MEDITATION

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AWARENESS

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Ven Dr. M. Vajiragnana

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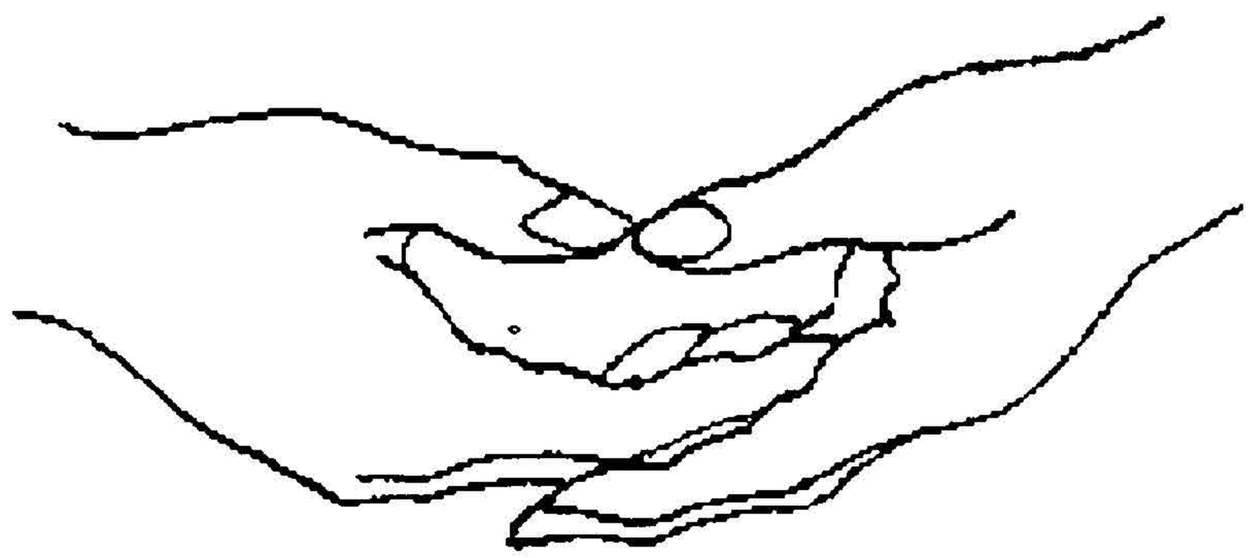

Ven Dr. M. Vajiragnana

CONTENTS

1. Meditation is Awareness..... 1

2. Techniques.....7

3. Insight Meditation.....41

4. Text of *Satipatthana Sutta*.....55

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of the Buddha contains the solution to all problems in life. It involves self-discipline and self-understanding. Meditation has always been the direct way to perceive for oneself both the problems and their solutions. The practice brings relaxation, mental stability and calmness in daily life - we could even say it polishes our life.

The purpose of this little book is to introduce the reader to the field of meditation. The practice of which is not, as I have explained within the book, withdrawal from the world, but a necessary preparation. Nor is meditation concerned only with the philosophical considerations of sages and monks. In every activity, in every mode of life, in every occupation, for all peple at all times, the practice of meditation can lead us to an appreciation of our individual place in life and of life's intrinsic value. Because we become aware more of ourselves as an individual than as a social/political animal, we gain the confidence and clarity of vision to use our powers wisely and for the good of all.

The Buddha encouraged his followers to "Meditate now so that you will not be lethargic and remorseful when the opportunity has passed and age or sickness overtakes you". A great master of meditation once said, "Living a meditative life is the same as living as ordinary everyday life.....do not waste time". With those words I close this introduction and I leave you to read on...

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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FOREWORD

"There is no meditation without wisdom, nor wisdom without meditation. One who has both wisdom and meditation is close to peace and emancipation."

Any religion, including Buddhism, is like a huge tree which has a trunk, roots, and a canopy of leaves, plus flowers, fruits, bark, soft wood and pith. None of them by themselves can be considered as a tree, but a tree can be made by the union of all these elements. Similarly the union of *morality, concentration* and *wisdom* is the vital essence which holds together all elements of Buddhism.

On the one hand, no moral practice alone can free us from the predicament of suffering; on the other hand, neither can concentration alone achieve liberation. It is the combination of both, coupled with *wisdom*, which leads us to the final goal. Meditation brings out the practical meaning of all aspects of this understanding. Without a good knowledge of meditation, it is impossible for us to make our practice perfect and to liberate ourselves from suffering.

Attention is an absolutely necessary factor. There are two kinds of attention - Bare Attention and Mindful Attention. One does not necessarily have to be a meditator to have bare attention, for even animals have it. Without bare attention it is impossible to know anything. Because we are not aware of the speed at which our mind operates, we take it for granted that our mind can

know anything without having to pay much attention. What is more important is the second kind of attention, Mindful Attention, therefore, being an all-important ingredient of meditation, it is this *full mindfulness* which is an essential aim of all practitioners.

Without any hesitation or reservation, I recommend this timely book on Buddhist meditation written by the Venerable Dr. Medagama Vajiragnana, Chief *Sanghanayaka Mahathera* of Great Britain. I cannot think of a Theravada Buddhist monk better qualified than Ven. Dr. Vajiragnana to write a book on meditation in such lucid language. This book, I believe, will satisfy the ever-increasing demand of meditators for guidance and instruction in this vital subject.

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MEDITATION IS AWARENESS

The word "meditation" means many different things to many different people. The fact that it is used in so many religious and philosophical traditions does not mean that it is always used in the same sense. Some people approach this subject with all sorts of preconceived ideas about what sort of experiences they should expect. We shall look at the meditations recommended and practised by the Buddha 2,500 years ago. These practices do not demand adherence to the Buddhist religion.

Practising meditation is not a ritual or a ceremony to be performed. It is in no sense a 'mystical' state. Meditation is a straightforward practice designed to cultivate awareness of the present moment.

The intrinsic value of meditation is that, by making us more aware of ourselves, it can lead us to an appreciation of our individual place in life. We are able to face the vicissitudes of life quietly, calmly and wisely. In Buddhism there is one word which describes this precisely, it is Wisdom *(Pañña)*. *Pañña* is not the same thing as intelligence - it is not accumulated ability. Wisdom is pure understanding in the present, reality in the here and now. Wisdom sees the truth as the truth, and the false as the false. It is wisdom that enables us to love

all beings and has the power to alleviate suffering.

Meditation also helps us live as neurosis-free beings, free from fear and worry. In the modern world, this alone is enough justification for the regular practice of meditation, but it also brings the further benefits of a greater understanding of life, leading to purity of action, speech and thought, and a deep serenity born of seeing the world as it really is, not as we wish it to be.

MENTAL CULTURE

The Buddha said, "There are two kind of dis-ease. What are those two? Physical dis-ease and mental dis-ease. There are people who enjoy freedom from physical dis-ease for a year or two....even for a hundred years or more. But rare in this world are those who enjoy freedom from mental dis-ease even for one moment, except those who are free from mental defilements".

He referred many times to the benefits and blessings of meditation, teaching its physical and mental benefits as well as its spiritual value. When the Buddha spoke on the subject, he used the word *Bhavana*. The word 'meditation' is in fact not a good translation of the Pali word *Bhavana*, which means 'mental culture' or 'development'. This means culture in the fullest sense of the term. It aims at cleansing the mind of impurities and disturbances, such as lustful desires, hatred, anger, jealousy, pride, arrogance, ill-will, indolence, sceptical doubts, worries and restlessness, whilst cultivating such qualities as love, compassion, kindness, concentration,

awareness, determination, energy, discernment, confidence, joy, and tranquillity. The more we can fill our minds with positive qualities, the less room there will be for negative feelings to manifest themselves.

Hence, one reason we practise meditation is to train the mind to develop its pleasant qualities and reduce its unpleasant states. There is, however, a more important, more fundamental aim. This is to reach the Truth - wisdom or penetrative knowledge - which Buddhists call Enlightenment. Ordinarily, our minds are clouded by defilements, so we are unable to see things in their proper nature; it is like looking through a veil or a piece of tinted glass. We do not see reality, but we see things as we would like them to be. For example, because we like to perceive our bodies as objects of beauty, we spend much time and effort to decorate them with fine clothes, cosmetics, and perfume. All of these embellishments prevent us from seeing the real nature of the body, which in its true state is not so attractive. Buddhist meditation enables us to see things as they really are, shorn of our preconceived ideas, our projections, our likes and dislikes. It leads eventually to the attainment of the highest wisdom. This does not mean that we have to give up conventional activities - we still have to live in society and we can still carry out our customary actions, such as caring for our bodies, but we are no longer attached to them and we see them for what they are.

Some people think that meditation is only for those people who have problems which need to be sorted out. This is, however, a serious misconception as it ignores

the very positive contribution which meditation can make to the way in which we live our lives. It is a way to bring about peaceful living with a mind that is relaxed and able to understand things that are happening both within us and outside us. The practice of meditation helps prevent us from becoming upset when difficulties arise, and it develops beneficial qualities such as courage, energy and vision.

One element of the Buddhist path is called right effort. It has four parts. First, we should strive to prevent the arising of unwholesome mental states which have not yet arisen. Secondly, we should strive to eliminate unwholesome mental states which have already arisen. Thirdly, we should strive to arouse wholesome mental states which have not yet arisen; and fourthly we should strive to develop those wholesome mental states which have already arisen. By practising right effort in order to purify our minds of negative mental states, we can cope with whatever situations we have to face, be worry-free, and enjoy life as it comes.

Happiness and unhappiness lie within our own minds. They are not dependent on our external circumstances, but on how we react to these circumstances. Two people may have the same experience, but one will react by feeling happy, and the other by feeling unhappy. Meditation helps us to cultivate the happy responses and reduce the unhappy ones. It gives us the courage to withstand life's inevitable difficulties without disturbing our peace of mind.

In addition to its mental benefits, the practice of meditation also improves physical health by inducing relaxation and sound sleep. It can also help to alleviate other physical problems, such as heart disease, duodenal and gastric ulcers and many more conditions related to stress, which are increasing rapidly in the developed countries of the world.

At the Harvard Medical School Dr. Herbert Benson found that meditators develop what he calls the "relaxation response" to difficult or dangerous situations. This is a much healthier response than the very common "fight or flight" reaction. He also observed that during meditation the heart rate decreases on average by three beats a minute, and that the rate of breathing also decreases. The blood pressure of those who have high blood pressure is reduced during meditation. Dr. Benson found that all the traditional methods of meditation evoke this response. He also found that four basic elements are needed. They are a quiet environment, an object for the attention to dwell on, a comfortable posture and, above all, a non-discriminatory attitude towards meditation. This is exactly what the Buddha taught two thousand five hundred years ago.

The requirements for meditation are time, patience and confidence - the time to practise without interruption at a convenient and conducive time of day (more about this later), the patience to be aware that the results of meditation may not be experienced or even be noticed for some time, and confidence in its efficacy. What is not demanded is any strict religious observance, rites, or rituals. Nor is it demanded that a middle-aged person

all but break his legs assuming a sitting position he may not have used before - all these things are foreign to the spirit of Buddhism.

You can read about meditation in many books and you can hear about it from well-respected teachers, but you will not know meditation until you try it first-hand. You cannot know the taste of a mango until you eat one yourself. Taste is a personal matter which cannot be fully described by one individual to another. There is no substitute for direct, personal experience. So it is with meditation. Meditation is something that must be experienced. No matter how many learned books you may read about the subject, it is practice which counts.

For Buddhists, meditation is a central part of their lives. In the *Satipatthana Sutta*, the most important of the Buddha's discourses on the subject, meditation is said to be, "a direct way for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destruction of suffering and grief, for reaching the right path and for the attainment of *Nibbana*." (In Sanskrit the word used is *Nirvana*). Meditation, as it is expounded in the original Pali texts, is based primarily upon the experience of the Buddha himself and the method adopted by him in the attainment of enlightenment.

2

TECHNIQUES

KINDS OF MEDITATION

There are two kinds of Buddhist meditation: Calming Meditation (*samatha*), which calms our minds and leads to higher states, called *jhanas* (a word which is often translated as Absorption and which will be more fully described later), and Insight Meditation (*vipassana*), which improves and cultivates our insight, a word which has a special meaning in Buddhism. They are complementary to each other.

The *samatha* system of meditation may, however, be regarded as optional, as it is seen in Buddhism only as a discipline preparatory to the attainment of wisdom. But *vipassana*, being a direct path to wisdom, is regarded in Buddhist teaching as an important and unique system.

The employment of *Samatha* meditation for cultivating tranquillity goes back to a time before the Buddha; in all probability it is a very ancient practice. Prior to the attainment of Buddhahood, Prince Siddhartha spent six long years investigating the teachings of the major philosophers of his day. He practised meditation as it was understood at the time, i.e. *Samatha* meditation. His teachers had reached the highest *Jhanas*. Prince

Siddhartha followed suit but found that even though he attained that same high level of absorption, still he did not solve the problems that confronted him. This kind of meditation did not supply the cure for the greatest of woes. Even when his mind was firmly established in complete Absorption, it was not in a permanent state and there was still no explanation for, or understanding of, the problems of human existence. So he persisted in his investigations and eventually discovered the practice of *Vipassana* meditation, which enabled him to reach Enlightenment and to become the Buddha (literally, the "one who knows").

DAILY ROUTINE

The practice of meditation should not be disconnected from our daily life, nor should it interfere with our routine. It should be resolved by the meditator that he or she will devote some time to it every day. Regularity of practice is important. Training the mind is like training the body - the greatest benefits can be experienced by establishing the habit of practising regularly. Try, if possible, to sit at the same time of day; shorter periods on a daily basis are more helpful than one long session once a week. People often say that they cannot find time or a suitable quiet place to meditate. Surely it is possible to find a way to have 15 minutes of quiet if we so desire.

There is no specific instruction concerning a suitable time for meditation. Serious meditation students devote most of the day to their practice, but those peo-

ple who have busy lay lives should choose a regular period once or twice a day. Having chosen a particular time or times, try to keep to an established routine. Some of us will meditate after lunch, some in the evenings, some in the mornings. Some of us are "owls" and some are "larks" and only you really know just when you are at your best. It would not be conducive to the practice for an "owl" to meditate in the mornings or for a "lark" to sit at night. The important thing to remember is that the success of the practice depends on the harmony of body and mind. In order to bring them to their zenith the body and mind must be in balance and in accord with each other. We cannot meditate if the mind is drowsy, lazy or restless. The best time for meditation is that part of the day when both body and mind are most regularly at their peak.

Although meditation is a practice to be incorporated into our everyday life, some people find it helpful to go on retreats. A retreat may last for a day, a weekend, several weeks or even months. During this time it is possible to free ourselves from the normal pressures and distractions of everyday life and to apply ourselves to more intensive practice in an environment which has been specifically designed to encourage meditation. We benefit from a set programme and routine which support the meditator. Even apparently small items in the routine may be helpful. For example, a gong may be struck from time to time which acts like a reminder and helps to direct the wandering mind back to the meditation object.

PLACE OF PRACTICE

As regards the place in which to start our practice, in the Buddhist scriptures it refers to a monk having "gone to the forest, or to the root of a tree, or to an empty place [a hill, a rock cleft, a mountain cave, a charnel ground, a forest thicket, an open space, a heap of straw]". In these days it might not be so easy to find a convenient forest or heap of straw, but the words are not to be taken too literally. We can all find a quiet place where we can be alone, undisturbed by people and external conditions. It is true to say that we can meditate almost anywhere, even whilst walking or travelling by bus or train, but a quiet, comfortable place is most conducive to concentration.

Nowhere is entirely without noise, even if we were to retire into the jungle, the twittering of birds, the wind and the rustle of leaves are all disturbing, to say little of the ants and mosquitoes! Also, whilst enjoying the seclusion of such a place, it is known that the imagination plays havoc and frightening things may be seen. We are warned about this and advised always to study every detail of our surroundings, only then can our imagination be brought under control. So wherever we are meditating we must be prepared to tolerate the inevitable outside distractions.

It is useful to establish one place exclusively as the "sitting place" or "meditation seat". The habitual use of this seat solely for this purpose will precondition both

the body and the mind into a calm, peaceful and receptive state whenever we sit there. In ancient days a yogi might sit on a tiger skin or a deer skin which would immediately help to prepare both his mind and his body; in the same way we should associate ourselves with our chosen place, which is kept clean and prepared for meditation.

POSTURE

The same flexibility as regards time and place for meditation applies equally to posture. The basic postures used for meditation are sitting and walking.

The generally recommended posture for meditation is to "sit erect with mindfulness alert". This does not, though, demand that you sit in the full lotus position with ankles placed on top of the thighs. If you are capable of sitting in the full lotus or half-lotus position comfortably for some time, then that is fine. Many people, however, are not able to do this, and so the use of a chair, cushion or small meditation bench is quite acceptable. It is good if the seat is neither too high, nor too low, nor too comfortable. If you are seated on the floor, a hard cushion approximately six to eight inches high creates a posture that allows free circulation of the blood and minimises discomfort. The important thing is to adopt a good posture, because poise of the body brings poise of the mind.

The hands should be resting, palms upwards, on the lap or the crossed legs. Make sure that the position

4008

is comfortable and no tension is allowed to develop in the upper arms or shoulders because of poor positioning of the hands. The back must be upright and still. Now allow the shoulders to drop naturally, and try to get the feeling that your centre of gravity is just a little below the navel.

When you start meditating, begin by just getting the FEEL of the posture. Take your time over this process because it is important.

Once you are seated comfortably, close your eyes, or, if you prefer, half close them and gaze past the tip of the nose. The advantage for the beginner of closing the eyes fully is that it reduces the number of distractions by shutting out all unnecessary light and visual stimuli. This can, however, lead to drowsiness. The Buddha is usually portrayed as sitting with half-closed eyes, looking past the tip of his nose, at a point approximately one metre away. Choose whichever technique you find more comfortable. You could try at the start of your meditation closing your eyes lightly, then, should you find drowsiness coming on, open your eyes slightly. Do not look around, but leave your gaze unfocused. After experimenting in this way you will ward off sleep successfully.

Now relax the body from the top of the head downwards, consciously considering the scalp and relaxing it; the muscles of the face and relaxing them; the neck and relaxing it; and so on, until the whole body is re-

laxed, calm and supple. This relaxation is most important because, if the body is hard, tense and stiff, it may induce feelings of pain, dissatisfaction, restlessness and a general air of distraction, which is not conducive to concentration.

LOVING-KINDNESS

Essential to all harmonious human relationships is the practice of love. Buddhists term this special quality *Metta* or "loving-kindness", which is regarded as so important that a specific meditation practice has been developed around it.

This kind of meditation can be practised daily, either by itself or as a preparation for other practices which will be described later. *Metta* is an attribute which we should all strive to develop to the maximum. It is particularly useful as a means of arousing positive states of mind in order to overcome anger and other negative states. This meditation helps when the concentration is weak and the mind is distracted. *Metta* is such an important quality that it needs to be described in detail.

Metta is a radiance, which springs from a pure heart; it may be thought of as universal goodwill. There is no one word in the English language which describes fully such a profound state of mind. Many different words have been used to translate *metta* into English, such as "love", "loving-kindness" and "universal love", but *metta* has a much deeper sense than is conveyed by any of these words. It is the foundation of all good qualities

in a person; in fact, it can be said that our entire spiritual development should be built on *metta*. It is the basis of all virtues.

When *metta* is translated as "love", people may form the impression that it involves some kind of attachment, but in this kind of love there is no trace of personal attachment. It is an altruistic, friendly feeling which is entirely free from lustful desires. We do not expect anything in return from those to whom we radiate this characteristic. They may not even know that we are radiating *metta* towards them, but by doing this, we fill our own hearts with peace and happiness. In this process, there is no room for *mana*, which is often translated as "conceit", but which means literally "measuring", namely measuring ourself against others in the sense of feeling superior or inferior or even equal to others.

No discriminatory thoughts should arise in the mind, *metta* is not limited by divisions such as "us, "them", "national", "international", "high", or "low", etc. The person who truly practises *metta* radiates this quality equally and impartially in all directions - north, south, east, west, above and below. Not only are all human beings included, but also all animals and even the environment too. The true practitioner pollutes neither the land, nor the air, nor the water; doing nothing which may spoil the environment in any way or disturb others because there is such a caring but unbiased feeling towards all objects, both animate and inanimate.

To develop *metta* is to bring peace, both to oneself and to others. This is such a sublime state that it has been

described by the Buddha as a "heavenly abode", in the sense that when you develop *metta*, even if only for a little while, you become like a divine person and experience divine feelings. This has the power to transform a man into a superman. It is a defining characteristic of every spiritually advanced person.

Metta is a force for the removal of all unpleasantness and unhappiness, both in the family and in society at large. *Metta* is the exact opposite of anger, resentment and ill-will because it is a pure form of goodwill which is extended without any limitations to the entire phenomenal world. Anger always arises because of attachment to the idea of self or "I am" (*sakkaya-ditthi*), but there is no room for this kind of attachment in the practise of *metta*. Anger is a mental state which spoils our behaviour, it can lead to the destruction of our possessions, and can even make us sick. We can observe how its arising brings about immediate changes in the appearance both of ourselves and others. Anger is responsible for many of the problems in the world, from petty quarrels or strife up to world wars. In the *Anguttara Nikaya* the Buddha says that there are seven characteristics of an angry person which will be a cause of satisfaction to his enemies:-

1. No matter how he may be dressed, he will look ugly.
2. He may be living in the lap of luxury, but he will be in pain.
3. Because he cannot think properly, he will mistake good for evil, and evil for good, and so he loses his belongings.

4. He loses whatever fame he had achieved through previous diligence.
5. He loses his friends.
6. When he dies, he is reborn in an unhappy place.
7. When all this happens, one who hates the angry person will derive tremendous satisfaction from his sufferings.

On many occasions the Buddha pointed out the negative effects of anger. In the *Dhammapada* we read, "Hatred is never appeased by hatred; through love alone it ceases. This is an eternal law." (*Dhammapada* v.5) Hatred confuses the mind by destroying the concentration. No angry person can devote attention fully to a chosen subject because the mind is restless, confused and distracted by other thoughts. This is also true for meditators and that is why *metta* is especially helpful for clearing the mind of negative thoughts at the start of a meditation session.

Metta has been compared with parental love. There is no purer form of selfless goodwill than the love which a mother has for her own child. Similarly, we should develop *metta* towards all beings. There is no limit to which this practice can be developed. The heart should overflow with love. Once the Buddha told his monks, "Suppose a man has his hands cut off by robbers with a double-handed saw. Even then he should not feel angry. If he gives way to anger, then he is not following my teachings. He who hates others only hurts himself. But he who does not give way to hatred, even though he has been injured, emerges victorious." (*Kakacupama Sutta, Majjhima Nikaya*). In the *Itivutthaka*, the Buddha said,

"Of all the kinds of worldly enjoyment, nothing has even one-sixteenth of the freedom of the radiant heart that *metta* brings".

THE WAY TO PRACTISE *METTA*

We should start with developing *metta* towards ourselves. You cannot radiate to others what is not already within yourself. Therefore, start with yourself and repeat these words, "May I be free from anger; may I be free from enmity; may I be free from anxiety. May I be happy and peaceful." Repeating this as many times as possible, fill your entire being with loving feelings from head to toe so that you become an embodiment of loving-kindness. By cutting off all kinds of negative thoughts, through the power of *metta* we can protect ourselves from the hostile vibrations of other people.

Having developed this attribute as fully as possible towards ourselves, then we can extend it towards others. Start this process by including people for whom you feel great respect and reverence, such as parents and teachers. Then include members of your family and friends. Slowly expand these feelings to include people living close by, then those living further away, then people to whom you feel generally neutral, and eventually include people who may even be regarded as "enemies". By continuing in this fashion, we expand our *metta* to include all beings, regardless of their characteristics or their circumstances, irrespective of status, nationality, or sex.

There are certain kinds of people to whom it is not helpful to direct our thoughts of *metta* at the start of our meditation. Exclude people to whom you may be sexually attracted as this may give rise to lust; exclude persons for whom you have aversion or resentment as this may give rise to anger; and exclude anyone who has recently died as this may give rise to sorrow.

Expanding from the world of human beings, we continue to radiate our feelings of *metta* embracing all kinds of animals, insects and other living creatures, also including those beings living in heavens and purgatories. *Metta* should be radiated without any limitations or obstructions. Thus we come to identify ourselves with all beings, thinking "As I am, so may all beings be happy".

One of the most important of the Buddha's discourses is the *Karaniya Metta Sutta* in which the development of *metta* is described as follows:-

"May all beings be happy and secure, may their hearts be wholesome!

"Whatever living beings there be - those mentally feeble or strong; physically long, stout or medium, short, small or large; those seen or unseen, dwelling far or near; those who are born and those who are to be born - may all beings, without exception, be happy-minded!

"Let none deceive another nor despise any person whomsoever in any place, in anger nor ill-will let one not wish any harm to another.

"Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life, even so, let one cultivate a boundless heart towards all beings.

"Let thoughts of infinite love pervade the whole world - above, below and around - without any obstructions, without any hatred, without any enmity.

"Whether standing, walking, sitting or lying down, as long as one is awake, this mindfulness should be developed: this, the wise say, is the highest conduct here."

The beneficial results of this practice are enormous. According to the scriptures, in the *Anguttara Nikaya*, the Buddha said that there are eleven benefits which come to the mind of someone who practises *metta*:-

1. He sleeps in comfort.
2. He awakes comfortably.
3. He has no evil dreams.
4. He is dear to human beings.
5. He is dear to non-human beings.
6. Gods protect him.
7. Fire, poison and weapons cause no harm (to his mental tranquillity).
8. His power of concentration is very high.
9. His face has a serene expression.
10. He will have a peaceful death.
11. After death, he will be reborn in a heavenly realm.

MINDFULNESS OF BREATHING

Let us turn now to the technique of establishing **mindfulness of breathing** (*Anapanasati*). The purpose of this meditation is to become MINDFUL. The Pali word *sati* is often translated as "mindfulness", but "awareness" is more direct.

You should find a quiet place and sit comfortably, relaxed, but also alert. You are balanced. And you are breathing. It is true that you have been breathing all the time, but now you are intentionally becoming aware of it. Do not attempt to control the breathing in any way. Simply allow breathing to happen naturally in the same way as you allow swallowing to happen when you drink.

Breathing is the most discernible and constant function of the body. It is fundamental to life. *Anapanasati* is very simply being mindful, being fully aware of the breath as you inhale and as you exhale. It sounds simple and easy, child's play in fact! Just while you are reading this, stop and relax for a few moments, then watch the breath as it enters the body and leaves it! Let the breath do the breathing, all on its own, after all it didn't need you to interfere before, did it? Now watch.....

In order to help follow the breath it is essential to establish one-pointedness of mind by directing your attention to one spot, either the tip of the nose where the breath first touches or the abdomen. If you hold the attention on the touch of the air passing the tip of the

nose, you may find it helpful to notice a slight cooling sensation on inhalation and a warming sensation on exhalation as the breath flows past the nostrils.

Alternatively, the breath can be observed as it causes the abdomen to rise and fall. When you breathe normally and naturally the inhalation causes the abdomen to swell or rise, and the exhalation will cause the abdomen to fall. The breath can then be observed by watching this rising and falling, and mentally noting, "rising, rising", and "falling, falling".

A word of caution is necessary here, when one method of observation has been adopted it is as well not to mix it with the other method. Therefore an inhalation being observed by watching the abdomen should not be followed by an exhalation observed by watching the breath pass through the nostrils. Keep to the one method that has proved most beneficial to you. There is flexibility in these techniques, but be vigilant and do not change methods just for the sake of change.

To be aware of breathing you must be aware of the breath you are taking in NOW, not the one before and not the next one. Be aware of it at the chosen point of the body. This is known simply as "one-pointedness".

At this stage be careful not to follow the breath as it flows through the body. The technique is just to observe the breath at the chosen point. Be like a gate-keeper of an old, walled city. His job is simply to note people as

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they arrive and leave. What they do inside the city is of no concern to the gate-keeper. Similarly, what happens to the breath inside his body is not the concern of the meditator.

You may have noticed that some breaths were longer than others, some may have been quite short, perhaps one inhalation was very long and the exhalation was quite short. Just note the breathing, taking each breath, each inhalation, each exhalation in turn and observe it without making judgements. When you breathe in note the whole in-breath, when you breathe out note the whole out-breath, its beginning, its middle and its end, noting whether it is short or long, deep or shallow. Do not force the breath, this is not a breathing exercise, it is an exercise in mindfulness. The breath should be left to breath, on its own, and all you do is note it mentally!

All the while you have been observing the breath, your mind has been preoccupied with the novelty of the new game, but now the novelty has started to wear thin. The mind in its incessant pursuit of things to think about is impatient to be off into some new fantasy or other. The merest excuse will do to distract the mind from the disciplined observation of the breath. Perhaps you heard something, a car, or a bird, or someone talking? You thought about it, considered what it was, whether you should investigate it, but whatever you did think, you took your mind away from the breathing and pursued the new object of thought.

Back to breathing! After a while you may have re-

membered something, something you should do at once in case you forget! Or maybe you remembered something pleasant or unpleasant, and just for a few moments you considered its relative importance. Return the awareness to the breathing. All the time, during this very brief period, thoughts have been rising in your mind as you tried to watch the breath come and go. The important thing here is to be *mindful*, just to observe the thoughts as they arise and to make the note: "thought"; to observe the distractions such as noises as: "sound"; and so on. Simply be aware of them and after noting their arising return to the observation of the breath. Of course, distracting thoughts will arise; you cannot expect to be able to eliminate them right from the very beginning. The important thing is to become aware as soon as such a thought arises, but not to get upset that it has arisen.

DEEPENING THE PRACTICE

If you have difficulty in concentration, if your mind is constantly occupied with some thought or other, then it may be an advantage to settle the mind for a while by counting the breaths. This method is reasonably simple and effective: on every in-breath count one, until you reach ten after ten breaths, then start again. Another way is merely to count every inhalation and exhalation thus: inhaling, one; exhaling, two; inhaling, three; exhaling four, etc. until you reach ten. Never go above ten or you will be concentrating on the numbering rather than on the breathing.

When you practise in this way, you should be able to build up your concentration. Some people may find that they miss certain numbers out or count two breaths once, or carry on counting beyond ten, or they may lose track altogether in the middle! Such people should persevere but should also be careful not to become disheartened, depressed or disappointed. Perhaps they should practise for shorter periods each day or maybe shorter periods more frequently.

Every time the mind wanders, it should be brought back and anchored on the chosen point, that is the nostrils or the abdomen. The mind may stay there for a while and then wander away again. Mindfully bring it back and focus it again on the subject. It is a concerted effort to focus the attention, made by the meditator willingly and with full awareness.

The Buddha likened effort to the string of a lute. If the string is too tight, the wrong note will be produced. Similarly, if it is too slack the wrong note will also be produced. Only the right degree of tension will produce the correct note. Similarly, the right degree of effort is required in meditation.

When the practice is established and concentration becomes easier, then you can look at the breathing in more detail. You can observe the flow of the air during the breath, noting the pause, if any, between inhaling and exhaling, exhaling and inhaling and noting when the breath appears to stop. (This stop may seem quite

alarming, but it is quite natural, because your sense of time makes a pause seem like eternity!)

As you achieve success in this practice, you will find that your concentration will extend little by little. The body becomes relaxed and breathing becomes gentle. There is a feeling of peace. Events outside or inside the mind no longer distract you from the object of meditation.

THE FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

Breathing meditation is but one part, albeit a self-sufficient one, of the system of meditations called *Satipatthana* or the Foundations of Mindfulness. These are four in number and are sub-divided into various subjects. Initially, we shall look at them as separate entities but in reality we should see them as one interrelated whole.

The first part is called **Mindfulness of Body**, that is, this physical body. Within this section we have (1) mindfulness of in- and out-breathing, which we have just examined, (2) consideration of the four postures, walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, (3) paying full attention to whatever one is doing, (4) contemplation on the 32 parts of the body - this section contains very useful considerations which we shall come to later, (5) analysis of the Four Elements, and (6) the cemetery contemplations.

The second part is called **Mindfulness of Feelings**. Using the same technique of concentration, we can observe feelings as they arise. During this practice note the various sensations giving rise to pain, pleasure or indifference, here again simply note that, "pain has arisen", or "pleasure has arisen", or that neither pleasure nor pain has arisen, which is a neutral experience. As in the previous section simply note the existence of these states, note how they arise and how they pass away but do not dwell on them, observe simply their arising and their passing away.

The third part is **Mindfulness of Mind** or mindfulness of the states of consciousness. This is the noting of the state of mind - whether it is angry, sad, distracted, deluded or loving, concentrated or compassionate. Difficult as it is at times, we should be aware of our state of mind and note it. We should not allow ourselves to be distracted, but should merely note that such and such a state of mind has arisen. Later you may begin to note how these states arise and how they pass away.

The fourth part is meditation on specific ethical, spiritual and intellectual subjects listed in the Discourse on Mindfulness as **Mindfulness of Mental Objects**. (Please refer to the section of the sutta shown on page no.62.) Whilst we are engaged in meditation on one of these mental objects, we should not allow the mind to wander around the subject. Direct the mind to an analytical approach, considering the arising of the particu-

lar object and examining it in depth, not allowing the mind all the while to deviate or repeat itself.

The process of concentration described in each of the above four sections of this discourse is *samatha* meditation, but at the end of each section we are advised to contemplate the true nature of the activity on which we are maintaining our awareness. This represents a switch from *samatha* to *vipassana*, in which we become aware of the arising and ceasing of each object, as impermanent, as subject to change, and as devoid of any abiding essence. For example with Mindfulness of Mind, it is important to observe when a state of mind such as anger or happiness or joy arises, and note it as "there is anger", etc. and not as "I am angry". The statement "I am angry" precludes any objective attempt to examine what really is experienced. We are not interested in the "I" that thinks that it is angry but only in the arising and the cessation of the mental state of anger, hence we note, "there is anger". If we examine the experience of a mental state such as anger or joy objectively, as it arises, we shall not be able to find any self or "I" to which this state is attached. Examined dispassionately we can only say, "there is joy", or "there is anger".

MINDFULNESS OF BODY

In addition to sitting meditation, **walking meditation** is a very useful aid and adjunct. In meditation centres where the practice of meditation is intensive, the

periods of sitting meditation are broken up with periods of walking meditation. This is not just good exercise or done for a change, it is an integral part of the practice and is a form of meditation in its own right. It is particularly useful for establishing concentration, and you can practise almost anywhere that is quiet and undisturbed. You can walk miles in your own bedroom!

Having established a suitable place, start off fairly slowly, noting each footstep one after the other thus: left, right, left, right..... After some time begin to note more details within each step: up, over, down, up, over, down, up..... and note each movement of the feet, legs, etc. when turning, straightening the body, stopping, in fact whatever the body does, note it! When you are standing, simply note that you are standing.

As with *Anapanasati*, when the object is well established, you can then become aware of the various sensations and associated mental states as they arise and note them. Consider that there are three elements to any bodily movement. These are known as *citta* (the thought of making the movement), *kiriya* (the function which activates the movement), and *vayo-dhatu* (the internal air element which causes the movement). Any movement of the body is dependent upon all three coming together.

In fact awareness should be extended to include whatever posture the body is in; no matter what the body is doing, be aware of it, from the top of the head down

to the tip of the toes. Whether sitting, walking, standing or lying down, this mindfulness should be constantly maintained. When the mind has been established one-pointedly on whatever the body is doing in that particular moment, then direct the attention to become aware of the impersonal nature of the bodily process which is being observed. For example when walking, become aware simply of the movement of the feet and legs; how the movement of each limb arises, changes and ceases.

There is yet another meditation posture: **lying down**. This is also suitable for the practice of mindfulness of breathing and of other practices such as the *kasinas* and discursive contemplation (more about these later), but it is necessary here to be on guard not to fall asleep! It is better to lie on the right side so as to keep the heart free of pressure and allow the blood to circulate more easily. Be mindful of how the body is lying. Be aware of how the limbs are arranged.

In addition to the meditations already discussed, there are a number of other valuable practices to be considered.

The **reflection on the 32 parts of the body** is useful for developing an awareness of the true nature of this body. At first sight it may appear quite beautiful and we attach much value to it as an attractive object. This is only a partial view, however, and totally ignores the body in its less appealing states. When Prince Siddhartha awoke in the early hours of the day on which

he left his palace for the homeless life, he saw his servants and dancing girls asleep on the ground. Their bodies were carelessly disarranged in sleep and the sight filled him with disgust. On the surface lies the body's beauty, but underneath the skin lies the truth of this body. There is an appropriate Pali proverb which says:-

sace imassa kayassa - anto bahirato siya,
dandam nuna gahetvana - kake soneca varaye.

If one could turn this body inside out -
be ready to chase away the crows and dogs.

The 32 parts of the body are enumerated in the *Satipatthana Sutta* but the first five are of particular note. These are the hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth and skin. These five are those parts of the body which are beautified and adorned. They should therefore be paid special attention and efforts should be made to see them in their true nature.

A husband may be very impressed with his wife's hair-do, so expensively acquired by skill at the hairdressers, a great deal of effort and technology has gone into the creation this superb coiffure. Her husband acclaims it as a beautiful style which enhances his wife's beauty and they are both pleased and gratified by the appearance. The husband, however, sings a different song sometime later, when, as he sits down to his dinner, he finds mixed up with the food one of the selfsame hairs he praised so highly only hours before. He is so

disgusted that he is unable to eat the food and admonishes his wife in no uncertain terms. The hair itself is no different in either case, but the hair's function has changed; that change has brought about this unsatisfactory state of affairs. In this way should these five parts of the body be contemplated, drawing from our own experiences the unpleasantness of the hair, nails, teeth and skin. The remaining parts of the body are repulsive in their nature, being sweat, grease, fat, bile, mucous, urine, etc.

This meditation is particularly useful for people of a lustful disposition whose faculties are fascinated by the appearance of the body. For those of us who are assailed daily by sensuous advertising in the cities, this meditation may also be a counter-balance against unwholesome thoughts.

There is the **contemplation of the four elements**. Matter is deemed to be composed of four elements, namely, earth *(pathavi)*, water *(apo)*, fire *(tejo)*, and air *(vayo)*. They each have their own characteristics. Earth has the characteristic of solidity or extension. Water has the characteristic of fluidity and cohesion. Fire has the characteristic of heating, and air or wind has the characteristic of motion. All matter is composed of all four elements but, where one element predominates, then a substance can be said to be solid, or liquid, etc.

The elements can be observed during meditation, in relation to the body, particularly as heat or water.

For instance when the body perspires, note: "There is excess of the water element". Or perhaps the bodily activities are causing discomfort and restlessness, in which case we should note: "There is excess of the air element or motion". By noting the arising and ceasing of these states we shall come to realise that this body is in a constant state of flux, is impermanent and is liable to decay.

A most effective meditation designed to arouse indifference to the body and leading to an integral understanding of both it and its constituent parts is the **Cemetery Contemplations**. This was performed by meditative monks in the charnel ground, studying a corpse. In order to practise this successfully, the meditator must first establish good concentration. He must be mentally sharp and alert if he is to see the decomposition of the body as it is taking place. Every stage of decomposition is contemplated as being of the true nature of the body. The monk considers that decomposition is inevitable and that this body of his is also destined to reach a similar state of putrefaction. Perhaps people are fortunate that in this age we cannot be given this subject of meditation!

Another form of meditation involves the use of an object known as a *kasina*, of which there are ten different kinds. A *kasina* is an external device used as a means of focusing and developing concentration. We take an object such as a coloured disc or circle of clay, to which we give our full and undivided attention. After prolonged

practice this image will remain even when the eyes are closed. By persevering in this practice we shall reach a state of mind in which all sense-activity is suspended.

Yet another form of meditation is **Discursive Contemplation**, such as Reflection on the Virtue of Holy People. Here a Buddhist would reflect on the loving-kindness of the Buddha; Hindus may choose a deity and reflect on the aspect it represents; a Christian will reflect upon Christ and his self-sacrifice.

Of these many different kinds of meditation, there are some which require a skilled meditation teacher to ascertain your particular temperament and identify which technique is best suited to your character. Mindfulness of breathing and *Metta*, however, are suitable for all people and were highly recommended by the Buddha himself.

BALANCE OF FACULTIES

Mention should be made here of the question of "energy". If you try too hard because of over-enthusiasm, the mind becomes confused and distracted by an excess of energy. This makes it hard to concentrate. On the other hand, if you do not try hard enough, you may sink into lethargy, indolence or day-dreaming.

Energy is one of five faculties (*indriya-samatta*) which must be in equilibrium. The five are faith (in the

sense of confidence based on knowledge), understanding, mindfulness, concentration and energy. Faith should be balanced with understanding, and concentration with energy. Someone who has an abundance of faith, but little understanding is in danger of accepting things uncritically. Someone who has strong understanding but who is weak in faith errs on the side of cunning. By balancing these two faculties you develop justified confidence based on proper understanding. Similarly, someone who is strong in concentration, but weak in energy is liable to idleness. Someone who is full of energy but lacking in concentration is in danger of becoming agitated. A balance between these two faculties ensures that energy does not lapse into idleness, and concentration does not lapse into agitation. Helping to maintain the balance between the other four faculties is mindfulness, which is needed in all instances. It acts as the mind's refuge, protector, activator and restrainer. Its importance is likened to that of salt which must be present in all manner of different sauces.

OBSTACLES

There are obstacles to your progress in meditation which are known as the Five Hindrances (*Nivarana*). These are sensual desire, anger, laziness, restlessness and doubt. Each one of these states is an effective block to any advancement and should be removed as far as is possible.

First of all, you should simply be aware that "anger has arisen", or that "there is restlessness". Initially you may not be very successful at overcoming these Hindrances, but the mindfulness of these states is a very important first step. It takes a certain amount of courage to admit to yourself that negative states do exist in your mind, but you must be honest with yourself. When you can observe how such a state of mind arises and how it passes away, then intervention becomes possible, enabling you to maintain an objective viewpoint and to refrain from identifying yourself with these states. As your meditative skills develop, your mindfulness deepens so that you can identify the arising of negative states earlier and earlier, and ultimately you may be able to prevent them from arising at all.

JHANIC FACTORS

When we practise concentration on breathing or any other object, such as a *kasina*, we try to attain one-pointedness or singleness of mind. The aim is to exclude all extraneous thoughts which clutter the mind so that the mind dwells uninterruptedly on the chosen object. If we practise thoroughly, earnestly and with dedication, there is a sequence of five attributes which will be developed. These, in their turn, lead to the overcoming of the five hindrances previously mentioned. Each attribute suppresses one particular hindrance and together they make it possible to attain the first absorption or *Jhana*.

The first attribute is *vitakka* (thought conception), the initial application of the mind to the object of meditation. This has been likened to a bee choosing and landing on a flower, or a sailor eventually reaching an island after a shipwreck, for it needs a degree of energy to apply the mind to the object, namely the tip of the nostrils. This cannot be achieved by a lazy mind, but the wholehearted application of the mind results in the suppression of the hindrance of *thina-middha*, laziness and inactivity.

The second attribute is *vicara* (discursive thinking), the sustained application of the mind to the object, in which the meditator studies the object thoroughly. This is like the bee searching the flower to locate the exact source of the nectar, or the shipwrecked sailor coming to know all the characteristics of the island he has reached, such as sources of food and water, etc. Here the meditator studies the nature of the breathing in detail, its variations, whether it is long or short, where precisely it touches the nostrils and so on. In this process confidence develops and the meditator overcomes uncertainty about meditation *(vicikiccha)*, which is a state in which the mind wavers.

The meditator will find that this examination pleases him, and this leads to the arising of the third attribute, *piti*, which is a joyful feeling in the mind. This feeling leads to the suppression of anger, displeasure or disliking *(vyapada)*.

This feeling of joy leads on to *sukha*, which is happiness. This sense of happiness means the meditator is now calm, both physically and mentally. The meditator experiences restfulness in mind and body, and so the fourth hindrance is inhibited, that is restlessness and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca)*. *Piti* is like the sight of a clear pool to our sailor; *sukha* is like drinking water from it and bathing in it.

In this situation of profound calm, the concentration becomes well established on the object and uninterrupted. This leads to what is called *upekkha* or equanimity, which means viewing an object with a balanced mind, having transcended both pain and pleasure, and having eliminated both attachment and aversion with regard to all conditioned things. This leads to the suppression of sensual desires *(kamacchanda)*.

At each stage in this process two things happen at the same time - the wholesome state of mind develops and the associated hindrance is suppressed. When all these five attributes are working together in unison, the first *jhana* is attained. This is a state in which the mind is devoid of the five hindrances and endowed with the five *jhanic* factors.

Compared with its ordinary state, the mind is now highly developed. Right up to the stage of *upekkha* the mind is still directed towards the meditation object; the *jhanic* factors are the outcome or result of this concen-

tration. This is, however, a rather delicate state of mind, which is vulnerable to disruption and easily lost. It must be strengthened by cultivating the following five habits (*panca vasita*):-

1. *Avajjana vasita* - turning the attention to the *Jhana*.
2. *Samapajjana vasita* - inducing and maintaining it.
3. *Adhitthana vasita* - pre-determining the period of its maintenance.
4. *Vutthana vasita* - emerging from it.
5. *Pacca vekkhana vasita* - reflecting on it, retrospecting on how this state was attained.

The first three habits are to be practised before or during the state of *jhana*, the last two are to be practised after leaving the state. It is important for the meditator to cultivate these five habits in relation to all four *jhanic* states in order to strengthen the ability to attain the *jhanas* at will. In this way he will establish mastery over these states; he will control them - both their arising and their ceasing; they do not control him. Hence regular practice is essential - just like in the early stages of meditation.

JHANIC STATES

There are four blissful states of absorption or *jhanic* states. The first, as we have just discussed, is a state of

peace, yet thought conception and discursive thinking are still present. As soon as these have ceased, the meditator has attained the second *jhana*, a state of highest rapture, free of thinking and pondering. This will fade away as equanimous joy pervades the mind, the meditator is now in the third *jhana*. Then, as the joy fades, a state of perfect equanimity is reached - the fourth and highest *jhana*. After emerging from the fourth *jhana*, the mind is described in the texts as "serene, pure, lucid, stainless, devoid of evil, pliable, able to act, firm, and imperturbable".

The meditator may choose to remain in these states for a matter of minutes, or hours or even days. It must, however, be remembered that all of these states are only temporary and are subject to the all-pervasive law of impermanence. There is a danger that the meditator may so enjoy abiding in the happy state of *jhana* that he comes to believe, mistakenly, that he has attained *nibbana*. No matter how high the attainments in *samatha* meditation, they do not last and cannot, therefore, bring permanent happiness. In order to attain this, we must practise a different form of meditation, we must practise *vipassana*.

We can say that *samatha* means awareness, mindfulness or alertness directed towards an object, whereas *vipassana* means realising its true nature.

The practice of meditation as set out in the *Satipatthana Sutta* is a complete, self-sufficient system

of meditation. It can be considered as *Samatha* meditation because its concentration leads to the *Jhanas* or blissful absorptions and induces tranquillity. It can also be considered as *Vipassana* meditation because we examine in the course of the practice the impermanence of phenomena, how we are subject to suffering or unsatisfactoriness; and we should be aware of the lack of any abiding or permanent essence or self in this being. The practice also develops insight into all the situations of everyday life and gives a clear vision of things as they really are.

Samatha brings the scattered mind to one-pointedness; it sharpens the mind by removing unnecessary clutter, thus enabling us to see things clearly and with penetration. *Vipassana* is spreading the mind in order to develop awareness of the real nature of everything - that is, its arising, its changing and its ceasing. The change from *Samatha* to *Vipassana* is brought about by a deliberate decision of the meditator. Otherwise he simply continues to enjoy the singleness of mind brought about by the practice of *Samatha*.

INSIGHT MEDITATION

Insight meditation, *Vipassana*, is a practice unique to Buddhism. It trains us initially to see the mind-body process as it occurs within ourselves, and then to see the real nature of external things. We need to be aware of the Buddhist teaching with regard to the nature of the mind and body which is said to consist of five properties or aggregates - form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness, and the meditator comes to see these individually and as phenomena subject to continuous change.

The insight which we gain from this practice is unique because people do not usually look at their own experiences in this way. In everyday life, people often have distorted perceptions, views and opinions which cloud their insight into reality. Therefore, this method of insight meditation is said to be "going against the current" (*patisotagami*).

In the ordinary manner of looking at things our view is distorted in three ways. We see things which are impermanent as permanent, things which are unsatisfactory as satisfactory, and things which do not have any eternal, lasting attributes as things which have eternal, lasting attributes. Because of these threefold dis-

torted perceptions and distorted views, we experience the troubles and hardships of life, known as *Dukkha*, which are fundamental to the human condition.

DUKKHA - IMPERMANENCE and UNSATISFACTORINESS

Enlightenment is nothing but seeing things in their proper, natural perspective, that is as changing all the time and therefore unsatisfactory. Because they are impermanent, we cannot expect external objects to bring us permanent satisfaction. Permanent happiness cannot be found from impermanent causes, although they can indeed bring us temporary satisfaction. Inevitably, however, they will change sooner or later, and here we make the mistake of trying to hold on and resist this change. This is what causes pain and unhappiness. Happiness and unhappiness depend upon the state of our minds. They are not to be found in the external world, but in how we react to the experiences we undergo. Two people may have the same experience, but they may react to it in completely different ways - one may enjoy it, the other may dislike it. The practice of meditation can bring us understanding of this situation by training us to concentrate on all aspects of our experience.

We are reluctant to face up to and accept change. We persist in wanting to hold onto things which we value - pleasure, wealth, happiness, life itself - while each slips inevitably through our fingers. We crave stability and permanence, but these cannot be found anywhere in the world. These unfulfilled desires are the cause of the

basic unsatisfactoriness of human existence. As long as we try to grasp and hold on to conditions which are forever impermanent, we shall continue to experience suffering. One definition of the word *nibbana* is "no craving". *Nibbana* is beyond the dualistic concepts of both happiness and unhappiness. Happiness and unhappiness are relative concepts - one cannot exist without the other; like light and dark, they can be defined only in relation to each other.

Ordinarily, we think of happiness and unhappiness as things which come through the senses (including mind which in Buddhism is considered as a sixth sense), but *nibbana* is not dependent upon the senses, it is beyond these dualistic concepts. It is a state which can be neither felt nor experienced. In fact one of the Buddha's chief disciples, Venerable Sariputta, said that the very fact that there is nothing to be felt is indeed happiness. If there is anything to be felt, then this experience must be subject to change and it cannot, therefore, be true happiness. The mind in its ordinary state cannot grasp this because it seeks something tangible to be grasped through the senses. This sensual happiness is only momentary and is vulnerable to change.

Pain is caused by change. Change causes *dukkha*, not because things are changing, but because we mistakenly view things as permanent and not subject to change. In the human body, things are changing so consistently, so systematically that within seven years the body has been totally renewed.

Change is an important process. It is because things

are changing that we have the opportunity to attain release from *dukkha*. If we look at changes in a positive way and accept them without resistance, they can help us along our path of spiritual development.

Growth is *dukkha*. Why? We have grown over the years, but never felt pain in this process of growth. It is not the growth itself which is *dukkha*, but our attitude towards the growth which is *dukkha*. It is our anxiety, worry and fear in relation to growth or change which cause *dukkha*. It is the function of insight meditation to show us how subtly our mind tries to deceive us with regard to our perception of existence.

When we face the truth directly and see life exactly as it is, we shall not allow ourselves to be trapped in this anxiety. Insight meditation is, therefore, not a system which helps us to run away from problems, to run away from reality or from truth, but it helps us to go into reality, to go into truth, to accept it, to be with it.

During insight meditation we train ourselves to observe all the processes of mind and body. We do not grasp at anything which attracts us, trying to hold on to thoughts and sensations which we find pleasant; nor do we reject whatever we find to be unpleasant. Do not be judgemental, but observe all the passing states of mind honestly and dispassionately. The phrase often used to describe this state is "choiceless awareness". Do not cling, and do not condemn. Of course, we shall become aware of negative states of mind, as previously discussed,

but try not to react against them. If we try to eliminate or repress these negative states by an effort of will, we may achieve some temporary success, but in the long run we shall succeed only in generating an equally powerful negative reaction, so this is not a skilful way in which to proceed. Observe everything as it is, remaining detached and aware that whatever comes into the mind is impermanent and subject to change from moment to moment. This process of mindful observation will weaken and eliminate the negative states of mind.

Imagine, if you like, that you are sitting, concealed, by a pool in a forest, watching quietly as different animals come to drink. Provided you remain silent and still, the animals will appear, take their drink, then depart, as long as you do not disturb them. You can observe your thoughts in a similar fashion.

The purpose of *vipassana* meditation is nothing less than the radical and permanent transformation of our entire sensory and cognitive experience. It is meant to affect the whole of our life experience and the skills learned during periods of seated meditation should be carried over into our everyday life.

THE EFFECTS OF MEDITATION

During the course of our training in meditation, various changes are likely to occur. Quite naturally, as the mind becomes calmer and more receptive we start to notice many things within ourselves of which we were not fully aware previously. As the process advances we may become aware of physical and mental states of which we were totally unaware before. These observations are often quite startlingly clear or even alarming, and sometimes may be uncomfortable. For example, as physical stimuli are observed at first hand we can experience by degrees even very minor variations in the sense of touch. Previously, because of our preoccupation with ourselves we were unable to feel them. Some meditators may be aware of a greater intensity in their appreciation of colours or sounds, and occasionally such effects may be disturbing. Any anxieties will, however, pass away provided that the meditator remains objective and dispassionately views these effects with the same "choiceless awareness" with which he regards his breath, feelings, state of mind, and so on.

Similarly, very pleasant states may arise, feelings of tranquillity and joy or even of ecstasy. We may even experience piercing insights that can be so profound as to lead us to think: "This is it!" But again, however profound the feeling is, however pleasant it is, it must be considered dispassionately: this feeling is subject to change, remorse may be felt when it passes away, and because it is subject to change there is no abiding or permanent entity here. This understanding will lead us to view ourselves as being simply a "mind-body proc-

ess" instead of a solid "me". Failure to understand the real nature of these feelings and mental states may result in either a cessation of progress or may lead to the delusive conclusion that we have achieved the Ultimate Goal.

This very brief outline cannot possibly encompass all the different states of mind or the obstacles that are likely to arise. No account has been taken of any of the more profound effects such as beatific visions or horrific hallucinations. When such states arise, make every effort to contact a meditation master who will explain these mental phenomena and allay any fears.

Both methods of meditation can help deal with many of the hindrances to a happy and fulfilled life, but only *Vipassana* can provide insight into their permanent eradication. *Samatha*, in the development of the *Jhana* or concentrative absorptions, can inhibit or at best suspend the functioning of the five hindrances but provides no final end to them. *Vipassana* on the other hand reveals how the unwanted mental states arise, how they pass away and gives us knowledge of the factors upon which they depend, the intuitive knowledge of which will lead to their permanent eradication.

It should be borne in mind that although meditation helps us to see things as they really are, it also helps us to see ourselves as *we* really are! The path of self-knowledge is occasionally difficult, unpleasant, and full of fear. It all depends on our type of personality. Do not, however, be put off from the practice of meditation.

Ensure that your strength of purpose and objectivity are developed so that you may come to enjoy the fruits of meditation and the peace born of self-knowledge.

BEING MINDFUL!

All the meditations which have been described may be considered as formal ways of training the mind, just as a musician develops his skills by practising scales. The mindfulness established during these periods of training should be regarded as preliminary to carrying this awareness into our entire waking life. We should strive to maintain mindfulness at all times.

In the course of the day be aware of your mental state, whether it is angry, fearful, or happy - just mentally note it. Whatever you do, whether it is work or during leisure hours, be aware of it, be aware of the body and its postures, whether it is standing, walking, reading, reaching, bending and so on. Be aware of what you say, be aware when you keep silence, be aware of eating, drinking, in fact be aware of everything you do. Live in your present action, the present moment. Let the past and the future look after themselves, the past has been and gone, the future has not yet arrived, so just live in the present.

Although we may give every impression of being fully occupied with what is happening here and now, in fact our mind is not always in the present. We give much of our attention to imaginary events, worries, problems, remembering, and even just allowing the mind to

wander completely freely over any object to which it takes a fancy. We should not occupy our mind with unnecessary and often pointless thoughts.

Sometimes we may become aware of one thought repeating itself over and over. How many times have we said to someone, "Do you know I just can't get this tune out of my head"? Some trains of thought repeat themselves in the same way and spiral round pointlessly. Occasionally we may become aware of holding "inner conversations" with some imaginary self, but all these phenomena should be noted with the same dispassionate care that we exercise in our sitting meditations. In all probability, as soon as the phenomenon has been noted, it will disappear. Thoughts rise like bubbles in the mind and the conscious awareness of them pricks them out of existence. Learn to live in the present and concentrate only on what is necessary here and now. It is not possible to do more than one thing at a time with any degree of real success, so we should give all our attention to the job in hand whether it is digging the garden, eating lunch or doing business. Even planning ahead should be a part of our mindful activities, as should remembering past experiences and results. These are all mindful activities of the present.

MINDFULNESS, CONCENTRATION and WISDOM

By following one or perhaps a number of the foregoing meditations we shall develop in the course of time insight into the process of life, the process of *everyday* life. The results of meditation do not all come at once

and may or may not be accompanied by strong feelings of revelation or joy. It may happen that for a time we shall be unaware of any changes at all, but at some point we shall come to appreciate the way that the practice of meditation is inextricably bound to the practice of moral behaviour and the realisation of the value of such behaviour in relation to normal life. In practice the Buddhist way of life is divided into three: *Sila, Samadhi, Paññа*.

1. *Sila* (Moral purity) is the basis upon which we can build a life free from guilt, remorse, feelings of inadequacy and generally unwholesome states of mind. This moral life consists of three parts: Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood.

Right Speech is abstention from lying, slander, and frivolous talk, and embodies all truthful forms of speech. Right Action is abstention from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and using intoxicants or drugs which cloud the mind. Right Livelihood is not to make a living by doing anything which is harmful to others. This means not trading in armaments, intoxicants, or poisons, etc., nor by killing animals, nor by engaging in any activity which involves lies, cheating, and trickery. It is only by establishing a proper morality that the mind can become sufficiently calm and relaxed for progress to be made in meditation.

2. *Samadhi* or concentration is the practice of the

meditations already outlined and is composed of: Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.

3. *Paññа,* wisdom, is developed through meditation or mental culture and is composed of two parts: Right View and Right Aspiration. Right View deserves some mention because it is the comprehension of ourselves, arising out of *Vipassana*, as being subject to change and suffering, and devoid of any abiding self. A proper appreciation of this view leads to the aspiration for spiritual development and the adoption of the moral life. Thus the whole scheme of *Sila*, *Samadhi*, *Paññа* is an inter-related, inter-dependent whole.

Regarding the term "Right" in relation to morality, a clear definition is required, because "right" is subjective and relative. The Buddha taught that any word or deed, even if it is true, which is liable to cause harm to yourself or your neighbour or both of you, is wrong. Any truthful word or deed which is conducive to the benefit of yourself, your neighbour or both of you is right. Further, any act or speech which is not conducive to the realisation of the truth is also wrong, and any act or speech which is conducive to the realisation of the truth, is right. By such considerations, you cultivate Right Thought and quite naturally you begin to act correctly, you begin to speak in a right manner and to live in a right manner.

Understanding the real value of the moral life becomes clear as you make progress in meditation, by re-

moving remorse and guilt, and so transforming such unskilful thoughts into Right Effort. Effort made in mindfulness and concentration leads to wisdom and an understanding of the interdependence of these three qualities. This process can be understood as being like a wheel, each part connected to the previous one and revolving in a continuous cycle of development, raising your understanding and consciousness gradually and effectively.

In the Buddhist Scriptures there is a beautiful analogy which helps us to understand the relationship between these different elements of the path. It is called "Growing the Mango Tree": Right Understanding through insight (*Vipassana-sammaditthi*) compares with planting a sweet mango seed. The help through Virtue is like making a boundary (of earth around the place of planting to hold the water). The help through Learning is like sprinkling the seed with water. Discussing (with a teacher) is like cleaning the roots. The help through *Samatha* Meditation, by which obstacles to *Jhanas* and insight are cleared away, is like the removal of worms, slugs, etc. The help through powerful Insight is like freeing the sprout of cobwebs, etc. Just as a mango tree that has been looked after in this way will grow quickly and produce good and ample fruit, so will basic Right Understanding, if it receives such fivefold help, help us to progress along the path of spiritual development. (*Anguttara Nikaya V.25*)

CONCLUSION

"Meditation is impossible for one who lacks wisdom. Wisdom is impossible for one who does not meditate. One that both meditates and possesses wisdom is near *nibbana*." (*Dhammapada v.372*)

Meditation can help anyone who is wanting to live a life free from tension, anxiety and other forms of misery. It enables us to experience a life full of peace and joy, filled with the kind of understanding which will allow us to observe events as they happen, without reacting to them in an unskilful way which generates negative thoughts and emotional disturbance.

It is only too easy to allow ourselves to nurture a frenzied state of mind. This destroys any possibility of being either peaceful or happy and gives rise to further *dukkha*. *Dukkha* is something which every being experiences until he attains the enlightenment of *Nibbana*, the complete understanding of the nature of all things and the total cessation of all forms of craving and desire.

The whole of Buddhist thinking is based on the Buddha's explanation of the Four Noble Truths. These truths concern '*dukkha*', a Pali word which has often been translated into English as 'suffering', but which can be better understood as 'unsatisfactoriness, conflict, unsubstantiality, emptiness, dissatisfaction, or lack of enduring contentment'. It is perhaps better to leave the word untranslated as *dukkha*.

As the Buddha said:-

"Truly, from meditation arises wisdom. Without meditation wisdom wanes. Knowing this twofold path of gain and loss, let one so conduct oneself that wisdom may increase." (Dhammapada v.282)

4

CONDENSED VERSION OF THE SATIPATTHANA SUTTA - THE FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

Thus have I heard. The Blessed One was once living among the Kurus, at Kammassadamma, a market town of the Kuru people. There the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus and spoke as follows:

This is the direct way, Bhikkhus, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destruction of suffering and grief, for reaching the right path, for the attainment of Nibbana, namely the Four Foundations (four forms of Presence) of Mindfulness. What are the four?

Here a bhikkhu, ardent, clearly comprehending things and mindful, lives observing (the activities of) the body, having overcome covetousness and repugnance towards the world (of body); observing feelings, having overcome covetousness and repugnance towards the world (of feelings).....observing (the activities of) the mind, having overcome covetousness and repugnance towards the world (of mind); observing mental objects, having overcome covetousness and repugnance towards the world (of mental objects).

(1. BODY)

And how does a bhikkhu live observing (the activities of) the body?

[1. *Breathing*]

Here Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu having gone to the forest, to the foot of a tree or so some empty place, sits down, with his legs crossed, keeps his body straight and his mindfulness alert.

Ever mindful he breathes in, and ever mindful he breathes out. Breathing in a long breath, he knows "I am breathing in a long breath"; breathing out a long breath, he knows "I am breathing out a long breath"; breathing in a short breath, he knows "I am breathing in a short breath"; breathing out a short breath, he knows "I am breathing out a short breath".

"Experiencing the whole (breath-)body, I shall breathe in": thus he trains himself. "Experiencing the whole (breath-)body, I shall breathe out": thus he trains himself. "Calming the activity of the (breath-)body, I shall breathe in": thus he trains himself. "Calming the activity of the (breath-)body, I shall breathe out": thus he trains himself.....

Thus he lives observing (the activities of) the body internally, or...externally, or...both internally and externally. He lives also observing origination-factors in the body, or dissolution-factors in the body, or origination- and dissolution-factors in the body. Or his mindfulness is established to the extent necessary just for knowledge and awareness that the body exists and he lives unattached, and clings to naught in the world. In this way Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu lives observing (the activities of) the body.

[2. *Postures of the Body*]

And further, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu knows when he is going, "I am going". He knows when he is standing, "I am standing". He knows when he is sitting, "I am sitting". He knows when he is lying down, "I am lying down". Or he knows just how his body is disposed.

Thus he lives observing (the activities of) the body internally, or externally.....

[3. *Full Attention*]

And further, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu applies full attention either in going forward or back; in looking straight on or looking away; in bending or in stretching; in wearing robes or carrying the bowl; in eating, drinking, chewing or savouring; in attending to the calls of nature; in walking, in standing, in sitting; in falling asleep, in waking; in speaking or keeping silence. In all these he applies full attention.

Thus he lives observing (the activities of) the body.

[4. *Repulsiveness of the Body*]

And further, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu reflects on this very body enveloped by the skin and full of manifold impurity, from the sole up, and from the top of the hair down, thinking thus: "There are in this body hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews,

bones, marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, midriff, spleen, lungs, intestines, mesentery, stomach, faeces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, saliva, nasal mucus, synovial fluid, urine".

Just as if there were a double-mouthed provision bag full of various kinds of grain such as hill paddy, paddy, green gram, cow-peas, sesamum and husked rice, and a man with sound eyes, having opened that bag, were to reflect thus: This is hill paddy, this is paddy, this is green gram, this is cow-pea, this is sesamum, this is husked rice. Just so, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu reflects on this very body enveloped by the skin and full of manifold impurity, from the sole up, and from the top of the hair down, thinking thus: There are in this body hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth..... synovial fluid, urine.

Thus he lives observing the body.....

[5. *Material Elements*]

And further, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu reflects on this very body, as it is, and it is constituted, by way of the material elements: "There are in this body the element of earth, the element of water, the element of fire, the element of wind".

Just as if, Bhikkhus, a clever cow-butcher or his apprentice, having slaughtered a cow and divided it into portions, would be sitting at the junction of four high roads; in the same way, a bhikkhu reflects on this very body, as it is, and it is constituted, by way of the material elements: "There are in this body the elements of earth, water, fire and wind".

Thus he lives observing the body.....

[6. *Nine Cemetery Objects*]

(1) And further, Bhikkhus, just as a bhikkhu sees a body dead one, two, or three days swollen, blue and festering, thrown onto the cemetery, so he applies this perception to his own body thus: "Verily, my own body, too, is of the same nature; such it will become and will not escape it".

Thus he lives observing the body.....

(2) And further, Bhikkhus, just as a bhikkhu sees a body thrown onto the cemetery, being eaten by crows, hawks, vultures, dogs, jackals or by different kinds of worms, so he applies this perception to his own body thus: "Verily, my own body, too, is of the same nature; such it will become and will not escape it".

Thus he lives observing the body.....

(3) And further, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu sees a body thrown onto the cemetery reduced to a skeleton with some flesh and blood attached to it, held together by the tendons.....

(4) And further, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu sees a body thrown onto the cemetery reduced to a skeleton, blood-besmeared and without flesh, held together by the tendons.....

(5) And further, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu sees a body thrown onto the cemetery reduced to a skeleton, without flesh and blood, held together by the tendons.....

(6) And further, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu sees a body thrown onto the cemetery reduced to disconnected bones, scattered in all directions - here a bone of the hand, there a bone of the foot, a shin bone, a thigh bone, the pelvis, spine and skull.....

(7) And further, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu sees a body

thrown onto the cemetery reduced to bleached bones of conch-like colour.....

(8) And further, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu sees a body thrown onto the cemetery reduced to bones, more than a year old, lying in a heap.....

(9) And further, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu sees a body thrown onto the cemetery reduced to bones, rotten and become dust....so he applies this perception to his own body thus: "Verily, my own body, too, is of the same nature; such it will become and will not escape it".

Thus he lives observing the body.....

(2. FEELINGS)

And how Bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu live observing feelings?

Here, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu when experiencing a pleasant feeling knows: "I experience a pleasant feeling"; when experiencing a painful feeling, he knows: "I experience a painful feeling"; when experiencing a neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling, he knows: "I experience a neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling". When experiencing a pleasant worldly feeling, he knows: "I experience a pleasant worldly feeling"; when experiencing a pleasant spiritual feeling, he knows: "I experience a pleasant spiritual feeling"; when experiencing a painful worldly feeling, he knows: "I experience a painful worldly feeling"; when experiencing a painful spiritual feeling, he knows: "I experience a painful spiritual feeling"; when experiencing a neither-pleasant-nor-painful worldly feeling, he knows: "I experience a neither-pleasant-nor-painful worldly feeling"; when experiencing a

neither-pleasant-nor-painful spiritual feeling, he knows: "I experience a neither-pleasant-nor-painful spiritual feeling".

He lives in this way observing feelings internally,... or externally, or.... internally and externally. He lives observing origination-factors in feelings, or dissolution-factors in feelings, or origination- and dissolution-factors in feelings. Or his mindfulness is established to the extent necessary just for knowledge and awareness that feeling exists, and he lives unattached, and clings to naught in the world. In this way, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu lives observing feelings.

(3. MIND)

And how, Bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu live observing mind?

Here, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu knows the mind with lust, as being with lust; the mind without lust, as being without lust; the mind with hate, as being with hate; the mind without hate, as being without hate; the mind with ignorance, as being with ignorance; the mind without ignorance, as being without ignorance; the shrunken state of mind as the shrunken state; the distracted state of mind as the distracted state; the developed state of mind as the developed state; the undeveloped state of mind as the undeveloped state; the state of mind with some other mental state superior to it, as being the state with something mentally superior to it; the state of mind with no other mental state superior to it,. as being the state of mind with no other mental state superior to it; the concentrated state of mind as the concentrated state; the

unconcentrated state of mind as the unconcentrated state; the liberated state of mind as the liberated state; and the unliberated state of mind as the unliberated state.

He lives in this way observing the mind internally, or externally, or internally and externally.

He lives observing origination-factors in mind, or dissolution-factors in mind, or origination- and dissolution-factors in mind. Or his mindfulness is established to the extent necessary just for knowledge and awareness that mind exists, and he lives unattached, and clings to naught in the world. In this way, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu lives observing mind.

(4. MENTAL OBJECTS)

And how, Bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu live observing mental objects?

[*Five Hindrances*]

Here, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu lives observing the Five Hindrances as mental objects.

And how, Bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu live observing the Five Hindrances as mental objects?

(1) Here, Bhikkhus, when sense-desire is present, a bhikkhu knows: "Sense-desire is in me", or when sense-desire is not present, he knows: "There is no sense-desire in me". He knows how the non-arisen sense-desire arises; he knows how the arisen sense-desire disappears; and he knows how the non-arising in the future of the abandoned sense-desire comes to be.

(2) When anger is present, he knows: "Anger is in me"....

(3) When torpor and languor are present, he knows: "Torpor and languor are in me"....

(4) When restlessness and worry are present, he knows: "Restlessness and worry are in me"....

(5) When doubt is present, he knows: "Doubt is in me", or when doubt is not present, he knows: "There is no doubt in me". He knows how the non-arisen doubt arises; he knows how the arisen doubt disappears; and he knows how the non-arising in the future of the abandoned doubt comes to be.

In this way he lives observing mental objects internally, or externally, or internally and externally. He lives observing origination-factors in mental objects, or dissolution-factors in mental objects, or origination- and dissolution-factors in mental objects. Or his mindfulness is established to the extent necessary just for knowledge and awareness that mental objects exist, and he lives unattached, and clings to naught in the world. In this way, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu lives observing the five hindrances as mental objects.

[*Five Aggregates*]

And further, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu lives observing the five aggregates of clinging as mental objects.

And how, Bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu live observing the five aggregates of clinging as mental objects?

Here, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu thinks: Thus is material form; it arises in this way; and it disappears in this way. Thus is feeling; it arises in this way; and it disap-

pears in this way. Thus is perception; it arises in this way; and it disappears in this way. Thus are mental formations; they arise in this way; and they disappear in this way. Thus is consciousness; it arises in this way; and it disappears in this way.

Thus he lives contemplating mental objects internally, etc.....In this way, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu lives contemplating the five aggregates of clinging as mental objects.

[*Six Sense-Bases*]

And further, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu lives contemplating the six internal and the six external sense-bases as mental objects.

How, Bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu live contemplating the six internal and the six external sense-bases as mental objects?

Here, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu knows the eye and visual forms, and the fetter that arises dependent on both (the eye and forms); he knows how the non-arisen fetter arises; he knows how the arisen fetter disappears; and he knows how the non-arising in the future of the abandoned fetter comes to be.

He knows the ear and sounds.....the nose and smells.....the tongue and flavours.....the body and tangible objects....the mind and mental objects, and the fetter that arises dependent on both; he knows how the non-arisen fetter arises; he knows how the arisen fetter disappears; and he knows how the non-arising in the future of the abandoned fetter comes to be.

In this way, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu lives contemplating mental objects internally, etc.....In this way,

Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu lives contemplating the six internal and six external sense-bases as mental objects.

[*Seven Factors of Enlightenment*]

And further, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhus lives observing the Seven Factors of Enlightenment as mental objects.

How, Bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu live observing the Seven Factors of Enlightenment as mental objects?

(1) Here, Bhikkhus, when the Enlightenment-factor of Mindfulness is present, the bhikkhu knows: "The Enlightenment-factor of Mindfulness is in me"; or when the Enlightenment-factor of Mindfulness is absent, he knows: "The Enlightenment-factor of Mindfulness is not in me"; and he knows how the non-arisen Enlightenment-factor of Mindfulness arises; and how the perfection in the development of the arisen Enlightenment-factor of Mindfulness comes to be.

(2) When the Enlightenment-factor of the Investigation of mental objects is present, the bhikkhu knows: "The Enlightenment-factor of the Investigation of mental objects is in me"; when the Enlightenment-factor of the Investigation of mental objects is absent, he knows: "The Enlightenment-factor of the Investigation of mental objects is not in me"; and he knows how the non-arisen Enlightenment-factor of the Investigation of mental objects arises and how perfection in the development of the arisen Enlightenment-factor of the Investigation of mental objects comes to be.

(3) When the Enlightenment-factor of Energy is present, he knows: "The Enlightenment-factor of Energy is in me"; when the Enlightenment-factor of Energy is absent, he knows: "The Enlightenment-factor of Energy is not in me"; and he knows how the non-arisen Enlightenment-factor of Energy arises, and how perfection in the development of the arisen Enlightenment-factor of Energy comes to be.

(4) When the Enlightenment-factor of Joy is present, he knows: "The Enlightenment-factor of Joy is in me"; when the Enlightenment-factor of Joy is absent, he knows: "The Enlightenment-factor of Joy is not in me"; and he knows how the non-arisen Enlightenment-factor of Joy arises, and how perfection in the development of the arisen Enlightenment-factor of Joy comes to be.

(5) When the Enlightenment-factor of Relaxation (of body and mind) is present, he knows: "The Enlightenment-factor of Relaxation is in me"; when the Enlightenment-factor of Relaxation is absent, he knows: "The Enlightenment-factor of Relaxation is not in me"; and he knows how the non-arisen Enlightenment-factor of Relaxation arises, and how perfection in the development of the arisen Enlightenment-factor of Relaxation comes to be.

(6) When the Enlightenment-factor of Concentration is present, he knows: "The Enlightenment-factor of Concentration is in me"; when the Enlightenment-factor of Concentration is absent, he knows: "The Enlightenment-factor of Concentration is not in me";

and he knows how the non-arisen Enlightenment-factor of Concentration arises, and how perfection in the development of the arisen Enlightenment-factor of Concentration comes to be.

(7) When the Enlightenment-factor of Equanimity is present, he knows: "The Enlightenment-factor of Equanimity is in me"; when the Enlightenment-factor of Equanimity is absent, he knows: "The Enlightenment-factor of Equanimity is not in me"; and he knows how the non-arisen Enlightenment-factor of Equanimity arises, and how perfection in the development of the arisen Enlightenment-factor of Equanimity comes to be.

Thus he lives observing mental objects internally, etc.....Thus, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu lives observing the Seven Factors of Enlightenment as mental objects.

[*Four Noble Truths*]

And further, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu lives contemplating the Four Noble Truths as mental objects.

How, Bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu live contemplating the Four Noble Truths as mental objects?

Here, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu knows, "This is *Dukkha* (suffering)", according to reality; he knows, "This is the origin of *Dukkha*", according to reality; he knows, "This is the Cessation of *Dukkha*", according to reality; he knows, "This is the Path leading to the Cessation of *Dukkha*", according to reality.

Thus he lives contemplating mental objects internally, etc.....In this way, Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu lives contemplating the Four Noble Truths as mental objects.

Bhikkhus, whosoever practises these four Foundations of Mindfulness in this manner for seven years, then one of these two fruits may be expected by him: Highest Knowledge (Arahantship), here and now, or if some remainder of clinging is yet present, the state of Non-returning.

Bhikkhus, let alone seven years. Should any person practise these four Foundations of Mindfulness in this manner for six years.....for five years.....four years.....three years.....two years.....one year, then one of these two fruits may be expected by him: Highest Knowledge, here and now, or if some remainder of clinging is yet present, the state of Non-returning.

Bhikkhus, let alone a year. Should any person practise these four Foundations of Mindfulness in this manner for seven months.....for six months.....five months.....four months.....three months.....two months.....a month.....half a month, then one of these two fruits may be expected by him: Highest Knowledge, here and now, or if some remainder of clinging is yet present, the state of Non-returning.

Bhikkhus, let alone half a month. Should any person practise these four Foundations of Mindfulness, in this manner, for a week, then one of these two fruits may be expected by him: Highest Knowledge, here and

now, or if some remainder of clinging is yet present, the state of Non-returning.

Because of this was it said: "This is the direct way, Bhikkhus, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destruction of suffering and grief, for reaching the right path, for the attainment of Nibbana, namely the Four Foundations of Mindfulness."

This the Blessed One said. Satisfied, the Bhikkhus rejoiced at his words.

(Majjhima Nikaya, Sutta no.10)

With bad advisors forever left behind,
From paths of evil he departs for eternity,
Soon to see the Buddha of Limitless Light
And perfect Samantabhadra's Supreme Vows.

The supreme and endless blessings
of Samantabhadra's deeds,
I now universally transfer.
May every living being, drowning and adrift,
Soon return to the Land of
Limitless Light!

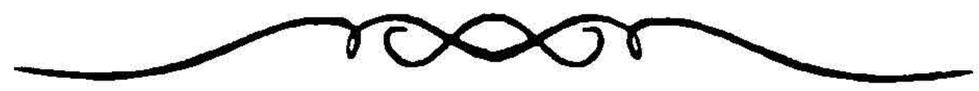
The Vows of Samantabhadra

I vow that when my life approaches its end,
All obstructions will be swept away;
I will see Amitabha Buddha,
And be born in his Land of Ultimate Bliss and Peace.

When reborn in the Western Land,
I will perfect and completely fulfill
Without exception these Great Vows,
To delight and benefit all beings.

The Vows of Samantabhadra
Avatamsaka Sutra

A Path to True Happiness



True Sincerity
toward others
Purity of Mind
within
Equality
in everything we see
Proper Understanding
of ourselves and our environment
Compassion
by helping others in a wise and unconditional way

See Through
to the truth of impermanence
Let Go
of all wandering thoughts and attachments
Freedom
of mind and spirit
Accord With Conditions
go along with the environment
Be Mindful of Buddha Amitabha
wishing to reach the Pure Land and follow His Teachings

DEDICATION OF MERIT

May the merit and virtues
accrued from this work,
Adorn the Buddha's Pure Land,
Repaying the four kinds
of kindness above,
and relieving the sufferings of
those in the Three Paths below.

May those who see and hear of this,
All bring forth the heart of
Understanding,
And live the Teachings for
the rest of this life,
Then be born together in
The Land of Ultimate Bliss.
Homage to Amitabha Buddha!

NAMO AMITABHA

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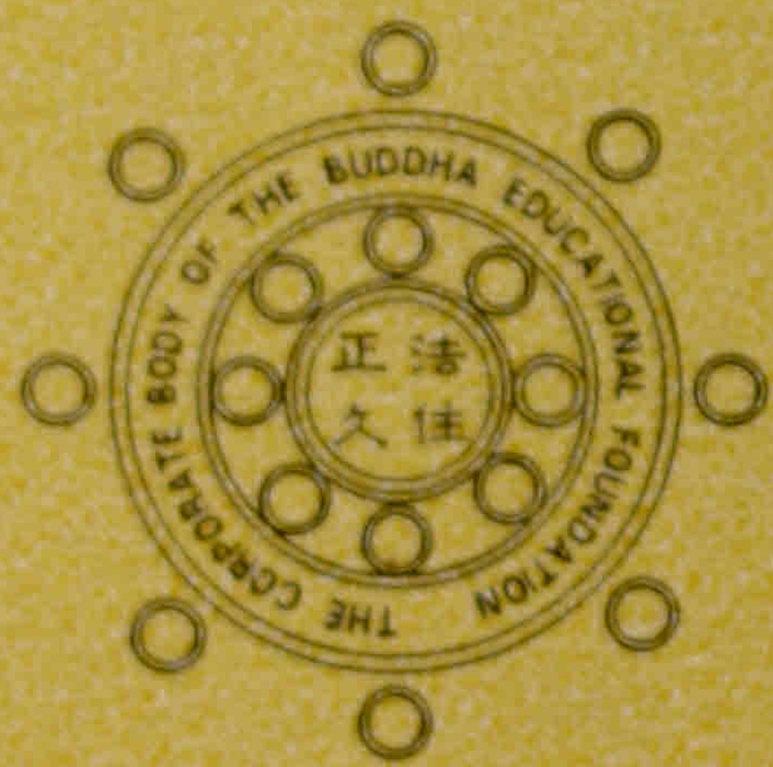
"As this is a religious text,
we request that it be treated with respect.
If you are finished with it,
please pass it on to others or return it to its source.
Thanks for your co-operation."



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