. How, then, does aversion fit into this scheme if the Buddha taught that it is craving that dominates one's life and brings suffering in its train? The answer is simple. When any sense object arises that one dislikes and rejects, it implies the desire for something else. Therefore, both liking and disliking are regarded as forms of craving.

Every being is dominated by the senses, which weave the whole fabric of physical existence. The mind tainted with sensual desire develops a lustful disposition, which leads the individual to multiply the various activities that gratify the senses. The physical body is the cause of desire. Many have attachment to their body, and see it as a desirable thing. Due to hallucination born of ignorance, one perceives it as permanent, desirable and constituting the self. This concept fetters one perpetually. It can only be broken if one realizes the impermanent and undesirable nature of the body and that it houses neither soul nor self.

Meditation on the impurity of the body is suitable for those of lustful or narcissistic dispositions. Attachment to the body must be eradicated if the happiness of eternal peace is to be attained and that is only possible for one who has realized its transitory nature. The word *asubha* generally means 'foulness' or 'impurity' and in this method the term is applied to the ten stages of the decay of a corpse. This meditation leads to the achievement of the *jhānic* states. It was very widely recognized among the sages of India, but the method of meditation upon a dead body taught by the Buddha is not previously found in any other Indian meditation system.

A similar method is found in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, where nine stages of decay are described. In the *Abhidhamma* ten stages are given as separate subjects. They are explained in detail in the *Visuddhimagga* as a swollen, a discoloured, a festering, a fissured, a mangled and a dismembered corpse; a cut and dismembered corpse; a bleeding corpse; a corpse infested with worms; a skeleton. Nowadays, we do not have the charnel grounds available in ancient India and it is not easy to view a decaying corpse. Skeletons are obtainable (at a price) and are frequently to be found in monasteries. In Thailand, at least, devout Buddhists sometimes direct that their bodies should be made available for this practice. An animal corpse may be used instead and these are more easily come by. It would not be a good idea to use your own dead pet, however, since objectivity would be that much more difficult to achieve.

The ten-fold classification mentioned above is traditionally assigned for different kinds of bodily attachment as follows:

1. The swollen corpse, exemplifying the decay of the body, is suitable for one who lusts after beauty of form.
2. The discoloured corpse, clearly showing the decayed beauty of the skin, is suitable for one whose fixation is the with the complexion.
3. The festering corpse is suitable for the connoisseur of scents.
4. The fissured corpse, demonstrating the existence of various cavities within the body, is suitable for fitness fanatics.

5. The mangled corpse, portraying the destruction of the perfection and fullness of the flesh, is suitable for one whose ideal of beauty is the pin-up girl or beefcake.
6. The dismembered corpse, with the limbs scattered, is suitable for one who cultivates graceful movements of the body.
7. The cut and dismembered corpse, with dislocated joints, is suitable for body builders.
8. The bleeding corpse, showing the repulsiveness of a body besmeared with blood, is suitable for one preoccupied with cosmetics and adornments.
9. The corpse infested with worms is suitable for those who identify with the body as themselves.
10. The skeleton expressing the gruesomeness of the bones of the body is suitable for one who lusts after perfection of teeth and nails.

Although these subjects may appear foul and repulsive, the meditator experiences joy while practising them, leading as they do to the first *jhānic* state which is the entrance to the path of insight. Here is a brief explanation of this wonderful technique as found in the *Visuddhimagga*.

When a meditator who wishes to practice the meditation on impurities hears that there is a corpse lying in such and such a place, he or she should first enquire as to its nature. It is said that the corpse of a woman is unsuitable for a man, and the corpse of a man for a woman, since a body not long dead may appear pleasing and stir the passions. Then, after due notice, the meditator should proceed there alone, with joy and gladness. Indeed, before leaving one should develop the mindfulness of death. When the meditator arrives, he or she should seat himself or herself within a comfortable distance and at first observe the corpse's surroundings so as to grasp the mental image in five ways; from the point of view of colour, features, shape, locality and limitation.

As to the colour: the meditator should note whether the body is black, white or brown. As to the features: the meditator should not consider it as male or female but determine whether the body is young, middle aged or old. In the case of shape, he should determine that of each part of the body - head, neck, hands, etc. As to locality, the meditator should determine the body's position in relation to his own. As regards limitation, he thinks 'This body is limited below by the sole of the foot, above by the hair of the head, across by the skin, and within these limits it contains the thirty-two putrid things.'

The most important thing is that the meditator observes the body until one grasps the image or sign (*nimitta*) in any of the ways explained above. If the sign does not appear in the mind, then one should mentally repeat

'swollen, swollen' (or whatever is the state of the corpse one is contemplating) fixing one's mind on the body so as to be able to visualise it on returning to the place where one lives. If the sign does not appear, then one should return for another viewing. If the sign of the object becomes clear and lucid, it develops as a counter-sign and one enters the first *Jhānic* state. Then taking the unwavering image as foundation, one should practise Insight meditation.

In this practice one should first try to fix the image of the corpse in his mind and then guard it as a precious thing, concentrating on it until one realizes that the same lot will befall one's own body and those of others. As the meditator develops his or her meditation the learning sign appears, followed by the counterpart sign. At its first appearance the sign of the swollen corpse will seem repulsive and terrifying and enable one to destroy passion. The second sign resembles a stout man lying down, but it is free from any notion of individuality. As sense desire subsides, ill-will and other hindrances are gradually eliminated and the *jhānic* factors arise, conditioned by the image. It is just the same for corpses in the other states.

f) *Meditation on the Four Elements*

This meditation employs the analysis of the four elements of the body. The main object is to free the mind from the conception of individuality in regard to the physical body and to realize its elemental nature with no thought of personal distinction. In the *Visuddhimagga* it is included as a subject for *Samatha* whereas, in the *Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta*, awareness of the four elements is an Insight practice.

When one analyzes the body with respect to its elements, one realizes that whatever part in it is solid or hard is the earth element; whatever is cohesive or fluid is the water element; whatever is hot or cold is the fire element; whatever is in motion is the air element. The four are further subdivided into forty-two forms: the earth element includes the twenty solid constituents of the body; the water element includes the twelve liquid parts. The fire element has four subdivisions: body heat, maturity, shrivelling and the heat of digestion; the air element has six: bodily air discharging upwards, downwards, the air in the stomach, in the intestines, the air supporting the movements of the limbs, and the breath of inhalation and exhalation. From repeated mindfulness arises the concentration that comprehends the body's elemental nature. As one reflects thus, the concept of I or mine, man or woman, will disappear.

g) *Developing the Four Illimitables (Appamaññā)*

This group of four qualities - loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*) - goes by a number of names. They are illimitable because they break down the

distinction between self and other, there is no limit put on the practice. Whatever one conceives of as having life, in whatever place or direction, is its proper subject. The four are, therefore, known also as liberators of the heart because they uncage one's sympathies from the personal and self-regarding.

'Divine abidings' is one common translation of *brahmavihara*; another *Pāli* term for them 'sublime states of mind' is an alternative attempt at rendering the sense. The reason for this name has already been explained. Although the aim of Buddhist practice is to free oneself entirely from the phenomenal world and become one with the Absolute, there are many subtle hindrances to be avoided. One of these is attachment to a practice's results. The ideal aim is pure spontaneous goodness, but if the slightest attachment remains then even the loftiest attainments remain in the realm of volitional activities and so have kammic results. One is reborn in the realm that Buddhist cosmology assigns to those of advanced meditational practice, especially mastery of the trance states or absorptions. Here one dwells with an undifferentiating mind almost akin to that of Enlightenment except for the subtle misapprehension that these fundamental energies of being are somehow personally generated. This is the world of the third sphere of sainthood, the non-returner (*anāgāmi*).

Loving-kindness is difficult to explain although it is easily recognizable once one makes contact with it in one's heart. It simply wishes well to all beings, or any individual being, without distinction or attachment. It is directly opposed by ill-will and may be used to counter it; its indirect enemy is selfish attachment, of which carnal love is only one variety. Self-abnegating mother-love is a marvellous thing, but in this context it too is regarded as limiting. Nevertheless, the Buddha used it as an illustration of what loving-kindness should be like in the discourse he dedicated to it: 'Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life, so let [the wise meditator] cultivate a boundless heart towards all beings.'

The quality is in fact perfectly natural, since it manifests in the individual as the instinct for self-preservation. We want to be happy and healthy, we do not want to suffer. Conflict arises when we forget that this is so for every being and make our own welfare the absolute priority. Loving-kindness removes this vicious short-circuiting of a fundamentally positive energy by recognizing it as a common aspiration and allying one's own happiness with concern for that of others.

There is what it is now fashionable to call a mind-experiment connected with this problem. Suppose one is travelling in company with a friend, someone unknown and an enemy. A bandit captures you all and, for sadistic purposes of his own decides one of you must die and leaves the choice of which to you. Who do you choose in the spirit of loving-kindness? Altruism is not allowed in this case, since that would be to make a

distinction and there are none in the exercise of loving-kindness. One must therefore deprive the bandit of his fun and reply, 'My friend, I can find no one here who wishes to lose his life.' This is a good example of the Eastern avoidance of either/or solutions. The preference is for both and/or, as in the example above, neither/nor.

Is the concept of self-sacrifice foreign to Buddhism, someone will inevitably ask in consequence. It is not, of course, but right motivation and right awareness need to be exercised first. The quality of humility has been taken so far in the West that it has tipped over the edge into self-hate or, at the very least, deprecation and self-reproach. They give one the comfortable feeling of being virtuous while in fact concealing self-absorption. One cannot make a proper response in personal relations unless on the basis of equality. Only then can one proceed to the grand gestures. If one is to fulfil the perfections required for Enlightenment, they are even expected. Giving up your life for another is an example of perfect generosity, but it is only perfect if you actually value the life you give in place; how otherwise does one's self-sacrifice differ from suicide? One of the subtle forms of craving that the Buddha identified was that for self-annihilation.

People who only get their Buddhism from books are occasionally puzzled by the fact that Theravādins seem to place most emphasis on loving-kindness while the Mahāyāna schools emphasize compassion. In fact, all four sublime states are only different aspects of a single energy; it does not really matter where you start. Greenwich, Lambeth, Battersea and Kew are different localities, but all are linked and given their distinction by the River Thames. If there is a difference, then, it is only terminological. The same basic energy of caring and open-heartedness is understood by the word *mettā* among Theravādins and by the word *karuṇā* in Mahāyāna circles.

In terms of this single energy, compassion is understood as that aspect of it which concentrates on beings at the moment of suffering. It is an active quality that understands how the suffering has been caused, always prepared to help alleviate it, and seeking ways to do so. In this it is different from mere pity, which tends to have an element of condescension and even self-interest about it, insofar as one is glad that the same thing has not happened to oneself. As in loving-kindness, the starting point must be from a position of equality. Suffering of one sort or another is inescapable, we are all subject to it no matter who we are and what kinds of life we lead. Compassion is not just softness of heart, it employs wise means to bring about its ends. The aim of Buddhist training is to achieve a balance between wisdom and compassion. Without such mutual dependence the first would be an arid attainment only, the second passive sentimentality.

If compassion manifests in the presence of suffering and has an empathic sharing quality, then so has sympathetic joy in the presence of

the happiness of others. It rejoices whole-heartedly in it, understands its arising and holds itself ready to keep that happiness in being. Like the others, therefore, it is an unselfish quality. Natural enough when applied to a friend, its development towards all others converts them too into friends. It is without envy on the one hand, but on the other does not subside into shallow frivolity.

There are no distinctions of preference in cultivating the sublime states. Loving-kindness is an opening of the heart without limit; focussed on those who suffer, it manifests as compassion; focussed on those in their moments of happiness, it manifests as sympathetic joy. Beyond such operational distinctions it treats all beings equally and accepts them as themselves without judgement. This aspect of it is understood as equanimity. It dwells with all beings, understanding their interdependence, their essential oneness. It is, on the other hand, completely removed from the neutrality of indifference or ignorance. On the other, it is perfected by understanding precisely what qualities particular beings have or lack and still maintaining the same open attitude towards them.

The Method of Meditation

To get started with the development of loving-kindness, there is a graduated exercise. You begin with yourself; as the Buddha found,

*I visited all quarters with my mind,
Nor found I any dearer than myself;
Self is likewise to every other dear.
Who loves himself will never harm another.*

(Udana 47)

To put it another way, hatred of others is often generated by projecting onto them the qualities one fears or dislikes in oneself. Peace within must precede the quest for peace elsewhere, therefore. Focusing on oneself does not mean valuing oneself beyond others, but one must begin by properly acknowledging the person about to develop this practice. So you visualise yourself as if in a mirror and genuinely wish for the physical, mental and spiritual welfare of that being without misgiving or reservation. When one is confidently in touch with that basic energy, which is always there in any case, then one is ready to broaden the practice.

To do this you choose a friend as the target for your good wishes. In order to preserve equality, this person should be about the same age as the meditator; it should also be someone of the same sex and still living, otherwise different feelings may arise. This part of the practice should not be hard; as an ancient Greek proverb has it, 'a friend is another self'. Once it is established, you can next visualise a slight acquaintance towards whom your feelings are neutral. Someone you recognize to nod to in the

street, for example. This person must then be made the recipient of equal good wishes. It might take a little while longer.

Now comes the time to really test yourself. Picture an enemy and give that person the same good wishes too. If that is too difficult at first, at least view the person neutrally and work up from there. It may be that you are the saintly kind of person who has no enemies personally. So much the better, you are bound to be loathed by lots of others who make their dislike only too apparent. Choose one of them. Indeed, if you have a particular problem with someone, you can use this practice to help put things right, once you have mastered the technique. Think of it how you like, working telepathically or subtly changing your body language along with your attitude, it's tried and tested and it works.

As a final test that you have broken down the distinction between self and other, friend or foe, visualize all four of you standing in a row and make sure the feeling is equally strong for all. Then gradually broaden the scope of your wishes to all in the house, street, town, region, country, continent and world. If the thought of any exception arises, simply overcome it with the thought that there is no class of being which will not be better for this practice. Again, if any individual comes to mind, include them in the embrace of your good wishes and then widen these to include everyone else again. So far it has only been human beings who have been the recipients of your loving-kindness. Give it now to every kind of being, snakes and cockroaches too. Pervade the world in each direction, above and below, with your love. Then make that the heart from which you broadcast it throughout space, encompassing everything that is.

It is quite common to add this practice to the end of another so as to remind oneself that it is not solely for one's own benefit that one practises but also for the happiness of all beings. This is particularly so where awareness of the breathing is concerned, and also the development of Insight. In this case one begins by consciously shifting the point of concentration from the object of the previous practice to the heart. Then one begins by directing loving kindness toward oneself and, once that is confirmed, widening the focus to include all beings. In this one may also make space towards the end to include particular recipients. These are traditionally listed as one's teachers, family, relatives and friends and those you know who are in special need. Exceptionally concentrated meditators have used the practice in this way as a healing meditation.

Much the same graduated exercise is suggested for developing the other three sublime states, but this is solely if the intention is to use them as subjects for the attainment of absorption. In each case it is said that access concentration and its accompanying sign arise when one has truly broken down all distinctions. The four may, however, be developed as a set. In this case one begins by establishing loving-kindness until it encompasses

all beings with controlled concentration. One may then change focus by bringing to mind all beings at the moment of suffering in order to engender compassion; all beings at the moment of enjoyment to engender sympathetic joy. Abandoning these circumstantial restrictions, one then travels beyond to the state of total acceptance which is equanimity.

Those who make the development of the four illimitables a regular and sustained practice are said to obtain several advantages. They sleep easily, have no evil dreams and wake in comfort. They are dear to humans and non-humans alike, and seem to lead a charmed life (the phrase means literally 'one guarded by the gods'); they are immune to fire, poison and weapons. Their expression is serene and their mind is easily concentrated; when they die it is with a clear and untroubled consciousness. After death, if they have not already attained liberation, their rebirth will be in accord with their practice.

May it be so for you, too.




A Ten Day Course in Insight Meditation





DAY ONE

Vipassanā Bhāvanā

 *ipassanā* is an essential practice for anyone seeking to gain happiness and liberation from suffering. It is a technique that can be practised by anyone and has no sectarian limitations; one's caste, colour, creed or gender have no bearing upon it. Although it is popularly known as Insight Meditation in the West, it is important to remember that the word meditation is used differently in Buddhism than in other religious traditions. The word *Vipassanā* is a combination of two words: *vi* meaning 'especially', 'in a special way', and *passanā* meaning 'seeing things'. In this case seeing also means understanding, in the sense of seeing things that are beyond the scope of the human eye. One whose mind is not trained cannot see things as they really are. Only a person whose mind is highly disciplined and developed can penetrate to that truth. Insight Meditation, in other words, is a technique through which one can achieve the state of Enlightenment.

When we speak of exercising Insight in the *Vipassanā* tradition, it means that we are following the Noble Eightfold Path as taught by the Buddha. However, meditation by itself is not actually the Noble Path, rather it is a preliminary step, a means of access to the Noble Path. Without taking this all-important first step we cannot set foot on the Path. The practice is, therefore extremely important to our future welfare.

Instruction

Having formally taken the Eight Precepts for lay people on retreat, you are now committed to moral practice. If there are any monks or nuns present among the meditators, they will need to purify their respective rules and precepts. Once they have done this they can begin to meditate. But, first, I want to say something about the three additional precepts to the five you are familiar with. In fact you have taken nine, since in these

conditions the seventh and eighth are counted as one. You may also have noticed that the third precept has a different wording to the one you usually repeat. In place of misuse of the senses (*kamesu miccacara*), you have promised to refrain from *abrahmacariya*, conduct unbecoming to one training in monastic conditions. In other words, you are temporarily under the rule of total chastity.

The rules are in fact those given to novices, except that you are not required to refrain from handling money. Not that you will get much chance to do so, in any case, since you are confined to the place of retreat! It does mean, however, that you will not be eating after the midday meal. This sixth rule was originally given so that monks begging for food did not burden householders too much. But there is a practical reason beyond that. You will notice that concentration will sharpen once the food is digested and that the attention takes hold of its objects much more sharply and precisely.

The seventh precept is that of refraining from occupying the mind with vanity and distracting entertainments, with dressing up and going out for the night. You don't need jewellery and scent in order to meditate! On a more serious note, loose rather than tight clothes are essential if you are to be comfortable sitting for long periods of time. In place of noise and babble, you will be substituting the noble silence. Hopefully, this will extend to your thought processes too. This means that not only does one not talk about anything, even Buddhism and meditation, but one also refrains from reading, writing or engaging in any activity other than meditation. The mind must be constantly occupied with the ordinary process of living and not taken away from it by the thousand and one things we use to avoid reality. The aim, let us remind ourselves again, is personally to see things as they really are, not to clutter our minds with the opinions of others about them. Please bear in mind that everyone has come here to meditate and talking disturbs not only your own practice but that of the other meditators too. Everyone is expected to observe this rule strictly. But if there is something that you really need, please ask the retreat manager for assistance.

The eighth precept also contributes towards keeping the mind fixed on its object. We renounce the distractions of luxury, high seats and beds, soft furnishings. In the old days use of such things was a sign of rank, so what we are renouncing as well is too keen a sense of ourselves. We are leaving who we think we are beyond the shrine-room door. In here, hopefully, we shall come to a rather different knowledge about even that.

The timetable for this retreat has been devised for your benefit. You are asked to follow it strictly and to take note of the times for the group sittings. Please make sure you enter the meditation hall before each session begins. If you do not attend these sessions daily then you will miss important

instructions. Also, you should not leave the hall without good reason. It is important that everyone follows all these rules as they are for your benefit. You should regard yourselves as being like members of the Order who live together in a monastery and have to abide by certain rules as part of their moral observance. By keeping the rules for this retreat you too are practising moral discipline.

The Preliminary Practice

We shall begin this retreat by developing concentration as a foundation for awareness. In order to do this we need to take a single object and maintain awareness of it steadily. For our purposes we shall take respiration as our meditation object. Different teachers use different techniques for this practice. Some teachers may tell you to concentrate on the breath as you take in air through the nostrils and follow it all the way down to the abdomen and then upwards from the abdomen to the tip of the nostrils as you breathe out. Other teachers may tell you to concentrate on the chest area as you inhale and exhale. Then there is the practice taught by Mahasi Sayadaw of Myanmar, one of the great meditation teachers of the 20th century. It was he who developed and then introduced a technique of meditation which involves the meditator noting the rise and fall of the abdomen as one inhales and exhales. His technique also includes mindfulness of sitting, touch and so forth.

However, we shall be using the traditional method which requires the meditator to focus attention at the nostrils. As you breathe in, just be aware of the intake of air at the nostrils; as you breathe out just be aware of the exhalation of the breath at the nostrils. It is not necessary for you to follow the passage of the breath round the body but only to have objective awareness of the sensation of the incoming and outgoing breath at the nostrils. You must be as watchful and objective as the keeper of a tollgate who carefully watches all those who pass in and out but is not concerned about where they are coming from or going to. You should breathe naturally and normally. You need not breathe in and out in a particular or controlled way or at a different rate as, for example, one is required to do when practising *Pranāyāma* in Yoga.

You need not assume a special sitting posture either, but you should choose one that suits you and can be maintained for long periods of time. It is recommended that you sit up straight. Whether you sit cross-legged on the floor or on a chair is immaterial, but it is most important that you keep the spine upright and hold the body erect but not rigid. Sitting up straight may feel strange at first but you will get used to it and find this is the best posture for meditation practice. Anyone here who already practises the technique of watching the rising and falling process of the abdomen and is satisfied with it, and finds it useful for the development of

awareness and concentration, should continue to practise it. The most important thing is to choose one method and follow it for the duration of the course. Please do not change your technique during the course.

Meditators will be practising both sitting and walking meditation as indicated at the times shown on the timetable. During walking meditation the first thing you will need to do is be aware of three distinct stages in every step: lifting the foot, moving it forward and placing it on the floor. Later on you will be given additional instructions. Having sat for an hour, some meditators may feel the need to relax and think this is the purpose of walking meditation, but they are mistaken. Walking meditation itself is a very useful technique for the further development of awareness and concentration. Anyone who practises it correctly will find it helpful. Both sitting and walking should be seen as one continuous practice, the aim of which is to improve one's concentration and sharpen one's awareness. Maintaining this continuity is both important and beneficial. Please follow exactly whatever instructions I have given you and do not deviate from them or expand them as you will be given further instructions each day according to your progress.

Putting the Practice in Context

To help you understand clearly why you have to practise meditation, I would like to clarify this by first asking and answering four questions.

Q1. *Why does one need training?* you may wonder. The answer is that the untrained mind is dangerous and the source of all suffering. Whatever problems we experience in our lives, such as unhappiness, grief, despair, jealousy, envy and so forth, are due to an impure mind. Craving, anger and delusion will arise in a mind without discipline and produce suffering. The untamed, untrained mind is more dangerous than a wild animal. If we do not tame it, then we cannot control it; as a consequence we will suffer here and now and in future rebirths.

Wild animals are many and they may attack and injure or even kill us, although only in this lifetime. If, however, we do not tame our wild mind it will cause us to do various unwholesome actions as a result of which we will suffer not only in this lifetime but in countless lives to come. Learning to meditate will give us a means by which we can train this unruly mind. We meditate in order to achieve the discipline and purity of mind that will enable us to put an end to the endless cycle of suffering and rebirth.

Q2. *How do we meditate?* There are as many answers to this question as there are Buddhist schools and traditions. Every school had its own approach to meditation and each teacher will favour a particular meditation technique and way of explaining it. Moreover, it cannot be said that one

method is better than another as every technique is meant to suit the individual meditator's temperament. One method may suit one type of person but not another.

After the Buddha and his perfected disciples had spent the first Rains Retreat in the Deer Park at Varanasi, he sent them out to teach. Before they left he told them to 'proclaim the teaching which is good in the beginning, good in the middle, and good in the end for the benefit and happiness of many'. He carefully chose the word 'many' (*bhahujana*), implying that it would not suit everyone. It is the same for us, as the technique we are using here will only benefit those for whom it is suitable. The technique of Insight meditation is itself quite a simple one and not difficult to explain. Practising it, however, may not be as easy as one might think. Its simplicity is such that a child of seven years could easily understand it although a man of seventy would find it difficult to practise. This is true of all meditation techniques and so you will need to be patient and to persevere.

When I was living in the Indian city of Varanasi, there were several people helping to build a temple there. Among them was a young boy of about ten or twelve years. He used to say to me that he thought monks had an easy life since, unlike him, they did not have to work hard; they just sat and meditated all day. I asked him how much money he earned and he told me he made just two rupees, about twenty pence for a day's work. Eventually I said to him, 'Don't go to work today; come with me to the temple to meditate for one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon and I'll give you five rupees'. He was delighted with the idea and eager to begin so I took him to the main temple and explained to him how he had to observe his breaths. Once he understood, he began to meditate. Ten minutes into his practice he began to look here and there; twenty minutes later he gave up altogether. He did not want five rupees, he said, because he could not sit for such a long time; for him, working hard all day outside in the sun was better than being in the temple trying to sit still.

You have already been told how to keep your attention at the nostrils. When your concentration has improved to some extent, you will need to focus your awareness not only on the breaths but also on whatever feelings, thoughts and sense data you may experience. Your awareness must be very precise and objective. Initially you will find it difficult to practise and be distracted by all these phenomena arising in the mind and body, but do not become discouraged. It is very important that you practise this technique step by step and try to be mindful of whatever physical and mental phenomena arise from moment to moment. That is why this technique is called mindfulness or awareness meditation.

Q3. *What is the goal of meditation?* The answer to this question is very simple. The goal of meditation is liberation. For Buddhists, liberation does

not mean that one is reborn in heaven or reunited with God. According to the Buddha's teaching, it means that through developing and purifying the mind one becomes free from the bondages of craving, anger and delusion. As long as we are bound by these mental defilements we will be trapped on the wheel of becoming.

Whether one is born as a human being or in a spiritual realm to pass countless aeons experiencing the bliss of the meditative absorptions, all beings are subject to birth, decay and death because of such defilements. But if we are able to break these bonds through the practice of insight, then we will be free from suffering. This is what Buddhism terms cessation. Why? Because through insight, suffering and the causes of suffering cease. The bonds of greed, hatred and delusion have been cut and the mind is made pure. All the defilements have been eradicated, no more kamma can be made and so suffering and rebirth cease. Both Buddhists and Hindus strive for Liberation and both believe that it is achieved by breaking those chains of existence that are the defilements and their results.

Q4. *How do we escape the wheel of becoming?* The answer is very similar to the previous one about the goal of meditation, but it implies not only the goal of liberation and deliverance from rebirth but also how people live their life before reaching that goal. That depends upon having fulfilled the ten perfections of generosity (*dāna*), morality (*sīla*), renunciation (*nekkhamma*), wisdom (*paññā*), energy (*virīya*), patience (*khantī*), truthfulness (*sacca*), resolution (*adhiṭṭhāna*), loving-kindness (*mettā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*). The state of liberation is not difficult to attain for those who already have accumulated them; and they can be liberated here and now in this very lifetime. Those who have yet to fulfil the perfections will need more time and effort before they can eradicate the defilements and attain liberation. Meditation will aid them personally and help them live in harmony with others. If they persevere, they too will attain freedom eventually.

Only a few who listened to the Buddha's discourses became liberated. However, there were others who were inspired by what they heard and decided to practise what they were taught so that their lives changed for the better. Even so, there were many others whose lives changed not at all after having heard the Buddha preach. On one occasion, the Buddha was walking in a forest and, picking up a handful of leaves, asked his monks, 'How many leaves are there in my hand compared with those still in the forest?' The monks answered that the leaves in his hand were very few in comparison. Then the Buddha said, 'So, monks, those who understand and follow the teaching are as few as the leaves in my hand, but there are countless others, as many as the leaves in the forest, who do not understand or practise it in their lives.'

The same is true for you. Even though you may try hard to practise meditation, you may not reach the final goal in a short time. Even so, as a result of your practice you will have gained some benefit. As I explained before, first of all you have to learn how to watch your in-breaths and at the nostrils objectively and precisely. Then with practice awareness will grow of whatever mental and physical phenomena arise in the mind. This is your task and the answer to the question of how you progress. You need to be only a passive observer of your own thoughts, feelings and emotions and not to react to any of them. Just watch all of them arise and pass away, remaining detached from what is going on. If you do this, you will find the mind becomes balanced and you will be able to live in harmony with yourself and with others as well. This balance of mind and harmony is what you need and should be aiming for in your daily lives. At the very least, through cultivating awareness and detachment your life will change for the better. Meditation will have taught you how to live happily and share what you have gained with others.

The Dhamma has many good qualities of which one is *sandiṭṭhika*, meaning that the results of practice depend on your making a proper and consistent effort. Another quality is *akālika*, which means that these results can be experienced here and now, rather than later. All you need do is act on the Buddha's invitation, *ehi passiko*, 'come and see'; explore the teaching for yourselves and by practising it learn to develop your mind and deepen your insight and understanding. Blind belief in the system is not demanded; if you practise diligently you will find out for yourself what benefit you get from it. You will understand the Four Noble Truths in terms of your own experience and eventually free yourself from suffering of every kind.

There is an old Chinese saying that 'the journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step'. All of you here have already taken the first steps on the Buddha's Path. The journey is a long one but if you follow this path you will be treading in the footsteps of the Buddha and his perfected disciples. So I encourage you to follow this path towards Liberation. It is the path for happiness and leads to Enlightenment. May all of you experience through its means the ultimate peace within.

DAY TWO

Instruction

The Fickle Mind

There will be many meditators who find it difficult to concentrate on the flow of the breath as it enters and leaves the nostrils. Though this exercise seems easy, after just a few minutes of trying to concentrate on the object you find it isn't easy at all. Your attention soon wanders and you cannot keep it focused. When this happens you may feel disappointed, frustrated or worried. There is no need to, it is quite normal for the mind, which is unruly by nature, to wander off the object and flit from one thing to another. The whole point of choosing one object to concentrate on is to tame the mind and train it to concentrate. Success will come eventually, but you will need to persevere and be patient. If you worry and feel discouraged, then you will not be able to meditate. A certain gentleness is called for in dealing with something as fickle and unsteady as the mind.

The Buddha once spoke of the mind's nature thus:

*The flickering, fickle mind is difficult to guard, difficult to control;
the wise person straightens it as an archer straightens an arrow.*

(Dhammapada, Verse 33)

In ancient times hunters used to fashion arrows from bamboo. If the arrow was not straight, then they had to straighten it gradually by heating it slowly over a fire. This was a task requiring great patience and care. Similarly, meditators need to exercise care and patience when trying to improve their concentration.

The moment you become aware that your mind has strayed off the object, you must gently bring it back and focus your attention on the breath. If this task proves too difficult, then you can employ the following

method: as you breathe in, mentally say to yourself 'in', and as you breathe out say 'out'. Be precise and objective when doing so. Persevere with this exercise and continue saying to yourself 'in - out' as you inhale and exhale; whenever your attention wavers, focus again on the breath. Even though you may still find it difficult to maintain your concentration continuously, do not give up. It is helpful to make a firm resolution to be mindful of (say) twenty-five breaths without a break in concentration. When you succeed in doing this, then increase the number of breaths to thirty-five or fifty. If you do not abandon your resolve, then eventually you will notice your concentration has improved.

As you continue meditating there are many other distractions apart from a wandering mind which can arise and disturb your practice - external sounds, memories, physical discomfort and pain. If you hear a sound, pay no attention to it but give more attention to the breath at the nostrils. Even though the sound continues, ignore it and keep your attention fixed on the object. Should you see an image in your mind's eye, ignore that too. At this stage in the practice a meditator needs to develop greater concentration and awareness. When such distractions and thoughts arise, try to keep your concentration unbroken. The moment you notice your attention had been diverted from the object, instantly bring it back to the breath at the nostrils until doing so becomes an automatic response. Through applying bare attention to the breath and mentally saying 'in - out' with every inhalation and exhalation, eventually all distractions will disappear.

It is not uncommon for meditators to feel physical pain and discomfort after prolonged sitting. Should you feel such discomfort, you must disregard it because dwelling on it will only make it worse and you may become annoyed or angry. Once again, the correct thing to do is to give your undivided attention to the in and out breaths and pay no mind to anything else. In our technique the way a meditator is told to respond to distractions differs from that of others. For instance, some teachers will recommend that as soon as a meditator sees an image in the mind's eye then they must mentally note it as 'seeing'. Whenever a sound is heard it is to be noted as 'hearing'. Likewise 'smelling', 'tasting' or 'touching' as appropriate. This method of meditating on the distraction itself is said to help one to develop better awareness and concentration. However, the meditation technique that you are practising demands a different approach. At the beginning of practice, whenever you are distracted by any sound, mental image or sensation, do not meditate on it but carry on giving your full attention to the in and out breaths. After meditating for a few days you will understand why you need not note or name any sight, sound, smell, taste, feeling, thought or memory which may arise. At this stage your task is simply to be mindful of the breath. If you follow these instructions exactly you will find that your awareness and concentration will improve.

The two things to remember at this stage, then, are to keep bringing the mind back to its assigned object and not to be put off by distractions. It is the same with walking meditation, too. As you begin to walk, do not look at the body but try to be aware of its movements alone. Your task is to be aware of the sensation of movement in your body as you walk. Pay close attention to the three stages involved in each step: lifting the foot, moving it forward and the sensation of touching as you place it on the floor.

As you practise, you can control your walking by being mindful of your breathing. As you breathe in and out, give your awareness to the lifting, the forward movement and touch with every step you take. If you can practise your walking through control of the breath, then your awareness will improve to some extent; you may even find that walking meditation is more beneficial for you than the sitting practice. Be sure to walk very slowly, keeping the mind vigilant and aware. Follow these instructions until you are given additional ones. During the walking sessions you may see things, hear sounds or have thoughts going through your mind; do not pay any attention to these distractions as this will hinder the development of your meditation practice. As you watch both the breath and the three stages of the steps, do so objectively as a passive observer. It is important not to bring the thought 'I am doing this' into it. Developing an objective awareness as you walk is your task and the main aim of the walking practice. As the course proceeds you will appreciate how important objective awareness is for your progress.

Dhamma Talk

Freedom of Thought

Nowadays, Buddhism and Buddhist meditation is known all over the world and there are few places on Earth where one or the other is not found. There are a number of reasons why the Buddha-Dhamma is so widespread and popular. The main one is that many people, particularly in the West, see Buddhism not as an organized religion demanding obedience but as a way of life, a discipline one freely chooses to follow. The Buddha believed in and taught freedom of thought. He encouraged people not to believe in his teachings blindly but to investigate them first and then decide either to accept or reject them.

In his own time a group of people called the Kālāmas were perplexed by the diversity of doctrines taught by travelling teachers and asked the Buddha's advice on how to deal with them. He responded in these robust terms:

Do not be led by report, by tradition, hearsay or the authority of religious texts; by claims of knowledge and truth that are based on any type of reasoning or speculation, or on the basis of the reliability of the person; do not be led even by respect for your teacher. Rather, Kālāmas, when you know for yourself that these things are unprofitable, blameworthy and conduce to loss and sorrow, then indeed you should reject them. And when you know for yourself that certain things are profitable, blameless and conduce to profit and happiness, then indeed you should accept them and abide by them.

Rather than demanding faith, the Buddha invites people to test his teaching for themselves. Unlike the founders of the other major religions, he never claimed to be anything other than a human being. Even though he had perfected himself and attained enlightenment, he had no more than fulfilled the potential inherent in all human beings. Moreover, he assumed no special role other than that of head of his monastic order. This contrasts with the Christian belief that Jesus was the Son of God and the long awaited Messiah, their saviour and redeemer. Christians are not entitled to salvation unless they believe in God and Christ's teachings. Similarly Mohammed, the founder of Islam, declared he was the last prophet to be sent by Allah. In order to be saved a Muslim must believe in Allah and that the prophet (peace be upon him) was personally instructed by Allah.

The Buddha made no such claims or demands. He was born as a human being and lived a normal human life. He depended on no one but himself to realize the truth and gain deliverance from suffering. After his Enlightenment he attributed all of his realizations, attainments and achievements to human effort and intelligence. He taught self-reliance and told people that he was just a guide, someone who could show them the path, but not a giver of salvation. The Buddha was not a god nor a divine emissary sent to save people whilst they did nothing to save themselves. Gotama the man was not born a Buddha, he became one. Having attained Buddhahood, Gotama transcended the human state mentally but his human existence continued as normal. He never claimed he could save anyone or grant them liberation from suffering. He only taught that every human being has the potential ability to achieve Enlightenment if they follow the way he had trained himself and strive for it ardently and diligently.

Another factor which was responsible for his teaching's spread and popularity was the Buddha's personality. Having eradicated every defilement, his mind was very pure and bright. His great achievement was also reflected in his personality, his physical appearance, his manner and the way he interacted with people. People found him to be a compassionate, modest and wise person. His attainment did not alter his humanity nor the way he lived the simple life of a monk. He devoted the rest of his life to

teaching and guiding others along the path of purification that he himself had taken.

Following enlightenment, the Buddha declared, 'I attained security from bondage; knowledge and vision arose in me, an unshakeable deliverance of mind'. His own experience of suffering and his profound understanding of both its cause and cure well qualified him to share his knowledge and wisdom with others. He taught them what he had himself discovered, the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path and how to train and tame the mind through meditation. Throughout his life the Buddha was an example and an inspiration. Even today we can be guided by the Buddha and benefit from investigating what he taught. We need only practise according to his instructions, not forgetting his reminder that he is only the finger post. If we follow his guidance and take the matter of liberation into our own hands, striving for it diligently, then we too can become liberated. We can begin to do this here and now on this retreat by practising the awareness, insight and wisdom that will be our salvation.

Insight meditation involves no religious rites or rituals. It is a spiritual practice for the purification of the mind. It can be mastered by anyone, irrespective of their cultural or religious background, so long as they are willing to make the necessary effort. It is important to remember always that neither the Buddha nor anyone can do this for us. It's up to us, alone. When we practise we are following in the Buddha's footsteps, but the training is freely offered to one and all and a person need not be a Buddhist to follow it. Anyone who incorporates the practice into their daily life will experience its benefits immediately.

Over the next few days I shall be explaining what constitutes the Noble Eightfold Path. It is made up of the three disciplines of morality, concentration and wisdom. Though these three modes of training must be practised simultaneously, morality is the necessary basis from which to begin. Of the eight steps of the Noble Path, Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood constitute the practice of morality. Here the word 'Right' (*Samma*) should not be interpreted simply as meaning the opposite of wrong. For example, if someone were to speak about truth, religious or devotional matters, whatever was said would not be wrong but, as far as the Path is concerned, it would have nothing to do with Right Speech. Even though what is said is good and fine, it still could not be so described. In the context of the Path the word 'Right' is defined as meaning to refrain from wrong speech (or wrong action, or wrong livelihood). The moment one does so then it may be said that one's speech is Right Speech, one's action is Right Action and one's livelihood is Right Livelihood.

Furthermore, whether one's words, actions or means of livelihood are morally right is dependent upon one's mental state - specifically upon the intention behind one's words, actions or manner of earning a living. So if

we happen to be speaking untruthfully, or performing an unwholesome action or pursuing an unwholesome way of earning a living, as soon as we realize that what we are doing is wrong and stems from a wrong intention, we should immediately desist. We are then practising Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood. The Buddha used the word *virati* to express this idea of the intention to refrain from doing wrong. It is the intention to refrain from what is wrong that is important in practising morality.

The Buddha taught that there were four kinds of Wrong Speech. These are: speaking untruthfully or lying; backbiting or telling tales; harsh speech; and frivolous or useless speech. To refrain from these is Right Speech. Whatever we say is actually a manifestation of our state of mind and reflects our intention. Whenever we abstain from using wrong speech, it means we have abandoned a wrong mental attitude and because our mind is pure we are disposed to speak truthfully and use beneficial words. It is important to understand that volition is what underlies action and it is volition that is manifested in Wrong Speech as well as in Right Speech. One needs, therefore, to appreciate the importance of awareness, as without it one would be unable to practise morality. This is also one reason why the simultaneous practice of all the steps on the Noble Eightfold path is so very necessary.

The Buddha further taught that there are three kinds of wrong action and these are to kill or harm any living being, to steal, and to misuse the senses (which especially encompasses sexual misconduct). To refrain from these immoral acts constitutes Right Action. If one were to help build a pagoda, or offer monks alms-food, or makes an offering of flowers and incense at a shrine, these deeds are certainly good, but in the context of the Path they are not what is meant by Right Action. Such actions are defined as wholesome (*kusala kamma*) rather than Right Action (*sammā kamanta*).

Right Action has to do with what is performed using the body. Whether bodily actions are deemed good or bad depends, as in the case of Right Speech, on one's state of mind and intention. Any action done with an impure mind is called unwholesome action; any action done with a pure mind is wholesome. Nevertheless, no action can be judged as being either wholesome or unwholesome by how it appears. What determines the wholesomeness or unwholesomeness of any action is the person's state of mind at the time it is carried out. Awareness in action is very important because unless we have it we cannot be aware of our state of mind or what we are doing or saying. It is because of a lack of awareness that we fail to recognise wrong states of mind and this leads us to do wrong actions. If we wish to do good and refrain from unwholesome words and deeds, then we have to increase our sensitivity through practising awareness.

The Buddha taught that Right Livelihood means one does not earn one's living by immoral means such as killing or harming another being or

dealing in weapons or harmful substances. People who live practising Right Speech and Right Action are better able to practise Right Livelihood than those who do not. Those who are given to speaking harsh words and violating the other moral precepts as a means of earning a living would be practising Wrong Livelihood. If such actions are not connected to their livelihood, then they are simply called unwholesome. Awareness helps one to live by the Noble Eightfold Path since by always being aware of one's state of mind one can observe morality perfectly. Merely taking and observing the precepts is not enough for one's purification. To purify the mind fully one needs to train oneself daily in the practice of morality, concentration and wisdom. Such is the Path of Purification leading to Deliverance.



DAY THREE

Instruction

The Three Phases of the Breath

You will have realized by now that meditation is not an easy task to perfect after just two days of practice. Even though you are only trying to keep your attention fixed on the breath as it flows in and out of the nostrils, your mind keeps wandering. This happens because you have yet to perfect the ability to concentrate from moment to moment. Despite your effort to watch the breath constantly, there is a lapse in your attention and you quickly lose track of the breath as it comes in and goes out. This happens because there is a gap in the process of breathing. When you breathe in you are aware of the in-breath very quickly, very promptly, but as you wait for the out-breath to come there is a gap between the two phases of the breath and you are aware of that gap. This is the point at which the mind is inclined to stray. What you need to do in this case is to keep watching each in-breath and out-breath in three phases, the beginning, the middle and the end. As you do this, breathe normally and naturally, do not alter the rate at which you breathe. When you breathe in, be mindful of the three phases of the in-breath, its beginning, middle and end, and maintain full awareness until the out-breath starts. As you breathe out, be aware of the three phases of the out-breath and maintain your awareness until the next in-breath starts. If you do not let your attention lapse during the interval between, then your mind will not stray.

Should the mind begin to wander, or if any thoughts arise, be sure to give your bare attention to the three phases of both the in and out breaths. If you experience any sensations of pain, pressure, heat or tingling anywhere in the body, or anything else, do not pay any attention to them but continue giving your full attention to the breath process. If you suffer great discomfort whilst sitting then you may change your position, but do so slowly and mindfully and be careful not to disturb others. Do not change

your position frequently. Try to maintain awareness of the entire process of breathing and always focus your attention on the nostrils. If you are disturbed by stray thoughts or anything else, do not worry or feel disappointed for that will distract you. You should think, 'It is the nature of the mind to wander but my task is to keep the mind on the entire breath process at the nostrils and to bring the attention back gently whenever it strays.' If you practise with great effort and resolve then you will find your ability to concentrate will improve and your understanding of the mind will deepen.

During the period of walking meditation, you are to observe not three, but five movements of the feet: lifting, raising, moving the foot forwards, lowering and touching or placing it on the ground. As you start to practise, keep your attention fixed on nothing but the lifting movement as you lift each foot. Likewise, as you move the foot forwards, be aware of the forward movement only; and as the foot touches the ground be aware only of it touching the ground. Remember, you must not look directly at your foot but visualize these movements in your mind and keep 'watching' them mentally, paying close attention to all five movements of the walking process from start to finish. In this practice you must assign names to each stage of walking in order to gain better control over the mind as you walk. If you do not name them then the main aim of this exercise will not be realized and your practice will lack the necessary discipline. Mindfulness should arise at the precise moment each movement is begun and be maintained throughout. Keep watching everything objectively; do not walk quickly but try to slow down your walking movements as much as you can. When you resume sitting practice, remember to be aware of every movement, should you need to move, just as when doing the walking practice.

Dhamma Talk

Concentration

Of the eight steps of the Noble Eightfold Path, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration constitute the practice of *Samādhi* or Concentration. In Buddhism this is defined as concentration attained through mental discipline. The three steps are working factors and must be well developed, otherwise morality and wisdom cannot be fully perfected.

There are four types of Right Effort. The first involves making an energetic effort to prevent evil and unwholesome states from arising in the mind. The second is the effort one makes to uproot any evil and unwholesome states that have already arisen. The third is one's effort to encourage the arising of good and wholesome states in the mind which have not yet arisen. The fourth concerns developing and perfecting those good and

wholesome states which are already present. These four Right Efforts are regarded as being present if during a meditation course the meditator is consistently diligent in developing awareness and concentration on a particular object and maintaining it from moment to moment. For example, if the meditator tries to develop awareness by choosing the object of in-breath and out-breath, since awareness arises constantly and precisely there is no moment during which any new impurities or negative thoughts can arise. Also, because awareness is maintained continually, the mind is gradually cleansed of any negative, unwholesome states that are present. Therefore, if the meditator makes an effort to develop awareness of the object continually, the impure mind is thereby cleansed. The fourfold effort to dispel all mental impurities and develop pure mental states is what is meant by exercising Right Effort.

Right Mindfulness is pure awareness. Awareness can be said to have been activated when the mind selects a single object and then applies unwavering attention to it. Right Mindfulness cannot be practised without fixing one's attention on a particular object and with this aim in mind the Buddha taught the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. These are described in the discourse known as the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, 'The Setting-Up of Mindfulness'. According to this, Right Mindfulness can be established through mindful awareness of body, feelings, mind and mental objects. The aim of practising Insight meditation is to achieve liberation, but in order to develop it one has to train the mind to focus on these four foundations of mindfulness. Any part of the body or any bodily activity is the least difficult object to cultivate. To watch the process of breathing by centering on a localised point constitutes the practice of establishing mindfulness through contemplating the body.

The meditation technique you are using requires that you take respiration as your object. When you begin to learn this technique the first thing you need to learn is how to develop objective and precise awareness. To do this properly you must exert Right Effort. Without Right Effort one cannot develop awareness or maintain it continually. As this meditation course proceeds you will learn to meditate intensively and, in due course, you will find that you can be mindful not only of the body and its activities, but also you will learn to be aware of all kinds of feelings, states of mind and mental objects. These things will be explained in more detail later on. When you are aware of a single object and your undivided attention is fixed on it from moment to moment, such one-pointedness of mind is called Concentration. Without this sustained attention of the mind gaining insight into things as they really are is impossible.

By now the meditator should have realised that Right Effort, Right Awareness and Right Concentration are only different aspects of the same thing. According to the Buddha there are three kinds of Samādhi: access

concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*), absorption concentration, also called the Jhānic states (*appanā-samādhi*), and moment by moment concentration (*khaṇika-samādhi*). The aim of the practice is to achieve meditative absorption. When one's mind is free from the five mental hindrances and absorbed with an object, there arise five kinds of mental factors: initial application (*vitakka*), sustained application (*vicāra*), joy (*pīti*), happiness (*sukha*) and one-pointedness of mind (*ekaggatā*). When the mind arises with these five factors it is absorbed in the object totally. This state is called tranquility of mind and is far subtler than the others.

If the mind becomes free from the hindrances during meditation and remains so for some time, then one experiences a kind of tranquility but, as soon as the mental hindrances arise again, it is lost. Although your ability to sustain one-pointedness of mind on the object may not have lasted very long you have, nevertheless, achieved some degree of concentration, specifically access concentration. Having done this you are now ready to begin to practise Insight Meditation. Access concentration is the foundation so, for this reason, before beginning to practise you have to prepare your mind by practising concentration for at least two or three days. As the Buddha said, 'only the concentrated mind can see reality as it really is.' However, the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw insisted that access concentration is not an essential foundation for the practise of Vipassanā meditation. Attaining moment by moment concentration helps one to develop insight. When we observe any particular object, awareness arises; at the same time, one-pointedness of mind or concentration also arises.

Moment by moment concentration is so named because when one starts to practise Insight Meditation one has to remain aware not only of one particular object but of anything and everything which arises in the mind or body from one moment to the next. Every meditator needs to be aware of all these psychophysical processes at the very moment they arise. As awareness arises from moment to moment, focussing on different objects, one-pointedness of mind arises simultaneously. The meditator needs to understand that there are, in fact, two different kinds of concentration: access concentration and absorption concentration, both of which can be developed only when one gives full attention to one chosen object. Moment by moment concentration, however, need not have a particular object as it will manifest whenever the meditator applies awareness to any mental or physical objects.

As the course continues and you persevere with your efforts to develop and maintain constant awareness and concentration, the problems which you experienced initially, such as physical discomfort and pain and a wavering mind, disappear and your level of awareness and concentration is much improved. However, other distractions or hindrances can arise in the mind and body which are so subtle that you may not realise that they

too are hindrances. This is quite normal. As you strive to make further progress in meditation it is quite common for five hindrances in particular to appear. These are: craving or desire (*kāmacchanda*), ill-will or anger (*byāpādā*), sloth and torpor (*thina-middha*), restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*) and doubt (*vicikiccha*). In the case of craving it means rather more that the meditator is developing some kind of desire or feeling for a sensual object. There can be other cravings which arise in the mind. For instance, when you experience some improvement in your concentration you immediately want more than this. This wanting more is also a form of craving. It arises in a very subtle way and becomes a hindrance to further progress in your meditation practice. Likewise you may want to change your sitting position despite the fact that you are sitting comfortably, just for a change. Wanting to do this or anything else is also a form of desire and a hindrance to your progress.

As far as the hindrance of anger or ill-will is concerned, it is more than feeling angry with another person. Anger can arise and be directed towards oneself when, for instance, after trying very hard to improve your practice, you are still not satisfied with the results. This feeling is another form of anger. Similarly, it may happen that you hear a sound coming from outside and become vexed. All these instances are examples of the hindrance of anger which arises in a very subtle way and interrupts your meditation.

The hindrance of 'sloth and torpor' is usually experienced by everyone within a few days of starting to practise meditation. Usually a meditator's efforts to concentrate and remain aware have begun to yield substantial results after one or two days. Then suddenly one experiences a loss of energy or feels drowsy and may be overcome by sleep. When this happens it is actually a sign of progress. Whenever a meditator fails to achieve his or her expectations in this way then the hindrance of agitation and worry is experienced. This hindrance arises not because of a lack of progress but because the ultimate goal is yet to be achieved. Sometimes the meditator knows that some progress has been made but, failing to be satisfied with this, he or she may become agitated or worried and these feelings will hinder further progress.

The fifth hindrance is doubt and is specifically related to doubts about the Three Refuges, the meditation technique or the teacher. If you lose confidence in these then there is no way in which you can make progress in your meditation. Doubt most often arises whenever you have not achieved the goal you anticipated. You start to lose confidence in your ability to meditate and further progress is hindered. At this stage, whenever any of these hindrances arise whilst you are practising, try not to think about them but make an effort to give greater attention to the nostrils. If you direct bare attention to the in-breaths and out-breaths very precisely then your mindfulness will steadily improve and eventually all the hindrances will vanish.

There is no reason why you should be worried or upset by the five hindrances as they are, in fact, indicative of your progress in meditation. If a meditator experiences none of the hindrances this means no progress has been made. But, whenever they do arise, you need to exert yourself more so as to keep the attention focused solely on the meditation object. With perseverance all the hindrances will disappear and the meditative absorptions already mentioned will take their place. Thus, initial application dispels sloth and torpor, sustained application dispels doubt, joy dispels anger, happiness dispels restlessness and worry, and one-pointedness of mind dispels sensual craving.

The characteristic function of initial application is to direct the mind towards the object of meditation, whereas when sloth and torpor arise one feels tired and lazy. With the arising of initial application, sloth and torpor disappear as the two cannot co-exist. The function of sustained application is to help the mind stay fixed on the object and it dispels doubt and steadies a wavering mind. The characteristic of joy is delight in an object, whereas anger is the opposite and is dispelled by joy. Happiness is characterised by calmness and this dispels restlessness and worry. The function of one-pointedness of mind is to strengthen concentration on the meditation object; with sensual craving banished the mind no longer wants to dwell on other things.

In order to master this technique, patience and persistent effort are required. It is very common for meditators to experience problems of body and mind. One intends to sit and meditate for an hour and yet, within a few minutes, physical pain and discomfort arise. Sometimes you may feel that you cannot sit for more than ten or twenty minutes. The unruly mind also causes you problems when you try to focus your attention on the breath or on any other object of meditation. After only a few moments you will find that you are not able to concentrate at all because the mind is flitting here and there, busy entertaining all kinds of thoughts and memories. But if you are determined to overcome these problems and keep trying to follow your instructions, you will eventually succeed. Whenever you experience any difficulties with your practice, do not be discouraged or worried but accept them patiently and keep bringing your attention back to the object of meditation.

This is the path for liberation, this is the path for happiness, this is the path for enlightenment. May all of you be well and happy! May all of you experience the ultimate peace within!

DAY FOUR

Instruction

The Touch-feeling

Today you will not be watching your in-breaths and out-breaths but focusing your attention on the touch-feeling of the breath. This means that you need not be aware of the breath itself but only the sensation of it as it touches the nostrils. Some people may feel the breath is touching at the tip of the nostrils or just inside the nose; others may sense it when it strikes the upper lip just below the nostrils. It is that touch-feeling that is now the object of your attention. As you breathe in and out you need to be aware of the place that the breath actually touches. If this sensation is not strong and clear or the point of contact is difficult to locate, then try to breathe a little deeper and longer and you will notice that your breath is actually touching somewhere. Try to be aware of that touch sensation and centre upon it. Sometimes when you breathe out you cannot sense the touch-feeling at all, or sometimes the touch-feelings of in and out breaths do not occur at the same place. This does not matter, but what does is that you are aware and mindful whenever feeling occurs. When you breathe in and breathe out the passage of air cannot pass without touching your nose area, the breath will always touch somewhere and you must keep trying to sense it. It will come with time.

Compare yourself to a carpenter. When he saws wood he pays attention to the point where the teeth are cutting through the wood; he does not focus his attention on the motion of the saw as it moves back and forth. Similarly, in this exercise you need not now give any attention to the in and out process but simply focus on the touch-feeling of the breath. This feeling may be felt over a large area of the nose or it may be just a tiny spot; large or small does not matter, just try to maintain attention objectively and precisely. If you are aware of any other feelings arising in the body, try to ignore them. But if any occur around the nose or nostril area,

then you do have to direct your attention to them. If you are able to stay mindful, you will notice that your concentration and awareness is much better than before. Please continue practising and perfecting this exercise until you are given new instructions.

For those meditators who have chosen to observe the rising and falling of the abdomen instead, it is important that they do not watch the physical rising and falling of the abdomen itself; rather they ought to be aware of the sensation of the abdomen in movement. It may happen to some meditators that the process of rising and falling becomes either very gross or quite subtle. Sometimes it can happen that the rising and falling process disappears altogether, but when this happens it need not worry you. As your awareness and concentration improves these kinds of feelings are very common. If the rising and falling process disappears from your mind then just be aware of its disappearance. It will soon reappear and you will find that you can meditate better than before.

It is very important that you are objectively aware of the movement of the abdomen precisely as it rises and falls with every breath. If you should experience any other feelings, thoughts or memories, do not pay any attention to them. Usually those who practise watching the rising and falling process are told to mentally name any other feelings as they arise. For example, if you experience pain you are instructed to mentally note it as 'pain'. If you have a feeling of tingling or itching then you are told to note it as such; whenever any thoughts or memories arise then you are told to mentally acknowledge them as 'thinking' and so forth. On this course, however, I ask you not to name anything you may experience but only to focus your attention on the sensation of rising and falling. This is necessary at this stage as later on you will have to practise mindfulness of other things, both mental and physical. For the moment, however, try to ignore such interruptions.

Dhamma Talk

Right Understanding

The significance and practical application of morality and concentration to your practice has already been explained to you. Today I would like to explain the third division of the Noble Eightfold Path, which is wisdom. Wisdom is so important that the aim of this practice is its development. Wisdom dispels ignorance and gives one spontaneous insight. The insight born of wisdom enables one to realize the Four Noble Truths and to see things as they really are, to put an end to suffering and experience the bliss of nibbānic peace.

Of the eight factors of the Noble Path, Right Understanding, and Right Thought constitute the wisdom group. In general Right Understanding is defined as the realization of the Four Noble Truths, while Right Awareness and Right Concentration are the means to this realization. In order to develop the highest wisdom one also needs to understand and practise basic Right Understanding. The Commentaries on the Buddhist Scriptures describe at length several kinds of Right Understanding. Of these there are two which are relevant to the practice of meditation - understanding of the law of Kamma and of the Four Noble Truths.

The doctrine of Kamma is the main point to grasp in the teachings of the Buddha and one needs to have a sound understanding of it before one can practise the Noble Eightfold Path. The Pāli word *kamma* literally means 'action'. The Buddha defined it as 'mental volition' (*cetanā*). Any action one performs with pure intention is wholesome, any performed with an impure intention is unwholesome. Therefore the working of Kamma is concerned not merely with external, visible actions but with the motive behind thought, word or deed. On more than one occasion the Buddha, pointed out the psychological importance of this connection. Therefore any deed devoid of will or intention cannot properly be called kamma. Moral and immoral action includes all volitional bodily and verbal actions and all volitional mental actions. Whether the action one performs is wholesome and yields good results, or unwholesome and yields evil results, depends upon one's state of mind at the moment it is done.

In order to understand the law of Kamma rightly one needs to understand the workings of the law of moral causation. That is to say, one must understand the ten karmically wholesome actions: generosity (*dāna*), morality (*sīla*), meditation (*bhāvanā*), reverence (*pacāyana*), service (*veyāvacca*), dedication of merit (*pattidāna*), rejoicing in the merit of others (*pattānumodana*), hearing the doctrine (*dharmasavaṇa*), teaching the doctrine (*dharmadesanā*) and correcting the wrong views of others (*ditṭhijukamma*). Right understanding also includes knowing about the ten unwholesome actions: killing (*pāṇātipāta*), stealing (*adinnadāna*), sexual misconduct (*kāmesu-micchācāra*), lying (*musāvāda*), slander (*pisunāvācā*), harsh speech (*pharusavācā*), gossip (*saṃphapalapavācā*), covetousness (*abhijjhā*), ill will (*byāpāda*) and wrong view (*micchāditṭhi*). Wholesome actions produce good results. They are meritorious and lead to happiness here and hereafter. Unwholesome actions have evil consequences for oneself and others. They are demeritorious and lead to suffering and unhappiness sooner or later.

The Pāli Scriptures record the story of a young man named Subha who approached the Buddha and asked him why some beings are born in a high station and others in a low one; some have long lives and others short; some are healthy, others are plagued by illness. The Buddha told him that

the reason for these inequalities in birth was Kamma. The result of their actions belongs to all beings; Kamma is their inheritance, Kamma is their origin, Kamma is their friend, Kamma is their sole refuge; as a result of whatever actions (*kamma*) they perform, good or evil, they will inevitably inherit either happiness or suffering.

Throughout the endless cycle of rebirth, the law of Kamma prevails. One who acknowledges moral causation clearly understands that it is one's own actions that make life miserable or happy. One sees that the direct cause of the differences and inequalities are the result of the good and evil actions done in past existences as well as those done in this life. The understanding of moral causation urges a thoughtful person to strive for moral and spiritual progress by ceasing to do evil, doing good and purifying the mind. This kind of understanding, even on a mundane level, paves the way for one to realize the Four Noble Truths. For the devotee it is the spur to becoming well established in the practice of morality which is the foundation on which concentration and wisdom are built.

Gotama, the Buddha-to-be, set out on his religious quest to find the cause and cure for suffering. He realized his goal by resolutely exercising right mindfulness and right concentration. This gave him the insight that would lead him to perceive and gain right understanding of suffering, which he later described as gaining knowledge of, and insight into, the Four Noble Truths. Insight born of mindfulness and concentration enabled him to perceive suffering clearly, to understand its cause, its cessation and the path leading to that end. Right understanding of the Four Noble Truths is wisdom.

Such was the Ascetic Gotama's goal and it is yours too. You can reach it by following the Buddha's example and training according to the Noble Eightfold Path which he laid down as the path to purification and deliverance. You are learning the technique of Insight Meditation in order to develop awareness, concentration and wisdom and perceive the essence of the Four Noble Truths. As soon as your awareness and wisdom are sufficiently developed you will gain knowledge and vision of the truth of suffering and at the same time, by eradicating its cause, experience its cessation.

Right Thought is that factor of the Noble Eightfold Path which constitutes wisdom. Right Thought works in conjunction with Wisdom. Right thoughts are those which are pure and free from sensuous desire, ill will and cruelty. All thoughts of good deeds are considered factors of renunciation. These may include the intention to practise acts of generosity, renunciation of selfish attachments, or practising righteousness. Practising Insight fulfils the thought of renunciation since it is a practice aimed at eliminating attachment and craving. Thoughts of not killing or not harming others, wishing others well and developing loving-kindness

render the mind free from ill will. Thoughts of non-violence, considerateness and compassion towards other beings are thoughts free from cruelty. Examples of thoughts which are not Right Thought would be those which are cruel, selfish or hateful, and all such thoughts lack wisdom.

The development of Right Understanding depends on Right Thought, as together they constitute wisdom. Right Understanding is the ability to see things as they really are and is the product of a pure mind. A mind that is defiled by thoughts of craving or ill will lacks the ability to perceive reality. Consider the analogy of the goldsmith. The quality of what he makes is dependent upon his ability to investigate and judge the quality of the gold he is going to work with. Right Thought is analogous to the goldsmith's ability to judge the quality of the gold and Right Understanding to the judgement he makes. The Buddha emphasised how important a pure mind is since the mind affects our thoughts and attitudes towards everything. If we do not have a pure mind we cannot judge things properly or see reality. The Buddha also spoke about right and wrong attitudes toward reality. When we see something and think it's no good, this is because of a wrong judgmental attitude. In order to see things as they really are we have to purify our mind through the practice of Insight. As long as our mind is not pure our thoughts are wrong thoughts, our judgement is impaired, our understanding is wrong. By striving to develop awareness and wisdom, the mind will be purified and, as with the Buddha, knowledge of the Four Noble Truths will arise in you.

There are three kinds of knowledge: that gained by reading, hearing or seeing; understanding arrived at by reasoning, analysing and contemplation; and direct experience. When we read books or hear the teaching from others, we acquire knowledge; this is the first kind of understanding. What we have gained, however, is only information. When we try to understand whatever we have read or heard by deliberating or reasoning, this is the second way of gaining knowledge. But when we actually sit down and meditate, the understanding we gain comes through direct experience; this is the third kind of knowledge. The Buddha taught that real understanding is only ever gained through direct experience. Insight Meditation is aimed at the realization of the truth by our own experience. The understanding and insight this practice gives is not discursive knowledge but wisdom.

When you practise Insight Meditation it is very important to observe realities and not concepts. As long as you observe the concept of a thing you will never gain a genuine understanding of its true nature. When you assign a name to a thing according to its shape, form or appearance, that is a concept, an idea. For example, when you look at something and say, 'this is a car', car is a concept, not a reality. If you were to reduce the car to its separate parts, there wouldn't be a car any more. When all the parts are put together again the resulting combination is called a car for convenience.

Likewise, the human body is also a concept. What is conventionally called the body is actually a combination of certain physical elements analysed in Buddhist texts into those of heaviness and lightness, heat and cold, cohesion and movement. These physical qualities are experienced as feelings. Physical pain and pleasure are also mere concepts, only the sensations interpreted as pain and pleasure are realities. No-one can experience a concept, but one can experience reality. For this reason, when you are being mindful of feeling you should never note what you are feeling as 'pain' or 'pleasure', but just be aware of the feeling as feeling. Also when you see something you must be aware only of seeing, not name the thing seen. The same applies to all the other senses too. This is the best way to train yourself in bare awareness.

It is of the utmost importance that the meditator understand things through direct experience. The study of religious doctrines and philosophies will give one interesting information and one may even be able to express what has been learnt in fine words, but one's understanding of them will be superficial. Only knowledge gained through the direct experience of insight will enable one to perceive reality and understand things as they really are.

The story of Naropā illustrates this point. A very learned scholar, Naropā became the principal of Nalanda University in eleventh century India. In those days it was a renowned place of Buddhist scholarship and the centre of Vajrayāna Buddhism. As Naropā sat reading a book one day in his room an old lady came to him who, some say, was really Manjushri, the Buddha of Wisdom, in disguise. She asked him if he understood what he was reading. 'I understand the words, if that's what you mean,' he answered. 'Well put!' said the old lady, 'but do you understand the meaning of the words.' Naropa replied, 'Yes, why shouldn't I?' Then the old lady told him, 'Naropā, you should not speak falsely. You know the literal meaning of the words, but you do not understand what they are actually saying. If you want to know the deeper significance, go to the East and find there a saint called Tilopā who will teach you their real meaning.' With that the old lady vanished.

After she had gone, Naropā realized that there were indeed words of which he understood the grammatical and literal sense but whose profounder meaning escaped him. So he set off straight away in search of Tilopā. After a long journey he found the sage and asked to become his pupil; thus the great scholar became an ascetic. Eventually he was visited by the Tibetan translator and scholar Mārpā who received teachings from him. Later the great ascetic and poet Milarepā became Mārpā's disciple and then in his turn passed on the teaching to Gampopā, the founder of the Karma Kagyu School of Tibetan Buddhism. It was one of his successors who invited me to direct his centre in Birmingham, so you could say that

I too have my part in this succession. Only now the direction is reversed and the teaching has come West.

The story is a source of inspiration and encouragement for all of us. Like Naropā, some may think they have a good grasp of the Buddha's teachings but do not realize that their understanding of them is only superficial. They may be adept at using the terminology of the Buddha-dhamma and speak eloquently about the doctrine of *anicca* or *dukkha*, or even about Nibbāna. They may go to great lengths to explain the etymology of these words, but of their deeper meaning they are ignorant. Words simply express concepts. The experience of the reality behind the words is something different. Insight dispels ignorance. Vipassanā meditation is a rare technique through which we will be able to gain insight and have a genuine understanding of the teaching's true meaning. I therefore urge you to practise this technique diligently until you come to understand the true nature of things through your own experience. This is the path for your own liberation, this is the path for your own happiness and Enlightenment. May all of you be well and happy! May all of you experience the ultimate peace within!



DAY FIVE

Instruction

Impermanence

As you continue trying to watch the touch-feeling of the breath it may happen that all trace of this feeling disappears. This happens because your awareness is not sharp enough to sense the subtle touch of the breath. Even though you cannot feel the breath, you must still focus all your attention on the place it was touching and in time the feeling will reappear and be stronger than before. If your mind is still wandering and random thoughts arise, then try breathing a little harder or longer three or four times and be sure to maintain bare attention with objective and precise awareness. So long as breathing and awareness of it do not synchronize, you will not be able to understand the true nature of the object. Take drinking a cup of tea, for example. Usually you are also thinking about something else and do not actually taste the tea. You will only experience its taste if you remain aware as you drink.

At this stage of your practice you should not only be aware of touch but also try to understand impermanence through it. Throughout his life and on his very death-bed, the Buddha emphasised, 'All conditioned things are impermanent'. You can experience this truth in meditation. As you focus on your object, you should perceive that when the in-breath arises and air strikes the nostrils, the touch-feeling arises and then instantly passes away. Likewise, when air strikes the nostrils as you breathe out, the sensation of its touching also arises and then disappears. Moreover, awareness itself also arises and passes away from one moment to the next. Awareness can only arise with an object, in this case when the touch-feeling arises. Yet, because everything is in a state of constant flux, neither the feeling nor the awareness of it lasts for two consecutive moments.

This exercise will help you understand the phenomenal nature of the world as a constantly changing process. During this stage of your practice if you should hear, see, smell, taste anything, or think about something or experience any feelings in the body, just be aware of them but do not meditate on them. Simply return your attention to the touch-feeling. If, however, you have any feelings in the nasal area such as a sensation of aching pressure, tingling, warmth or anything else, be mindful of it. If the feeling continues to arise, then you have to be aware of it from moment to moment.

As far as your walking practice is concerned, before you began the last session I explained the five things of which to be aware: lifting the foot, raising it, pushing it forward, lowering it and touching the floor. Today you will add one more step, namely awareness of the intention to walk. The fact is that you cannot walk without first having the intention. This is true of all bodily movements. Initially, the meditator may find it difficult to recognise the intention which precedes the act. Therefore, before you start to walk, first be aware of your standing position and, if necessary, note mentally 'standing, standing'; then try to be aware of your intention to walk. If the intention is not obvious, then say mentally 'intending, intending'. If you continue practising in this way, you will become conscious of the intention after a few repetitions. After acknowledging your intention to walk, you may then start to move the body but take care to observe attentively each of the five stages precisely as they occur. Before lifting the foot be aware of the intention to lift it and do the same before raising it and so on. Follow this exercise in mindfulness by being aware of every movement as you walk. If at any time during your practice you experience any memories, thoughts, feelings and other sensory impressions, do not focus your awareness on them but just be aware of their arising and fix all of your attention on each of the six stages of the walking process.

Dhamma Talk

The Body of Truth

The Pāli Scriptures state that there are three types of vehicle by which a person can attain complete liberation from suffering - either the *Buddhayāna*, or the *Pacceka-Buddhayāna* or the *Sāvakayāna*. A person who is destined for Buddhahood is known as a Bodhisatta (Skt *Bodhisattva*), a Buddha-to-be. The Bodhisatta who became the Buddha Gotama had to bring to maturity the necessary perfections through countless existences so that he could teach others the way to purification and liberation. A Bodhisatta follows the way of the Buddhas. The Jātaka Tales provide an account of the numerous lives in which the future Buddha

Gotama strove to follow this vehicle to Buddhahood. A person who is destined to be a solitary Buddha follows a way of his own, but he too must fulfil the ten perfections in order to reach the goal. On attaining it he is enlightened but does not teach or guide others. A person who chooses to follow the disciple's vehicle in order to become liberated also has to fulfil the ten perfections and follow the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path. Thus the disciple's liberation is dependent upon taking a Noble One as his or her Teacher.

Gotama attained Buddhahood at the age of thirty-five and then spent another forty-five years tirelessly teaching for the benefit of countless sentient beings. Most of his teachings were eventually recorded in what is known as the *Tipitaka*, the 'Three Baskets'. If you analyse these you find that the Noble Eightfold Path is pivotal to the teaching of the Buddha. Although the various schools and traditions approach the teachings in various ways, none of them contradict the essence of what the Buddha taught. The choice of tradition depends largely on a person's need, temperament and level of progress, or simply on where they are born.

Two months after his Enlightenment the Buddha travelled to the Deer Park near Varanasi to proclaim the truths he had realized under the Bodhi tree to his five former companions in the ascetic life. In his first sermon propounding the Four Noble Truths the Buddha told the five ascetics what he had discovered, namely that suffering is an inescapable fact of life which has its origin in craving, and that its elimination can be obtained by following the training of the Noble Eightfold Path. For the Buddha 'the world founded on suffering, is established on suffering' (S.N. i.140). In this context the term 'world' implies all forms of existence.

There are those who say that Buddhism is pessimistic because of its insistence on suffering. Far from it! In facing this undeniable truth it is realistic and in foreseeing a solution to the problem of suffering it is even optimistic. Moreover, when the Buddha spoke of suffering as inescapable he did not deny that there is also happiness in life. On the contrary, the Buddha cited many kinds attendant on both lay life and the religious. Nevertheless, all kinds of happiness are classified as allied to suffering because, without exception, they are subject to change. All compounded things in the world, physical or mental, pertain to suffering because they are impermanent. Even those sublime states of mind one experiences through attaining the jhānic states, wherein one knows neither pleasant nor unpleasant feelings but dwells in pure equanimity, share this characteristic.

The word *dukkha* can be translated as suffering, pain, sorrow, misery, dissatisfaction, unsatisfactoriness and frustration. In the context of the Four Noble Truths it means not only ordinary suffering but has the deeper meaning of impermanence, imperfection, emptiness, and insubstantiality. To grasp the meaning in full one should understand that suffering is

classified as being of three kinds: bodily or mental pain; suffering experienced through change; suffering occasioned by conditioned states.

The first kind of suffering is defined by repetition of the word (*dukkha-dukkha*). On numerous occasions the Buddha spoke about the five aggregates which make up an individual having the characteristics of suffering. In other words, the bare fact of existence itself is *dukkha*. When these five mental and material factors come into existence as beings they are bound to suffer such maladies as birth, old age, sickness, death, association with unloved ones and unpleasant conditions, separation from loved ones and pleasant conditions, not getting what they want, sorrow, pain, grief and despair. In other words, *dukkha* refers to all those kinds of painful physical and mental experiences that are universally accepted as such. The second type of suffering is dependent on the fact that everything in the universe is constantly changing. A happy feeling, a happy condition in life, cannot last; such things are impermanent by nature. When they change, suffering, frustration, unhappiness and dissatisfaction follow. The Buddha declared that 'whatever is impermanent is suffering'.

These first two aspects are easy to understand as they are common experiences in daily life and they have come to stand for the typical meaning of *dukkha*. However, neither aspect conveys the full meaning as the Buddha used the term in the First Noble Truth. The third aspect is that of conditioned states. Everything in the universe, whether physical or mental, is conditioned and conditioning. This kind of suffering will be clearly understood through direct experience in Insight meditation. The meditator who observes all the physical and mental phenomena he or she experiences will realize that the processes that constitute this universe of flux interact constantly. To grasp this aspect of suffering the meditator has to focus on how the notion of an 'individual' or what we call 'I' is modified in the process. Then one will comprehend that suffering is not only physical and mental but existential, an inextricable part of life itself.

When the Buddha pointed to the fact of suffering, he did not mean that one should run away from life but that one should face up to and try to understand it. To do this it is necessary to investigate suffering fully for oneself. Through following the Noble Eightfold Path step by step one comes to have a deeper understanding of what the Buddha meant. Thus one must not simply accept that life is suffering. Liberation only comes through comprehension of the process as a matter of personal experience. Only then it is possible to overcome suffering and learn how to live with equanimity.

Now, what are those aggregates to which I just referred? The Buddha defined a being as a combination of ever-changing physical and mental forces which he divided into five groups or aggregates:-

1. Matter (*Rūpa*)

This is made up of the four great principal elements: earth (*pathavī-dhātu*), which is the quality of heaviness and lightness in material form; water (*āpo*), which is the quality of cohesion or fluidity; fire (*tejo*), which is the quality of heat and cold; and air (*vāyo*), which is the quality of motion and movement. Derivatives of these four are also included in the aggregate of matter; they are the five material sense organs plus their corresponding objects in the external world, namely: visible form, sound, odour, taste, and tangible things. Thus all matter, both internal and external, is included in this aggregate.

2. Feeling or Sensation (*Vedanā*)

This includes every kind of feeling, whether pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. All feelings are experienced through the contact of the physical and mental organs with the external world. There are six kinds of feeling: those experienced through the contact of the eye with visible form; the ear with sound; the nose with odour; the tongue with taste; the body with tangible objects; and the contact of the mind with mental objects, thoughts or ideas. Thus, all kinds of physical and mental feelings are included in this group.

3. Perception (*Saññā*)

Perception refers to that faculty that recognizes sensations. Perceptions, like sensations, are also of six kinds and relate to the six internal faculties plus their six corresponding external objects. Whenever our sense organs come into contact with external objects, sensations arise and from this contact follows perception.

4. Mental Formations (*Samkhāra*)

All volitional or mental activities are included in this group. According to the *Abhidhamma*, with the exception of feeling and perception there remain fifty other kinds of mental factors. These include contact (*phassa*), volition (*cetanā*), one-pointedness of mind (*ekaggatā*), the life continuum (*jīvitindriya*), attention (*manasikāra*), will (*chanda*), determination (*adhimokkha*), wisdom (*paññā*), loving-kindness (*adosa* or *mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), greed (*lobha*), anger (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*), conceit (*māna*) and others. The mental formations comprise all our good and bad actions and reactions in daily life. What is generally known as *Kamma* comes under this group. The Buddha defined it this way:

*O monks, it is volition (cetanā) that I call kamma.
Having willed, one acts through body, speech and mind.*

(AN 3.415)

Volition is defined as a mental construction or activity. Its function is to direct the mind in the sphere of good, bad or neutral activities. It can therefore be called the stimulus for karmic formations. When our six sense faculties and their corresponding six objects in the external world, come into contact, sense awareness arises, and then their respective sensations and perceptions. These are followed by our actions and reactions. Sensations and perceptions are not volitional actions so they cannot generate any karmic force, but the mental activities act and react to produce karmic results.

5. Consciousness (*Viññāna*)

Consciousness is awareness that arises at one of the six sense bases. For instance, visual consciousness has the eye as its base and visible form as its object. The Buddha said, 'When the visible object arises at the eye-base, visible consciousness arises.' Likewise, when sound contacts the ear-base, odour contacts the nose-base, taste contacts the tongue-base, tangible things contact the body-base and mental objects contact the mind-base, then hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and mental consciousness arise at each respective sense-base. Consciousness, then, is of six kinds in relation to the internal bases and their corresponding objects.

It should be noted that consciousness does not have the capacity to recognise an object as a particular thing. It is characterised only by the quality of being aware of that sense object. For instance, when the eye comes into contact with the colour blue, visible consciousness of the presence of a colour arises as awareness. However, consciousness does not recognize that colour as blue; there is no recognition at that stage. Perception, the third aggregate, is the faculty that recognises and identifies the colour. Thus the aggregate of consciousness is merely the awareness of sense experience arising from moment to moment at the sense bases. These sense experiences do not remain the same for even two consecutive moments but are in a state of flux, continuously arising and perishing.

This is a very brief description of the five aggregates. When they are combined together, one then conceives the idea of labelling or naming them as 'I' or a being. However, they are all impermanent, always changing, and for this reason they too are *dukkha*. In reality there exists no unchanging substance, essence or self that can be called 'I' either within these five aggregates or outside of them. The Buddha declared, 'Whatever is impermanent is *dukkha*.' He also told his disciples, 'as these five aggregates are born, decay, and die every moment, you too are born, decay and die every moment.' (AN. *Aṭṭhakathā*-78)

Just as a scientist will resolve a lump of flesh into tissue and the tissue into cells, the cells into atoms and atoms into molecules, so the Buddha analysed the entire universe and concluded that it was composed of

aggregates. Consider again the statement 'This is a car.' Where is this car when it has been reduced to its mechanical components? It is only when all these parts are assembled to make a certain shape that the resulting form can be called a car. Thus the word is simply the name that is assigned to the combination of its parts. The word 'being' is also just a concept that encompasses the conjoint aggregates of body, feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness. It is the same with the body. On examination it too is a combination of different parts. The Buddha reduced each part of the body to the smallest indivisible particle, known as a *kalāpa*. Smaller than an atom, it might be compared to a sub-atomic particle.

The word *kalāpa* means 'elemental unity' and is so called because it contains eight elements. These are the four principal elements already referred to, plus the four derivative qualities of colour, smell, taste and consistency. When we speak of the earth element, it does not mean earth itself but the quality of heaviness and lightness in the body or in things. Likewise, the quality of cohesion and binding is the element of water, heat and cold is the element of fire and the quality of motion and movement is the element of air. The combination of these elements makes up a *kalāpa*, millions upon millions of which make up a thing, a combination of which in turn constitutes a body. What is conventionally called 'the body' is therefore nothing but an aggregation of particles, all arising and passing away every moment. The Buddha said that the human body is just like a mountain river that is flowing all the time, there is no moment, no instant, when the flowing stops.

Through the practice of Insight meditation, we are able to investigate and come to see for ourselves that the mental aggregates of sensation, perception, action and reaction and consciousness are arising and passing away continuously and are always changing. In the light of this experience we also realize that our life is itself impermanent and therefore founded on suffering. This is how the Buddha wanted people to understand the first Noble Truth. I therefore ask each of you to continue practising as you have been instructed, diligently and mindfully. This is the path for your liberation, the path leading to total realization of the Four Noble Truths, the path to the highest happiness. May all of you be well and happy! May all of you realize the nibbānic peace within!

DAY SIX

Instruction

Attention and Objectivity

Now we are going to investigate who and what we really are. As has already been explained, the word *Vipassanā* means 'insight' in the sense of seeing things as they really are. In order to gain proficiency in the practice of Insight meditation it is essential for you to strengthen your powers of awareness and concentration. To this end you need to exercise precise and objective awareness of the touch-feeling of the breath. When trying to do this exercise you need not be aware of the incoming and outgoing breath itself but only the actual touch-feeling. Just as the carpenter that we mentioned the other day pays no attention to the to and fro of the saw, but is careful to keep his eyes fixed on the place where the teeth of the saw cut the wood, so must you keep your mind's eye focused on the precise place where the breath touches. It is of no importance where that takes place because your present task is simply to keep watching the touch-feeling itself. Do not be concerned if you do not feel one part of the breath cycle, just keep watching attentively and objectively the feelings you are experiencing.

After twenty or twenty-five minutes of practice, provided your concentration and awareness is sufficiently strong, you will become aware of other feelings around the nostrils and elsewhere in the body. Whether they are gross or subtle, painful or pleasant, just be aware of whatever is occurring. Initially you may not be able to manage this, because most of the time there is such a profusion of feelings and sense objects arising and passing away that they are difficult to distinguish. It may happen that some thought arises connected with a feeling, or you may think that certain feelings are good or bad. If this is the case, then what you will need to do is to concentrate exclusively on the main object of meditation. Whenever any other feeling arises in the body or in the mind, just be aware of that

feeling or that object. Do not dwell on any of them and do not name them, but return your attention immediately to the touch-feeling of the breath. Also, if you hear a sound, just be aware of hearing, do not think about the sound. Likewise with the other senses and with thoughts, just be aware of them at the precise moment they arise.

Should you experience emotional feelings such as fear, sadness, anger, good-will or happiness, just allow them objective awareness for a moment. It is important that meditators cultivate bare awareness of what they experience but neither react to it negatively or positively, nor reject it. At this stage the main aim of the practice is to be mindful and accept whatever feelings arise and refrain from judging them. Objective and precise awareness is very important in this practice and is the key to its mastery.

As you proceed with the walking practice you have to strive to be mindful of all the feelings, motions and movements of the body, but not the external walking position itself. For example, when you are standing, sensation will arise because your feet are touching the floor. If you are aware of that feeling, you will realize that the feeling is arising not only in the foot but all over the body too. Similarly, while you are walking, you will experience feelings of movement and motion arising and passing away continuously. If you are careful to be aware of all the feelings which arise during the walking practice, it will be very helpful when you practise sitting meditation again. The combination of both sitting and walking mindfully will help your progress.

Dhamma Talk

The Four Noble Truths

The ascetic Gotama realized the Four Noble Truths as he sat meditating under the Bodhi Tree. It was upon this realization that he based his claim to have attained supreme Enlightenment. The Four Noble Truths constitute the central tenets of the Buddha's teaching. They are:

1. The Noble Truth of suffering (*dukkha*)
2. The Noble Truth of the origin of suffering (*samudaya*)
3. The Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering (*nirodha*)
4. The Noble Truth of the path leading to its cessation (*magga*)

The Buddha had realized these four truths through insight into the true nature of the psycho-physical phenomena within himself. In keeping with what he recommended, you too are using the same technique to investigate the truth of suffering within yourselves. As you investigate whatever is

going on within your own body and mind, you will become aware that everything is always changing and that whatever arises is bound to perish. As you carry on scrutinising the five aggregates that constitute what you think of as yourself, insight into the impermanence of the aggregates arises. What you are in fact realising is the characteristic of impermanence through direct experience of it. What is conventionally called 'I' is seen as it is, an ever changing and therefore unsatisfactory process. To have understood this by direct experience is to have fully comprehended the First Noble Truth of suffering.

In his first sermon the Buddha declared that the cause of suffering is craving. Whenever you see, hear, smell, taste, touch or think, if you are not exercising proper awareness, you will react to everything you experience with either like or dislike and suffering will follow. Liking is craving, disliking is aversion - or if you are completely unaware then that is ignorance; all these things contribute to the arising of suffering. If you develop skill in the practice of Insight you will be able to observe everything dispassionately and objectively from moment to moment. When you see, hear, smell, taste, touch or think, there will be nothing other than the seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking. Thus there will be no liking or disliking and you will not fall into craving's trap. You will have succeeded in subduing the cause of suffering.

Once an old monk named Mālukiya-putta went to see the Buddha and asked for a brief summation of the teaching. The Buddha looked at him and implied he would be wasting his time on one so broken down and near to death. Mālukiya-putta replied, 'Lord, it is true that I am old, but if Lord you would teach me I will understand and practise it.' Then the Buddha asked him, 'Suppose there is a sight or an object that you have never seen before, you are not seeing now and will not see in future, will you have like or dislike for that object?' Well, the answer was no to that and all the other sense impressions. Then Mālukiya-putta broke in, 'Lord, give me no more teaching, I understand it already.' What had he understood? the Buddha asked. It was, said Mālukiya-putta, that if we react to sense objects with like or dislike, then we will have developed craving and aversion; if we do not so react but are just aware of them as they are, then we are near to Nibbāna. Therefore, when sense objects arise and are perceived through the senses, one should be aware of the seeing, the hearing, the smelling, the tasting, the touching and thinking only, and nothing more. 'Well said,' the Buddha replied, 'you have understood my teaching'.

Bare attention that is non-judgmental was the essence of what Mālukiya-putta realised as the Buddha's teaching. This is what you too are trying to achieve. Although your main object is the touch-feeling of breath, if sense impressions arise during your practice, you should give them bare attention before redirecting your awareness. If you practise in this way, then

you will soon realize the impermanent, and therefore unsatisfactory nature of all these processes. Furthermore, you will discover that there is no unchanging self there. Through perfecting your awareness day by day you will have realized the three fundamental characteristics of existence and discovered the answer to the question of who and what we really are.

The Buddha said he was just a guide who pointed out to people the path leading to deliverance. In fact, the body and mind are our true teachers as therein the truth of existence lies waiting to be discovered. This is how the Buddha wanted people to see and understand truth and reality:

'All compounded things are impermanent; when one sees this with wisdom, then one becomes dispassionate towards ill. This is the path to purification.'

'All compounded things are suffering; when one realizes this with wisdom, then one becomes dispassionate toward ill. This is the path to purification.'

'All compounded and uncompounded things are without self; when one realizes this with wisdom, one becomes dispassionate toward ill. This is the path to purity'. (Dhammapada, vv. 277-279)

When one follows the Noble Eightfold Path and perfects the disciplines of morality, concentration and wisdom, then one will certainly realize the first truth through direct experience. At the same time one will have succeeded in eradicating the cause of suffering and thereby realized cessation, which is the peace of Nibbāna. Thus, to realize the final goal, suffering must be fully comprehended and craving eradicated; then the Third Noble Truth of Nibbāna will be realized through the development of the path which is the Fourth Noble Truth.

Although it is said that to practise Insight is to apply the Four Noble Truths as taught by the Buddha, in fact this meditation is not the whole of the path. There are actually three paths involved in this practice, namely the basic (*mūlamagga*), the preliminary (*pubbabhāgamagga*) and the noble (*ariyamagga*) paths. The basic path consists of gaining the right understanding of Kamma and morality and must be accomplished before one begins Insight practice. Then some aim to attain the meditative absorptions as a preliminary to attempting Insight practice. Others practise bare attention from the start. To do this one has to follow the basic *samādhi* path while contemplating the four primary material elements of earth, water, fire and air. Then whenever the meditator becomes aware of any sense object, it is accompanied with one-pointedness and moment by moment concentration and the mind ceases to wander off to other objects. In this way the meditator's mind becomes purified and thus in every subsequent moment of awareness he or she is said to be developing the path of Insight.

The preliminary path of morality may be called the forerunner of the Noble Path. These two are the first and last parts respectively of the same continuous path. To attain the Noble Path, the meditator must initially develop the path of Insight. When it becomes fully developed, it is transcended and the Noble Path is attained, leading to the realization of Nibbāna. Having become established in the Noble Path, the meditator becomes a Noble One himself and experiences the bliss of Nibbāna. I want to encourage all of you to make an even greater effort to develop your awareness and wisdom in order to realize this path. It will lead you to liberation, happiness and Enlightenment. May all of you be well and happy! May all of you experience the Nibbānic peace within!



DAY SEVEN

Instruction

Just the Feelings

Today, you are to continue attentively watching the touch-feeling of breath at the nostril area. Whenever any sensation arises in the nostrils then you are to be aware of that feeling. All feelings arise and pass away because they are impermanent. If you should experience any external object through the senses, any sight or sound and so forth, take care to be aware of each one objectively and precisely, but avoid thinking about them or identifying with them. If you experience any other physical or mental feelings, then you have to observe them objectively and precisely. If no feelings or mental objects arise at all, then you must simply remain with the touch-feeling of the breath. Should there arise feelings of either pain or pleasure anywhere in the body, just be aware of them as feeling.

Do not name such feelings. Labels such as 'pain' and 'pleasure' are just concepts, they have no objective existence only the bare feeling is reality. As a meditator you have to focus on realities, not on concepts. If you experience a variety of feelings in different parts of the body, then keep watching them carefully and objectively, one by one. Sometimes you can be aware of the whole body at the same time. If this is the case then you should observe the body from head to foot and then from foot to head, but do not think about the feelings or address them in any way. At this stage of the practice it is essential that you simply watch all feelings with bare attention in order to understand them as they really are. All phenomena, whether physical or mental, are ever-changing, impermanent processes. If you see them as such then you have seen impermanence. It is most important that you try to perceive and understand this through your own experience of it.

Dhamma Talk

The Hindrances

Many distractions can arise in the meditator's mind and body during meditation. Some are less easy to recognise than others because they invade the mind and body in such subtle ways. Whenever the hindrances appear you should be aware of them just as they are at the precise moment they manifest, then they will soon disappear. While practising with the breath for the purpose of developing concentration, the meditator is told to ignore any hindrances which appear and focus greater attention on the object until the hindrances vanish. While practising Vipassanā, however, you should not ignore any hindrance but take it as a meditation object. You must be aware of it precisely from moment to moment; because your awareness is so precise, the hindrance cannot linger.

A Brahmin by the name of Saṅgārava once asked the Buddha about the difficulty he sometimes had in memorising mantras. The Buddha replied:

Look, Brahmin, here is a vessel full of water; if the water were mixed with blue or red dye one could not see one's reflection in it even with the best of eyesight. Likewise one whose mind is tainted by craving and lust cannot see reality, whereas one can if the mind is free from such taints. Again, Brahmin, if this water is boiling and bubbling, good eyesight is of no avail to see one's reflection in the water. In the same way, if the mind is full of anger and hatred, then one cannot see reality yet can when free from such taints. Again, Brahmin, if the water is covered with mossy plants, even with good eyesight one cannot see one's reflection in the water. Likewise, if the mind is overwhelmed with sloth and torpor, one cannot see reality. Again, Brahmin, if the water is shaken and swirled round, one cannot see one's reflection in the water. So with a mind troubled by agitation and worry one cannot see reality. Finally, Brahmin, if this vessel is put in a dark place, the best of eyesight cannot make one see a reflection in the water. Likewise, if one's mind is affected by doubt and perplexity, then one cannot understand reality. Therefore, Brahmin, if your mind is affected by the five hindrances of lust, anger, sloth and torpor, agitation and worry, and doubt, it will take you many months and even years to learn a mantra by heart. But when the mind is free from these hindrances it will not be difficult for you to learn any mantra you hear.

The Buddha's advice should be helpful for you, too. If your mind is affected by any one or by all of the hindrances, then you will be unable to make further progress in your meditation practice because they limit the mind's ability to perceive the reality of the phenomena that are arising from

moment to moment. The most effective way to render the hindrances powerless is to acknowledge them and be objectively aware of them precisely as they arise. If you do nothing but this then they will disappear.

During the meditation sessions some of you may have been wondering about the why and wherefore of this technique. In explaining the practice of Samatha-Vipassanā meditation, emphasis is put upon the importance of sensation as a meditation object. You may be wondering why sensations are so important and why you have to observe them so meticulously. The main reason lies in what the Buddha said about mindfulness meditation and its objects. In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* he stated that the four foundations of mindfulness are the body, sensations, mind and mental objects. Of the four, practising mindfulness of the body and sensation is relatively easy to do because these objects are more discernible than the others.

The Law of Dependent Origination

When a meditator is told to observe the body, it is not the empirical body that is meant but its elements, its qualities. These are experienced as physical feelings and are everlasting processes. Nevertheless, one of the main reasons why the meditator has to be aware of the feelings is because they condition the arising of craving which, as the Law of Dependent Origination states, is the cause of suffering. Whenever a feeling arises you must always be aware of it precisely, otherwise that feeling will give rise to craving. If mindfulness is lacking when sensations arise, then you will automatically react to them either with like or dislike, craving or aversion.

It is easy to understand how a pleasant feeling gives rise to craving, but how does an unpleasant feeling can give rise to craving? The answer is that when an unpleasant feeling arises one instinctively recoils from it because it is not pleasing and wants to replace it with some more agreeable feeling. This wanting something to be other than it is constitutes craving. It is of three kinds: sensual craving (*kāma tanhā*), craving for becoming (*bhava tanhā*) and craving for annihilation (*vibhava tanhā*). All craving produces suffering and suffering leads to rebirth. It is very common for people to desire sense objects and whenever craving arises attachment also arises. According to the Law of Dependent Origination, craving conditions attachment or clinging. There are four kinds of attachment - to sensual objects (*kāma-upādāna*), to one's own view (*diṭṭhi-upādāna*), to rites and rituals (*sīlavata-upādāna*) and to the idea of a self (*attavāda-upādāna*). Whatever kind of suffering a person experiences always arises through attachment to one or other of these.

Suffering arises because one desires and clings to sense objects. If something goes wrong with a sense object to which one is attached this

also causes suffering. Suppose a watch that I very much like is damaged or stolen; I will be upset and miss my watch and long to have it back again. But if something were to happen to your watch, even though it may be better and more expensive than mine, I will not be upset at all because it is not 'my watch'. We become attached not only to our possessions but also to persons. When something goes wrong for them we suffer, not because of what has happened but because we are attached to them. Being attached to our own views also results in suffering and is quite dangerous. Each of us has our own thoughts, ideas and opinions with which we identify quite closely. If someone disagrees with us or criticises our beliefs and views, our feelings are hurt, we reject their criticism and become angry with them because of our attachment to what we identify as ours and therefore as right. Similarly, with certain religious rites: through attachment we tend to believe that only they are right and beneficial and have no appreciation of those believed in by others.

What lies at the heart of the matter of attachment and the suffering it causes is the mistaken belief that 'this is mine', 'my idea', 'my friend', 'my job', 'my land', 'my money' and so forth. In the event of something going wrong we suffer. If we did not view things and people and beliefs as 'mine', if we ceased to be attached in this damaging way to things and people, then we could deal with problems objectively and would not suffer. Attachment is the real problem. It is that also which gives rise to becoming as the Law of Dependent Origination states again. In this case becoming has two parts: action and reaction, kamma and its result. Our attraction and attachment to the world of sense objects leads us to do both wholesome and unwholesome deeds and we are bound to experience the results throughout our lives.

This law also states that becoming conditions rebirth. If there is becoming, then there is bound to be the continuity of life in *Samsāra*. The law goes on to say that if there is rebirth, then it follows that there will be old age and death. As long as we are taking rebirth, we have to die. If that which causes re-birth has been removed, however, then the process stops. Just after his Enlightenment, the Buddha declared 'there is no more rebirth', meaning that he had seen the truth and eradicated the cause of suffering, thereby attaining the nibbānic state. He actually used the word *amataṃ*, meaning the deathless, here synonymous with Nibbāna, for it alone is unconditioned.

The Buddha named the process that has just been described the Law of Dependent Origination (*Patīccasamuppāda*). This process is cyclic and is traditionally expressed by the following formula 'Feeling conditions the arising of craving which, in turn, conditions the arising of attachment; attachment conditions the arising of becoming; becoming conditions the arising of rebirth and that conditions the arising of old-age and death.'

Now, you may be wondering what conditions the arising of feelings? The answer is contact. Without that no feeling, no sensation, can ever arise. When any of the six sense objects arises at one of the sense doors, sense consciousness or sense awareness arises; it is from the contact between sense object, sense base and sense consciousness that feeling arises.

In the West, only five sense bases are recognized, namely those of the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body, but for Buddhists mind is also a sense faculty. Mind is, therefore, a sense base and its object is thought or idea. Everything at this stage of the process depends on contact, but how does contact arise? The answer is that the six sense bases condition the arising of contact. If one of the sense bases is missing, then its respective sense object cannot arise. A blind person cannot see, for example, and a deaf person cannot hear.

Mind and body (mentality and materiality) condition the arising of the six sense bases; re-linking consciousness conditions the arising of mentality and materiality. The first consciousness that arises at the time of a being's conception in its mother's womb is called re-linking consciousness, because this links the preceding life to the present life. Accumulated *kamma* conditions the arising of re-linking consciousness. Whatever actions one performs that are not prompted by greed, anger or delusion are wholesome *kamma*; any prompted by greed, anger and delusion are unwholesome. Deeds performed in the fine material and immaterial planes of existence are termed unshakeable. This means that meditative achievements such as the absorptions will yield invariable results.

The Law of Dependent Origination begins with the statement 'Ignorance conditions volitional actions'. Its function is to describe the actions that result in rebirth in terms of cause and effect. It shows how each effect becomes in turn a cause and that the process goes on and on without ceasing as long as ignorance and craving are not eradicated. The Buddha taught that things are neither due to one cause, nor are they causeless: the twelve factors of dependent origination and the twenty-four conditional relations clearly demonstrate how things arise through multiple causes.

The description of the process of dependent origination may begin with the factor of ignorance but ignorance is not the first cause. There is no first cause; if one says there must be, then one is justified in asking for the cause of that first cause. According to the Law of Dependent Origination there are only beginningless causes, which are conditioned and conditioning. It is not possible to conceive a first beginning. No-one can trace the first origin of anything. It is useless and meaningless to go in search of a beginning for a beginningless *Samsāra*. Life is becoming and it is a flux of mental and material changes. Concerning this law the Buddha once said to his attendant:

Ānanda! deep indeed is this Dependent Origination and deep does it appear. It is through not understanding, through not penetrating this doctrine that these beings have become entangled like a matted ball of thread, unable to pass beyond the woeful cycle of existence.

(Mahānidāna Sutta)

Let us now examine how each factor in this process of interdependent origination operates:

Ignorance conditions the arising of volitional activities; volitional activities condition the arising of re-linking consciousness; re-linking consciousness conditions the arising of mentality and materiality; mentality and materiality conditions the arising of the six sense bases; the six sense bases condition the arising of contact; contact conditions the arising of feeling; feeling conditions the arising of craving; craving conditions the arising of attachment; attachment conditions the arising of becoming; becoming conditions rebirth; rebirth conditions old-age and death.

The Doctrine of Dependent Origination can best be illustrated as a circle of becoming and as such any given point on the circle may be taken as the starting point. Each and every factor can be joined together with another in the series, and therefore no single factor can stand by itself nor function independently of the rest. All are inter-dependent and inseparable. In this process there is neither absolute existence nor non-existence, but only bare phenomena rolling on and on. The following formula may help you to better understand the law of conditionality:

*When this is, that comes to be. With the arising of this, that arises.
When this is not, that does not come to be. With the cessation of this,
that ceases. (M.N. ii)*

According to the Buddha ignorance is delusion; specifically it is not knowing the Four Noble Truths or the Law of Dependent Origination. As long as one remains ignorant of these one will remain trapped in *Samsāra* and will have to choose between doing wholesome or unwholesome actions. Whilst ignorance is not the direct cause of *Kamma*, it is the main reason why beings wander endlessly in *Samsāra*. The actions a person has performed in this or previous lives will appear to him or her at the moment preceding death and will be a sign of his or her destiny. This is known as reproductive *kamma* and as such conditions the re-linking consciousness that arises immediately after the consciousness of death has ceased.

There is no gap between this re-linking consciousness and the next life, which begins at the moment of conception in the mother's womb. Modern-day biologists confirm that a new human life begins at that miraculous

moment when a sperm cell meets with an ovum. But where scientists speak only of interaction between two physical factors, Buddhists acknowledge the presence of a third factor, that of consciousness. The *Abhidhamma* explains in detail how the foetus develops week by week through four principle causes which are *kamma*, consciousness, temperature and nutrition, and how re-linking consciousness conditions the further development of the mental and material elements of the new life.

If you lack awareness whenever any feeling arises during your practice, then craving is bound to arise and the whole process of dependent origination is set in motion. But with the wisdom that Insight develops, whenever feeling arises at each of the six sense bases you can be aware of it objectively and understand that it is impermanent. In this way you can eradicate it and cause the whole cycle of Dependent Origination to cease. This is how it happens. The cessation of craving conditions the cessation of attachment, the cessation of attachment conditions the cessation of becoming, the cessation of becoming conditions the cessation of rebirth, the cessation of rebirth conditions the cessation of old-age and death.

In the chain of dependent origination there are twelve causes and effects of which ignorance and craving are at the root. The aim of meditation should be to uproot one of these two, for if one is removed the other also disappears. One accumulates *kamma* due to the defilement of craving and as a result becoming follows. If there is life then defilement and *kamma* follow without any gap. Your task as a meditator is to uproot the defilements which lie latent in the mind. If you can do this and break the chain of cause and effect, then you will be free. This is what is meant by cessation in the Law of Dependent Origination.

I want to encourage all of you to persevere with your practice, taking care to be very aware. Strive on until you see for yourself quite clearly the true nature of life in terms of causal relations and dependent origination. This is the path for your own liberation, this is the path for the realization of the truth. May all of you be well and happy! May all of you realize the ultimate peace within!

DAY EIGHT

Instruction

Breaking the Chain

It is important that you strive diligently to develop awareness. Without it you cannot see things clearly. Just as you would not be able to see your reflection in a dull, dirty mirror until you had cleaned and polished it, so you cannot see the nature of sense objects if your awareness is dull and imprecise. You will only perceive reality to the extent that your awareness is clear and precise. All processes arising in the mind and body during meditation are in a constant state of flux and are impermanent. Although, your eyes are closed, you must try to see every object that comes before your mind. Be sure to exercise bare awareness so that you are aware of seeing whatever is to be seen and do the same with respect to sound, smell, taste, touch and thought. Just be aware of the processes and nothing more. The key to achieving crystal clear insight is resolve, diligence and moment to moment awareness.

In the Buddha's time, people used to follow one of two distinct but quite extreme paths in pursuit of freedom from worldly suffering. One of these was the path of enjoyment and excessive indulgence in sense pleasures. The other was the path of self-mortification and physical torture. The Buddha dismissed both of them as ineffectual. In their stead he taught a Middle Path, the one we know as the Noble Eightfold Path. By following it one can escape from rebirth through cutting off the continuity of the five aggregates which condition cause and effect. This conditioned and conditioning process is what is meant by the word *dukkha* and includes the whole mass of suffering. The turning of the wheel of life goes on and on relentlessly and can be likened to a chain of endless suffering, but by following and perfecting the Noble Eightfold Path one can break this chain. Following it requires one to contemplate the unsatisfactory, impermanent, and non-personal nature of continuously arising and ceasing

mental and material phenomena. One must meditate fully on these phenomena until one feels detachment towards them. This is the middle path between the extremes of hedonism and self-mortification and the true way to end suffering.

The meditator has to practice on his or her own five aggregates: the physical body, feelings, perception, mental formations and mind. Any one of these may be chosen as the object of meditation. At the moment, however, we are taking the mind as the object of our practice, for it is mind which is the forerunner of all states; mind is chief and all states are mind-made. One has to get to know one's own mind thoroughly and all the stages of the mind-process itself. Present mind has to observe previous mind and successive mind as well. Whenever any sense object arises, then sight, sound, smell, taste, tangible and mental objects arise at the respective sense door of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind, followed by sense consciousness and perception. A meditator has to watch and be aware of that particular consciousness at the very moment it arises and continue doing so until it disappears. In this process the first consciousness is that of sense awareness, and the next one is path consciousness. Insight then arises together with right awareness, right concentration, right thought and right understanding.

Whatever mental state or mind is arising during meditation, watch attentively; do not overlook any, awareness must be continuous. If sleepiness arises, or if the mind begins to wander or waver, one must be aware of these states just as they are. Also, if craving or aversion arise, simply be aware of these states in themselves. If this is done properly, a meditator will soon realize that all mental states simply arise and then pass away. To gain full understanding of their nature is to experience Insight first hand. Mindful attention to all mental states as they come and go is the way to see their impermanent nature.

A meditator who observes the entire mind and body process as it arises and passes away from moment to moment will certainly come to the realization that life is nothing other than a continuous round of cause and effect. Meditation will shed light on this process and it will be seen directly that cause and effect, actions and reactions, are ceaselessly arising and passing away. This process is called Dependent Origination by the Buddha.

When describing it he said that there are twelve mental and material factors which are linked to each other as in a chain and that they are conditioned and conditioning one another all the time. At the head of all these factors is ignorance, the Pāli for which is *Avijjā*. As in the Greek from which our English word derives, the basic meaning is not knowing. But what is it that should be known? The Buddha's answer is the true nature of the universe; in other words, one is ignorant of the fact that all mental

and material phenomena are transient, arising and passing away in an endless chain of cause and effect, as it is their nature to do. Logically, therefore, they are undesirable, lacking any permanence, substantiality or essence. As long as the mind is blinded by ignorance, one cannot see reality. Ignorance obscures the truth and due to ignorance a person mistakenly regards these phenomena as being permanent and desirable.

Ignorance also conditions all volitional states, both past and present. Wholesome or unwholesome, the result of one's volitional actions or *kamma* accumulate. Volitional actions condition the arising of the six types of sense consciousness. Consequent on them arises the psychophysical phenomenon we think of as ourselves. Mind and material elements condition the arising of the six sense bases which in turn condition the arising of contact between the mental states and their respective objects. Contact also conditions the arising of one of three kinds of feeling, that is the value judgement that things are pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. In turn feeling conditions the arising of craving, which brings the behavioural disposition of clinging or attachment in its wake.

Attachment conditions the arising of becoming or actions and reactions. Once the mind has been programmed in this way, there is no going back. One is stuck with the recurrence of birth, followed by the inevitability of suffering and death. In terms of our present meditation experience, this refers to the cyclical birth and death of momentary personality changes and mental impressions to which the Buddha referred. They form the mass of suffering which arises again and again in an endless cycle.

A meditator who wants to break this chain of suffering and escape rebirth should focus on the three kinds of feelings until their impermanence is seen for what it really is and craving is no longer allowed to arise. If full awareness is not present, then either like or dislike will follow. If liking arises a meditator needs just to be aware of its arising and disappearing. Insofar as this awareness of arising is maintained, the realization follows that it is simply the nature of such feelings to arise and pass away. When a meditator enters into the experience that all feeling naturally arises and disappears, as does craving, he or she then experiences the wheel of coming to be and passing away. A meditator who understands this law of conditionality achieves Right Understanding, which is the same as Insight.

Once this penetrating insight matures one realizes that the life-cycle which one conventionally perceives as 'I' is nothing more than a mental and material process that arises and disappears every moment. Having come to be, the factors cease immediately. With the cessation of the process of arising and passing away, path insight arises. In reality the mind/body process that one thinks of as 'self' is merely the successive rising and vanishing of *dukkha*; if one sees this mass of suffering coming to be and disappearing, then one has penetrated the truth of suffering that

previously prevented one from seeing clearly. Every meditator can and should strive to break this chain through developing penetrating insight into its workings. The way to do this is to give full, objective awareness to the practice. By doing so, you will not find consciousness, mind and material phenomenon, bases, contact, feelings, craving or attachment, but only their arising and passing away. During meditation distractions arise but they are all to be ignored as they are the corruption of Insight. Keep your attention fixed on them until they disappear and you will realize the peace of Nibbāna.

The arising and passing away of phenomena is reality itself. To understand this is to comprehend the truth of suffering. To do so you only have to strive to see the impermanent nature of mind and the material processes. To do that you must observe the arising and vanishing nature of the mind or material elements as the truth of suffering. One keeps the attention mindfully fixed on the wheel of suffering and maintains one-pointedness of mind so that it does not wander away from the object. Insight into this complex cyclical process will then arise. The moment insight arises, the turning of the wheel ceases and one knows Nibbānic peace.

On one occasion the Buddha told the ascetic Māgaṇḍiya that anyone wishing to experience the bliss of Nibbāna had to fulfil three conditions: to seek out and associate with men of integrity and wisdom, to hear the true Dhamma and practise it accordingly. A meditator intent on gaining freedom from all kinds of suffering must first find a teacher who can give the proper instruction in the technique of meditation. One also needs to gain an intellectual understanding of the teaching. Finally, the meditator has to practise what he or she has been taught. Some say that it is not necessary to listen to and study the teachings, only practise. On the contrary, by studying and listening to discourses one gains the proper framework within which to understand what one experiences in meditation. Study arouses motivation; it dispels doubt about the practice and wrong view concerning existence before entering into the training whereby the Dhamma is internalised.

In Buddhism the word *Dhamma* has a number of meanings: natural law, the teachings of the Buddha, a state, phenomenon or mental object. It also has a similar meaning to the English word 'thing'. Whatever things arise in the mind and body are called *dhmma*. When a meditator maintains awareness and observes what arises there, this is what is meant by 'practising in accordance with *dhmma*'. Any phenomenon which arises in the body or mind has to be observed as an object of meditation until the meditator realizes that there is no such thing in reality as an entity, no permanent enduring substance; everything is empty of essence. This realization of emptiness (*suññatā*) constitutes path insight. Emptiness of self

is the true reality and the realization of it Insight. This is followed by the stopping of the wheel of suffering and the experience of Nibbānic peace.

Whenever he observes with right awareness the rise and fall of the aggregates he is full of joy and happiness. One who has discerned them as they are, experiences the deathless state.

(Dhammapada v.374)

With success comes delight in the practice; joy and happiness suffuse the body and mind. All processes cease with insight and the meditator dwells in the peace of Nibbāna. There is no more pain, no more suffering; one's goal has been achieved.

Dhamma Talk

Opening the Mind-door

One of the Buddha's disciples was an elderly monk named Poṭṭila. He was very intelligent and had the reputation of being an expert at expounding in detail and intelligibly whatever teachings the Buddha had given in brief. Despite his popularity and reputation, whenever the Buddha saw this monk he used to call him 'empty Poṭṭila'. At first he couldn't understand why but one day the truth dawned on him. Despite being knowledgeable and able to express the Buddha's teaching well he had no wisdom because he himself did not practise the *Dhamma*. So Poṭṭila decided that mere knowledge was not enough, he needed experience of what he taught. Only through actually applying the Four Noble Truths would he gain the insight-wisdom necessary to achieve sainthood.

Poṭṭila set off in search of a quiet place to meditate, but then he realized that although he knew all about the theory of meditation he did not actually know how to practise it. He would have to find himself a well-qualified teacher. With this in mind he went to a forest where thirty of his former pupils were living, all now accomplished Arahants. On arriving, he approached the senior monk and asked him for meditation instruction. The elder was well aware of Poṭṭila's reputation as an intellectual and of his lack of real insight but, fearing he would not appreciate the simplicity of this technique the monk politely declined and suggested he ask someone else. Poṭṭila approached twenty-nine of the thirty with the same request but found none prepared to teach him. He then approached the last who, although still a young novice, had already attained Arahantship.

This novice was sewing a robe when Poṭṭila entered and asked respectfully for instruction. Then he thought to himself, 'This monk is old and proud of his learning; he may not really wish to follow my advice.' So to

test Poṭṭila's sincerity and willingness to obey him, the novice directed him to cross a small stream. Poṭṭila immediately did so. 'Now, come back,' the novice said and he did so at once. This convinced him that Poṭṭila would follow his advice and he went on - 'Here is an anthill with six holes and under it lives a lizard. Someone would have to close five of the holes and leave just one of them open and then he could capture the lizard easily.' Then Poṭṭila put his hands together and respectfully saluted the novice, saying, 'What a great teacher you are; I fully understood, you need teach me nothing further.' Then the novice asked what it was he had understood. 'Great teacher,' Poṭṭila said, 'I understand that there are six sense doors; I have to close five of them and open only the mind door, this is how you want me to practise.' Then the novice congratulated Poṭṭila: '*Sādhū, sādhu, sādhu!* You have understood very well. Please go now and do it.' Finding a solitary place, Poṭṭila began to meditate and three days later attained the final stage of sainthood.

You too can learn from the novice's example of the anthill and the lizard. What you have to do in this practice is close the sense bases as if you were closing a door. When a sense object comes to a sense door, just see it as it is; you must not react to it with either like or dislike. It is very important that you do not name any sense object or judge it as being good or bad, right or wrong. The whole point of this practice is to cultivate pure objective awareness.

A person who practises Insight meditation in order to attain the Noble Path needs to develop three kinds of profound knowledge in the course of his or her progress through the various stages of meditation - full understanding as the known (*ñātapariññā*); full understanding as overcoming concept or as investigating (*tiraṇāpariññā*); full understanding as abandoning misconception (*pahāna pariññā*).

When one observes the physical and mental processes with awareness, they are seen as they are from moment to moment. There are two stages of awareness. If a visible object arises at the eye base, for example, at first one names the object as a tree, a chair or whatever. After much progress in the practice, however, one is aware only of the seeing rather than of the named objects. In the next moment, if a sound is heard it is recognised as a bell, a car, or a human voice. With progress one becomes aware simply of hearing and not of the thing heard. Also, whenever thoughts arise, only thinking is known. If attention is given to the body, then one is aware of the quality experienced at the moment - heaviness, lightness, heat and cold, motion and movement. When one experiences any feelings of pain or pleasure, they are to be seen just as feelings with no reference to self. In this way the meditator discerns the reception of mental and material phenomena but has yet to develop insight. This is what is meant by 'full understanding as the known'.

If the meditator observes whatever mental and material processes arise in the body or mind objectively, then he or she sees that there is no solid shape or form to them, they are merely continuous processes. After practising for some time, the meditator realizes that there is no moment, no fraction of an instant, when this changing stops. All phenomena are impermanent, entail suffering and lack a permanent identity. This is what is meant by 'full understanding as overcoming concepts'.

When the meditator's understanding of the aforementioned three characteristics of phenomena becomes profound, it enables him or her to dispel all hallucinations, imaginings or erroneous observations whereby that which is true is taken to be false and vice versa. A common example of such a misconception is to mistake a length of rope for a snake in the dark. Hallucination can affect perception, thought and view. One erroneously perceives, thinks of and views impermanence as permanence, impurity as purity, suffering as happiness and the impersonal as self. If one perfectly discerns the true nature of the phenomenal world, then these hallucinations are dispelled. This is what is meant by 'full understanding as abandoning misconceptions'.

Insight meditation is the application of the Noble Eightfold Path as taught by the Buddha, but it is only the preliminary path one takes before entering into the stream of the Noble Path. After having established oneself in the basics of morality, the meditator commences the Insight practice and undertakes to observe mindfully the physical and mental processes within the five aggregates which are misconstrued as constituents of selfhood. As awareness and concentration are developed, one's understanding also develops. Through insight one realizes that the processes being observed from moment to moment are impermanent and always changing. Through insight one experiences the truth of suffering and, by eradicating its source, spontaneously realizes its cessation, which is the bliss of Nibbāna.

When one is engaged in meditation, five factors of the Noble Eightfold Path are present; the three from the concentration group - Right Effort, Right Awareness and Right Concentration; and the two from the wisdom group - Right Understanding and Right Thought. These five factors are simultaneously active during each moment of awareness and wisdom. Collectively they are called working paths. In addition, the remaining three morality factors are also active and enable one to keep the precepts through abstaining from Wrong Speech, Wrong Action and Wrong Livelihood. For example, when the intention to speak falsely or to commit a wrong action arises, the meditator is aware of it at that very moment and so he or she abstains. In this way the meditator follows the Noble Eightfold Path as the preliminary path during Vipassanā.

If you practise with Right Effort and develop Right Awareness and Right Concentration, you will be following the Buddha's Noble Eightfold

Path and by doing this you will surely come to realize the Four Noble Truths and understand things as they really are. Follow this path for it leads to Liberation and Enlightenment. May all of you realize the Four Noble Truths!



DAY NINE

Instruction

The Three Stages of Insight

What is impermanent is suffering. What is suffering is not-self. What is not-self should be seen as it really is with right wisdom. Thus: this is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self. Seeing so, the well trained disciple experiences disgust towards the five aggregates and he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion his mind is liberated.

(Sāmyutta Nikāya)

A meditator who practises the meditation on the mind (*Cittānupassanā*) comes to three realizations:

1. That mind and the material elements arise and disappear continuously. To know this is to know things as they really are (*yathābhūta ñāṇa*).
2. The mind then views all mental and material elements with disgust (*nibbidā ñāṇa*).
3. This is followed by cessation of the arising and passing away of the mental and material elements known as path-insight (*maggāñāṇa*).

The first two are Vipassanā insights and are classified as mundane states. The third is true insight and classified as a supra-mundane state. In order to gain these realizations a meditator must contemplate and closely observe one of the five aggregates, focusing attention on the object until its impermanent nature is clearly seen. Observing it in this way leads to realization of its undesirable nature and arouse a feeling of disgust. The moment disgust ceases one attains path insight. In other words, with the cessation of disgust the mind enters into the stream of the Noble Path. These three realizations do not arise simultaneously but in sequence.

The practice enables a meditator to dispel the concept of self. Anyone who abandons it becomes a *Sotāpanna*, one who has entered the stream of the Noble Path. Mind is one of the five aggregates (*Viññāṇa-khandhā*) and is also one of the four objects used in the meditation on mindfulness. It is highly recommended as an effective means of attaining insight.

Vipassanā begins with the will to sit. In other words, every meditator ought to be aware of the intention to sit preceding the start of the sitting practice. Once one sits the intention disappears. This constitutes the first understanding, knowing as it is. Knowing the disappearance of the intention to sit is the insight of impermanence, realising it the path of insight. Every mental state must be known in this way as it arises and passes away. Its true nature must be seen and understood very precisely. After sitting one immediately turns one's full attention to the breathing and similarly notes the intention to inhale and exhale. If this intention is not obvious, then just watch the awareness of the in-breath and the out-breath and see clearly how the entire breathing process arises and then disappears from moment to moment. The meditator must pay attention to the awareness of the breath until the impermanent nature of this awareness itself is clearly seen. Be patient and it will eventually happen. Sometimes the in and out breath becomes more and more subtle and so awareness is not very clear. Just give bare attention to that degree of awareness and it will eventually grow stronger.

Meditators must always be on the watch for every object that arises during practice. Each will inevitably arise at its own sense door and then vanish. When a meditator knows that each moment of consciousness simply arises and vanishes, that is 'knowing things as they really are'. This realization of the truth can only come through one's direct experience of it. If impermanence is experienced and understood, then realization of suffering follows immediately. All states of consciousness arise and pass away endlessly according to their own conditions. In seeing this, one realizes that none of them have anything to do with 'me'. This understanding is the realization of not-self. One knows without a doubt that there is not, nor can there ever be, such a thing as an 'I' who controls any mental state. The meditator grows aware that every state of consciousness is impermanent and impersonal and, as such, undesirable and inherently disgusting. The wish to be free of them arises from insight knowledge. While watching the processes of these disgusting states, they may suddenly cease for a moment. When that happens there is a cessation of *dukkha*. This occurrence is the realization of the goal of meditation.

When King Milinda asked his teacher Nāgasena, about the nature of Nibbānic peace, the monk gave the example of a man born blind. Just as it would be impossible to make him understand the experience of colour, so those conditioned by the world will not understand the nature of

Nibbānic peace. The supra-mundane state is by definition beyond the reach of the worldly person. In the worldly life all aggregates are rising and passing away, there is no peace and happiness. If one observes these aggregates with wisdom, one will find only fire and fuel - nothing more. The meditator who sees these aggregates as a burning fire will conceive disgust for them and find escape in the state of Nibbānic peace.

Now it may happen that when a meditator gives his or her undivided attention to the body/mind process he or she does not notice anything happening. The thing to do then is simply be aware of not seeing, hearing or feeling anything. This mental state is ignorance. At this stage a meditator needs to understand that such nonseeing is also a mental state and equally impermanent. Object and observer, observed and observing, are impermanent. Just as mind-states arise and pass away, awareness also arises and passes away; neither one can remain the same for two consecutive moments. Similarly, when a meditator is giving attention to the body process and is not certain whether there is awareness of it or not, this state of mind is called doubt which, you will remember, is one of the hindrances. Treat it in the same way and take it as the object of meditation. Doubting is an impermanent state and awareness of that constitutes insight.

Likewise, if one wants to change one's position while sitting, then it is necessary to be aware of this too - and, indeed, any and all other mental states which arise during one's practice. Clear understanding of the nature of impermanence is commensurate with the effort you make to maintain awareness of all mental states. Eventually every mental state will appear dangerous and will be so viewed with disgust that one will wish to become free from them. When this understanding matures then the truth of suffering becomes perfectly clear. This understanding will lead to the certain knowledge that there is no personality controlling any of these conditioned and conditioning states. This is what is meant by understanding not-self. Soon after this realization dawns, all mental and material processes will suddenly cease. That occurrence is liberation from suffering and with it comes the realization of the peace of Nibbāna.

In the Buddhist view, absolutely everything is conditioning and conditioned: volitional actions, consciousness, temperature and nutrition. This is true of all mental and material phenomena throughout the universe; beings, trees, rivers, mountains. Even so, none of these things condition Nibbāna. Nibbāna is outside time; it is not located in the past, the present or the future, yet it can be experienced by anyone whose mind is free of the defilements.

There are two sorts of mind: defiled mind which is tainted by greed, hatred and delusion and has these taints as its object; and the pure mind free from the taints. When a meditator's practice is hindered and defiled by them, the mind is incapable of experiencing the Nibbānic peace. If one

wishes this experience, it is necessary to purify one's mind by developing to perfection the Noble Eightfold Path. The first stage on the way to it is the realization of the transient nature of the five aggregates (*yathābhūta ñāna*). At this stage one's insight is not yet free from the latent dispositions which hinder the meditator's progress. The second stage occurs when the meditator experiences disgust at the impermanent nature of the five aggregates (*nibbidā ñāna*). This insight is defilement free. Lastly comes the cessation of the transient processes. This is pure Path Insight (*magga ñāna*) which knows directly the Nibbānic peace and has Nibbāna as its object.

Dhamma Talk

The Paths of Purification

The main aim of Insight meditation is to realize the Four Noble Truths in order to attain the state of Enlightenment. It is developed through attaining the seven stages of purification, each of which has its corresponding level of insight. The meditator can ascertain his or progress according to the level of insight experienced. These stages of purification are as follows:-

Purity of Morality (Sīla Visuddhi)

Morality is the foundation of this practice. Without developing morality there is no way one can achieve the final goal of liberation. Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood are basic practices for achieving moral purification. Traditionally, observance of the five or eight precepts is considered to be adequate for the lay person aiming to achieve the moral purity necessary to undertake the practice of Insight meditation. For monks and nuns additional precepts are observed according to the monastic rules. It is advisable that monks and nuns should purify themselves by following the disciplinary procedure of confession before meditating as even the slightest infraction of the rule will hinder their attainment. The morality of restraining the sense, the morality of pure livelihood and the morality of the proper use of the requisites are essential precepts for monks or nuns intent on meditating. Self-control and disciplined behaviour perfect the higher morality of disciplining the mind.

Purity of Mind (Citta Visuddhi)

After a few days of practice the mind becomes quieter, calmer and less liable to wander and so it can be said that the process of purifying the mind has begun. In order to progress further, the meditator makes a great effort to develop awareness and concentration and strives to attain one of three types of concentration: moment by moment (*khaṇika samādhi*), access

(*upacāra samādhi*) or absorption (*appanā samādhi*). The three meditative factors in the Eightfold Path must be developed in order to purify the mind, which is perpetually inclined towards sense objects. If one fails to be objectively aware when such an object arises at a sense door, one inevitably reacts to it with either like or dislike. This brings about thoughts that cause the arising of impurities. Nevertheless, through intensive practise and effort to develop absolutely precise and objective concentration and awareness, one can dispel the hindrances and achieve purity of mind. Once this has been done, one can begin to make progress in the development of Insight.

Purity of View (Ditṭhi Visuddhi)

Purity of view is achieved when one has overcome the false idea of a self or soul existing in a so-called being. Having established purity of mind, the meditator will carefully observe all the mental and material processes each moment and understand the mind and body analytically. While concentrating on breathing, he or she is able to distinguish between the in-breath and the out-breath and become aware of the interval between the in-breath and its awareness, the out-breath and its awareness, each arising as different processes. In this way the meditator comes to recognise through direct experience that each mental and material state is a different process and through watching the breath reaches the same conclusion with respect to the other sense functions. For example, the seeing and awareness of a visual object are perceived as distinct factors in the visual process. By observing each of these, the meditator can analyse the mental and material states according to their true, essential nature. This is called 'analytical knowledge of mind and body'. When it reaches maturity, the meditator understands that there is no permanent essence present in any of the mental and material processes. This is called purity of view and it is described by Buddhaghosa in *The Path of Purification* in the following way:

*No doer of the deeds is found, no being that may reap their fruits;
Empty phenomena roll on, this is the only rightful view.*

Purity by Overcoming Doubt (Ditṭhi Visuddhi)

Purity by overcoming doubt is defined as that knowledge which arises through comprehending the conditions for the arising of mental and physical phenomena. One overcomes such doubts as: Have I been in the past? Shall I be in the future? Am I now? Am I not? The understanding of the Law of Dependent Origination, of Kamma, and Rebirth are also included here. As concentration and understanding develops the meditator sees the Law of Cause and Effect operating as he or she observes the mental and material processes. For instance, before changing sitting position the

meditator realizes that there is an intention to change the position. Likewise, the intention to stretch a limb is recognised as preceding the act of stretching. Through this insight the meditator can make a distinction at each moment between cause and effect.

As time passes, the meditator comes to experience various painful feelings in the body. After awareness of one feeling arises, another feeling arises somewhere else. The meditator follows each feeling and focuses awareness on it. Although the meditator is engaged in watching these feelings as they arise, only the initial phase of arising is perceived and not the final phase of dissolution. Similarly with mental images, one is aware of their arising but not of the moment of their dissolution. In this way the meditator understands clearly that all mental and material processes are conditioned and conditioning. Apart from these processes, there is nothing else.

*Purity by Insight and Vision of
What Is and Is Not the Path*

(Maggāmagga-ñānadassana Visuddhi)

As the meditator continues to practise with perfect concentration, he or she becomes aware that every process of the mind and body being observed is subject to change. All of them are impermanent, all merely arise and then pass away. This knowledge is called 'the insight that observes, explores, and grasps impermanence'. By realising that all mental and physical phenomena are impermanent, one recognises that they are not worth cherishing and regards them as a form of suffering. One comprehends that they are absent of self and simply impersonal processes. The meditator has clear awareness of the arising and passing of the mental and material processes every moment. The comprehension that arises by means of direct experience is called 'insight by comprehension of phenomena'.

As the meditator focuses attention on these psychophysical phenomena, the arising and dissolution of each process becomes obvious. This is the 'insight of arising and passing away'. As a result of insight, various mental phenomena arise such as brilliant light, strong mindfulness, vivid and lucid awareness, firm faith, rapture, tranquillity, sublime happiness suffusing the body, vigour, equanimity. The danger here is that the meditator may feel a liking or subtle attachment to these phenomena. Initially, the meditator is delighted with these experiences and believes that he or she has attained the goal. There is then the danger of becoming attached to them. However, when they are seen in the light of objective awareness, it is soon realised that they are mere phenomena, subject to change and as such are corruptions of Insight.

*Purity by Knowledge and Vision
of the Course of Practice*

(Paṭipadāṇanadassana Visuddhi)

As the meditator carries on with the practice, his or her observation of arising and passing away becomes sharper, stronger and more accurate. When this awareness reaches maturity then one perceives only two factors in each moment, namely the object and the awareness. While giving attention to these, one is aware of every factor's dissolution. For instance, when experiencing sensory phenomena, it is the dissolution and not the arising which becomes obvious. This experience is what is known as 'the arising of dissolution'. With the development of this, awareness arises in the wake of the constant and rapid dissolution of all processes. This is 'insight with the awareness of fearfulness'. Perceiving the dissolution of all psychophysical phenomena, the meditator sees them as undesirable and harmful. This is 'the insight of misery'. All psychophysical manifestations are seen as being insubstantial, devoid of pleasure and tiresome. This is 'the insight of disgust'. These last three insights are combined and form a single insight; some meditators may experience only one or two of them, however.

As the meditator experiences all these processes and the concomitant fearfulness, misery and disgust, the desire arises to renounce this mind-body complex. This is 'the insight of desire for deliverance'. The meditator then makes a firm resolve and further effort to develop awareness and wisdom. All the processes of physical and mental elements become calm and balanced and painful feelings disappear. Awareness now arises smoothly and spontaneously while equanimity is present and continues for longer than previously experienced. This is the insight of 'equanimity of formations'.

When this insight reaches maturity, the meditator's awareness becomes sharp and occurs two or three times rapidly without the need to exert any special effort. This last stage is called 'insight leading to emergence or the insight of adaptation'. The meditator attains this stage and then glimpses the special insight that precedes realization of the Noble Path. The last of the insights that occur in the progression, it is called 'purity by insight and vision in the course of practice'. Immediately afterwards, a kind of insight arises that falls, as it were, for the first time into Nibbāna, which is void of formations since it is, by definition, the cessation of all formations. This is called 'maturity insight', the Pāli term for which literally means 'the one who has become of the lineage'. In other words, by attaining this insight, the meditator has left behind the lineage of worldlings and embraced that of the Noble Ones, the Buddha and *Arahattas*.

Purity by Insight and Vision (Ñānadassana Visuddhi)

The moment of the arising of path insight is the last of the seven purifications. After the insight of adaptation and maturity insight, the path and fruition insights follow in succession. Path insight lasts no more than a fleeting moment and then the meditator realizes the cessation of all conditioned processes. This is the insight of fruition and it is followed by two or three insights of retrospection in which the path of Insight is contemplated, as is the path of the Noble Ones. Path vision and fruition are experienced by the stream winner. In virtue of this accomplishment, he or she has overcome the concept of an everlasting self, doubts about the path or teaching and adherence to wrong rites and rituals. The stream winner has become free from rebirth in any of the lower realms of existence.

A person who wishes to attain the higher stages of Enlightenment should strive ardently to develop further insight, beginning with that of arising and dissolution. This will enable the meditator to attain the higher paths and fruition insights which eradicate the remaining fetters of the defilements. The final stage one attains is that of the *Arahanta*, one who has won the goal of deliverance from suffering and can never again be reborn.

I want to encourage you all to continue making an earnest effort to develop Right Awareness and Wisdom, so that you may gain insight and realize the path and its fruits. This is the path for your own liberation, this is the path for your own happiness and purification. May all of you be well and happy! May all of you experience the ultimate peace within!



DAY TEN

Instruction

Vipassana in Daily Life

Now our meditation retreat has come to an end. But, before you leave, I want to say a few words about the importance of applying meditation to your daily life. This retreat has been a period of intense mind development and training. For the last ten days you have been learning to master the technique of Insight meditation. Some people like to stay in meditation centres for months at a time because they can live happily and peacefully, but when they return to their homes they know no happiness or peace and are again caught up in a life dominated by patterns of craving and aversion. You too have experienced some happiness and peace of mind during this retreat, but when you go back to your homes you will be exposed to many different situations and may respond to them with liking or dislike, anger, ill-will and in other negative ways. Living at a meditation centre without any problems is no special achievement. During a retreat everyone's attention is focused inwards and everyone is aware only of their own feelings and thoughts and are not concerned with others or external matters. A meditation centre has a calm and peaceful atmosphere not easily found in the outside world.

Now, if you cannot live at home peacefully with equanimity, this means that you have not yet learned to practise properly. Vipassanā is meant to teach you the art of living wisely. It is a most practical technique and, if you learn it properly, you will be able to use it effectively in your life. You will know how to live happily and with equanimity in all situations. Take the example of someone who, having studied to be a professional pianist, never actually plays properly because he or she has only learned about the technique but neglected to practise sufficiently. It is the same with this or any other meditation technique, 'practice makes perfect'. Your daily life is like a stage on which you will put into practice what you have learned here.

In Mahāyāna Buddhism there are many different schools which have their own approach. On the surface each one seems quite different, but when one analyses and tries to understand the purpose of their practices then one discovers that all of them aim to develop compassion and wisdom. The goal of the Mahāyāna Buddhist is to achieve Buddhahood through the Bodhisattva ideal. A Bodhisattva is required to develop both compassion and wisdom in order to help sentient beings. Both qualities must be developed equally as, without wisdom, there can be no truly compassionate practice and without compassion there can be no real wisdom.

In Theravada Buddhism the doctrine is the same but the way of teaching it and the techniques and practices used are different. The main aim is to develop awareness and wisdom. On many occasions the Buddha spoke about how important it is to be accomplished in these. Many teach Insight meditation according to their own techniques, yet all do so with the same aim. You have been on a Vipassanā retreat for ten days and have been given much instruction. If you analyse what you have been taught, you will see that you have been practising meditation in order to develop awareness and wisdom. At the beginning of the retreat you were told that the goal of Insight practice is to become a detached observer of your own feelings, emotions and thoughts in order to put an end to suffering and rebirth. During the retreat you strove to train the mind so that whenever a sense object arose at its respective sense door then seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking arose and you could be aware objectively and precisely and not react with either like or dislike. You discovered that by controlling the mind in this way it could remain balanced and equanimous. This is precisely the mental discipline that you have to exercise in your daily life.

During Vipassanā practice the meditator has to develop a keen awareness of all psycho-physical processes from moment to moment. Initially the meditator is trained to keep watching these processes until they are seen as they really are, impermanent and continually changing. Sustained awareness and wisdom enables one not to impose value judgements on these processes. When either pleasant or unpleasant feelings arise, a meditator must merely be aware of them as feelings and retain a neutral attitude. In this way, the mind is brought into balance and can meet every situation with equanimity. When you go back home you have to continue applying what you have learned from this practice. Look at it this way: when you study at school or college, you have to follow a course of study and learn your subject from the prescribed textbooks. Afterwards you no longer need the books but instead put what you have learned to good use. At home, you do not need to sit in meditation for long periods of time as you have been doing here. You should by now have learned the habit of mind to cope with the situations you will find there.

Continue to lead a normal life, but apply to it awareness and wisdom. On seeing someone or something, just be aware of the seeing and of how you are reacting or feeling. If someone speaks to you, then try to be aware of hearing and also your own reactions. When giving attention to your reaction, be aware objectively and precisely and then you will soon be living with equanimity. If you are talking with someone, you have to give attention to what he or she is saying whilst at the same time being aware of your own feelings or reaction. You may think this will be difficult to do, but if you try it two or three times you will find it gradually comes to you. By behaving mindfully you will learn to be aware of your feelings and reactions in all situations. Human beings are social beings and as such cannot live outside society, so we are bound to encounter both pleasant and unpleasant situations. The Vipassanā meditator must learn to face life, not run away from it.

Someone once asked the Buddha what were life's principal blessings. He answered by listing thirty-eight different things to be thankful for and to which the practice can be applied. In Buddhism the blessings of life are not bestowed on one by any external power but have to be developed within oneself. To be blessed in our lives we have to practise developing ourselves. Buddhism is not a religion of grace, but one of diligence and effort. The Buddha's list begins with things like 'not to associate with fools, to associate with the wise, paying respect to those worthy of respect.' He goes on to say, 'When the worldly vicissitudes come to touch the mind and the mind is not shaken but sorrowless, stainless and secure, this is a blessing in life.'

There are eight worldly vicissitudes or situations to which we should apply our practice: gain and loss, fame and defame, blame and praise, happiness and suffering. When we are doing things that we think are good and beneficial for all, it will turn out to be either a gain or a loss. For example, some of us may at times enjoy great fame and have many admirers but at other times no one takes any notice of us. Some people will blame us whilst others will praise us. Sometimes we are in a happy situation and sometime we are not. If our mind remains unshaken, sorrowless, stainless and secure whenever we are confronted with life's ups and downs, then this is a real blessing. So, when you have to face life's vicissitudes, as a Vipassanā meditator you must accept whatever happens and face it with equanimity. If any feeling arises in your mind, keep watching it objectively and precisely; because of your constant awareness and detachment, you will see it as it is and it will arise and then pass away.

Developing Loving Kindness

Before you leave, you are going to learn how to practise a new type of meditation which will also be of great benefit in developing the right attitude in social situations. It is called developing loving-kindness (*mettā bhavana*). The Buddha often spoke about the importance of developing four sublime states of mind: loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*). Loving-kindness meditation is the most popularly practised of these.

The practice is also known as *appamaññā*, which means illimitable, because the application of loving-kindness must be infinite or boundless. *Mettā* means pure love, unconditional and indiscriminating. One who again and again extends boundless love to all beings everywhere will generate and fill the mind with pure mental energies which subtly change its attitude. If there are any negative feelings present when we send our loving kindness to others - selfish attachment, for example - then it is not pure *Mettā*. We cannot restrict such love only to some people or send it only to our own family or friends. It belongs to all sentient beings.

There are many kinds of love in human society - a mother's love for her child, a husband's love for his wife, love between brothers and sisters, love between friends, yet none of these are *Mettā*. Why? Because human love is based on attachment. We give love in the expectation of getting something back, a return of affection at the very least. Loving kindness must be given freely; it's a one-way ticket. But there is a return half even so, in that by giving love to all beings without exception, we experience so much more peace, happiness and harmony within ourselves. This in turn we reinvest by sharing it and dedicating its result to the welfare of others.

Whenever you have problems with others, difficulties with those you work with or live with, then for your own well-being and theirs you should send loving kindness to that particular person. *Mettā* is like telepathy, you can communicate it mentally and the effect will be felt by the other person so that his or her attitude changes. Of its power the Buddha himself said

*Truly, hatred never ceases through hatred in this world;
Through love alone it ceases. This is an ancient law.*

(Dhammapada v.5)

Loving kindness meditation is a most powerful antidote for anger and it can and should be practised at all times and in every situation as it will help you to live your life happily and harmoniously. Let's suppose that someone acted badly towards me or verbally abused me twenty-five years ago and to this day I cannot let go of the memory of what was said or done to me. I still feel angry about it after all this time. However much I punish him in my head, it's really me that suffers, not the other person. Had I given

loving kindness to him at that moment twenty-five years ago, I would not now be still suffering from negative feelings. Those who practise Insight meditation understand that if one generates negative feelings, these produce negative energies that cause oneself to suffer and affect others badly too. But by suffusing your mind and body with peace and happiness through this meditation, you will create and emanate pure energies that will be beneficial for all.

The aim of Insight meditation is to purify the mind. By the end of each session this has been achieved to a certain extent and so the meditator experiences some degree of happiness and peace and is inclined to want to share these feelings with others. Sending loving kindness is an ideal way to do this. So long as negative thoughts or feelings such as attachment, jealousy or selfishness are present, you cannot give pure *Mettā* to others. Therefore, you need to purify your heart by first directing loving kindness towards yourself. This is not at all a selfish thing to do. Only after having purified yourself are you fit to send it to others.

We begin our practice by visualising ourselves as we are in this room and getting in touch with that wish to be happy which is common to us all. Forget about the negativity that many of us feel towards ourselves, forget about doubt. Just open your heart with confidence in the practice and let it fill you with this positive energy. If it helps you to verbalise good wishes for yourself, then really mean what you say:

May I be free from anger and ill will.

May I be free from fear and anxiety.

May I be free from suffering and pain.

May I be free from ignorance and desire.

May I be happy and peaceful.

May I be harmonious.

*May I be liberated from bondages such as
greed, anger and delusion.*

May I realize the Nibbānic peace within.

When you get in touch with this goodwill towards yourself, you are sharing in the natural impulse of all beings. The next step, then, is to break down the barrier we erect between ourselves and others by opening our hearts to them and wishing them equally what we have wished for ourselves:

May all beings be free from anger and ill will.

May all beings be free from fear and anxiety.

May all beings be free from suffering and pain.

May all beings be free from ignorance and desire.

May all beings be happy and peaceful.

May all beings live in harmony.

*May all beings be liberated from bondages such as
greed, anger and delusion.*

May all beings realize the Nibbānic peace within.

Next we have to share our peace and happiness with those near and dear to us such as parents, teachers, relatives and friends. If there is someone you know who is ill or in difficulty, now is the opportunity to give your *Mettā* to that particular person. Doing this will help reduce their suffering and pain. Then, finally, dedicate the good of your practice to the welfare and spiritual advancement of all beings:

May they be happy! May they be happy! May they be happy!

Loving kindness meditation and Insight meditation may also be practised so as to reinforce each other. When you are not happy with people or a situation, for example, first try to be aware of your feelings and, if they are strong, begin by giving loving kindness to yourself. Once you are calm, wish the other person well. If you make use of both practices in your life, it will be very helpful in enabling you to live in harmony with others and at peace with yourself.

During our time together here I have spoken at length about many things in order that you might understand the Buddha's teaching and develop awareness and wisdom. You may not have fully understood it all, you may not be prepared to accept everything, but this does not matter. If you have grasped just one or two things and found them beneficial, then be sure to make good use of them and leave the rest for the time being. Some things you may need to use later and some not at all. It's rather like going to a shopping centre or supermarket. Although there are a great variety of things on display, you don't buy everything you see but only what you need that day. The rest you will leave for another time; indeed, some things you may never need.

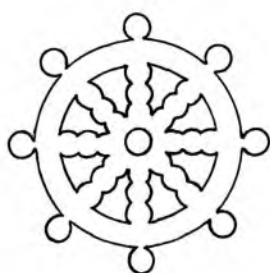
The most important thing for each one of you to do is maintain your practice. A serious meditator will practice twice a day. One hour in the morning and one hour in the evening would be most beneficial. As most of you are living the householder's life, you may not have time to practise for so long. If this is the case, then I recommend half an hour's practice morning and evening. If that is still too difficult, then sit for at least fifteen minutes morning and evening. If you do this every day, it will help you to maintain your practice; but don't neglect to apply Insight to your daily life as well. It will also be helpful for you if you find the time once a week to sit for least one hour by yourself or with another meditator.

During the retreat I have praised this technique as a good and effective way to achieve total liberation and have advised you to practise it for your own benefit and happiness. In saying this I did not mean to imply that other techniques are not effective. It is just as if I were to praise my mother and say again and again how good and kind and compassionate she is. In making this claim I am not implying that your mother is not good or that I dislike her or think my mother is better than yours. It is simply that in my experience my mother is good whilst in your eyes your mother is good. Both are good, of course, and so are the mothers of other people. There are many who teach according to their own understanding and have different approaches and techniques. It is unreasonable to say that only one method is good and others are not. The real issue is whether a certain practice is suitable to one's individual temperament and needs. Some people may benefit from this technique whilst others will benefit from another. The Buddha never claimed that his teachings were good and beneficial for all, but he did say that they would benefit many. No technique or teaching can be said to be universally applicable.

I would like to encourage all of you to keep practising until the path of insight becomes your way of life and your way in life. Then you can live happily and remain in harmony with yourself and others. At the beginning of this course I said that the Buddha is regarded as a great physician who prescribed the Noble Eightfold Path and the practice of Insight meditation as an effective way of healing the universal disease of suffering. Interestingly the English word *meditation* is derived from the Latin word *mederi*, which means 'to heal'. So, if you want to rid yourself of the disease of suffering, meditation is the right word for what you must do and is an effective medicine.

In conclusion, I would like to say that if you want to understand the Buddha, then try to understand yourself by practising the Noble Eightfold Path he taught. This path is the path for your own happiness and well-being, this is the path for your liberation from the bondages of greed, hatred and delusion and from suffering. This is the path leading to Enlightenment and Nibbāna. May all of you be well and happy! May all of you experience the ultimate peace within!

May all beings be happy!



Glossary

All words are from the Pali language unless otherwise indicated.

- Abhiṇṇā*: covetousness
Abhiññā: higher knowledge, supernatural knowledge
Adhimokkha: determination
Adhiṭṭhāna: resolution
Adinnadāna: taking what is not given
Adosa: loving-kindness, absence of hatred
Ākāsa: space
Ākāśānañcāyatana: the first immaterial absorption pertaining to the base of infinite space
Ākiācaññāyatana: the third stage of immaterial absorption pertaining to the base of nothingness
Āloka: circle of light
Anāgāmi: non-returner, third stage of sainthood
Anāgataṃsa ñāna: knowledge of future existences
Ānāpānassati: awareness of respiration
Añjali: joining one's hands in a gesture of respect
Antaḡaṇaṃ: intestinal tract
Antaṃ: intestines
Anusaya: underlying, latent
Anussati: recollection, reflection
Anuttaro purisadammasārathi: the peerless charioteer of men to be tamed
Appamaññā: illimitable
Āpo dhātu: water element, the quality of cohesion or fluidity
Appanā: absorption, attainment
Arahaṃ: one who is free from defilements, the final stage of sainthood
Ariya: Holy, Noble One
Ariya magga: the Noble Path
Arupa: immaterial, formless
Assu: tears
Asubha: foulness, impurity
Attavāda: notion of self
Avijjā: ignorance (Skt. *avidya*)
Atṭhi: bones
Atṭhimiñjaṃ: marrow
Āvajjana: reflection
Āyukkhaya: expiration of the life span
Bhagavā: blessed
Bhava tanhā: desire for existence or craving for becoming
Bhāvanā: meditation, development
Bodhi: enlightenment
Bodhisatta: Buddha-to-be (Skt. *Bodhisatva*)
Brahmavihāra: divine abidings, sublime states of mind
Buddhānussati: recollection of the virtues of the Buddha
Buddho: spiritually awakened
Byāpāda: ill-will, dislike, aversion
Carita: temperament, characteristic
Cetanā: volition
Chanda: will

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| <i>Dāna</i> : giving, generosity | <i>Kāyagatā sati</i> : mindfulness of |
| <i>Dantā</i> : teeth | the body |
| <i>Dhamma</i> : teachings, truth, reality, | <i>Kesā</i> : hair of head |
| things, phenomenon | <i>Khanti</i> : patience |
| <i>Dhammadesanā</i> : | <i>Khaṇika</i> : moment |
| teaching the doctrine | <i>Khelo</i> : saliva |
| <i>Dhammasavana</i> : | <i>Kilesa</i> : defilement |
| hearing the doctrine | <i>Kilomakaṃ</i> : pleura |
| <i>Dhātu</i> : element | <i>Kusala</i> : wholesome |
| <i>Dibbacakkhu</i> : divine eye, | <i>Lasikā</i> : fluid of the joints |
| clairvoyance | <i>Lobha</i> : greed |
| <i>Dibbasota</i> : divine ear, cliraudience | <i>Lohita</i> : red, blood |
| <i>Diṭṭhi</i> : wrong view | <i>Lokavidū</i> : knower of the worlds |
| <i>Dosa</i> : anger, ill-will | <i>Lomā</i> : hair of body |
| <i>Dukkha</i> : suffering, the | <i>Magga</i> : the path, the fourth |
| first Noble Truth | Noble Truth |
| <i>Ekaggatā</i> : concentration, | <i>Maggañāna</i> : path insight |
| one-pointedness of mind | <i>Māna</i> : conceit |
| <i>Gandha</i> : odour | <i>Manasikāra</i> : attention |
| <i>Hadayaṃ</i> : heart | <i>Mandala</i> : circle, a meditation object |
| <i>Iddhividha</i> : supernatural powers | <i>Māra</i> : the evil one, a satan figure |
| <i>Jhāna</i> : meditative absorption, trance | who resists spiritual advance |
| <i>Jīvitindriya</i> : life continuum | <i>Marana</i> : death |
| <i>Kāma tanhā</i> : sensuous desire | <i>Maranānussati</i> : Mindfulness of death |
| <i>Kāmacchanda</i> : sensuous desire | <i>Matthaluṃgaṃ</i> : brain |
| <i>Kāmesumicchācāra</i> : misuse of the | <i>Mamsaṃ</i> : flesh |
| senses, often limited to sexual | <i>Medo</i> : fat |
| misconduct | <i>Mettā</i> : loving-kindness |
| <i>Kamma</i> : action, deed | <i>Micchādiṭṭhi</i> : wrong view |
| <i>Kammakkhaya</i> : expiration of the | <i>Moha</i> : delusion |
| productive kammic force | <i>Muditā</i> : sympathetic joy |
| <i>Kammaṭṭhāna</i> : work place, | <i>Mūla magga</i> : basic path |
| meditation subject | <i>Musāvāda</i> : lying, wrong speech |
| <i>Karisaṃ</i> : excrement | <i>Muttaṃ</i> : urine |
| <i>Karunā</i> : compassion | <i>Nakhā</i> : nails |
| <i>Kasina</i> : whole, complete, | <i>Ñātapariññā</i> : full understanding, |
| a meditation device | penetration of reality |

- Nekkhamma*: renunciation
Nevasaññānāsaññāyatana:
the fourth stage of immaterial
absorption pertaining to the
base of neither perception
nor non-perception
Nhāru: sinews
Nibbidā: disgust
Nila: blue
Nimitta: sign, image
Nirodha: cessation
Nīvarana: hindrance
Odāta: white
Ojā: nutriment
Pacāyana: reverence
Pacceka Buddha: A solitary
or private Buddha
Pahānapariññā: full understanding
as abandoning misconception
Pañcakkhandha: five aggregates
Paññā: wisdom, insight
Papphāsaṃ: lungs
Paracitta vijāñana: knowing the
thoughts and feelings of others,
telepathy
Parikamma: preparatory
Pariññā: profound knowledge,
full understanding
Pariyutthāna: arising
Pathavī dhātu: earth element,
the quality of heaviness and
lightness
Patikulasaññā: perception of
loathsomeness
Pattānumodana: rejoicing in the
merit of others
Patthanā: aspiration
Pattidāna: dedication of merit
Paṭibhāga: counter-sign or object
for meditation
Pāṇātipāta: killing
Pharusavācā: harsh speech
Phassa: contact
Pihākam: spleen
Pisunāvācā: slander
Pīta: yellow, golden colour
Pīti: joy, pleasure in the object
Pittam: bile
Pubbabhāga magga:
preliminary path
Pubbenivāsānussati: the ability to
remember one's former lives
Pubbo: pus
Rasa: taste
Rūpa: matter, material form
Sacca: truth, truthfulness
Samathā: calm tranquility of mind
Sammā: right (cf. Lat. *summa*, the
highest, the best)
Sammāsambuddho:
fully self-enlightened
Sampajañña: clear; perfectly or
thoroughly understanding
Samphapalāpavācā: gossip
Samudaya: the origin of suffering,
the second Noble Truth
of craving
Sangha: holy community,
realised disciples
Sankhāra: mental formations,
volitional activities
Saññā: perception of sense objects
Satthā devamanussānaṃ:
teacher of gods and men

Sedo: sweat

Semham: phlegm

Sīla: morality

Sīlavata: rites and ritual

Sīṅgālikā: mucus

Soṭāpanna: stream winner, the
initial stage of sainthood

Sugato: one who has achieved
the Way, title of the Buddha

Sukha: happiness, pleasant feeling

Suññatā: emptiness

Taco: skin

Tanha: lit. thirst, craving

Tathāgata: the Buddha, 'thus come'
like previous buddhas

Tejo dhātu: fire element, the quality
of heat and cold

Thina-middha: sloth and torpor,
drowsiness, sleepiness

Tipīṭaka: three baskets, the divisions
of the Pali scriptures

Tīraṇapariññā: full understanding
as overcoming concept

Tisarana: triple gem

Ubhayaṅkhaṇa: expiration of both
lifespan and kammic force

Udāriyam: stomach

Uddhacca-kukkuca:
restlessness and worry

Uggaha: acquired object

Upacāra: access, neighbourhood

Upādāna: attachment

Upasama: peace, calmness

Upecceda-kamma: destructive
kamma, untimely death

Upekkhā:

equanimity, undifferentiation

Vakkaṃ: kidneys

Vaṇṇa: colour, visible form

Vasā: grease

Vasitā: ability

Vavatthāna: analysis

Vāyo dhātu: air element, the quality
of motion and movement

Vedanā: feeling or sensation

Veyāvacca: service

Vibhava tanhā: craving for
annihilation

Vicāra: sustained application

Vicikicchā: sceptical doubt

Vijjācarana sampanno:
endowed with knowledge and
good conduct

Vīññāna: consciousness

Vīññānañcāyatana: the second stage
of immaterial absorption
pertaining to the base of infinite
consciousness

Vipassanā: insight, seeing things
as they really are

Viriya: energy, effort

Visuddhi: purity

Vitakka: initial application

Vitikkama: transgression

Yakanam: liver

Yāna: vehicle, the path

Yathābhūta: as they really are

Yathākammupaga ñāna: knowing
the kamma of others giving
rise to their rebirths.

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|----|------------------|
| A | Atthakathā |
| AN | Aṅguttara Nikāya |
| DN | Dīgha Nikāya |
| DH | Dhammapada |
| MN | Majjhima Nikāya |
| SN | Saṃyutta Nikāya |
| UD | Udāna |
| v | Verse |
| VS | Visuddhimagga |

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All illustrations are by Dea Paradisos.*

The following reflections are extracted from the book *Timeless & Priceless Treasures of Thabyekan Sayadaw*

TRUE DISCIPLES

Merely listening to sermons on the Dhamma, one becomes a “disciple” in name only. True disciples are those who put the Buddha’s teachings into practice, and becoming ever mindful of the Eightfold Path, strive ardently to purify their minds of all impurities, and thereby achieve Nibbana, the release from sufferings of Samsara.

PRAY THUS FOR ALL MANKIND

If the Buddha’s Sasana (teachings) spreads and influences for the better of the minds and actions of mankind, then the world will surely enjoy greater peace, prosperity and happiness. Pray thus: “May the Buddha’s Sasana spread, influence and protect mankind. May there be peace and prosperity for all.”

THE GREATEST INHERITANCE

The Myanmar people today can take great pride in the purity and achievements of the Buddha’s Sasana in Myanmar, and in the success of the Myanmar Sangha in the propagating the teachings abroad. We must teach and culture our children so that future generations too can take pride in the Buddha’s Sasana, realise its value, and know how to worship and revere the Triple Gem. This is the greatest inheritance we can leave for future generations. This is the way to ensure the propagation, purity and success of the Buddha’s Sasana for posterity.

FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

It is absolutely essential for the Buddha’s Sasana to maintain its purity and to spread and become strong. Only then will future generations, knowing how to worship, revere and cherish, protect and defend the Buddha’s teachings, and having the opportunities to put them into practice, enjoy the benefits and blessings of the Buddha’s teachings as we ourselves have benefited; and these future generations must in turn further propagate the teachings for posterity.

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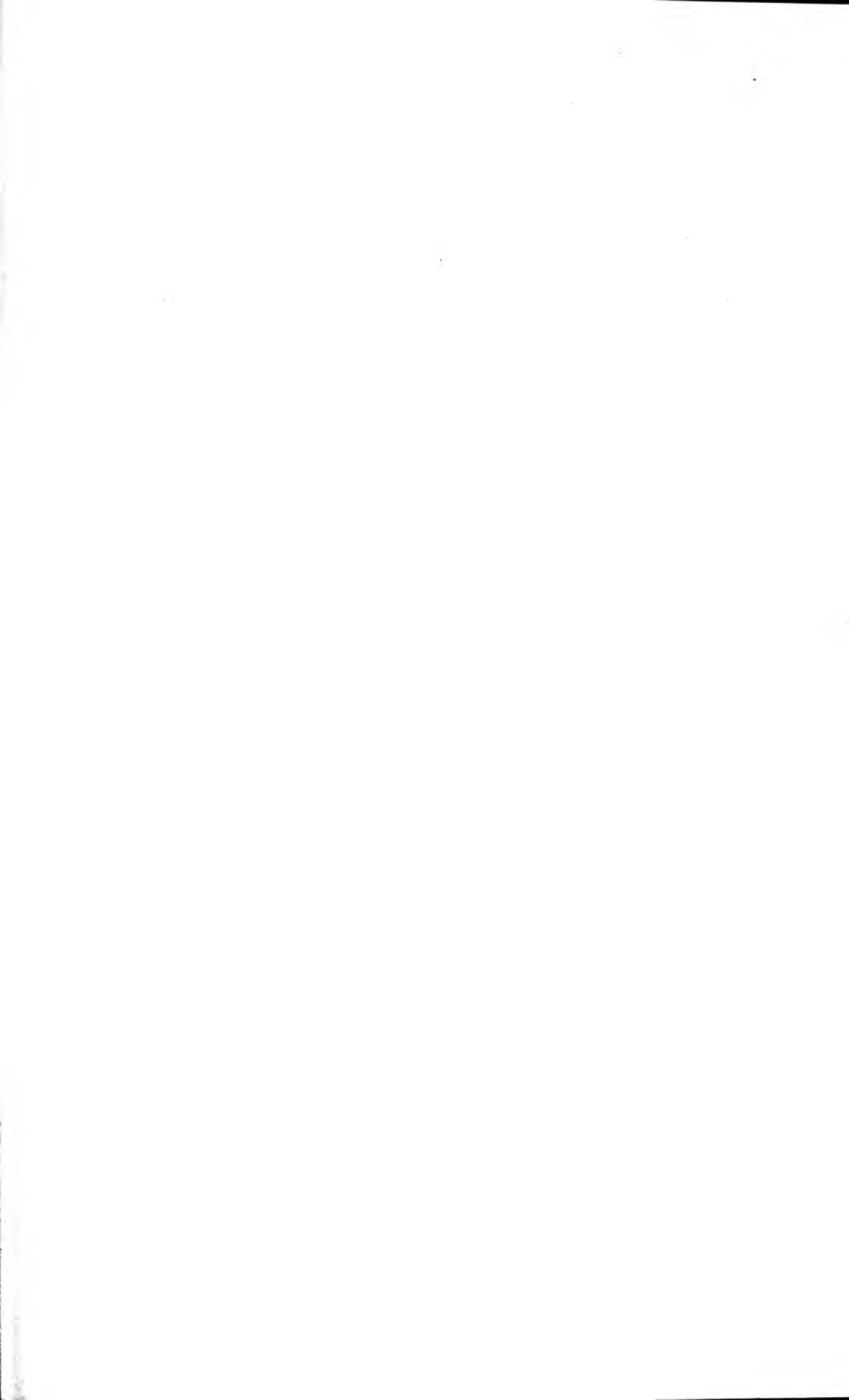
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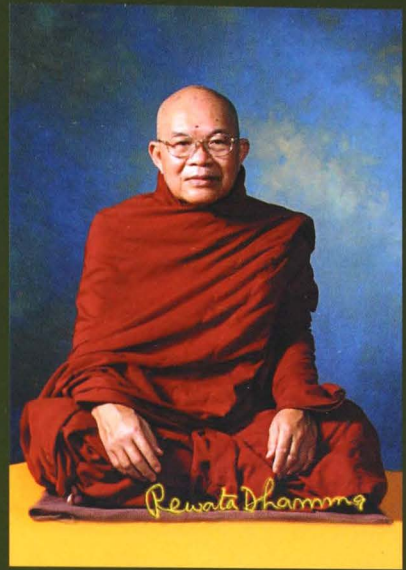
May all be well and happy.

May they be relieved from suffering.

Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!







(continued from front flap)

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BUDDHISM/MEDITATION

Before the Buddha's enlightenment, Siddhatta Gotama discovered meditation for himself seated under a rose-apple tree while still a child. As he was to discover later, however, merely stilling the mind is not enough. For the meditation to be lastingly effective, a method must be found of emptying the meditator of the concept of self. This is the practice with which this book concerns itself. Also described are the preliminary techniques for concentrating the mind commonly used from the Buddha's time to this day.

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