

**U HLA MYINT**

**ABHIDHAMMA  
FOR  
MEDITATORS**



**Namo tassa bhagavato arahato  
sammā-samobuddhassa**

(Homage to the Exalted One, the Worthy One, the  
Self-enlightened One)



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## PREFACE

### How Abhidhamma Knowledge Helps Meditators

The term “Abhidhamma” (*abhi + dhamma*) literally means “higher teaching” that mainly deals with mind and matter. The discernment of mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*) is the starting point of our spiritual journey. As a matter of fact, it is the necessary foundation for all kinds of higher vipassanā insights leading to enlightenment. Of course, we can discern mental and physical phenomena without academic study. Yet, the knowledge of Abhidhamma is highly conducive to the discernment of mind and matter. So, we need the knowledge of Abhidhamma to a certain extent. This is the reason why we study Abhidhamma.

During the Buddha’s time, a monk asked four arahants (full-enlightened saints) how one’s view could be fully purified (i.e., how one can be fully enlightened). Then, the four arahants gave four different answers<sup>1</sup> to the question as follows:

1. One discerns six internal senses arising and passing away.
2. One sees five aggregates arising and passing away.

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<sup>1</sup> Saḷāyatana Samyutta-396

3. One discerns four primary elements arising and passing away.
4. One realizes that all conditioned phenomena are impermanent.

The different answers to the same question definitely perplexed the monk. So, he approached the Buddha for clarification. Then, the Buddha gave a simile of a person who got confused about a parrot described from four different aspects: color, size, gesture, and personality. The Buddha explained that all four arahants had given the same answer according to the different classifications of mind and matter on which they had focused. In conclusion, therefore, the Buddha said: "*The four saints gave four different answers depending on how they have their view purified (or on what they observed to purify their view).*" In the cases like this, the Abhidhamma knowledge helps us get the point. The Abhidhamma, therefore, can help us better understand the Buddha's teachings and our practice from both theoretical and practical aspects. At the same time, it protects us from falling victim to blind faith and wrong guidance that would jeopardize our spiritual future. To help vipassanā meditators on their spiritual journey, this book is designed with three progressive stages that meditators have to go through:

- The first chapter expounds mental distractions or unwholesome mental states because meditators have to deal with them when they practice. In addition, all of us need to know what are real

enemies in life. They are described here under several classifications, viz., ten Māra Armies (*mārasena*), five Hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), ten Bondages (*samyojana*), ten Mental Defilements (*kilesa*), four Intoxicants (*āsava*), four Floods (*ogha*), four Yokes (*yoga*), four Ties (*gantha*), four Grasping (*upādāna*), and seven Latent Dispositions (*anusaya*).

- In the second chapter, psychophysical phenomena are expounded because discernment of psychophysical phenomena directly counteracts the illusory sense of self. They are here classified into four categories: five Aggregates (*khandha*), five Aggregates of Clinging (*upādāna-kkhandha*), twelve Sense-sources (*āyatana*), and eighteen Elements (*dhātu*).
- In the third chapter, thirty-seven awakening factors are explained because they are all about our practice. They include four functions of effort (*sammappadāna*), four bases of accomplishment (*Iddhipāda*), five Faculties (*indriya*), five Powers (*bala*), five Jhānic Factors (*jhānaṅga*), seven Awakening Factors (*bojjhaṅga*), and eightfold Noble Path (*Maggā-sacca*). They lead to enlightenment.

Initially, this book was designed to include Part-II, which deals with "Seven Stages of Purification" so that meditators can get a general idea of the path they are walking on. But for yogis' convenience sake, that part may be separately printed when conditions are favorable.



## Acknowledgements

I finished the draft of this manuscript in 2014, but with other TMC's book projects ahead of it, it could not be reviewed and edited until now. So, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Mr. Luyen Pham for his precious time and knowledge of dhamma in patiently and carefully reviewing and refining my draft while he is fully occupied with many other dhamma projects at TMC. In addition, my special thanks would go to Mr. Son Tu and all the other TMC's members and generous supporters for their consent and support to this dhamma publication.

Indeed, we owe a lot to our great teachers and ancestors who took all sorts of pain and trouble to pass the priceless teachings of Buddha down generations to generations for more than twenty-five centuries. So, I would like to express my deepest appreciation of all the great teachers starting from Venerable Kassapa, Venerable Ānanda who led the first Buddhist Council to our immediate teachers such as Ledi Sayādaw, Mahāgandhāyon Sayādaw, Mahāsi Sayādaw, U Pandita Sayadaw, U Sīlananda Sayādaw, Tharmanay Kyaw Sayādaw, U Vijaya Sayadaw, and so on.

Last, but not least, I also thank you readers for your precious time reading this book. All the TMC's members and I will be greatly happy should you find it helpful to your understanding of dhamma from both theoretical and practical aspects.

With much metta  
U Hla Myint

## CHAPTER-I

# MENTAL DISTRACTIONS



*Whatever one  
enemy may do to another,  
Or one hater to another,  
Far worse is the harm  
done by one's own wrongly directed mind.  
(Dhammapada)*

The first thing we will inevitably encounter when we practice meditation is the constant flow of thoughts that make it very difficult to concentrate on the meditative object and, therefore, are called mental distractions. Only with right diagnosis, can we find right treatment. So too, only with knowledge of unwholesome, can we find the

right way to remove the unwholesomeness. For this purpose, we learn what mental defilements are and how to deal with them. In this chapter, therefore, they will be analyzed under the following titles:

- Ten Mara's Armies (*māra-sena*)
- Five Hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*)
- Ten Bondages (*saṃyojana*)
- Ten Mental Defilements (*kilesa*)
- Four Intoxicants (*āsava*),
- Four Floods (*ogha*)
- Four Yokes (*yoga*)
- Four Knots, Bodily Ties (*gantha*)
- Four Graspings (*upādāna*)
- Seven Latent Dispositions (*anusaya*)

## Two Kinds of Meditation

When we practice meditation (*samatha* or *vipassanā*), the first thing we have to deal with is our thoughts. They always make it extremely hard for us to concentrate on a meditative object. In a sense, however, they represent the nature of the mind which we need to be aware of. Meditation practice itself is all about dealing with them until we can master them to develop concentration and progressive insights. In the case of *vipassanā*, we just turn them into meditative objects by noting them as "*thinking, thinking.*" In the case of *samatha*, we just simply pull our minds back to the meditative object. Every moment we become aware of them or we can pull back to the meditative object, we take one step closer to our spiritual accomplishment (*magga-phala* or *jhāna*). In a nutshell, spiritual accomplishment lies in mastering our mind. So, it is very important to learn what they are and how we can deal with them.

Before we go straight to the analysis of mental hindrances, it is good to know what meditation practice is. Fundamentally, the Buddhist meditation is of two kinds: Tranquility Meditation (*samatha*) and Insight or Mindfulness Meditation (*vipassanā*).

### Tranquility Meditation

Tranquility meditation is the development of concentration. Why do we need to develop concentration? Because our monkey mind is restless and rebellious. It

does not stay where we want it to stay or think about what we want it to think. We cannot stop it from thinking of something negative or distressing, sometimes even for the whole night, either. Such unruly and unstable mind definitely does us more harm than good. Let's see how unstable it is. Try to focus it on a single object like breath and to see how many breaths it can focus on without wandering anywhere. If it can focus on fewer than five breaths continuously, this means it is very unstable; it is killing. We must be very careful of it. We urgently need to develop concentration.

We develop concentration by focusing our mind on a single object as continuously as possible. The moment the mind focuses on a single object without wandering anywhere, there arises concentration that is always accompanied by tranquility. The length of unbroken focus is the degree of concentration. Literally, we have forty kinds of meditative objects to focus on such as in-and-out breath (*ānāpāna*), motionless flame of a candle (*tejo-kasiṇa*), a glassful of clear water (*āpo-kasiṇa*), a meditative disk of soils (*pathavī-kasiṇa*), or of blue color (*nīla-kasiṇa*), and so on. Initially, it is very hard to concentrate on the object because of wandering mind. We may often get lost in thoughts for a few minutes or much longer. In the case of *samatha*, all we have to do is just to draw the mind back to the object as soon as possible and as often as it wanders away. Later, thoughts become shorter, unbroken focus gets longer and concentration grows stronger along with tranquility. This is how we develop concentration. In due course of time, we can fully focus on the object, reducing

negative thoughts to absolute minimum and developing the high-level concentration called *jhāna*. Such concentrated mind is very tranquil and very powerful. With further development, it will bring intuitive or psychic power. This is Tranquility Meditation.

## **Insight Meditation**

Insight Meditation is the development of progressive *vipassanā* insights. Why do we need to develop them? To be awakened out of illusion or to be liberated from illusion-generated cycle of suffering. Basically, illusion (*vipallāsa*) is of four kinds as follows:

1. Illusory sense of permanence: We are changing at every moment physically, mentally, and emotionally. It is simply an illusion that we feel like we have been the same person from the day we were born until now.
2. Illusory sense of pleasure: We seek pleasure by satisfying our senses like scratching an itch or quenching the thirst. It is simply an illusion that we enjoy such sensual pleasure as a genuine bliss in life.
3. Illusory sense of beauty: Beauty is just our interpretation of any objects that satisfy our eyes or our romantic feeling.
4. Illusory sense of "self": In an ultimate sense, we are just illusive manifestations of psycho-physical phenomena that are conditioned and ever-changing.

It is just under this illusion that we feel like we were someone living eternally on our own accord and in our own right.

These four kinds of illusion are deep-seated in our mind or mental process in a very mysterious way. Even though we find ourselves getting old or even if we see somebody die right under our eyes, we still feel as if we were to live eternally (*nicca*) or still seek pleasure in life (*sukha, subha*) or still feel like someone superior to others (*atta*).

What we cherish or get attached to in life, the Buddha said, are all a dream (*pisunakūpamā kāmā*). Indeed, life is a dream! Rather, it is a nightmare since it ends up with what we hate most, old age and death. We all are really scared to get old, let alone to die. Ironically, we get older and closer to death every moment. What we are really afraid of are actually happening to life. So, life is kind of nightmare. Moreover, illusion makes it even more miserable. We are just illusive manifestations (*ghana-nimitta*) of psycho-physical phenomena. The time we live on earth is very limited. But we have to suffer aging, sickness, and death. The cycle of birth, aging and death is a natural process of a life. If we expect a life against this nature, it's simply illusion that makes the nightmare really miserable.

So, the Buddha said:

*"People are in nature born old and dead. This is their nature; this is the way they are. Yet, unwise people hate*

*that nature. It is not appropriate for one to hate the truth<sup>2</sup>."*

When we see mind and body as they really are, we will overcome the illusion and be awakened from the dreadful nightmare.

In order to be aware of mind and body as they really are, we are instructed by the Buddha to be constantly mindful of four kinds of objects: body, feeling, thoughts, and sensory reactions. Such awareness is *vipassanā* insight that directly counteracts all sorts of illusions. Thus, constant mindfulness will awaken us out of the dreadful nightmare, or the nightmare will discontinue once we are awakened. This is Insight Meditation (IM).

## **Ten Killer Armies (*Māra-sena*)**

When we develop constant mindfulness (*vipassanā*) or deep concentration (*samatha*), we have to encounter many obstacles and mental distractions. First of all, ten Mara's Armies attack us even when we think of practicing during the retreat. The Pāḷi word, *Māra-sena* is composed of two words: *māra* and *sena*. Here, "*māra*" literally means a killer and "*sena*" means army. So *Māra-sena* literally means "Killer Army."

In the Pāḷi text, five phenomena are described as killer (*māra*).

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<sup>2</sup> Sukhumāla Sutta, Anguttara-1, 145



1. Psycho-physical phenomena (*khandha*) are killers because they involve all kinds of distress.
2. Mental defilements (*kilesa*) are also killers because they bring us all sorts of misfortune in this very life as well as in the lives to come.
3. Volitional actions (*abhisankhara*) are killers because they are responsible for our actions, wholesome and unwholesome, that prolong our existence in the round of rebirths.
4. Death (*miccu*) is obviously a killer.
5. An evil spirit (*deva-putta*) is also a killer because it encourages us to do evil and discourages us from doing good.

Regarding the fifth killer, this evil spirit came over and persuaded Prince Siddhatta, the would-be Buddha, to continue enjoying sensual pleasures as a universal monarch. Even when the prince sat under the Bodhi tree with firm decision to practice until he became fully enlightened, the evil spirit came over again and interfered with his effort.

## **Real or Personification?**

Here, question is whether the evil spirit is really a certain celestial being or just a personification. It is mentioned in the *Māra-dhītu Sutta*<sup>3</sup> that three divine

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<sup>3</sup> Māra-dhītu Sutta, Samyutta, 125

daughters of this evil spirit came down and tempted the Buddha into enjoying sensual pleasures with them. Their names were *Tanḥā*, *Aratī*, and *Ragā*, which respectively mean attachment, boredom, and lust. The names themselves obviously suggest that they are just personifications of mental defilements but this evil spirit is described as a certain celestial being from the heavenly realm called *Paranimmita-vasavattī*. Having conquered such mental defilements, the Buddha is honored as the conqueror (*jina*) over the five killers (*māra*).

In the Pāḷi text<sup>4</sup>, the Buddha described ten kinds of impediments as "Ten Māra Armies" (*Māra-sena*) because they often attack us when we do good, especially when we practice meditation or when we just think of practicing. The ten Māra Armies (*Māra-sena*) are:

1. Attachment to sensual pleasure (*kāma*)
2. Boredom or loneliness (*arati*)
3. Thirst and hunger (*khuppiṭṭhā*)
4. Craving for tasty food and drink (*tanḥā*)
5. Sloth-and-torpor (or laziness) (*thina-middha*)
6. Fear (*bhīru*)
7. Skeptical Doubt (*vicikicchā*)
8. Ingratitude and arrogance (*makkha, thambhā*)
9. Gain, fame, and honor (*lābha, sakkāra, siloka*)
10. Dignifying oneself and disgracing others (*attukkāmsana, para-vambhana*)

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<sup>4</sup> Sutta-nipata-342

## **The 1<sup>st</sup> Māra Army: Attachment to Sensual Pleasure (*kāma*)**

The first Māra Army is the attachment to sensual pleasure (*kāma*). At the night when Prince Siddhatta renounced the worldly life, he quietly entered the chamber of his wife and gave a last look at his newly-born son and his wife before he left the palace. At the city gate, he was alluringly persuaded to go back by Māra (most probably, it is attachment personified by Māra). If he were an ordinary person, he would have given up or at least postponed the idea of renunciation. Imagine how painful it would be to leave such a beautiful wife, cute baby son and royal palace. He would not have become the Buddha if he had not defeated such a powerful attachment, the first Māra Army.

The same Māra Army will come and attack us when we think about taking a meditation retreat. If we take an intensive retreat at a meditation center, we first have to leave our loved ones and things behind like family members, friends, wonderful TV programs, brand-new car, and so on. During the retreat, we are not allowed to have dinner; the food served may not be as tasty; the mattress provided may not be as soft. The first Māra Army, the attachment to sensual pleasure, will thus persuade us to dismiss the idea of a retreat or to enjoy comfort at home. The battle with the first Māra Army is often so severe that we rarely take a retreat. Only with strong faith in the practice and deeper understanding of the Dhamma, can we win this battle or seize the opportunity to practice. Many unfortunate people are defeated by the first Māra Army. They miss a chance to

practice or leave the retreat earlier than scheduled without making any progress. So, we must be courageous to fight the first Māra Army.

### **The 2<sup>nd</sup> Māra Army: Boredom or Loneliness** *(arati)*

Boredom or loneliness (*arati*) is the second Māra Army. It is related to attachment to sense objects. We get bored when we get out of touch with the sense-objects we love. For example, we get bored if we cannot see or talk to our loved ones, watch wonderful TV programs, drink the coffee we like, enjoy dinner, sleep on a soft mattress, do what we love to do like swimming, dancing, playing piano or golf and so on. Of course, we can suffer the most horrible boredom when we have to stay away from loved ones like spouses, girlfriends or boyfriends. So, boredom implies attachment unfulfilled. During a meditation retreat, such boredom will persuade us to leave the retreat earlier or to put no effort in the practice. So, boredom is the second Māra Army. The battle with it would be very intense if our attachment to loved ones is very strong. Continuous mindfulness is the most powerful weapon to fight this battle successfully.

### **The 3<sup>rd</sup> Māra Army: Thirst and Hunger** *(khuppipāsa)*

The third Māra Army is thirst and hunger (*khuppipāsa*). During a meditation retreat, we may not have enough food. Especially for monks and nuns during the Buddha's time, they sometimes suffered thirst and hunger because they had to live on alms given by people. Even the Buddha once returned from

the alms round with the empty bowl. Then, Māra in disguise of an ordinary man came over and persuaded the Buddha to take one more round. Māra's purpose was to humiliate the Buddha for discontentment. Then, the Buddha replied thus: "*Having no negative emotions we always live a happy life. We'll have the serenity food like Ābhassara<sup>5</sup>, indeed.*" During the retreat we observe eight precepts and have no dinner. So, hunger often has a bad impact on our mood and practice. There are people especially young ones who give up meditation because they cannot resist hunger for days. This means they fall in the battle with the third Mara Army.

### **The 4<sup>th</sup> Māra Army: Craving for Tasty Food** (*taṇhā*)

The fourth Māra Army is craving for tasty food (*taṇhā*). The word "*taṇhā*" normally means attachment to people and things. In this particular case, however, it refers to craving for food. When we do not have enough food or favorite food, we may feel agitated with thought of food and drink we love. We may get lost in the thought of food or sneak out to a restaurant nearby. When the Buddha laid down a monastic rule that requires monks and nuns to have no food after noon, a monk in the audience stood up and boldly rejected the Buddha. The Buddha had to convince him of how beneficial it would be to have no food after noon. Craving for food is not something easy to cope with. It can interfere with our practice. One of my young American friends once sneaked out of the center

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<sup>5</sup> "Ābhassara" are celestial beings who live in the highest among the 31 realms.

during the retreat and rushed to Pizza Hut nearby. The craving for food thus persuades many meditators to leave the retreat earlier than scheduled. Thus, some of us fall in the battle with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Māra Army. With continuous mindfulness we can fight it successfully.

### **The 5<sup>th</sup> Māra Army: Sloth-and-Torpor or Laziness** (*thina-middha*)

The fifth Māra Army is sloth-and-torpor or laziness (*thina-middha*). In an intensive retreat, yogis are required to get up early in the morning and go to bed late. Meditation teachers instruct yogis to develop mindfulness continuously even in the restroom. If we have faith in the teachers and the method of practice, we are rarely tired of doing what we believe important or beneficial. If we understand that mindfulness can bring us success in this life and heavenly bliss after death and culminate in ultimate peacefulness, we will not be tired of constantly developing mindfulness. Without this kind of faith, we will be surely so reluctant to take such an intensive retreat or we may be lazy to put full effort in the practice during retreat.

On top of weak faith, according to the commentary<sup>6</sup>, laziness is somehow related to discontent over the food. From my own experience, when I was not satisfied with my lunch, I was moody for the rest of the day and unwilling to put effort in the practice. In this regard, there is a story of monks in an intensive retreat in a forest. Mātika-mātā, an influential lady in the village nearby,

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<sup>6</sup> Sutta-nipata Atthakatha-2, 439

practiced under their guidance and reached the third stage of enlightenment along with psychic power. Then she investigated how high her teachers' spiritual status would be. She was shocked to find out that they reached nowhere yet. She checked why and found out they were not satisfied with food. Reading their mind, she managed every day food they liked. All the monks became arahants by the time their rain retreat was over. So, sometimes, insufficient or unsatisfactory food is the reason why we become unwilling to put effort in the practice. Whatever reason it may be, the sloth-and-torpor or laziness is the fifth Māra Army for us to fight courageously.

### **The 6<sup>th</sup> Māra Army: Fear** (*bhīru*)

The sixth Māra Army is fear (*bhīru*). The commentary says that we are mostly likely to be afflicted by fear if we practice alone in a secluded place without strong faith in *dhamma* and progress in the practice. In the remote area where there is no one around, we are often haunted by images and noises in the dark. During the Buddha's time, there was an event in which monks came back from the forest without making progress in the practice because they were haunted by spirits with scary sounds, fearsome images and horrible smell. Then, the Buddha said that they should have been well-equipped with loving-kindness (*metta*) to face with fear in such a secluded place. After having taught them how to develop loving-kindness (*metta*), the Buddha sent them back to that very forest where they later managed to build love and harmony with spirits and could practice successfully.

Another kind of fear is related to over-concern about our body and mind. Many of us often fear that long sitting may cause damage to our body and mind or harm our health. Some even feel anxious that they may get crazy by intensive practice. *Vipassanā* meditation is all about the attempt to be aware of what we are doing or thinking. So, this meditation simply promotes our awareness and understanding and keeps our mind more stable. Unfortunately, however, some people with weak and unstable mind happen to put too much pressure on their weak mind worsening their problem during intensive retreat. They need to learn to relax their mind and body and to get a balance between concentration and effort accordingly. Other than that, there is nothing for us to fear. So, fear or anxiety is the sixth Māra army. We must be courageous to fight against fear successfully.

### **The 7<sup>th</sup> Māra Army: Skeptical Doubt** (*vicikicchā*)

The seventh Mara army is skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*). Unless we make progress in our practice as shortly as we expect, we are likely to feel disappointed or skeptical about the method, teachers, or our potential. So, it is important to understand the practice correctly.

*Samatha* is all about development of concentration by focusing on a single meditative object like breath. The longer we can focus, the stronger the concentration becomes. Such concentrated mind is very stable, peaceful and powerful. It can lead to intuitive power or psychic power. At least, we can find ourselves to become spontaneously aware of future events in advance and



have our past memory much clearer than ever before. *Vipassanā* is all about to see body and mind as they really are, instead of as “I” or “mine.” Here, “body” refers to such physical phenomena as hardness, softness, tension, pressure, heat, warmth, etc. and “mind” mental phenomena as feelings, thoughts, seeing, hearing, etc. So, there arises insight the moment we experience, for instance, hardness as hardness instead of as “I” or “mine.” When such discernment gains momentum, it forms progressive insights all the way to path-fruit (magga-phala) enlightenment.

So, both *samatha* and *vipassanā* are simple and realistic although not easy. We need to understand them clearly. Otherwise, we will be defeated in the battle with the skeptical doubt, the 7<sup>th</sup> Māra Army, when we practice.

To make a remarkable progress in the practice, we need to meet five requirements: faith in the practice, good health, honesty, courageous effort, seeing real nature of observed phenomena or seeing things as they really are. Moreover, it is also important to keep a balance between faith and knowledge and between effort and concentration. Unbroken concentration is the key to *samatha* and continuous mindfulness to *vipassanā*. So, do not harbor any doubt about the method but just try to practice wholeheartedly.

### **The 8<sup>th</sup> Māra Army: Ingratitude and Arrogance** (*makkha, thambha*)

The 8<sup>th</sup> Māra Army is ingratitude and arrogance (*makkha, thambha*). According to the commentary, it can

happen to someone who makes progress to some extent in the practice, especially in the *samatha* meditation. In this case, Devadatta is a good example. He was one of the Buddha's six cousin princes who joined the Holy Order together. Instead of developing *vipassanā* insights and enlightenment, he developed high-level concentration and psychic power that brought him high esteem. Exercising his supernatural power, he convinced Prince Ajata-sattu that he was someone holy. Later, he became so proud and arrogant that he even requested the Buddha to hand over the entire Holy Order to him. Thus, he developed ingratitude toward the Buddha and made several attempts to assassinate the Buddha. In the end, he died of the horrible kind of disease and was reborn in the hell. When we make a remarkable progress in the practice, we take pride in our experience and knowledge and start to have low opinion of others or even our teachers. Thus, ingratitude and arrogance sneak into our mind, the 8<sup>th</sup> Māra Army that we need to fight carefully.

### **The 9<sup>th</sup> Māra Army: Gain, Fame, and Honor** (*lābha, sakkāra, siloka*)

The 9<sup>th</sup> Māra Army includes gain, fame, and honor (*lābha, sakkāra, siloka*). According to the commentary, this army comes and attacks us when we are honored by people in appreciation of our practice or teaching. The Buddha once said: "A banana and bamboo are killed by their fruits; likewise, a fool is killed by his achievement (fame, gain, and honor)." In many cases, people rather follow popularity than real dhamma. Practicing in a secluded place we can make

faster progress in the practice but less chance to become popular. In a big city we have more opportunities to become popular and prosperous. So, we may make choice to teach people in the city rather than to practice in a secluded place until we reach the satisfactory state. As for monks or nuns, gain and fame are easily available by doing chanting or by giving blessing or astrological advice to the devotees in the cities. In pursue of gain, fame, and honor, we may become hypocrites instead of real dhamma practitioners. The path to gain, fame, and honor is, the Buddha once said, different from the path to *nibbāna*. So, gain, fame, and honor form the 9<sup>th</sup> Māra Army. We need to fight it carefully.

### **The 10<sup>th</sup> Māra Army: Dignify Oneself and Disgrace Others**

*(attukkaṃsana, para-vambhana)*

The 10<sup>th</sup> Māra Army is to dignify oneself and disgrace others (*attukkaṃsana, para-vambhana*). With good knowledge of dhamma we may enhance our self-esteem and ego. Then we happen to dignify ourselves and disgrace others including fellow meditators or even our teachers. Such behavior often causes damage to peace and harmony among us or among the communities. During the Buddha's time, there were two senior monks, one very famous for being well-versed in monastic codes (*vinaya*) and another for his profound knowledge of Abhidhamma. Both had thousands of students. One day, one of the vinaya students disgraced the Abhidhamma master for a minor vinaya

offence<sup>7</sup>. Over that issue, there arose a bitter quarrel between two groups, Vinaya and Abhidhamma. Even the Buddha himself could not settle it and took a retreat in the forest. So, dignifying oneself and disgracing others is a dangerous Māra Army that often breaks peace and harmony among us and causes damage to our spiritual progress. During the retreat, seeing some of our fellow yogis not practicing properly and disturbing others, we are likely to dignify ourselves and disgrace others. This is the 10<sup>th</sup> Māra Army. We need to take extra care to fight it successfully.

## **Five Hindrances** (*Nīvaraṇa*)

During an intensive meditation retreat, what we first encounter is constant flow of thoughts known as hindrance (*nīvaraṇa*). It is classified into five kinds in many discourses but six kinds in the Abhidhamma. When the Buddha answered to Ajita-māṇava's question about hindrances, however, only delusion (*avijjā*) is described as the hindrance to the discernment of the real nature of the phenomena. The Buddha said that delusion conceals it. In *Paṭisambhidā-magga-162*, all sorts of unwholesome mental states are described as mental hindrances thus:

What are hindrances? Sensual desire is a hindrance;  
aversion is a hindrance; sloth-and-torpor is a

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<sup>7</sup> There is a monastic etiquette in the bathroom that requires a monk or nun to put a bowl face down after use. The failure to do so is a minor offence, of course. The Abhidhamma master left the bowl with leftover water in it in the bathroom, for which he was disgraced as a fool by a vinaya monk. Big problem started there.

hindrance; restlessness-and-remorse is a hindrance; skeptical doubt is a hindrance; delusion is a hindrance; boredom is a hindrance. All kinds of unwholesome mental states are hindrances.

## **Āvaraṇa Sutta**

In *Āvaraṇa Sutta* (An-2, 56), the Buddha described five kinds of the mental hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) as follows:

*Monks, there are five mental hindrances or mental obstructions that overwhelm one's mind and weaken one's wisdom. What are they? Monks, sensual desire (kāma-cchanda) is a mental hindrance, a mental obstruction that overwhelms one's mind and weakens one's wisdom. Aversion (byāpāda)...; sloth-and-torpor (thina-middha)...; restlessness-and-remorse (uddhacca-kukkucca) ...; skeptical doubt (vicikicchā) is a mental hindrance, a mental obstruction that overwhelms one's mind and weakens one's wisdom.*

*Without removing these hindrances, it is impossible for one to realize one's own interest, others', or both, (let alone) sublime wisdom and insight beyond the human merits (ten kinds of wholesome kammic deeds)<sup>8</sup>.*

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<sup>8</sup> Ten kinds of wholesome kammic deed (*dasa-kusala-kamma-patha*) refer to abstinence from ten kinds of misconducts: three bodily, four verbal, and three mental.

According to this discourse, the five unwholesome mental states (*nīvaraṇa*) called hindrances are: sensual desire, aversion, sloth-and-torpor, restlessness-and-remorse, and skeptical doubt<sup>9</sup>.

1. The Pāḷi term for sensual desire is *kāma-cchanda* that is composed of two words: *kāma* (desirable objects or sensual pleasure) and *cchanda* (craving). So, *kāma-cchanda* literally means craving for desirable objects or sensual pleasure. There are millions of things we crave for, animate or inanimate, like a beautiful partner, a pet, a car, a house, a laptop and so on. In the ultimate sense, however, they can all be summed up into five: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. When these sense-objects satisfy our senses, there arises sensual pleasure. We take delight in it, crave for it, and get attached to it. This kind of craving or attachment is called *kāma-cchanda*, which comes to be present in us on occasions when we think about having something desirable, or about having a good time with someone we love, and so on.

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<sup>9</sup> The commentary says that this fivefold presentation of hindrances corresponds with five *jhānic* factors. Actually, these five hindrances serve as obstacles not only to five *jhānic* factors but to seven awakening factors and any other wholesomeness. The *Abhidhamma* describes six kinds of mental hindrances by adding delusion (*avijjā*) to these five.

2. "Aversion" is the translation of *byāpāda* that implies such negative emotions as anger, hatred, ill will, dislike, displeasure, frustration, dissatisfaction, and so on. Such negative emotions arise in us when we react without mindfulness to undesirable sense-objects. We may feel angry with someone like our roommates or a yogi sitting next to us, or noises, heat, pain, poor food, poor service, poor accommodation, and so on.
3. The third hindrance is "sloth-and-torpor" (*thina-middha*) that are respectively defined by the commentaries as the lethargy of consciousness and that of mental factors. So, two separate mental states are subsumed under this hindrance, since they are obviously the same in effect and character. In daily language, they just refer to being lazy or unwilling to do something wholesome. So, this kind of hindrance manifests itself in terms of being unwilling to put correct effort in wholesome deeds, such as act of generosity, development of *metta*, study of *dhamma*, practice of *vipassanā*, and so on.
4. The fourth hindrance is also composed of two separate mental factors: restlessness (*uddhacca*) and remorse (*kukkucca*). The two are subsumed under the fourth hindrance apparently because they have similar effect and character. The Pāḷi word for "restlessness" is *uddhacca* which is literally defined as a scattered mind and illustrated with analogy of ash flying up in the air when a stone is thrown into

its pile. So, “restlessness” mainly refers to wandering minds or aimless thoughts. “Remorse” here refers to a guilty conscience that is mainly related to mistakes we made or opportunities we missed. So, the commentaries define it as regret about evil deeds one has done and good deeds one has failed to do. Restlessness-and-remorse (*uddhacca-kukkucca*) comes up when our mind wanders aimlessly and ends up being worried or remorseful about the mistakes we made and the opportunities we missed.

5. The Pāḷi word for “doubt” is *vicikicchā*, which consists of two words *vici* (analyzing) + *kicchā* (to dither or waver). If we analyze something beyond our knowledge, we are most likely to dither or waver. For example, if we were to try to analyze the Relativity Theory, we would only become confused unless we had a sufficient knowledge of physics. As a hindrance to spiritual progress, “doubt” refers to the confusion between right and wrong, between absolute truth and conventional truth. Suppose, for instance, we find selfish and aggressive people become more successful than those who are goodhearted. Then, we may analyze the reason and end up getting confused between wholesome and unwholesome, getting skeptical about the law of kamma and rebirth, which cannot be explained in scientific terms.

Regarding the absolute truth, even though we know we are going to die one day, we always feel as if we



were someone unique and ageless. Therefore, when we are taught there is no "I" but only mental and physical phenomena changing every moment, we get confused between what we believe and what we are taught. Subsequently, we may also feel skeptical about the Buddha's teaching, meditation practice and its benefits, the meditation teacher and his method, our capability and potentiality, and so on. Such skepticism or confusion is called "*vicikicchā*" which is normally translated as doubt.

So, the skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*) manifests itself in terms of being confused between right and wrong, wholesome and unwholesome, concept and reality, or losing faith and confidence in the practice, in our teachers, or in our potential.

## **Why They Are Called Hindrances**

These unwholesome mental states always make our mind cloudy, our vision misty, and our knowledge weedy. So, the effect of each hindrance is illustrated by the unclear image of one's face reflected on the surface of the water in a bowl. Sensual desire is compared to water mixed with dye, aversion to water heated to the boil, sloth-and-torpor to water covered with algae, restlessness-and-remorse to water stirred by wind, and doubt to water dark and muddy.

So, these unwholesome mental states hinder not only development of concentration and progressive *vipassanā*

insights, but also ordinary kinds of wholesome deeds such as acts of generosity (*dāna*), moral conducts (*sīla*), development of *metta* (*bhāvanā*), modesty (*apacāyana*), humanitarian or volunteer works (*veyyāvacca*), learning or teaching *dhamma* (*dhamma-ssavana, desanā*), sharing one's merits with others (*patti-dāna*), taking delight in other's merit (*pattānumodanā*), and so on. If or when we have one of these hindrances, we cannot think of anything wholesome, let alone to practice *samatha* or *vipassanā* meditation.

## **Destructive**

Furthermore, these mental hindrances not only interfere with spiritual progress or ordinary kind of wholesomeness but also can destroy what we have already achieved. Especially, gross forms of sensual desire and aversion can destroy the concentration and insight that have been already developed.

Below are two stories to illustrate this point:

### **1. Hermit Hari-taca**

The story of a hermit called Hari-taca illustrates how destructive the lustful feeling is to one's spiritual attainment. Hari-taca<sup>10</sup> was born as a son to a wealthy Brahmin family. When he came of age, he studied at Takkasīla, the most prestigious university of those days. When his parents died, great amount of wealth was left

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<sup>10</sup> Jhātaka-tṭhakathā-3, 474

for him. Then he happened to contemplate on the fact that everybody has to get out of the world empty-handed, leaving all the wealth and beloved ones behind. So, he renounced the worldly life, and spent the rest of his life as a hermit in a deep forest at the foot of Mt. Himalaya. He developed concentration until he attained *jhāna* (highly-developed concentration) and psychic power. After years, he had to come down to Bārāṇasī city to get salt and sour <sup>11</sup>. Then, he met the Bārāṇasī king who was so impressed by his spiritual achievement and requested him to stay in the royal park. During his stay there, he went to the palace every day for his lunch through the sky by exercising his psychic power. One day, the king had to go to the border area to defeat the rebellion. During that time, the queen took care of his lunch. One day, when he was coming into the palace through the sky, the queen got up suddenly and her silk outfit fell off exposing her attractive body. Seeing that, he was so overwhelmed by lustful feeling that he committed sexual misconduct. As a result, he lost his concentration and psychic power. This is how sensual desire destroys one's accomplishment.

## 2. Devadatta

With regards to the destructive power of anger or hatred, we can take Devadatta as an example. Devadatta

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<sup>11</sup> On the Himalaya mountain reign, many hermits and ascetics practiced in old days. Without having enough salt (sodium) and sour (Vitamin C) for months there, they became weak and fatigued and were required to come down to the villages nearby.

was one of the six Sakya princes<sup>12</sup> who were all the Buddha's cousins and joined the Holy Order together. Under the guidance of the Buddha, six princes became monks and practiced meditation strenuously. All of them except Devadatta attained magga-phala enlightenment. But Devadatta only developed high-level concentration (*jhāna*) and its resultant supernatural power (*iddhi*). Unfortunately, he later lost all his spiritual achievements because he made several attempts to assassinate the Buddha in revenge for having rejected his request to hand over the monastic administration to him. This event illustrates how destructive the anger or hatred is to one's spiritual achievement.

## **To Overcome Mental Hindrances**

These five unwholesome mental states obviously interfere with our meditation practice. Only with strong faith and great effort can we manage to be mindful of them as immediately as possible. Otherwise, they may last from a few minutes to much longer. When this happens, there will be no way for us to make any progress in the practice. So, learning how to withstand their impact with awareness is an important skill for success in our spiritual life.

The Buddha put great emphasis on the comprehensive understanding of the hindrances in *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. He instructed us to be aware of the hindrances from five aspects: their presence, their absence, the

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<sup>12</sup> Six Sakya Princes: Bhaddiya, Anuruddha, Ānanda, Bhagu, Kimila and Devadatta.

reason for their presence, the reason for their absence, and the prevention. In order to master a hindrance from these five aspects, all we have to do is to note it while it is present. This technique of simple recognition constitutes a powerful way to turn the obstacles to meditation into objects of meditation. So, we are instructed to be mindful of a hindrance while it is present in us, but neither to suppress it nor indulge in it nor give vent to it. Between suppression and indulgence, the bare awareness of a hindrance forms a middle path. With an awareness of the presence of a hindrance, it can often be prevented from continuing to arise or simply disappear. So, this task of mindful recognition is the central theme in the contemplation of the hindrances.

Before we are able to develop higher *vipassanā* insights, we can only overcome or prevent the mental hindrances at the moment we are mindful of them. It is a momentary eradication. And through continuous and mature mindfulness, we can prevent them for a longer period. Of course, we can uproot them when we reach the third or fourth stage of enlightenment (*anāgami* or *arahatta*).

Before that, *samatha* meditation is also very helpful to temporarily prevent the mental hindrances from arising. To reduce the sensual desire, for instance, we may practice contemplation on thirty-two anatomical parts, meditation on the skeleton of bones, or recollection of our death as our unavoidable destiny. To lessen anger and hatred, we can develop loving kindness or compassion. To get rid of sloth and torpor, we may develop

mindfulness of walking or standing. To overcome wandering mind and worry, we can develop the meditation on breath or on thirty-two anatomical parts. We can remove skeptical doubt by listening to dhamma talks, learning or discussing dhamma with skilled teachers, reading dhamma books, and so on.

## Ten Mental Defilements (*Kilesa*)

### Definition and Classification

“*Kilesa*” is normally translated as mental defilement. But it has two literal meanings: pollution and torture<sup>13</sup>. Some discourses describe lust or sinful desire as *kilesa* and other discourses<sup>14</sup> five kinds of negative mental states. Abhidhamma mentions ten kinds<sup>15</sup> of *kilesa*. In order to satisfy our lust or sinful desire, we do anything good or bad. Thus, the sinful desire or attachment often forms a root cause of all kinds of negative mental states. So, it is said in the Sub-commentary on Dhamma-saṅganī-127 thus: “Dependent on attachment there arise delusion, pride, sloth-and-torpor, restlessness, lack of moral shame and lack of moral fear.” Of course, *kilesas* are always supportive of one another. So, they are overlapped in essence despite different classifications.

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<sup>13</sup> Patisambhida-magga Aṭṭhakathā-124

<sup>14</sup> *Kāmacchando ca byāpādo, thina-middhañca bhikkhuno; uddhaccaṃ vicikicchā ca, pañcete citta-kelisā* (thera, 346)

<sup>15</sup> *kilesa* is even classified into 1500 kinds in Anu-ṭīkā, the subcommentary on Dhamma-saṅganī, Page-19

## ***Kilesa Means Pollution***

As mentioned above, one meaning of *kilesa* is pollution. From the Buddhist perspective, the pollution most harmful to us is not water or air pollution but mental pollution (*kilesa*) because it can destroy our quality of life not only in this life but also in the lives to come. Abhidhamma classifies it into ten kinds: sensual desire (*lobha*), aversion (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*), conceit (*mana*), wrong view (*ditthi*), skeptical doubt (*vicikiccha*), sloth (*thina*), torpor (*middha*), lack of moral shame (*ahirika*), and lack of moral fear (*anottappa*).

1. The Pāli word "*lobha*" refers to such negative mental states as greed, selfishness, desire, craving, lust, attachment, and so on. When our mind is polluted with greed or lust, we cannot see things clearly and correctly; we cannot make right decision. Motivated by greed we may cheat others, fight over food, lodging, mate, natural resources, and territory. Wars will never end on this planet because of our greed and selfishness. In the same way, when our mind is polluted with lust, we cannot see things clearly and correctly and all we can think about at that moment is to satisfy our lust. So, we are likely to commit rape or adultery jeopardizing our reputation, career and family. According to the law of kamma, such unwholesome actions can lead us to woeful rebirths. Thus, *lobha* is a pollutant that is far more harmful to our life than water and air pollutions are.

2. The Pāli word "*dosa*" refers to such negative mental states as anger, hatred, aversion, hostility, aggression and so on in an active sense, and worry, anxiety, fear,

frustration, stress, depression, etc. in a passive sense. *Dosa* pollutes our mind in a very harmful manner. When our mind is polluted with anger, we cannot see things clearly and correctly. So, we may beat our beloved spouse or child, fight with our best friends, set our valuable things on fire, and even commit parricide or suicide. So, *dosa* is described as harmful mental pollution.

3. Pāḷi word "*moha*" is defined in two ways, as ignorance (*appatipatti*) and delusion (*miccha-patipatti*). Ignorance means to not see the truth like walking in the dark exposing to all sorts of danger and disaster. Delusion means to mistake one thing for another. Like seasonal insects that mistake flame for entertainment and rush into it to death or a deer that mistakes mirage for water and pursues it in distress and in vain, we mistake impermanence for permanence, displeasure for pleasure, and non-self for self. Like a cow on the way to slaughterhouse, we are getting closer to the death at every moment. To pursue sensual pleasure on the way to death is simply delusion, which is real pollution, the worst among others.

4. Conceit (*māna*) literally means to evaluate or judge ourselves in comparison with others. In most cases, it is to think highly of ourselves, our status, our knowledge, our family, our nationality, our country, etc., and at the same time to think lowly of others, their status, their family, their nationality, their countries, etc. Hitler thought Germans were superior to any other nationalities on earth. Indeed, we all have similar notion of ego; we want others to think or speak highly of us and to treat us respectfully. Also, it is ego that makes us feel insulted and



react in an arrogant and often disastrous manner when others look down on us. Thus, when our mind is polluted with conceit, we cannot see things clearly and correctly; we are doomed to take wrong way.

5. Wrong view (*diṭṭhi*) is basically of three kinds: belief in no cause, belief in wrong cause, and belief in kamma as only cause. The first wrong view is to believe that all phenomena, animate and inanimate, come into existence casually or randomly. The second kind is to believe each and everyone as individual soul (*jīva-atta*) that is created by the universal soul (*parama-atta*). The third is to believe that all our thoughts and actions are predetermined by our kamma.

Unless we develop constant mindfulness, we think under illusion that it is "I" acting, feeling, thinking, and reacting to the sense-objects on "my" own accord. It is wrong view, indeed. When our mind is polluted with such a wrong view, we cannot see things clearly and correctly. Then, we cannot find a way out of the torturous cycle of life and death.

6-8. The sixth to the eighth mental pollutions are skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*), sloth (*thina*) and torpor (*middha*). They have been explained under "Five Mental Hindrances" in the previous section.

9-10. The last two are: lack of moral shame (*ahirika*) and lack of moral fear (*anottappa*). Virtuous people feel ashamed of doing evil deeds. But there are many people who dare to show their faces even after having done evil deeds, like telling a lie, cheating others, committing adultery, and so on. Some officials take bribe shamelessly

and fearlessly. Some business men never feel ashamed of committing unlawful acts over and over again. Some religious persons are hypocrites; they shamelessly claim to be someone who they are really not. Such shameless people are very easy to do evil. Thus, lack of moral shame and lack of moral fear pollute our mind, indeed.

### ***Kilesa* Means Torture**

According to the second definition, *kilesa* means torture. Normally, disease, danger, disaster and many other misfortunes are regarded as tortures. From Buddhist perspective, however, mental defilements are described as tortures (*kilesa*), instead. The ordinary kinds of torture can be avoided in one way or another. Even unavoidable, they can only afflict this life, but not the lives to come. But mental defilements such as greed, lust, anger, hatred, etc. can torture us not only in this life but also in the future lives. This is the literal meaning of *kilesa*.

Lust is a torture. Its preliminary form is what we glorify as love. When we were young, we were very happy playing and jumping around. Such happiness fades away once we fall in love with someone. We can no longer enjoy ourselves without our beloved one, exactly like a drug addict. Actually, the feeling to be with him or her is like burning, not as pleasant or peaceful as we illusively think. When I was young, I saw a girl in good shape coming from distance, and felt lustful. But when she came close enough, I found out she was my younger sister. Thereupon, I found lust as a torture compared to family

feeling if not to loving-kindness (*metta*). For sure, lust is a torture.

And, attachment to anything or anyone is a torture, too. Suppose, for instance, we watch the news in which hundreds of people were dead in a disaster. We may feel compassionate, but not afflicted by that. However, if one of them were someone we dearly love, the news would be really a torture. Actually, we are tortured not by the death but by our attachment to the person.

In the same way, greed or selfishness is a torture, too. The more selfish we are, the more miserable our lives would become. We can feel happy if we do something with unselfishness. A friend of mine once said that when she wanted to donate to her mother, a charitable organization, monks or people in need, she worked overtime to make extra money. Working extra hours is very exhausting, but she said she found herself even happier. However, if we do it with selfishness or greed, we will be tortured by it.

Anger is a torture, too. When we are angry, our heart beats faster, blood pressure rises up, face turns red, and lips dry up. Definitely, we look ugly right away, and feel really miserable. Chemical changes associated with anger make it difficult to think straight and harm our physical and mental health. According to psychologists, anger causes a loss in self-monitoring capacity and objective observability. If really angry, we are likely to commit evil actions, even murder or suicide. From all aspects, anger and hatred are tortures, indeed.

Ignorance or delusion is also really a torture. In the old days in Burma, there were no chicken farms. So, a butcher had to collect chickens from villages and brought them in a big basket on a bike back to his slaughter-house in town. Occasionally, I saw some chicken fighting in the basket on their way to the slaughter house. Like those chickens, we are all on the way to death. But, we are ignorant of the fact of impermanence and harbor anger, hatred, jealousy, pride and prejudice, etc. that bring all sorts of human afflictions. When we understand the fact that we are approaching death every moment, there will be no room in our hearts for these negative emotions. Then, we can experience genuine happiness and be happy under any circumstances. In this sense, ignorance and its related mental defilements are all described as afflictions or tortures (*kilesa*). Their absence means genuine happiness, indeed. This is second definition of *kilesa*.

## **From Psychological Perspectives**

Modern psychologists believe our emotions such as anger, lust, etc. have certain intrinsic values for our survival and well-being. They even warn against the possible harmful effects of suppressing them. From Buddhist perspective, we have both wholesome potentials (*parami*) and unwholesome potentials (*anusaya*) that have lain dormant in our mental process throughout the cycle of rebirths. Such dormant mental states always influence our thoughts. In this sense, our emotions are considered to be intrinsic but not to be necessary for our well-being although they are interrelated according to the law of conditionality (*paṭṭhāna*). Anyhow, we can find ourselves to be even happier when negative emotions like

anger, lust, etc. are not present in our hearts. According to *Satipatthana Sutta*, we are to be mindful of them carefully but neither to suppress them deliberately nor to give vent to them in any way. Sheer awareness of their true nature itself means a control over their harmful effect and, at the same time, the development of insight.

## **Genuine Happiness**

For a little more elaboration, we can experience genuine happiness the moment we are freed from such mental tortures (*kilesa*) as lust, greed, selfishness, insatiable desire, jealousy, pride and prejudice, and so on. In a nightmare, for example, we may have some horrible experiences like fear, exhaustion, faster heartbeats, cold sweat, etc. The moment we are awakened out of the nightmare, however, all sorts of distress will be suddenly gone like a magic. Similarly, once we see things as they really are, we will be awakened from illusion and, at the same time, all sorts of distress will be gone right away.

In order to overcome *kilesas*, the most effective way is to practice *samatha* and *vipassanā*. For *samatha*, for example, if we practice the meditation on 32 anatomical parts by contemplating thus: "Hair is not me or mine;" "nails are not me or mine;" "skin is not me or mine," and so on. In due course of time, we will find nothing to take as "I" or "mine." At this point, we will find ourselves freed from all kinds of mental torture like awakening from a nightmare. Loving kindness meditation can reduce anger, hatred, and jealousy. The meditation on death can reduce conceit, superiority, and rivalry. Meditation on breath can keep our mind away from negative emotions like worry,

anxiety, etc. For instance, if we had a hard time to sleep, note breaths and the mind will calm down leading to a sound sleep. In this way, *samatha* can bring us genuine happiness by keeping our mind away from mental defilements (*vikkhambhana-pahāna*).

In the same way, for *vipassanā*, if we develop mindfulness, we will discern mind and body as they really are instead of as "I" or "mine." At this moment, we are awakened from the illusion that is wholly responsible for all sorts of mental defilements or mental tortures. Thanks to mindfulness, even if we encounter some dangers or disaster, they will not afflict us as severely as they otherwise would. Thus, every moment we are mindful, we are freed from mental tortures and experience genuine happiness. Of course, full cessation of torture only comes along with full enlightenment. Hence, there is a genuine happiness.

## **Additional Information**

### **1500 Kinds of Kilesa**

In the Pāli text<sup>16</sup>, *kilesa* is divided into 1,500 kinds. Ten kilesas are multiplied by 75 objects and become 750 that are again multiplied by two, one's own and other's. Thus, ten kilesas become 1,500 in number. Here, the 75 objects include one consciousness, 52 mental factors, and 22 physical elements.

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<sup>16</sup> Anu-ṭīkā, the subcommentary on Dhamma-saṅgani, Page-19

## One Consciousness and Kilesa

In the Abhidhamma, consciousness is classified into 89 kinds according to the certain sets of mental factors that accompany certain mind-moments. In many discourses, however, it is classified into six kinds associated with six sense-doors, such as eye-consciousness and so on<sup>17</sup>. In terms of a cognitive function which is barely aware of the existence of an object or phenomenon, however, there is only one kind of consciousness, based on which there can arise ten kinds of kilesas. For example, depending on the seeing consciousness, there can arise ten kinds of Kilesas:

- Attachment when we take delight in seeing.
- Aversion when we are averse to seeing something disgusting.
- Delusion when we are ignorant of what the seeing really is.
- Conceit when we take pride in seeing.
- Illusion when we identify seeing with "I" or "mine."

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<sup>17</sup> In many discourses, however, it is classified into six kinds depending on six sense-doors: eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness, and mind-consciousness. Among the six kinds of consciousness, the first five are quite simple to understand, but the last one, mind-consciousness, is complicated because it includes various kinds of thoughts such as lustful thought, hateful thought, spiteful thought, analyzing thought, reasoning thought, judging thought, planning thought, daydreaming thought and so on.

- Skeptical doubt when we get confused by the fact that there is only seeing consciousness but no seer.
- Sloth and torpor when we are lazy to do good deeds in regard to seeing, like to be mindful of seeing.
- Shamelessness or fearlessness when we are shameless or fearless to see in an evil way.

The same is true with remaining kinds of consciousness: hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking. So, there can arise ten kinds of kilesas associated with each of six kinds of consciousness.

## **52 Mental Factors and Kilesa**

There are 52 mental factors<sup>18</sup>, each of which can serve as an object for ten kinds of kilesa. Among the 52 mental

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### <sup>18</sup> **52 Mental Factors**

- Seven Common: Contact, Feeling, Perception, Volition, Concentration, Mental Vitality, Attention;
- Six Particular: Initial Application, Sustained Application, Decision, Effort, Joy, zeal;
- Fourteen Immoral: Delusion, Shamelessness, Fearlessness, Restlessness, Attachment, Wrong View, Conceit, Hatred, Jealousy, Avariciousness, Worry, Sloth, Torpor, Doubt;
- Nineteen Common Beautiful: Faith, Mindfulness, Moral Shame, Moral Fear, Non-attachment, Non-hatred, Equanimity, Tranquility of Mind, Tranquility of Mental Factors, Lightness of mind, Lightness of Mental Factors, Pliancy of Mind, Pliancy of Mental Factors, Adaptability of Mind, Adaptability of Mental Factors, Proficiency of Mind,



factors, anger, for instance, can become an object of ten kinds of kilesas. For example, there are times when we proudly say something like: "You know I am not very patient. I cannot forebear from discrimination, at all." At such moment, we apparently take delight or pride in our anger. Sometimes, we are angry about our anger or someone else's. For example, we may be angry with ourselves for being angry in public. An old lady once said that she was angry with her grand-son for being angry with her without suitable reason. So, sometimes, we are angry about our anger or others'. Thus, based on a mental factor like anger there can arise:

- attachment when we take delight in anger,
- aversion to anger,
- delusion when we are ignorant of what anger really is,
- conceit when we take pride in anger,
- illusion when we identify anger with "I" or "mine,"
- skeptical doubt when we get confused between right and wrong regarding anger,
- sloth and torpor when we are lazy to do good deeds in the wake of anger,

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Proficiency of Mental Factors, Rectitude of Mind, Rectitude of Mental Factors;

- Three Abstinenes: Abstinence from Wrong Speeches, Wrong Actions, Wrong Livelihood;
- Two Illimitable: Compassion, Sympathetic Joy, (loving-kindness (*metta*) and Equanimity (*upekkhā*) are already taken as non-hatred and non-attachment, respectively);
- Wisdom: The Faculty of Wisdom.

- shamelessness or fearlessness when we are shameless or fearless of being angry.

## **22 Matters and Kilesa**

- In harmony with the sub-commentary, there are 22 kinds of physical elements that can be taken by ten kilesas as their objects such as earth, water, fire, air, color, smell, taste, nutriment, eye-sensitivity, ear-sensitivity, nose-sensitivity, tongue-sensitivity, body-sensitivity, form, sound, odor, taste, and tangibility (tangibility is nothing but three primary elements excluding water element), femininity and masculinity, heart-base, faculty of physical vitality, nutriment, space, appearing, lasting, and disappearing. A rocky mountain seems to be really solid but can be broken repeatedly until there is nothing other than formless physical elements remains. This means there is nothing solid. So, to feel something solid actually means to experience the characteristics of two kinds of elements: earth and water. That is the way we experience solidity. We can also feel the temperature or air pressure when we touch something. The entire outer world is born of *utu*, the fire element. In other words, they are just different manifestations, or mutations of the fire element. It is undeniable that our planet and everything on it are originally born of the sun, a massive fire ball. So, our physical body is not solid, but just a combination of formless elements that can be taken by ten kilesas as their objects. Among

them, 22 kinds of physical elements are mentioned as objects of kilesas in the sub-commentary<sup>19</sup>.

When we touch someone, for instance, we can experience hardness, which is the characteristic of the earth and water elements; we can feel his or her body temperature that is characterized by the fire element; or we experience air pressure or tension or motion which represents the air element. Our bodies are not solid. What feels solid is just a physical characteristic of the earth element. A boy once proudly showed off how hard his muscles were. Obviously, he took delight and pride in the hardness (earth element) that is predominant in his muscles. His muscles will become soft if he no longer does regular exercise. Then, he may feel averse to softness of his muscles. Hardness and softness represent the earth elements. Thus, the earth element can form the foundation for ten kinds of kilesas to arise, namely:

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<sup>19</sup> **22 Physical Elements**

- Four Great Essentials: earth (extension), water, (cohesion), fire, air (motion);
- Five Sensitive: eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body;
- Five Sense-objects: form, sound, odor, taste, and tangibility (tangibility is nothing but three primary elements excluding water element);
- Two Genders: femininity and masculinity;
- Material Quality of Base: heart-base;
- Material Quality of Life: faculty of physical vitality;
- Nutrition: nutriment;
- One Limiting Quality: space;
- Three Marks: appearing, lasting, and disappearing.

- Attachment when we take delight in hardness or softness that predominates in one's muscles, for instance;
- Aversion when we are not satisfied with hardness or softness;
- Delusion when we are ignorant of what hardness or softness really is;
- Conceit when we take pride in hardness or softness;
- Illusion when we identify hardness or softness with "I" or "mine;"
- Skeptical doubt when we get confused between right and wrong regarding hardness or softness;
- Sloth and torpor when we are lazy to do good deeds in association with hardness or softness;
- Shamelessness or fearlessness when we are shameless or fearless to do evil deeds associated with hardness or softness.

Thus, ten kinds of kilesa take 75 objects each and become 750 in number, which are again multiplied by one's own and others' and become 1,500 in number. This is how we get 1,500 kinds of kilesa.

# Ten Bondages (*Samyojana*)

## Definition of *Samyojana*

"Fetter" is the literal meaning of *samyojana*, which is composed of two words, *sam* (strongly) and *yojana* (to yoke or to bind). It refers to the unwholesome mental states that strongly yoke or bind beings to the round of existence. During the Buddha's time, Venerable Koṭṭhika once asked Venerable Sāriputta which phenomena yoke a being to the round of birth and death, his or her senses or sense-objects. Their discussion is documented in the Pāli text as follows:

"Friend Sāriputta, is the eye the fetter of visible objects or are the visible objects the fetter of the eye? Is the ear the fetter of sounds or are sounds the fetter of the ear? Is the nose the fetter of smell or are smells the fetter of the nose? Is the tongue the fetter of taste or are tastes the fetter of the tongue? Is the body the fetter of touches or are touches the fetter of the body? Is the mind the fetter of dhamma objects or are the dhamma objects<sup>20</sup> the fetter of the mind?"

"Friend Koṭṭhika, the eye is not the fetter of visible objects nor are visible objects the fetter of the eye, but rather the desire and lust that arise there

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<sup>20</sup> Dhamma objects refers to the objects that can only be experienced through the mind but not through other senses. They include subtle physical elements except the first five sense-objects and all kinds of minds and mental factors, nibbāna, conceptual objects.

depending on both: that is the fetter there.” The similar statements are made for remaining senses and their corresponding objects.

“Suppose, friend, a black ox and a white ox were yoked together by a single harness or yoke. Would one be speaking rightly if one were to say: “The black ox is the fetter of the white ox; the white ox is the fetter of the black ox.”

“No, friend, the black ox is not the fetter of the white ox, nor is the white ox the fetter of the black ox, but rather the single harness or yoke by which the two are yoked together: that is the fetter there.”

“So too, friend, the eye is not the fetter of visible objects, nor are visible objects the fetter of the eye, but rather the desire and lust that arise there depending on both: that is the fetter there..., nor are the dhamma objects the fetter of the mind, but rather the desire and lust that arise there in dependence on both: that is the fetter.”<sup>21</sup>

## **Ten Kinds of Fetters**

In *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the Buddha instructed us to be mindful of fetters that arise when we react to the outer world (five sense-objects). The commentary on that sutta explains how ten kinds of fetter come into existence when we react to sense-objects. Except for the time we fall asleep, we are experiencing one object after another

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<sup>21</sup> Koṭṭhika Sutta, Saḷāyatana-vagga Saṃyutta-nikāya, Page 372

continuously through our senses. It is impossible for us to select the objects we want to experience. Without mindfulness, we are totally ignorant of our senses, objects and their impacts. As a result, we often react to them by unwholesome means rather than wholesome. So, when we react to an object without mindfulness, whether it is sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, or mental object, we are most likely to arouse:

1. Lust if the object is taken as someone or something lovable (*kāmarāga*).
2. Aversion if the object is considered despicable (*paṭigha*).
3. Conceit if the object is taken in comparison with who we are (*māna*).
4. Ego-illusion if the object is related to an illusory sense of "I" or "mine" (*diṭṭhi*).
5. Doubt if the object wavers us between good or bad, right or wrong (*vicikicchā*).
6. Wrong view if the object is taken from the perspective of rites and rituals (*sīlabbata-parāmāsa*). In ancient India, there were many kinds of rites and rituals. People, for instance, bathe in the Ganges river to wash their offences away; sacrifice animals to God for blessing and protection; torture their own bodies by behaving like a dog or a cow with the purpose to pay off their kammic debts, and so on.
7. Attachment to eternal life if the object is something or someone we would like to possess forever (*bhava-rāga*).

8. Envy or jealousy if the object is someone more successful than we are (*issā*).
9. Intolerance if the object is someone who is as successful as we are (*macchariya*).
10. Ignorance if the object is unknown in an ultimate sense (*appaṭipatti avijjā*) or known in an illusory sense (*micchā-patipatti avijjā*).

Thus, we react to the sense-objects by means of ten kinds of unwholesome mental states that are called “fetters” because they bind or yoke us to the incessant cycle of births and deaths. It is a simple logic that if there is a present life, there must be past and future lives, too. There is an essential relationship between today and tomorrow, this month and next month, this year and next year, this life and next life. As long as we cannot cut these fetters (ten kinds of unwholesome mental states), we can by no means cease this painful and endless cycle of births and deaths (*saṃsāra*). To illustrate this point, below are some stories:

### **Fettered by Attachment**

During the Buddha’s time, one day a monk received a brand-new robe of good quality. Unfortunately, he passed away that very evening. When his belongings were about to be shared among his fellow monks in accordance with monastic rules, Buddha asked them to postpone for another week because he heard by his divine ear a louse on that very robe crying for help thus: “Please help me! Help me! The greedy monks are trying to steal my robe.”



The monk was reborn as a louse obviously because of his attachment to the robe. After a week when the louse died, the monks were allowed to share the robes. This story shows how one can be fettered to the woeful rebirth by attachment.

Another story happened in Burma in 1960. A dedicated Buddhist had a beautiful monastery built for a monk on Zagaing Hill, Upper Burma. When construction was almost completed, the monk passed away. So, the second senior monk took over that newly built monastery. For a few months since then, monks in that monastery heard every night someone doing construction work even though nobody was really there. Apparently, the late abbot was reborn as a ghost in that very building due to his attachment to it. The similar events in the USA or Europe can be heard, too. These two stories indicate how we can be fettered or bound to saṃsāra by attachment.

### **Fettered by Aversion and Jealousy**

To illustrate how we can be fettered by the aversion and jealousy, there is a *Dhammapada* story. Once there lived a man whose wife was barren. Unable to bear a child she was afraid that she would be mistreated by her husband and parents-in-law unless they would get a baby who could inherit their name and wealth. So, she herself arranged for her husband to marry another woman. But, as soon as she knew the second wife was pregnant, she gave the second wife food mixed with drugs causing her to have miscarriage. On her third pregnancy, the second wife kept it to herself without informing the barren wife. But when the latter came to know about it, she again

caused an abortion. Eventually, the second wife died in childbirth. Before her death, the poor woman was filled with hatred and vowed vengeance on the barren wife and her future offspring. Thus, the hatred started.

Among their later existences the two were reborn as hen and a cat, a doe and a leopardess, and finally as the daughter of a nobleman in Sāvatti and an ogress. One day, the ogress (*kāḷa-yakkhinī*) was in hot pursuit of the noble man's daughter and her baby. Then, the lady fled to the Buddha and placed her son at his feet for protection. Fortunately, their long and painful revenge was finally settled under the compassionate and wise teaching of the Buddha. This story highlights how the aversion and jealousy can bind us to the sorrowful round of rebirths.

### **Fettered by False View, etc.**

On one occasion, the Buddha lived in a small town called Uttarakā in Thūlu State. One morning, the Buddha went to Uttarakā village for alms round accompanied by a monk named Sunakkhatta. On the way, Sunakkhatta saw Korakkhattiya, an ascetic who lived a dog's lifestyle as kammic retribution or repayment for his sins. Korakkhattiya, following the lifestyle of a dog, lived naked, walked with four limbs, slept on the ground, and took food from the ground with his mouth. The monk Sunakkhatta really admired Korakkhattiya for such a seemingly superhuman effort and also believed him to be a holy person. Knowing his thoughts, the Buddha openly criticized thus: "*What a stupid you are, Sunakkhatta! I*

wonder why you claim you are a monk of Sakya-muni while you admire very much Korakkhattiya for such a stupid kammic retribution practice." Then, the Buddha professed Korakkhattiya's life after death. The Buddha declared, "A week later, Korakkhattiya will die of excessive eating, be buried in a burial ground called *Bīraṇatthambaka*, and be reborn in a woeful state called *Kālakañcika*<sup>22</sup>." And then the Buddha said to Sunakkhatta thus: "You may go to the burial ground and ask where he will have been reborn." A week later, all the Buddha's prophecy came true, humiliating Sunakkhatta so much that he left the Holy Order.<sup>23</sup> Then, the Buddha professed that Sunakkhatta would also be reborn in a woeful state after death because he was stuck to that wrong view.

This event obviously showed that two persons, the monk Sunakkhatta and the ascetic Korakkhattiya, were fettered to the woeful rebirths by their false view of rites and ritual (*silabbata-parāmāsa*). Actually, their woeful rebirths can also be attributed to two other kinds of fetter: confusion between right and wrong (*vicikicchā*), and ignorance of the truth (*avijjā*).

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<sup>22</sup> "*Kālakañcika*" is a particular kind of ghost species (*peta*). Ghosts are fundamentally of two kinds: one belongs to a lower celestial realm (*catu-mahārājika*) and another to a woeful realm (*peta*). *Kālakañcikas* belong to a woeful state and look fearful, and live on trash and human waste. (Pañca-pakaraṇa Aṭṭhakathā, 205)

<sup>23</sup> Pāthika-vagga Pāli, Page 5

## Two Different Classifications

The list of ten fetters is a little bit different between the discourses (*sutta*) and the *Abhidhamma*. As mentioned before, the list of fetters in *Abhidhamma* includes craving for sensual pleasure, craving for eternal existence, aversion, conceit, ego-illusion, belief in rites and rituals, skeptical doubt, jealousy (*issā*), intolerance (*macchhariya*), and ignorance or delusion.

In the discourses (*sutta*), craving for eternal existence is divided into two kinds: craving for life in the form-celestial realms (*rūpa-vacara*) life and craving for formless-celestial realms (*arūpa-vacara*) life. Jealousy (*issa*) and intolerance (*macchhariya*) in the *Abhidhamma* list are replaced with restlessness (*uddhacca*) in discourses. Therefore, the fetters mentioned in discourses are: craving for sensual pleasure, craving for form-celestial realms life, craving for formless-celestial realms life, aversion, conceit, ego-illusion, belief in rites and rituals, skeptical doubt, restlessness, and delusion.

### Lower and Upper Fetters <sup>24</sup>

In the discourses, the ten kinds of fetter are again classified into two groups as follows:

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<sup>24</sup> Orambhāgiya Sutta, and Uddhambhāgiya Sutta, Mahāvagga Pāḷi, Samyutta-nikāya, Page 56

- Five Lower Fetters (*orambhāgiya*): sensual desire, aversion, ego-illusion, belief in rites and rituals, and skeptical doubt.
- Five Upper Fetters (*uddhambhāgiya*): craving for form celestial realms (*rūpa-vacara*), craving for formless celestial realms (*arūpa-vacara*), conceit, restlessness, and ignorance.

Among the Lower Fetters, sensual desire and aversion can be eradicated by the third stage of enlightenment (*anāgāmi-magga*) and ego-illusion, belief in rites-and-rituals, and skeptical doubt by the first stage of enlightenment (*sotāpatti-magga*). Therefore, we are still liable to be reborn in the woeful states before we attain the first stage of enlightenment, and to be reborn in lower blissful realms (human and deva) before we reach the third stage. Thus, we are tied to lower rebirths with the first five fetters, which are therefore called Lower Fetters.

When we become non-returners (third-stage enlighteners), we are no longer liable to be reborn in woeful realms and lower blissful realms. But we are still liable to be reborn in upper realms called *brahma* (*rūpa* and *arūpa*). So, we are still tied to the rebirths in the upper realms with the second five fetters which are, therefore, called Upper Fetters.

Below is one more story to illustrate how we are tied with the fetters to the cycle of births and deaths:

## A Piglet's Past Existences<sup>25</sup>

One morning, the Buddha smiled himself looking at a female piglet on his way to Rājagaha city for alms round. Then, Venerable Ānanda asked for the reason. "Ānanda," the Buddha replied, "*you see the female piglet over there?*" "Yes sir, I do" replied Ānanda. Then the Buddha revealed past existences of the piglet. She had been a hen near a hermitage during the time of Kakusanda Buddha (the first Buddha on the earth planet). As a hen she often took delight in dhamma chanting done by a meditator there. Thanks to this wholesome mental state, when she died, she was reborn to a royal family as a princess named Ubbarī. As a princess she developed the first stage of highly-developed concentration (*jhāna*) due to which she was reborn in a brahma realm after death. Eons later, she died in the brahma abode and was reborn again to a rich family here in the human realm. As a wealthy woman, she happened to do evil deeds and was reborn as a piglet after death. "Ānanda," the Buddha said, "*the piglet you now see was once a superior celestial being (brahma).*" Then, the Buddha concluded this story with a dhamma moral as follows:

*Tied by craving, beings are anxious like a rabbit on a trap.*

*Bound by fetters they experience suffering again and again for eons.*

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<sup>25</sup> Dhammapada-2, 331

*So, you should eradicate craving with aspiration for nibbāna.*

No one on earth wants to die. This means everyone wants to live forever. This is attachment to eternal existence. So, no wonder we are reborn and experience anguish and pain again and again. Apparently, the attachment is fully responsible for our endless and painful circle of births and deaths (*saṃsāra*). Throughout *saṃsāra*, we definitely came across a countless number of existences in the past and countless numbers more in the future. How stressful *saṃsāra* is! The five Lower Fetters bind us to rebirths in woeful realms and lower blissful realms; the five Upper Fetters to rebirths in upper realms (*rūpa* and *arūpa* brahma realms). So, even when we attain the third-stage of enlightenment (*anāgāmi-magga*), we are not yet fully liberated from *saṃsāra*; we are still bound to the upper realms by Upper Fetters. That is why we are encouraged by the Buddha to make a heroic effort to eradicate all kinds of fetters so that we can go beyond the *saṃsāra*.

## **Four Intoxicants (*Āsava*)**

### **The Conqueror of *Āsava***

Seven weeks after his enlightenment, the Buddha went to Bāraṇasī in order to give his first sermon to the group of five ascetics known as *pañca-vaggiya*. On his way there he came across an ascetic called Upaka somewhere between Bodhi tree and Gāya village (Gaya

City in the Modern India). Impressed by the Buddha's peaceful facial expression and graceful behavior, Upaka became very curious about who the Buddha was, and asked some questions below:

"Hey, my friend, your facial expression is very peaceful. Your skin complexion is very clear and flawless. Under whose guidance have you been ordained? Who is your preceptor or teacher? Whose teachings do you follow?"

Then, the Buddha answered that he had practiced under no teacher; he was fully enlightened; he eradicated all kinds of craving and attachment; now he was on the way to Bāraṇasi where he would set the dhamma wheel in motion and would beat the dhamma drum. Then, Upaka asked the Buddha one more question:

"Are you claiming that you are the Worthy One (*Arahan*) and the Absolute Conqueror (*ananta-jino*)?"

Then, the Buddha answered as follows:

*Conquerors (jina) are those who have reached the cessation of āsava.*

*I've conquered them and therefore I am a conqueror.<sup>26</sup>*

Then, Upaka nodded his head saying skeptically, "Maybe, you are so, my friend<sup>27</sup>." Here, the Buddha

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<sup>26</sup> Vinaya, Mahavagga.

<sup>27</sup> From this event, Sayadaw U Panditabhivamsa drew the conclusion that if one lacks experience of dhamma, one cannot see the Buddha even if one comes across the Buddha in person.



explicitly claimed he was fully awakened and reached the cessation of *āsava*. So, the cessation of *āsava* becomes an ultimate aspiration we all Buddhists make every time we do good deeds thus: "May this meritorious deed lead to cessation of *āsava* (*idaṃ me puññaṃ āsavakkhayāvahim hotu*)."

What does *āsava* mean?

## Definition and Classification of *Āsava*

*Āsava* is defined in two ways: ingrained or oozing phenomena, referring to four kinds of unwholesome mental states, namely:

1. Attachment to Sensual Pleasures (*kāma-rāga*);
2. Attachment to Life (*bhava-rāga*);
3. Wrong View (*micchā-diṭṭhi*);
4. Ignorance or Delusion (*avijjā*).

These mental states are defined as ingrained phenomena because they, like fermented drink, have been ingrained very persistently in our incessant psychological process throughout the cycle of rebirths.

They are also defined as oozing phenomena because they constantly overwhelm our minds as if they were constantly oozing out of our senses such as eyes, ears, etc. Moreover, they even ooze out for beings in the highest celestial realm (*neva-saññā-nā-saññāyatana*), or

flow up to the highest vipassanā insight (*gotrabhū*) just before the first magga-enlightenment. In other words, they persist in us even when we are in the topmost realm of existence and even until we attain the highest vipassanā insight (*gotrabhū*). So, they even underlie the highest vipassanā insight, let alone evil states and ordinary wholesome states. At least desire for sensual pleasure and blissful rebirth lies behind all our wholesome deeds, such as act of generosity (*dāna*), observance of moral precepts (*sīla*), and meditation practices (*bhāvanā*). That is why three lower enlighteners are still liable to be reborn. This is literal definition of *āsava*.

### **Attachment to Sensual Pleasures** (*kāma-rāga*)

There are a countless number of material things we crave for such as house, car, cell phone, laptop, and so on. And there are also many people whom we love and get attached to such as friends, relatives, family members, spouses, and so on. In the ultimate sense, they are all summed up into five objects (*pañca kāma-guṇa*): sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. There arise sensual pleasures when they satisfy our senses: eyes, ears, noses, tongues, and bodies. Our eyes are satisfied by something or someone beautiful; our ears by pleasing words and pleasant songs; our noses by fragrant flowers or romantic perfume; our tongues by delicious food, and our bodies by touch, especially romantic touch. Thus, we get attached to someone or something that provides us with such sensual satisfaction.

That attachment has long been fermented or deep-seated in our minds throughout the cycle of births and deaths (*samsāra*), and fooling us like a fermented drink that makes us drunk and crazy. Moreover, it has been constantly overwhelming our senses as if it were oozing out of our senses. So, the attachment to sensual pleasures is called *āsava* (*kāmāsava*).

### **Attachment to Life** (*bhava-rāga*)

The second kind of *āsava* is attachment to life. Nobody on earth wants to die. Everybody in the world wants to live forever. Even maggots are happy to live in the feces. They do not want to die and would like to live forever. According to the Abhidhamma, we get attached to our life, whether blissful or woeful, as soon as we are conceived (*bhava-nikantika taṇhā*). So, even if someone committed suicide, he or she still has strong desire for a better life. Therefore, “attachment to life” is closely related to illusory sense of eternal existence (*sassata-ditṭhi*). Even when we reach the third stage of enlightenment (*anāgāmi-magga*), we would still have the desire to live a life in the *brahma* realms in spite of having eradicated the ego-illusion. Therefore, “the attachment to life” is literally defined as attachment to a *brahma* life or *jhāna* that leads to a *brahma* life. In any case, the attachment to life has been deep-seated in our minds fooling us like a fermented drink that makes us drunk or crazy throughout *samsāra*. Thus, we are really attached to life (*bhavāsava*).

## **Wrong View** (*micchā-ditṭhi*)

The third kind of *āsava* is wrong view that basically refers to illusory sense of "I" (*atta*) and "mine" (*attaniya*). We feel as if we were to live an eternal life full of actions and infinite sensual experiences. However, it is not our choice or our decision that we are who we are now. Of course, old age, sickness and death are exactly opposite of what we really wish for. In the ultimate sense, we are just illusive manifestations of real psycho-physical phenomena that are arising and passing away according to their conditions, not on our own accord. Such illusory sense of "I" (*atta*) is actually a wrong view (*micchā-ditṭhi*).

We also have an illusory sense of "mine" (*attaniya*). We think that we possess things like a house or a car and people like our spouses or children. Actually, we do not even possess our mind and body not to mention other things. We cannot manage the mind to think about something healthy, not to think about anything unhealthy. We want our bodies look perfect, but they may not; we want them to be healthy and strong, but they get older and weaker with time. Finally, on our demise, we have to go empty-handed leaving all our loved people and things behind. So, it is really ridiculous that we take things and people as ours. Such concept is an illusory sense of "mine." To illustrate this point, there is an enlightening poem that was composed by a monk:

Gold and jewel laugh at a man for claiming them to be his.  
A plot of land ridicules a man for claiming it to be his.  
"How foolish, how stupid a man is!

Appearing out of nowhere and claiming us to be his!"

This illusory sense of "I" and "mine" (*atta, attaniya*)<sup>28</sup> has been ingrained or deep-seated in the incessant process of psycho-physical phenomena throughout *saṃsāra* and makes us mad and crazy. Hence it is called *diṭṭhāsava*.

### **Ignorance** (*Avijjāsava*)

The fourth *āsava* is ignorance. It is literally defined as "not knowing the Four Noble Truths." From many perspectives, we human beings can be compared to seasonal bugs that appear out of nowhere during the season. Although their lifespan is as short as a single night to a few days, their lives are full of activities struggling for survival and reproduction. Compared to the lifespan of the solar system, human lifespan is as short as a seasonal bug's. With highly advanced science and technology, all we do is just for survival and reproduction. We do not know what we really are (*dukkha*), why we are who we are (*samudaya*), what beyond who we are (*nirodha*), and

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<sup>28</sup> Regarding the illusory sense of "I" and "mine," the Buddha described sixty-two kinds of wrong view in the Brahma-jāla Sutta (*Sīlakkhandha-vagga*, *Dīgha-nikāya*). In *Titthāyatana Sutta* (*Aṅguttara-nikāya*, Page 174 – 6), the Buddha described three main wrong views: belief in no cause (*ahetuka-diṭṭhi*), belief in wrong cause (*visamahetu-diṭṭhi*), and belief in kamma as the absolute cause (*pubbekatahetu-diṭṭhi*).

how to reach there (*magga*). These facts are literally described as Four Noble Truths thus:

1. We are just illusive manifestations of psycho-physical phenomena. They are conditioned and ever-changing and, therefore, are called the true suffering.
2. We do not see them as they really are and get attached to them. This attachment produces and prolongs the cycle of births. Hence, it is the true cause of suffering.
3. We will not get attached to anything when we see phenomena to be conditioned and ever-changing. Non-attachment means cessation of suffering, which is in nature diametrically opposite of the conditioned. Hence, it is the true cessation of suffering.
4. The Eight-fold Noble Path is the true path that directly leads to the unconditioned.

Ignorance of these four Noble Truths is called *avijjā*, which has been deep-seated in the incessant process of psycho-physical phenomena throughout *saṃsāra* and always overwhelms our actions, speeches and thoughts, and is, therefore, called *avijjāsava*.

## **Cessation of *Āsava***

The four afore-mentioned unwholesome mental states are known as *āsava* because they are ingrained in the incessant process of psycho-physical phenomena

throughout the cycle of births and deaths and make us stupid and crazy like fermented or alcoholic drink. It is also due mainly to these four *āsavas* that we commit evil deeds and, as a result, experience enormous amount of suffering in woeful realms such as animal kingdoms.

We are very fortunate to be born as human beings but we are still liable to be reborn as animals if we cannot eradicate these mental defilements. There are some animals like crabs that people normally cook alive. There are certain kinds of bugs that are boiled alive to produce silk. There are also several kinds of domestic animals like chickens that are forced to live in tiny little cages for the whole life until they are killed for human consumption. Moreover, bigger and stronger animals eat smaller and weaker ones alive everywhere on this planet. How painful the life of an animal is, not to mention that of a hell being! In this sense, we are considered to be very fortunate to be born as human beings. However, we should not forget that we are still liable to be reborn in animal kingdoms or hell. Having overcome these mental defilements, the Buddha, therefore, claimed he was a real winner or conqueror (*jina*). Following the Buddha's teachings, we also make wish every time we do a meritorious deed thus: "May my merit lead to the cessation of four kinds of intoxicants (*asavakkhaya*).” Of course, the direct path to their cessation is the vipassanā practice.

## **Four Floods (*Ogha*)**

*Ogha* literally means flood like a tsunami that drowns people. The four kinds of mental defilements known as

*āsavas* are also known as flood (*ogha*) because they drown us in terms of leading us down to woeful rebirths in animal kingdom or hell.

It is mentioned in the Pāḷi text<sup>29</sup> that, one night, a deva visited and asked the Buddha how the Buddha had swum across the flood (of mental defilements) that drowns living beings. The Buddha replied as follows:

*"Neither standing still nor struggling, had I swum across the flood."*

The deva believed that one who swims across the flood has to struggle with the current, or to stand still if required. So, he felt puzzled about how the Buddha swam across the gigantic flood of mental defilements, which is very strong and flows from the lowest hell (*Avīci*) to the highest brahma realm (*bhavagga*). Therefore, he asked how the Buddha swam across the flood of mental defilements without neither struggling nor standing still. Then, the Buddha said that if one stands still, one would get drowned, whereas if one struggles with the current, one would be swept away. Here, according to the commentary, by "standing still and getting drowned" the Buddha means performing no good deeds and getting down into woeful rebirths. And "struggling with the current and being swept away" means doing good deeds with wrong purpose and prolonging the cycle of rebirths. If we do good deeds wishing for sensual pleasures, they will lead us to one blissful rebirth after another, but we

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<sup>29</sup> Ogha-taraṇa Sutta, Sagāthā-vagga Saṃyutta.



are still liable for woeful rebirth unless we attain magga-enlightenment. Thus, the wholesome deeds done with wrong purpose prolong the cycle of births and deaths (*samsāra*) like being swept away by the water current.

## **Wrong Wish**

There is a funny story of a couple that was celebrating their 60<sup>th</sup> birth day when an angel came down and asked them to make one wish each, whatever they liked. Then, the woman wished to get an air ticket for a tour around the globe. The angel granted it to her and she got the ticket in her hand right away. Then the man made a wish whispering into the angel's ear that he would get a wife 30 years younger than he was. The angel granted his wish. There and then, he became 90 years old. The old man's wish was fulfilled, but exactly in a wrong way that he hates the most.

Like the angle, our wholesome deeds will grant us sensual pleasure in one blissful life after another. The irony is that every life, however blissful it may be, ends up with old age and death that we hate the most.

## **Right Wish**

So, if we avoid evil and do good wishing for liberation, we can swim across the following mighty floods of attachment:

1. Attachment to sensual pleasures (*kamogha*)

2. Attachment to life (*bhavogha*)
3. Wrong view (*ditthogha*)
4. Ignorance (*avijjogha*)

That is why, when we perform good deeds, we are advised not to wish for sensual pleasures in a blissful life, but for liberation instead as thus: "May this meritorious deeds lead to the cessation of four kinds of *ogha* (or *āsava*), that is, magga-phala enlightenment."

*With effort, mindfulness, morality and sense-restraint  
A wise can build up the island that cannot be flooded.  
(Dhamma-pada 25)*

## **Four Yokes ( *Yoga* )**

The four unwholesome mental defilements as attachment to sensual pleasures, attachment to life, wrong view, and ignorance are also known as *yoga* whose root *yujā* literally means to yoke. Just as bulls are yoked to the cart, so are beings yoked to the round of existences or cycle of births and deaths by these four unwholesome mental states.

### **Vāseṭṭha Sutta** (Ma-2, 486)

Destruction of *yoga* (*yogakkhema*) is a technical term the Buddha often used to refer to the ultimate peacefulness of *nibbāna*. On one occasion, the Buddha defined "a Brahmin" as removal of four kinds of yoke instead of cast.

India was born along with the Vedic civilization that was created by Brahmins. So, Brahmins held the most influential social status and claimed their cast to be the highest among others. In a prosperous village known as Icchānaṅgala (near Sāvatti City, Kosala Kingdom) there lived many wealthy and highly educated Brahmins such as Pokkharasāti, Jāṇussoni, and so on. One day, two young Brahmins, Vāseṭṭhā and Bhāradvāja, happened to talk about who should be honored as a true Brahmin. Bhāradvāja said a true Brahmin should be the one who was born to pure Brahmin parents from both maternal and paternal sides for seven generations so that nobody could deny his Brahmin status. Then, Vāseṭṭha said that a true Brahmin must be the one who is virtuous (*sīlavā*) and well-disciplined (*vattasampanno*)<sup>30</sup>. Having reached no agreement, they decided to ask the Buddha, who was known as a great sage. Then, the Buddha described a true Brahmin as follows:

*"Having broken human yoke, having put down divine yoke, having removed all sorts of yoke, one gets freed of all the yokes. I claim him to be a Brahmin."*

Any kind of existence, human or divine, is impermanent and suffering. The incessant round of births and deaths is just a painful circle (*samsāra*). We are yoked to such a painful circle by the four afore-mentioned unwholesome mental states. They are, therefore, called *yokes*. Only when we can put down the yokes, then comes the cessation of suffering, i.e., the ultimate

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<sup>30</sup> *sīlavā'ti guṇavā; vattasampanno'ti ācāra-sampanno* (the commentary definition)

peacefulness of *nibbāna*. Only those who have terminated the yokes should be considered to be a true Brahmin.

Regarding the torturous cycle of births and deaths, I often think of a friend of mine in my native town who could recount his past life in a very vivid and undeniable manner. He was such a weird boy who could only learn a few Burmese alphabets but was very good at hunting and fishing. Some evenings he voluntarily recounted his past life to me. He said that he had committed thefts and murders during the WWII and was also shot to death by his rivals. Right after his demise, he said, he found himself to be somewhere under a big tree. Then, twenty some black dogs aggressively came over and attacked him very severely. He thus suffered extreme pain for many weeks. In the end, he escaped to a village where he was born. All the details he had recounted were proved to be true by the five women whom he had described as his wife and four daughters in his previous life.

We all came across countless number of past lives although we do not remember them. But, for sure, any form of life requires us to struggle for survival and reproduction and ends up with old age and death. As a child, we have to learn basic skills like how to sit, stand, speak, eat, read, write and so on. Later, we learn much more in schools until we obtain a degree and a job. We work hard days and nights so that we can make enough money to live a decent life, to feed our families, and to raise our children. We try our best to pay monthly bills, education loan, home loan, and so on. By the time we pay off all kinds of loan, we may

have become old enough to go to nursing home. No matter how blissful one's life may be, it surely ends up with old age and death. After death, we will be reborn again and learn again how to sit, stand, eat, read and so on. Thus, we have been going on an endless journey from womb to tomb and from tomb to womb. This is what is called *samsāra* to which we have been yoked by the four kinds of unwholesome mental states called *yoga*.

*Those who meditate constantly and energetically  
Experience nibbāna, the noble cessation of yoga.*

(Dhammapada, 16)

## **Four Knots ( *Gantha* )**

On one occasion in Jeta Grove monastery in the city of Sāvattī, the Buddha expounded four kinds of “*kāya-gantha*” thus<sup>31</sup>:

*"There are, monks, four kinds of kāya-ganthas: abhijjhā, byāpāda, sīlabbata-parāmāsa, and idaṃ-saccā'bhinivesa. In order to discern and do away with them, the Eight-fold Noble Path should be developed."*

### **Definition and Classification of *Gantha***

The Pāḷi word “*kāya-gantha*” literally means body-knot. Here, “body” refers the psycho-physical compound,

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<sup>31</sup> *Gantha Sutta*, Mahāvagga, Saṃyutta-nikāya, page 55

and “knot” to unwholesome mental states that join the present and future lives (psycho-physical compounds) together. They are classified into four kinds:

1. *Abhijjhā*: It normally means envy of someone's fortune or success. For instance, when we see someone driving a beautiful car or living in a luxury house, we may wish the same one for ourselves. Such envy is called *abhijjhā*. In the case of *gantha*, however, *abhijjhā* refers to *lobha* which includes such unwholesome mental states as greed, selfishness, lust, craving, attachment and so on.
2. *Byāpāda*: It normally refers to the thought of causing damage to someone's life or properties. In an ultimate sense, it is *dosa* that refers to such negative mental states as aversion, anger, hatred, hostility, resentment and so on.
3. *Silabbata-parāmāsa*: It refers to a misconception that rites and rituals are the path to liberation. In the ancient India, there were people who misconceived that one needed to make retribution for one's sins so that one can be liberated from woeful rebirths. With this concept, they performed several kinds of rites and rituals torturing their bodies, like sitting among four fire places in the summer days, or bathing in the icy cold water in the winter. They also followed a life style of an animal like a dog or a cow. They acted and behaved like a dog or a cow; they lived naked, ate food on the ground, walked with four limbs, slept on the ground and so on. Even in the modern India, we can see

some forms of these practices. It is a misconception if we believe and practice these rites and rituals with faith that they lead to heavenly rebirths or liberation.

4. *Idam-saccā'bhinivesa*: It is a dogmatic belief that only one's own view is true; everything else is wrong. So, any kind of false view can be regarded as dogmatic belief if it is strongly held in a dogmatic manner. So, the third and fourth kinds of Knot (*gantha*) are the same in terms of false view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). However, the bearer of the third view accepts that there are some other views that may be possibly true, while the holder of the fourth rejects any kind of view or faith other than his or hers. So the fourth is more dogmatic and further away from the truth.

## **How Present and Future Lives Get Knotted Together**

As mentioned above, the four kinds of knot (*gantha*) can be subsumed in three kinds of unskillful mental states: craving, aversion, and wrong view because the last two kinds are the same in terms of wrong view. These mental states are called *gantha* because they join our present life with the future one. In this regard, I would like to recount one more rebirth story.

Ms. Thaug was a pork butcher whose shop was next to my mother's grocery shop in the market in my home town.

She really looked scary cutting pork into pieces with big knife and also was so aggressive that nobody in the market dared to quarrel with her. In retrospect, she was apparently greedy and never did any kind of good deed like act of generosity. When she died, I was a monk somewhere away. Later, my elder sister recounted a strange event regarding her rebirth. Months after her demise, her daughter dreamed of her saying that she had been reborn as a domestic piglet and waiting to be picked up. She also mentioned where she had been. So, her daughter went there just in case the piglet was her mother. On her arrival there, she introduced herself to the host at the doorstep. Thereupon, much to their surprise, a piglet suddenly came over to them out of the pigsty. Its unusual manner proved undeniably that it had been her mother in its previous life. In the end, she paid three thousand kyats (about \$500 in those days) for that little piglet. I do not know how it ended up, but it is a real story.

According to the Buddha's teachings, Thaug's human life and pig life were knotted together by her unwholesome actions associated with greed, aversion, and wrong view she had accumulated as a human. This is an example of how our current and future lives are knotted together by the *gantha*. So, it is important to get rid of the four *gantha* so that we can be liberated from such a torturous cycle of rebirths. That is why we are instructed by the Buddha to develop the Eight-fold Noble Path<sup>32</sup>. The detailed explanation of the Eight-fold Noble Path will come in the later section.

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<sup>32</sup> Eight Factors of the Noble Path: Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.



## Four Grasplings (*Upādāna*)

*Upādāna* is composed of two words: *upa* (firmly or strongly) and *ādāna* (taking). So, it is normally translated as grasping, clinging or attachment.

It is of four kinds:

1. Attachment to sensual pleasures (*kāmuṣupādāna*)
2. Attachment to wrong views (*diṭṭhupādāna*)
3. Attachment to rites and rituals (*sīlabbatupādāna*)
4. Attachment to illusion of self (*attavādupādāna*)

Among these four, the first two have been explained under the title of *āsava*, and the third under *gantha*. So, only the fourth one, attachment to illusion of self, will be explained here. We feel that we are like someone living forever and acting on our own accord. This is illusory sense of eternal soul or the notion of self which has been deep-seated in our heart throughout *saṃsāra*. According to the teaching of the Buddha, there is no such an eternal soul or self that represents "I."

In this case, questions may be posed: if there is no "soul" or "self" then who we really are, what the round of rebirth means, why we need to do good and to avoid bad things.

### What if No Self

On one full moon night, in Eastern Monastery (Pubbārāma), Sāvatti City, the Buddha gave a talk on

“non-self” by describing each and every of the Five Aggregates to be devoid of soul (*atta*) or “self.” This talk confused a monk because he believed that when one dies, one’s body decays but soul is eternal and transmigrates along with good or bad kamma to a new body. If there is not “I,” how kamma (volitional deeds) done by “not me” could affect “me.”<sup>33</sup> Even though he was a monk during the Buddha's time, he was firmly attached to the belief that it is “I” who live, feel, and act on my own accord. No wonder there are many people in modern days, who are attached to similar belief, often raise questions like:

If there is no “self,” then for whose sake do we need to do good or to avoid evil? For whose liberation do we need to practice?

### **Ego-illusion** (*Sakkāya-dit̥ṭhi*)

We can find the answer in Vajira Sutta<sup>34</sup> that says thus:

*A chariot is just an assembly of timber pieces.  
So too "self" is just illusive manifestation of five aggregates.*

In old days, people built a vehicle by putting wooden pieces together and got bulls or horses to draw it. This is a chariot, something real in common sense (*sammuti-sacca*). There is nothing wrong with our notion of a chariot. If we watch the chariot carefully, however, we

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<sup>33</sup> Mahā-puṇṇama Sutta, Upari-paṇṇāsa, Majjhima-nikāya age 69

<sup>34</sup> Vajirā Sutta, Sagāthā-vagga, Saṃyutta-nikāya, Page 136

can only find timber pieces but no chariot. Again, if we examine the timber pieces carefully, we can find that they are formed from the physical conditions, but no timber by itself. So, if we cut them repeatedly, we can find nothing solid but only formless physical elements remain in the end. So, the whole chariot or its wooden pieces are just illusive manifestations of physical phenomena.

In the same way, there is no "self" except conditional mental and physical phenomena. Our body is composed of a number of anatomical parts like thousands of hair threads, hundreds of bone, and so on. Each and every anatomical part is also composed of tissues and cells which are also composed of even finer physical phenomena that are arising and passing away and constantly replaced with new ones at every moment. Similarly, our mind is not something that exists for the whole life, but it is just a constant process of mental phenomena. So, "thought" means just a dense process of mind-units that are arising and passing away and constantly replaced with new ones like a candle light or the water current of a river. Each and every mind-unit is composed of consciousness and its corresponding mental factors which are categorized into four aggregates: feeling (*vedana*), memory (*sañña*), working mental factors (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññana*). Thus, there is only the unbroken process of five aggregates that represent what we really are.

## Why to Do Good?

As mentioned repeatedly before, we are constituted of psycho-physical phenomena that are conditioned and ever-changing. Here, something conditioned means something that can be modified. For example, a tree is something conditioned and, therefore, it can be genetically modified the way we want it to be, like making its fruits seedless, tastier and bigger. In the same way, we are all psycho-physical compounds that are conditioned and ever-changing. So, we are conditioned and can be modified. We can do something to improve the quality of life. This is why we are encouraged to do good and to avoid evil.

## Twenty Kinds of Ego-illusion

Psycho-physical phenomena are what really exist and, therefore, called *sakkāya*. Seeing *sakkāya* (psycho-physical phenomena) as “I” or “mine” is *sakkāya-dit̥ṭhi*. According to Abhidhamma<sup>35</sup>, this ego-illusion (*sakkāya-dit̥ṭhi*) is formed in twenty ways associated with the five aggregates as follows:

*“There, what is ego-illusion? Here, common people, ill-informed (of dhamma)... take body to be self, take self to possess body, take body to be in self, take self to be in body.”*

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<sup>35</sup> Dhamma-saṅgaṇī, (the first book of Abhidhamma), page 241

Note: The same formula is true with remaining aggregates: feeling (*vedanā*), memory (*saññā*), working mental factors (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Thus, the ego-illusion is classified into twenty kinds.

1. We mistake body for "I" or "mine" in four aspects. For example, the ego-illusion takes place when we think of the hair in one of the four aspects thus: "Hair is part of me;" "hair is mine;" "hair exists in me;" "I exist in hair." The same is true with all our body parts, body shape, weight, appearance, physical gesture, facial expression, and so on. For instance, we feel thus: "My body is fit, well-shaped and attractive." In this way, we identify our body as "I" or "mine" in four aspects.
2. We mistake feelings for "I" or "mine" in one of the four aspects. We think thus: "It is I who am happy;" "happiness is part of me;" "happiness is present in me;" "I am present in happiness." The same explanation should be applied to remaining kinds of feeling such as sadness, comfort, discomfort, and neutral feeling. This is how the ego-illusion takes place relating to feelings.
3. We mistake memory for "I" or "mine" in one of the four aspects when we think thus: "I remember things or people;" "the memory is part of me;" "memory is present in me;" "I am present in memory." This is how the ego-illusion takes place regarding memory.

4. There are fifty kinds of working mental factors including unwholesome factors such as greed, lust, anger, hatred, illusion, delusion, pride and prejudice, and wholesome factors such as faith, mindfulness, kindness, compassion, wisdom, restraint, and so on. We mistake these mental factors for "I" or "mine" in four aspects. We think thus: "I feel lustful;" "lust is part of me;" "lust is present in me;" "I am present in lust." The same is true with remaining mental factors. This is how the ego-illusion takes place regarding working mental factors.
5. We mistake consciousness (seeing consciousness, hearing consciousness, etc.) for "I" or "mine" in four aspects. We think, "I am seeing;" "seeing is part of me;" "seeing is present in me;" "I am present in seeing." The same is true with hearing, etc. This how the ego-illusion takes place regarding consciousness.

## **Sāti, a Monk with Soul Theory**

*(Mūla-Paṇṇāsa, 323)*

During the Buddha's time, a monk called Sāti claimed that he has a comprehensive understanding of eternal soul in harmony with the Buddha's teachings. He said that it is one's consciousness, but nothing else that transmigrates from one form of life to another. Referring to Jātaka stories that describe the Buddha to have been King Vessantara, Sage Mahosadha, and so on, he said that it was the Buddha himself who had taken several forms of life such as animals, celestial beings, and human

beings of different social status like farmers, traders, teachers, hermits, warriors, kings, monarchs, and so on. This point, he said, explained how the Buddha fulfilled his *pāramī* (wholesome qualities) to become the Buddha by performing several kinds of good deeds life after life.

To correct Sāti's wrong view, senior monks explained:

*"There are several kinds of conditions for consciousness to come into existence; only when certain conditions are met, does a certain kind of consciousness arise, but not otherwise."*

Seeing consciousness, for example, can take place only when certain conditions such as eyes, visible objects, attention paid, and sufficient light are met together. If one of these conditions falls short, we cannot see anything, or the seeing consciousness cannot take place. Whatever way the senior monks explained about conditionality of phenomena, their attempt was in vain; Sāti firmly held this view like a snake that catches a frog firmly and strongly. Such firm attachment to wrong view is called *diṭṭhupādāna*.

This ego-illusion (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) serves as the foundation for all sixty-two kinds of wrong view<sup>36</sup>. Therefore, when it is eradicated, all kinds of wrong views are spontaneously eliminated. Then, mental defilements will no longer be strong enough to commit evil deeds that can lead to woeful rebirths.

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<sup>36</sup> *Piṭako-padesa*, page 255. Sixty-two kinds of wrong view are expounded in Brahma-jāla Sutta, Dī-1

That is why the Buddha put great emphasis on the eradication of this ego-illusion thus:

*Like a spear pierced into one's chest or fire caught on one's head,  
One, being mindful, should strive urgently to remove the ego-illusion.*

## **Seven Latent Dispositions (*Anusaya*)**

### **Definition and Classification of *Anusaya***

The Pāḷi term "*anusaya*" means unwholesome disposition referring to negative mental states that have lain dormant in us. In a tiny banyan seed, for example, there is the physical potential to produce a giant banyan tree along with branches, leaves, flowers, and fruits. In other words, a potential giant tree with thousands of branches, leaves and fruits lies dormant in a tiny little seed. This dormant form of physical quality suffuses the entire process of a growing tree all the way from its seed up to its fruits. So, when right conditions are met, from this tiny little seed there come out sprouts, branches, leaves, flowers, and fruits progressively. Like the dormant physical qualities in a seed, there are certain kinds of unwholesome mental qualities or dispositions<sup>37</sup> that have lain dormant in us since the time unknown.

In an ultimate sense, therefore, *anusaya* are not actual unwholesome mental states but just unwholesome

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<sup>37</sup> The wholesome dispositions are called "*pāramī*"



potentials, like dormant fire in the match which is not actual fire but only potential to produce fire. They are actually the dormant forms of unwholesome mental states. When we are in a deep sleep or doing wholesome deeds, no actual unwholesome mental states arise in our mind. But, when the right conditions are met like when we react to sense-objects with unwise attitude or without mindfulness, these dormant potentials will become active mentally, verbally or physically. Such dormant forms of unwholesome mental states are called *anusaya*.

There are seven kinds of *anusaya* corresponding to the following seven unwholesome mental states:

1. Craving for sensual pleasures (*kāmarāgānusaya*)
2. Craving for eternal existence (*bhavarāgānusaya*)
3. Anger, hatred or aversion (*paṭighānusaya*)
4. Conceit, pride and prejudice (*mānānusaya*)
5. Wrong view (*diṭṭhānusaya*)
6. Skeptical doubt or confusion (*vicikicchānusaya*)
7. Ignorance or delusion (*avijjānusaya*)

Among the many different unwholesome mental states, only these seven can become strong enough to leave their unwholesome qualities in a dormant form when they disappear. All the remaining kinds cannot be strong enough to leave their unwholesome qualities in a dormant form, such as sloth-and-torpor (*thina-middha*), restlessness-and-remorse (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), lack of moral shame (*ahirika*), lack of moral fear (*anottappa*) and so on.

## Three Stages of Mental Defilements

These dormant defilements become active mentally, verbally or physically when conditions are met. In other words, they materialize in terms of unwholesome deeds such as killing, stealing, etc. Hence, there are three progressive stages of mental defilements: dormant (*anusaya*), active mentally (*pariyuṭṭhāna*), and active verbally or physically (*vītikkaṃa*).

## Two Kinds of Dormant Defilements

All seven kinds of dormant defilements have two forms each:

- *Santānāṇusaya*: The evil potential left by mental defilements in previous lives.
- *Arammana-nusaya*: The evil potential left by the mental defilements in the current life.

### 1. *Santānāṇusaya*

Sometimes we may find ourselves to fall in love with, or feel averse to something or someone at first sight for no reason. Such impulsive emotions or reactions are often related to love or hate we had in the previous lives. In other words, love or hate we had in previous lives has lain dormant in us. Such dormant evil is called *santānāṇusaya*. Below is a story to depict this point:

## Venerable Meghiya

On one occasion, the Buddha stayed on a hill near a town called Cālikā. At that time, Venerable Meghiya served as a personal attendant to the Buddha. One day, on his way back from the alms round, he passed by a mango grove on the bank of Kimikālā River near Jantu village. Seeing the beautiful and peaceful park he was inspired to practice there. So, he requested permission from the Buddha but was rejected. The Buddha said, *"Meghiya, I'm alone. Please wait for someone else to come."* As he insisted, however, the Buddha let him go in the end. He went there and sat on a rock slab under a tree with the purpose to meditate. Much to his surprise, he first felt as if he were a king enjoying a romantic night with hundreds of pretty and young women. And then, in his mind's eyes, he saw two robbers brought to him and he himself gave the order to kill one and to imprison another. Only at this point, did he realize why the Buddha had rejected his request for three times. So, he rushed back to the Buddha and made an apology for his mistake.

According to the commentary, he was a king in that very place in his many previous lives. Undoubtedly, lust and hate that had arisen in his previous lives lay dormant in his heart and became active in his current life. Actually, all seven kinds of unwholesome mental states had lain dormant in him because they always go together.

When he reported his experience to the Buddha, the Buddha gave a dhamma talk on five conditions required for liberation, viz., having moral friends, moral conducts, moral conversation, great effort, and insight into the impermanent nature of mind and body. In conclusion, the Buddha said that based on these five conditions one should develop the contemplation on repulsive and non-self nature of the body to overcome lust, and on loving kindness to overcome aversion, and on meditation on breath to overcome wandering mind, and on insight into impermanence (of mind and body) to overcome illusive self-image (*asmi-māna*). Then, the Buddha concluded his talk thus:

*"Here, Meghiya, seeing mind and body arising and disappearing, you will realize them to be devoid of "self," leaving no room for illusive self-image (asmi-māna). This realization, Meghiya, is nibbāna in the current life (dittha-dhamma nibbanā)."*

## **2. Ārammaṇānusaya**

In our daily life, several kinds of sense-objects impinge on our senses all the time except for the time we are in a deep sleep or in an unconscious state. We react to them mostly with negative emotions such as desire and discontent. Such unwholesome reactions or negative emotions (i.e., mental defilements) arise and disappear moment by moment. But if they are strong enough, they leave their negative qualities behind in a dormant form in our on-going mental process. In other words, they have been impressing on our memory. Suppose, for example, we once had a good time walking with someone we loved

and collecting sea shells together on a beach. After some time, we may forget that wonderful moment. But the romantic feeling we had at that time will recur when we encounter similar objects like a seashell or a picture of a beautiful beach. This means the romantic feeling in the past has lain dormant in us. Such dormant form of mental states (*kāmarāgānusaya*) is related to the objects in the current life and therefore called *arammanānusaya*. They will become active every time conditions are met.

## **Beyond the Brain**

According to science, our memory is a brain function. However, there are some people who can remember many things related to their past life, which has nothing to do with their current brains. A friend of mine once told me about her nephew who showed his parents where to dig for a diamond ring and gold watch he had hidden under ground in his previous life. The incidents like this suggest that there are memories and dormant mental energies beyond our physical brain in one's current life.

## **Other Unwholesome Dormant Energies**

Regarding the dormant anger (*paṭigha*), suppose we were once so angry with an aggressive dog that we shouted or kicked it. Our anger and anger-related actions arose and passed away after a while. We may even forget the event over time. However, the memory of that event along with the anger may come back to us when we see a similar dog. This means our anger has lain dormant in

us. The similar explanation can be given for the remaining dormant forms: conceit (*māna*), wrong view (*ditṭhi*), skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*), and delusion (*moha*).

## How to Overcome

Like a silent volcano, the dormant unwholesome potentials (*anusaya-kilesa*) will be active whenever conditions are met. To uproot them, all we have to do is to develop progressive *vipassanā* insights until *magga-phala* enlightenment. If we are mindful of present phenomena, we can prevent them from becoming mentally active, or from being transgressive verbally or physically when they are already mentally active. By being mindful of our reactions to the sense-objects, there will be little or no chance for mental defilements to become active or to newly lie dormant in us. This is how we can overcome the dormant defilements for the time being in a temporary manner. If we continue to cultivate mindfulness through *vipassanā* meditation then the mindfulness itself will mature into progressive *vipassanā* insights culminating in *magga* enlightenment which completely eradicate mental defilements.

## Summary

Now, we have learned unwholesome mental states from several different perspectives. They can be summed up into fourteen kinds. In other words, there are only fourteen kinds of unwholesome mental states in an ultimate sense. The Buddha categorized or defined them

from several different perspectives to meet his audience's spiritual background (*puggala-jjhāsayā*), or to widen his teaching style as required for his audience's sake (*desanā-vilāsa*). For example, when we explain what an earthquake is, we have to make presentation to children in one way and to adults in another. Likewise, the Buddha described or defined fourteen kinds of unwholesome mental states in several different ways according to his audience. So, they all can be summed up into fourteen kinds. Below is a diagram to explain fourteen kinds of negative mental states under several different titles:

<i>Fourteen un-wholesome Mental Factors</i>	<i>Ten Kilesa</i>	<i>Ten Sam yojana</i>	<i>Seven Anusaya</i>	<i>Six<sup>38</sup> Nivarana</i>	<i>Four Upādāna</i>	<i>Four Gantha</i>	<i>Four Āsava, Yoga, Ogha (3)</i>
<i>Delusion</i>	+	+	+	+			+
<i>Shamelessness</i>	+						
<i>Lack of moral conscience</i>	+						
<i>Restlessness</i>	+	+		+			

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<sup>38</sup> According to Abhidhamma, there are six nīvarana instead of five like in the discourses. There are two pairs and each counts as one: sloth-and-torpor and restlessness-and-remorse.

<i>Craving</i>	+	+ <sup>39</sup>	+ <sup>40</sup>	+	+	+	+ <sup>41</sup>
<i>Wrong view</i>	+	+	+		+ <sup>42</sup>	+ <sup>43</sup>	+
<i>Conceit</i>	+	+	+				
<i>Aversion</i>	+	+	+	+		+	
<i>Jealousy</i>		+					
<i>Avariciousness</i>		+					
<i>Remorse</i>				+			
<i>Sloth</i>	+			+			
<i>Torpor</i>				+			
<i>Doubt</i>	+	+	+	+			

So, the Buddha made nine classifications out of fourteen unwholesome mental factors according to his audience's spiritual background.

Abhidhamma makes the sequential arrangement of fourteen unwholesome mental factors in harmony with certain sets of cooperative mental factors as follows:

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<sup>39</sup> Craving makes two kinds of samyojana: craving for sensual pleasures and craving for life.

<sup>40</sup> Craving makes two kinds of anusaya: craving for sensual pleasures and craving for life.

<sup>41</sup> There are two kinds of craving: craving for sensual pleasures and craving for life.

<sup>42</sup> There are three kinds of wrong view: Wrong view, rite and rituals, and belief in self.

<sup>43</sup> There are two kinds of wrong view: rite and rituals and dogmatic belief.



- The first four factors (delusion, shamelessness, lack of moral fear, restlessness of mind) accompany any evil mind-moment.
- The second three (craving, false view, conceit) always go along with greedy or selfish mind-moment.
- The third four (aversion, jealousy, avariciousness, remorse) are always associated with angry mind-moment.
- The fourth two (sloth and torpor) are related to prompted (or inactive) unwholesome mind-moment.
- The last one (doubt) is associated only with wavering mind-moment.

## CHAPTER-II



*Common people are crazy under illusions. Seeing things as they really are, one will escape from death snare (māra-bandhana).*

(Vipallasa Sutta, Anguttara-1, 361)

### MIND AND BODY

Having learned what mental defilements (*kilesa*) are and how to deal with them, we can develop more constant mindfulness and stronger concentration. Then, we start to discern mind and body as they really are without identifying them as “I” or someone else. This discernment directly counteracts the illusory sense of permanence, pleasure, person, and prettiness. Thus, the mental defilements, which are based on such illusion, gradually decrease until complete eradication through the full enlightenment. So, the discernment of mind and body serves as a foundation for progressive *vipassanā* insights and *magga-phala* enlightenment. In this chapter, we will study mind and body, or psycho-physical phenomena in terms of Five Aggregates, Twelve Sense-sources, and Eighteen Elements.

## Analysis of Inanimate Things

According to Abhidhamma, there is nothing solid in the world. Any physical object on earth can be divided repeatedly until nothing but only formless physical elements remain. These physical elements arise and disappear so rapidly that they have no time to get old and to move any further. Things and people look the same for long because of incessant replacements, like the water current of a river or the flame of a candle. Even then, when the time passes by, we all look old because replacements deteriorate both in quantity and quality. Moreover, they cannot move any further, but they appear to move because their new replacements arise at progressively further locations. Thus, replacements are so continuous and so massive that people and things look solid, lasting, or moving. So, old or young, beautiful or ugly, moving or standing still are all just illusive manifestations of ever-changing physical phenomena.

### Inanimate Things

Inanimate things (*anindriya-baddha-rūpa*) are born from the climate called “*utu*” in Pāli, which represents temperature or fire element in the ultimate sense. So, we can reasonably speculate that the inanimate things are born of the sun and mutated into all kinds of things we can see on our planet. There are eight kinds of physical phenomena that primarily constitute all the inanimate things in the world, like a house, a car, a tree, a mountain, and so on. These eight always go together and therefore are called Eight Undividable (*avinibbhoga*). As mentioned above, these eight are produced by the the climate (*utu*)

so incessantly and so immensely that all the material things on earth seem to be solid and lasting.

Below are the Eight Undividable:

1. Earth element (*pathavi*)
2. water element (*āpo*)
3. fire element (*tejo*)
4. wind (*vāyo*)
5. color (*vaṇṇa*)
6. smell (*gandha*)
7. taste (*rasa*)
8. nutrition (*oja*)

## Definition of Four Elements

Among the Eight Undividable (*avinibbhoga*), the first four are most fundamental. Even the whole planet including all of us is reducible to these four fundamental elements. Actually, not only the body as a whole but each and every little piece of the body constitutes these four elements. Even a tiny little thing like a hair consists of these four elements, let alone big trees or Rocky Mountains. So, it is important for us to learn what the four elements really are because they are not exactly what we think they are. They are not something visible either. For instance, there is fire element in such a tender lily that can only be experienced in terms of temperature. Abhidhamma and the commentaries on discourses

describe the four elements from three perspectives: individual characteristics (*lakkhāṇa*), functions (*rasa*), and manifestations (*paccupaṭṭhāna*).

### **Earth Element** (*pathavi*)

The earth under our feet is not exactly the earth element in the ultimate sense. When we see the earth under our feet, what we really see is the color, but not the earth. The earth element is not something visible. It is not something solid either, as it can be divided repeatedly until there remain just certain kinds of electromagnetic elements. However, we cannot pass through the earth like air and water because it is different in nature from these two. Hardness or softness is its characteristic (*lakkhāṇā*) that we can experience by touching any thing. Its function (*rasa*) is to serve as a solid base for all physical phenomena. It manifests itself as an element that holds or bears all the material things (*paccupaṭṭhāna*). So, we can experience the earth element in terms of its characteristic, function or manifestation.

### **Water Element** (*āpo*)

The water element is not really the water we find in a glass, in a storage tank or in the ocean. When we see water, what we really see is the color, but not the water element. When we drink it, we can experience its smell and taste, which are not the water element, either. Abhidhamma says, the water element can only be experienced against the three other elements that go

along with it. When we touch water in the ocean, for example, we may experience coldness or warmth that represents the fire element, not the water element. We can experience ocean waves pushing and pulling in a very powerful way. This is just the air pressure involved in the water but not the water element, either. We can touch water and feel its physical aspects, but this represents the earth element involved in the water, not the water element.

The water element can be experienced as fluidity or trickling in terms of its characteristic (*lakkaṇā*), as expansion or enlargement in terms of its function (*rasa*), or as adhesiveness or cohesiveness in terms of its manifestation (*paccupaṭṭhāna*). There is cohesion of elements in everything on earth, like a stone, wood, bricks, and so on. This cohesion, which holds things together, is the manifestation of the water element. When we add water to the flour, for instance, we get dough. It is the water element that holds the flour particles together. This is how the water element manifests itself to us when we contemplate the body. Water element is not only found in a liquid form. Everything solid like a bone or tooth always means there is a water element that holds its material particles together to create a solid form.

### **Fire Element (*tejo*)**

Normally, when we think of fire, we think of its flame form. Actually, the fire element, in terms of temperature, exists in everything on earth, in our bodies, in a tree, in rocky mountain and even in ice. According to Abhidhamma, this universe was born of fire. If not for the

sun, which is an extremely massive fire ball, we and our planet would not even have come into existence in this solar system. So, no wonder under certain temperatures various kinds of insects, plants, flowers and fruits are born and develop. Given this fact, it is reasonable to assume that the fire element itself is essential for everything on earth to come into existence and to mutate or to develop. Depending on how low or how high its temperature is, the fire element can be experienced as hot, warm, cool, or cold. The fire element is not something we can see. The flame we see is just the color of fire, but not the fire element itself. The fire element exists not only in the flame but also in a water lily or even in the ice.

It can be experienced as hotness, warmth, coolness or coldness in terms of its characteristic (*lakṣhaṇā*); or as maturing or aging of the body in terms of its function (*rasa*); or as flexibility or plasticity in terms of its manifestation (*paccupaṭṭhānā*). A dead body becomes stiff and rigid, no longer flexible because it has not enough fire element. So, flexibility is the result of the fire element, and at the same time, its manifestation.

### **Air Element** (*vāyo*)

The air element does not necessarily refer to the wind blowing around us. Obviously, we cannot see the air. But air feels cold or hot. It is just the fire element bound up with the air but not the air element. No doubt the air is not something solid, but it exists in everything on earth, in sentient beings or inanimate things, in a giant rocky mountain or in a tiny hair thread. It is the air pressure that operates our digestive system, blood circulation, and any other physical movements. So, the air element is very predominant in the body parts that are moving because it

is but air pressure that generates these movements. In the Pāli texts, our physical strength (*kaya-bala*) is described as the air element (*vāyo-dhātu*) rather than nutritional substances. So, the air element is a certain kind of physical energy that can be experienced as pressure, tension or tightness in terms of its characteristic (*vitthambhana-lakkhaṇā*); or as motion or vibration in terms of its function (*samudīraṇa-rasa*); or as pushing forward or pulling back in terms of its manifestation (*abhinīhāra-paccupaṭṭhāna*).

In conclusion, everything on earth is mainly constituted by the four elements. A question here is: Why are things on earth different in size, color, life span and so on while they are all composed of the same elements? Because they are conditioned and have been mutating for millions of years by different proportions of the elements. So, a lily, for instance, can be genetically modified to become much bigger and more colorful than it is now. In any case, what the Buddha would like to teach us is that our bodies and everything else on earth are mainly constituted of these four fundamental elements. There is nothing worthy of getting attached to as "I" or "mine."

## **Analysis of Animate Body**

As for our bodies, they start from a very minute combination of our mother's ovum and our father's sperm in our mother's womb at conception. That combination is called in Pāli "*kalala*" and said to be constituted of 30 physical elements in addition to consciousness and its mental factors. From that very moment, we begin our long journey in this current life. Later, the embryo is



progressively mutated into *abbuda* (bubble) in the first week, and then *pesi* (particle) in the second week, and *ghana* (solid particle) in the third week, and then *pasākha* (limbs and head) including hair and nails in the fourth week.

After eleven weeks, our senses such as eye, ear, etc., start to form. After eight or nine months we are born with full-fledged senses and five to twelve pounds in weight. From that tiny little baby, we gradually grow up through several progressive stages of psycho-physical phenomena, which are described in a Pāḷi text<sup>44</sup> in terms of ten transitional periods with ten years each as follows:

1. The first stage is called Tender Period (*maṇḍa*). It covers the period from the day we were born until we are 10 years old. During this stage, we are very weak, both mentally and physically, and very vulnerable to weather, food and so on.
2. The second stage (age 10 to 20) is called Playing Period (*khiḍḍā*) during which we enjoy ourselves playing around. At this stage, what we are most interested in is to play, sing, or dance with friends.
3. The third (20-30) is Beauty Period (*vaṇṇa*), during which our physical beauty reaches its peak. We develop sense of beauty with increasing interest in the opposite sex. We often enjoy our look by checking our face and body in mirror.
4. The fourth stage (30-40) is Strength Period (*bala*) during which we are strongest in life. We can become

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<sup>44</sup> Citta-sambhula Jataka, Jatakathakatha-4, 398

successful boxers during this period. We are increasingly interested in health and strength.

5. The fifth stage (40-50) is Intellect Period (*paññā*) during which our brain fully develops along with mature body and mind. "Life starts at 40" as the saying goes, we are fully grown at this age. Our intellect and education reach their peak. We can become very good at writing and teaching.
6. The sixth stage (50-60) is Deterioration Period (*hāni*). We start to deteriorate physically. Our skin starts to get wrinkles; hair starts to turn gray; eye-sight gets poorer; muscles starts to become floppy; brain starts to shrink.
7. The seventh stage (60-70) is Leaning Period (*pabbhāra*) during which our bodies start to lean, or our backs start to bend. Thus, we are no longer look youthful or attractive, at all.
8. The eighth stage (70-80) is Ill-shaped Period (*varika*) during which our bodies become ill-proportioned; or in other words, we are most likely to gain weight, lose shape and balance.
9. The ninth stage (80-90) is Confusion Period (*momūha*) during which our brain starts to wane; we forget names of people and places. We cannot recollect whether we had meal or medicine. Sometimes, we get disoriented and lost.
10. The tenth (90-100) is Reclining Period (*sayana*) during which we spend most of the time on bed because we are so weak both physically and mentally. Our senility

reaches its peak, indeed. We are just waiting for the last breath of this life.

These stages are a natural process of our bodies, a true fact of our bodies. Actually, average human lifespan is around 75 years, at most. Some people even die in their mothers' wombs. Even if we live a full lifespan of hundred years, it is just some 36,500 days. In comparison with the lifespan of the universe, our life on earth can be considered short and fragile like a bubble produced by a rain-drop. We all end up with what exactly we scare most in life, old age, sickness and death. A dead body, exactly like a water lily, decomposes into four fundamental elements: soil, vapor, air and temperature. This is the unavoidable destiny of our bodies. We do not see, or we do not even want to see the true fact of body. Thus, we get firmly attached to the body, and constantly haunted by old age, sickness and death.

## **Four Kinds of Animate Body**

According to the teachings of the Buddha, our bodies are just illusive manifestations (*ghana-nimitta*) of physical phenomena that are conditioned and ever-changing. An animate body is much more complicated than inanimate things in the world because it is determined not only by temperature (*utu*), but also by *kamma*, mind (*citta*) and nutrition (*ahara*).

### **1. Kamma-born Body**

Kamma literally means action. But the Buddha described kamma as intention or volition behind all the

actions we do. When a car hits someone, for example, the driver is responsible although the car really hits. In the same way, volition or intention is responsible for our actions. The intention, wholesome or unwholesome, determines an action wholesome or unwholesome, respectively. Such intentions actually arise and pass away along with our actions. However, they leave a latent tendency or form of mental energy (*kamma-satti*) behind in our continuous mental process like the disposition for fire in the match. It will bring about corresponding results to us when the right conditions are met. This is what exactly we call kamma.

Our body is influenced not only by our heredity and environment, but also by this kamma of ours. That is why we can see many differences even between identical twins that are born and brought up with the same heredity and environment. Although they have similar appearance and features, one may be brainier, healthier or more fortunate than the other. Moreover, there are points to ponder, like why we were born to this particular kind of heredity and environment, why not to the other kinds; why we were born as men or women, but why not otherwise; why some of us were born with a particular talent and aptitude, why not others; why some of us get opportunities to be successful in life, why not others. These differences are points to ponder beyond our heredity and environment. Do they take place at random, or thanks to God, or what?

According to the Buddha's teaching, we reap what we sow, as the saying goes. Our kamma makes us different from many other peoples in many aspects. If we did wholesome kamma in a past life, such as giving to charity, keeping moral conducts, and so on, we would be born to

a family of high social status in the present life, and also receive a healthy and beautiful body, healthy and beautiful eyes, healthy and beautiful nose, and so on. We would be otherwise if we did unwholesome deeds in the previous lives, like killing, stealing, etc. According to Abhidhamma, many kinds of physical phenomena in our bodies are produced by our kamma incessantly and immensely for the whole life starting from the very first moment of an embryo. In an ultimate sense, they are of eleven kinds as follows:

1. Eight Undividable (*avinibbhoga*)
2. Space (*ākasa*)
3. Eye-sensitivity (*cakkhu-pasāda*)
4. Ear-sensitivity (*sota-pasāda*)
5. Nose-sensitivity (*ghāna-pasāda*)
6. Tongue-sensitivity (*jivhā-pasāda*)
7. Body-sensitivity (*kāya-pasāda*)
8. Femininity (*itthi-bhāva*)
9. Masculinity (*pum-bhāva*)
10. Heart-base (*hadaya-vatthu*)
11. Life faculty (*jīvitindriya*)

## **2. Mind-born Body**

Obviously, our mind or mental states influence our physical body in one way or another. There is mind behind all the actions we do, like typing, walking, smiling, hugging, and so on. The mind always plays a leading role

in chemical changes in our body. When we get angry, for example, there arise physical changes in our body, making our face turn red, our heart beats faster and so on. When we are excited or nervous, our feet turn cold. When we think of sad events, tears come out; when we think of delicious food, saliva comes out; when we think of sex, other physiological changes result. Wholesome mind always gives rise to healthy chemicals that make our life long and healthy, while unwholesome mental states do otherwise. Thus, our mind is very powerful enough to produce the following physical phenomena in our body incessantly and immensely for the whole life starting from the second mind moment in our mother's womb:

1. Eight Undividable (*avinibbhoga*)
2. Space (*ākasa*)
3. Bodily posture (*iriyapatha*)
4. Bodily gesture (*kāya-viññatti*)
5. Verbal gesture (*vacī-viññatti*)
6. Manner of Laugh and smile (*hasana*)
7. Sound or voice (*sadda*)
8. Bodily lightness (*lahutā*)
9. Bodily flexibility (*mudutā*)
10. Bodily Adaptability (*kammaññatā*)

### **3. Climate-born Body**

As mentioned before, climate (*utu*) is the fire element or temperature in an ultimate sense. If we can manage to have suitable climate, we can live longer and healthier.

Under certain temperature, there appear certain kinds of insects, plants, flowers and fruits. We know how much the sun influences our lives. If not for the sun, we and everything else on earth and the earth itself would not even have come into existence in this solar system. This is an indisputable fact. Moreover, the fire element represents our body heat (*jīraṇa*) and digestive heat (*pācaka*). Thus, the fire element is very powerful enough to produce the physical phenomena incessantly and immensely in our bodies for the whole life starting from the moment of rebirth consciousness:

1. Eight Undividable (*avinibbhoga*)
2. Space (*ākasa*)
3. Sound or voice (*sadda*)
4. Bodily lightness (*lahutā*)
5. Bodily flexibility (*mudutā*)
6. Bodily Adaptability (*kammaññatā*)

#### **4. Nutrition-born Body**

The essence of food is called *oja* in Pāḷi, which most likely refers to vitamins and minerals involved in the food we eat. My father was just five feet four inches. However, he said he was pretty taller than most Japanese soldiers he met during WWII. Nowadays, many Japanese people are as tall as Europeans on average. No doubt, it is nutrition that makes a big difference to the body. Nutrition (*oja*) produces the following phenomena incessantly and immensely throughout our life starting from the time we began to obtain nutrition as a fetus in our mother's womb:

1. Eight Undividable (*avinibbhoga*)
2. Space (*ākasa*)
3. Bodily lightness (*lahutā*)
4. Bodily flexibility (*mudutā*)
5. Bodily Adaptability (*kammaññatā*)

## To Discern Body

Thus, the physical phenomena that constitute our bodies are arising and disappearing or changing at every moment. The different kinds of physical phenomena predominate in different bodily positions and actions. For example, our body temperature, which represents the fire element, is changing every moment along with our bodily movements. The body temperature, for instance, reaches its peak during running, and drops to its lowest during sleeping. As for the air element, it is the air pressure that helps our heart pump up the blood into the brain and throughout the body for the entire life (*arigamaṅga-nusāri*). The air pressure itself generates all our bodily movements and functions like digestive system, bowel movements, etc. (*adhogama*). Basically, the air and fire elements dominate the active body, whereas earth and water elements in a less active body. Thus, the physical elements are changing at every moment according to our actions.

Therefore, when we reach for something, for instance, a higher proportion of fire and air elements manifest



themselves with that action. When we are sitting or reclining, the earth and water elements are more predominant in our body. So, if we contemplate on our body while sitting or reclining, we can experience the dominance of these two elements in terms of hardness or heaviness. If we contemplate an active body like walking or doing something, we can experience the dominance of fire and air elements in terms of warmth and motion, respectively. When walking, if we contemplate on the foot being lifted, we can experience the dominance of two elements, fire and air, in terms of lightness, warmth or motion. When the foot is dropped down, the earth and water elements can be experienced in terms of heaviness or hardness. In brief, the fire and air elements play a major role in any physical actions starting from blinking the eyes to running very fast. So, by observing our bodily actions, we can discern physical phenomena and their changes beyond the form or shape of the body.

The discernment of physical phenomena means the penetrative insight into what the body really is (*rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*). Many of us, however, consider such discernment to be trivial. Sometimes, we also complain that we experience nothing special or remarkable, or we do not see impermanence, suffering and soullessness. Actually, to see different phenomena changing at different moments means to see their impermanence. And again, seeing impermanence means seeing suffering and soullessness. So, discernment of the physical phenomena is a very important foundation for the entire course of progressive vipassanā insights.

## Simile

By seeing the four elements in this way, we can see our bodies as they really are, i.e., a combination of elements, or chemical compounds. This realization leaves little or no room for us to illusively identify the body as "I" or "mines." In the Satipathāna Sutta, the Buddha illustrated this point with the simile as follows:

*"Just as though a skilled butcher or his apprentice had killed a cow and was sitting at a crossroads with it cut up into pieces; so too he contemplates this very body in whatever position in terms of elements thus: "In this very body there are the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the air element.""*

So, the discernment of four elements is depicted with a butcher who slaughtered and cut up a cow to sell. According to the commentaries, the butcher simile indicates a change of cognition (*saññā*), since after the slaughter the butcher thinks no longer in terms of "cow," but only in terms of "meat." A similar shift of cognition takes place when a meditator divides the body into four elements; the body is no longer experienced as "I" or "mines," but simply as a combination of the elements.

In this way, a healthy degree of detachment develops, counteracting the illusory sense of "I" and attachment to material pleasure. With sustained contemplation, we may come to realize that this apparently solid and compact material body is entirely devoid of anything substantial and

lasting. There are only elements that are characterized by simply different degrees of hardness or softness, of wetness or dryness, of hotness or coldness, and pressure or motion. Discernment of such physical elements, thus, has the potential to lead to a penetrative realization of the insubstantial and selfless nature of the body.

## **Analysis of Consciousness**

### **Three Kinds of Consciousness**

According to Buddha's teachings, cognitive phenomena consist of consciousness (*citta*) and its mental factors (*cetasika*), which are collectively called mind (*nāma*). By definition, consciousness is a pure awareness of sense-objects; however, it is classified into eighty-nine based on different batches of its concomitant mental factors and different sense-bases.

Essentially, however, it is of three kinds as follows:

#### **1. Sub-consciousness (*Bhavaṅga*)**

The first kind of consciousness in our lives is inborn mind, which is generated by past kamma<sup>45</sup>. This inborn mind determines whether we are smart or stupid, kind or cruel. In other words, it represents both our heredity and personality. Like the water current of a river, this inborn mind flows continuously throughout the entire life except for

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<sup>45</sup> Kamma is a kind of mental legacy that is left dormant by the volitional actions we have done in the past. It always brings us its corresponding result when the right conditions are met.

the time when fully conscious thoughts come in. Literally, this inborn mind is called by three names: “relinking mind” (*paṭisandhi*) at the first moment of our life, and “death mind” (*cuti*) at the last moment, and “life-continuum” (*bhavaṅga*) in between. The most similar concept would likely be “sub-consciousness”<sup>46</sup>. The unbroken flow of inborn mind or sub-consciousness takes place when we are in our mother’s womb, in a deep sleep, or in an unconscious state. In daily life, sense-objects constantly get into the subconscious mind stream, giving rise to wholesome or unwholesome thoughts based on our mindset (*manasi-kāra*). In other words, our thoughts (full consciousness) come in through our sub-consciousness, which is, therefore, called “mind-door” (*mano-dvāra*)<sup>47</sup>. Referring to this sub-consciousness the Buddha said as follows:

*“Monks, shining purely is the mind, which is defiled by visiting mental hindrances.”* (Anguttara-nikaya-1)

There are nineteen kinds of sub-consciousness as follows:

1. The sub-consciousness of animals, ghosts, and hell beings is called *santīraṇa*<sup>48</sup>, which results from unwholesome kamma. (1)
2. The sub-consciousness of human beings who are disabled by birth is also called *santīraṇa* that results from poor-quality wholesome kamma. It is

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<sup>46</sup> The two terms, “inborn mind” and “sub-consciousness” will be used synonymously.

<sup>47</sup> *Mano-dvāraṃ pana bhavaṅganti pavuccati.* (Abhidhammattha-sangaha 47)

<sup>48</sup> *Santīraṇa* is literally translated as “investigating consciousness,” which is one of 18 Rootless minds.

the kamma done without understanding and preceded or succeeded by unwholesome mental states. (1)

3. The sub-consciousness of normal human beings and divine beings is one of the eight Great Resultant minds that result from wholesome kamma of good quality. (8)
4. The sub-consciousness of the *Brahma* beings<sup>49</sup> is one of the nine jhānic resultant minds. (9)

## 2. Sense-Consciousness (*Pañca-viññāṇa*)

The second kind of consciousness is "sense-consciousness," which mainly consists of the five pairs of sense-consciousness: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching consciousnesses which each are the results of past-life wholesome or unwholesome kamma. Thus, they each have two kinds, wholesome resultant and unwholesome resultant. So, if we have past wholesome kamma, we will get chances to see beautiful things and lovely people, to hear pleasing words and pleasant songs, to eat tasty and fancy food, and so on. Whereas, past unwholesome kamma brings us bad sense consciousness.

When our attention is drawn to a sight that impinges on our eyes (sensitive phenomena in our eyes), the seeing mental process arises in our mind replacing the flow of sub-consciousness. This process includes a series of successive mind-units below:

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<sup>49</sup> Ghost (*peta*), Deva and Brahma are beings that we cannot see through our naked eyes unless they want us to. However, a lot of scientific researches have suggested the possible existence of unseen beings like ghost.

1. Past sub-consciousness (*atīta-bhavaṅga*)
2. Vibrational sub-consciousness (*bhavaṅga-calana*)
3. Arresting sub-consciousness (*bhavaṅgupaccheda*)
4. Adverting consciousness (attention) (*pañca-dvārāvajjana*)
5. Seeing consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*)
6. Sense-object-receiver (*sampaṭicchana*)
7. Sense-object-investigator (*santīraṇa*)
8. Sense-object-determiner (*vuṭṭho*)

The same process takes place when our attention is pulled to sound, smell, taste and touch that impinge on our ears, noses, tongues, and bodies, respectively. The above-mentioned mental process includes eight moments of mind-units. All of them (except the 4th and 8th) are linked to our past kamma. The experience of desirable sense-objects is attributed to good kamma, whereas undesirable ones to bad kamma. Up to this point we simply experience sense-objects in a passive manner without any negative or positive reaction (*kusala* or *akusala*), or without happy or unhappy feeling (*somanassa* or *domanassa*).

### **3. Fully Active Consciousness (*Javana*)**

The eighth mind-unit is succeeded by fully active consciousness called *javana* that repeats seven times. Thus, there are seven subsequent mind-units (from the 9th to 15th) that represent the negative or positive mental reactions, or wholesome or unwholesome thoughts, or happy or unhappy feeling. They are very powerful and

often leave their mental energies (*viññāṇa-satti*) in dormant forms behind, like memory, talent, aptitude, habit, etc. Such powerful consciousness (*javana*) is of two kinds: sense-door-based (*pañca-dvārika-javana*) and mind-door-based (*mano-dvārika-javana*). The first one corresponds with five sense-objects, and the second with mental objects<sup>50</sup>. Either one normally repeats seven times, succeeded by two registering mind-units (*tadārammaṇa*), which is compared to an aftertaste. These full consciousnesses (*javana*) are classified into 55 kinds as follows:

1. Eight greed-rooted consciousnesses that motivate such immoral deeds as stealing, sexual misconduct, abusing drinks and drugs, etc. (8)
2. Two hate-rooted consciousnesses that motivate such immoral deeds as killing, tormenting, hurting, speaking ill of other, insulting or backbiting, etc. (2)
3. Two delusion-rooted consciousnesses that gives rise to all the actions including gossiping (*samphappalāpa*), daydreaming or thinking aimlessly (*uddhacca*), and being anxious and remorse (*kukkucca*). (2)
4. Smile-producing consciousness (*hasituppāda*) that is peculiar to an Arahatta, a fully enlightened person. (1)

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<sup>50</sup> The mental objects are objects that only come through our sub-consciousness, but not five senses. They include all kinds of phenomena, mental, physical and conceptual, but exclusive of five-sense objects that are still present.

5. Sixteen wholesome consciousnesses (eight great wholesome, and eight great functional) that motivate such good deeds as generosity, morality, volunteer work, cultivation of mind and so on. (16)
6. Eighteen Jhānic consciousnesses that are associated with highly developed concentration (or jhānic factors). They are: ten fine material sphere consciousnesses (five wholesome and five Functional) and eight Immaterial Sphere Consciousnesses (four wholesome and four Functional). (18)
7. Eight Supra-mundane consciousnesses (four Paths and four Fruitions) that are associated with highly developed insight knowledge, or the Eight-fold Noble Path. (8)

Among these seven kinds of powerful consciousness (*javana*) mentioned above, the first five represent what we call thoughts, such as thinking, planning, daydreaming, analyzing, reasoning, judging and so on. The last two kinds are the mental states that are highly developed with concentration and insight knowledge, respectively.

## **The Mental Process of Five Senses**

For better understanding of what is mentioned above, it is good to learn two kinds of mental process (*vīthi*), namely five-sense-door process (*pañca-dvārika vīthi*), and mind-door process (*mano-dvārika vīthi*). When the five sense-objects (sight, sound, etc.,) come and knock on their corresponding sense-doors (eyes, ears, etc.,) the



mental process takes place with seventeen successive mind-units as follows:

1. Past sub-consciousness (*atīta-bhavaṅga*),
2. Vibrational sub-consciousness (*bhavaṅga-calana*),
3. Arresting sub-consciousness (*bhavaṅg'upaccheda*)
4. Adverting consciousness (*pañca-dvārāvajjana*),
5. Seeing consciousness (*cakku-viññāṇa*) (hearing, smelling, etc.)
6. Receiving consciousness (*sampaṭicchana*),
7. Investigating consciousness (*santīraṇa*),
8. Determining consciousness (*voṭṭho*),
9. Seven units of fully active consciousness (*javana*) accompanied by wholesome or unwholesome mental factors and by happiness or unhappy feeling depending on one's mindset,
10. Two moments of registering consciousness (*tadārammaṇa*).

In this mental process, the mind-units 1 to 3 are subconscious moments, 4 to 7 are sense-consciousnesses, and the remaining ones are full-consciousnesses. Actually only the 9<sup>th</sup> (that includes seven mind-moments) is real full-consciousness because it represents negative or positive mental reactions (*kusala* or *akusala*) along with happy and unhappy feeling, and is, therefore, powerful enough to leave behind its mental energy in dormant form. The 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> mind-units, however, are included in the full-consciousness just

because they respectively precede and succeed the real full-consciousness called *javana*. The 5<sup>th</sup>, however, is not included in full-consciousness because it belongs and contributes only to the sense-consciousness, but not to the full-consciousness.

### **Thousands of Processes in a Split Second**

The English terms such as adverting, investigating, determining, registering, etc., normally refer to particular kinds of functions that may take time. In the case of mental processes, these terms refer to mental functions of certain mind-units involved, rather than what they really mean in daily language. For example, examining the quality of a diamond it may take us a few minutes to hours. In the case of mental process (*vithi*), however, the investigating mind-unit is so brief that millions of such mind-units can take place within a split second. Moreover, thousands of mental processes, each composed of such brief mind-units as mentioned above, are required to get the whole picture of an object, say, to identify whom we are seeing, what he or she is talking about, and so on. To recognize one's face, for instance, we have to see it bit by bit, layer by layer, from hairs down to chin, and put all the parts together until we recognize who it is. In the same way, in order to understand what he or she is talking about, we need thousands of mental processes to put all the pieces of words together. Thanks to thousands of such mental processes within a split second, we can recognize someone within a split second. How fleeting the mind is!

## The Mental Process of the Sixth Sense

When a mental object intrudes the flow of sub-consciousness, the mind-door mental process (*mano-dvarika vithi*) arises with twelve mind-units as follows:

1. Vibrational sub-consciousness (*bhavaṅga-calana*)
2. Arresting sub-consciousness (*bhavaṅg'upaccheda*)
3. Adverting consciousness (*mano-dvārāvajjana*)
4. Seven moments of the fully active consciousness (*javana*) that is associated with mental reactions, wholesome or unwholesome depending on one's mindset.
5. Two moments of registering consciousness (*tadārammaṇa*)

**Note:** In this mental process, the first two are subconscious mind-units, and the remaining mind-units are taken as full consciousness for the same reason mentioned earlier.

## Analysis of Mental Factors

The third kind of ultimate phenomena is mental factors called "*cetasika*." Different batches of the mental factors characterize and classify different kinds of consciousness just as water is classified into several kinds depending on whether it is pigmented with red, green or purple dye. In other words, the characteristics and classifications of the consciousness are related to its

associated mental factors. They include 52 in number: 14 unwholesome, 25 wholesome, and 13 common.

## Unwholesome Factors and Their Roles

There are 14 kinds of unwholesome mental factors. Among them the first four factors are common to every unwholesome mind, and the last ten are associated with particular unwholesome minds on a particular occasion.

- a. Four Common Unwholesome: ignorance or delusion (*moha*), lack of moral shame or shamelessness (*ahīrika*), lack of moral conscience (*anottappa*), unstable mind (*uddhacca*).
- b. Ten Particular Unwholesome: greed (*lobha*), wrong view (*ditṭhi*), conceit (*māna*), hatred (*dosa*), envy (*issā*), intolerance (*macchariya*), regret (*kukkucca*), laziness (*thina* and *middha*), skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*).

The four mental factors common to every unwholesome mind are always involved in any kind of evil deed. They manifest themselves as delusion, illusion, confusion, wandering thoughts, careless actions, worthless speeches, and so on. Contributed by these four Unwholesome Common, "*lobha*" often leads to such evil deeds as stealing, cheating, robbery, rape, adultery and so on, and "*dosa*" to killing, hurting, backbiting, slandering, speaking ill of other, and so on. Under the term "*lobha*" there come such unwholesome mental states as greed, craving, selfishness, sensual desire, sexual desire, and wrong view. The *dosa* is characterized

by such mental states as anger, hatred, ill will, envy, intolerance, prejudice, regret, worry, anxiety, and so on.

## Wholesome Factors and Their Roles

There are 25 wholesome mental factors. Among them the first 19 factors are common to every wholesome mind, and the last six are associated only with particular kinds of wholesome mind on a particular occasion.

- a. Nineteen Common Wholesome: rightful faith (*saddhā*), mindfulness (*sati*), moral shame (*hiri*), moral fear (*ottappa*), non-greed (*a-lobha*), non-hatred (*a-dosa*), stability of mind (*tatramajjhataṭṭā*), tranquility of body (*kāya-passaddhi*), tranquility of consciousness (*citta-passaddhi*), lightness of body (*kāya-lahutā*), and lightness of consciousness (*citta-lahutā*), malleability of body (*kāya-mudutā*), malleability of consciousness (*citta-mudutā*), adaptability of body (*kāya-kammaññatā*), adaptability of consciousness (*citta-kammaññatā*), proficiency of body (*kāya-paguññatā*), and proficiency of consciousness (*citta-pāguññatā*), straightforwardness of body (*kayujukatā*), straightforwardness of consciousness (*cittujukatā*).
- b. Six Particular Wholesome: Three Abstinences (*virati*), namely, right speech (*sammā-vācā*), right action (*sammā-kammanta*), right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*); two Illimitable, namely, compassion (*karuṇā*) and appreciative joy

(*muditā*). And finally, there comes Wisdom Faculty (*paññindriya*)

The nineteen mental factors common to every wholesome mind are always involved in all kinds of wholesome deeds such as acts of generosity (*dāna*), acts of moral conducts (*sīla*), and spiritual development or meditation (*bhāvanā*) and so on. For example, the act of generosity (*dāna*), for instance, involves all 19 mental factors such as faith in the benefits of *dāna* (*saddhā*), remembrance to do *dāna* (*sati*), moral shame (*hiri*), moral fear (*ottappa*), unselfishness (*alobha*), loving kindness (*adosa*), mental stability (*tatra-majjhataṭṭhā*) and so on. The same is true with the remaining good deed such as morality (*sīla*), spiritual development (*bhāvanā*), and so on.

In addition to the nineteen factors, there are six mental factors that play a particular wholesome role. The three Abstinenances (*virati*) play the main role in acts of moral conducts; the compassion (*karuṇā*) in helping others in need or in trouble; appreciative Joy (*muditā*) in taking delights in other people's success, prosperity or moral values; Wisdom (*paññā*) in reasoning, understanding, insight knowledge and enlightenment.

## **To Live a Noble Life**

Among the 25 wholesome mental factors, we are highly recommended to develop the four factors in particular, which characterize what we call "superior dwelling" (*brahma-vihāra*): loving kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*).

We can live a superior life by dwelling on or cultivating these four:

1. Loving kindness (*mettā*) to those who are as fortunate as we are, instead of rivaling in an unhealthy way. (It comes under "non-hatred" (*a-dosa*)).
2. Compassion (*karuṇā*) to those who are less fortunate than we are, instead of oppressing or looking down on them.
3. Sympathetic joy (*muditā*) to those who are more fortunate than we are, instead of feeling jealous.
4. Equanimity (*upekkhā*) to those who are unfortunate or in trouble, for whom we can do nothing, instead of feeling upset or worried. Here, to "cultivate equanimity" means to contemplate on their kamma as their own destiny when there is nothing we can do to help them. (It comes under "stability of mind" (*tatra-majjhataṭṭā*)).

In general, *metta* makes us happy with people's success, *karuṇa* makes us compassionate for their failure, and *mudita* makes us take delight in other's prosperity. As for equanimity, when we cannot find any way to get someone out of trouble, we need to contemplate on his or her kamma so that we will not be unnecessarily infested with unwholesome emotions like self-blame, worry, anxiety, etc. Thus, by developing these wholesome mental states, we can be considered to live a superior dwelling (*brahma-vihāra*).

## Common Factors and Their Roles

There are thirteen mental factors that are associated with either wholesome or unwholesome mind. Among them the first seven go along with each and every kind of consciousness, and the second six only with particular kinds on particular occasions.

- a. Seven Factors Common to All: They include mental contact (*phasso*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), concentration (*ekaggatā*), life faculty (*jīvitindriya*), and attention (*manasi-kāra*). These seven factors accompany every kind of consciousness whether moral, unmoral or indeterminate.
- b. Six Factors Common to Certain Consciousness: They are initial attention (*vitakka*), sustained attention (*vicāra*), decision (*adhimokkha*), energy (*vīriya*), rapture (*pīti*), and desire (*chanda*). These six accompany particular kinds of consciousness on particular occasions.

Some of the thirteen Common play very significant roles in particular cases in which their characteristics are very predominant:

- **Mental Contact** (*phassa*) is the mental factor that helps the mind contact with sense-objects in such a vivid manner that it seems to touch the sense object.
- **Feeling** (*vedanā*) is the mental factor that helps the mind to experience the sense-objects, whether



pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. This feeling generates desire and attachment that generate the torturous cycle of psycho-physical process.

- **Perception** (*saññā*) is the mental factor that helps the mind to remember sense-objects. This mental factor represents memory and intellectual knowledge.
- **Intention** (*cetanā*) is the mental factor that initiates and causes verbal and bodily actions. It plays a leading role in all our good or bad actions called "*kamma*."
- **Concentration** (*ekaggatā*) is the mental factor that helps the mind to focus on sense-objects. The concentration mainly contributes to our knowledge and also serves as the key factor of meditative absorption (*jhāna*).
- **Life Faculty** (*jīvitindriya*) is the mental factor that vitalizes and sustains our constant mental process.
- **Attention** (*manasi-kāra*) is a particular kind of mental factor that directs the consciousness and its associated mental factors to pay attention to the sense objects.
- **Initial Attention** (*vitakka*) is the mental factor that directs the mind toward sense-objects.
- **Sustained Attention** (*vicāra*) is the mental factor that keeps the mind with the object after it is directed to it by the initial attention.

The initial attention and the sustained attention work together for the mind to be with the object during the meditation practice. They are two important factors for the practice. In the case of the meditative absorption (*jhāna*), the two along with three others serve as the main factors, i.e., rapture (*pīti*), happiness (*sukha*) and concentration (*ekaggatā*).

- **Determination** (*adhimokkha*) is the mental factor that makes the mind determined to carry out and accomplish the purpose.
- **Energy** (*vīriya*) is the mental factor that energizes the mind by putting effort into the work.
- **Desire** (*chanda*) is the wish to carry out the purpose including the practice.

Energy and desire are two mental factors that energize the mind. Four mental faculties including these two are known as sources of success (*iddhi-pāda*). They are desire (*chanda*), will (*citta*), energy (*vīriya*), and reasoning (*vimaṃsa*).

- **Rapture** (*pīti*) is the mental factor that makes the mind delightful of the experience of dhamma and enthusiastic in the practice.

## Analysis of Attention

Among the 13 Common, there are three mental factors that have correspondance with what we call "attention." They are *manasi-kāra*, *vitakka*, and *cetanā*. We need to understand their differences. Moreover, the

term "*manasi-kāra*" in Dhamma discourses (*sutta*) means something different from what it means in Abhidhamma. So, it is good to learn what they really mean.

## **Literal Meaning of "*Manasi-kāra*"**

"*Manasi-kāra*" is a technical term that is translated in different ways by different scholars. Grammatically, it is composed of two words: *manasi* (in the mind) + *kāra* (doing). So, its literal meaning is "doing in the mind." We do everything in the mind first before we actually do them. So, "doing in the mind" is like drawing a blueprint that determines who we are going to be. For instance, if money is all we do in the mind, we may become millionaires, but may not be healthy and happy persons. If education is all in our mind, then we will be highly educated, but we may not live a worthwhile life. Quality of life requires not only wealth, health, education, and sensory happiness but something else beyond them, too. Anyhow, doing in the mind means drawing a blueprint to shape who we are going to be. This is the literal meaning of "*manasi-kāra*."

## **Three Kinds of *Manasi-kāra***

In Abhidhamma, there is a mental factor by the name of *manasi-kāra*, which "directs the mind to pay attention to the sense-objects." Referring to this definition, it is often translated as attention, or paying attention to the objects. There are two other mental factors, *vitakka* and *cetanā*, which are also defined in a similar sense. In Sutta discourses, however, *manasi-kāra* does not refer to these three mental factors, but to Adverting Consciousness (*āvajjana citta*), instead. Moreover, in some cases, *manasi-kāra* means

contemplation or meditation (*samatha* or *vipassanā*). Given these facts, we can classify *manasi-kāra* into three kinds:

### **Manasi-kāra-1**

In harmony with Abhidhamma mentioned above, our “attention” represents three mental factors collectively: *manasikāra*, *vitakka*, and *cetanā*. In other words, these three factors are working together to serve as our “attention.” So, the question is the difference among them. This point is illustrated with a simile in the sub-commentary as follows:

1. *Manasi-kāra* directs the attention of the mind to the object like someone who sits in the backseat and operate the steer of the boat to the goal.
2. *Vitakka* resembles someone in the middle seat propelling the boat to the goal.
3. *Cetanā* is compared to someone in the front seat commanding the mind to reach for the goal flag.

Actually, these three factors only work within their associated mind and other mental factors that constitute a single mind-moment. Their functions are just to direct them to the sense-objects. So, in this case, they themselves do not predetermine our thoughts to be wholesome or unwholesome.

### **Mansikara-2**

There is certain kind of mind-unit that predetermines our subsequent thoughts to be wholesome or unwholesome. In the five-sense door thought process (*pañca-dvārika vīthi*), it is

the Determining Consciousness (*voṭṭho*); in the mind-door thought process (*mano-dvarika vithi*), it is the Mind-door Adverting Consciousness (*mano-dvārāvajjana*)<sup>51</sup>. It predetermines whether an object is good or bad, right or wrong, lovable or despicable based on the preconceived idea (*adhimuccana*<sup>52</sup>). Thus, this mind-unit predetermines our thoughts to be wholesome or unwholesome. Such decisive mind-unit is called *manasi-kāra* in Dhamma discourses, which we may reasonably translate as mindset or way of thinking. At the 4<sup>th</sup> stage of insight, therefore, this mind-unit is said to bear the preconceived idea of impermanence, when it leads to discernment of impermanence.

So, our mind-set (*manasi-kāra*) determines our thoughts to be wholesome or unwholesome. For example, Tambadathika, an appointed executioner, killed hundreds of criminals throughout his career life. So, when Venerable Sariputta taught him Dhamma, he could not absorb it, since his mind was set on guilty aspect of his deed. After a while, however, he managed to set his mind on seemingly innocent aspect of his deed when Venerable Sariputta asked whether it was his choice or the king's order that he killed people. Thanks to fortunate shift of the mindset, he could absorb the Dhamma so well that he even reached a certain spiritual status and blissful rebirth after death. This story indicates the vital role of our mindset that determines our destiny. Such powerful mind-set (Investigating Consciousness in technical terms) is called *manasi-kāra* in Dhamma discourses.

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<sup>51</sup> Paṭisambhidāmagga-aṭṭhakathā-2, 81.  
[*manasikaro penettha āvajjanāya cittuppado*]

<sup>52</sup> Mahāvagga (Samyutta) Tika, 487

## Manasi-kāra-3

In the example below, the Buddha himself used two words *manasi-kāra* and *avajjana* synonymously to describe his meditation practices:

*My practices (samatha and vipassanā) are related to investigation (āvajjana), aspiration (ākankhā), and contemplation (manasi-kāra)<sup>53</sup>.*

In many cases like the one mentioned below, “*manasi-kāra*” itself mean contemplation or meditation:

*“There are two “manasi-kāra”: inferential manasi-kāra and empirical manasi-kāra. Even if a single phenomenon is discerned to be impermanent (by empirical manasi-kāra), all the conditioned phenomena can be inferentially discerned to be so (by inferential manasi-kāra).<sup>54</sup>”*

In these cases, “*manasi-kāra*” can be translated as contemplation or meditation. It literally refers to the Investigating Consciousness (*avajjana*) that leads to *vipassanā* insights.

## *Yoniso vs. Ayoniso*

In Dhamma discourses, we can often find the word *manasi-kāra* (mind-set) to be modified by two adjectives: *yoniso* and *a-yoniso*. Hence, there are two technical

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<sup>53</sup> *tassa me Dhammā avajjana-paṭibaddhā honti, ākankhā-paṭibaddhā, manasikāra-paṭibaddhā* (Paṭisambhidā-magga, 171)

<sup>54</sup> Pañca-pakaraṇaṭṭhakathā

terms, *yoniso manasi-kāra* and *a-yoniso manasi-kāra* that the Buddha often described as the sources of all kinds of merit and demerit, respectively. In these terms the word “*yonī*” has two literal meanings:

1. The first meaning is womb or female organ, which infers one’s birth place, native country, four forms of birth<sup>55</sup>, four social classes<sup>56</sup>, seven types of species<sup>57</sup>, and so on.
2. The second meaning is "source", or "tracing back to the source" (*patha, upaya manasikaro*). This definition is applicable to the phrase “*yoniso manasi-kāra*”.

### ***Yoniso Manasi-kāra***

The word *yoniso* has the suffix “*so*” which is equivalent to “*ly*” in an English adverb. So, the entire phrase “*yoniso manasi-kāra*” literally means doing reasonably in the

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<sup>55</sup> **Four Births (*yonī*):** birth from egg (*andhaja*), from womb (*jalabuja*), from wet stuff (*samsedaja*), spontaneous birth (*opapātika*)

<sup>56</sup> **Four Social Classes:** royal, warrior, merchant, and working class

<sup>57</sup> **Seven Mind-species (*viññana-thiti*):** 1. Certain species are different in both form and mind from one another, 2. Certain species different in form but same in mind, 3. Same in form but different in mind, 4. Same in both form and mind, 5. Superior species called *akasanancayatana*, 6. Superior species called *viññanancayatana*, 7. Superior species called *akinsanayatana*.

**Nine Spheres of Beings (*sattavasa*):** In additions to the above-mentioned seven Mind Species there are two kinds of superior species: one is neither conscious nor totally unconscious (*nevasaññānasaññayatana*) and another is totally unconscious (*asana-satta*).

mind, or reasonable way of thinking. Here, "reasonable" means to trace back to the source, i.e., to the nature of conditionality and impermanence.

Suppose, for example, we feel hurt by someone's rude behavior. If we trace our feeling back to its source, we can find wrong mind-set. Actually, we all become rude if overwhelmed by mental defilements. And we all feel bad unless someone satisfies our ego. So, if we think of an incident by tracing back to its source, we can see reality beyond illusions leaving no or little room for negative emotion. Such rational way of thinking is the literal meaning of *yoniso manasi-kāra*.

For another example, finding someone beautiful and attractive, say, we feel lustful. In reality, everybody is constituted of skin, flesh, bones and blood. "Beauty is just skin deep" as the saying goes. A beautiful body is just an illusive manifestation of skin and flesh, or that of ever-changing physical phenomena. It is simply under illusion that we find someone attractive and feel lustful. So, it is a rational way of thinking if we think of someone from what he or she really is, i.e., 32 anatomical parts, or ever-changing psycho-physical phenomena. In a nutshell, "rational way of thinking" (*yoniso manasi-kāra*) means to see things as they really are, to see things by tracing back to their true nature of conditionality and impermanence.

### **Mallikā**

On one occasion, five hundred monks led by Venerable Sariputta were served with lunch by Mallikā, the wife of General Bandhula, the great warrior of King Kosala. Thereupon, a servant accidently dropped a big pot of ghee



that broke into pieces right in her front. Venerable Sariputta then consoled Mallikā thus: "Please don't be upset; it breaks as it's breakable in nature." Then, she took a message out of her pocket and said: "Venerable Sir, I've just received this message that my husband and our 32 fostered sons were recently assassinated. I've accepted the nature of impermanence." Thus, she was completely consoled and calm by accepting the nature of impermanence. She also gave an advice to her 32 daughters-in-law to attribute such a cruel assassination to their kamma, but not to blame anybody else.

So, thinking about something or someone from the nature of impermanence or from the law of cause and effect (*kamma*) means rational way of thinking (*yoniso-manasi-kāra*).

## **Ānanda**

Once, Venerable Ananda was so sad when he received a message that Venerable Sariputta passed away. Then, the Buddha consoled him thus:

*"Ānanda, whatever arises or comes into existence is conditioned and breakable in nature. How can you possibly expect it to not break?"*

We are all impermanent; whatever belong to us are all impermanent. Gain is impermanent; loss is impermanent;

fame is impermanent; defame is impermanent; success is impermanent; failure is impermanent; happiness is impermanent; sadness is impermanent. Impermanence is the nature we all have in common. Seeing something from such natural perspective means rational way of thinking (*yoniso-manasi-kāra*), which always helps us to be calm under any circumstances.

### **Nine Benefits**

By thinking thus rationally, we can feel contented with whatever available; we can be consoled under any circumstances. We will neither be too elated although everything goes perfect, nor will we be too upset when something goes wrong. We can be gratified and happy with whatever happens to us; our mind will be calm, stable, and peaceful.

Hence, the Buddha said:

One can gain nine kinds of successive benefits from *yoniso manasi-kāra*. By thinking rationally, one will become gratified (*pāmojja*) and delightful (*pīti*) under any circumstances; one will feel content (*passaddhi*) and happy (*sukha*) with whatever available. As a result, one's mind will become stable and concentrated (*samādhi*). Such a stable and concentrated mind will help one to see things as they really are (*yathābhūta-ñāṇa-dassana*), leading one to disenchantment (*nibbidā*), detachment (*virāga*) and liberation (*vimutta*), successively<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>58</sup> Pāthika Pali, 252

## *A-yoniso Manasi-kāra*

On the other hand, if Mallikā could not have thought of the conditions rationally, she would have faced with even more serious misfortunes because this assassination was secretly arranged by King Kosala himself suspecting General Bandhula to be a threat to his power. In any case, the moment we fail to think of a fact rationally, or we direct our mind wrongly, we are exposed to all sort of evil and misfortune. So, it is said in the Dhammapada:

*Whatever one enemy may do to another, or one haters to another,*

*Far worse is the harm from one's own wrongly directed mind.*

Remember that we all are conditioned and ever-changing; things are conditioned and ever-changing. If we think of something against this true fact, it would be irrational way of thinking (*a-yoniso manasi-kāra*), indeed.

*"A-yoniso manasi-kāra" means irrational way of thinking. It takes place when impermanence is mistaken for permanence, non-pleasure for pleasure, non-prettiness for prettiness, non-ego for ego<sup>59</sup>.*

When we think of something irrationally, we cannot be contented with what is available. As a result, our minds will become agitated and unstable. We will be infested

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<sup>59</sup> Mulapaṇṇāsa Aṭṭhakathā-1, 66

with negative emotions like anger, fear, worry, frustration and depression. Then, we cannot see things as they really are; we are most likely to make more mistakes; we will get fewer chances to succeed in life, let alone to achieve something superior to worldly success. The Buddha said that all kinds of negative emotions or mental defilements are related to irrational way of thinking, or irrational mind-set (*a-yoniso manasi-kāra*).

In conclusion, *yoniso manasi-kāra* is to think of something from the perspective of its true nature, that is, conditionality and impermanence. We may translate it as rational mindset, rational way of thinking, wholesome attitude, logical thinking, philosophical thinking, wise attention, wise reflection, systematic thought, or whatsoever suits to our better understanding of it. Whereas, it is *a-yoniso manasi-kāra* if we think of something against its true nature. We may call it irrational way of thinking, irrational mindset, unwholesome attitude, or unwise way of thinking, etc.

### **Mind-set in Meditation**

The correct mind-set plays a vital role in the successful *vipassanā* practice, too. We practice *vipassanā* to see things as they really are. Continuous mindfulness is the key to a breakthrough in insight and enlightenment. The more continuously we are mindful the stronger the concentration. The stronger the concentration the more clearly we can discern psycho-physical phenomena, their conditionality and changes (impermanence). The clearer the discernment the closer we get to enlightenment.

Ironically, however, if we expect for continuous mindfulness and strong concentration without any

interference like wandering mind and negative emotions, it is exactly wrong attitude or irrational mind-set because we expect the mind against its true nature. Such mind-set is always counterproductive, as it always brings desire and discontent making it even harder to develop continuous mindfulness and concentration. In the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the Buddha explicitly taught us to see things as they really are without desire and discontent.

Following cases obviously involve wrong attitude or irrational mind-set:

- Desire for wholesome thoughts; discontent over negative emotions.
- Desire for mindfulness; discontent over wandering mind.
- Desire for concentration; discontent over unstable mind.
- Desire for quietness; discontent over noise.
- Desire for tranquility; discontent over agitated mind.
- Desire for comfort; discontent over discomfort and distress.
- Desire for happiness; discontent over worry and sorrow.
- Desire for faster progress; discontent over regress or slow progress.
- Desire for remarkable experiences; discontent over monotonous experiences of psycho-physical phenomena like tension, tightness, pressure, pain, itchiness, numbness, thoughts, emotions, etc.

## Rational Mind-set about Vipassanā

*Vipassanā* is all about seeing things as they really are (*bhūtaṃ bhūtato passati*). Perhaps, it is too simple to understand. We may need a bit more elaboration. In general, unwholesome are greed, selfishness, anger, aversion, delusion, doubt, pride and prejudice, etc., and whereas wholesome are kindness, compassion, mindfulness, awareness, concentration, understanding, realization, insight, and so on. However, *vipassanā* has nothing to do with whether something is good or bad, right or wrong, wholesome or unwholesome. It is all about seeing them as they really are without identifying them as "I" or "mine," and without judging whether good or bad, right or wrong.

So, it is *vipassanā* if we see emotion as emotion, without identifying it as "I" or "mine," and without judging it to be good or bad, right or wrong. In the same way, it is *vipassanā* if we see tension as tension, heat as heat, itch as itch, comfort as comfort, pain as pain, noise as noise, greed as greed, lust as lust, happiness as happiness, frustration as frustration, and so on. Thus, we are neither to suppress any phenomena, nor to give vent to them in any way. We just see them as they really are without any expectation, analyzing, reasoning or judging. This sheer mindfulness forms a middle way, gaining control over all the unwholesome, and leading to progressive insights and enlightenment. So, we have to set our mind on such sheer mindfulness. This is correct mind-set in the case of *vipassanā*, indeed.

Remember that there is big difference between worry and awareness of worry; anger and awareness of anger;

pain and awareness of pain, and so on. For instance, when we are worried about a job, our mind is focused on that very job (external object), but we are not aware we are worried. In other words, we do not see worry as worry. When we are angry with a dog, for example, our mind is focused on the dog (external object), but we are not aware we are angry, or we do not see anger as anger. When we feel pain, we simply feel upset about the pain, but are not aware of the pain itself. If we are really aware of pain as pain separately from emotion, then we will even feel as if we were someone else watching the pain from distance or above. Then, the pain will no longer bother us. This is how to see things as they really are. This is the rational mind-set regarding *vipassanā* practice.

With such rational mindset (*yoniso manasi-kāra*), we will make progress in the practice without frustration. In brief, *vipassanā* is simple; all we have to do is to see things as they really are. Keep this fact in mind; do not stress; just relax. But make sure we see things as they really are without expectation or judging. Then, we will gain a faster breakthrough into enlightenment.

## CHAPTER-III



### 37 ENLIGHTENMENT FACTORS

As mentioned in the chapter-II, there are psycho-physical phenomena conditioned and ever-changing. We illusively identify them as "I" or "mine." Such illusion is the main source of all mental defilements such as greed, selfishness, anger, hatred, worry, anxiety and so on. They lead to evil deeds, and evil results. When we see psycho-physical phenomena as they really are instead of as "I" or "mine," there will be no or little room for such disastrous mental defilements. And, at the same time, we start to develop the 37 factors of enlightenment (*Bodhi-pakkhiya*), which will be expounded in this chapter.

When the Buddha declared his demise three months ahead, he reminded his disciples out of great compassion to learn and to develop the 37 Enlightenment Factors thus:



*"Monks, for this reason those matters which I have discovered and proclaimed should be thoroughly learnt, practiced, developed and cultivated by you, so that this holy life may endure for a long time, that it may be for the benefit and happiness of the multitude, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit and happiness of devas and humans. And what are those matters...? They are: four foundations of mindfulness, four right efforts, four bases of accomplishment, five faculties, five powers, seven awakening factors, Noble Eightfold Path."*

And now, monks, I'd affirm to you: *"All conditioned things are decaying in nature. Strive on untiringly. The Tathāgata's (Buddha's) final passing will not be long delayed. Three months from now the Tathāgata will take his final Nibbāna."*

In this message the Buddha explicitly put great emphasis on development of the 37 Enlightenment Factors. Moreover, according to the context, the affirmation of his decision to pass away was made only when he trusted that his disciples (monks, nuns and lay devotees) had thoroughly learnt and developed 37 Factors of Enlightenment and would prolong his Holy Order for the sake of human and celestial beings. In order to meet his kind trust on us or in order to follow his kind advice, we should try our best to learn and to develop the 37 Factors of Enlightenment.

## For Whose Sake

Before we go straight to the 37 Enlightenment Factors, we need to understand why it is important to learn and develop them if there are only psycho-physical phenomena but no "I" or "mine" as mentioned in the Chapter-II. To answer this question, we need to understand first two kinds of truth correctly: conceptual truth and ultimate truth.

As mentioned repeatedly before, inanimate things like houses, cars, trees, etc., and living beings such as human, celestial beings, animals, ghosts, etc., are all illusions because what they look are different from what they really are. They look something or someone lasting, lovable or despicable. In an ultimate sense (*paramattha*), however, they are just illusive manifestations (*ghananimitta paññatti*) of psycho-physical phenomena that are conditioned and ever-changing. For example, steel is designed into several different things from a tiny spoon to a giant Boeing engine. A spoon is to take food with; a Boeing engine is to fly hundreds of passengers through the sky. One is totally different from another in all aspects. However, steel is something real (*paramattha*), and spoon or engine is a concept (*paññatti*) based on the particular designs and usages of the steel. Anyhow, from the conceptual aspect, a spoon is a spoon; an engine is an engine. They are real conventionally with their own identity and value based on their designs or dimensions. Hence, they are truths from conceptual perspective (*sammuti-sacca*). Deceived by such conceptual truths, however, we no longer see the steel.

In the same way, deceived by colors, shapes, dimensions, manners, time, space, etc., we illusively see a person lovable or despicable, instead of his or her flesh and bones, strictly speaking, psycho-physical phenomena that constitute what he or she really is. Based on such illusion there arise desire and discontent that generate evil deeds and prolong the torturous cycle of births and deaths.

## **Two Extremes** (*Atidhāvana*)

However, if we only care about the ultimate truth, it would be hard for us to distinguish between merit and demerit, good and bad, right and wrong. As Pakudha Kaccayana<sup>60</sup> said, for example, there is no moral offense in cutting someone's throat with a sword, because both the sword and the throat are just physical elements. On the other hand, if we are only interested in the conceptual things, we will be like a thirsty deer that mistakes mirage for water and goes after it in distress and in vain. In other words, unless we accept the conventional truth, we cannot distinguish between merit and demerit, right and wrong, good and bad. And if we don't see the absolute truth, then we can never be awakened out of illusion. In order to avoid these two extremes (*ati-dhavana*), therefore, we need to apply two kinds of truth appropriately to our spiritual journey to liberation.

Not discerning absolute phenomena, we feel like, "I" am ever-lasting (*jiva-atta*), engaging in all sorts of actions

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<sup>60</sup> Pakudha Kaccāyana is the founder of a particular creed during the Buddha's time. He taught his disciples seven elements as timeless elements of the world: earth, fire, water, wind, pleasure, displeasure, and soul. Cutting someone's throat with a sword, he said, was just tantamount to putting one form of elements into another. (Si-53)

(*kāraṇa*), experiencing pleasure or pain (*vedaka*), owning "my" life (*sāmi*), living forever (*ni-vasī*), living on "my" own accord and in "my" own right (*sayam-vasī*). This is illusive "I," but not what "I" really am. Referring to such illusive "I," the Buddha said that there is no "I." But it does not mean there is nothing.

## What We Really Are

In an ultimate sense, however, we each are a certain process of psycho-physical phenomena, which the Buddha described as "*sakkāya*." Here, the Pāli word "*sakkāya*" is composed of two words: *sa* (really present) and *kāya* (psycho-physical compound). So, "*sakkāya*" refers to a psycho-physical compound, which is really present, or really exists, and represents what we each really are. This is the literal definition of "*sakkaya*," according to which, we are not nobody, but we are what we really are, i.e., psycho-physical phenomena that are conditioned and ever-changing. Here, "conditioned" implies both to be impermanent and to be modified. So, we can modify our life to be better, or to be reborn in a blissful life or to be liberated from the entire cycle of rebirths. Indeed, it is for our own sake that we do *dāna* for a wealthier life; we observe *sīla* for a more blissful life; we develop 37 factors to be liberated from the entire cycle of births and rebirths.

As mentioned before, constant replacements of new phenomena sustain our bodies to certain extent. With the time passing by, however, the new replacements deteriorate both in quality and quantity, and we look older and older. Thus, the physical phenomena of our bodies decay gradually until they are all dispersed into the natural world in the end. So, one day our current bodies will cease to exist, but our mental processes—although

ever-changing—will be going on with new bodies in the new lives along with good or bad mental qualities<sup>61</sup> we have developed throughout the cycle of rebirths. This point claims the support in the discourse below.

## **Mahā-nāma Sutta**

*"Thus have I heard, on one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling among the Sakyans at Kapilavatthu in Nigrodha's Park. Then, Mahānāma the Sakyian approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, sat down to one side, and said to him:*

*"Venerable sir, this Kapilavatthu is rich and prosperous, populous, crowded, with congested thoroughfares. In the evening, when I am entering*

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<sup>61</sup> There are mental qualities, good or bad, that go along with us life after life:

1. *Kamma*: The mental legacy left by the volition involved in good or bad actions that we did in past lives
2. *Anusaya*: Our unwholesome mentality left by unwholesome mental states such as greed, anger, etc., involved in such immoral deeds as killing, stealing, etc., in our past lives
3. *Pāramī*: Our wholesome mentality left in a dormant form by wholesome mental states involved in dāna, sīla, etc., in our past lives
4. *Ajjhāsaya*: Our likes and dislikes left in a dormant form by our sensual experiences in our past lives.
5. *Vāsanā*: Our tendencies that are associated with our habits in our past lives.
6. *Carita*: Our personality that are related to our mentality in our past lives.
7. *Jātissara-ñāṇa*: our memory of past lives.

*Kapilavatthu after visiting the Blessed One or the bhikkhus worthy of esteem, I come across a stray elephant, a stray horse, a stray chariot, a stray cart, a stray man. On that occasion, Venerable sir, my mindfulness regarding the Blessed One becomes muddled, my mindfulness regarding the Dhamma becomes muddled, my mindfulness regarding the saṅgha becomes muddled. The thought then occurs to me: "If I should die at this moment, what would be my destination, what would be my future bourn?"*

*"Don't be afraid, Mahānāma! Don't be afraid, Mahānāma! Your death will not be a bad one, your demise will not be a bad one. When a person's mind has been fortified over a long time by faith, virtue, learning, generosity, and wisdom, right here crows, vultures, hawks, dogs, jackals, or various creatures eat his body, consisting of physical phenomena, composed of four great elements, originating from mother and father, built up out of rice and gruel, subject to impermanence, to being worn and rubbed away, to breaking apart and dispersal. But his mind, which has been fortified over a long time by faith, virtue, learning, generosity, and wisdom—that goes upwards, reaches remarkable state.*

*"Suppose, Mahānāma, a man submerges a pot of ghee or a pot of oil in a deep pool of water and breaks it. All of its shards and fragments would sink downwards, but the ghee or oil there would rise upwards. So too, Mahānāma, when a person's mind has been fortified over a long time by faith, virtue, learning, generosity, and wisdom, right here crows... or various creatures eat his body.... But his mind, which has been fortified over*

*a long time by faith, virtue, learning, generosity, and wisdom—that goes upwards, reaches remarkable state.*

*"Don't be afraid, Mahānāma! Don't be afraid, Mahānāma! Your death will not be a bad one, your demise will not be a bad one."*

## **PĀRĀMI**

### **Ten Kinds of *Pāramī***

According to this discourse, our mind should be fortified with five wholesome qualities: faith (*saddhā*), moral virtue (*sīla*), learning (*suta*), generosity (*cāga*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Actually, in the Pāḷi text there are ten kinds of wholesome qualities known as *pāramī*, which serve as prerequisites for full development of 37 Enlightenment Factors. Here, the word "*pāramī*" is defined in several ways, as noble deeds, or deeds done by noble people, or deeds that make one noble, and so on. They are of ten kinds in basic: generosity (*dāna*), moral virtue (*sīla*), renunciation (*nekkhama*), knowledge (*paññā*), heroic effort (*vīriya*), forbearance (*khanti*), truthfulness (*sacca*), moral determination (*adhitthana*), loving kindness (*mettā*), and a balanced mental state (*upekkhā*). Obviously, to develop these noble qualities we must recognize concepts of living beings with their good and bad and acknowledge the ultimate reality beyond those very concepts.

#### ***1. Dāna Pāramī***

Dāna literally means giving. However, not all kinds of giving are regarded as *dāna*. Only when we give something

to somebody with loving kindness, compassion and understanding, can it be regarded as *dāna*. So, it is not *dāna* if we give something to someone because we are afraid he or she may do harm to us, or because we expect something from him or her. Even if we give a million dollars to a charity, it cannot be considered *dāna* if it is done just for personal gain, or political propaganda. So, *dāna* must involve love, compassion and understanding. In daily language, it is an attitude of caring and sharing. We care about others' wellfair and wellbeing, and share our food with the hunger; share our wealth with someone in need; share our happiness with someone in distress; share our time with someone by listening to his or her story; share our seat with someone standing by. The Buddha compared *dāna* to a battle between selfishness and unselfishness<sup>62</sup>. Only with love, compassion, and understanding can we win over such a mighty power of selfishness. If we win this battle, we can have the happiest moments in life. *Dāna* always brings us multiplied benefits like a single seed of good quality that grows and bears thousands of fruits. Once the Buddha said: *"If you know the benefits of dāna as well as I do, you will even give the food you are going to eat."*

In an ultimate sense, *dāna* cannot be done without the concept of person. Moreover, if we do *dāna* with expectation for worldly benefits in return, it may lead only to blissful rebirths but may not to liberation. So, we should do *dāna* with aspiration for liberation instead of worldly benefits. Only then, can it be called the *dāna-pāramī*. Anyhow, *dāna* always promises wealthy lives even if not liberation.

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<sup>62</sup> Samyutta



## ***2. Sīla Pāramī***

*Sīla* literally means "moral conduct." In an ultimate sense, it is abstinence from doing anything harmful to any living being. In Abhidhamma, such moral abstinence is called "*virati*," which basically refers to five precepts: refraining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, telling a lie, and intoxicating drinks and drug. Killing, stealing, etc., are universal offenses (*loka-vajja*) because nobody on earth wants to encounter them. So, refraining from these offenses is called universal precept and honored as the greatest gift (*mahā-dāna*) we can grant to our fellow beings. The spirit of morality lies in empathy for fellow beings. We refrain from the evil actions because we care about wellbeings of our fellow beings. So, *sīla* involves loving kindness, compassion and understanding, indeed. To accumulate the *sīla-pāramī* we have to observe the five-precepts as lay persons, or monastic rules and regulations as monks and nuns.

Paradoxically, to observe *sīla*, we need to accept the concept of beings in general, while we need to see reality beyond concepts to be liberated out of the tortuous cycle of births and deaths. Moreover, if *sīla* is observed with purpose to enjoy a blissful life or sensual pleasures, it may lead to blissful rebirths but not to liberation. So, we should observe *sīla* with aspiration for liberation out of torturous cycle of births and deaths. Only then, can it be called *sīla-pāramī*. In any case, *sīla* always guarantees a blissful life after death.

## ***3. Nekkhamma Pāramī***

*Nekkhamma* literally means to renounce worldly life and worldly pleasures, or exactly speaking, to get rid of attachment to them. Nobody on earth wants to die. This

means we are all attached to life (eternal existence or only current existence). Next to this attachment, the strongest desire is to enjoy sensual pleasures. Thus, there are three kinds of attachment: attachment to eternal existence (*bhava-taṇhā*), attachment only to current existence (*vibhava-taṇhā*), and attachment to sensual pleasures (*kama-taṇhā*). They form the strongest driving force behind the torturous cycle of births and deaths. In other words, due to these attachments we were and will be reborn again and again, and die again and again. So, to renounce these attachments is a noble deed called *Nekkhamma-pāramī*. We practice this noble deed of renunciation by ordaining as a monk at a monastery, or practicing meditation at a center leaving our beloved family and business behind.

#### **4. Paññā Pāramī**

*Paññā* means “knowledge” which is of three kinds: the academic knowledge gained from study and research (*suta-maya*), the intellectual knowledge related to reasoning power (*cintā-maya*), and the empirical knowledge acquired by seeing the ultimate phenomena beyond concepts (*bhāvanā-maya*). The first two kinds of knowledge are required for the worldly accomplishment. As for spiritual accomplishment, all three kinds of knowledge are required. We have to develop the academic knowledge of *dhamma* by reading *dhamma* books, listening to *dhamma* talks, discussing *dhamma* with skilled teachers and so on. Such academic knowledge forms understanding of *dhamma* from theoretical aspect. It also provides us with rational mindset. These two kinds of knowledge in turn greatly contribute to the empirical knowledge of *dhamma* when we practice *vipassanā* meditation. So, we have to accumulate the noble deed of

wisdom (*paññā-pāramī*) by developing three kinds of knowledge.

### **5. Viriya Pāramī**

*Viriya* is normally translated as effort, but its literal meaning is work or characteristic of heroes<sup>63</sup>. We are considered heroes if we are courageous or brave to face pains, hardships or impediments persistently until we accomplish our purposes. So, such a persistent spirit characterizes a hero or his work, and is called *vīriya*. Any kind of accomplishment requires such heroic attitude, or courageous effort. Here, the value of accomplishments is related to our concepts. In prehistoric time, one was honored as a hero if he could kill a wild beast, and in our old days a hero was someone who could assassinate a monarch. Nowadays, a hero may be defined as someone successful in terms of wealth, education or power. In an ultimate sense, worldly accomplishments are just illusions because we are dreamlike figures and our accomplishments are make-beliefs. Real accomplishment is to go beyond torturous cycle of births and deaths. So, the great effort in development of mindfulness and discernment of the ultimate reality is a noble work called *vīriya-pāramī*.

### **6. Khantī Pāramī**

There are three words, the Buddha often used as synonyms<sup>64</sup>: *khantī* (forbearance), *titikkhā* (forgiveness), and *adhivāsana* (acceptance). We have many unkind people

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<sup>63</sup> *Vīrānaṃ kammaṃ; vīrānaṃ bhāvo*

<sup>64</sup>"Forbearance or forgiveness is superior practice." (*khantī-paramaṃ tapo titikkhā*) Dhamma-pada

around who may do harm to us, or say something bad about us. We are also subject to many undesirable things like diseases, illness, bad weather, hunger, pain, sleepless nights and so on. The Buddha teaches us to cultivate acceptance attitude or broad-minded attitude like earth and ocean, which always accept whatever we throw onto or into them. They never take revenge on us; they always forget and forgive however bad we did to them. Such acceptance attitude is called *khantī*, normally translated as patience, forbearance or forgiveness. "Patience leads to *nibbāna*," as a Burmese saying goes. If we have patience, we can even accomplish the loftiest aim to go beyond the cycle of births and deaths. With recognition of two kinds of truth, we should cultivate and accumulate this wholesome attitude of forbearance or forgiveness, *khantī-pāramī*.

Below is a poem that illustrates this receptive attitude:

*Even if we take it for granted, a flower doesn't cease  
to be beautiful.*

*A tree doesn't take it personally even if we fail to  
recognize its value.*

*Stars continue to shine even if we don't stare at them.  
They never demand us to admire, adore, or even to  
notice them.*

*If our boss fails to recognize an astonishing feat  
If our lovers pull their hands away  
If a friend forgets our birthday  
Why do we not accept them in a flower's way?*

## **7. Sacca Pāramī**

*Sacca* means truth. There are different kinds of truth from different perspectives, such as conceptual truth

(*sammuti-sacca*), absolute truth (*paramattha-sacca*), noble truth (*ariya-sacca*), verbal truth (*vacī-sacca*) and so on. In the case of *pāramī* (spiritual deeds that noble people perform and accumulate), the word “*sacca*” refers to verbal truth. In our social life, it is not always simple or easy to speak the truth because we are afraid it may cause damage to our job, our reputation, our identity, and so on. There are also times when we find it difficult to tell the truth out of sympathy to someone. For example, if a hunter asks us where the rabbit is hiding itself, we may not tell the truth even if we know it. Of course, far more difficult is to speak the truth risking our wealth, life, or reputation.

In the Pāli text, there were many occasions when the truthfulness (*sacca*) was used as healing power. For such cases, the truth is solemnly declared, and then a wish is made for one’s own sake or someone else’s. Here, to declare the truth means to reveal one’s secret risking one’s life, wealth, reputation, etc., or to proclaim something uniquely true. Once the Buddha proclaimed the unique qualities of enlightened persons (saints) and made wish for wellbeing of people in Vesāli who were badly afflicted by drought, famine and diseases. Venerable Aṅgulimāla proclaimed that he never ever committed killing since he was born as a noble person, and made a wish for a woman to have a smooth delivery. The would-be Buddha as a quail proclaimed that it had feet but could not walk; it had parents but was deserted, and then it made a wish to be not afflicted by the wildfire. Of course, such wishes are fulfilled thanks to the merit of talking no lie.

## ***8. Adhiṭṭhāna Pāramī***

*Adhiṭṭhāna* means resolution. Our resolutions often keep us on the right track to our goal. Suppose, for instance, we make a resolution on New Year, like to stop smoking and drinking, or to practice meditation an hour a day. We make different resolutions to fulfill different purposes. If we can meet our resolutions, we can accomplish our purposes, or our dream can come true. However, we can make a successful resolution with ambitious desire, strong mind, great effort, and comprehensive understanding of the resolution we are going to make. For instance, a resolution to stop smoking can be successful only when we have strong desire for the benefits of non-smoking, strong mind to resist its temptation, great effort in the healing procedure, and understanding the nature of the addiction. The Prince Sidattha made a firm resolution that he would not get up until he was fully enlightened. His resolution was successful because he got unwavering desire and strong mind for liberation, great effort in the practice and clear understanding of the nature of practice. In any case, the spirit of resolution is a wholesome mental quality that needs to be developed for fulfillment of our lofty aim.

## ***9. Mettā Pāramī***

*Mettā* is normally translated as loving kindness so that it can be distinguished from romantic love (*taṇhā-pema*), family love (*gehasita-pema*) and compassion (*karuṇā*). Literally, it is defined as "unconditional love" (*appamaññā*). In nature, we love someone and wish him or her happiness only when he or she is beautiful or helpful to us. We may no longer love him or her if he or she is no longer beautiful or helpful to us. Such conditional

or selfish love is not regarded as *metta*. There arises *metta* only when we wish someone or all living beings happiness on no condition, and without expecting anything in return from them. Such unconditional love is *metta*. In the Pāḷi text, we can find *metta* acts as healing power, as protection, as a blessing, or even as a magic charm. Above all else, *metta* always creates win-win situation among us, and it always brings us blissful moments in life.

Anyhow, without the concept of beings, we cannot develop *metta*. On the other hand, without seeing the ultimate truth beyond concepts, *metta* may reinforce our ego-illusion and attachment to individuals. Then, it may only contribute to blissful rebirths rather than to liberation. So, our attitude should be balanced between two kinds of truth. In other words, we wish living beings happiness without the concept of individual souls (*jīva-atta*) or universal soul (*parama-atta*).

In the Metta Sutta, the Buddha described unconditional love as follows:

*Like a mother who greatly care about her only son even sacrificing her own life, one should develop such strong spirit of loving kindness to all living beings.*

And then the Buddha concluded the discourse thus:

*Approaching to no wrong view (the illusory sense of eternal soul), keeping moral virtues, developing insight, and eradicating attachment to sensual pleasures, one will come back to no womb.*

## 10. Upekkhā Pāramī

The Pāli word "upekkhā" literally means balanced (*upa*) view (*ekkha*), referring to stable mind or well-balanced mind. *Upekkhā* is of ten kinds<sup>65</sup> and, therefore, needs to be defined in accordance with the context. In the case of *pāramī*, it is defined as a mental state that helps the mind to be in balance between ups and downs of life. There are eight kinds (or four pairs) of vicissitude of life: gain and loss, isolation and having companions, fame and defame, comfort and discomfort. Under the law of impermanence, they come and go interchangeably; it is impossible for us to select only desirable vicissitudes. Ironically, gain always ends up with loss, on our demise at last. Similarly, having companion ends with isolation; fame with defame; comfort with discomfort. Of course, we always follow the desirable four which, however, are always followed by the undesirable four. So, understanding this nature of life, we should train ourselves to get balanced between ups and downs of life; to be neither too elated nor too upset. In the *Maṅgala Sutta*, the Buddha described such balanced attitude as the most superior blessing thus:

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<sup>65</sup> Ten kinds of "upekkhā": 1. *Vedanupekkhā*, feeling balanced between pleasure and pain 2. *Brahma-vihārupekkhā*, the mental state balanced between compassion and sorrow 3. *Vipassanupekkhā*, the insight balanced between pleasant and unpleasant phenomena 4. *Pāramī-upekkhā*, balance between ups and downs of life 5. *Saṅkhārupekkhā*, balance between pleasant and unpleasant phenomena 6. *Jhānupekkhā*, balance between mental hindrances and jhānic happiness 7. *Tatramajjhātūpekkhā*, balance between mental factors 8. *Chāraṅgupekkhā*, balance between desirable and undesirable sense-objects 9. *Bojjhaṅgupekkhā*, balance between desire and discontent. 10. *Añāṇupekkhā*, indifference of good or bad, right or wrong.



*In face of vicissitudes of life, unruffled, unstressed and untainted is one's mind.*

*The most superior blessing indeed is such serene and peaceful mind.*

So, just let go of whatever comes or goes. We have to develop such let-go attitude, a noble work called *upekkha-pāramī*.

Below is a saying that denotes this let-go attitude.

*What comes, let it come.*

*What stays, let it stay.*

*What goes, let it go.*

(Papaji)

## **What Pāramī Really Is**

Our deeds are considered to be wholesome and noble only when they are done with wholesome mental states such as unselfishness (*alobhā*), loving kindness (*adosā*), and understanding (*amoha*)<sup>66</sup>. In an ultimate sense, therefore, noble deeds refer to the wholesome mental states that motivate wholesome actions. Both wholesome mental states and their subsequent wholesome actions arise and disappear, but they leave certain kind of mental energy in a dormant form in our mental process. Such dormant forms of wholesome qualities are actually regarded as *pāramī*, which go along with us (with our continuous mental processes) from life to life even though our physical bodies disperse into natural world on our

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<sup>66</sup> The wholesome mental qualities include all 25 wholesome mental factors mentioned in the Chapter-II

demise. This is how wholesome mental qualities (*pāramīs*) are accumulated until they become mature enough for us to become fully awakened along with development of 37 Enlightenment Factors.

## Four Individuals

So, if our *pāramīs* are mature enough, we can reach our spiritual goal within a single retreat, or even a single *dhamma* talk in this very life. In this regard, there are four kinds of individuals mentioned in the Pāḷi text<sup>67</sup>:

*Ugghaṭitaññū*: An individual who can be enlightened within a single brief *dhamma* talk in this very life, like Koṇḍañña, the oldest one among the first five disciples of the Buddha.

*Vipañcitaññū*: An individual who can be enlightened in this very life if *dhamma* is explained in detail, like the remaining four of the first five disciples.

*Neyya*: An individual who can be enlightened in this very life only by applying well-balanced faculties<sup>68</sup> to the *vipassanā* practice for days, months, or years.

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<sup>67</sup> Anguttara-nikaya, Catukka Page-452

<sup>68</sup> To the development of progressive vipassanā insights and enlightenment we need to apply five mental faculties: faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, and knowledge. Among them, faith and knowledge should be balanced. With strong faith but no enough knowledge we will fall victim to blind faith, whereas having knowledge but no rightful faith we will end up with much analyses of our dhamma experience during practice that lead to nowhere. And then, effort and concentration need to be balanced. With strong effort and weak concentration our mind will become restless, whereas with weak effort and strong concentration we will develop superficial

*Padaparama*: An individual who does not have mature *pāramīs* to be awakened in this very life. But his or her practice will by no means be in vain, as it will gather momentum for faster enlightenment in a life to come.

If we are the first kind of person mentioned above, we will be enlightened “within a single dhamma talk,” but it does not mean we do not develop progressive *vipassanā* insights. Actually, we do, but our *pāramīs* are mature enough to develop the entire process of *vipassanā* insights within such a short period of a single *dhamma* talk. Even if we do not have such a mature *pāramī*, we should not be disappointed; we should remember that every single moment of mindfulness means one step closer to the destination. So, our effort will by no means be in vain, but is gathering momentum for such fast enlightenment in a life to come. This is what we call *pāramī*.

## FOUR KINDS OF MINDFULNESS

### Definition of *Satipaṭṭhāna*

The term “*satipaṭṭhāna*’ is a compound of *sati* + *paṭṭhāna* (or *upaṭṭhāna* with “u” omitted by vowel elision). The word *sati* comes from the root *sara* that literally means to remember or to recollect. In some cases, therefore, *sati* denotes the memory. Strictly speaking, *sati* is not really memory but it does activate memory. In the context of mindfulness practice, it has nothing to do with past memory; it is not to remember anything in the past but to remember everything that manifest themselves in

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awareness with sleepiness. Thus, faculty imbalance delays or damages the progress in practice.

the present. In other words, it is to be mindful of present psycho-physical phenomena that constitute what we really are. In this sense, *sati* is generally translated as “mindfulness.”

The latter word “*paṭṭhāna* (or *upaṭṭhāna*)” is composed of “*pa* (or *upa*) + *ṭhāna*”. The commentary defines the prefix “*pa* (or *upa*)” in three ways: jumping into (*okkanditvā*), rushing toward (*pakkhanditvā*) and spreading all over (*pattharivā*), which respectively mean “ardently”, “urgently,” and “comprehensively.” And *ṭhāna* (*upaṭṭhāna*) defined as “to establish.”

So, *sati-paṭṭhāna* literally means “the mindfulness to be established (by noting present phenomena) ardently, urgently, and comprehensively.” Something present is something real. So, to see something real, we have to see it while it is still present. A present phenomenon always last only a split second like a lightning strike. Only when we note it ardently, urgently, and comprehensively can we discern it as it really is. Undeniably, we are changing at every moment from all aspects, physical, mental, and emotional. To be aware of such fleeting present phenomena comprehensively, we must note them ardently and urgently as if we were to jump into or rush towards them. This is how to establish mindfulness; this is the definition of “*satipaṭṭhāna*.”

In brief, we are changing every moment physically, mentally, sensationally, and emotionally. To see such fleeting phenomena while they are present, we have to observe them in an urgent or ardent manner. Only then, can we discern psycho-physical phenomena beyond

concepts. In other words, we can become awakened out of the illusory sense of “I” along with freedom from all sorts of afflictions.

## **Mindfulness of Four Kinds**

For the development of mindfulness there are four kinds of objects to observe: body, feeling, mind, and *dhamma*. Hence, mindfulness is of four kinds according to its objects.

1. Mindfulness of body is developed by contemplating on the body. In this regard, the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* describes six primary objects to observe: breath, bodily postures, bodily activities, 32 anatomical parts, four fundamental elements, and corpse in decay. Among the six, postures, activities, and fundamental elements are described as *vipassanā* objects. By observing them we can discern psycho-physical phenomena with their conditionality and changes until we become fully enlightened. In our bodies, new and different physical properties are always arising along with different bodily actions, different thoughts (*citta*), different weathers (*utu*), and different foods (*āhāra*). For instance, our body temperature (fire element) gets higher when running and lower when lying. One kind of chemical changes will take place when angry and another kind when lustful. Similarly, certain kind of food intake or weather will cause certain kind of chemical changes in us. Thus, depending on conditions our bodies are changing at every moment. We can discern our body by being mindful of our

bodily postures, bodily actions, and fundamental elements as mentioned in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.

2. Mindfulness of feeling is developed by contemplating on three kinds of feeling: pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral. Our feelings are changing at every moment. We may feel comfortable at one moment and uncomfortable at the next; happy at one moment and unhappy at the next. Moreover, moments of feeling are so short that millions of such moments can arise and disappear within a split second. Suppose, for instance, we have comfortable feeling for half an hour. But it does not mean that feeling lasts half an hour. It is just a process of comfortable feelings that are continuously replaced with new ones for half an hour. Through mindfulness of feeling, we can clearly see our feelings, their conditionality and changes. Thus, we can see feeling as feeling without identifying it as “I” or “mine;” we can find how fast they arise and pass away. This is how we develop the mindfulness of feeling leading to progressive *vipassanā* insights and enlightenment.
3. Mindfulness of mind is developed by observing thoughts of different kinds, such as lust-related, anger-related, compassion-related, unselfishness-related, wisdom-related, etc. In other words, we can become aware of our thoughts associated with lust at one moment, aversion at the next, and so on. Different kinds of thoughts arise and pass away at every moment according to how we react to the sense-objects we encounter. Even though the same kind of thought is found to last for some time, it is

actually a process of thoughts that are continuously replaced with newly arising thoughts during that period. Actually, the series of our thoughts goes so fast that thousands of thought processes can take place within a split second. By observing them we will see thoughts as thoughts without identifying them as "I" or "mine;" we can see how fast they arise and pass away. This is how we develop progressive insights by observing our minds.

4. Under the title of "Mindfulness of Dhamma," the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta describes five primary objects to observe: five hindrances, five aggregates, six sense-bases, seven awakening factors, and four Noble Truths. Among these, six sense-bases (seeing, hearing, etc.) are to observe as dhamma in particular because the remaining four are appropriately included in the previous kinds of mindfulness. So, as for dhamma object, we are advised to observe seeing, hearing, smelling, and so on. Unless we are in a deep sleep or in an unconscious state, we are always reacting to the sense-objects. Our senses, such as eyes, ears, etc., are always hungry for their corresponding objects. And even for a while we do not want to shut them off. We continuously react to one sense-object after another. So, observing our senses and discerning psycho-physical phenomena involved, we develop progressive vipassanā insights and enlightenment.

Thus, we are changing at every moment from all aspects, physical, sensational, mental, and emotional.

Without mindfulness, it is impossible to see this fleeting nature of what we really are. This is why we always feel as if we were someone unique and timeless; we find someone else beautiful or ugly, lovable or despicable.

## **Illusions**

For a further elaboration, we do know from intellectual perspective that we are getting older and closer to death at every moment. From the bottom of our heart, however, we feel as if we were ageless or eternal, especially when we were young. As teenagers we always take delight and pride in our youthfulness and attractiveness. So, we would feel very frustrated if we realize the fact that we will find ourselves a few decades later with wrinkled skin, gray hair, nursing teeth, protruding joints, twining sinews, and double-bent body. More terrifying is to approach closer to death at every moment. Actually, it is very mysterious that even if we see someone die on our lap, we may not accept the fact that we will surely die one day, not to mention the fact we are changing at every moment. That is why we always feel as if we were to live eternally. Even a seasonal bug with a few hours of lifespan would find itself and its mate to be someone unique, timeless and beautiful. How deep the illusion is in our hearts!

## **Four Kinds of Density ( *Ghana* )**

Without continuous mindfulness we can by no means see impermanence even though we are changing at every moment. It is because the process and formation of psycho-physical phenomena are so dense that everybody and everything on earth seems to us the same for years. The density (*ghana*) of phenomena is of four kinds:



1. Process Density (*santati-ghana*),
2. Formation Density (*samūha-ghana*),
3. Object Density (*ārammaṇa-ghana*),
4. Functions Density (*kicca-ghana*)<sup>69</sup>

Only with the continuous mindfulness, therefore, can we gain a breakthrough in these densities (*ghana-vinibbhoga ñāṇa*), and see the true fact that there is no individual considered to be timeless (*nicca*), pleasant (*sukha*), or attractive (*subha*). So, it is important to understand these densities.

## Process Density

Obviously, our physical body is a combination of many continuous processes of minute physical phenomena. For example, a thread of hair is composed of the countless number of physical processes that are arising and passing away at every moment. Processes are so dense that there is no break in between. Therefore, the hair thread seems to last long since its moment-by-moment changes are concealed. Similarly, our mind is not something that exists for long, but it is just a continuous mental process that is composed of mind-units that are changing at every moment. For example, it takes just a few seconds for us to see and recognize someone. But such a short moment of seeing involves hundreds of mental processes because

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<sup>69</sup> Visuddhi-magga Mahā-ṭīkā-2, 437; Aṅguttara-ṭīkā-1, 275; Saḡāthāvagga-ṭīkā, 271

we have to see hundreds of segments of his or her face in order to recognize who he or she is. For example, we may see first his or her hair, and then forehead, bridge of nose, cheeks, lips, chin and so on from the topmost segment of his or her face down to the lowest segment. And then, we put all the segments of his or her face together in our mind's eye and recognize whom we are seeing. So, although it just takes a few seconds for us to recognize someone, it actually involves hundreds of mental processes. In other words, the hundreds of mental processes arise and pass away within a few seconds. How dense the psycho-physical processes that represent what we really are! No wonder, with such dense processes of psycho-physical phenomena, we always feel ourselves the same individuals from the day we were born until now.

### **Formation Density**

The formation of physical phenomena is so dense that a tiny little seed, for instance, can be said to have a giant tree in it because a giant tree grows from that very tiny seed. We can even hypothetically say that it has the whole universe in it, as it is a product of the earth (*pathavī*), the ocean (*āpo*), the sun (*tejo*), and the air (*vāyo*). It is just an example to explain how dense the physical formations or configurations are. According to the Abhidhamma, the life-span of mind-units is so short that millions of them can arise and pass away within a split second. It lasts just one seventeenth of the lifespan of a physical phenomenon. In other words, a physical phenomenon lasts as seventeen times as a mind-unit lasts. Suppose, if seventeen millions of mind-units arise and disappear within one second, then one million of

physical phenomena arise and pass away every second. It means we are changing physically one million times and mentally seventeen million times within one second. Unsurprisingly, such a dense configuration conceals the impermanence of mind and body and makes us feel as if we were someone ever-lasting.

## **Object Density**

We have been experiencing the outer world through our senses since the day we were born, strictly speaking, since the moment we were conceived. According to the teachings of the Buddha, there are six kinds of senses such as eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and sub-consciousness (literally, life-continuum), on which six sense-objects respectively impinge, viz., visible forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touch<sup>70</sup> and dhamma objects<sup>71</sup>. We continuously react to the outer world (sense-objects) through our senses from the day we were born until we die. In other words, one sense-consciousness arises after another continuously without break for the whole life. Such a dense sensual interaction conceals the impermanent nature of mind and body, and makes us feel as if we were someone unique and ageless.

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<sup>70</sup> Here, touch refers to the experience of three kinds of elements: earth characterized by hardness and softness, fire by temperature, and air by pressure, motion and vibration.

<sup>71</sup> Dhamma objects refers to any kind of phenomena that can be experienced only by mind but not any other senses. It includes all kinds of physical phenomena (except five sense-objects), all kinds of mind and mental factors, all kinds of imagery or conceptual objects and nibbāna.

## Function Density

Each and every unit of psycho-physical phenomena has their own functions. In general, our body has a lot of functions like going, standing, sitting down, reclining, looking straight or sideward, bending and stretching our limbs, smiling, laughing, crying, yelling, and so on<sup>72</sup>. Our senses are also doing their own functions. The eye sensitivity is receiving the visible forms, ear sensitivity accepting sounds and so on. As for mental phenomena, there are several kinds of mind mentioned in *Satipṭṭhāna Sutta*, such as lust-related mind, anger-related mind, delusion-related mind, kindness-related mind and so on. Different kinds of mind have different functions. And also there are 52 mental factors, which all have their own functions. For instance, the certain mental factor called *phassa* has the function of contacting a sense-object; the function of feeling is to experience of the sense objects whether pleasant or unpleasant. Thus, different psycho-physical phenomena are functioning in different ways without break. No wonder, such dense functions of psycho-physical phenomena conceal the true nature of mind and body, making us feel as if we were to live forever.

## Mindfulness vs. Distress

By observing four kinds of objects consisting of body, feeling, mind, and dhamma, we establish mindfulness

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<sup>72</sup> In an ultimate sense, bodily actions are generated mainly by fire and air elements based on our will. On motionless body like sitting and reclining there prevail the functions of earth and water elements. In other words, fire and air elements are predominant in moving body parts, whereas earth and water elements in motionless body parts.

that helps us break the four kinds of density and discern our psycho-physical phenomena beyond dream-like figure of "I." Then, like awakened out of a dream, we will be no longer affected by any kind of affliction like disease, danger and disaster. In a dream, for instance, an angel would be very beautiful and a demon really frightening. Both, however, will be found nothing when we get awakened, indeed. Life is a dream (*pisunakūpamā kāmā*). "I" and someone "I" love are dream-like figures. Through the development of continuous mindfulness, we can see psycho-physical phenomena beyond such dream-like figures. Then, like awakened out of a dream, afflictions will no longer bother us in terms of worry, anxiety and distress. This is how the mindfulness helps us to be fully enlightened along with the complete cessation of afflictions. In the First Sermon, therefore, complete cessation of afflictions is described as complete cessation of attachment to "I."

Before we are fully enlightened, even if we reach the first or second stage of enlightenment, we are still liable to be agitated by pleasant or unpleasant objects and afflicted by ups and downs of life. So, even the first or second-stage enlighteners cannot resist temptation and afflictions. They still enjoy a married life and suffer sorrow. Anyhow, each and every moment of mindfulness promises happiness and tranquility because we are in the present at that moment. According to *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, where there is mindfulness there is no desire or discontent and no mental or physical distress because we are just aware of present phenomena.

For further elaboration, a touch with somebody, for instance, can be experienced to be hard or soft (earth element), warm or cool (fire element), tight or loose (wind element) depending on which body part we touch. A friend of mine once told me that a touch with a soft pillow brought him the memory of his ex-girlfriend and made him feel romantic or sorrowful. If we are mindful of the touch in the present, we can discern physical elements as they really are. Then, we will not find anybody lovable or despicable. Then, there will be no room for desire and discontent and their resultant distress.

In the same way, if we are mindful of the sound or music in the present, we will find it as sound, but not melody nor pleasure or displeasure. If we eat mindfully, we can find taste as taste, but will not find it to be pleasant or unpleasant. Thus, the moment we are really aware of present phenomena, there would be no room for desire and discontent, but just tranquility and peacefulness. Such is a blissful moment, indeed. Even though we cannot yet experience ultimate peacefulness, there is always bliss for the moment we are present with our own minds and bodies. In *Baddhekaratta Sutta*<sup>73</sup> the Buddha honored such mindful moment as:

*"One Blissful Moment"*

*Do not go back to the past  
Nor expect for the future,  
For the past has been left behind  
And the future has not come yet.*

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<sup>73</sup> Upari-panṇāsa Pāḷi, 226

*Instead, see through the insight  
Whatever is in the present,  
You the wise develop that insight  
Invincibly and unshakably.*

*The effort must be made right today,  
Who knows you may die the next day.  
Impossible to bribe the Death  
Who has army mightiest.*

*Practicing ardently you must dwell,  
Relentlessly day and night.  
You are honored by the Sage (the Buddha)  
To have "One Blissful Moment."*

## **FOUR KINDS OF WORTHWHILE EFFORT**

### **Definition of *Samma-ppadhāna***

*Samma-ppadhāna* means worthwhile effort. The typical Pāḷi word for "effort" is *vīriya* that literally means "work of a hero," or "heroic work" (*vīrānaṃ kammaṃ*). Someone is considered a hero for the effort he or she made until his or her purpose is accomplished. In this particular case, such heroic effort (*vīriya*) is described by a technical term, "*samma-ppadhāna*", which is composed of three words: *sammā + pa + dhāna*, meaning "worthwhile + heroic + endeavor", respectively. It refers to a special kind of effort.

## **Effort Not Worthwhile**

The heroic effort we put in business, education or politics may make us a millionaire, a professor or even a president. But, such heroic effort is not considered to be worthwhile because worldly accomplishments and sensual pleasure it brings us are illusive and evil-oriented.

The worldly accomplishments are dream-like phenomena under the law of impermanence. In the past there were many millionaires, professors and emperors with absolute power in the world. But now, we cannot even imagine where they were gone. They were just dream-like figures; their accomplishments are just like a mirage. No doubt, on our demise we all have to go empty-handed out of this world, leaving everyone and everything behind, including our wealth, academic degrees and political positions. Ironically, the wealthier we are, the more painful we would feel when the time comes to leave them. A friend of mine once recounted an event he experienced as a patient in a hospital. He found two fellow patients in his room to be totally opposite, one evidently wealthy and taken very good care of by his young and pretty wife, and another was lonesome, counting beats quietly. One evening, he found the wealthy patient to be dead with his hands tightly gripped his young wife's. His facial expression suggested how agonized he felt to leave his wealth and wife. After a while, people noticed the other patient also dead, but with clear and happy face.

Unless we have done wholesome deeds, we would be reborn to homeless parents or even to animal parents whether we are millionaires or professors in this present life. King Ashoka, one of the greatest emperors of Indian



or world history, got only one female attendant around him when he was on his deathbed because there was aggressive power struggle to succeed his throne. It made him feel so painful and upset that he was reborn as a snake after death. So, worldly accomplishments are kind of illusions under the law of impermanence.

Moreover, sensual pleasures that worldly accomplishments bring to us are rooted in illusion (*moha-mūla*, *diṭṭhigata-sampayutta*) and attachment (*lobha-mūla*) according to Abhidhamma. Whether we are millionaires, professors or emperors; what we see is color; what we hear is sound; what we experience through our noses and tongues are smell and taste, respectively. Touching with someone lovable or despicable, all we can feel is to be hard or soft (earth), tight or loose (air), warm or cool (fire). Such ultimate phenomena as color, sound, etc., are deceptively interpreted as pleasures by illusion and attachment. So, we would find such pleasures even in feces if we were maggots. Worse is the sensual pleasures are evil-oriented since they often lead to deeper illusion and stronger craving. To enjoy sensual pleasures, therefore, we often put heroic effort in evil deeds, even in bloody wars. Given these facts, it is clear that worldly accomplishments ultimately bring us sensual pleasures that are illusive and evil-oriented. The heroic effort we put in them, therefore, cannot be considered worthwhile effort (*sammappadāna*).

## **Effort Worthwhile**

The worthwhile heroic effort is the effort we put in four acts below:

1. To get rid of *arisen demerit*,
2. To prevent *unarisen demerit* from arising,
3. To make *unarisen merit* to arise,
4. To make *arisen merit* to improve further.

## **Demerit and Merit**

De-merit (*a-kusala*) refers to mental defilements and unwholesome deeds generated by them such as anger and anger-generated killing, greed and greed-generated stealing, lust and lust-generated sexual misconducts and so on. Merit (*kusala*) refers to wholesome mental states and wholesome acts generated by them like an act of generosity generated by unselfishness, observation of morality by sympathy and kindness, development of progressive vipassanā insights by understanding of true nature of life, and so on.

## **Demerit, Arisen or Unarisen**

In the above classifications, there are two technical terms: *arisen* and *un-arisen*. In order to understand them properly, we need to learn three forms of defilement: dormant form (*anusaya*), active form (*pariyuṭṭhāna*), and transgressive form (*vītikāma*).

When we react to sense-objects with wrong attitude there arise unwholesome mental states such as greed, selfishness, lust, hate, conceit, delusion, jealousy and so on. Naturally, they disappear immediately after they arise, but their unwholesome qualities lie dormant in our

unbroken psycho-physical process. Such dormant defilement is of two kinds, one related to sense-objects in this current life (*ārammaṇānusaya*) and another for the future lives (*santānānusaya*). When the right conditions are met, either kind of dormant evil becomes mentally active. As a computer motto says, "GIGO" (Garbage In, Garbage Out), if we feed unwholesome data into our minds, or if our inputs are unwholesome, outputs will be unwholesome, for sure. This is how dormant form of defilement becomes active mentally.

For example, a friend of mine once told me that whenever he saw a haystack, he felt romantic because the first date with his girlfriend happened by a haystack somewhere in Burma. In a Jataka story, Kevaṭṭa, a royal adviser, got a scar on his forehead in a wisdom contest with Mahosada. Whenever he thought of that scar, the anger recurred in him. This is how the dormant defilement recurs or become mentally active when conditions are met. Such mentally active defilements are called *pariyuṭṭhāna-kilesa*. Sometimes, they may become active verbally or physically, committing unwholesome deeds such as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, telling a lie, speaking harsh words, slandering, and backbiting, and so on. Such is called transgressive form of defilement (*vitakkama-kilesa*). Thus, defilement is of three forms: dormant, active, and transgressive.

In general, however, all kinds of demerit are considered to have arisen in us because we have gone through the endless cycle of births and deaths. Therefore, as "arisen demerit" we take the two dormant forms of demerit and any current demerit similar to them. Such

arisen demerit recurs when we feel, for instance, lustful for our ex-partners, or angry about someone we fought in the past, or yearning for our childhood days, craving for the food we once ate in a fancy restaurant. This is what we call "arisen demerit." We should make great effort to remove it. Here, to remove means to give no chance for it to continue or to recur.

As "unarisen demerit", there is no demerit to be regarded as "unarisen," namely new, because, as mentioned above, all sorts of demerit arose in us throughout such a long *samsara*. "Unarisen demerit", therefore, is literally defined as demerit that is associated with a new object or new action in this current life, such as desire for new product, romance with a new partner, jealousy or anger about a stranger, and so on. Moreover, there are several forms of unwholesome actions that we have never ever committed in this present life, like murder, rape, human-trafficking, etc. They should also be regarded as "unarisen demerit." In order to prevent such unarisen demerit from arising we must make great effort.

### **Three Ways to Get Rid of Defilement**

There are three ways to overcome defilement, either unarisen or arisen: temporary eradication (*khaṇika-pahāna*), preventive eradication (*vikkhambhana-pahāna*), and complete eradication (*samuccheda-pahāna*).

#### **1. Temporary Eradication**

By observing precepts or by developing mindfulness we can eradicate defilement in a temporary manner.

Suppose, for instance, we get angry about a mosquito that bites us and want to kill it. By remembering the precepts we have undertaken, or by being mindful of the anger, we refrain from killing. This is how we prevent active anger from transgressing, or how we eradicate anger in a temporary manner. And, when we find a wallet unattended somewhere while we are in need of money, we are most likely to think about stealing. When we feel lustful for someone's partner or underage, our *sīla*, or mindfulness helps us refrain from sexual misconduct. This is how we can eradicate greed or lust in a temporary way. Here, morality is all about sympathy with others, but not a form of oppression as some people may think. So, we have to put heroic effort in keeping moral conducts or developing mindfulness to eradicate defilement in a temporary manner.

## **2. Preventive Eradication**

Concentration developed with *samatha* practices and higher vipassanā insights can help us for longer periods to keep dormant form of defilement from being active. By developing metta, for example, we can prevent anger and anger-related unwholesome deeds from arising for a long period. Through the meditation on our 32 anatomical parts or on certainty of our death, we can prevent for long the dormant form of defilement from being active. Similarly, the higher vipassanā insights with discernment of mind and body help reduce the frequency and degree of defilement for a longer period, as they directly counteract the illusory sense of "I," which is the main driving force behind all sorts of defilement. So, the effort

in samatha practices and in development of mindfulness is really worthwhile.

### **3. Complete Eradication**

Like a seed from which a tree or plant come out, it is the dormant form of defilement from which all our unwholesome thoughts and actions are originated. Only when we are enlightened or awakened out of delusion can we uproot such unwholesome seeds and their resultant unwholesome thoughts and actions. Such awakening is outcome of mindfulness and progressive vipassanā insights developed according to Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. There are four stages of awakening. At the first stage (*sotāpatti*) two kinds of defilement are eradicated: illusory sense of "self" (*sakkāya-ditṭhi*) and skeptical doubt about Triple Gem and the law of cause and effect (*vicikicchā*). Moreover, it weakens the remaining kinds of unwholesome mental states to the extent to which we no longer commit such unwholesome deeds as killing. Thus, at the first stage of enlightenment, we inherently observe five precepts and are no longer liable to be reborn in woeful states. At the second stage (*sakadāgāmi*), the degree of remaining defilement is further reduced although no particular kind of defilement is uprooted; at the third (*anāgāmi*) anger and sensual desire are completely eradicated, and at the fourth (*arahatta*) all sorts of remaining dormant forms of defilement are uprooted.

### **The Most Worthwhile Effort**

Before we can eradicate defilement completely, we can apply mindfulness to prevent the dormant defilement

from being active, and the active defilement from being transgressive or from newly lying dormant in us. Thus, well-guided by mindfulness we can overcome the *arisen* defilement, and prevent the *un arisen* defilement from arising, and at the same time we can give rise to the *un arisen* merit and can further develop the *arisen* merit. Therefore, the effort we put in the development of mindfulness should be considered the most worthwhile effort (*sammappadhāna*) among others.

### **To Cause “Un arisen Merit” to Arise**

Merit is of two kinds: mundane and supra-mundane. Mundane merit basically includes act of generosity, morality, and meditation. The supra-mundane merit refers to magga enlightenment, which is considered “un arisen merit” if we are not enlightened yet. As for mundane merit, we are believed to have ever done all mundane kinds of merit in one life or another throughout the round of rebirths. In the current life, however, there can be many kinds of mundane merit we have never done. For example, the observance of five precepts is regarded as *un arisen* (new) merit if we have never done before. There can be many kinds of merit we have never done in the current life, for example, donation of blood, observation of nine or ten precepts, ordination, metta meditation, breath meditation, mindfulness meditation and so on. So, “un arisen merit” includes supra-mundane merit and all kinds of mundane merit we have never done in this current life. We should make heroic effort to cause such *un arisen* merit to arise.

## **To Further Improve “Arisen Merit”**

As “arisen merit”, we only take mundane kinds of merit that have ever arisen in this current life because in previous lives all mundane kinds of merit arose in us. As a result of mundane merit, we must have enjoyed millions of blissful rebirths in saṃsāra. Yet, woeful rebirths would far outnumber them throughout saṃsāra, though. As long as we have an illusory sense of “self,” we will be selfish and foolish, and liable to make mistakes that lead us to woeful rebirths. So, although we have performed many mundane kinds of merit, we need to make effort to do more and higher quality merits, especially to practice vipassanā meditation until we attain at least the first stage of enlightenment. Therefore, the heroic effort put in development of mindfulness and progressive vipassanā insights is honored as worthwhile effort (*sammappadhāna*).

## **Four Functions of Efforts Completed Simultaneously**

Through the continuous mindfulness, Mahasi Sayadaw said, there will be no room for any defilement to arise, to recur or to lie dormant in us. And it also leads to discernment of mind and body that directly counteracts ego-illusion and ego-related love and hate. We love someone only if he or she is helpful or respectful to us, and hate him or her if harmful or disrespectful to us. Based on love and hate we do all sorts of unwholesome actions. So, ego-illusion is a driving force behind all sorts of unwholesome actions. Continuous mindfulness helps discern mind and body, counteracts ego-illusion and all sorts of unwholesome actions, and at the



same time, it forms a good condition for the unarisen merit to arise and the arisen merit to improve further. Thus, every moment of mindfulness involves four functions of effort: preventing the evil from arising and recurring, and causing the merit to arise and to develop.

The four functions of effort are considered to be completed when we become arahants, fully enlightened persons. Arahants have eradicated all sorts of unwholesome actions completely, and developed merit to its highest. Therefore, *arahants* — having no more defilement to remove, no more merit to do or to improve further — are honored for doing away with merit and demerit (*kusalā-kusalaṃ jaharā*). To clarify this point, the Pāḷi text called Vibhaṅga poses a question: “Does heroic effort belong to merit (*kusala*), demerit (*a-kusala*) or indeterminate (*abyākata*)<sup>74</sup>?” And then it gives the answer: “only to merit” (*kusalā’va*).

## Wrong and Right Effort

To prevent the unwholesome actions from arising and recurring, and to cause the good to arise and improve further, we are encouraged to prepare ourselves, if required, to let our bones and sinews remain, and our

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<sup>74</sup> It is good to learn three technical terms since they are often used in the Pāḷi texts: *kusala*, *akusala* and *abyākata*. *Kusala* is defined in two characteristics: flawless (*anavajja*) and blissful (*sukha-vipākā*). It includes wholesome mental states and their associated good deeds. *Akusala* is the opposite of *kusala*. *Abyākata* is what cannot be described as *kusala* or *akusala*. It includes resultant mental states, arahants’ minds and mental factors, all physical phenomena and *nibbāna*. Indeed, an arahant does perform wholesome deeds. But his or her wholesome deeds cannot be described as *kusala* because they cannot bring any bliss to an arahant who has no more rebirths.

blood and flesh dry<sup>75</sup>. However, if we put wrong or extreme effort in the practice with over-enthusiasm to make progress in the practice, we will become stressful, restless, or anxious. Excessive effort does more harm than good especially to those who have a weak mind. Some people expect meditation to help fix their mental problems. Yes, it does, if we make correct effort. Here “correct effort” is the effort balanced with right attitude without much expectation when we develop continuous mindfulness. On the other hand, “wrong effort” is over-zealous practice through sleepless nights, long sitting or walking meditation with expectation for fast progress. Of course, such wrong effort will worsen their problems. At some point, they may even become excessively restless.

To some meditators the longer sitting seems to mean better progress in the practice. So, they take a lot of pain to sit for three to four hours continuously, but without much mindfulness. Such courageous effort is not worthwhile as expected. Other meditators may put too much effort in slow motion in walking meditation, which would be useless without the continuity of mindfulness. In brief, there is no magic in sleepless nights, long sittings or slow motion. The magic is in continuous mindfulness. So, the right effort to make is to be mindful continuously anytime and anywhere even in the restroom as mentioned in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.

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<sup>75</sup> The would-be Buddha made great effort with a firm resolution thus: *“Indeed, let my skin, sinews and bones remain; let my flesh and blood dry up in the body. Without gaining what should be gained through heroic effort and heroic endeavor I won’t give up.”*

## **Balance Effort with Relaxation**

Here again, "continuous mindfulness" means to be mindful of whatever is obvious to us at the present moment. We should not restrict our mindfulness only to a particular object like abdomen even though we start our practice with this object since we cannot be mindful of a particular object all the time. In reality, different phenomena become obvious to us at different moment. Vipassanā is to be mindful of whatever becomes most prominent at the present moment without making choice and judgement. In this sense, "continuous mindfulness" may reasonably be defined as "choiceless awareness" as done by Munidraji, the late Mahasi Sayadawgyi's great disciple and also a great meditation master of worldwide repute.

As mentioned at the end of the Chapter II, vipassanā is all about seeing things as they really are. Generally, we distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad, wholesome and unwholesome. However, vipassanā has nothing to do with such distinction. Vipassanā is just to see them as they really are without identifying them as "I" or "mine," and without judging them to be good or bad, right or wrong. When our mind is restless, for example, make sure we are aware of it as it is. Don't judge it to be good or bad, right or wrong. Don't expect it to be against its nature. Also, don't identify it as "I" or "mine." Don't suppress it deliberately. Don't give vent to it in a way. Just be aware of it as it is. This sheer awareness will work by itself to gain control over unwholesome actions as well as to develop progressive insights. So, keeping this fact in mind, don't stress and just relax. Then, we will gain a faster progress in the practice without frustration.

This is what we call "balance between effort and relaxation" (*sama-pakindriyatā*).

So, the effort needs to be balanced with relaxation to avoid excessive effort for quick results. In this regard, the Late Venerable Mahāsi Sayadawgyi recommended that a yogi who has become excessively stressed takes a short break from the practice by listening to dhamma talks or reading dhamma books or taking a nap, or going somewhere for a few days. It is also good to remember the example of Venerable Ānanda who became fully enlightened only when he relaxed himself after having practiced without resting for the whole night.

## **Eleven Supportive Conditions**

On the other hand, we need to learn how to boost up heroic effort if it is weak. In this regards, the Visuddhi-magga recommends applying eleven supportive conditions as follows:

1. Reflecting on how miserable the rebirths in woeful realms are: Unless we reach at least the first stage of enlightenment, we are liable to be reborn in woeful states. Reflecting on this, we should boost up our effort in our practice.
2. Reflecting on the benefits of effort: Without courageous effort, we cannot accomplish anything; great effort always brings us great accomplishments. Reflecting on this point, we should boost up our energy.

3. Reflecting on the Noble Path: Only heroic and energetic people can walk on the path. Following the footsteps of such noble persons as the arahants and the Buddha, we should boost up our effort in our practice.
4. Honoring the alms one has received: This is primarily concerned with monks and nuns who live on the generous supports of lay people. It also applies to meditators on retreat who are taken care of by volunteers. We should reflect thus: "People take good care of my needs; I should honor their kind support by putting great effort into my practice."
5. Reflecting on the inspiring qualities of the heritage: Here, "heritage" refers to the Dhamma heritage passed down from the Buddha. Meditators should reflect thus, "Great, indeed, is the dhamma heritage left by the Buddha. If I am lazy, I won't deserve it."
6. Reflecting on the inspiring qualities of one's teacher, the Buddha: This means recalling the great events in the life of the Buddha and admonishing ourselves thus, "It does not befit me to be lazy after learning from such a great teacher."
7. Reflecting on the inspiring qualities of one's status as a follower of the Buddha: "I am a spiritual child of the Buddha. I must be energetic."
8. Reflecting on the inspiring qualities of fellow meditators: "Sāriputta, Moggalāna and many other great direct disciples of the Buddha were fully

- enlightened after having put heroic effort into their practice. Am I following their way?"
9. Avoiding lazy people: If we associate with lazy people, we are most likely to become lazy, too. So, we should avoid associating with them so that we can become energetic.
  10. Associating with energetic people: We can boost up our energy by emulating energetic fellow meditators.
  11. Devoting our time and energy to developing energy.

## **FOUR SOURCES OF ACCOMPLISHMENT**

*(Iddhi-pāda)*

### **Definition and Classifications of *Iddhi-pāda***

*Iddhi-pāda* literally means sources of accomplishment, referring to four powerful mental factors: ambitious desire (*chanda*), strong mind (*citta*), heroic effort (*vīriya*), and analytical knowledge (*vīmaṃsa*). In the Paṭṭhāna (the law of conditionality), these four mental factors are known as a Predominant Condition (*adhipati-paccaya*) since they have strong influence on their concomitant mind and mental factors. In that case, the first three (desire, mind, and effort) can be wholesome or unwholesome. If unwholesome, they can bring us unwholesome accomplishments; they can help us become a millionaire or president in an unwholesome way. So, no wonder we can find some evil persons successful in life. For unwholesome accomplishments, however, we have to pay price in this very life or definitely in a life to come.

Anyhow, all worldly accomplishments are just make-beliefs. For real accomplishments (*iddhi*), therefore, we take the attainment of *magga* enlightenment, which guarantees liberation from the cycle of births and deaths. And, as sources of such accomplishment (*iddhi-pāda*), we take the four powerful factors that are involved in development of mindfulness, progressive *vipassanā* insights and the *magga* enlightenments (*Bodhi*). So, they are defined as follows:

1. Ambitious desire for *magga* enlightenment;
2. Strong mind devoted to development of progressive *vipassanā* insights;
3. Courageous effort put in development of progressive *vipassanā* insights;
4. Analytical knowledge of psycho-physical phenomena.

## **Ambitious Desire**

The ambitious desire for *magga*-enlightenment is one of the four sources of spiritual accomplishment (*iddhi-pāda*), and a constituent of *magga* enlightenment (*Bodhi-pakkhikya*) as well. In this regard, we can take Venerable Raṭṭha-pāla as a good example:

### **Story of Venerable Raṭṭha-pāla**

A young man named Raṭṭha-pāla was the only son of a multimillionaire in a town called Thulla-koṭṭhika, Kuru State. When the Buddha taught *dhamma* to the people there, he was among the audience. He developed a great sense of urgency when he learned from the Buddha what

is known as “dhamma digest” (*dhammuddesa*) that describes the four facts of life as follows:

1. One<sup>76</sup> is impermanent, driven constantly closer to death (*Upanīyyati loko addhuvo*).
2. One is helpless, having nobody else to take refuge to (*Atāṇo loko anabhissaro*).
3. One possesses nothing and has to leave empty-handed (*Assako loko, sabbarṃ pahāya gamanīyaṃ*).
4. One is ever wanting, never content, enslaved by insatiable desire (*Ūno loko atitto taṇhā-dāso*).

Realizing these four facts he became very ambitious to accomplish the spiritual development. He decided to renounce worldly life so that he could devote all his time and energy to the practice. Then, the Buddha asked him to get the parent’s permission for ordination. Unfortunately, his request for permission was rejected since he was the only child to inherit his parents’ wealth and family name. He tried by all means available to get permission, but in vain. Finally, he gave up food and lied down on the bare ground, and proclaimed that he’d rather die unless permitted to ordain. Finally, his parents had to yield to his ambitious desire and allowed him to ordain. After two weeks he accompanied the Buddha to Jetavana monastery, Savatthi, where Raṭṭha-pāla practiced intensively until he reached

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<sup>76</sup> Here, “one” is the translation of the Pāli word *loko* which literally means “world.” There are three kinds of world: world of individual living beings (*satta-loko*), world of the Earth (*okāsa-loko*), and world of conditioned phenomena (*sarīkhāra-loko*). In this context, it refers to the world of individual living beings and is translated as “one.”



highest spiritual accomplishment. Obviously, Venerable Raṭṭha-pāla's ambitious desire forms the firm source of his spiritual accomplishment.

## **Courageous Effort**

The Pāḷi word for effort is *vīriya*, which literally means courage. By nature, the courage is constituted of patience and persistence in face of impediments and hardships that lie on the way to our goal. Inevitably, we have to encounter several kinds of impediments and hardships on our way to spiritual goal, like poor health, financial crisis, social or psychological problem, and so on. How hard and hopeless the situation may be, the Buddha said, we should never give up until we accomplish our purpose. Such courage is literally called *vīriya*, often translated as courageous effort. In the worldly case, there are many successful people in the world who once were homeless or alcoholics or drug addicts. In an article I once read, a homeless girl who used to sleep on the door steps of others' houses in New York City later earned a degree at Herbert University. Even if we are in a hopeless situation, the Buddha advised us to not give up but continue making a heroic effort to reach our goal. To illustrate this point, a jātaka story was told as follows:

### **The Story of Mahā-janaka**

A man named Mahā-janaka was trading across the ocean between Kāla-campa and Suvaṇṇa-bhūmi<sup>77</sup> with the purpose to earn enough money to battle his uncle, King Pola-janako, who killed his father, King Aritṭha-

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<sup>77</sup> According to researchers, it was between Calcutta India and Malaysia that was then known as Suvaṇṇa-bhūmi in Buddhist history.

janako, and took over the entire kingdom. Unfortunately, on a voyage, his boat broke down in the open sea as it was over-loaded with several hundred people and tons of goods. Some of the people on board were running and crying in panic, and others were praying God for help. He did not pray, but kept himself calm and thought about what to do. First, he filled his stomach with butter and sugar when the boat began to sink. Then, he soaked his clothing in oil so that it would help him float more easily on the water surface. As the boat sank, he climbed up to the top of the mast, and jumped as far away as possible from the people beneath who were immediately attacked by sharks.

Even in the open sea under such a hopeless and disastrous situation Mahā-janaka did not give up; he just kept swimming. At one point, an ocean-guardian deity, who could no longer ignore him, came down and said: "Who's that, swimming in the open sea, without seeing the other shore? For what purpose are you making such a heroic endeavor?" He replied thus: "Understanding the law of the world and the benefit of the endeavor, I am struggling in the open sea even though I can't see the shoreline, indeed."

To make a long story short, the guardian deity picked him up out of the sea and brought him to Mithila City where coincidentally his uncle, King Pola-janako, passed away on that very day. He then became the king of the Mitthila Kingdom that was once his father's (Mahājanaka Jātaka 160). The Buddha taught us a lesson from this story as follows:

*Be full of hope and never give up.  
I saw myself accomplish what I wish.*

So, here Mahā-janaka's heroic effort formed a powerful source of his accomplishment. However, such worldly accomplishment is a dream-like phenomenon under the law of impermanence. His heroic effort, therefore, cannot be regarded as a source of accomplishment (*iddhi-pāda*). So, as a good example of heroic effort that serves as a source of accomplishment, we can take Venerable Soṇa:

## **The Story of Soṇa**

Soṇa (known as Koḷivisa by his family name) was a son of a multimillionaire of Campā City, Rājagaha Kingdom. He was raised so luxuriously that he never went anywhere by foot and even got hair on the soles of his feet. That was so strange that King Bimbisāra of Rājagaha Kingdom wanted to meet him. So, one day he was summoned to the palace along with his fellow country folks. After having looked at his soles and given some words of advice to him and his fellow folks, the king asked them to see the Buddha who then lived on Mt. Gijja-kūṭa. The Buddha taught them Sequential Dhamma (*anupubbi-kathā*) and Self-discovered Dhamma (*sāmukkaṃsika desanā*), i.e., Four-fold Noble Truth. All the country folks including Soṇa himself attained the first stage of enlightenment. Then, Soṇa ordained in order to devote all his time and energy to his purpose of the highest spiritual attainment, arahantship.

As a monk, he practiced intensively, day and night, sitting or walking. So, no wonder his extremely tender soles were broken, smearing every part of the walkway with blood. Then, the Buddha came and gave him an advice on how to balance his effort with concentration with an analogy of tuning a harp (a musical instrument)

neither too tight nor too loose to have a good sound. Afterward, Venerable Soṇa managed to balance the mental faculties and became fully enlightened. Venerable Soṇa took a lot of pain and hardship in order to accomplish his spiritual purpose. His heroic effort brought him a breakthrough in the highest spiritual attainment. Such heroic effort is a source of accomplishment and regarded as a constituent of enlightenment (*Bodhipakkhiya*).

### **The Story of Mahāsīva**<sup>78</sup>

Perseverance of Venerable Mahāsīva is also a good example of heroic effort. He was a senior monk, highly learned and highly respected. There were thousands of monks who studied the Buddha's teachings with him and practiced meditation until they became fully enlightened under his guidance. But he himself still remained an ordinary person without any spiritual achievement. One day, one of his arahant students came over and upset him by reminding him of his spiritual goal unachieved. So, he left for the forest to practice without informing anybody because he thought he could make it within a few days. However, he spent twenty-nine rain retreats (*vassa*) practicing in the forest without any achievement. So, he wept regretfully at the end of every rains retreat. However, he never gave up; once again he spent his thirtieth rains retreat practicing intensively, but no success. As he had done in previous times, he could not help weeping for his failure to achieve enlightenment at the end of the retreat. This time, he strangely heard

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<sup>78</sup> Di-1, Tha-312

someone weeping, too. So, he asked who weeping, and why. Then, he heard someone reply that she was a deity weeping with the purpose to accomplish magga-phala enlightenment. He then realized that the deity was making fun of him over his failure in practice. He then put again heroic effort in the intensive practice. This time, having learned a lot from his previous mistakes, he could make successful endeavor by balancing mental faculties until he became fully-enlightened.

It is not for a few weeks, but for thirty years that Venerable Mahāsīva endured a lot of troubles and pains to accomplish his spiritual purpose. Such heroic effort is honored as a constituent factor of enlightenment.

## **Strong Mind**

For the one who has a strong mind, there is nothing that cannot be accomplished. Strong mind is necessary for our accomplishments. For example, we can graduate only when our mind is strong and stable enough to resist several kinds of temptation and to face several kinds of difficulties during our school years. With a weak and unstable mind, we will not get anywhere; we will not find ways to solve our difficulties. So, a strong and stable mind is necessary for success. It is a strong mind that shapes our life and our world, indeed.

We need a strong mind to resist temptations and to reach our destination. To illustrate this point there is a Jātaka story of six princes<sup>79</sup>. Once upon a time, a king wanted to select a worthwhile heir for his kingdom. So,

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<sup>79</sup> Jātaka-1, 419

he tactfully summoned his six sons to come to the royal city across a very dangerous desert where cannibals lived. When they got to the first camp in the desert, they were welcomed and entertained by the cannibals in the guise of pretty women. One of the princes could not resist the temptation of beauty, and stayed there. The remaining princes continued with their journey, and were entertained with different kinds of pleasurable sense-objects at the different camps: sweet songs at the second camp, fragrant smells at the third camp, tasty food at the fourth camp, and soft touch at the fifth camp. In the end, there remained only one prince who was able to resist the temptations all the way to the royal city. As a result, he was bestowed with the kingship crown. This story teaches us that our mind needs to be strong and stable enough to resist temptations until we accomplish our purpose.

Moreover, we need strong mind to face eight vicissitudes of life: gain and loss, fame and defame, praise and blame, happiness and sadness. Anyone even the Buddha himself cannot avoid them, at all. Of course, we are always seeking the pleasant four out of them: gain, fame, praise, and happiness. Ironically, whatever we gain, we will lose it some time later, upon our demise at the very latest. The same is true with fame, praise, and happiness as they are all conditioned and impermanent. So, while we are following the pleasant four, we are followed by the unpleasant four. That is why the Buddha said: "*Eight vicissitudes and human beings are followed by each other.*"<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Aṅguttara-3, 7

Only with a strong and stable mind can we resist these vicissitudes of life until we reach our goal. If the mind is weak, we may even forget what our goal is; we would get further and further away from success. Many young students in college, for example, have the purpose of obtaining a degree. Some of them, however, have to leave college without any accomplishment because they cannot deal with these vicissitudes. So, a stable and strong mind is necessary to face vicissitudes and to accomplish our purpose.

On the other hand, it is also a strong and stable mind that helps maintain or protect our achievements. For example, a young man from a remote village in Burma became the most successful singer of his time. He used to be simple and humble before that, but when successful, he became a drunkard and womanizer. Finally, he ended up losing his fame and died from lung cancer due to excessive drinking. Obviously his success ruined his life because his mind was not strong enough to resist temptations and the vicissitudes of life. That is why the Buddha said thus:

*Bananas, bamboos and reeds are killed by their fruits.  
A man of weak mind is killed by his success like an  
assatari (a particular breed of horse) that is killed by  
the baby in her womb. (Cūḷavagga 346)*

Every day, these vicissitudes of life are testing our minds. Only if our mind is stable and strong, can we protect our life and prevent our success or achievements from being ruined. That is why such a strong mind is honored by Buddha as the most precious blessing:

*In the face of the vicissitudes of life,  
One's mind is stable,  
Worry-free, flawless and tranquil.  
This is the most precious blessing on earth*  
(Maṅgala Sutta)

So, strong and stable mind is one of four sources of accomplishment. When we practice meditation at the meditation center, for instance, we may encounter poor accommodation, poor food and inconsiderate roommates. And during a sitting hour, we have to face several kinds of unpleasant sensations like pain, itchiness, heat, etc. and mental distractions like worry, anxiety, sorrow, regret, and so on. Without a strong mind, we may give up meditation. So, strong mind is necessary to resist these difficulties and temptations so that we can make progress in the practice. Such strong mind is honored as one of the sources of spiritual accomplishment and one of the 37 enlightenment factors as well.

## **Analytical Knowledge**

For the one who has strong knowledge, there is nothing that cannot be accomplished. In this regard, it is good to learn three kinds of knowledge mentioned in the Pāḷi text:

1. The knowledge gained from study and research (*suta-maya ñāṇa*);
2. The knowledge gained from analyzing and reasoning (*cintā-maya ñāṇa*);



3. The knowledge gained from spiritual development (*bhāvanā-maya jñāna*).

We can gain the first kind of knowledge through study and research. Under this category there come science and technology that even reshape our life and our planet. Thus, this kind of knowledge makes us the most powerful species on earth. All kinds of animals have to live at our mercy whether they are giant animals like elephants or whales, or lethal animals like lions or sharks. We can even extend our reach outside our planet to the moon and Mars. We have achieved what our forefathers could never have imagined. So, if we have a good knowledge of science and technology, there would be almost nothing that cannot be accomplished.

The second kind of knowledge is reasoning power that enables us to distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad, or wholesome and unwholesome. Through this reasoning power we have established a civilized society under a constitution and laws without which we would perish. In other words, it is not science and technology, but the reasoning power (*cintā-maya*) that can help us establish the civilized society under a win-win situation. So, if we have good reasoning power (*cintā-maya*), there would be almost nothing that we cannot accomplish.

The third kind of knowledge is the most superior one since it enables us to see the truth beyond the world. According to the law of conditionality and impermanence, we are all dream-like figures on earth; not much different from seasonal insects that live only a few hours or days. In the ultimate sense, we die and are reborn at every moment because all the mental and physical

phenomena—which constitute what we really are—are arising and passing away at every moment. It is indisputable that our planet itself will disappear one day. So, what we call achievements or accomplishments on this planet are just make-beliefs (*paññatti*); claiming something to be our own is just ignorance (*avijja*); thinking of ourselves to be unique and timeless is just delusion (*vipallāsa*). That is why Buddha said in Vipallāsa Sutta:

*Ordinary people are crazy under illusive memory, illusive consciousness, and illusive view. Seeing things correctly, one can escape the bond of death.*

(Aṅguttara-nikāya)

Only through the *vipassanā* insights and *magga-phala* enlightenments can we see the truth beyond illusions. These kinds of knowledge are called “*bhāvanā-maya*,” as they have to be developed by practicing *vipassanā* meditation. Literally, therefore, wisdom as a constituent of enlightenment (*bodhi-pakkhiya*) refers to progressive *vipassanā* insights and the first three stages of magga enlightenment, which are sources of peak spiritual accomplishment, the fourth magga.

## **Mental Qualities to Develop**

The four sources of spiritual accomplishment (*iddhi-pāda*) are mental qualities that can be developed. If we do not have ambitious desire for enlightenment, we have to cultivate it. If we are lazy and cowardly to face pain and hardship or to resist temptations, we need to train ourselves in patience and persistence. If our mind is weak

and unstable, we should make it strong and stable by means of *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditations. Unless we have ever developed *vipassanā* insights, we should try our best to develop progressive *vipassanā* insights by practicing mindfulness meditation. So, the Buddha encourages us to develop the four bases of spiritual accomplishment as follows:

*A noble disciple develops ambitious desire as a source of spiritual accomplishment. He or she develops strong mind...; courageous effort...; profound knowledge as a source of spiritual accomplishment.*

Without having one of the four sources, there will be no hope for accomplishment. So, if we don't have any of the four, we are compared to a beggar who has no hope to become a monarch. If we have one of them, not to mention all four, we are like a crown prince who is full of hope to become a monarch. Of course, we can expect to become fully enlightened in this very life if we have all four sources of accomplishment.

## **FIVE MENTAL FACULTIES**

There are five powerful mental factors called "controlling faculties" (*indriya*), namely, faith (*saddha*), effort (*vīriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samadhi*), and knowledge (*paññā*). They are so called since they are in control of our spiritual accomplishments.

## **Faculty of Faith** (*Saddhindriya*)

Faith, the first faculty, is a powerful mental factor, which is a driving force behind all our actions because we always do what we believe good for us. Thus, faith is in control of our life. So, it is very important for us to have factual faith. False faith (*mudha-ppasanna*) jeopardizes our life. On the other hand, having no faith in anything or anybody we will surely miss all the opportunities available. Nowadays, there are many peoples (especially materialists) who do not accept lives before and after this current life just because they cannot find scientific evidence. Actually, scientists admit they cannot explain everything on earth. Without faith we are like someone who gets confused at the crossroad and caught by enemies. According to the Pāli texts, therefore, we should draw right conclusion (*siddha*), or we can gain factual faith from our own experience (*peccakkha*), logical thinking (*anumāna* or *ākappana*), or someone trustworthy (*saddheyya*).

There are several kinds of faith in Pāli:

- Blind faith (*mudha-ppasanna*): In old days, for example, people believed that natural disasters like thunder storms, earthquakes, etc., were created by God to punish us. Based on such blind faith they tried to please the so-called God by sacrificing animals like cow or goat, even human being. In many Asian countries people believe a man is somehow more sublime in nature than a woman.

To such blind faith there are many innocent baby girls fell victim. During the WWII, Japanese pilots amazed the world when they dived into the enemy warships to serve their king whom they believed as a direct descendant of the sun. In ancient India, there were cases in which women were forced to be cremated alive along with their dead husbands to show their faithfulness. In modern days, there are people who believe a holy war as a religious duty. This blind faith creates suicide-bombers in the world. How dangerous the blind faith is!

- Love-based faith (*pasāda-saddhā*): Most of us have faith in someone we love, say, our spouses, children, teachers or friends. There are some Buddhists who admire monks or nuns and believe whatever they teach. During the Buddha's time, a monk named Vakkali loved the Buddha so much that he spent most of his time gazing at the face of the Buddha. The Buddha blamed him for such love-based faith without putting his teachings into practice.
- Factual faith (*okappana-saddhā*): In particular cases, our faith is based on facts. We believe in the Buddha because, say, we find his teachings are realistic, factual and harmony with historical facts or scientific evidences. We believe the law of kamma by considering differences among people even between two identical twins raised in the same environment. We believe lives before and after the current life based on the facts recounted by people who remembered their past lives. This is factual faith.

- Unshakable faith (*adhigama-saddhā*, or *aveccā-pasāda*): Our faith in the Buddha and his teachings becomes unshakable only when it is based on enlightenment. By being mindful continuously of four kinds of objects, viz., body, feelings, thoughts, and senses, we will discern psycho-physical phenomena, their conditionality and changes without identifying them as “I.” Such discernment leads to progressive *vipassanā* insights culminating in *magga* enlightenments. Only with such enlightenment can our faith in Triple Gem become unshakable.
- Inherent faith (*āgamanīya-saddhā*): There is a particular kind of faith that lies in the heart of a would-be Buddha. A would-be Buddha is still liable to make mistakes based on the mental defilements that lie dormant in his heart. However, he never falls victim to blind faith; he inherently believes only in rightful things. To have such rightful faith he does not even need any fact and reason. Such inherent faith is unique to a would-be Buddha.

As a Constituent of Enlightenment, “faith” refers to the just above-mentioned 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> items. In the Buddhism, faith in Triple Gem is always recommended, but blind faith (*mudha-pasanna*) is never encouraged, of course. Logic and reasoning (*vibhajja-vāda*) are always welcome in Buddha's teaching. Faith is honored only when it is based on facts, or comprehensive understanding. So, faith in the Buddha does not mean that the Buddha saves us only if we believe in him. The Buddha never claims as a savior, indeed. He openly said that he was just an instructor (*akkhataro*); we ourselves should strenuously do what we

should do so that we can be liberated out of torturous cycle of births and deaths. To cure our disease, we ourselves take medicine. To keep our body in good shape, we ourselves take regular exercise and proper diet. To be educated we ourselves put great effort in homework. To see the truth beyond illusions and concepts we ourselves have to practice meditation, but no one else on earth can do that on our behalf.

No matter whether we know the Buddha and what his teachings or not, if we see psycho-physical phenomena beyond illusion, we are assured to be enlightened like pacceka-buddhas<sup>81</sup>; if we do evil, we are bound to suffer; if we do good, we are guaranteed to enjoy bliss. This is just natural law. However, we do something only when we have faith in its benefit. We follow someone's advice only if we have faith in him or her. Having no faith we do nothing and accomplish nothing. Faith is courage. We are always prepared to sacrifice our life and limbs for what we believe to be worthwhile. So, blind faith forms immoral courage, which is very destructive, whereas rightful faith is moral courage to avoid evil and to perform good by taking pains and hardships if necessary. Moreover, "Faith

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<sup>81</sup> "Pacceka Buddha" literally means "Particular Buddha" normally translated as "Silent Buddha" because he is unable to teach people such a profound dhamma as the Four Noble Truths although he is fully enlightened. If one has full-fledged parami, he can become fully enlightened by seeing psycho-physical phenomena as they really are, even though he has no access to the Buddha and his teachings. Such a particular enlightener is called Pacceka-buddha, who can appear on earth at any time except for the period when there still prevails on earth the teaching of the Omniscient Buddha (*sabbaññū*).

is wealth,” the Buddha said in the Pāli text<sup>82</sup>. In our life, wealth is necessary for us to be healthy, educated, good-looking, or powerful. We can even become a president if we are wealthy enough. In the same way, strong faith—like wealth—affords us not only heavenly rebirths but also high-level concentration (*jhana*) and *magga* enlightenments.

For sure, when we understand *dhamma* from both practical and theoretical aspects, we will gain deep and unshakable faith in the Buddha, his enlightened disciples (*sangha*), and his teachings. Such faith forms great courage for us to develop unbroken mindfulness until we are enlightened in face of any hardship and temptation. Thus, faith determines our spiritual accomplishment and therefore is honored as a mental faculty (*indriya*) that forms a constituent of enlightenment (*Bodhi-pakkhiya*).

## **Faculty of Effort** (*Viriyindriya*)

The Pāli word for effort is *vīriya* which literally means “heroic work.” As mentioned repeatedly before, heroic work is the work that can only be done with patience and persistence. All the way to our spiritual goal, there lie difficulties and distresses, as well as several kinds of temptation. Only when we can face them with patience and persistence, can our aim be fulfilled. On top of faith, therefore, we need heroic effort to accomplish our purposes. Although we have faith in education, for instance, we cannot be graduated unless we make heroic

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<sup>82</sup> Sagāthā-vagga, Samyutta-nikāya



effort, like doing home works until midnights or early morning, resisting temptation of drink, drug or sex, and facing bad weather, hunger, sleepless nights and so on.

If such heroic effort is put in unwholesome deeds, it would help accomplish unwholesome purpose, which, however, will end up in jeopardy in this very life or future life. On the other hand, sometimes we put great effort in good deeds but wish for personal gain or fame. Such inferior effort helps fulfill our wish for sensual pleasures in a blissful life, but it is often evil-oriented rather than conducive to enlightenment. Real heroic effort is the effort we put in development of unbroken mindfulness against our unruly mind. Such heroic effort is conducive to the *magga* enlightenment and, therefore, highly recommended.

The would-be Buddha renounced his royal life and spent six years in the deep forest putting heroic effort in the intensive practice of meditation in search of the truth. During that period, he devoted all his time and energy to the practice without caring about his body. No wonder, he'd got only skin, sinews and bones left, and his flesh and blood dry, and come close to death many times. He was not someone who easily gave up because of hardships and pains. He kept on practicing in such an intensive manner for six years. Although he did not attain any spiritual achievement, his effort paid off in the end. He did uncover what were wrong. Having found what were wrong, he did find what were right in the end. Naturally, we make a lot of mistakes during the

experimental period, but it is from those very mistakes that we always learn something right. Anyhow, it is very obvious that the would-be Buddha endured great hardships and pains until his lofty aim was accomplished. So, such heroic effort is honored as a mental faculty since it determines our spiritual accomplishments (*indriya*) and serves as a factor of enlightenment (*Bodhi-pakkhiya*).

## **Faculty of Mindfulness** (*Satindriya*)

The Pāli word for mindfulness is *sati* whose root “*sarā*” literally means to remember. In the case of Enlightenment Factors, to remember means to be aware of our own mind and body. Quite often, our mind is so occupied with external objects that we cannot even remember what we are doing or thinking or what are really happening to our mind and body. For example, we are angry but not aware of anger because all we are aware of at that moment is the person we angry with, but not ourselves or our anger. When we feel lustful, all we are aware of at that moment is someone we feel lustful for, but not ourselves or our lust.

Moreover, there are times when we are lost in thought so deeply that we cannot even see people passing by, nor hear someone calling us. Even though we are driving carefully on freeway, we cannot necessarily be aware of our thoughts and actions involved in driving because we are rarely aware of present phenomena. There are insane people who are not aware that they are doing something silly or talking about something embarrassing. We can be compared to such an insane one when we do not

remember ourselves, or in other words, when we are not fully aware of our actions, feelings and thoughts. So, it is very important to remember ourselves, or to be mindful of our mind and body.

Mindfulness is all about observing our actions, feelings, thoughts and senses. Only with mindfulness can we be fully aware of ourselves; can we be in full control of ourselves. And we are thus well-protected from all kinds of misfortunes generated by mental defilements. Therefore, the Buddha describes mindfulness as a guardian like our parents who always protect us from all possible dangers and disasters. Our parents always care about whether we are doing well, feeling alright, and behaving properly. So too, mindfulness always cares about what we are doing, talking, or thinking. Under such protection of mindfulness, we are saved from all sorts of dangers and disasters. More importantly, with mature mindfulness we will discern mental and physical phenomena, their conditionality and changes. Such discernment directly counteracts delusion and delusion-based mental defilements, and leads straight to the progressive vipassanā insights and enlightenment. So, mindfulness—heading to such discernment—is a mental faculty that determines our spiritual achievement (*indriya*) and forms a factor of enlightenment (*Bodhi-pakkhiya*).

### **Faculty of Concentration** (*Samadhindriya*)

Naturally, when something is concentrated, it becomes powerful. Highly concentrated wine, for instance, will become very powerful in taste. Light will

become brighter and goes further if concentrated into a spotlight. In the same way, the mind becomes very stable and very powerful when it is concentrated by focusing on a meditative object like breath. Only with such stable and concentrated mind, can we become smart enough to accomplish what we wish in life. More importantly, concentration directly contributes to knowledge and wisdom. Actually, psychic or supernormal power is all about concentration. On the stable mind—like the stable surface of water—all sorts of images are clearly reflected, whether past, present or future. Thus, depending on how strong our concentration is, we develop intuitive power and psychic power. The most importance is that the concentration helps us see the truth beyond concepts and make-believe. In other words, we can discern mind and body beyond illusory sense of “I” or “mine,” leading to progressive vipassanā insights and enlightenment.

Concentration is a very important mental faculty necessary for any kind of knowledge, secular or spiritual. Generally, our monkey mind is restless, jumping around from one object to another constantly. Within a few minutes, we may think about hundreds of things. At one moment we may think of our friend, and at the next someone who passes by, or the topic we discussed just recently, or the dinner we ate last night, or someone we are going to meet this evening, and so on. A friend of mine changes four or five TV channels within a few minutes as his mind was restless. Another friend moves around as he cannot stay quietly in a place for more than five minutes. With such a restless mind it would be very

hard to learn something, to distinguish between right and wrong, to find solution to our difficulties, or to accomplish our purpose in life, let alone to see the ultimate truth beyond the concepts. So, concentration is very important mental faculty for all sorts of accomplishment. We can develop such valuable mental quality by concentrating our mind on a meditative object.

Our would-be Buddha first developed high-level concentration (*jhāna*) by focusing on his breath. That concentration enabled him to see past and future lives of beings and the law of cause and effect (kamma and Paticca-samuppāda). When he directed such a powerful concentration to his own mind and body, he saw psycho-physical phenomena, their conditionality and constant changes. Thus, he developed progressive vipassanā insights and supreme enlightenment within no time. So, we are literally encouraged to develop the concentration up to jhānic level.

In the case of pure vipassanā practice (*sukka-vipassanā*), however, we do not develop such high level concentration (*jhāna*); instead, we try to be mindful constantly of present phenomena moment by moment. By focusing on one phenomenon after another continuously we can develop concentration strong enough to see psycho-physical phenomena, their conditionality and changes, leading to progressive vipassanā insights and enlightenments. In order to accomplish our spiritual purpose, therefore, we need to develop concentration, literally jhāna (*appanā*) or its

neighborhood (*upacāra*), or moment-to-moment concentration (*khaṇika*). Thus, concentration is a mental faculty that determines our spiritual accomplishment (*indriya*) and forms a constituent of enlightenment (*Bodhi-pakkhiya*).

## **Faculty of Wisdom** (*Pannindriya*)

According to the Pāḷi texts, wisdom is honored as a constituent of enlightenment only when it deals with four noble truths. As wisdom faculty, one of the 37 enlightenment factors, we only take progressive vipassanā insights and magga enlightenments which deal with "Four Noble Truth." When we are enlightened, we realize psycho-physical phenomena as real suffering; we uproot the attachment, the true cause of suffering; we experience nibbāna, the true cessation of suffering; we accomplish the development of the eight-fold Noble Path, the true path to the nibbāna.

1. The true suffering is described by the Buddha in a word as *upādāna-kkhandha*, the five aggregates (or mind and body)<sup>83</sup> that we identify as "I" or "mine," and get attached to. Our body is called suffering because it is conditioned, ever-changing, very vulnerable to all sorts of illness, and thus very demanding a great care. We have to take great care for each and every part of body such as eyes,

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<sup>83</sup> "Five aggregates" include body, feeling, perception, mental formation, and consciousness. Among them, the first one is body and the remaining four are mental phenomena (mind). So, the phrase "five aggregates" is synonymous with the phrase "mind and body."

ears, teeth, skin, livers, hearts, kidneys, bowels, blood, and so on. No matter how much we care about the body, it is aging, decaying, and approaching to death at every moment.

Our mind is also suffering, as it is conditioned and fleeting. At one moment we may be happy, but at the next we may be unhappy, worried, or sorrowful. Associated with negative mental states the mind makes us suffer several kinds of psychological disorder like stress, frustration, depression and nervous breakdown. Some of us even become insane, or commit suicide. So, mind and body (or five aggregates)—being conditioned and not in our control—are simply suffering. Seeing them as they really are means seeing the truth of suffering. So, discernment of mind and body (*dukkha-sacca*) is faculty of wisdom (*paññindriya*) that is honored as a factor of enlightenment (*bodhi-pakkhiya*).

2. The true cause of suffering (*samudaya-sacca*) is attachment. We are deeply attached to ourselves as well as to things and people we love. Nobody on earth wants to die; everyone in the world makes all possible attempts to live longer. This obviously means we are all deeply attached to ourselves, our lives and those we love. This very attachment generates the continuous process of psycho-physical compounds, the solid suffering, in one life after another.

To illustrate this point, there is an interesting story. In a village, a boy often said: "Let me go back home." His parents initially ignored it. Later, however, they became curious of what their boy meant, and let him lead the way to what he called "home." The boy led them to a village nearby, and stopped by someone's house. Then, the boy saw a woman of middle age coming out of the house, he immediately called her name. When the woman looked at him with confusion, he said: "Hey, my wife, I'm your husband; don't you remember me? How come my dear, you look that old, now!" The boy later proved that he had been her husband in the previous life. When he died, he said, he was first reborn as a ghost around the house watching his beloved wife. Sometimes he had seen her former boyfriend visit her. Then, he felt so jealous that he threw stone at him so that he dared not visit her. What a poor guy! Even as a ghost, he still got attached to his wife. This is how attachment generates the cycle of births and deaths, the solid suffering. Vipassnā insights and enlightenment, counteracting and eradicating attachment, form the wisdom faculty (*paññindriya*) that is honored as a factor of enlightenment (*Bodhi-pakkhiya*).

3. The true cessation of suffering is nibbāna, which literally means "no bondage." Here, "bondage" refers to attachment that binds us to the cycle of births and deaths. Along with the cessation of attachment, the torturous cycle of births and deaths ceases or the process of psycho-physical phenomena stops. But, it does not imply eternal



death; it is a state in which conditioned phenomena turn into “unconditioned state.” Psycho-physical phenomena are conditioned and fleeting, related to time and space. Just at their reverse side—like darkness and light—there is “Unconditioned State” beyond time and space (*a-nimitta*). Such experience of unconditioned state (*a-sankhata*) known as nibbāna is honored as wisdom faculty (*paññindriya*) that forms a factor of enlightenment (*Bodhi-pakkhiya*).

4. The true path to the cessation of suffering is Eight-fold Noble Path (*magga-sacca*). This will be explained in detail in the end of this section.

## **Balance of the Controlling Faculties**

Thus, there are five controlling mental faculties: factual faith, heroic effort, constant mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. Among them, mindfulness is at the center, most needed to protect ourselves from mental defilements and their resultant misfortunes. So, the more continuous the mindfulness is, the safer we are from mental defilements and the faster we make progress in the practice. As for the remaining four faculties, a balance is needed especially between faith and knowledge, and between effort and concentration.

With strong faith and weak knowledge, we are most likely to fall victim to blind faith, whereas with strong knowledge and weak faith, we are likely to become cunning. Of course, vipassanā knowledge (*bhāvanāmaya*

*ñāṇa*) can never be excessive. The stronger it is, the faster can we attain enlightenment. But, intellectual knowledge (*sutamaya ñāṇa*) and reasoning power (*cintāmayā ñāṇa*) are most likely to become excessive. So, these two kinds of knowledge should be balanced with factual faith.

In the same way, imbalance between effort and concentration delay the progress. With strong effort and weak concentration our mind will become restless and overshoot the object, whereas strong concentration and weak effort will lead us to shallow awareness and sleepiness. Only with well-balanced mental faculties can we develop strong mindfulness and progressive vipassanā insights. So, it is important to learn how to balance them.

## **Too Strong Faith**

Faith is a very powerful factor to accomplish our purpose. But it needs to be balanced with knowledge; otherwise, we may fall victim to blind faith (*mudhapasanna*). There were many incidents in history in which some religious leaders and hypocrites took advantage of innocent people. In an incidence in the US, people in a cult committed suicide by drinking poison because they were convinced that it was the way to meet God. Indeed, such blind faith is very disastrous. Even when we practice the correct method, too much faith is still not good. One of my best friends, a monk named U Khemācāra, was a very dedicated practitioner. His faith in the practice was so strong that he believed his practice would lead to

enlightenment within a three-month rain retreat if he put enough effort in it. Unfortunately, he died during one of his intensive self-retreats in the forests of Burma. Sometimes I suspect whether his excessive faith was worthwhile.

Another form of excessive faith often comes along with a certain stage of vipassanā insights, during which our experiences are so remarkable that we falsely recognize them as magga-phala enlightenments. Therefore, we need to balance such excessive faith with scriptural knowledge and reasoning power (*paṭisaṅkhāna-bala*). In this regard, we are recommended to read good dhamma books, and to learn with skilled teachers and fellow meditators of dhamma experience.

## **Too Much Knowledge**

Intellectual knowledge (*suta-maya*), reasoning power (*cinta-maya*) and rational analysis (*paṭisaṅkhāna*) are encouraged to such extent that they engage us in right actions, right speech and right livelihood. In order to develop vipassanā insights, however, reasoning, analyzing or judging is not encouraged because we have to see present phenomena; there is no time for reasoning, analyzing or judging. Moreover, unskillful analysis often leads to confusion, like whether there are lives before or after the current life; whether mind is just a function of the brain or a separate phenomenon. In the end, we may come up with cunning ideas, like: A good heart is good enough, and no

other good deed needs to be done; merit and demerit are just concepts since there is neither "I" nor anybody else.

Another form of unskillful analysis is to judge one method against another, putting no effort into any correct practice. This is quite common to those who have read a lot of dhamma books written by different teachers, or to those who have practiced different methods under the guidance of different masters. During practice, knowledgeable individuals often waste their time analyzing their Dhamma experiences, delaying the spiritual progress. This fact explains why Venerable Sariputta, the most knowledgeable next to the Buddha, attained enlightenment a week later than his best friend, Moggalana. Obviously, intellectual knowledge unless balanced with faith does more harm than good to us on the spiritual path. So, the Buddha even said that he could not help someone of a wavering mind. So, knowledge needs to be balanced with faith.

## **Too Much Effort**

Effort, as mentioned before, is one of the four factors required to accomplish whatever we wish. However, if we put too much effort in the practice, or if we are over-enthusiastic for the faster progress in the practice, we will become restless, making mindfulness and concentration even weaker. As mentioned before, "too much effort" means the effort for too long sitting, too slow motion, insufficient sleep, and rigid focus on a particular object.

Generally, one-hour sitting and one-hour walking in rotation is a perfect schedule.

The key to progress in vipassanā is, let me repeat, the continuous mindfulness, which can only be developed by observing present phenomena without making choice and judgement. So, we need to be mindful of whatever obvious to us in a respective and relaxing manner. If we rigidly focus on the abdomen, for example, we would fail to be mindful of present phenomena like wandering mind, frustration, anger, noise, pain, and so on. Then it would be very hard to develop continuous mindfulness. On the other hand, if we observe present phenomena at random without focusing on a home object like abdomen, then the mind having no particular base to focus on will become restless after a while; there will be no room for concentration to develop. Without concentration, we cannot be aware of the object precisely and accurately. Without precise awareness we cannot develop any insight let alone enlightenment. So, it is necessary to focus on a home object like abdomen so that we can develop concentration. However, the abdomen is not only object to observe, but whatever obvious is object for us to note without making choice and judgment.

Yet again, there are some meditators who put too much effort in seeing mind and body in terms of characteristics and conditionality, impermanence, etc. This kind of effort also makes us feel stressful leaving a lot of expectations unfulfilled. In this case, we need to remember the original Pāḷi passage in which the Buddha instructed us to be aware

that we are going, when going, and so on in a very simple and realistic way. With the continuous mindfulness of our activities like going forward, returning, etc., a time will come when we discern psycho-physical phenomena in terms of characteristics and conditionality, impermanence, etc. So, put just enough effort in continuous mindfulness by noting whatever phenomena obvious to us without making choice and judgement. This is how to balance the excessive effort with relaxed receptiveness and without being overly concerned with results.

### **Too Much Concentration**

Too much concentration does not mean a very strong concentration. It actually refers to concentration with too much relaxation. This problem is likely to happen to the meditators who have made progress to some extent in the practice. Factual faith and great effort naturally lead us to a smooth practice with less pain and less wandering mind. At that point we are able to concentrate on the object without making much effort. As a result, our mind and body becomes very relaxed leading to falling asleep during the sitting hour. Some practitioners even fall asleep for two to three hours straight in a sitting position without moving. If they are left alone, they may even keep on sitting for hours without eating or drinking. So, they should be made to get up and go to dining hall and bathroom.

In other cases, the meditators become extremely concentrated on the meditative object, and experience a

state of oblivion, somewhat like the unconscious state. That is often mistaken for meditative absorption (*samāpatti*) or even for the experience of nibbāna (*phala*). The meditators with too much concentration like this are normally advised to spend more hours in walking meditation than sitting. Thus, they can boost up their energy balanced with concentration.

So, with the proper balance between faith and knowledge and between effort and concentration we can develop unbroken mindfulness leading to discernment of psycho-physical phenomena, their conditionality and constant changes.

## **FIVE KINDS OF STRENGTH**

The Pāli word *bala* is defined in several ways as strength, power, talent, authority, military might, and so on. And also there are different classifications of strength (*bala*) mentioned in the Pāli text. In the Aṅguttara-nikāya, for example, the Buddha mentions eight kinds of *bala*, thus: "*Monks, there are eight kinds of strength: crying is the strength of a baby, sulking is the strength of a woman, weapon is the strength of a thief, authority is the strength of a king, finding fault with others is the strength of a fool, analyzing advantages and disadvantages is the strength of a wise person, pondering is the strength of a learned person, and forgiveness is the strength of a monk.*" Actually, there are many different classifications of strength (*bala*) mentioned in the Pāli text. According to the context, therefore, we should understand the correct meaning of strength (*bala*).

Here in the case of Enlightenment Factors (*Bodhipakkhiya*), the word “*bala*” literally means “military might.” In this sense, the five controlling faculties (*indriya*) themselves are here described as strength (*bala*) because they, like the military might, counterattack the attack of their corresponding enemies as follows:

1. Faith (*saddha*) is the military might that counterattacks the enemy of disbelief (*assaddhiya*) in Triple Gem, the law of kamma, Dependent Origination, and so on. Of course, the Buddha never encourages blind faith. But factual faith or experiential faith is necessary for any accomplishment. Without faith, we will not make any effort. Without faith and effort, we reach nowhere, indeed. So, by cultivating factual faith or experiential faith we have to counterattack the enemy of disbelief.
2. Effort (*vīriya*) is the military might that counterattacks the enemy of laziness (*kosajja*). There are times when we are too lazy to put effort in wholesome things. Then, we should exert our energy by reflecting on the advantages of effort and on the disadvantages of laziness. We may reflect, for example, that without effort we cannot accomplish anything wholesome. Then, countless woeful rebirths are lying ahead for us to go through. Reflecting on this fact, we can arouse effort to counterattack the enemy of laziness.
3. Mindfulness (*sati*) is the military might that counterattacks the enemy of negligence (*pamāda*).



There are times when we are defeated by unwholesome thoughts. This means we are attacked by negligence or by mindlessness. By observing present phenomena arising in us, we can develop mindfulness counterattacking negligence.

4. Concentration (*samadhi*) is the military might that counterattacks the enemy of unstable mind or agitation (*uddhacca*). There are times when our mind is agitated by different kinds of emotions like love, hate, worry, anxiety, excitement, and so on. Then, we may practice samatha meditations to develop concentration. For example, when our mind is agitated with lust we may meditate on repulsiveness of the body, and when it is restless with hate, we may develop loving-kindness (*metta*), and so on. In the case of vipassanā, we can develop concentration by noting whatever phenomenon most obvious at the present moment.
5. Knowledge (*paññā*) is the military might that counterattacks the enemy of delusion (*avijjā*). There are times when we are defeated by confusion, illusion, misapprehension, and so on. Then, we should develop knowledge. In the case of Enlightenment Factors, knowledge refers progressive stages of insight starting from the discernment of psycho-physical phenomena, their interactions, impermanence, and so on to the magga enlightenment. By developing such insights we can counterattack the enemy of delusion.

## SEVEN AWAKENING FACTORS

### Awakening out of *Kilesa* Sleep

The Pāḷi term "*sambojjhaṅga*" means enlightening or awakening factors that refers to certain kinds of mental qualities that enlighten or awaken us from the *kilesa* sleep.

When we fall asleep, for example, we are not aware of what are really happening to us or to our surroundings and, therefore, exposed to all sorts of dangers and disasters like enemies, wild animals, floods, fires, earthquakes, and so on. Exactly like someone asleep, we are not really aware of what are really happening to us. We are changing at every moment physically, mentally and emotionally. Every moment we are getting older and our days on earth are counting down nonstop to death. Yet, we just feel as if unique and timeless. Such is simply illusion and in terms of which we are exactly like someone asleep. Under such illusion, our ego grows bigger and bigger; we become more and more selfish. With such ever-growing ego and selfishness, we are undermining ourselves and our planet by creating destructive weapons, and putting poisonous chemicals into our water, food, and air, and so on. Thus, our lives on earth become a nightmare, constantly threatened by several kinds of dangers and disasters.

Regarding illusion, let me recount one of my experiences. In a monastery where I used to live as a novice, there were about twenty dogs. Among them, Moe Nyo was the strongest, smartest, and most dominant

male that could defeat all its rivals during their mating season. Except for this time, it was always relaxing. It had nothing special to do, but just enjoyed its carefree life. We young novices were required to attend regular classes, to do home works and daily chores. So, we even envied it for its comfortable life. One day during a mating season, it fought brutally with its rivals and got a fatal injury on its head, from which it never recovered. Much to our sadness, it died right under our eyes. Moe Nyo, motionless and meaningless, brought me a moment of seeing a life as a deceptive nightmare.

The Buddha first awakened himself out of such deceptive nightmare by seeing mind and body as they really are. And then he taught us seven mental qualities for us to develop our spirituality so that we can awaken ourselves in the same way he did.

Below are Seven Awakening Factors:

1. Mindfulness that is developed by observing four objects: body, feelings, thoughts, and senses based on the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.
2. Investigation of dhamma that arises in terms of seeing mind and body as they really are.
3. Energy that gains momentum along with discernment of mind and body.
4. Gratification with our own experience of dhamma
5. Tranquility that naturally accompanies the gratification mentioned above.

6. Concentration that builds up with gratification and tranquility.
7. Equanimity, the mental state that is unaffected by any kind of sense-objects, pleasant or unpleasant<sup>84</sup>.

## **Mindfulness as an Enlightenment Factor**

Mindfulness is the key factor among the seven awakening factors. The Buddha instructed us to develop mindfulness by observing four objects: body, feelings, thoughts, and senses. Regarding the mindfulness of body, we are instructed to be aware of our actions like going, sitting, etc. The mindfulness of feeling is to observe pleasure, pain, happiness or sadness. The mindfulness of mind is to be aware of our thoughts, whether lust-related, anger-related, compassion-related, or wisdom-related, or whatsoever. And the mindfulness of dhamma is to be aware of our senses, like seeing, hearing, etc. According to Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, we are instructed to observe these objects at all times and on all occasions even in the restroom.

Here, there is a question. It is consciously and knowingly that we are going, standing, sitting, looking straight or aside, bending, stretching, and so on. So, it sounds like silly when we are instructed to be aware of

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<sup>84</sup> In many discourses, the Buddha described this kind of equanimity thus: "Seeing an object with the eyes, one is neither happy nor unhappy, but just tranquil, mindful, and clearly comprehending." The same is true with hearing, etc.

them. In this regard, the commentary first poses a question:

Why are we instructed to be aware of going when we are going, of sitting when sitting, and so on, because even animals like dogs and foxes are aware of such things?

As an answer to this question, the commentary explains the difference between common awareness and vipassanā awareness:

### **Common Awareness**

It is true we do things knowingly and consciously. In this sense, we are aware that we are going. However, such common awareness is just illusive perception (*saññāvipallāsa*) because it is related to ignorance (*apaṭipatti avijjā*) and illusion (*micchā-paṭipatti avijjā*). It is ignorance if we are going while thinking of something else. And it is illusion if we feel as if we've been the same persons going and walking on our own accord from the day we were born until now. If we trace all our actions back to their origin by asking why we are doing what we are doing, we will finally find only two reasons: for survival (*bhava-taṇhā*) and for reproduction (*kāma-taṇhā*). And both have their origin in delusion (*avijjā*). Thus, our actions themselves are generated by attachment and delusion even though we claim we are doing on our own accord. So, common awareness of our actions, feelings and thoughts is just illusive perception.

## Vipasanā Awareness

Vipassanā awareness is to see things as they really are (*bhūtaṃ bhutato passati*). So, it is vipassanā awareness when we are aware of going as going without illusory sense of "I" or "mine." In the same way, it is vipassanā awareness if we are aware, without illusion, of tension as tension, vibration as vibration, pain as pain, pleasure as pleasure, thoughts as thoughts, lust as lust, anger as anger, seeing as seeing, hearing as hearing, and so on. Thus, we become aware of mind and body as they really are, without ignorance and illusion. This kind of awareness is vipassanā awareness, which is honored as an awakening factor.

As mentioned above, mindfulness is the key awakening factor. Only with continuous mindfulness and strong concentration can we discern mental and physical phenomena beyond illusion and make-beliefs. With this discernment, we can realize what our mind and body really are (i.e., their individual characteristics, *sabhāva*), how they arise (i.e., their conditionality, *saṅkhata*), and how they disappear (i.e., their common signs such as impermanence..., *sāmañña*). At this moment of realization, we are considered to be awakened from the illusion and illusion-based mental defilements. The next moment, however, we may fall asleep again in terms of illusion when we think that it is I who is seeing something or someone beautiful or ugly. Then, we are exposed again to the enemies, namely, the mental defilements such as greed, lust, attachment, anger, hatred, and so on. Thus, at the early stages of developing mindfulness, we can only

become awakened momentarily. But, at the mature stages, with more continuous mindfulness, we can be awakened for a longer period. Eventually, we will be fully awakened from all illusions once we are fully enlightened.

## **Investigation of Dhamma**

The second awakening factor is Investigation of Dhamma. Here, “dhamma” refers to the mental and physical phenomena, while “investigation” means to see them as they really are. So, “Investigation of Dhamma” doesn’t mean to analyze the dhamma (mind and body) using our rational thought process. If we observe with full attention meditative objects such as body, feelings, thoughts, etc., we will discern mental and physical phenomena as they really are without identifying as “I” or “mine.”

For example, when we walk mindfully focusing on the feet, we can discern such physical phenomena as lightness or heaviness, pressure or vibration, warmth or coolness and so on beyond the conceptual form of the feet. While observing rising and falling of the abdomen, we will discern physical phenomena involved, like tension, pressure, vibration and so on. When we observe pain in our shoulders, for instance, if we are really mindful of it, we will see it (with *sati*) distinctively and separately from the shoulder. Once we can see pain as pain, there will be little or no room for illusory sense of “I” or negative feeling. While thus observing our body and feelings, we can also spontaneously discern the observing mind and wandering mind that follow each other. This discernment of mind and body means “Investigation of Dhamma”

(*dhamma-vicaya*), which is just the natural outcome of mindfulness, the first awakening factor.

## **The Other Awakening Factors**

With a clear discernment of mind and body, we will naturally become: enthusiastic, energetic (*vīriya*), gratified with our experience of dhamma (*pīti*), calm and tranquil (*passadhi*), mentally stable, concentrated (*samādhi*), and unmoved by pleasant or unpleasant sense-objects (*upekkhā*). Thus, the Seven Awakening Factors successively arise starting from mindfulness. In other words, they form a conditionally related sequence with mindfulness as the initial cause and foundation. This confirms that the development of these awakening factors is a natural outcome of mindfulness. This causal sequence is often described elsewhere in the discourses and proceeds from gratification to tranquility, happiness, concentration, and culminates with the arising of wisdom and realization.

## **To Know Them from Four Facets**

In Satipatthāna Sutta, the Buddha instructed us to know each and every awakening factor from four facets: its presence, its absence, how to develop it, and how to perfect it. However, it does not mean to observe the awakening factors deliberately, but to understand them through our own experience of the progressive vipassanā insights. We will become spontaneously aware of these facets, when they become prominent during certain stages of vipassanā insight.



According to the commentarial definition of *sambodhi*<sup>85</sup>, these seven factors arise in us starting from the fourth stage of vipassanā insight. According to the progressive vipassanā insights, however, “mindfulness” can become obvious starting from the first stage, i.e., the insight into mind and body (*nāma-rūpa-pariccheda ñāṇa*); “investigation of dhamma” becomes vivid starting from the third stage, i.e., the insight into three common characteristics<sup>86</sup> (*sāmañña ñāṇa*); “energy” and “gratification” are the most obvious among others at the fourth stage, i.e., the insight into arising and passing away (*udayabbaya ñāṇa*); and the last three factors, namely, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity, are most prominent at the eleventh stage, the insight that is unmoved by sense-objects, pleasant or unpleasant (*sañkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*). During these stages, we will become aware of the corresponding awakening factors without deliberately trying to observe them.

Indeed, these seven awakening factors are perfected and become known to us through the reflection of enlightenment (*paccavekkhaṇā ñāṇa*). In this sense, the Buddha instructed us that if an awakening factor is present in us, we should know that there is an awakening factor in us; if an awakening factor is not present in us,

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<sup>85</sup> Starting from the insight into arising and passing away (of mental and physical phenomena), a meditator develops the awakening factors and can be called *sambodhi*. *Udayavayañāṇuppattito paṭṭhāya sambodhi-paṭipadāyaṃ t̥hito nāma hoti*. (sub-commentary on Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta)

<sup>86</sup> “Three common characteristics” refers to impermanent, unsatisfactory, and impersonal natures of mind and body. These three characteristics begin to be known to us at the second stage of vipassanā insight when we see mental and physical phenomena changing process by process (but not yet moment by moment).

we should know that there is no awakening factor in us. We should know how the un-arisen awakening factors can arise and how the arisen awakening factor can be perfected by development.

## Supportive Conditions

The commentary on the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta describes the supportive conditions for developing the awakening factors.

**Mindfulness** (*sati*): There are four supportive conditions for developing mindfulness:

1. Performing physical activities mindfully according to the third subsection on the contemplation of the body;
2. Avoiding unmindful people;
3. Associating with mindful people;
4. Devoting our time and energy to developing mindfulness.

**Investigation of Dhamma** (*dhamma-vicaya*): Below are seven supportive conditions for developing “Investigation of Dhamma”, that is, seeing mind and body as they really are:

1. Theoretical inquiry: We should learn about Buddhist doctrines such as five aggregates, twelve sense-sources, four fundamental elements, etc.
2. Personal hygiene: We should bathe regularly, cut our nails when necessary, wash our clothes, and

clean our rooms. Such cleanliness is conducive to the wise investigation of dhamma.

3. Balancing the five mental faculties: faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, and knowledge. Among them, mindfulness is the awakening factor whose development is beneficial at all times and on all occasions. This means that there can never be an excessive amount of mindfulness. Whereas, a balance is needed between faith and knowledge and between effort and concentration (as mentioned in the third subsection on the contemplation of the body). Such balance of these mental faculties directly contributes to the wise investigation of dhamma.
4. Avoiding unwise people: We should avoid people who are ill-informed about the Buddha's teachings (such as the five aggregates, twelve sense-sources, etc.).
5. Associating with wise people: We should associate with people who are well-informed of the Buddha's teachings and can help us develop the awakening factors.
6. Reflecting on the deeper aspects of the Dhamma: We should profoundly reflect on the teachings of the Buddha, such as the five aggregates, Four Noble Truths, Dependent Origination, etc.
7. Devoting our time and energy to developing the Investigation of Dhamma.

**Energy** (*vīriya*): Below are eleven supportive conditions for developing energy and being inspired, enthusiastic and energetic:

1. Reflecting on how miserable the rebirths in woeful realms are: Unless we attain the first stage of enlightenment, we are liable to be reborn in woeful states. Reflecting on this dreadful fact, we should boost up our effort in our practice.
2. Reflecting on the benefits of effort: Without courageous effort, we cannot accomplish anything; great effort always brings us great accomplishments. Reflecting this point, we should boost up our energy.
3. Reflecting on the path to be practiced: Only heroic and energetic people can walk on the Noble Path following the footsteps of such noble persons as the arahants and the Buddha. Reflecting on this fact, we should boost up our effort in our practice.
4. Honoring the alms one has received: This is primarily concerned with monks and nuns who live on the generous supports of lay people. It also applies to meditators on retreat who are taken care of by volunteers. We should reflect thus: "People take good care of my needs; I should honor their kind support by putting great effort into my practice."
5. Reflecting on the inspiring qualities of the heritage: Here, "heritage" refers to the Dhamma heritage passed down from the Buddha. Meditators should reflect thus, "Great, indeed, is the dhamma

heritage left by the Buddha. If I am lazy, I will not deserve it.”

6. Reflecting on the inspiring qualities of one’s teacher, the Buddha: This means recalling the great events in the life of the Buddha and admonishing ourselves thus, “It does not befit me to be lazy after learning from such a great teacher.”
7. Reflecting on the inspiring qualities of one’s status as a follower of the Buddha: We should reflect thus: “I am a spiritual child of the Buddha. I must be energetic.”
8. Reflecting on the inspiring qualities of fellow meditators: We should admonish ourselves thus: “Sāriputta, Moggalāna and many other great disciples were fully enlightened having put heroic effort into their practice. Am I following their way?”
9. Avoiding lazy people: If we associate with lazy people, we are most likely to become lazy, too. So, we should avoid associating with them so that we can become energetic.
10. Associating with energetic people: We can boost up our energy by emulating energetic fellow meditators.
11. Devoting our time and energy to developing energy.

**Gratification** (*pīti*): The Pāli term for “gratification” is *pīti* which is normally translated as rapture, joy,

happiness, or delight. In the context of the Seven Awakening Factors, however, it refers to being gratified with one's remarkable experiences especially at the fourth stage of the progressive vipassanā insight. The exercises mentioned below are supportive conditions for developing "gratification":

1. Recollecting the Buddha's qualities.
2. Recollecting the Dhamma's qualities.
3. Recollecting the Sangha's qualities.
4. Recollecting one's virtue (*sīla*), such as five or eight precepts.
5. Recollecting one's acts of generosity.
6. Recollecting heavenly beings (*devas*) and their good deeds that lead them to such a blissful life.
7. Recollecting the peacefulness of nibbāna (or cessation of mental defilements).
8. Avoiding rough people who do not care about the Dhamma.
9. Associating with gentle and Dhamma-devoted people.
10. Reflecting on inspiring discourses.
11. Devoting our time and energy to developing gratification.

**Tranquility** (*passaddhi*): Below are seven supportive conditions for developing tranquility:

1. Good food: This means suitable food which is neither very poor nor very lavish, but good enough to satisfy and nourish us.
2. Agreeable weather.

3. Comfortable posture.
4. Balanced behavior: We should behave in a balanced and tranquil manner by reflecting on the law of kamma and avoiding the two extremes consisting of belief in no cause and belief in a wrong cause (a creator).
5. Avoiding restless people: There are some people who harass others. Associating with such people we are likely to behave the way they do. So, we should avoid such restless people to keep ourselves tranquil.
6. Associating with calm people.
7. Devoting our time and energy to developing tranquility.

**Concentration** (*Samadhi*): Below are eleven supportive conditions for developing concentration:

1. Personal hygiene
2. Balancing the five mental faculties. (These first two conditions should be understood as mentioned before).
3. Skill in observing the *samatha* objects to develop concentration: When the mind is restless with lustful feeling, for example, the skill in contemplating thirty-two anatomical parts of the body will help; when agitated with aversion, the skill in developing metta will work, and so on.
4. Exhilarating or inspiring the mind at the right time: When the mind is bored or inactive, we should inspire it by developing the three awakening

factors, namely, investigation of dhamma, effort, and gratification.

5. Calming the mind at the right time: When the mind is overactive or full of expectations we should calm it down by developing the last three awakening factors, namely, tranquility, concentration, and equanimity.
6. Gladdening the mind at the right time: When the mind is disheartened, we should gladden it by arousing a sense of urgency through the recollection of things: birth, old age, sickness, death, several kinds of distress in woeful realms, distress in past lives, distress in future lives, and struggle for survival in all forms of life.
7. Relaxing the mind at the right time: When the mind is well-balanced, that is, neither inactive nor overactive nor disheartened, we should sustain such balanced mental states.
8. Avoiding distracted people.
9. Associating with attentive people.
10. Reflecting on the attainment of absorption.
11. Devoting our time and energy to developing concentration.

**Equanimity** (*upekkhā*): Below are five supportive conditions for developing equanimity:

1. Not being overly concerned about other people: By reflecting on the law of kamma and emptiness of self, we should remain equanimous without being overly concerned about other people.



2. Not being overly concerned about material things: By recollecting the ownerless and impermanent nature of material things, we should keep equanimity without being overly concerned about material things.
3. Avoiding individuals who are overly concerned about people and things.
4. Associating with individuals whose minds are stable without being overly concerned about people and material things.
5. Devoting our time and energy to developing equanimity.

## **EIGHT-FOLD NOBLE PATH<sup>87</sup>**

The last part of the 37 Awakening Factors is the Eightfold Noble Path. The Pāḷi term “*magga*” literally means path or road that leads us to somewhere. In this discourse, this term figuratively refers to eight kinds of wholesome mental qualities that are collectively known as “Noble Path” (*ariya-magga*) since they lead us to nibbāna, the complete cessation of suffering. The Buddha described the Noble Path thus:

*"And what, monks, is the Noble Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering? It is simply the Eightfold Noble Path, namely, Right View, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Concentration."*

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<sup>87</sup> This section is from "Great Observing Power"

According to the above passage, the Noble Path is composed of eight factors:

1. Right View (*sammā-diṭṭhi*),
2. Right Attention (*sammā-samkappa*),
3. Right Speech (*sammā-vācā*),
4. Right Action (*sammā-kammanta*),
5. Right Livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*),
6. Right Effort (*sammā-vāyāma*),
7. Right Mindfulness (*sammā-sati*),
8. Right Concentration (*sammā-samādhi*).

## Three Trainings and Levels

The eight factors are classified into the three trainings: the first two into wisdom training (*paññā-sikkhā*), the middle three into morality training (*sīla-sikkhā*), and the last three into concentration training (*samādhi-sikkhā*). Just as we take some local roads before we get into the freeway, so also there are Prerequisite Path (*mūla-magga*) and Preliminary Path (*pubba-bhāga magga*) for us to take before we reach Noble Path (*ariya magga*).

### The Prerequisite Path (*Mūla Magga*):

“Prerequisite Path” is led by “right view” which refers to understanding kamma as our own possession. When we were born into this world, we brought nothing with us except kamma. One day, we will leave this world empty-handed, incapable of taking anything with us except our kamma. So, what we really possess is kamma, nothing else. Understanding this fact is what we call “right view” in the stage of prerequisite path. Guided by this right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*), our way of thinking becomes rational and

skillful. This is what we call “right thought.” These two factors, right view and right thought, thus forms “wisdom training” at this stage. Subsequently, our moral training can be fulfilled by observing four kinds of moral speech (*sammā-vācā*), three kinds of skillful actions (*sammā-kammanta*), and skillful livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*)<sup>88</sup>. The understanding of kamma also leads us to concentration training, i.e., samatha practices. Samatha practice consists of three Path factors: right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*), right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*). Samanatha practices help purify our mind from mental defilements (*kilesa*). Loving kindness meditation, for example, helps quiet such defilements as anger, hatred, ill-will, jealousy, conceit and so on; the contemplation on 32 anatomical parts, or recollection of our death helps minimize our ego, intolerance, and selfishness; the meditation on the in-and-out breath protects our mind from negative emotions like worry, anxiety, depression, wandering thoughts and so on. Hence, concentration is honored as mental purification (*citta-visuddhi*) which forms a strong foundation for higher spiritual development. Thus, understanding of kamma as

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<sup>88</sup> Three Right Thoughts (*sammā-sarikappa*) include thoughts of renunciation, thoughts of loving-kindness, and thoughts of compassion by avoiding three unwholesome thoughts: thoughts of sensual pleasure, thoughts of killing, and thoughts of hurting. Four Right Speeches (*sammā-vācā*) means avoiding unwholesome speech: telling a lie, slandering, harsh speech, and frivolous speech. Three Right Actions (*sammā-kammanta*) refers to refraining from three wrong actions: killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. Right livelihood means earning one’s livelihood without getting involved in the three wrong actions and four wrong speeches.

our own property we do wholesome deeds that form eight factors of the Prerequisite Path (*mūla-magga*).

## **Preliminary Path Culminating in the Noble Path**

“Preliminary Path” refers to the development of progressive vipassanā insights by discerning mental and physical phenomena that are changing every moment. It is an illusion to see someone or something to be solid and lasting, beautiful or ugly, whereas it is vipassanā insights to see the flux of mind and body beyond such illusion. So, the Preliminary Path starts from discernment of psycho-physical phenomena, their conditionality and changes.

In order to discern mind and body, we should be mindful of four kinds of objects as mentioned repeatedly before: body, feelings, minds, and dhamma. In the beginning of the practice, we cannot see real phenomena, their conditionality or changes beyond concepts such as “I” or “mine.” The illusory sense of “I” is not something that can be easily uprooted because it has been deep-seated in our heart throughout cycle of births and deaths. We always feel that it is “I” who is sitting, walking, happy, unhappy, thinking, planning, seeing, hearing and so on. When concentration and mindfulness are strong enough, however, we will be able to discern physical and mental elements beyond such conceptual forms and without identifying them as “I” or “mine.”

### **Discernment of Mind and Body**

1. When we note physical objects like breath, abdominal movement or bodily actions, we mainly experience four kinds of physical elements: the

earth element in terms of hardness or softness, the water element in terms of heaviness and lightness, the fire element in terms of cold, warmth, or heat, the air element in terms of tightness, tension, vibration, and pressure.

2. When we note sensations or feelings such as pleasure or pain, happiness or sadness, we can see them as separate from the body and without identifying them as "I" or "mine." Normally, we think "it is "I"" who is in pain or unhappy. Under the light of strong mindfulness and concentration, we can see pain as pain, and pleasure as pleasure without identifying them as "I" and "mine."
3. When we note thoughts, such as lust-related thoughts, anger-related thoughts, worry-related thoughts, wandering thoughts and so on, we can see different thoughts arising along with different sense-objects. We can also see mental phenomena as separate from the body and without identifying them as "I" or "mine."
4. When we note dhamma-objects such as seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching, we can discern real phenomena-senses, sense-objects, their corresponding sense-consciousness or subsequent thought processes-without identifying them with "I" or "mine."

This is how we discern mind and body when we can observe phenomena while they are still present. For instance, the Venerable Mahāsi Sayadaw said, if we want to really see lightning, we have to see it the moment it strikes, neither before nor after. To catch such a moment,

we must be alert and mentally active. In the same way, to see mental and physical phenomena while they are still present, we must be very alert and mentally active. Once we see the present phenomena, we can discern what they really are and how they arise and disappear. Such discernment is the starting point of progressive vipassanā insights. In other words, discernment of mind and body leads us all the way from the basic level of vipassanā insights up to magga-phala enlightenment. Unfortunately, many of us take these discernments for granted and think of them as unimportant; often we complain that we are experiencing nothing special. So, remember that discerning mind and body as mentioned above we are building the strong foundation necessary for the whole structure of spiritual accomplishment.

### **Five or Eight Factors of the Preliminary Path**

Each and every stage of vipassanā insights consists of five Working Path-factors (*kāraṅga maggaṅga*). Attempts we make to be aware of present phenomena involve Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration (three factors of the concentration training). "Right Thought" in this stage means the attention we pay to the meditative objects and "Right View" is to see mind and body as they really are (two factors of the wisdom training). All together there are five factors that are called Working Path Factors (*kāraṅga-maggaṅga*) because they are working together for development of vipassanā insights until accomplishment of the Eight-fold Noble Path. Every time we see mind and body as they really are, however, we are considered to be developing all the eight Path Factors because the three moral factors (right speech, right action, and right livelihood) are usually fulfilled either before or during meditation practice.

## **The Noble Path** (*Ariya Magga*)

Thus, progressive vipassanā insights advance gradually until they culminate in attainment of magga-enlightenment, which is composed of eight factors called the Eightfold Noble Path. Here, Mahāsi Sayadaw compared the Preliminary Path (vipassanā insights) and Noble Path (magga-enlightenment) to jumping over a canal and landing on the other bank. There are four tasks that are accomplished at the moment of enlightenment: first, seeing mind and body being constantly tormented by impermanence (*dukkha*); second, eradicating attachment to them, which is responsible for the cycle of rebirth (the cause of *dukkha*); third, experiencing their cessation, nibbāna (the cessation of *dukkha*); and lastly accomplishing eight factors of the Noble Path, which reach their full maturity at this moment (the Path leading to the cessation of *dukkha*).

### **Culmination: Accomplishment of the Goal**

Among the Four Noble Truths, we only experience the first two, namely, *dukkha* (mental and physical phenomena) and the cause of *dukkha* (attachment). It is only when we attain the *magga-phala* enlightenment that we can experience the last two Noble Truths: the accomplishment of the Eightfold Noble Path and the realization of *Nibbāna*. However as mentioned repeatedly before, if we can note objects while they are present, we will be able to discern mental and physical phenomena without identifying them as “I” or “mine.” Such discernment means realizing *dukkha* (the first truth), undermining attachment (the second

truth), leading to the experience of *nibbāna* (the third truth), and walking on the Noble path (the fourth truth).

*“Oh monks, just as the River Ganges flows towards, inclines towards, tends towards the east, so too, one who cultivates and develops the Eightfold Noble Path flows towards, inclines towards and tends towards nibbāna.”* (Samyutta 5, 38)

By practicing as instructed according to the Satipatthāna Sutta, we will realize the first Noble Truth when we see mind and body as they really are within ourselves empirically, and in other beings inferentially. Through this practice, mindfulness is established and vipassanā-insights are developed step by step until the cessation of clinging, that is, *maggā-phala* enlightenment and the realization of *nibbāna*.

## **ASSURANCE OF ATTAINMENT<sup>89</sup>**

### **Twenty-one Ways**

In the Satipatthāna Sutta, the Buddha taught us how to develop mindfulness and progressive vipassanā insights in twenty-one different ways:

- The Contemplation of the Body in fourteen ways: mindfulness of breathing, bodily postures, clear comprehension of activities, contemplation on the

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<sup>89</sup> This section is from the book titled Great Observing Power.



thirty-two anatomical parts of body, on the primary material elements, and the nine cemetery contemplations.

- The Contemplation of Feelings.
- The Contemplation of the Mind.
- The Contemplation of the Dhamma in five ways: mindfulness of the five hindrances, the five aggregates of clinging, the six internal and external sense-sources, the seven awakening factors, and the Four Noble Truths.

After describing all these twenty-one ways of meditation on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Buddha gave this assurance,

*"Monks, if anyone should develop these four satipaṭṭhānas in such a way for seven years, then one of two fruits can be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now or, if there is a trace of clinging left, non-returning.*

*Let alone seven years, monks, if anyone should develop these four satipaṭṭhānas in such a way for six years, five years ... four years ... three years ...two years ...one year, then one of two fruits can be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now or, if there is a trace of clinging left, non-returning.*

*Let alone one year, monks, if anyone should develop these four satipaṭṭhānas in such a way for seven*

*months... six months ... five months ... four months ... three months ... two months ... one month ... half a month, then one of two fruits can be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now or, if there is a trace of clinging left, non-returning.*

*Let alone half a month, monks, if anyone should develop these four satipaṭṭhānas in such a way for seven days, then one of two fruits can be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now or, if there is a trace of clinging left, non-returning.*

So, it was with reference to this that it was said:

*"Monks, this is the only sure path for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of dukkha and discontent, for acquiring the true method, for the realization of nibbāna, namely, the four satipaṭṭhāna."*

*This the Blessed One said. Glad in their hearts, the monks welcomed the words of the Blessed One.*

In the conclusion of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the Buddha compellingly assured us that we can accomplish the highest or the second highest stage of enlightenment if we practice satipaṭṭhāna meditation for seven years at most, or seven days at least depending on how mature our spiritual potentials are. In his assurance, the Buddha used the number "seven" a lot because in ancient India, "seven" was a popular number for several reasons.

Actually, this statement was not intended to set an exact time frame for spiritual accomplishment within seven years, seven months or seven days. Therefore, Venerable Mahāsīva, a highly-learned senior monk, for example, took three decades while Bāhiya Dārucīriya took just a few minutes to accomplish the spiritual breakthrough to the realization of nibbāna.

As a matter of fact, this assurance clearly indicates the variation in time for spiritual accomplishment of individuals with different spiritual backgrounds. So, this statement vividly implies that we can become awakened at any moment if the mindfulness is well established (*supatthita-sati*) and with the help of well-balanced mental faculties<sup>90</sup>.

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<sup>90</sup> A balance is required between faith and knowledge and between effort and concentration. Regarding too much faith, a good example is Venerable Vakkali who became fully awakened only when he balanced excessive adoration of the Buddha with the cultivation of wisdom. For excessive effort, Venerable Ananda is a good example. He became fully enlightened once he relaxed his excessive energy. Another example is Venerable Soṇa who became an arahant by reducing his excessive effort according to the guidance given by the Buddha with the simile of the harp that produces a nice sound only when its strings are neither too loose, nor too tight. Regarding the excessive application of one's knowledge, a good example is Venerable Mahāsīva who, highly learned and over-confident, had to take three decades to accomplish his practice. Another well-known example is Venerable Sāriputta who applied too much knowledge to his practice and experiences and, therefore, attained the arahantship a week later than his fellow meditator, Venerable Moggallāna.

According to the discourses, we cannot say exactly how long we need to practice in order to accomplish mindfulness, or to eradicate our mental defilements. In this regard, the Buddha gave us a simile. A carpenter, the Buddha once said, cannot measure how much his ax handle has worn out when observing it on a daily basis, but will realize this over time, due to his finger marks which impress on the handle after repeated use. So too will a meditator, after repeated practice, realize that the defilements are growing weaker and are gradually being eradicated. This simile indicates a gradual progress towards realization although it cannot be measured in a precise time frame. Obviously, the finger marks on the handle arise gradually; they do not suddenly emerge. In the same way, Bāhiya's spiritual aptitude (*pāramī*), when he met the Buddha, had gradually developed and matured enough for a sudden breakthrough to the realization of nibbāna.

Actually, even gradual progress towards realization has many ups and downs along the way until enlightenment like a certain kind of bird that always flies up and down as it steadily moves toward its goal. Mahāsi Sayadaw explained this point in comparison with the speedometer that always goes up and down according to the acceleration of the car. One day we may reach the higher stages of vipassanā insights when our practice accelerates due to continuous mindfulness, strong concentration and having well-balanced mental faculties. The next day, however, an imbalance of mental faculties during our practice may return us to the basic stages of practice. Even during the same day, our practice may

progress in the morning, but regress in the evening. So, the fluctuation of progression and regression is a normal process which yogis experience in their meditation practice. Despite these fluctuations, this process gradually builds up momentum, and due to an ever-increasing potential may culminate in the sudden realization of *nibbāna*. This means we can become awakened at any moment. So, remember that each and every single moment of mindfulness involves 37 factors of enlightenment and forms a step closer to the goal.

## **Sharing Merit**

May all beings share this merit  
Which we have thus acquired  
For the acquisition of all kinds of happiness.

May beings inhabiting space and earth,  
Devas and nagas of mighty power  
Share this merit of ours.  
May they long protect the teachings!

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