Nibbānagāminipaṭipadā · Mini · Cuốn 1 / Volume 1

Subjects of Tranquillity Meditation — A

Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw

English

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Bìa / Cover

Nibbānagāminipaṭipadā — The Practice Leading to Nibbāna (abridged edition). Volume 1. Subjects of Tranquillity Meditation (Samatha kammaṭṭhāna) — A. Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw.

Yo ca vassasataṃ jīve, dussīlo asamāhito; ekāhaṃ jīvitaṃ seyyo, sīlavantassa jhāyino.

A single day in the life of one who is virtuous and meditates is better than a hundred years lived without virtue or concentration.

One may live a hundred years without wholesome conduct in body and speech, or without access or absorption concentration. Far better is even a single day, or a single moment, in the life of a virtuous person whose mind is settled in meditation. Such a person may enter tranquillity jhāna by contemplating a conceptual kasiṇa object, or practise insight meditation by contemplating the characteristics of formations, such as impermanence. The former is called meditation that examines the object, and the latter meditation that examines the characteristics. (Source cited on the cover: Dhammapada Commentary.)

Yo ca vassasataṃ jīve, duppañño asamāhito; ekāhaṃ jīvitaṃ seyyo, paññavantassa jhāyino.

A single day in the life of one who has wisdom and meditates is better than a hundred years lived without wisdom or concentration.

One may live a hundred years without the wisdom of tranquillity and insight, or without access or absorption concentration. Far better is even a single day, or a single moment, in the life of a wise person whose mind is settled in meditation. Such a person may enter tranquillity jhāna by contemplating a conceptual kasiṇa object, or practise insight meditation by contemplating the characteristics of formations, such as impermanence. The former is called meditation that examines the object, and the latter meditation that examines the characteristics. (Source cited on the cover: Dhammapada Commentary.)

Bìa rời là ảnh JPG; chỉ số 1 dùng để định danh ảnh, không phải số trang PDF. Hai đoạn chú giải được dịch trực tiếp từ chữ Miến ở bìa; chưa tra độc lập ấn bản Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā.

Title page

Nibbānagāminipaṭipadā

The Practice Leading to Nibbāna (abridged edition) — Volume 1

Subjects of Tranquillity Meditation (Samatha kammaṭṭhāna) — A

Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw

Opening verses

Sabbadānaṃ dhammadānaṃ jināti.
Sabbarasaṃ dhammaraso jināti.
Sabbaratiṃ dhammarati jināti.
Taṇhakkhayo sabbadukkhaṃ jināti.

The gift of Dhamma surpasses every gift.
The taste of Dhamma surpasses every taste.
Delight in Dhamma surpasses every delight.
The destruction of craving overcomes all suffering.

Jinasāsanaṃ ciraṃ tiṭṭhatu, sabbe hontu sukhitā.

May the Dispensation of the Victorious One endure.
May all be happy.
May all be free from suffering.

Author’s note

In the extensive treatise Nibbānagāminipaṭipadā (The Practice Leading to Nibbāna), the author set out the method for meditators, starting with tranquillity and insight, following the instructions in the texts. To make the method easier to understand, the author cited sources from:

1. The Tipiṭaka.
2. The commentaries.
3. The subcommentaries.

With these textual references and explanations, the treatise became very large. To give meditators a book they could readily carry and read, the author has set out the method again in this abridged edition, reducing quotations from the texts as far as possible. Readers who wish to investigate points of practice that are unclear or doubtful in the light of the texts should consult the larger treatise. Since the textual evidence has been abbreviated in this edition, the author earnestly invites virtuous friends to help supply omissions and correct errors in letters, words or meaning. May all lend their help with an open heart to supply what is lacking…

Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw

Introduction — 1

Bìa / Cover

Nibbānagāminipaṭipadā
The Practice Leading to Nibbāna (abridged edition)

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa.
Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Enlightened One.

Introduction

Jinasāsanaṃ ciraṃ tiṭṭhatu.
May the Buddha’s teaching endure.

At the request of friends striving in meditation at Pa-Auk Tawya, the author wrote the extensive treatise Nibbānagāminipaṭipadā. The author also prepared short manuals to help these friends learn and remember the instructions as they practised. Since those manuals were very brief, some passages were difficult to understand. Some readers also wanted a fuller and firmer grounding in the texts…

Câu tiếp nối sang PDF lời dẫn trang 2; dấu … cuối đoạn phản ánh câu đang nối trang, không phải phần nguyên tác được tự khôi phục.

Introduction — 2

Bìa / Cover

…For these reasons they earnestly asked the author to explain the material a little more fully. The author therefore wrote this series. It is divided into six parts:

1. Subjects of tranquillity meditation (Samatha kammaṭṭhāna).
2. Meditation on materiality (Rūpa kammaṭṭhāna).
3. Meditation on mentality (Nāma kammaṭṭhāna).
4. Dependent origination.
5. The three characteristics.
6. Subjects of insight meditation (Vipassanā kammaṭṭhāna).

The series is thus arranged in six parts.

The section on tranquillity meditation is divided into two parts:
(A) Subjects of Tranquillity Meditation — A.
(B) Subjects of Tranquillity Meditation — B.

The section on dependent origination is divided into three parts:
(A) Dependent Origination — A.
(B) Dependent Origination — B.
(C) How phenomena are related through the conditions (paccaya) of the Paṭṭhāna..

Dependent origination thus takes up three volumes. The six parts of the series therefore make up nine volumes.

The section on tranquillity (Samatha) includes:
1. Mindfulness of breathing (Ānāpāna kammaṭṭhāna).

Introduction — 3

Bìa / Cover

2. Meditation on the thirty-two parts of the body (Dvattiṃsākāra kammaṭṭhāna).
3. The ten kasiṇas and nine subjects of foulness.
4. The four protective meditations (Caturārakkha kammaṭṭhāna).
5. Discernment of the four elements (Catudhātu kammaṭṭhāna).
6. Meditation on the eight attainments (Aṭṭhasamāpatti kammaṭṭhāna).
7. Mundane direct knowledges (Lokiya abhiññā kammaṭṭhāna).

These meditation subjects are presented together under the title Subjects of Tranquillity Meditation (Samatha kammaṭṭhāna).

May all good friends lend their help with an open heart to supply what is lacking…

Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw
Cittalapabbatā Monastery
Pa-Auk Tawya

Buddhist Era 2540.
Myanmar Era 1358, full moon of Tawthalin.

Niên đại được giữ theo nguồn; chưa quy đổi độc lập sang dương lịch. Tên tu viện Latin cần kiểm thêm: chữ Miến စိတ္တလပဗ္ဗတကျောင်း.

The Four Noble Truths and the strength of the pāramīs

Miến / Burmese 1

Subjects of Tranquillity Meditation (Samatha kammaṭṭhāna) — A

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa.
Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Enlightened One.

The Four Noble Truths and the strength of the pāramīs
From the Aparijānanāsutta

“Sabbaṃ, bhikkhave, anabhijānaṃ aparijānaṃ avirājayaṃ appajahaṃ abhabbo dukkhakkhayāya. /pe/ Sabbañca kho, bhikkhave, abhijānaṃ parijānaṃ virājayaṃ pajahaṃ bhabbo dukkhakkhayāya.”

Bhikkhus, without directly knowing and fully understanding all, without becoming dispassionate towards it and abandoning it, one cannot make an end of suffering. /pe/ But, bhikkhus, by directly knowing and fully understanding all, by becoming dispassionate towards it and abandoning it, one can make an end of suffering.

According to the commentary, “abhijānaṃ” refers to full understanding of the known (ñātapariññā), “parijānaṃ” to full understanding by scrutiny (tīraṇapariññā), and “virājayaṃ” and “pajahaṃ” to full understanding by abandoning (pahānapariññā). (Saṃyutta Commentary 3, p. 6, as cited in the original.)

Unless one directly knows and fully understands all the mental and material phenomena of the five aggregates with these three kinds of full understanding, becomes dispassionate towards those aggregates, and abandons craving for them, one cannot attain the end of suffering, Nibbāna. (Saṃyutta 2, pp. 249–250.)

If one directly knows and fully understands all the mental and material phenomena of the five aggregates with the three kinds of full understanding, becomes dispassionate towards them, and abandons craving for them, one can attain the end of suffering, Nibbāna. (Saṃyutta 2, pp. 249–250.)

Therefore, once meditators who aspire to attain Nibbāna, the end of suffering, have understood the meaning of this teaching of the Buddha…

Dẫn số tập/trang theo nguyên tác; chưa mở và xác minh ấn bản ngoài. Ký hiệu /pe/ giữ phần lược của nguồn. Pāli Latin phiên chuyển từ chữ Miến; chi tiết avirājayaṃ/virājayaṃ còn cần kiểm dị bản, không tự chuẩn hóa.

Four types of people

Miến / Burmese 2

…they must strive to know directly and fully understand all the mental and material phenomena of the five aggregates with the three kinds of full understanding. A good friend who strives in this way and practises the eight factors of the Noble Path that lead to Nibbāna is called one who follows the practice leading to Nibbāna.

Of the eight factors, right view and right intention belong to the wisdom group. Right speech, right action and right livelihood belong to the virtue group. Right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration belong to the concentration group. The training in virtue, concentration and wisdom contained in these eight factors is called the practice that leads out of the round of rebirth (niyyānikapaṭipadā). These are the duties to be fulfilled until Nibbāna is directly realized.

Four types of people

One should also know four types of people who undertake the practice set out in the eight factors:
1. One who understands from a brief statement (Ugghaṭitaññū).
2. One who understands from a detailed explanation (Vipañcitaññū).
3. One who can be guided (Neyya).
4. One for whom the words are the utmost (Padaparama).

There are thus four types of people. (Aṅguttara 1, p. 461, and its Commentary 3, p. 100.)

1. One who understands from a brief statement (Ugghaṭitaññū). Such a person has pāramīs so keen that when the Buddha gives a brief discourse concerning the Four Noble Truths, they can penetrate those truths as soon as the discourse ends. For example, when the Buddha teaches briefly with words such as “cakkhu aniccaṃ…”…

Four types of people — continued

…“sotaṃ aniccaṃ…”, giving just an outline (mātikā), they can penetrate the Four Noble Truths with path and fruition knowledge as soon as the teaching ends. One whose pāramīs are this keen is called an ugghaṭitaññū.

2. One who understands from a detailed explanation (Vipañcitaññū). The Buddha teaches the Four Noble Truths both briefly and in detail to noble venerable ones such as Sāriputta and Moggallāna. They do not penetrate the truths from a brief statement, but at the end of a detailed explanation they can penetrate the Four Noble Truths with path and fruition knowledge. A person whose pāramīs are sufficiently keen to penetrate the truths in this way is called a vipañcitaññū.

3. One who can be guided (Neyya). Whether the Buddha teaches the Four Noble Truths briefly, in detail, or in various ways, this person does not penetrate them as soon as the teaching ends. Afterwards, however, relying on wise friends and diligently practising virtue, concentration and wisdom according to the eight path factors, they can gradually penetrate the Four Noble Truths and attain path and fruition knowledge. Such a person is called a neyya.

4. One for whom the words are the utmost (Padaparama). Whether taught the Four Noble Truths briefly, in detail, or in various ways, this person does not penetrate them. Even if, after hearing the Dhamma, they strive correctly to practise the eight path factors under the guidance of wise people, they cannot penetrate the Four Noble Truths in that very life. Such a person is called a padaparama.

The four types of people and the seven qualities of a good person

Miến / Burmese 4

Although they cannot yet penetrate the Four Noble Truths, by rightly practising the eight path factors they can develop wholesome qualities that constitute pāramīs. They will penetrate the Noble Truths in a future life.

Of the four types, the ugghaṭitaññū and vipañcitaññū can penetrate the Four Noble Truths with path and fruition knowledge upon hearing the Buddha teach them, the former from a brief statement and the latter from a detailed explanation. For the neyya and padaparama, hearing about the practice of the eight path factors is insufficient. They must undertake that practice correctly, in accordance with the Dhamma. When their pāramīs are mature, by practising in this way they can penetrate the truths in this very life. Such people are neyya. If their pāramīs are not yet mature enough for them to penetrate the truths in this life, they are padaparama. The author is presenting the practice of the eight path factors chiefly for these two types. Neyya means someone who can be guided. The present age is the age of people who can be guided in this way. Practice is therefore especially necessary for them. Let us now consider the seven qualities of a good person (sappurisadhamma). (Dīgha 3, p. 223, and Subcommentary 2, p. 50.)

Seven qualities of a good person

1. Saddhā — Faith. It is confidence that the Buddha is an Arahant, fully enlightened, and that this Arahant is indeed the Buddha. In particular, it is firm confidence that an Arahant has eradicated all defilements without remainder…

Chỉ dẫn số tập/trang cuối đoạn cần kiểm lại ở hình phóng lớn; giữ là dẫn theo nguồn, chưa tra độc lập.

Seven qualities of a good person — continued

Miến / Burmese 5

…and is utterly pure. This is the characteristic of faith. In particular, one has wholehearted confidence that the Buddha is an Arahant who has eradicated all defilements and is utterly pure.

2. Pariyatti — Learning. One is learned in the Buddha's words, the teachings he proclaimed. In the dispensations of past Buddhas one also strove to become accomplished in this learning.

3. Sākacchā — Discussion. One discusses and asks and answers questions with good friends, respectfully and with a desire to understand, without disdain or contempt. In particular, one also strove to develop this quality in the dispensations of past Buddhas.

4. Paripucchā — Inquiry. Concerning profound teachings on the aggregates, bases, elements, Noble Truths and dependent origination, one learns the intended meaning (attha) and the meaning of the words (pada), and asks how passages follow and relate to one another (anusandhi). In other words, one studies the explanations. In the dispensations of past Buddhas one also made a special effort in this regard to understand profound teachings such as the aggregates. (Aṅguttara Commentary 2, p. 272.)

5. Pubbayoga — "Pubbayogo nāma pubbayojanaṃ sāsane gatapaccāgatikabhāvena yāva anulomaṃ gotrabhusamīpaṃ tāva vipassanānuyogo."

Pubbayoga is former endeavour. Within the Dispensation, one diligently practises insight while carrying the meditation subject out and back (gatapaccāgatika), as far as conformity, close to change-of-lineage. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 72.)

"Yāva anulomagotrabhusamīpaṃ saṅkhārupekkhāñāṇaṃ."

As far as knowledge of equanimity about formations, close to conformity and change-of-lineage. (Mahāṭīkā 1, p. 104.)

Former endeavour and former cultivation

Miến / Burmese 6

Former endeavour means having diligently practised a meditation subject in the dispensations of past Buddhas. One took the meditation subject along when going to the village for alms and brought it back when returning to the monastery. One diligently practised tranquillity and insight, advancing towards knowledge of equanimity about formations, a stage of insight leading to emergence close to the Noble Path. This is called pubbayoga. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 72, and Mahāṭīkā 1, p. 104.)

In the commentary on the causes of sharp knowledge in scrutiny, however, this former endeavour (pubbayoga) is called former cultivation (pubbavāsa). Faith, learning, discussion and inquiry are the same. Pubbavāsa is explained as follows:

“Pubbavāso nāma pubbayogāvacaratā atītabhave haraṇapaccāharaṇanayena parihaṭakammaṭṭhānatā.” (Source cited in the original: Aṅguttara, Commentary, 2, p. 272.)

In past lives, one took the meditation subject along when leaving the monastery for alms in the village and diligently practised while going. One brought the subject back when returning to the monastery and diligently practised on the way back. Having carried, maintained and discerned with knowledge a subject of tranquillity and insight meditation in this way is called pubbavāsa. (Aṅguttara Commentary 2, p. 272.)

Here, the author calls past practice of pubbayoga pubbavāsa, without distinguishing between the dispensations of earlier Buddhas and that of the present Buddha. The author also mentions phenomena investigated by insight, such as the truth of suffering, under “saccādīsu” (Aṅguttara Commentary 2, p. 272).

Former endeavour — continued

Miến / Burmese 7

The reference here extends beyond knowledge of equanimity about formations in this life. Whether in the dispensations of past Buddhas or in the present Buddha's Dispensation, past insight practice is called former endeavour (pubbayoga). It investigates, as impermanent, suffering and non-self, formations of two kinds: the five aggregates subject to clinging, which constitute the truth of suffering, and ignorance, craving, clinging, formations, kamma and so forth, which belong to the truth of the origin of suffering.

"Etesu pana kāraṇesu pariyatti, savanaṃ, paripucchāti imāni tīṇi pabhedasseva balavakāraṇāni. Pubbayogo hi adhigamassa balavapaccayo, pabhedassa hoti na hotīti? Na pana tathā. Pariyattisavanaparipucchā hi pubbe hontu vā mā vā, pubbayogena pubbe ceva etarahi ca saṅkhārasammasanaṃ vinā paṭisambhidā nāma natthi. Ime pana dvepi ekato hutvā paṭisambhidā upatthambhetvā visadā karonti." (Source cited in the original: Abhidhamma Commentary, vol. 2, p. 373.)

Of the five causes just discussed, learning (pariyatti), listening (savana) and inquiry (paripucchā) are strong causes specifically for differences in the degree of analytical knowledge (paṭisambhidāñāṇa). Former endeavour (pubbayoga) is a strong cause for attainment (adhigama), namely the Noble Paths and Fruitions. Does that mean former endeavour does not also account for differences in analytical knowledge? It does play a part. Yet although former endeavour is a strong cause for attainment of the Noble Paths and Fruitions…

Câu cuối nối sang trang chính văn 8. Đoạn Pāli đã phiên chuyển từ ảnh Miến và đối chiếu lại; lời giải nghĩa của tác giả tiếp tục ở trang 8. Các số tập/trang là dẫn theo nguyên tác.

Strong and supporting causes of analytical knowledge

Miến / Burmese 8

…it is not a strong cause for differences in the degree of analytical knowledge. It is nevertheless a supporting cause (upatthambhaka).

Learning (pariyatti), listening (savana) and inquiry (paripucchā) may or may not have taken place in the dispensations of past Buddhas or in earlier lives during the present Buddha's Dispensation. As for former endeavour (pubbayoga), without insight practice in past lives under previous Buddhas or in the present life, analytical knowledge cannot be attained. This practice consists in scrutinizing formations belonging to the truths of suffering and its origin as impermanent, suffering and non-self.

Former endeavour (pubbayoga) and attainment (adhigama) together support the arising of analytical knowledge and make it clear. Thus, though former endeavour is not the strong cause of differences in degree, it supports and sustains analytical knowledge. (Abhidhamma Commentary 2, pp. 372–373, and Mūlaṭīkā 2, p. 193.)

Nhan đề trang dùng để điều hướng là nhãn biên tập; các đề mục in hoa trong nội dung theo nguồn. Các dẫn số tập/trang được giữ theo nguyên tác.

The four analytical knowledges (Paṭisambhidāñāṇa)

Miến / Burmese 9

A question arises here: do all noble disciples attain analytical knowledge? The Sammohavinodanī commentary explains:

“Ariyasāvako no paṭisambhidāpatto nāma natthi.” (Abhidhamma Commentary, tập 2, p. 372.)

There is no noble disciple who has not attained analytical knowledge. (Abhidhamma Commentary 2, p. 372.)

The four analytical knowledges (Paṭisambhidāñāṇa)

The Sammohavinodanī’s explanation refers to teachings such as the exposition of the truths (Saccavāradesanā) in the Vibhaṅga. In that exposition the Buddha teaches the analytical knowledges as follows:

“Dukkhe ñāṇaṃ atthapaṭisambhidā; dukkhasamudaye ñāṇaṃ dhammapaṭisambhidā; dukkhanirodhe ñāṇaṃ atthapaṭisambhidā; dukkhanirodhagāminiyā paṭipadāya ñāṇaṃ dhammapaṭisambhidā; tatra dhammaniruttābhilāpe ñāṇaṃ niruttipaṭisambhidā; ñāṇesu ñāṇaṃ paṭibhānapaṭisambhidā.” (Source cited in the original: Abhidhamma, vol. 2, p. 307.)

1. Knowledge of the truth of suffering is analytical knowledge of meaning (atthapaṭisambhidāñāṇa).

2. Knowledge of the truth of the origin of suffering is analytical knowledge of principles (dhammapaṭisambhidāñāṇa).

3. Knowledge of the truth of the cessation of suffering is analytical knowledge of meaning (atthapaṭisambhidāñāṇa).

Nhan đề trang dùng để điều hướng là nhãn biên tập; các đề mục in hoa trong nội dung theo nguồn. Các dẫn số tập/trang được giữ theo nguyên tác.

The four analytical knowledges — continued

Miến / Burmese 10

4. Knowledge of the practice leading to the cessation of suffering, the truth of cessation or Nibbāna, is knowledge of the truth of the path and is called analytical knowledge of principles (dhammapaṭisambhidāñāṇa).

Knowledge of the designations and words used to express those meanings (attha) and principles (dhamma), that is, language (nirutti), is called analytical knowledge of language (niruttipaṭisambhidāñāṇa).

Knowledge that in turn knows the analytical knowledges of meaning, principles and language is called analytical knowledge of discernment (paṭibhānapaṭisambhidāñāṇa). (Abhidhamma 2, p. 307.)

Remember that the analytical knowledges of meaning and principles penetrate the Four Noble Truths. In other words, analytical knowledge of meaning knows the truth of suffering: the five aggregates subject to clinging, the phenomena of mentality and materiality. In one way of speaking, it is knowledge that delimits mentality and materiality (nāmarūpapariccheḍañāṇa) and knows the truth of suffering. In another, it is the insight knowledges and path knowledge.

Analytical knowledge of principles knows the truth of the origin of suffering. Put another way, it is knowledge of discerning conditions (paccayapariggahañāṇa), or the insight knowledges and path knowledge. After attaining these insight knowledges, a meditator who takes those very knowledges called analytical knowledge of meaning and of principles as objects of investigation can attain analytical knowledge of discernment (paṭibhānapaṭisambhidāñāṇa), insight knowledge that knows insight knowledge itself. Remember this point too.

Nhan đề trang dùng để điều hướng là nhãn biên tập; các đề mục in hoa trong nội dung theo nguồn. Các dẫn số tập/trang được giữ theo nguyên tác.

Truths of the round and of release, and the objects of insight

Miến / Burmese 11

The truths belonging to the round and the truths belonging to release (vaṭṭasacca — vivaṭṭasacca)

“Tattha purimāni dve saccāni vaṭṭaṃ, pacchimāni vivaṭṭaṃ. Tesu bhikkhunā vaṭṭe kammaṭṭhānābhiniveso hoti. Vivaṭṭe natthi abhiniveso.” (Source cited in the original: Abhidhamma Commentary, vol. 2, p. 109.)

The first two of the Four Noble Truths, suffering and its origin, belong to the round (vaṭṭa) because they recur in the round of rebirth. The last two belong to release (vivaṭṭa). They are the supramundane truth of cessation, Nibbāna, which is unborn, undying and entirely peaceful, and the supramundane truth of the path. The latter comprises the eight path factors associated with noble path knowledge that penetrates cessation and is the practice leading to Nibbāna, the end of suffering. These are called truths of release because they lie outside the round.

Of these two groups of truths, a meditator developing insight takes as objects only the truths of suffering and its origin, which belong to the round. The two truths belonging to release are outside the field of insight meditation. (Abhidhamma Commentary 2, p. 109.)

The objects investigated by insight knowledge

According to the canonical texts and commentaries cited above, a meditator developing insight must contemplate the phenomena belonging to the truths of suffering and its origin.

“Aniccādivasena vividhenākārena dhamme passatīti vipassanā.” (Source cited in the original: Abhidhamma Commentary, vol. 1, p. 175.)

Because it sees phenomena in various ways, as impermanent and so forth…

Nhan đề trang dùng để điều hướng là nhãn biên tập; các đề mục in hoa trong nội dung theo nguồn. Các dẫn số tập/trang được giữ theo nguyên tác.

The Four Noble Truths as understood through mundane insight

Miến / Burmese 12

…that is, sees phenomena belonging to the truths of suffering and its origin, it is called insight (vipassanā). (Abhidhamma Commentary 1, p. 175.)

As this commentary explains, insight means investigating and examining phenomena belonging to the truths of suffering and its origin in various ways, as impermanent, suffering and non-self.

The Four Noble Truths to be understood through mundane insight knowledge

1. The truth of suffering (dukkhasacca)

“Saṅkhittena pañcupādānakkhandhā dukkhā.” (Source cited in the original: Saṃyutta, vol. 3, p. 369; Majjhima, vol. 1, p. 82.)

According to the teachings cited, such as the Dhammacakkappavattana and Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna discourses, the five aggregates subject to clinging are the truth of suffering: the aggregates of materiality (rūpupādānakkhandha), feeling (vedanupādānakkhandha), perception (saññupādānakkhandha), formations (saṅkhārupādānakkhandha) and consciousness (viññāṇupādānakkhandha) subject to clinging. In brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering. What are these aggregates, beginning with materiality subject to clinging?

“Yaṃ kiñci rūpaṃ atītānāgatapaccuppannaṃ ajjhattaṃ vā bahiddhā vā oḷārikaṃ vā sukhumaṃ vā hīnaṃ vā paṇītaṃ vā yaṃ dūre santike vā sāsavaṃ upādāniyaṃ, ayaṃ vuccati rūpupādānakkhandho.” (Source cited in the original: Saṃyutta, vol. 2, p. 39.)

As the Buddha teaches in the Khandha discourse quoted above, any materiality, considered under eleven aspects, that is subject to the taints and liable to be clung to through craving and wrong view may be past, future or present, internal (in the body) or external (outside it), gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near…

Nhan đề trang dùng để điều hướng là nhãn biên tập; các đề mục in hoa trong nội dung theo nguồn. Các dẫn số tập/trang được giữ theo nguyên tác.

The truth of suffering and five presentations of its origin

Miến / Burmese 13

…The material phenomena that craving and wrong view can take as “mine” are called the materiality aggregate subject to clinging. In the continuation of the same Khandha discourse, the Buddha also teaches that feeling, perception, formations and consciousness, classified under all eleven aspects, are respectively called the aggregates of feeling, perception, formations and consciousness subject to clinging. (Saṃyutta 2, p. 39.)

According to these teachings, the five aggregates subject to clinging, the phenomena of mentality and materiality classified under eleven aspects, are the truth of suffering.

2. The truth of the origin of suffering (samudayasacca)

In the Saccavibhaṅga the Buddha presents the truth of the origin of suffering in five ways:

1. Craving (taṇhā) is the truth of the origin of suffering. (Abhidhamma 2, p. 112.)

2. Craving and all the remaining defilements are the truth of the origin of suffering. (Abhidhamma 2, p. 113.)

3. Craving, all the remaining defilements and all the remaining unwholesome phenomena are the truth of the origin of suffering. (Abhidhamma 2, p. 114.)

4. Craving, the defilements, all the remaining unwholesome phenomena and the three wholesome roots of non-greed, non-hatred and non-delusion that give rise to phenomena subject to the taints are the truth of the origin of suffering. (Abhidhamma 2, p. 114.)

Nhan đề trang dùng để điều hướng là nhãn biên tập; các đề mục in hoa trong nội dung theo nguồn. Các dẫn số tập/trang được giữ theo nguyên tác.

The truth of the origin of suffering and dependent origination

Miến / Burmese 14

5. Craving, the defilements, the remaining unwholesome phenomena, the three wholesome roots that give rise to phenomena subject to the taints, and all the remaining wholesome phenomena subject to the taints are the truth of the origin of suffering. (Abhidhamma 2, p. 115.)

With reference to these teachings in the Saccavibhaṅga, the Sammohavinodanī commentary and the Visuddhimagga explain:

“Taṇhā yañca kusalākusalakammaṃ avisesena samudayasaccanti saccavibhaṅge vuttaṃ.” (Source cited in the original: Abhidhamma Commentary, vol. 2, p. 185; Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 216.)

In the Saccavibhaṅga, the Buddha speaks of the truth of the origin of suffering in an inclusive way, without separating volition (cetanā) from its associated phenomena. Wholesome and unwholesome kamma that keep the round of rebirth going are all the truth of its origin. (Abhidhamma Commentary 2, p. 185, and Visuddhimagga 2, p. 216.)

In the Titthāyatanādi discourse in the Book of Threes of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the Buddha teaches:

“Katamañca bhikkhave dukkhasamudayaṃ ariyasaccaṃ? Avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā, saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇaṃ, viññāṇapaccayā nāmarūpaṃ, nāmarūpapaccayā saḷāyatanaṃ, saḷāyatanapaccayā phasso, phassapaccayā vedanā, vedanāpaccayā taṇhā, taṇhāpaccayā upādānaṃ, upādānapaccayā bhavo, bhavapaccayā jāti, jātipaccayā jarāmaraṇaṃ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā sambhavanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti. Idaṃ vuccati bhikkhave dukkhasamudayaṃ ariyasaccaṃ.” (Source cited in the original: Aṅguttara, vol. 1, p. 178.)

And what, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the origin of suffering?

Nhan đề trang dùng để điều hướng là nhãn biên tập; các đề mục in hoa trong nội dung theo nguồn. Các dẫn số tập/trang được giữ theo nguyên tác.

Dependent origination: five causes and five effects

Miến / Burmese 15

1. With the arising of ignorance, formations arise.

2. With the arising of formations, consciousness arises.

3. With the arising of consciousness, mentality-materiality arises.

4. With the arising of mentality-materiality, the six internal sense bases arise.

5. With the arising of the six sense bases, contact arises.

6. With the arising of contact, feeling arises.

7. With the arising of feeling, craving arises.

8. With the arising of craving, clinging arises.

9. With the arising of clinging, becoming arises, both kamma-becoming and rebirth-becoming.

10. With the arising of kamma-becoming, birth arises.

11. With the arising of birth, ageing and death arise, along with sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair.

Thus this whole mass of suffering arises, sheer suffering unmingled with happiness. Bhikkhus, this causal sequence of dependent origination (paṭiccasamuppāda) is called the Noble Truth of the origin of suffering. (Aṅguttara 1, p. 178.)

The Sammohavinodanī commentary and the Visuddhimagga quote the Paṭisambhidāmagga (p. 50), summarizing dependent origination in this verse:

“Atīte hetavo pañca, idāni phalapañcakaṃ; idāni hetavo pañca, āyatiṃ phalapañcakaṃ.” (Source cited in the original: Abhidhamma Commentary, vol. 2, p. 112; Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 214.)

The verse means, in brief, that the five past causes of ignorance, craving, clinging, formations and kamma give rise to consciousness, mentality-materiality…

Nhan đề trang dùng để điều hướng là nhãn biên tập; các đề mục in hoa trong nội dung theo nguồn. Các dẫn số tập/trang được giữ theo nguyên tác.

The origin of suffering, suffering, and cessation

Miến / Burmese 16

…the six sense bases, contact and feeling. These five present effects arise.

From five causes established in the present, namely ignorance, craving, clinging, formations and kamma, arise five future effects: consciousness, mentality-materiality, the six sense bases, contact and feeling.

This is the meaning of the verse. Summarized as a causal relation, dependent origination (paṭiccasamuppāda) consists of causes and effects. The causes belong to the truth of the origin of suffering, and the effects to the truth of suffering. Thus ignorance, craving, clinging, formations and kamma belong to the truth of the origin of suffering. Consciousness, mentality-materiality, the six sense bases, contact and feeling belong to the truth of suffering. Remember this distinction.

3. The truth of cessation (nirodhasacca)

1. The complete cessation of craving without remainder.

2. The complete cessation without remainder of craving and the remaining defilements.

3. The complete cessation without remainder of craving, the remaining defilements and the remaining unwholesome phenomena.

4. The complete cessation without remainder of craving, the remaining defilements, the remaining unwholesome phenomena, and the three wholesome roots that give rise to phenomena subject to the taints.

5. The complete cessation without remainder of craving, the remaining defilements, the remaining unwholesome phenomena…

Nhan đề trang dùng để điều hướng là nhãn biên tập; các đề mục in hoa trong nội dung theo nguồn. Các dẫn số tập/trang được giữ theo nguyên tác.

Cessation and the ending of dependent origination

Miến / Burmese 17

…the three wholesome roots that give rise to phenomena subject to the taints, and all the remaining wholesome phenomena subject to the taints. In the Saccavibhaṅga the Buddha teaches these cessations as the truth of cessation. (Abhidhamma 2, pp. 112, 114 and 115.)

In the Titthāyatanasutta in the Book of Threes of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the Buddha also teaches:

“Katamañca bhikkhave dukkhanirodhaṃ ariyasaccaṃ? Avijjāya tveva asesavirāganirodhā saṅkhāranirodho, saṅkhāranirodhā viññāṇanirodho, viññāṇanirodhā nāmarūpanirodho, nāmarūpanirodhā saḷāyatananirodho, saḷāyatananirodhā phassanirodho, phassanirodhā vedanānirodho, vedanānirodhā taṇhānirodho, taṇhānirodhā upādānanirodho, upādānanirodhā bhavanirodho, bhavanirodhā jātinirodho, jātinirodhā jarāmaraṇaṃ sokaparidevadukkhadomanassupāyāsā nirujjhanti. Evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hoti. Idaṃ vuccati bhikkhave dukkhanirodhaṃ ariyasaccaṃ.” (Source cited in the original: Aṅguttara, vol. 1, p. 178.)

And what, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering?

1. With the complete fading away and cessation of ignorance without remainder, formations cease.

2. With the cessation of formations, consciousness ceases.

3. With the cessation of consciousness, mentality-materiality ceases.

4. With the cessation of mentality-materiality, the six sense bases cease.

5. With the cessation of the six sense bases, contact ceases.

6. With the cessation of contact, feeling ceases.

Nhan đề trang dùng để điều hướng là nhãn biên tập; các đề mục in hoa trong nội dung theo nguồn. Các dẫn số tập/trang được giữ theo nguyên tác.

The truth of cessation and the practice of establishing mindfulness

Miến / Burmese 18

7. With the cessation of feeling, craving ceases.

8. With the cessation of craving, clinging ceases.

9. With the cessation of clinging, becoming ceases, both kamma-becoming and rebirth-becoming.

10. With the cessation of kamma-becoming, birth ceases.

11. With the cessation of birth, ageing and death cease, as do sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair.

Thus this whole mass of suffering, sheer suffering unmingled with happiness, ceases.

Bhikkhus, the cessation of this causal relation, the phenomena of dependent origination, is called the Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering. (Aṅguttara 1, p. 178.)

The practice of establishing mindfulness (satipaṭṭhāna)

As explained above, the causes belonging to the truth of origin are ignorance, craving, clinging, formations and kamma. Because they exist and can be discerned, the effects belonging to the truth of suffering arise and exist: consciousness, mentality-materiality, the six sense bases, contact and feeling. When those causes cease completely, without remainder and without arising again, this is called cessation in the forward order (anulomanirodha). The effects belonging to the truth of suffering, the mentality and materiality of the five aggregates, then also cease completely at parinibbāna and never arise again. This is called cessation in the reverse order (paṭilomanirodha)…

Nhan đề trang dùng để điều hướng là nhãn biên tập; các đề mục in hoa trong nội dung theo nguồn. Các dẫn số tập/trang được giữ theo nguyên tác.

Contemplating arising and passing away in the four establishments of mindfulness

Miến / Burmese 19

…The meditator should see this in contemplation. To enable one to see it, the Buddha teaches in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna discourse:

“Samudayadhammānupassī vā kāyasmiṃ viharati; vayadhammānupassī vā kāyasmiṃ viharati; samudayavayadhammānupassī vā kāyasmiṃ viharati.” (Source cited in the original: Majjhima, vol. 1, p. 71.)

One dwells contemplating the nature of arising in the body, or the nature of passing away in the body, or both the nature of arising and the nature of passing away in the body.

“Samudayadhammānupassī vā vedanāsu viharati; vayadhammānupassī vā vedanāsu viharati; samudayavayadhammānupassī vā vedanāsu viharati.” (Source cited in the original: Majjhima, vol. 1, p. 75.)

One dwells contemplating the nature of arising in feelings, or the nature of passing away in feelings, or both the nature of arising and the nature of passing away in feelings.

“Samudayadhammānupassī vā cittasmiṃ viharati; vayadhammānupassī vā cittasmiṃ viharati; samudayavayadhammānupassī vā cittasmiṃ viharati.” (Source cited in the original: Majjhima, vol. 1, p. 76.)

One dwells contemplating the nature of arising in the mind, or the nature of passing away in the mind, or both the nature of arising and the nature of passing away in the mind.

“Samudayadhammānupassī vā dhammesu viharati; vayadhammānupassī vā dhammesu viharati; samudayavayadhammānupassī vā dhammesu viharati.” (Source cited in the original: Majjhima, vol. 1, p. 77–78.)

One dwells contemplating the nature of arising in phenomena, or the nature of passing away in phenomena, or both the nature of arising and the nature of passing away in phenomena.

The commentaries explain:

“Samudayadhammānupassī vātiādīsu pana ‘avijjāsamudayā rūpasamudayo’tiādinā nayena pañcahākārehi rūpakkhandhassa samudayo ca vayo ca nīharitabbo. Tañhi sandhāya idha ‘samudayadhammānupassī vā’tiādi vuttaṃ.”

In the expressions beginning “dwells contemplating the nature of arising,” the arising and passing away of the materiality aggregate should be set out in five ways, beginning with “with the arising of ignorance, materiality arises.” This is what is intended here in the expressions beginning “dwells contemplating the nature of arising.” (Paṭisambhidā, p. 53, and Majjhima Commentary 1, p. 257.)

“Samudayavayadhammānupassī vāti ettha pana ‘avijjāsamudayā vedanāsamudayo’tiādīhi pañcahi pañcahi ākārehi vedanānaṃ samudayañca vayañca passanto samudayadhammānupassī vā vedanāsu viharati, vayadhammānupassī vā vedanāsu viharati. Kālena samudayadhammānupassī vā kālena vayadhammānupassī vā vedanāsu viharatīti

veditabbo.”

In “dwells contemplating both arising and passing away,” one who sees the arising and passing away of feelings in five ways each, beginning with “with the arising of ignorance, feeling arises,” dwells contemplating the nature of arising or of passing away in feelings. This should be understood as contemplating arising in feelings at one time and passing away in feelings at another. (Paṭisambhidā, p. 54, and Majjhima Commentary 1, pp. 283–284.)

Nhan đề trang dùng để điều hướng là nhãn biên tập; các đề mục in hoa trong nội dung theo nguồn. Các dẫn số tập/trang được giữ theo nguyên tác.

The meaning of contemplating arising and passing away

Miến / Burmese 20

The passages just quoted from the canonical texts and commentaries mean the following.

1. The meditator must see that because the causes belonging to the truth of origin exist, namely ignorance, craving, clinging, formations and kamma, the effects belonging to the truth of suffering arise and exist. These are the five aggregates referred to as body (kāya), feeling (vedanā), mind (citta) and phenomena (dhamma).

2. The meditator must also see that because those causes cease completely, without remainder and without arising again, the effects belonging to the truth of suffering, the five aggregates referred to as body, feeling, mind and phenomena, also cease completely and without remainder, culminating in parinibbāna.

3. The meditator should see with insight knowledge the moment-by-moment arising and passing away of both causes and effects, contemplating them through the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self.

When the causes cease

According to the canonical and commentarial passages explained above, the meditator must see how past causes belonging to the truth of origin, ignorance, craving, clinging, formations and kamma established in those lives, give rise to the effects belonging to the truth of suffering in this life, called body, feeling, mind and phenomena. The meditator must also see that the wholesome causes a good person is now establishing will continue to exist in the future round of rebirth: ignorance, craving, clinging, formations…

Nhan đề trang dùng để điều hướng là nhãn biên tập; các đề mục in hoa trong nội dung theo nguồn. Các dẫn số tập/trang được giữ theo nguyên tác.

Cessation without further arising (Anuppādanirodha)

Miến / Burmese 21

…and kamma give rise to effects belonging to the truth of suffering, namely body, feeling, mind and phenomena. When the causes belonging to the truth of origin cease completely without remainder and never arise again, that is called cessation without further arising (anuppādanirodha). The effects belonging to the truth of suffering, the five aggregates, also cease completely without remainder and never arise again, in the same manner. The meditator must see this too with insight knowledge.

When do the causes cease in this way? When do the effects cease in this way? The explanation is as follows:

“Avijjānirodhā rūpanirodhoti aggamaggañāṇena avijjāya anuppādanirodho anāgatassa rūpassa anuppādanirodho hoti, paccayābhāve abhāvato.” (Source cited in the original: Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 421.)

“With the cessation of ignorance, materiality ceases” means that through knowledge of the highest path, the path of arahantship (aggamaggañāṇa), ignorance ceases without ever arising again. This is called anuppādanirodha. Consequently future materiality, the material phenomena whose last point is the death moment of parinibbāna, also ceases without ever arising again. When the causes are absent, the effects cannot exist either. (Mahāṭīkā 2, p. 421.)

Nhan đề trang dùng để điều hướng là nhãn biên tập; các đề mục in hoa trong nội dung theo nguồn. Các dẫn số tập/trang được giữ theo nguyên tác.

When the meditator contemplates that cessation

Miến / Burmese 22

When to contemplate this

The Visuddhimagga instructs the meditator to contemplate this in its detailed treatment of knowledge of arising and passing away (udayabbayañāṇa). One beginning insight practice should contemplate formations belonging to the truths of suffering and its origin in the sequence of the insight knowledges. On reaching knowledge of arising and passing away, one should contemplate this.

The purpose is to progress to higher insight knowledges and attain noble path and fruition knowledge. At this stage the beginner is still a worldling. A noble person can also contemplate this in order to attain higher path and fruition knowledge, or enter the fruition attainment already attained. The author's point here, however, is that even a meditator who is still a worldling should contemplate this on reaching knowledge of arising and passing away.

The meditator who is a worldling should contemplate with insight how ignorance, craving, clinging, formations and kamma cease through the power of the knowledge of the path of arahantship, and how, with those causes ceasing, the five effects cease, culminating in the moment of parinibbāna. This concerns something still in the future, in a future life, rather than an event that has already occurred in the present. Therefore…

Nhan đề trang dùng để điều hướng là nhãn biên tập; các đề mục in hoa trong nội dung theo nguồn. Các dẫn số tập/trang được giữ theo nguyên tác.

Contemplating future cessation and seeing arising and passing away through conditions

Miến / Burmese 23

…the meditator should contemplate with insight how the causes will cease when the path of arahantship is attained in that future life. The path of arahantship itself is outside the range of objects for the insight knowledge of a worldling. What one sees in contemplation is the cessation of the causes through the power of the path of arahantship one will attain in the future.

Having seen this, one again contemplates with insight how, with the cessation of the causes without further arising (anuppādanirodha), the effects, the five aggregates, likewise cease without further arising, culminating in the death moment of parinibbāna.

For a worldling just beginning to develop knowledge of arising and passing away, the cessation seen in this contemplation is still in the future. Since the meditator has yet to attain the path of arahantship and reach parinibbāna, the Mahāṭīkā explains, “anāgatassa rūpassa anuppādanirodho hoti”: future materiality ceases without arising again.

The insight knowledge that knows the effects exist and arise because their causes exist is called knowledge that sees arising through conditions (paccayato udayadassanañāṇa). Insight knowledge that knows the effects cease without arising again because the causes cease without arising again is called…

The knowledges of arising and passing away and the Four Noble Truths

Miến / Burmese 24

…knowledge that sees passing away through conditions (paccayato vayadassanañāṇa). Together the two are called knowledge that sees arising and passing away through conditions (paccayato udayabbayadassanañāṇa).

The insight knowledge that knows how the aggregates arise from moment to moment is called knowledge that sees momentary arising (khaṇato udayadassanañāṇa). Insight knowledge that knows how the aggregates decay and pass away from moment to moment is called knowledge that sees momentary passing away (khaṇato vayadassanañāṇa). Together these two are called knowledge that sees momentary arising and passing away (khaṇato udayabbayadassanañāṇa). The Visuddhimagga explains these designations. (Visuddhimagga 2, p. 267.)

In the mental continuum of the meditator who contemplates in this way:

1. Through knowledge that sees arising through conditions, the truth of origin becomes clear. With the right view of insight, one understands for oneself the causes that arise and directly give rise to the five aggregates belonging to the truth of suffering. (Visuddhimagga 2, p. 267.)

2. Through knowledge that sees momentary arising, the truth of suffering becomes clear. With the right view of insight, one understands for oneself the suffering of birth (jātidukkha). (Visuddhimagga 2, p. 267.)

3. Through knowledge that sees passing away through conditions, the truth of cessation becomes clear. With the right view of insight, one understands for oneself that when the causes cease without arising again, the effects also cease without arising again. (Visuddhimagga 2, p. 267.)

4. Through knowledge that sees momentary passing away, only the truth of suffering…

The mundane truth of the path in contemplating arising and passing away

…becomes clear, because with the right view of insight one understands for oneself the suffering of death (maraṇadukkha). (Visuddhimagga 2, p. 267.)

5. The two kinds of knowledge of arising and passing away, through conditions and from moment to moment, belong to the mundane truth of the path. Thus the truth of the path becomes clear in the meditator's mental continuum. Through these two contemplations, one can dispel confusion regarding arising and passing away. (Visuddhimagga 2, pp. 267–268.)

In that meditator's mental continuum:

1. What understands the Four Noble Truths is right view (sammādiṭṭhi).

2. What directs the insight mind to the Four Noble Truths as its object is right intention (sammāsaṅkappa).

3. What strives to know the Four Noble Truths as its object is right effort (sammāvāyāma).

4. What keeps the Four Noble Truths in mind without forgetting the object is right mindfulness (sammāsati).

5. What steadies the insight mind firmly on the Four Noble Truths as its object is right concentration (sammāsamādhi).

These five mundane path factors thus arise together in the same moment of insight consciousness. With the three factors in the group of virtue, namely the wholesome conduct previously purified, all eight mundane path factors are present. These eight factors are the mundane truth of the path (lokiyamaggasacca).

The truth of the path the meditator should practise

Miến / Burmese 26

The truth of the path the meditator should follow and practise

“Na vīthiṃ jānātīti so gopālako maggāmaggaṃ viya ‘ayaṃ lokiyo ayaṃ lokuttaro’ti ariyaṃ aṭṭhaṅgikaṃ maggaṃ yathābhūtaṃ na pajānāti. Ajānanto lokiyamagge abhinivisitvā lokuttaraṃ nibbattetuṃ na sakkoti.” (Source cited in the original: Majjhima Commentary, vol. 2, p. 169.)

A cowherd who does not know which way is level and safe and which is rough and dangerous cannot make the herd in their care grow and thrive. Likewise, a meditating bhikkhu who does not know the eight noble path factors as they really are and cannot distinguish the mundane from the supramundane Noble Path cannot develop the supramundane Noble Path by beginning with the mundane Noble Path.

Such a bhikkhu cannot grow in virtue, concentration, insight, path, fruition and Nibbāna in the Dispensation. The bhikkhu remains outside the five aggregates of qualities: virtue of one beyond training (asekkhasīla), concentration, wisdom, liberation, and knowledge and vision of liberation. (Majjhima Commentary 2, p. 169.)

According to these explanations and instructions, the meditator must develop the phenomena belonging to the mundane truth of the path in the sequence of the insight knowledges, so that the phenomena belonging to the supramundane truth of the path arise. In other words, one must develop the phenomena of the mundane truth of the path, led by the right view of insight…

Đã tra thêm bản Pāli tại 84000.org, AtthaPali Vol.16, đoạn ‘Na vīthiṃ jānātīti…’, để hỗ trợ đọc chữ vīthiṃ trên ảnh Miến. Nguyên tác Mini in na pajānāti; bản trực tuyến đã mở in nappajānāti, nên giữ cách in của Mini. Không dùng phần dịch Anh làm nguồn.

Are the pāramīs necessary?

Miến / Burmese 27

…in order first to know the Four Noble Truths explained above. Through that endeavour, the phenomena of the mundane truth of the path give rise to those of the supramundane truth of the path. With supramundane right view, the meditator penetrates the Four Noble Truths, including the supramundane truths of cessation and of the path.

Are the pāramīs necessary?

Recall the explanation in the Sammohavinodanī commentary quoted earlier:

“Pubbayogena pubbe ceva etarahi ca saṅkhārasammasanaṃ vinā paṭisambhidā nāma natthi.” (Source cited in the original: Abhidhamma Commentary, vol. 2, p. 272.)

Without scrutinizing the formations belonging to the truths of suffering and its origin under the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self, in the past or in the present, there can be no analytical knowledge. (Abhidhamma Commentary 2, p. 272.)

Remember this teaching. Furthermore:

“Ariyasāvako no paṭisambhidāpatto nāma natthi.” (Source cited in the original: Abhidhamma Commentary, vol. 2, p. 272.)

There is no noble disciple who has not attained analytical knowledge. (Abhidhamma Commentary 2, p. 272.)

Remembering both explanations, one should note that if formations have not been scrutinized in the past or the present…

Aspiration and preparation for awakening

Miến / Burmese 28

…under their characteristics, one cannot become a noble person who has penetrated the Four Noble Truths.

The Apadāna Commentary also explains:

“Tathā paccekabuddhabuddhasāvakānaṃ sabbesaṃ patthanā ca abhinīhāro ca icchitabbā.” (Source cited in the original: Apadāna Commentary, vol. 1, p. 155.)

All independently awakened Buddhas (paccekabuddhas) and all disciples of a Fully Enlightened Buddha require two things:

1. An aspiration (patthanā), the wish to attain the kind of awakening (bodhiñāṇa) towards which one is aiming.

2. An undertaking directed towards awakening (abhinīhāra), the accumulation of the pāramīs that lead one to that kind of awakening. (Apadāna Commentary 1, p. 155.)

“Imesaṃ pana sabbesaṃ adhikāro ca chandatāti dvaṅgasamannāgatoyeva abhinīhāro hoti.” (Source cited in the original: Apadāna Commentary, vol. 1, p. 156.)

For all disciples of the Buddha, the undertaking (abhinīhāra), the accumulated pāramīs leading to the awakening they aspire to, must have two factors:

1. Wholesome kamma performed to support and lead to awakening (adhikāra).

2. A strong desire for the kind of awakening one seeks (chandatā). (Apadāna Commentary 1, p. 156.)

Wholesome kamma supporting the three types of disciple

Miến / Burmese 29

Therefore, the disciples of the Buddha must first develop and perfect the accumulated pāramīs, including the supporting wholesome kamma (adhikāra) and the desire (chandatā) just discussed.

Wholesome kamma that supports awakening (adhikāra)

We now explain adhikāra, the wholesome kamma supporting awakening. The Buddha's disciples are of three types:

1. Chief disciples (aggasāvaka).

2. Great disciples (mahāsāvaka).

3. Ordinary disciples (pakatisāvaka).

Among the three:

1. Chief disciples such as the Venerable Sāriputta and the Venerable Mahāmoggallāna must perfect their qualities for one incalculable period and one hundred thousand great aeons to attain the awakening knowledge of a chief disciple (aggasāvakabodhiñāṇa).

2. Great disciples such as the Venerable Mahākassapa, the Venerable Anuruddha, the Venerable Mahākaccāna, the Venerable Ānanda and the Venerable Puṇṇa must perfect their qualities for one hundred thousand great aeons to attain the awakening knowledge of a great disciple (mahāsāvakabodhiñāṇa).

3. Ordinary disciples must cultivate and perfect the accumulation of pāramīs called abhinīhāra for as long as those qualities need to mature to lead to the kind of awakening one aspires to, whether the awakening of a chief, great or ordinary disciple…

Former practice and two aspects of the pāramīs

…and bring those qualities to fulfilment. (Apadāna Commentary 1, p. 156.)

Among the three types, chief disciples, great disciples and some ordinary disciples also attain all four analytical knowledges when they attain the kind of awakening they wished and aspired for. The five causes that clarify these good persons' analytical knowledges were explained above: attainment (adhigama), learning (pariyatti), listening (savana), inquiry (paripucchā) and former endeavour (pubbayoga). (Visuddhimagga 2, p. 72, and Abhidhamma Commentary 2, p. 272.)

Of those five factors, the four other than attainment (adhigama) are the wholesome kamma supporting awakening (adhikāra) that they must develop and perfect.

Even for an ordinary disciple, however, the Sammohavinodanī says "pubbe ceva etarahi ca saṅkhārasammasanaṃ vinā," without scrutinizing formations in the past and present. Thus the former cultivation of insight, scrutinizing formations under the characteristics in past lives, is itself wholesome kamma supporting awakening (adhikāra).

Some teachers, drawing on the commentaries and subcommentaries on the Dīghajānusutta, also called the Byagghapajjasutta, explain the supporting wholesome kamma in a disciple's cultivation of the pāramīs under two headings:

1. Accomplishment in knowledge (vijjā).

2. Accomplishment in conduct (caraṇa).

They also explain both aspects clearly in their exposition of the pāramīs…

Accomplishment in knowledge and conduct (Vijjā–Caraṇa)

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…as follows.

Accomplishment in knowledge and conduct (Vijjā–Caraṇa)

“Tattha vijjāsampadā bhagavato sabbaññutaṃ pūretvā ṭhitā, caraṇasampadā mahākāruṇikataṃ. So sabbaññutāya sabbasattānaṃ atthānatthaṃ ñatvā mahākāruṇikatāya anatthaṃ parivajjetvā atthe niyojeti. Yathā taṃ vijjācaraṇasampanno. Tenassa sāvakā suppaṭipannā honti, no duppaṭipannā vijjācaraṇavipannānaṃ sāvakā attantapādayo viya.” (Source cited in the original: Visuddhimagga, vol. 1, p. 197.)

“Tattha yathā taṃ vijjācaraṇasampannoti yathā aññopi vijjācaraṇasampanno, tena vijjācaraṇasampannassevāyaṃ āveṇikā paṭipattīti dasseti. Sā panāyaṃ satthu vijjācaraṇasampadā sāsanassa niyyānikatāya sāvakānaṃ sammāpaṭipattiyā ekantakāraṇanti dassetuṃ ‘tenassā’tiādi vuttaṃ.” (Source cited in the original: Mahāṭīkā, vol. 1, p. 233.)

The commentary and subcommentary mean the following. The Buddha was accomplished in knowledge, comprising eight knowledges, and accomplished in conduct, comprising fifteen qualities of conduct. The Buddha’s accomplishment in knowledge fulfilled his omniscient knowledge (sabbaññutañāṇa), and his accomplishment in conduct fulfilled his great compassion (mahākaruṇā).

With omniscient knowledge the Buddha knew what was beneficial and what was harmful for all beings, that is, which actions would benefit or harm them…

Phiên Pāli đối chiếu ảnh Miến; trích chữ từ PDF chỉ dùng để hỗ trợ đọc cụm vijjācaraṇasampannassevāyaṃ āveṇikā paṭipattīti. Chưa tra độc lập ấn bản Mahāṭīkā được dẫn.

Knowledge and conduct as the basis of right practice

Miến / Burmese 32

…and with great compassion he led them to avoid harmful actions and undertake beneficial ones.

Just as the past Buddhas accomplished in knowledge and conduct led beings to undertake beneficial actions, our Buddha Gotama likewise leads beings to undertake only what is beneficial, the right practices.

By avoiding harmful practices and cultivating beneficial ones, the Buddha's disciples practise rightly and diligently develop the good practices that lead to accomplishment in knowledge and conduct.

The disciples of outside teachers who lack knowledge and conduct, such as those who torment themselves with severe austerities (attantapa), practise wrongly (duppaṭipanna). Disciples of the Fully Enlightened Buddha practise rightly (suppaṭipanna), for they diligently cultivate good practices to attain knowledge and conduct. Thus his disciples do not practise wrongly. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 197.)

The Buddha's accomplishment in knowledge and conduct is a strong cause both for his Dispensation's capacity to lead out of the round of rebirth and for the right practice of his disciples…

Three and eight kinds of knowledge (Vijjā)

Miến / Burmese 33

…that is, for the good and right practice by which the disciples become accomplished in knowledge and conduct. The commentary explains the passage just quoted in order to make this clear. (Mahāṭīkā 1, p. 233.)

According to the Visuddhimagga and the Mahāṭīkā, the Buddha's disciples practise rightly (suppaṭipanna) and diligently cultivate good practices in order to become accomplished in knowledge and conduct. Right practice is also given as one of the nine qualities of the Saṅgha.

Three and eight kinds of knowledge (Vijjā)

The three knowledges, knowledge of recollection of past lives (pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa), knowledge of the divine eye (dibbacakkhuñāṇa) and knowledge of the destruction of the taints (āsavakkhayañāṇa), are explained in the Bhayabherava discourse. The eight knowledges are explained in the Ambaṭṭha discourse. They are as follows:

1. Insight knowledge (vipassanāñāṇa). It penetrates as impermanent, suffering and non-self the formations belonging to the truth of suffering, namely the five aggregates subject to clinging or the phenomena of mentality and materiality, and the causes belonging to the truth of origin, such as ignorance, craving, clinging, formations and kamma.

2. Knowledge of mind-made psychic power (manomayiddhiñāṇa). With the mind in jhāna one can create another body, taking as the basis this body composed of the four elements.

3. Knowledge of the kinds of psychic power (iddhividhañāṇa). One can perform various feats, such as passing through the ground without being obstructed by the earth…

The eight knowledges and the fifteen qualities of conduct

4. Knowledge of the divine ear (dibbasotañāṇa). One can hear all kinds of sounds, far or near, as with the ear of a deity.

5. Knowledge of others' minds (cetopariyañāṇa). One can know the minds of others.

6. Knowledge of recollection of past lives (pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa). One can recollect and know, from beginning to end, aggregates experienced in the past.

7. Knowledge of the divine eye (dibbacakkhuñāṇa). One can see various visible objects, far or near, clearly and without obstruction, as with the eye of a deity.

8. Knowledge of the destruction of the taints (āsavakkhayañāṇa). Knowledge of the path of arahantship penetrates the Four Noble Truths to the highest degree and brings the taints, the defilements, to a complete end.

These are the eight kinds of knowledge. The eighth, knowledge of the destruction of the taints or noble path knowledge, is the factor of attainment (adhigama) among the causes of clarity in analytical knowledge described above. The first, insight knowledge, is the factor of former endeavour (pubbayoga). In the context of the perfections of a disciple (sāvakapāramī), knowledge in the form of insight cultivated previously is itself a perfection belonging to wholesome kamma that supports awakening (adhikāra).

Fifteen qualities of conduct (Caraṇa)

"Sī, gu, bho, jā, saddhā-sattā, rūpajjhānāni caraṇaṃ."

The fifteen qualities of conduct are presented in the Sekhasutta of the Majjhima Nikāya, as follows…

The fifteen qualities of conduct and seven good qualities

Miến / Burmese 35

1. Restraint by virtue (sīlasaṃvara): keeping the precepts.

2. Guarding the sense faculties (indriyesu guttadvāratā): guarding and protecting the mind so that defilements do not enter through the six doors of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind, and restraining the mind through the strength of tranquillity and insight practice.

3. Moderation in eating (bhojane mattaññutā): knowing how much food and drink is needed and taking it after reflection.

4. Devotion to wakefulness (jāgariyānuyoga): sleeping for only about one of the three watches of the night and striving for the practice of a renunciant in the remaining watches.

5–11. The seven good qualities (satta saddhammā).

12–15. The four fine-material jhānas (rūpāvacarajjhāna): first, second, third and fourth.

There are fifteen qualities of conduct in all. The seven good qualities are as follows:

The seven good qualities (satta saddhammā)

1. Faith (saddhā): confidence in the Triple Gem, in kamma and its results, and so forth.

2. Moral shame (hirī): shame at misconduct and unwholesome phenomena.

3. Moral concern (ottappa): dread of misconduct and unwholesome phenomena.

4. Extensive learning (bahussuta): having heard and learned much.

5. Aroused energy (āraddhavīriya): vigorous effort to abandon unwholesome phenomena and bring wholesome qualities to fulfilment through tranquillity and insight practice.

6. Mindfulness (satimā): strong mindfulness associated with the practice of tranquillity and insight…

Extensive learning (Bahussuta): learning and penetration

…in this way.

7. Wisdom (paññā): accomplishment in insight knowledge that penetrates the impermanence, suffering and non-self of the formations belonging to the truths of suffering and its origin.

These are the seven good qualities described in the Sekhasutta. We now explain just the quality of extensive learning. (Majjhima 2, pp. 10–13.)

The quality of extensive learning (Bahussuta)

“Bahussuto hoti sutadharo sutasannicayo. Ye te dhammā ādikalyāṇā majjhekalyāṇā pariyosānakalyāṇā sātthā sabyañjanā kevalaparipuṇṇaṃ parisuddhaṃ brahmacariyaṃ abhivadanti, tathārūpāssa dhammā bahussutā honti dhatā vacasā paricitā manasānupekkhitā diṭṭhiyā suppaṭividdhā.” (Source cited in the original: Majjhima, vol. 2, p. 9.)

“Diṭṭhiyā suppaṭividdhāti atthato ca kāraṇato ca paññāya suppaṭividdhā.” (Source cited in the original: Majjhima Commentary, vol. 2, p. 104.)

“Diṭṭhiyā suppaṭividdhāti atthato ca kāraṇato ca paññāya paṭivijjhitvā paccakkhaṃ katā.” (Source cited in the original: Aṅguttara Commentary, vol. 2, p. 164.)

Meaning of the quoted passages

The passages just cited from the canonical texts and commentaries mean the following. In extensive learning, understanding gained by hearing and learning is of two kinds:

1. Understanding gained through learning the teaching (āgamasuta)…

Understanding through learning and through direct experience

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2. Understanding through direct experience (adhigamasuta): understanding penetrated by wisdom and seen directly.

The canonical passage quoted above presents these two together.

A disciple of the Buddha hears and learns much and remembers what has been heard and learned. The disciple retains the teachings of the Buddha, good in the beginning, good in the middle and good in the end, complete in meaning and wording, and proclaiming a holy life that is entirely complete and pure. These teachings are given in full, word by word and syllable by syllable. The disciple learns them by heart and recites them frequently until fluent. Understanding retained in this way is called understanding through learning the teaching (āgamasuta), extensive learning acquired by listening. One learns from teachers by hearing and then remembers what was heard.

On the basis of that listening and learning, the disciple then strives to penetrate for themselves what they have heard and learned through right view. In this endeavour, as the Majjhimapaṇṇāsa and Aṅguttara commentaries explain, the disciple penetrates through right view both the meaning (attha), the five aggregates subject to clinging that belong to the truth of suffering, and the cause (kāraṇa), phenomena such as ignorance, craving, clinging, formations and kamma that belong to the truth of origin. This penetration by right view, the knowledge of direct experience, is called understanding through direct experience (adhigamasuta)…

Direct understanding and mindfulness (Sati)

Miến / Burmese 38

…through right view. This understanding is called understanding through direct experience (adhigamasuta).

The expression “a disciple of the Buddha accomplished in extensive learning, both in understanding through learning and in understanding through direct experience” refers in particular to clearly knowing and distinguishing the five aggregates, the ultimate mental and material phenomena, by knowledge of delimiting mentality and materiality (nāmarūpapariccheda ñāṇa), and clearly discerning their causes by knowledge of discerning conditions (paccayapariggahañāṇa). Penetrating the truths of suffering and its origin through right view, or the knowledge capable of that penetration, is called accomplishment in extensive learning.

Mindfulness, mindfulness, mindfulness (Sati)

The Majjhimapaṇṇāsa commentary also explains mindfulness, one of the seven good qualities, as follows:

“Iti ime rūpārūpadhammā evaṃ uppajjitvā evaṃ niruddhāti sarati ceva anussarati ca, satisambojjhaṅgaṃ samuṭṭhāpetīti attho.” (Source cited in the original: Majjhima Commentary, vol. 2, p. 21.)

Mindfulness is thus the wholesome quality that remembers and recollects: “Because of this cause, mental and material phenomena arise in this way. Because of this cause, they cease in this way.” This brings about the mindfulness enlightenment factor (satisambojjhaṅga).

Insight knowledge is also among the seven good qualities. It contemplates the material and mental phenomena of the truths of suffering and its origin, together with their causes, which have been apprehended through extensive learning…

Insight belongs to both knowledge and conduct

Miến / Burmese 39

…to penetrate the impermanence, suffering and non-self of those formations. The Majjhimapaṇṇāsa commentary explains that this penetrating wisdom comprises both insight knowledges and noble path knowledge. Of the five causes that clarify analytical knowledge, the insight knowledges belong to former endeavour (pubbayoga), while noble path knowledge belongs to attainment (adhigama). Here, however, the discussion concerns only the pāramīs, so the author intends insight knowledge as a quality of conduct. (Majjhima Commentary 2, p. 22.)

Knowledge and conduct: a quality belonging to both

Remember from these explanations that insight knowledge belongs to the fifteen qualities of conduct and also to the eight kinds of knowledge. It belongs to both knowledge and conduct.

From the Sekhasutta

In explaining accomplishment in knowledge and conduct, the author focuses on insight knowledge among the eight knowledges. For an ordinary disciple who seeks to attain path and fruition knowledge, the indispensable part of accomplishment in knowledge is accomplishment in insight knowledge. It is good to attain the other knowledges as well, but their absence does not prevent an ordinary disciple from attaining Nibbāna through path and fruition knowledge. Remember this point.

A clear textual basis for this explanation is the passage from the Sekhasutta of the Majjhima Nikāya quoted below…

The practice of one in training in the Sekhasutta

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…in the Majjhimapaṇṇāsa. (Majjhima 2, pp. 19–20.)

“Yato kho mahānāma ariyasāvako — evaṃ sīlasampanno hoti; evaṃ indriyesu guttadvāro hoti; evaṃ bhojane mattaññū hoti; evaṃ jāgariyaṃ anuyutto hoti; evaṃ sattahi saddhammehi samannāgato hoti; evaṃ catunnaṃ jhānānaṃ ābhicetasikānaṃ diṭṭhadhammasukhavihārānaṃ nikāmalābhī hoti akicchalābhī akasiralābhī. Ayaṃ vuccati mahānāma ariyasāvako sekho pāṭipado. Apuccaṇḍatāya samāpanno, bhabbo abhinibbhidāya, bhabbo sambodhāya, bhabbo anuttarassa yogakkhemassa adhigamāya.” (Source cited in the original: Majjhima, vol. 2, p. 19–20.)

Householder Mahānāma, when a noble disciple:

1. Is accomplished in virtue in this way.

2. Guards the sense faculties in this way.

3. Is moderate in eating in this way.

4. Is devoted to wakefulness in this way.

5–11. Is endowed with the seven good qualities in this way.

12–15. Obtains at will, without difficulty or trouble, the four jhānas of the higher mind, pleasant dwellings in this very life.

Then that noble disciple is called one in training who is practising. Like an egg that has not spoiled, such a disciple is capable of breaking through, capable of awakening and capable of attaining unsurpassed security from bondage.

Why the fifteen qualities of conduct include insight knowledge

Miến / Burmese 41

Householder Mahānāma, because the Buddha's disciple is endowed with these fifteen qualities of conduct, the disciple is called one in training who practises well, in the good practice of the eight kinds of noble person. The disciple has insight knowledge that brings maturation and burns away defilements. Like an unspoiled egg that can hatch into a chick, the disciple is capable of penetrating the Four Noble Truths and attaining the fruition of arahantship and unsurpassed Nibbāna, security from the four bonds. (Majjhima 2, pp. 19–20.)

A point worth asking about

Why is someone endowed with the fifteen qualities of conduct also said to be endowed with insight knowledge? The answer is as follows.

As explained, the seven good qualities are among the fifteen qualities of conduct, and wisdom (paññā) is one of the seven. The Majjhimapaṇṇāsa commentary explains "paññāya samannāgato" as follows:

"Paññāya samannāgatoti vipassanāpaññāya ceva maggapaññāya ca samaṅgībhūto." (Source cited in the original: Majjhima Commentary, vol. 2, p. 22.)

It means being endowed with both insight wisdom (vipassanāpaññā) and noble path wisdom (maggapaññā). Thus, by developing the fifteen qualities of conduct to fulfilment, including the insight knowledges, one can reach the standing of a person in training (sekha) or one beyond training (asekha)…

Giving and the strength of knowledge and conduct

Miến / Burmese 42

…and attain the standing of those noble persons. Remember this. Since insight knowledge is included in the fifteen qualities of conduct and in the eight knowledges, it belongs to both conduct and knowledge.

According to the Sammohavinodanī commentary quoted above, “pubbayogena pubbe ceva etarahi ca saṅkhārasammasanaṃ vinā…,” these knowledges and qualities of conduct are qualities that a meditator seeking Nibbāna must bring to fulfilment, whether in the past or in the present. These very qualities of knowledge and conduct are called wholesome kamma supporting awakening (adhikāra). (Abhidhamma Commentary 2, p. 272.)

The practice of giving (Dāna)

In cultivating and accumulating the pāramīs that constitute wholesome kamma supporting awakening and lead to the farther shore, Nibbāna, disciples also cultivate the perfection of giving (dānapāramī) according to their ability. Giving is itself a form of ethical practice within the fifteen qualities of conduct that a good person should follow and undertake.

The strength of knowledge and conduct

The qualities of conduct cultivated and accumulated with Nibbāna as their aim are like a pair of legs. Just as someone with legs can go where they wish…

How knowledge and conduct support the path to awakening

Miến / Burmese 43

…and someone with hands can pick up and hold whatever they wish, the qualities of conduct cultivated for Nibbāna lead meditators to encounter the Buddha and wise noble persons who can teach and advise them on wholesome qualities leading to Nibbāna. They also lead them to good parents, friends, relatives, teachers and guides. (See the sources cited in the original: Visuddhimagga 1, p. 196, Vinaya Commentary 1, p. 88, Abhidhamma Commentary 2, pp. 114 and 318, and Dīgha Subcommentary 3, p. 112.)

Upon meeting the Buddha and those wise noble persons and hearing them teach the Four Noble Truths, the pāramīs called knowledge, accumulated in past lives, guide and support one in attaining the kind of awakening one seeks and in penetrating the Four Noble Truths. The function of those knowledges is to support and sustain the penetration of the Four Noble Truths.

In the Pāramīdīpanī, Ledi Sayadaw explains that if one successfully cultivates only the seeds of knowledge and has not successfully cultivated the seeds of conduct, one still cannot attain path, fruition and Nibbāna. An example is the wealthy man Mahādhana's son and his wife in the Dhammapada Commentary. If one successfully cultivates only the seeds of conduct and the seeds of knowledge are deficient and undeveloped, one likewise cannot attain path, fruition and Nibbāna. An example is the wanderer Saccaka in the Cūḷasaccakasutta and Mahāsaccakasutta. (Dhammapada Commentary 2, p. 81, and Majjhima 1, pp. 289–299 and 299–317.)

Two cases: Mahādhana’s family and the wanderer Saccaka

Miến / Burmese 44

Had the wealthy man Mahādhana’s son and his wife stirred themselves early in life, entered the Dispensation and gone forth to practise, the husband could have become an arahant and the wife a non-returner. Had they gone forth in middle age, the husband could still have become a non-returner and the wife a once-returner. Even had they gone forth late in life, the husband could still have become a once-returner and the wife a stream-enterer.

Seeds of the pāramī of knowledge capable of leading to path knowledge, fruition knowledge and Nibbāna were already present in their continuum of mentality and materiality. Because they lacked the seeds of conduct, however, they had no opportunity to meet the Buddha at the right time. Only when all three stages had passed, when they were very old and frail, did they meet him. By then their capacity to receive teaching on the Four Noble Truths was exhausted, so the Buddha did not teach them. Although their seeds of knowledge were complete, they missed the Buddha’s Dispensation because their seeds of conduct had not been successfully cultivated.

The wanderer Saccaka had successfully cultivated the seeds of conduct other than insight knowledge, with Nibbāna as his aim. He therefore had the opportunity to meet the Buddha at the right time and hear him teach the Four Noble Truths. His seeds of knowledge were still deficient, however, because he had not successfully cultivated the seed of knowledge that is insight. Thus, even though he heard the Buddha explain firmly and clearly that the five aggregates are non-self, he still…

Saccaka’s seed of knowledge and its continuation in a later life

Miến / Burmese 45

…maintained in reply that they were self. He was unable to accept the Buddha’s teaching of non-self. Even so, the Buddha gave him two long discourses, the Cūḷasaccakasutta and Mahāsaccakasutta, intending to leave an impression and plant the seed of the pāramī of knowledge in Saccaka’s mental continuum. (Majjhima 1, pp. 289–299 and 299–317.)

He had yet to enter the noble stream or even to establish refuge in the Triple Gem. Through hearing those teachings, however, Saccaka had understood and accepted inwardly that the five aggregates are non-self. He was embarrassed to admit it publicly in front of the Licchavī princes who followed him, so although he understood and accepted it inwardly, he hesitated to say so openly.

That inward understanding that the five aggregates are non-self became a seed of the pāramī of knowledge capable of leading Saccaka to the direct realization of path, fruition and Nibbāna. From this explanation we can understand that while listening to those discourses Saccaka came to know the impermanence, suffering and non-self of the five aggregates sufficiently for this knowledge to serve as a seed of the pāramīs. (Majjhima Commentary 2, pp. 114 and 194.)

Through this accumulation of pāramīs, the seeds of knowledge and conduct cultivated successfully in this way, roughly two to three hundred years after the Buddha’s parinibbāna, in the early days of the Dispensation on the island of Sīhaḷa, he committed the Tipiṭaka to memory and successfully cultivated insight meditation there, so that…

Insight knowledge serves both roles

Miến / Burmese 46

…he became a noble arahant named Mahākāḷabuddharakkhita and attained all four analytical knowledges. (Majjhima Commentary 2, pp. 192–194.)

Insight belongs to both

From the preceding explanation we can see that insight knowledges belong to both the seeds of knowledge and the seeds of conduct. In the Paṭisambhidāmagga the Buddha teaches that if a meditator delights in and takes pleasure in an insight knowledge such as knowledge of equanimity about formations (saṅkhārupekkhāñāṇa), that very knowledge can give rise to the result of rebirth-linking (paṭisandhi) in a later life. The Paṭisambhidāmagga Commentary explains as follows. (Paṭisambhidā, p. 60.)

“For a worldling, if the kamma consisting in strong volition (cetanā) associated with knowledge of equanimity about formations gives the result of rebirth in a happy destination in the sensual sphere (kāmasugati), the defilement of greed, that is, delight in that knowledge, is one cause of the rebirth.

Volitional kamma associated with knowledge of equanimity about formations, supported by the defilement of greed, can produce a result such as rebirth in a happy destination in the sensual sphere. Thus volitional kamma associated with that knowledge is the productive cause (janaka), directly producing the result. Greed, the delight in that knowledge, is a supporting cause (upatthambhaka). /pe/”

Rebirth results and the two kinds of seed

Miến / Burmese 47

“For those in training, such as stream-enterers and once-returners who have not attained jhāna, equanimity kamma, that is, volition associated with knowledge of equanimity about formations, can also give the result of rebirth in a happy destination in the sensual sphere. Greed, delight in that knowledge, is a supporting and sustaining cause.

But stream-enterers and once-returners who have attained jhāna, and non-returners, are reborn only in the Brahmā world. Therefore greed, delight in knowledge of equanimity about formations, cannot support the result of rebirth in the Brahmā world.

Even for rebirth produced by kamma consisting in volition associated with conformity knowledge (anulomañāṇa) and change-of-lineage knowledge (gotrabhuñāṇa), greed, delight in knowledge of equanimity about formations, here including conformity and change-of-lineage knowledge, remains a supporting and sustaining cause.” (Paṭisambhidā Commentary 1, p. 250.)

According to the canonical and commentarial passages above, if insight knowledge produces a rebirth result, it serves both as a seed of knowledge and as a seed of conduct. If it does not produce a rebirth result, it serves only as a seed of knowledge. Remember this distinction.

Disciples of outside teachers who lack the pāramīs called the seeds of knowledge and conduct cannot attain path, fruition and Nibbāna. To attain path, fruition and Nibbāna, this accumulation of pāramīs guides a meditator towards the kind of awakening they seek…

Preparation for awakening (Abhinīhāra)

Miến / Burmese 48

…and is called abhinīhāra. Within this accumulation of pāramīs comprising seeds of knowledge and conduct, the wholesome kamma is called wholesome kamma supporting awakening (adhikāra). These are the practices of the pāramīs that disciples aspiring to Nibbāna must undertake, develop and bring to fulfilment.

In undertaking them, one should act with strong desire (chandatā), aspiring to Nibbāna and wishing to bring to fulfilment the pāramīs leading to it, that is, the wholesome kamma supporting awakening.

“Imesaṃ pana sabbesaṃ adhikāro ca chandatāti dvaṅgasamannāgatoyeva abhinīhāro hoti.” (Source cited in the original: Apadāna Commentary, vol. 1, p. 156.)

For all disciples, the undertaking directed towards awakening (abhinīhāra), which leads to the kind of awakening they aspire to, must have two factors: 1. Wholesome kamma supporting awakening (adhikāra). 2. Strong desire (chandatā). This is the meaning of the commentary. (Apadāna Commentary 1, p. 156.)

In other words, cultivating the seeds of knowledge and conduct is developing, accumulating and bringing to fulfilment the practice of the eight path factors. In bringing that practice to fulfilment, whether in the dispensations of past Buddhas or in the Dispensation…

The time needed to cultivate the pāramīs

Miến / Burmese 49

…of the present Buddha, meditators should develop and bring it to fulfilment as the wise practitioners of former times did. To attain the four paths and the four fruitions, encompassed by the three trainings in virtue, concentration and wisdom, they should cultivate the noble practice comprising the eight path factors with very strong desire and diligent effort until it is fulfilled.

In cultivating the pāramīs in this way:

1. Chief disciples need one incalculable period and one hundred thousand great aeons.

2. Great disciples need one hundred thousand great aeons.

3. For ordinary disciples there is no fixed period in which the pāramīs must be fulfilled.

In the Pāramīdīpanī, Ledi Sayadaw observes that in cases such as that of the wanderer Saccaka, although only a few lives may pass, the pāramīs that are seeds of knowledge and conduct can already mature sufficiently to lead to path, fruition and Nibbāna.

1. The seeds of knowledge are insight knowledge that penetrates the impermanence, suffering and non-self of formations belonging to the truths of suffering and its origin. If they were cultivated to fulfilment in past lives, as the pāramīs called abhinīhāra, they are the best seeds in this life for attaining path, fruition and Nibbāna.

Degrees of the seeds of knowledge from former practice

Miến / Burmese 50

2. If one has attained only the two knowledges that understand the truths of suffering and its origin, namely knowledge of delimiting mentality and materiality (nāmarūpapariccheda ñāṇa) and knowledge of discerning conditions (paccayapariggahañāṇa), those seeds of knowledge are of the second degree.

3. If one has attained only knowledge of delimiting mentality and materiality, and can distinguish the five aggregates belonging to the truth of suffering, namely the material and mental phenomena, those seeds of knowledge are of the third degree. This is Ledi Sayadaw's assessment in the Pāramīdīpanī.

If one has brought these seeds of knowledge and conduct to fulfilment in the dispensations of past Buddhas, or in earlier lives during the present Buddha's Dispensation, the factor of former endeavour (pubbayoga) is fulfilled.

The five factors explained above are the qualities brought to fulfilment by the noble persons who attain the four analytical knowledges. Here the author wishes to emphasize former endeavour (pubbayoga) in particular.

The noble persons mentioned above who understand from a brief statement (ugghaṭitaññū) or from a detailed explanation (vipañcitaññū) are wise practitioners who diligently cultivated insight meditation in the past, in the dispensations of former Buddhas, as far as the advanced knowledge of equanimity about formations. They repeatedly practised and became familiar with and proficient in contemplating formations with insight as far as knowledge of equanimity about formations.

How previous proficiency in insight supports practice

Miến / Burmese 51

These wise practitioners had repeatedly trained until they were thoroughly familiar with contemplating formations with insight as far as knowledge of equanimity about formations. In their last existence, their previous insight practice supported them through the power of natural decisive support (pakatūpanissayasatti). With this strong support, the great wholesome consciousnesses in their insight mind-door processes had great strength in that final life.

In a time as brief as a blink, a flash of lightning or a snap of the fingers, tens of millions of such insight mind-door processes can arise and cease. One koṭi is ten million. (Saṃyutta Commentary 2, p. 295.)

Because these insight mind-door processes ran so rapidly in so brief a time, these wise practitioners were able to understand, to the degree possible for a disciple, the impermanence, suffering and non-self of formations, and to penetrate all four Noble Truths.

In their present life they had not yet discerned by characteristic, function, manifestation and proximate cause the mental and material phenomena of the five aggregates subject to clinging, which are the truth of suffering, or the phenomena of dependent origination, which are the truth of its origin…

Earlier pāramīs support noble attainment in this life

Miến / Burmese 52

…nor had they trained with insight knowledge, or had time to do so. But in the dispensations of past Buddhas they had already discerned the formations of the truths of suffering and its origin by characteristic, function, manifestation and proximate cause. They had distinguished these formations with insight, practised with insight and become proficient in it.

Thus these wise practitioners had cultivated the insight knowledges as far as knowledge of equanimity about formations in the dispensations of past Buddhas. Consequently the seeds of wisdom at the levels of delimiting mentality and materiality, discerning conditions, comprehension (sammasanañāṇa), arising and passing away (udayabbayañāṇa), and so on were sustained by equanimity about formations through strong natural decisive support. These seeds had ripened.

Thus, before entering the noble stream in this life, they had not yet discerned the formations of suffering and its origin by characteristic, function, manifestation and proximate cause, distinguished them clearly with knowledge or become proficient in contemplating them. Even so, the wholesome pāramīs developed in the dispensations of past Buddhas provided strong support for entering the noble stream in this life, like a stepping stone already in place.

Wholesome pāramīs accumulated in the dispensations of past Buddhas can provide this strong natural decisive support until the insight knowledges mature and one enters the noble stream in the present life.

Practice for those who need guidance (Neyya)

Miến / Burmese 53

Therefore, listen to discourses such as the Dhammacakkappavattana and Anattalakkhaṇa, as those who understood from a brief statement or a detailed explanation once did. If hearing the teaching alone enables you to penetrate the Four Noble Truths and enter the noble stream, you can identify yourself as an ugghaṭitaññū or a vipañcitaññū.

If you determine that you are one who needs guidance (neyya), strive in accordance with the canonical texts, commentaries and subcommentaries to fulfil the noble practice of the eight path factors, which the three trainings in virtue, concentration and wisdom encompass:

1. First strive to purify virtue by fulfilling its three path factors: right speech, right action and right livelihood.

2. When virtue is purified, establish concentration and fulfil purification of mind (cittavisuddhi), so that the mind is clear and free from impurities and obstacles to concentration. Strive to attain access concentration (upacārasamādhi), absorption concentration (appanāsamādhi), or both. Fulfil the three factors of the concentration group: right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

3. When the mind has been purified through one or both of these kinds of concentration, strive to fulfil the two path factors of wisdom, right view and right intention, so that knowledge and vision are clear. In other words…

Right view of the Four Noble Truths

Miến / Burmese 54

…bring the following qualities to fulfilment:

(a) Right view that penetrates to the ultimate level the five aggregates subject to clinging, the material and mental phenomena that constitute the truth of suffering.

(b) Right view that penetrates dependent origination (paṭiccasamuppāda), the causal relation belonging to the truth of the origin of suffering:

1. From the corresponding five past causes, the corresponding five past effects arise and exist.

2. From the corresponding five past causes, the corresponding five present effects arise and exist.

3. From the corresponding five present causes, the corresponding five future effects arise and exist.

4. From the corresponding five future causes, the corresponding five future effects arise and exist.

(c) 1. The right view of insight (vipassanāsammādiṭṭhi) penetrates the dissolution of formations, the truth of cessation in the sense of dissolution (khayanirodhasacca).

2. The right view of the Noble Path (ariyamaggasammādiṭṭhi) penetrates Nibbāna, utterly blissful and peaceful, the truth of cessation in the sense of absolute cessation (accantanirodhasacca).

(d) 1. The wholesome qualities of the mundane truth of the path that accompany mundane insight knowledge are right view, right intention, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration…

The truth of the path and the development of concentration

Miến / Burmese 55

…together with the wholesome qualities of the mundane truth of the path that are right speech, right action and right livelihood.

2. The wholesome qualities of the supramundane truth of the path, associated with the Noble Path that penetrates Nibbāna as absolute cessation, are right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. Strive to fulfil the right view that penetrates the phenomena of the mundane and supramundane truths of the path.

What, then, does one need in order to penetrate the Four Noble Truths for oneself as they really are, through right view? The answer follows.

Develop concentration (Samādhi)

“Samādhiṃ bhikkhave bhāvetha. Samāhito bhikkhave bhikkhu yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti. Kiñca yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti? ‘Idaṃ dukkhan’ti yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti, ‘ayaṃ dukkhasamudayo’ti yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti, ‘ayaṃ dukkhanirodho’ti yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti, ‘ayaṃ dukkhanirodhagāminī paṭipadā’ti yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti.” (Source cited in the original: Saṃyutta, vol. 3, p. 369.)

Bhikkhus, develop concentration, whether access concentration, absorption concentration, or both. A concentrated bhikkhu knows phenomena as they really are, without distortion. What does that bhikkhu know as it really is?…

Concentration as the basis for knowing the Four Noble Truths

Miến / Burmese 56

1. One knows as it really is, without distortion: “This is the Noble Truth of suffering.”

2. One knows as it really is, without distortion: “This is the Noble Truth of the origin of suffering.”

3. One knows as it really is, without distortion: “This is the Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering.”

4. One knows as it really is, without distortion: “This is the Noble Truth of the practice leading to the cessation of suffering, Nibbāna.” (Saṃyutta 3, p. 369.)

Therefore, bhikkhus, develop concentration. A concentrated bhikkhu knows phenomena as they really are, without distortion.

Therefore, bhikkhus, in this Dispensation:

1. Strive to know: “This is the Noble Truth of suffering.”

2. Strive to know: “This is the Noble Truth of the origin of suffering.”

3. Strive to know: “This is the Noble Truth of the cessation of suffering.”

4. Strive to know: “This is the Noble Truth of the practice leading to the cessation of suffering, Nibbāna.” (Saṃyutta 3, p. 369.)

The meaning of the instruction on concentration

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The meaning of the instruction

“Idaṃ vuttaṃ hoti, bhikkhave yasmā samāhito bhikkhu cattāri saccāni yathābhūtaṃ pajānāti, tasmā tumhehi ca samāhitehi catunnaṃ saccānaṃ yathābhūtaṃ pajānanatthāya ‘idaṃ dukkhan’ti yogo hi karaṇīyo. Tathā yasmā cattāri saccāni tathāgateneva pātubhāvā pākaṭāni honti, yasmā ca tathāgatena suvibhattāni, yasmā ca tesu aparimāṇā vaṇṇā aparimāṇāni padabyañjanāni, yasmā ca tesaṃ appaṭividdhattā vaṭṭaṃ vaṭṭati, tesaṃ paṭividdhakālato paṭṭhāya na vaṭṭati, tasmā ‘evaṃ no vaṭṭaṃ na vaṭṭissatī’ti tumhehi ‘idaṃ dukkhan’ti yogo hi karaṇīyo.” (Source cited in the original: Saṃyutta Commentary, vol. 3, p. 274.)

The meaning is as follows. A firmly concentrated bhikkhu knows the Four Noble Truths as they really are, penetrates them and distinguishes them clearly. Therefore, bhikkhus, establish firm concentration and strive to know the Four Noble Truths as they really are, penetrate them and distinguish them clearly: “This is the Noble Truth of suffering… /pe/ …This is the Noble Truth of the path.” The Four Noble Truths stand out clearly to the Tathāgata’s wisdom, like a jewel in the palm of his hand. The Tathāgata himself has skilfully analysed and explained them. In his teachings on the Four Noble Truths, countless explanations, words and phrases are set out clearly…

Penetrating the Four Noble Truths and the Khadirapatta discourse

Miến / Burmese 58

…in this way. Further, because you have not yet seen and penetrated the Four Noble Truths for yourselves through the wisdom of right view, the suffering of the round of rebirth continues to grow. From the time you see and penetrate them for yourselves through right view, this great mass of suffering will no longer grow. Therefore, with the resolve “May the suffering of our round of rebirth not grow in this way,” strive to see and penetrate the Four Noble Truths for yourselves through right view: “This is the Noble Truth of suffering… /pe/ …This is the Noble Truth of the path.” That is the intended meaning. (Saṃyutta Commentary 3, p. 274.)

Read also the following teaching in the Khadirapatta discourse.

The Khadirapatta discourse (Khadirapattasutta)

Bhikkhus, suppose someone were to say: “Without seeing and penetrating for myself through the wisdom of right view the Noble Truth of suffering, the Noble Truth of its origin, the Noble Truth of its cessation and the Noble Truth of the path leading to its cessation, Nibbāna, I shall bring the suffering of the round of rebirth to an end…”

The simile of the leaves and penetration of the Four Noble Truths

Miến / Burmese 59

…if someone were to speak in this way, their words could not come true.

Suppose someone were to say: “I shall take khadira leaves, pine leaves or Indian gooseberry leaves (āmalaka, ရွှစ်ရှား), fashion them into a cup to carry water, or roll them up to wear as earrings.” If someone were to say this, their words could not come true.

In the same way, bhikkhus, suppose someone were to say: “Without seeing and penetrating for myself through the wisdom of right view the Noble Truth of suffering… /pe/ …the Noble Truth of the path, I shall bring the suffering of the round of rebirth to an end.” Their words could not come true.

Suppose, bhikkhus, someone were to say: “By seeing and penetrating for myself through the wisdom of right view the Noble Truth of suffering, the Noble Truth of its origin, the Noble Truth of its cessation and the Noble Truth of the path leading to its cessation, Nibbāna, I shall be able to bring the suffering of the round of rebirth…”

Ending suffering requires penetrating the Four Noble Truths

Miến / Burmese 60

"…to an end." If someone were to speak in this way, their words could come true.

Suppose someone were to say: "I shall take leaves of the paduma lotus, the palāsa or the māluvā, fashion them into a cup to carry water, or roll them up to wear as earrings." If someone were to say this, their words could come true.

In the same way, bhikkhus, suppose someone were to say: "By seeing and penetrating for myself through the wisdom of right view the Noble Truth of suffering… /pe/ …the Noble Truth of the path, I shall bring the suffering of the round of rebirth to an end." Their words could come true.

Therefore, bhikkhus, in this Dispensation:

1. Strive to know: "This is the Noble Truth of suffering." /pe/

2. Strive to know: "This is the Noble Truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering, Nibbāna." (Saṃyutta 3, pp. 383–384.)

What is materiality? (Rūpa)

Miến / Burmese 61

What is materiality? (Rūpa)

As explained above, the truths of suffering and its origin are the objects of insight knowledge. We shall first explain the materiality aggregate subject to clinging (rūpupādānakkhandha), which is included in the truth of suffering.

The Buddha's teaching distinguishes twenty-eight kinds of materiality. One must know them as they really are, both as to their number, twenty-eight, and as to their origins: which are produced by kamma, consciousness, temperature or nutriment, and which are produced by none of these causes. Without knowing this, one cannot grow in the Dispensation as far as path, fruition and Nibbāna. The Buddha himself taught this in the Mahāgopālaka discourse (Majjhima 1, pp. 281–286). Its commentary explains:

"So gaṇanato (samuṭṭhānato) rūpaṃ ajānanto rūpaṃ pariggahetvā arūpaṃ vavatthapetvā rūpārūpaṃ pariggahetvā paccayaṃ sallakkhetvā lakkhaṇaṃ āropetvā kammaṭṭhānaṃ matthakaṃ pāpetuṃ na sakkoti." (Source cited in the original: Majjhima Commentary, vol. 2, p. 163–164.)

If a meditating bhikkhu does not know materiality, first, as to its number…

Materiality groups and the discernment of materiality

Miến / Burmese 62

…and second, as to its origins, without understanding it as it really is to the level of ultimate reality, that bhikkhu cannot discern materiality (rūpapariggahañāṇa), distinguish and define immaterial phenomena (arūpapariggahañāṇa), discern mentality and materiality together (rūpārūpapariggahañāṇa), discern their conditions (paccayapariggahañāṇa), contemplate these formations of materiality, mentality, causes and effects under the three characteristics (vipassanāñāṇa), or bring insight practice to its culmination in path and fruition knowledge. (Majjhima Commentary 2, pp. 163–164.)

According to these canonical and commentarial passages, one practising meditation on materiality must first strive to know the twenty-eight kinds of materiality. Material phenomena do not arise one at a time. They generally arise in small groups called kalāpas. A materiality group is a minimal grouping of material phenomena in the ultimate sense. It is described as being the size of a paramāṇu. This expression is illustrative and gives no exact measurement. It should be understood to be many times smaller than a paramāṇu.

These small groups are still bound up with such concepts as the concept of a collection (samūhapaññatti) and the concept of shape (saṇṭhānapaññatti). They still belong to the realm of concepts, where compactness (ghana) has not been broken up. In each such group…

Ultimate materiality and mentality

Miến / Burmese 63

…there are at least eight kinds of materiality with their own nature: earth (pathavī), water (āpo), fire (tejo), wind (vāyo), colour (vaṇṇa), odour (gandha), taste (rasa) and nutritive essence (ojā). These phenomena with their own nature are ultimate materiality. It is ultimate materiality that should be examined under the three characteristics in developing insight. The lifespan of those materiality groups, or, in other words, of those ultimate material phenomena, is about one part in more than five thousand koṭis of the time it takes to blink or snap the fingers.

Their lifespan is extremely brief. As long as the supporting power of the causes is not exhausted, the effects continue to arise in successive layers. To know and penetrate these material phenomena for oneself through the wisdom of right view, as they really are at the ultimate level, the necessary aid is right concentration (sammāsamādhi), as the Buddha taught in the discourses on concentration cited above.

What is mentality? (Nāma)

Mental phenomena also generally arise in groups called mentality groups (nāmakalāpa), as indicated by “rūpārūpakalāpupādānaṃ” in the Mahāṭīkā (2, p. 235). They do not arise one at a time. Consciousnesses are of two kinds: consciousness in a cognitive process (vīthicitta) and process-free consciousness (vīthimuttacitta). Rebirth-linking (paṭisandhicitta), life-continuum (bhavaṅgacitta) and death consciousness (cuticitta) are process-free. The first consciousness in a life is rebirth-linking and the last is death consciousness. Between them, when no process consciousness arises…

Process consciousness and mentality groups

Miến / Burmese 64

…the consciousness that sustains the continuity of life is called life-continuum consciousness. When a door and its object meet, sequences of process consciousness arise. Broadly there are six processes, at the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind doors. For a very great or clear object, these consciousnesses generally arise according to the regular order: five-door adverting (pañcadvārāvajjana), eye-consciousness (cakkhuviññāṇa, or the corresponding sense consciousness), receiving (sampaṭicchana), investigating (santīraṇa), determining (voṭṭhabbana), seven impulsions (javana), two registrations (tadārammaṇa), and life continuum. At the mind door there are mind-door adverting (manodvārāvajjana), seven impulsions and two registrations. (Abhidhamma Commentary 1, p. 314.)

In each moment of process or process-free consciousness there are at least eight phenomena, counting consciousness and its mental factors. In some moments, such as impulsion, there can be as many as thirty-four. The consciousness and mental factors arising together in a single moment constitute a mentality group (nāmakalāpa). One knows mentality at the ultimate level only when wisdom can distinguish each mental phenomenon in such a group: this is contact (phassa), this is feeling (vedanā), this is perception (saññā), this is volition (cetanā), this is consciousness (viññāṇa), and so on. The necessary aid for distinguishing, understanding and directly seeing mentality for oneself through right view is right concentration, as the Buddha taught in the discourses cited above.

The view that tranquillity is outside the Dispensation

Miến / Burmese 65

The view that tranquillity is outside the Dispensation

“Ye te Assaji samaṇabrāhmaṇā samādhisārakā samādhisāmaññā, tesaṃ taṃ samādhiṃ appaṭilabhataṃ evaṃ hoti ‘no cassu mayaṃ parihāyāmā’ti.” (Source cited in the original: Saṃyutta, vol. 2, p. 102.)

“Samādhisārakā samādhisāmaññāti samādhiṃyeva sāraṃ sāmaññaṃ maññanti. Mayhaṃ pana sāsane na etaṃ sāraṃ, vipassanāmaggaphalāni sāraṃ. So tvaṃ samādhito parihāyanto kasmā cintesi ‘sāsanato parihāyāmī’ti.” (Source cited in the original: Saṃyutta Commentary, vol. 2, p. 289.)

Dear Assaji, when ascetics and brahmins who regard concentration as the essence and as the very quality of an ascetic cannot regain it, they tend to think: “Have we declined and fallen away from the teaching?” (Saṃyutta 2, p. 102.)

“Regard concentration as the essence and as the very quality of an ascetic” means they take concentration alone to be the essence and the quality of an ascetic. In my Dispensation, however, that concentration is not the essence. Insight, path and fruition are the essence. Why, when you have declined from concentration, do you think you have declined and fallen away from the Dispensation? This is the intended meaning. (Saṃyutta Commentary 2, p. 289.)

The Venerable Assaji usually used the fourth jhāna of mindfulness of breathing, in which the bodily formation of in-breaths and out-breaths had subsided, as a basis for insight…

The meaning of insight (Vipassanā)

…and then turned to insight. When his health declined, however, he could not enter that fourth jhāna again and could not turn to insight. At the request of the Saṅgha, the Buddha visited him and gave the Assaji discourse containing the words cited above. At the end of the teaching, he dwelt in the fruition of arahantship. (Saṃyutta Commentary 2, p. 289.)

On the basis of the canonical passage and commentary, some maintain: “Concentration, or tranquillity, is not the essence of the Dispensation. Insight alone is the essence. Therefore one need not establish concentration.”

This book likewise does not call concentration or tranquillity the essence of the Dispensation. Only insight, path and fruition are called its essence. But what is insight?

“Aniccādivasena vividhehi ākārehi dhamme passatīti vipassanā.” (Abhidhamma Commentary 1, p. 175.) According to the Aṭṭhasālinī, insight sees formations in various ways. These formations are actual ultimate phenomena: the five aggregates subject to clinging, which are the truth of suffering, namely ultimate materiality and mentality, and their ultimate causes, which are the truth of origin.

1. See clearly with knowledge that once arisen these formations immediately break up and keep breaking up. This is impermanence (anicca).

2. See clearly with knowledge that these formations are constantly oppressed by arising and passing away and subjected to continual dissolution. This is suffering (dukkha)…

Insight sees formations and is supported by concentration

Miến / Burmese 67

…3. See clearly with knowledge that the formations contain no permanent, stable, indestructible self as their essence. The formations are not self. This is non-self (anatta).

Only examination and development in accordance with these three characteristics is called insight. Its objects are precisely the ultimate formations called the truths of suffering and its origin.

You may have practised without establishing concentration. In doing so, ask yourself whether you directly saw and penetrated ultimate materiality, ultimate mentality, causes and effects through the wisdom of right view. If you did not, respectfully remember the Buddha's instruction to establish concentration so that you may see these formations as they really are. Only those with concentration can see and penetrate them for themselves through right view.

Others maintain: "Concentration, or tranquillity, whether access or absorption concentration, lies outside the Dispensation. Only insight belongs to it." If you accept that the noble practice of the eight path factors leads out of the suffering of the round (niyyānika) and belongs to the Dispensation…

What is right concentration? (Sammāsamādhi)

Miến / Burmese 68

…why would you not accept right concentration, one of the eight factors, as belonging to the Dispensation? If you accept the eight path factors as part of the Dispensation, you should also accept right concentration as part of it.

What is right concentration? (Sammāsamādhi)

“Katamo ca bhikkhave sammāsamādhi?

(a) Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu vivicceva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ vivekajaṃ pītisukhaṃ paṭhamaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.

(b) Vitakkavicārānaṃ vūpasamā ajjhattaṃ sampasādanaṃ cetaso ekodibhāvaṃ avitakkaṃ avicāraṃ samādhijaṃ pītisukhaṃ dutiyaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.

(c) Pītiyā ca virāgā upekkhako ca viharati, sato ca sampajāno, sukhañca kāyena paṭisaṃvedeti, yaṃ taṃ ariyā ācikkhanti ‘upekkhako satimā sukhavihārī’ti, tatiyaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati.

(d) Sukhassa ca pahānā dukkhassa ca pahānā pubbeva somanassadomanassānaṃ atthaṅgamā adukkhamasukhaṃ upekkhāsatipārisuddhiṃ catutthaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati. Ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave sammāsamādhi.” (Source cited in the original: Majjhima, vol. 1, p. 89.)

The four jhānas are called right concentration

Miến / Burmese 69

And what, bhikkhus, is right concentration?

(a) Here a meditating bhikkhu, secluded from sensual pleasures and unwholesome phenomena, enters and dwells in the first jhāna, with applied and sustained thought, and with joy and bliss born of seclusion from the hindrances.

(b) With the subsiding of applied and sustained thought, the bhikkhu enters and dwells in the second jhāna. It has inner confidence that clarifies the mind and concentration that unifies it. It is without applied or sustained thought, with joy and bliss born of concentration.

(c) With joy fading away, the bhikkhu dwells equanimous, mindful and clearly comprehending, with equanimity towards a tranquillity object such as the counterpart sign of mindfulness of breathing. The bhikkhu experiences bliss with the mental body. The noble ones praise one who attains the third jhāna as “equanimous towards the tranquillity object, mindful and dwelling in bliss.” The bhikkhu enters and dwells in the third jhāna.

(d) With the abandoning of bliss and pain, and with gladness and grief having already disappeared, the bhikkhu enters and dwells in the fourth jhāna, which is neither painful nor pleasant, with mindfulness purified by equanimity, the mental factor of equipoise (tatramajjhattatā).

This, bhikkhus, is called right concentration. (Majjhima 1, p. 89.)

Purification of mind and the pure-insight practitioner

Miến / Burmese 70

There are three kinds of concentration: sense-sphere access concentration at its highest level, fine-material concentration and immaterial concentration. Mentioning the middle kind, fine-material concentration, to explain right concentration also includes the first and last. This is the method of indicating the two ends by mentioning the middle (majjhedīpaka). The Visuddhimagga therefore explains:

“Cittavisuddhi nāma saupacārā aṭṭha samāpattiyo.” (Source cited in the original: Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 222.)

The eight attainments together with access concentration are called purification of mind (cittavisuddhi). (Visuddhimagga 2, p. 222.) They are called right concentration among the eight path factors and purification of mind among the seven purifications.

The pure-insight practitioner (Suddhavipassanāyānika)

Question: The practitioner who takes tranquillity as the vehicle (samathayānika) must establish concentration. But does the practitioner who takes pure insight as the vehicle (suddhavipassanāyānika) go straight to insight without establishing concentration?

Answer: The pure-insight practitioner also establishes a kind of concentration called access concentration by analogy (sadisūpacāra). To learn which meditation subject to begin with, read the following explanation in the Visuddhimagga.

Beginning by defining the four elements

Miến / Burmese 71

“Suddhavipassanāyāniko pana ayameva vā samathayāniko catudhātuvavatthāne vuttānaṃ tesaṃ tesaṃ dhātupariggahamukhānaṃ aññataramukhavasena saṅkhepato vā vitthārato vā catasso dhātuyo pariggaṇhāti.” (Source cited in the original: Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 222.)

On moving on to purification of view (diṭṭhivisuddhi), a tranquillity practitioner can begin either with materiality or with mentality. If beginning with mentality, the Visuddhimagga directs the practitioner first to discern the mental phenomena, starting with the jhāna factors and their associated phenomena, and then to discern the material bases on which these mental phenomena depend (2, p. 222). If beginning with materiality, the practitioner is directed to start with the four elements, just like the pure-insight practitioner, as follows.

The pure-insight practitioner, or this same tranquillity practitioner who begins with materiality for purification of view, first discerns the four elements in brief or in detail through one of the approaches explained under defining the four elements (catudhātuvavatthāna), one of the forty tranquillity meditation subjects. (Visuddhimagga 2, p. 222.)

Explanation

Of the forty tranquillity meditation subjects used to establish concentration, the subject concerning the four elements is called defining the four elements. Of the two kinds of concentration, access and absorption in jhāna…

Concentration from defining the elements is called access by analogy

Miến / Burmese 72

…this subject is explained as leading to access concentration. (Visuddhimagga 1, pp. 107, 347.)

“Upacārasamādhīti ca rūḷhīvasena veditabbaṃ, appanaṃ hi upecca cārī samādhi upacārasamādhi, appanā cettha natthi. Tādisassa pana samādhissa samānalakkhaṇatāya evaṃ vuttaṃ. Kasmā panettha appanā na hotīti? Tattha kāraṇamāha ‘sabhāvadhammārammaṇattā’ti.” (Source cited in the original: Mahāṭīkā, vol. 1, p. 436.)

The commentary says that when one develops concentration through meditation on the four elements, access concentration can be attained. Here the term “access” is used by convention, in an extended sense (rūḷhī). Strictly speaking, access concentration is concentration arising close to absorption. In this subject, however, there is no absorption. Since this concentration shares the characteristic of genuine access concentration close to absorption, it is called access concentration by analogy (sadisūpacāra). Why does this practice not reach absorption? Its objects are the individual characteristics, the ultimate natures of the four elements in each materiality group. These ultimate natures are profound, so the practice reaches access concentration only. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 347, and Mahāṭīkā 1, p. 436.)

When establishing concentration by using knowledge to distinguish and discern the individual characteristics of the four elements, the meditator discerns with knowledge their individual characteristics or ultimate natures in each materiality group…

Concentration analogous to access in four-elements meditation

Miến / Burmese 73

…and becomes able to distinguish them in this way. The concentration associated with the ability to distinguish each element's individual characteristic in each materiality group is sense-sphere access concentration at its highest level. Strictly, only concentration close to absorption is called access concentration. Even if one continues establishing concentration on the individual characteristics of the four elements in each group, absorption cannot be attained, because their individual characteristics are profound. There is no absorption in four-elements practice.

Those materiality groups, or the material phenomena in them, last for an extremely brief time, about one part in more than five thousand koṭis of the time it takes to blink or snap the fingers. Taking the individual characteristics of such short-lived phenomena as objects is extremely profound. Yet this concentration is at the same level as true access near absorption, so the commentary calls it access by analogy. A pure-insight practitioner who wishes to proceed directly to insight, moving on to purification of view without using tranquillity jhānas as a basis, must establish this kind of access concentration.

Defining the four elements (catudhātuvavatthāna) is among the forty tranquillity subjects capable of leading to access concentration. When access concentration from defining the four elements reaches its highest level…

Why the pure-insight practitioner begins with the four elements

Miến / Burmese 74

…one uses that concentration as support, taking as objects the individual characteristics, the ultimate natures of the four elements in each materiality group, and then proceeds to purification of view. Thus this subject belongs to both tranquillity and insight.

A further question may be asked. Why is the pure-insight practitioner, who wishes to proceed directly to insight and purification of view, instructed to begin with the four elements? The answer follows.

“Duvidhañhi kammaṭṭhānaṃ rūpakammaṭṭhānaṃ arūpakammaṭṭhānañca, rūpapariggaho arūpapariggahoti etadeva vuccati. Tattha bhagavā rūpakammaṭṭhānaṃ kathento saṅkhepamanasikāravasena vā vitthāramanasikāravasena vā catudhātuvavatthānaṃ katheti.” (Source cited in the original: Majjhima Commentary, vol. 1, p. 280.)

“Pariggahite ca rūpakammaṭṭhāneti idaṃ rūpamukhena vipassanābhinivesaṃ sandhāya vuttaṃ. Arūpamukhena pana vipassanābhiniveso yebhuyyena samathayānikassa icchitabbo. So ca paṭhamaṃ jhānaṅgāni pariggahetvā tato paraṃ sesadhamme pariggaṇhāti.” (Majjhima Nikāya Ṭīkā, vol. 1, p. 369.)

“Pariggahite rūpakammaṭṭhāneti idaṃ rūpamukhena vipassanābhinivesaṃ sandhāya vuttaṃ; arūpamukhena pana vipassanābhiniveso yebhuyyena samathayānikassa icchitabbo; so ca paṭhamaṃ jhānaṅgāni pariggahetvā tato paraṃ sesadhamme pariggaṇhāti.” (Source cited in the original: phụ Majjhima Commentary, vol. 1, p. 369.)

Two ways to begin discerning mentality and materiality

Miến / Burmese 75

…The Buddha often teaches the subject of the four elements called defining the four elements (catudhātuvavatthāna). (Majjhima Commentary 1, p. 280.)

Here, entering insight through materiality and beginning with meditation on materiality is generally said of the pure-insight practitioner. Entering insight through mentality and beginning with meditation on mentality is generally said only of the tranquillity practitioner. That practitioner first discerns the jhāna factors and then discerns the remaining mental phenomena and material phenomena. (Majjhima Subcommentary 1, p. 369.)

The tranquillity practitioner has sufficient strength of concentration and can therefore understand ultimate natures as they really are. On moving on to purification of view, that is, insight, the practitioner may begin with materiality or mentality, according to preference. The pure-insight practitioner generally needs to begin with materiality. In a few cases one may begin with mentality if one wishes, but it can be very difficult to discern materiality and mentality to the level of ultimate reality. Therefore, giving the rule that applies in most cases (yebhuyya), the Visuddhimagga instructs the pure-insight practitioner to begin by discerning materiality. (Visuddhimagga 2, p. 222.)

Moreover, for the objects contemplated in meditation on materiality, only two methods are taught: the brief and the detailed methods of the four elements…

Sources for the four elements and the introduction to mindfulness of breathing

Miến / Burmese 76

…The brief method is given in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna discourse (Dīgha 2, p. 234; Majjhima 1, p. 73). The detailed method is given in the Mahāhatthipadopama (Majjhima 1, pp. 242–249), the Mahārāhulovāda (Majjhima 2, pp. 83–89), and the Dhātuvibhaṅga of the Abhidhamma (Abhidhamma 2, pp. 84–89). The Dhātuvibhaṅga discourse (Majjhima 3, pp. 281–290) is neither very brief nor very detailed, and is included in the detailed method.

Thus contemplation of materiality has two methods, the brief and detailed methods of the four elements. The commentaries and subcommentaries therefore direct practitioners who begin with materiality to discern it by either method according to preference. Following the instructions of the canonical texts, commentaries and subcommentaries is the most suitable and beneficial practice for a meditator aspiring to Nibbāna, and cannot be omitted.

Once purification of virtue has been accomplished by fulfilling the three path factors of virtue, begin to establish concentration with whichever of the forty tranquillity subjects you prefer. This fulfils the three factors of concentration and accomplishes purification of mind. This book describes how to establish concentration by beginning with mindfulness of breathing and developing concentration through mindfulness of breathing (ānāpānassatisamādhi).

Mindfulness of breathing (Ānāpānakammaṭṭhāna)

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Mindfulness of breathing (Ānāpānakammaṭṭhāna)

Praise of mindfulness of breathing

“Ayampi kho bhikkhave ānāpānassatisamādhi bhāvito bahulīkato santo ceva paṇīto ca asecanako ca sukho ca vihāro, uppannuppanne ca pāpake akusale dhamme ṭhānaso antaradhāpeti vūpasameti.” (Source cited in the original: Saṃyutta, vol. 3, p. 279; Vinaya, vol. 1, p. 88.)

Bhikkhus, when this concentration through mindfulness of breathing has been developed and repeatedly practised, it is a peaceful and sublime dwelling requiring no other preliminary means. It is a pleasant dwelling, bringing bodily and mental ease. Whenever inferior, evil and unwholesome phenomena arise and have not yet been removed by jhāna, this concentration can make them disappear and subside at once. (Saṃyutta 3, p. 279, and Vinaya 1, p. 88.)

Establishing mindfulness of breathing

“Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu araññagato vā rukkhamūlagato vā suññāgāragato vā nisīdati pallaṅkaṃ ābhujitvā ujuṃ kāyaṃ paṇidhāya parimukhaṃ satiṃ upaṭṭhapetvā so satova assasati sato passasati.” (Source cited in the original: Majjhima, vol. 1, p. 70.)

Bhikkhus, here a meditating bhikkhu goes to a forest, the foot of a tree or a secluded place, sits cross-legged, holds the upper body erect and establishes mindfulness directed towards the meditation subject of breathing, the in-breath and the out-breath…

Keeping mindfulness where the breath touches

Miến / Burmese 78

…Mindful, the bhikkhu breathes in. Mindful, the bhikkhu breathes out. (Majjhima 1, p. 70.)

To practise keeping mindfulness steady on the in-breath and out-breath, the Buddha explained the practice in four groups of four (Saṃyutta 3, p. 280, and Vinaya 1, p. 88). There are four groups of four for the in-breath and four groups of four for the out-breath, making sixteen aspects for each, thirty-two in all, to practise for steady mindfulness.

When one reaches insight and can regularly contemplate under the three characteristics the formations of the three spheres in the thirty-one realms, called formations to be fully understood (pariññeyyasaṅkhāra), along with the phenomena of mindfulness-of-breathing jhāna, those thirty-two aspects are gradually fulfilled. Here we give priority to the first group of four.

Keep mindfulness

“Phuṭṭhaphuṭṭhokāse pana satiṃ ṭhapetvā bhāventasseva bhāvanā sampajjati.” (Source cited in the original: Visuddhimagga, vol. 1, p. 271.)

The development of concentration through mindfulness of breathing can be brought to fulfilment only by one who establishes mindfulness where the in-breath and out-breath touch, where contact is evident, and strives to develop that meditation subject. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 271.)

What to avoid in mindfulness of breathing

Miến / Burmese 79

What to avoid

“Athānena taṃ nimittaṃ neva vaṇṇato manasikātabbaṃ, na lakkhaṇato paccavekkhitabbaṃ.” (Source cited in the original: Visuddhimagga, vol. 1, p. 278.)

There are three kinds of sign (nimitta) in mindfulness of breathing: the preliminary sign (parikammanimitta), the learning sign (uggahanimitta) and the counterpart sign (paṭibhāganimitta).

1. The preliminary sign (parikammanimitta). The natural in-breath and out-breath are also called the preliminary sign. As the meditator follows the Buddha’s instructions in the first tetrad step by step, concentration grows. A breath sign that is opaque like smoke appears through the strength of the practice. This too is called the preliminary sign.

2. The learning sign (uggahanimitta). A breath sign white like a tuft of cotton, also arising through the strength of practice, is called the learning sign. This description applies in most cases (yebhuyya), since other colours may appear.

3. The counterpart sign (paṭibhāganimitta). A very clear breath sign, bright like the morning star, also arising through the strength of practice, is called the counterpart sign. Here too the description applies in most cases.

1. If a smoky preliminary sign, a pure white learning sign or a clear counterpart sign appears in mindfulness of breathing, do not attend to it by colour. If you attend to its colour, you will turn towards…

Keep the breath as the object without shifting to colour or the elements

Miến / Burmese 80

…a colour kasiṇa. Yet it will not truly become a colour kasiṇa, because the breath sign does not belong to the class of signs that can serve as objects for colour kasiṇa practice.

2. The four elements have individual characteristics. Earth (pathavī) has hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness and lightness. Water (āpo) has flowing and cohesion. Fire (tejo) has heat and cold. Wind (vāyo) has supporting. Do not attend to the preliminary, learning or counterpart sign, or to the natural in-breath and out-breath, in terms of individual characteristics. Do not attend to the individual characteristics of the four elements in those breath signs. If you do, the subject becomes the four elements and is no longer mindfulness of breathing.

For meditation on the four elements, however, contemplating all four elements only in the breath is insufficient. In the brief method, contemplate their individual characteristics throughout the body. In the detailed method, contemplate their individual characteristics in each of the forty-two parts of the body.

3. Impermanence (aniccalakkhaṇa), suffering (dukkhalakkhaṇa) and non-self (anattalakkhaṇa) are called common characteristics (sāmaññalakkhaṇa), as they apply to all formations belonging to the truths of suffering and its origin. Do not attend to the signs of mindfulness of breathing, including the natural in-breath and out-breath…

Discern the ultimate materiality of the breath before practising insight

Miến / Burmese 81

…in terms of the common characteristics. Do not apply impermanence, suffering and non-self in succession to them in order to develop insight. Insight examines only the ultimate formations called the truths of suffering and its origin under the three characteristics. All the signs of mindfulness of breathing, including the natural in-breath and out-breath, are still conceptual wholes, bound up with such concepts as collection and shape. Concepts are outside the range of insight knowledge. Therefore do not attend to these signs in terms of the common characteristics.

Do not take the natural in-breath and out-breath as objects and contemplate: “The in-breath arises and ceases and is impermanent. The out-breath arises and ceases and is impermanent.” As long as the compactness (ghana) of materiality has not been broken up, the natural in-breath and out-breath are still concepts.

“Assāsapassāsā cittasamuṭṭhānāva.” (Source cited in the original: Visuddhimagga, vol. 1, p. 346.)

“Cittaje assāsapassāsakoṭṭhāsepi gandhojaṭṭhamakañceva saddo cāti nava.” (Source cited in the original: Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 223.)

If you have successfully developed the detailed method of the four elements, use knowledge to see the four elements in the breath component (assāsapassāsakoṭṭhāsa), the natural in-breath and out-breath produced by consciousness. When concentration is sufficient, you will see tiny materiality groups. If you analyse and examine them with knowledge, in each group you can distinguish…

The counting method (Gaṇanā)

Miến / Burmese 82

…nine kinds of materiality: earth (pathavī), water (āpo), fire (tejo), wind (vāyo), colour (vaṇṇa), odour (gandha), taste (rasa), nutritive essence (ojā) and sound (sadda), the sound of breathing. These nine are ultimate materiality and can be contemplated under the three characteristics. Remember that until you have discerned and seen these ultimate material phenomena with knowledge, contemplating any of the breath signs, including the natural breath, under the three characteristics is not genuine insight.

Counting (Gaṇanā)

Stay at the tip of the nose, at one nostril or at the upper lip, wherever the contact of the breath is evident, and attend to the in-breath and out-breath. If you can do without mental noting, simply attend closely so that mindfulness remains steady on the breath. If you need to note it mentally, note only “in-breath, out-breath.”

Do not attend exclusively to the touch. Do not follow the flow of the breath inwards or outwards beyond the place where the contact is evident. Stay at that place and attend only to the in-breath and out-breath. Attending to the touch alone is a different subject related to the four elements. Attending to the flow of breath itself is mindfulness of breathing. Stay there and discern the in-breath and out-breath as they are present, with steady mindfulness.

It is good if the mind in meditation remains settled, connected and steady on the in-breath and out-breath for half an hour or an hour. When it consistently stays connected and steady on them for about an hour in each sitting…

Counting the breaths to settle a distracted mind

Miến / Burmese 83

…you can proceed to contemplating long and short breaths (dīgha, rassa).

If the mind is not yet settled, connected and steady on the in-breath and out-breath and is still often distracted, use the counting method given in the commentaries (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 270 ff.).

1. “In-breath, out-breath,” one (1).

2. “In-breath, out-breath,” two (2).

3. “In-breath, out-breath,” three (3).

4. “In-breath, out-breath,” four (4).

5. “In-breath, out-breath,” five (5).

6. “In-breath, out-breath,” six (6).

7. “In-breath, out-breath,” seven (7).

8. “In-breath, out-breath,” eight (8).

Count in this way. From one to eight, do not let the mind stray to other objects. Keep it fairly firmly on the breath so that it stays settled, connected and steady on the in-breath and out-breath alone. You may count from one to five or from one to ten. Do not stop below five or go beyond ten. Choose an ending number between five and ten as you prefer.

Through counting (gaṇanā), the mind gradually becomes settled, connected and steady on the in-breath and out-breath. When in each sitting it stays that way for about half an hour or an hour, leave off counting and continue attending only to the in-breath and out-breath. As for the mind in meditation…

Long and short breaths (Dīgha; Rassa)

Miến / Burmese 84

…make a resolve and try sitting: “May the mind stay settled on the in-breath and out-breath for half an hour,” or “May the mind stay settled for an hour.” If you succeed, proceed to contemplating long and short breaths.

1. Long — 2. Short (Dīgha; Rassa)

The first tetrad of mindfulness of breathing has four steps: (1) dīgha, long, (2) rassa, short, (3) sabbakāya, the whole in-breath and out-breath, and (4) passambhaya, training in calming. The Buddha taught the practice concerning long and short breaths as follows:

1. “Dīghaṃ vā assasanto ‘dīghaṃ assasāmī’ti pajānāti; dīghaṃ vā passasanto ‘dīghaṃ passasāmī’ti pajānāti.”

2. “Rassaṃ vā assasanto ‘rassaṃ assasāmī’ti pajānāti; rassaṃ vā passasanto ‘rassaṃ passasāmī’ti pajānāti.” (Source cited in the original: Majjhima, vol. 1, p. 70.)

1. Breathing in long, one clearly knows and distinguishes: “I breathe in long.” Breathing out long, one clearly knows and distinguishes: “I breathe out long.”

2. Breathing in short, one clearly knows and distinguishes: “I breathe in short.” Breathing out short, one clearly knows and distinguishes: “I breathe out short.” (Majjhima 1, p. 70.)

Know length by duration and let the breath remain natural

Miến / Burmese 85

“Yā pana tesaṃ dīgharassatā, sā addhānavasena veditabbā.” (Source cited in the original: Visuddhimagga, vol. 1, p. 263.)

“Addhānavasenāti dīghakālavasena.” (Source cited in the original: Mahāṭīkā, vol. 1, p. 320.)

According to the commentary and subcommentary cited above, an in-breath or out-breath that lasts relatively longer is known as long, and one that lasts a short time is known as short.

When contemplating long and short breaths, do not deliberately lengthen or shorten them. Breathe as you normally do, naturally. Deliberately adjusting the breath often weakens concentration or causes it to disappear.

First, with or without counting, try to keep the mind settled, connected and steady with mindfulness on the in-breath and out-breath. Once the mind is settled in this way, try to know long as long and short as short. Do not mentally label the breath “long” or “short.” If you need to note it mentally, note only “in-breath, out-breath.” Clearly knowing its length is enough. Do not analyse how long or short it is. Excessive investigation, the investigation-of-phenomena enlightenment factor (dhammavicayasambojjhaṅga), often weakens concentration or causes it to disappear.

Try to keep the mind settled, connected and steady on the long and short in-breaths and out-breaths for an hour, two hours, and so on. There is no fault if the breath stays long throughout the sitting or short throughout the sitting. From one breath…

Experiencing the whole breath-body (Sabbakāyapaṭisaṃvedī)

Miến / Burmese 86

…to the next, however, the breaths are generally not exactly alike. Sometimes they are slow and sometimes fast. Keep the mind relaxed and always observe the breath naturally.

A point to note in particular

If the in-breath is long and the out-breath short, the body tends in time to lean backwards. If the out-breath is long and the in-breath short, the body tends to lean forwards. Attending to even in-breaths and out-breaths therefore helps concentration greatly. If they are long, let them be equally long. If short, let them be equally short. When the mind stays connected and steady on the long and short breaths for an hour, two hours, and so on in each sitting, strive to know the beginning, middle and end, the whole in-breath and out-breath.

3. Experiencing the whole breath-body (Sabbakāyapaṭisaṃvedī)

“‘Sabbakāyapaṭisaṃvedī assasissāmī’ti sikkhati; ‘sabbakāyapaṭisaṃvedī passasissāmī’ti sikkhati.” (Source cited in the original: Majjhima, vol. 1, p. 70.)

3. One trains: “Experiencing the beginning, middle and end, the whole in-breath, I shall breathe in.” One trains: “Experiencing the beginning, middle and end, the whole out-breath, I shall breathe out.” (Majjhima 1, p. 70.)

When in each sitting the mind remains settled, connected and steady on the long and short in-breaths and out-breaths for an hour, two hours, and so on…

Knowing the beginning, middle and end of the breath

Miến / Burmese 87

…strive to know the beginning, middle and end, the whole in-breath and out-breath. First establish steady mindfulness on the in-breath and out-breath, and then steady mindfulness on their length. When mindfulness is steady and holds the long and short breaths firmly, continue by knowing their beginning, middle and end, the whole in-breath and out-breath.

In doing so, do not note in succession, “This is the beginning, this is the middle, this is the end.” This often weakens concentration or causes it to disappear. If you need a mental note, use only “in-breath, out-breath.” Simply try to know the whole breath, from beginning through middle to end. That is enough.

Advice that applies in most cases

The practice explained so far has three steps: clearly knowing (1) long breaths, (2) short breaths and (3) the beginning, middle and end, the whole in-breath and out-breath. If you can discern the whole breath, from beginning through middle to end, practise as follows:

1. If you breathe slowly and the in-breath and out-breath are long, let them remain long and simply attend so as to know their beginning, middle and end, the whole in-breath and out-breath.

2. If you breathe quickly and the in-breath and out-breath are short, let them remain short and simply attend so as to know their beginning, middle and end, the whole in-breath and out-breath…

Balancing concentration and energy

Miến / Burmese 88

…in this way. This combines all three steps. Do not note, “This is the beginning, this is the middle, this is the end,” or “This is long, this is short.” If you wish to note mentally, use only “in-breath, out-breath” in all three steps. Do not analyse whether the breath is really long or really short. When the investigation-of-phenomena enlightenment factor (dhammavicayasambojjhaṅga) becomes too strong through such analysis, the concentration enlightenment factor (samādhisambojjhaṅga) often weakens.

If the breath is long because you are breathing slowly, let it be long. If it is short because you are breathing quickly, let it be short. Know it as long or short just as it is and attend only to the beginning, middle and end, the whole breath. If the breath is slow and long throughout the sitting, continue to know its beginning, middle and end just as it is. Do not try to speed it up or shorten it. Attend naturally. If the breath is fast and short throughout the sitting, continue to know its beginning, middle and end just as it is. Do not try to slow it down or lengthen it.

A naturally slow and long breath throughout the sitting is no fault, and a naturally fast and short breath throughout the sitting is no fault. If you deliberately lengthen or shorten it, the energy enlightenment factor (viriyasambojjhaṅga) becomes too strong through that effort, and the concentration enlightenment factor often weakens. Keep concentration and energy in balance.

The meaning of “one trains” (Sikkhati)

Miến / Burmese 89

Why the instruction says “sikkhati — one trains”

From the third step onward the Buddha says “sikkhati — one trains,” instead of “pajānāti — one clearly knows and distinguishes.” The meaning is as follows. One strives to know the beginning, middle and end, the whole object of the in-breath and out-breath, and knows it continuously for an hour, two hours and so on. The mind is settled, connected and steady on the in-breath and out-breath. At that time:

(a) The restraint that keeps the unwholesome impurities of the hindrances and defilements from entering the mental continuum is the training in higher virtue (adhisīlasikkhā), restraint through mindfulness (satisaṃvara) and through energy (viriyasaṃvara).

(b) Concentration that stays settled, connected and steady on the whole in-breath and out-breath for an hour, two hours and so on is the training in the higher mind (adhicittasikkhā).

(c) The wisdom that clearly knows the beginning, middle and end, the whole in-breath and out-breath, is the training in higher wisdom (adhipaññāsikkhā).

The Buddha uses the word “sikkhati” so that meditators understand that they must strive to fulfil all three noble trainings. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 266.)

Why the instruction uses the future tense

The Buddha also teaches with verbs in the future tense: “assasissāmi, passasissāmi — I shall breathe in, I shall breathe out”…

Knowledges to develop and calming the bodily formation

Miến / Burmese 90

…The reason is as follows. From the third step onward one must train so as to bring about:

(a) Knowledge that clearly knows the beginning, middle and end, the whole in-breath and out-breath.

(b) Knowledge that clearly knows the subsiding of the in-breath and out-breath.

(c) Knowledge that clearly knows the jhāna factors together with joy, knowledge that clearly understands the impermanence, suffering and non-self of the mental phenomena of jhāna together with joy, /pe/ knowledge that clearly understands the impermanence, suffering and non-self of formations in the three spheres.

To instruct meditators to strive in practice and develop such valuable knowledges, the Buddha presents the practice of mindfulness of breathing from here onward using verbs in the future tense. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 266, and Mahāṭīkā 1, p. 322.)

(See all four tetrads of mindfulness of breathing in the section on insight.)

4. Calming the bodily formation (Passambhayaṃ kāyasaṅkhāraṃ)

"'Passambhayaṃ kāyasaṅkhāraṃ assasissāmī'ti sikkhati; 'passambhayaṃ kāyasaṅkhāraṃ passasissāmī'ti sikkhati." (Source cited in the original: Majjhima, vol. 1, p. 70.)

4. One trains: "Calming the gross bodily formation, the in-breath and out-breath (assāsapassāsa), I shall breathe in." One trains: "Calming the gross bodily formation, the in-breath and out-breath…

Calming the breath by directing attention while breathing naturally

Miến / Burmese 91

…I shall breathe out." (Majjhima 1, p. 70.)

In each sitting first try to keep mindfulness steady on the in-breath and out-breath. Once mindfulness is steady, continue to know whether the breath is long or short, slow or fast. Once the mind holds the long and short breaths firmly and stays settled, connected and steady on them, continue attending to that same in-breath and out-breath, whether long or short, so as to know its beginning, middle and end, the whole breath.

To know the beginning, middle and end, remain where the breath's touch is evident. Do not follow the flow inwards or outwards beyond that place. Observe it there alone. When in each sitting the mind stays settled, connected and steady on the breath for an hour, two hours and so on, direct attention with the intention "Let the in-breath and out-breath become subtle, gentle and calm." Then continue striving to know the beginning, middle and end, the whole breath. Deliberately making the breath subtle often weakens concentration or causes it to disappear.

"'Oḷārikoḷārike kāyasaṅkhāre passambhemī'ti
ābhoga-samannāhāra-manasikāra-paccavekkhaṇā…" (Source cited in the original: Visuddhimagga, vol. 1, p. 267.)

When the breath becomes hard to discern

Miến / Burmese 92

It is enough to have the intention “I shall calm the gross bodily formation, the in-breath and out-breath,” through (1) initial consideration (ābhoga), (2) repeatedly bringing it to mind (samannāhāra), (3) attention (manasikāra) and (4) examination (paccavekkhaṇā, or vīmaṃsā). Deliberately adjusting the breath to make it subtle often weakens concentration and also tires the mind and exhausts the body.

Therefore hold only the intention that the breath become subtle and calm, and keep observing naturally. As concentration improves through this effort, the breath gradually becomes subtler. Attend closely to that subtle flow with strong mindfulness so that the mind becomes more settled and connected. At this stage especially, very strong mindfulness is needed to discern the subtle breath, and very strong wisdom to know it clearly.

Sometimes while practising in this way the in-breath and out-breath are indistinct and the flow cannot be found. Then simply attend to the place where you have been observing from the beginning, and bear in mind that you are still breathing. Those who do not breathe include:

1. One at the moment of rebirth-linking in the womb.

2. One submerged in water.

3. One who is unconscious or insensible.

4. One who has died…

Mindfulness and clear comprehension in breath meditation

Miến / Burmese 93

…5. One who has entered the fourth jhāna.

6. Beings in the fine-material and immaterial spheres, that is, Brahmās.

7. One in the attainment of cessation of perception and feeling (nirodhasamāpatti).

These are the seven kinds of beings or persons said not to breathe. Bear in mind that you do not belong to them. The reason you do not know the in-breath and out-breath is that mindfulness and wisdom are still weak. Keep attending closely at the place where you have observed the breath from the beginning. The Buddha also taught the following words with just such a person and occasion in mind:

“Nāhaṃ bhikkhave muṭṭhassatissa asampajānassa ānāpānassatisamādhibhāvanaṃ vadāmi.” (Source cited in the original: Saṃyutta, vol. 3, p. 294.)

Bhikkhus, I do not teach the development of concentration through mindfulness of breathing to one who is forgetful, whose mindfulness fails to discern the breath and who lacks the clear comprehension (sampajañña) to know and examine it. (Saṃyutta 3, p. 294.)

Whatever the meditation subject, only one endowed with mindfulness and the wisdom of clear comprehension can bring its development to fulfilment. With other meditation subjects, however, the stronger the concentration, the clearer the object. Mindfulness of breathing is very difficult and takes much effort to develop…

When the sign of mindfulness of breathing begins to appear

Miến / Burmese 94

…This practice is the domain of three kinds of noble great persons: (1) Fully Enlightened Buddhas (Sammāsambuddha), (2) Independently Awakened Buddhas (Paccekabuddha) and (3) disciples of Fully Enlightened Buddhas, called children of the Buddha (buddhaputta). This is no ordinary undertaking, nor a subject an ordinary person can readily develop. In whatever respect one attends to the breath, the object of mindfulness of breathing becomes calm and subtle in that respect. This practice therefore requires very strong mindfulness and wisdom. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 276.)

When the sign of mindfulness of breathing begins to appear

When the breath becomes too subtle to be evident, keep the mind settled and connected at the tip of the nose or upper lip, wherever the breath's touch was evident at first, and attend repeatedly. In most cases you will find the very subtle flow again. You find it again precisely when mindfulness and clear comprehension grow strong. If you keep the mind settled and connected on that subtle flow, signs usually appear as concentration improves. This too is an observation about what happens in most cases (yebhuyya).

In the canonical Paṭisambhidāmagga, p. 175, in the section on long and short breaths…

The sign can appear in any of the first four steps

Miến / Burmese 95

…the possibility of a sign (nimitta) appearing is also mentioned. Meditators with strong pāramīs accumulated in the past may see the sign at any of the four steps of dīgha, rassa, sabbakāya and passambhaya: while observing long and short breaths, while knowing the beginning, middle and end of the whole breath, or while practising to make it subtle, gentle and calm.

For some meditators light appears first. For others the sign appears first. If light appears, leave it alone and attend only to the natural in-breath and out-breath with steady mindfulness. If the sign appears, do not attend to it yet, since a newly appeared sign is usually unstable. Continue attending only to the natural in-breath and out-breath. Keep mindfulness steady and clear comprehension strong.

If the sign appears while contemplating long and short breaths, leave it alone for now and continue with sabbakāya, knowing the beginning, middle and end of the whole in-breath and out-breath, and passambhaya, calming the breath so that it becomes subtle and gentle. The sign then usually grows steadier.

If the sign appears only once you have reached the step of knowing the beginning, middle and end of the whole breath, leave it alone for now and continue practising to make the breath subtle. When the mind can stay settled and connected on the subtle flow, the breath and the sign become one. Then continue…

Difficulties when the breath sign appears

Miến / Burmese 96

…continue to develop and strengthen that concentration.

Suppose, as explained above, that the sign appears only after you have practised the four steps in order: (1) dīgha, long, (2) rassa, short, (3) sabbakāya, the whole breath, and (4) passambhaya, training to make it subtle, gentle and calm. Since the sign is usually unstable when it first appears, do not attend to it yet. Keep attending to the natural in-breath and out-breath. When the breath and the sign become one, the breath itself is the sign and the sign itself is the breath. The practice has reached its proper course. Taking the in-breath and out-breath as the object is then already taking the sign as the object, and taking the sign as the object is already taking the breath as the object.

Difficulties

For some meditators the breath and the sign do not become one. The in-breath and out-breath remain separate from the sign. The sign may appear a span or a foot away from the tip of the nose, or one or two arm-lengths away, or on the forehead. Signs of various shapes and colours may appear at various distances. Remember the statement of the Visuddhimagga commentary explained above.

Keep attention at the point of contact

Miến / Burmese 97

“Phuṭṭhaphuṭṭhokāse pana satiṃ ṭhapetvā bhāventasseva bhāvanā sampajjati.” (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 271.)

The development of concentration through mindfulness of breathing succeeds only in a person who strives at this meditation subject while establishing mindfulness that discerns the breath at the place where the touch of the in-breath and out-breath is evident, at the tip of the nose or the upper lip.

Do not forget this rule at this stage either. It must be followed very precisely. Also, do not attend to the colour of the sign. This is another rule to be followed very precisely.

When the sign is still distant, do not attend to it. Stay at either the tip of the nose or the upper lip, where the touch of the breath is evident, and observe only the natural in-breath and out-breath. As the strength of concentration gradually grows, the sign will come to rest at the tip of the nose or upper lip. Once the sign and the in-breath and out-breath have become one, the practice is on its proper course.

Do not enlarge the sign

Miến / Burmese 98

Do not play with the sign

“Tesu hi ānāpānanimittaṃ tāva vaḍḍhayato vātarāsiyeva vaḍḍhati, okāsena ca paricchinnaṃ. Iti sādīnavattā okāsena ca paricchinnattā na vaḍḍhetabbaṃ.” (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 109.)

Of these meditation subjects, if one enlarges the breathing sign, only the mass of air increases. This meditation subject is also delimited by place, since it is developed by establishing mindfulness where the touch of the in-breath and out-breath is evident. Do not enlarge the breathing sign, both because enlargement of the mass of air is a drawback and because the subject is delimited by the point of contact. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 109.)

This is another rule to observe with care and respect. Do not try to make the sign larger or smaller, longer or shorter, farther away or nearer, white, yellow, red, blue, or otherwise. If you try to do so, you will not reach the breathing jhāna you seek. If you doubt this, try it in practice and you will know for yourself.

The various signs

The sign of mindfulness of breathing does not appear the same to everyone. It appears in various ways. For some meditators…

Seventeen appearances of the sign

Miến / Burmese 99

…the sign gives a pleasant touch and appears: 1. Like cotton wool (learning sign).
2. Like silk-cotton wool (learning sign).
3. Like a current of air (learning sign).
4. Like the light of the morning star (learning sign and counterpart sign).
5. Like a ruby (counterpart sign).
6. Like a pearl (counterpart sign).

For some meditators it has a rough touch and appears: 7. Like a cotton stalk (learning sign and counterpart sign).
8. Like a peg made of heartwood (learning sign and counterpart sign).

For some meditators it appears: 9. Like a long cord (learning sign and counterpart sign).
10. Like a garland (learning sign and counterpart sign).
11. Like a plume of smoke (learning sign and counterpart sign).
12. Like an extended cobweb (learning sign and counterpart sign).
13. Like a sheet of cloud (learning sign and counterpart sign).
14. Like a paduma lotus flower (learning sign and counterpart sign).
15. Like a chariot wheel (learning sign and counterpart sign).
16. Like the disc of the moon (learning sign and counterpart sign).
17. Like the disc of the sun (learning sign and counterpart sign). (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 277, and Mahāṭīkā 1, p. 335.)

Why the breathing sign varies

Miến / Burmese 100

“Evaṃ ekameva kammaṭṭhānaṃ saññānānatāya nānato upaṭṭhāti. Saññajañhi etaṃ saññānidānaṃ saññāpabhavaṃ. Tasmā saññānānatāya nānato upaṭṭhātīti veditabbaṃ.” (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 277.)

“Saññānānatāyāti nimittupaṭṭhānato pubbe pavattasaññānaṃ nānāsabhāvato.” (Mahāṭīkā 1, p. 335.)

Though mindfulness of breathing is a single meditation subject, the sign appears in various ways because the perceptions that occur before the sign appears differ, both from one person to another and from one time to another. The breathing sign arises from perception in the development of concentration through mindfulness of breathing. It is fashioned and constructed by that perception. Meditation perception is its source and origin. Since that perception varies, the sign appears in various ways. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 277, and Mahāṭīkā 1, p. 335.)

When the development of concentration through mindfulness of breathing ripens, before the sign appears a meditator may from time to time entertain ideas, thoughts and perceptions about it, owing to what has been heard from others or read in books: “a sign like this, a sign like that.” Because these perceptions differ, signs arise with various shapes and colours. Even after the sign has appeared, if the perceptions in meditation continue to vary, its shapes and colours may continue to change…

The learning sign and the counterpart sign

…If it changes a great deal in this way, reaching jhāna concentration can be very difficult.

Therefore strive to keep perceptions concerning the sign to a minimum. Keep the meditating mind quietly fixed on the sign where it rests against the tip of the nose or upper lip. As one might immerse a ruby or pearl in a glass full of water, immerse the meditating mind in the sign resting against the tip of the nose or upper lip. Observe the sign closely and steadily. Strive to stay quietly fixed on it for an hour, two hours, and so on.

The learning sign and the counterpart sign (Uggahanimitta and Paṭibhāganimitta)

Generally, the pure white sign like a tuft of cotton is the learning sign. The learning sign is opaque. A sign that develops from that pure white appearance into something shining like the morning star and clear and bright like glass or ice is the counterpart sign. If the sign appears like a ruby, an opaque ruby-like sign is the learning sign and a clear, luminous ruby-like sign is the counterpart sign. Understand the remaining colours in the same way.

Number 11 in the list above is a sign like a plume of smoke. In this case a grey, smoke-coloured sign is the preliminary sign. A smoke-plume sign that is pure white like cotton wool is the learning sign…

Staying with the sign where it meets the nose

Miến / Burmese 102

…and a smoke-plume sign that becomes clear and bright is the counterpart sign.

If the sign appears in a line extending out from the opening of the nose, like an elephant's tusk, do not follow it with the mind. Put the meditating mind within the portion of the sign closest to the opening of the nose and observe there. If it extends in a line inwards, do not follow it inwards either. Keep the mind on the part closest to the opening of the nose. You may have some awareness of the whole sign, but the point is to let the mind sink into the sign where it meets the nose. If in almost every sitting the mind stays quietly fixed within the sign for an hour or two, the sign gradually grows clearer and brighter. The exceptionally clear, bright sign is the counterpart sign.

Once the counterpart sign appears in this way, the defilements that are hindrances have already been suppressed in the meditator's continuum. Defilements other than the hindrances have diminished. Mindfulness of breathing rests facing, and remains fixed on, the counterpart sign of breathing as its object. With access concentration the meditating mind rests well on that counterpart sign. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 278.)

At that point the meditator should not attend to the breathing sign in terms of its colour or appearance, whether white like cotton wool or bright like the morning star. Nor should the meditator attend to it by its individual characteristics…

Protecting the counterpart sign

Miến / Burmese 103

…or by its common characteristics. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 278.)

[Note. At both the learning-sign and counterpart-sign stages, once the sign grows stable and the breath and the sign have become one, strive to keep the meditating mind quietly fixed on the sign. Do not alternate between looking at the sign and looking at the in-breath and out-breath. Leave the breath aside and attend solely to the breathing sign. If the sign disappears, return to the in-breath and out-breath. When the sign reappears and grows stable, observe the sign alone again. Practised in this way, the sign grows stable and one gradually reaches access concentration. If you keep attending to both breath and sign, concentration may fail to arise or may decline. Be mindful.]

Guard the counterpart sign of breathing as a chief queen guards the unborn future wheel-turning monarch, whose presence is as apparent as if he were in a glass vessel, or as a farmer guards ripening rice. Attend to this very counterpart sign over and over. By attending to it in this way, preserve access concentration from deterioration. With mindfulness, balance energy with concentration and faith with wisdom, striving to balance the five faculties. When one makes this effort, the fourfold or fivefold jhānas arise with the breathing counterpart sign as object. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 278.)

How to balance the five faculties

Miến / Burmese 104

How to balance the five faculties (Indriya)

The five faculties are faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. They are five great powers that keep the meditator's mental continuum from veering off the paths of tranquillity and insight leading to Nibbāna. Faith is confidence in what deserves confidence, such as the Triple Gem, kamma and its results. Confidence in the Buddha's awakening knowledge is especially necessary. If you are constantly beset by doubts about the Buddha, your practice will go backwards. Full confidence in the tenfold Dhamma is also especially necessary: the four paths, four fruitions, Nibbāna and the teaching as learned. The teaching proclaimed by the Buddha guides the work of meditation. At this stage full faith in those teachings is especially needed.

If you entertain doubts such as "Can observing the in-breath and out-breath really lead to jhāna? Can there really be a white learning sign like cotton wool and a clear, bright counterpart sign like ice or glass?" or if you blame the age and say that this is no longer a time when jhāna can be attained, your faith has weakened. Such weakened faith no longer has the power to keep the mind engaged in tranquillity…

The strength and excess of faith

Miến / Burmese 105

…from veering away from the path of tranquillity.

“Samādhikammikassa balavatīpi saddhā vaṭṭati.” (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 126.)

Strong faith is appropriate for a meditator developing concentration in a tranquillity subject such as mindfulness of breathing. Instead of asking, “How could jhāna arise merely through attending to the in-breath and out-breath?”, undertake mindfulness of breathing with confidence: “Addhā sammāsambuddhena vuttavidhi ijjhissati.” The method taught by the Fully Enlightened Buddha will assuredly succeed.

Conversely, the faculty of faith may become excessive because faith’s function of deciding confidently upon what is worthy of confidence is particularly conspicuous in breath meditation, because the faculty of wisdom is unclear, or because energy, mindfulness and concentration are weak. Then energy cannot perform its function of supporting the associated consciousness and mental factors so that they do not fall away from a tranquillity object such as the breathing counterpart sign.

The faculty of mindfulness likewise cannot perform its function of making a tranquillity object such as the breathing counterpart sign stand out clearly to awareness. The faculty of concentration cannot…

Balancing excessive faith or energy

Miến / Burmese 106

…perform its function of keeping the mind from scattering from a tranquillity sign to an outside object. The faculty of wisdom also cannot perform its function of penetrating and seeing a tranquillity object such as the breathing counterpart sign. Therefore reduce excessive faith by reflecting on the nature of ultimate phenomena or by attending to the tranquillity object, such as the breathing counterpart sign, so that mindfulness becomes strong.

If energy, the exertion of effort, becomes too strong, faith, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom cannot perform their respective functions of decision, establishment, non-distraction and seeing. Reduce excessive energy by quietly keeping the meditating mind fixed on the tranquillity sign, such as the breathing counterpart sign, until the enlightenment factors of tranquillity, concentration and equanimity can arise. Understand cases of excessive concentration or wisdom in the same way.

The wise praise balance between faith and wisdom, and between concentration and energy. When faith is strong and wisdom weak, one has naïve confidence (muddhappasanna) in something insubstantial. Like the followers of outside teachers, one may put faith in what does not deserve it. Think, for example, of people who put their faith in such figures in Mandalay as Ma Hne Lay (မနဲ့လေး), Min Gyi (မင်းကြီး), Min Galay (မင်းကလေး), and May Daw Gyi (မယ်တော်ကြီး).

When wisdom is strong and faith weak, one tends towards cunning (kerāṭikapakkha). Instead of actually practising, one does nothing but criticize. Just as an illness brought on by medicine…

Faith with wisdom, concentration with energy

Miến / Burmese 107

…is difficult to cure, such a person is difficult to help. They keep going round in circles, forever saying “but.” When pressed, they adopt the policy “the snake will not die and the stick will not break.” They end by saying “It is good, of course, but…” They are turning their backs on the Buddha’s teaching.

When faith and wisdom are balanced, one puts faith in what deserves it, such as the Triple Gem, kamma and its results. One trusts that if mindfulness of breathing is practised as the Buddha taught, and the pāramīs are sufficiently strong, one can reach the breathing counterpart sign and attain jhāna. This is confidence in what warrants confidence. When one practises with this faith and knows the breathing counterpart sign directly and penetratingly through wisdom, faith and wisdom are in balance.

If concentration is strong and energy weak, concentration inclines towards indolence (kosajja) and indolence can overwhelm the meditator’s mind. If energy is strong and concentration weak, energy inclines towards restlessness (uddhacca) and restlessness can overwhelm the mind. “Excessive concentration brings indolence. Excessive energy brings restlessness.” When concentration is paired with energy, it has no opportunity to fall into indolence. When energy is paired with concentration…

Balance and the need for mindfulness

Miến / Burmese 108

…it has no opportunity to fall into restlessness. Therefore balance concentration and energy. When these two are balanced, absorption jhāna arises. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 126.)

Put another way, strong faith suits one developing tranquillity concentration. One is confident that establishing concentration on the breathing counterpart sign will lead to absorption. If one settles upon the sign with confidence, as though going straight into it, one can reach absorption jhāna. Concentration is predominant in jhāna. Strong wisdom, in turn, suits one developing insight. With strong wisdom, that meditator can attain knowledge that penetrates the three characteristics.

Mundane absorption can also arise through a balance of concentration and wisdom. But the teaching “Samathavipassanaṃ yuganaddhaṃ bhāveti,” one develops tranquillity and insight yoked together (Paṭisambhidā, p. 253), indicates that supramundane absorption can arise only through the balance of concentration and wisdom.

Mindfulness (Sati). Mindfulness is always needed to balance faith with wisdom, concentration with energy, and concentration with wisdom. In every situation it should be strong…

Mindfulness guards the mind and its object

Miến / Burmese 109

…Indeed, mindfulness guards the meditating mind against falling into restlessness through excessive faith, energy or wisdom, which incline towards restlessness. It also guards the mind against falling into indolence through concentration that inclines towards indolence. Just as salt is needed in every dish and a minister skilful in all tasks is needed in all the king's affairs, mindfulness is needed in all meditation subjects, whenever the mind sinks away from practice or scatters from its object.

Thus the ancient commentaries explain: the Buddha taught that mindfulness is needed at all times in every meditation. Why? The wholesome meditating mind relies on mindfulness as its refuge. To reach a superior state not yet reached, obtain one not yet obtained or know one not yet known, the wholesome meditating mind must depend on mindfulness. Without mindfulness, the wholesome mind alone cannot attain or know those superior states.

Moreover, mindfulness guards the meditation object from being lost. It also guards the meditating mind so that it remembers the object and does not lose it. Therefore, to the knowledge of a meditator who investigates with insight, mindfulness first becomes evident as the phenomenon that guards both the meditation object and the meditating mind…

How to balance the seven enlightenment factors

Miến / Burmese 110

…in this way. Without mindfulness the meditating mind cannot be encouraged or restrained, raised up or held down. Therefore the Buddha taught that mindfulness is needed everywhere (sabbatthika), at all times. (See Visuddhimagga 1, pp. 125–126, and Mahāṭīkā 1, pp. 150–154.)

How to balance the seven enlightenment factors

1. Mindfulness that remembers and repeatedly apprehends the breathing counterpart sign is the mindfulness enlightenment factor.

2. Wisdom that penetrates the breathing counterpart sign is the investigation-of-phenomena enlightenment factor.

3. The effort to bring the seven enlightenment factors into harmony and balance on the breathing counterpart sign, especially the effort to bring about investigation and energy, is the energy enlightenment factor.

4. Joy and delight in the breathing counterpart sign constitute the joy enlightenment factor.

5. The peaceful coolness of the meditating consciousness and its mental factors on the breathing counterpart sign is the tranquillity enlightenment factor.

6. The meditating mind's quiet, steady settling on the breathing counterpart sign is the concentration enlightenment factor.

7. Equipoise (tatramajjhattatā) that keeps the meditating mind in balance on the breathing counterpart sign, so that it neither becomes elated nor shrinks back, is the equanimity enlightenment factor.

You should also develop these seven enlightenment factors…

Balancing the enlightenment factors; proceeding to the first jhāna

Miến / Burmese 111

…should be developed in balance. When, owing to such causes as very slack effort, the meditating mind withdraws from its meditation object—the ānāpāna counterpart sign—and becomes discouraged, do not develop the three enlightenment factors of tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity. Develop instead the three enlightenment factors of investigation of phenomena, energy, and joy. This is called encouraging the mind: raising up the mind that has sunk down.

When, owing to such causes as strenuous exertion and excessive effort, the meditating mind becomes excited and agitated, do not develop the three enlightenment factors of investigation of phenomena, energy, and joy. Develop instead the three enlightenment factors of tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity. This means restraining the excited, agitated mind.

These seven qualities are called enlightenment factors (bojjhaṅga) because they are causes for obtaining the supramundane Noble Path. In brief, practise so that the five faculties and seven enlightenment factors are balanced.

PROCEEDING TO THE FIRST JHĀNA (PAṬHAMAJJHĀNA)

A meditator wishing to proceed to jhāna must already have discerned the transparent mind-door, the life-continuum, with insight knowledge. In the Anupadasutta (Majjhima Nikāya 3, pp. 75–79), the Buddha himself praised the Venerable Sāriputta for being able to discern individually, with knowledge, the mental phenomena called jhāna-dhammas that accompany each jhāna factor…

Discerning the jhāna factors

Miến / Burmese 112

…for clearly knowing those phenomena and their arising, presence, and dissolution, and for being able to contemplate them with insight. The Aṭṭhakanāgara discourse also explains this discernment. (Majjhima Commentary 4, p. 60.) It explains that one practises insight on the mental phenomena of jhāna by discerning both the basis, or door, and the object together.

This ancient method of practice, already practised and followed by the Venerable Sāriputta—the chief disciple unsurpassed in wisdom—is an invaluable ancient inheritance for a noble person wishing to discern the jhāna factors and the associated mental phenomena, and to contemplate them with insight. It is an ancient method that every such person should carefully learn and follow.

Good meditator, first establish concentration so that the meditating mind remains quietly and steadily on the very clear ānāpāna counterpart sign for one hour, two hours, or longer. When the counterpart sign has become exceptionally clear, look into the heart, where the heart-base on which the life-continuum depends is located. With repeated practice, you will be able to discern both the transparent mind-door—the life-continuum that depends on the heart-base—and the ānāpāna counterpart sign appearing at that mind-door…

Enter jhāna often; review it sparingly

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…with ease. Then raise concentration increasingly higher and, discerning the mind-door together with the ānāpāna counterpart sign, examine the jhāna factors. Repeatedly discern the jhāna factors that take as object the ānāpāna counterpart sign appearing in, or falling upon, the transparent mind-door. Gradually you will discern them easily. First discern each factor distinctly, one by one. Then discern all five together, collectively.

ENTER JHĀNA OFTEN; REVIEW IT SPARINGLY

A beginner (ādikammika) who has attained the first jhāna with the ānāpāna counterpart sign as object should enter jhāna often and should not review the factors too frequently. With excessive reviewing, the factors may appear weak, because repeated reviewing makes them less distinct. The meditator should therefore attend chiefly to entering the first jhāna skilfully, for a long time, with concentration full and strong. Weak jhāna factors cannot serve as a basis for proceeding to the second jhāna. If, without having practised the first jhāna frequently and brought it fully under control, that meditator endeavours to attain the second jhāna…

The five jhāna factors and five kinds of mastery

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…even the first jhāna already attained may deteriorate and disappear, while the second jhāna cannot be reached. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 148; Mahāṭīkā 1, p. 178.)

THE FIVE JHĀNA FACTORS (JHĀNAṄGA)

1. Applied thought (vitakka): directing and placing the mind on the ānāpāna counterpart sign.

2. Sustained thought (vicāra): repeatedly examining the ānāpāna counterpart sign.

3. Joy (pīti): delight in the ānāpāna counterpart sign.

4. Bliss (sukha): the pleasant experience of the taste of the ānāpāna counterpart sign.

5. One-pointedness (ekaggatā): the mind's falling upon and remaining steadily on the single object, the ānāpāna counterpart sign.

THE FIVE KINDS OF MASTERY (VASĪ)

1. Mastery in adverting (āvajjanavasī): being able to advert to and examine the jhāna factors after emerging, whenever one wishes.

2. Mastery in entering (samāpajjanavasī): being able to enter jhāna whenever one wishes.

3. Mastery in resolving (adhiṭṭhānavasī): being able to enter jhāna after resolving on the desired duration—one hour, two hours, and so forth.

4. Mastery in emerging (vuṭṭhānavasī): being able to emerge from jhāna when the predetermined time has elapsed.

Proceeding to the second jhāna

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…5. Mastery in reviewing (paccavekkhaṇavasī): being able to review the jhāna factors whenever one wishes.

The ability of mind-door adverting consciousness to review the factors swiftly is called mastery in adverting. The ability of the reviewing impulsions to review them swiftly is called mastery in reviewing. Adverting and reviewing are types of consciousness arising in one mind-door process; at this stage all the impulsions can only be sense-sphere consciousness. Within one process, one mind-door adverting consciousness is followed by four or five reviewing impulsions. (For details see Visuddhimagga 1, pp. 149–150; Mahāṭīkā 1, pp. 178–180.)

Good meditator, thoroughly learn these jhāna factors by heart. Then review them as explained above. Enter jhāna. On emerging, discern one factor. Enter jhāna again, and after emerging discern another factor. When you can discern each factor firmly, examine all five together after emerging. Practise until this becomes familiar. When the five factors of the first jhāna become clear as explained above, practise the five kinds of mastery over that jhāna in the manner just described.

PROCEEDING TO THE SECOND JHĀNA (DUTIYAJJHĀNA)

The meditator who has thoroughly practised the five kinds of mastery should emerge from the first jhāna in which he has become proficient and see…

Developing the second jhāna

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…the following disadvantages of that first jhāna:
1. Because it is the first jhāna to abandon the hindrances, this attainment is close to the hindrances, its enemies.
2. Because applied and sustained thought are gross, its jhāna factors are weak and liable to disruption.
Having seen these disadvantages of the first jhāna:
3. Attend to the second jhāna as peaceful.
4. Cut off attachment to the first jhāna and strive to attain the second by practising mindfulness-of-breathing concentration. Focus on the very same ānāpāna counterpart sign with these four intentions.

At this stage do not recite anything. Simply look at and attend to the ānāpāna counterpart sign. According to the statement “Vitakkavicārā vacīsaṅkhārā” (Majjhima Nikāya 1, p. 375), the intention to recite or mentally repeat “in-breath, out-breath” creates applied and sustained thought and can cause them to reappear clearly. Therefore, at this stage of proceeding to the second jhāna, attend to the ānāpāna counterpart sign without reciting anything. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 150.)

As the meditator exerts himself in this way, his mindfulness remains firmly on that very ānāpāna counterpart sign, and the knowledge that penetrates it becomes lucid and clear. When he reviews the jhāna factors with mind-door processes, discerning the counterpart sign together with the transparent mind-door…

Proceeding to the third jhāna

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…and reviews them, applied and sustained thought appear gross, whereas joy, bliss, and one-pointedness appear peaceful. To abandon the gross factors and obtain the peaceful factors, he repeatedly attends and concentrates on that very ānāpāna counterpart sign. In the continuity of the meditator cultivating in this way, the second jhāna arises with three factors: joy, bliss, and one-pointedness. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 150.)

PROCEEDING TO THE THIRD JHĀNA (TATIYAJJHĀNA)

Practise the five kinds of mastery over the second jhāna thus attained. After attaining proficiency in this way, emerge from the second jhāna and see its disadvantages:

1. This attainment is close to its enemies, applied and sustained thought.

2. [Because joy excites the mind in that attainment,] it is said to be disturbed: “Pītiyā cetaso ubbilāvitattā oḷārikaṃ akkhāyatī.” (Dīgha Nikāya 1, p. 34.) Because of the grossness of the joy that excites the mind, its jhāna factors are weak.

Having seen these disadvantages of the second-jhāna attainment:
3. Attend to the third jhāna as peaceful.

Developing the third jhāna

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…4. Cut off attachment to the second jhāna and strive to attain the third by practising mindfulness-of-breathing concentration. Focus on the very same ānāpāna counterpart sign with these four intentions. (Visuddhimagga 1, pp. 153–154.)

As the meditator exerts himself in this way, his mindfulness remains firmly on that very ānāpāna counterpart sign, and his knowledge that penetrates it becomes lucid and clear. When he reviews the jhāna factors with mind-door processes, joy appears gross, whereas bliss and one-pointedness appear peaceful. To abandon the gross factor and obtain the peaceful factors, he repeatedly attends and concentrates on that very ānāpāna counterpart sign. In the continuity of the meditator cultivating in this way, the third jhāna arises with two factors: bliss and one-pointedness. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 154.)

In the third jhāna, equanimity—the mental balance called tatramajjhattatā or tatramajjhattupekkhā—is especially prominent because applied thought, sustained thought, and joy are absent. The Buddha and the noble ones praise one possessing that attainment as equanimous, mindful, and abiding in bliss. In that jhāna, the faculties of equanimity, mindfulness, and bliss are exceedingly distinct and pure. This third-jhāna bliss is the highest bliss in the world. In the higher…

Proceeding to the fourth jhāna

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…jhānas, no pleasant feeling accompanies consciousness; only equanimous feeling accompanies it. Practise the five kinds of mastery over that third jhāna too.

PROCEEDING TO THE FOURTH JHĀNA (CATUTTHAJJHĀNA)

After attaining the third jhāna through this development, and becoming thoroughly proficient in its five kinds of mastery, emerge from that jhāna and see:

1. This third-jhāna attainment is close to joy, its enemy.

2. There is mental attention to bliss. Because of that bliss, the third jhāna is said to be gross. (Dīgha Nikāya 1, p. 34.) Because bliss is gross, its jhāna factors are weak.

Having seen these disadvantages of the third-jhāna attainment:
3. Attend to the fourth jhāna as peaceful.
4. Cut off attachment to the third jhāna and strive to attain the fourth by practising mindfulness-of-breathing concentration. Focus on the very same ānāpāna counterpart sign with those intentions. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 159.)

As the meditator repeatedly exerts himself, his mindfulness remains firmly on the same ānāpāna counterpart sign…

A distinctive feature of the fourth jhāna

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…and his knowledge penetrating it becomes lucid and clear. When he reviews the jhāna factors with mind-door processes, bliss—here called mental pleasant feeling (cetasika-somanassa)—appears gross. Equanimous feeling and one-pointedness appear peaceful. To abandon the gross factor and obtain the peaceful factors, he repeatedly attends and concentrates on that very ānāpāna counterpart sign. In the continuity of the meditator cultivating in this way, the fourth jhāna arises with two factors: equanimity and one-pointedness. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 159.)

Practise the five kinds of mastery over this fourth jhāna too.

1. Bodily painful feeling is abandoned at the access stage of the first jhāna.
2. Mental unpleasant feeling is abandoned at the access stage of the second jhāna.
3. Bodily pleasant feeling is abandoned at the access stage of the third jhāna.
4. Mental pleasant feeling is abandoned at the access stage of the fourth jhāna.
(Visuddhimagga 1, p. 160; Saṃyutta Nikāya 3, pp. 188–189.)

A DISTINCTIVE FEATURE OF THE FOURTH JHĀNA

“Catutthajjhāne atisukhumo appavattimeva pāpuṇāti.” (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 267.)

“Atisukhumāti aññattha labbhamāno kāyasaṅkhāro catutthajjhāne atisukhumasabhāvopi samāno tattha natthi. Kuto…”

Breathing and the fourth jhāna

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“…oḷārikatā, appavattiṃ gatova. Tenāha ‘appavattimeva pāpuṇātī’ti.” (Mahāṭīkā 2, p. 22.)

In the fourth jhāna, bodily formations—in-breaths and out-breaths—pass beyond subtlety and reach non-occurrence. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 267.)

Atisukhuma means exceedingly subtle. The bodily formation of breathing found in the other jhānas—the first, second, and third—passes beyond subtlety in the fourth jhāna. In that jhāna it does not exist even in an exceedingly subtle form. How, then, could it exist in a gross form? Therefore the commentator said “appavattimeva pāpuṇāti”: it reaches non-occurrence. (Mahāṭīkā 2, p. 22.)

This is the explanation given by the commentator according to the Dīgha, Majjhima, and Saṃyutta commentaries. (See Visuddhimagga 1, p. 267.)

A point to note concerning the fourth jhāna: “Catutthajjhānasamāpannānaṃ.” (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 266.)

The commentary explains that no in-breath or out-breath occurs in the continuity of one entering the fourth-jhāna attainment. There is, however, a special point for the good meditator to notice here. If you believe that you have reached the fourth jhāna, do not frequently check whether breathing is present or absent. Concentration may be disturbed and an attained jhāna may decline…

Checking the fourth-jhāna attainment

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…Instead, frequently enter what you take to be the fourth jhāna. Although breathing does not occur during that attainment, the mind-door adverting and reviewing impulsions that review the factors, and the sense-sphere mind-door processes that investigate whether one is breathing, are all kinds of consciousness capable of producing in-breaths and out-breaths. Some meditators therefore notice very subtle breathing—a slight warmth at the nostrils—produced by those sense-sphere mind-door processes while checking whether breathing is present.

During fourth-jhāna attainment there is no breathing; the breathing occurs during the investigation. Therefore, at this stage frequently enter the fourth jhāna without checking the breath. Check it when there is no doubt. The two factors, equanimity and one-pointedness, already appear clearly at the access stage of the fourth jhāna. The two factors of that access concentration and those of the fourth jhāna itself resemble each other to some extent. There is breathing in access concentration; there is none during fourth-jhāna attainment. Be mindful of this.

Good meditator, practise the five kinds of mastery over the fourth jhāna too. Practise until its light shines brilliantly and brightly all around. You can then proceed to insight, should you wish to do so.

The course of development and falling into the life-continuum

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THE COURSE OF DEVELOPMENT AND THE LIFE-CONTINUUM
HOW ONE FALLS INTO THE LIFE-CONTINUUM

The preceding pages have briefly described the procedure for developing the ānāpāna meditation subject up to the fourth absorption jhāna. In meditation there are two kinds of concentration: access concentration and absorption concentration. Concentration occurring near absorption jhāna is access concentration; concentration occurring during absorption is absorption concentration. Concerning falling into the life-continuum during access concentration, the Visuddhimagga gives this warning. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 124.)

There are two kinds of concentration: access and absorption. The meditating mind becomes concentrated in two ways: at access, when access concentration has been obtained, and at acquisition, when absorption jhāna has been attained. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 124.)

In access concentration the meditating mind remains well concentrated on its tranquillity object because the hindrances are abandoned and kept far away. At acquisition, because the jhāna factors arise with their full strength and become distinctly manifest, the meditating mind remains well concentrated on its tranquillity object—the ānāpāna counterpart sign, the counterpart sign of the skeleton, the counterpart sign of the white kasiṇa, and so on. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 124.)

The reason these two kinds of concentration differ is this. During access concentration, the jhāna factors are not yet sufficiently strong to arise with their full power; the strength of development is not yet complete, and the jhāna factors have not become powerful…

The difference between access and absorption concentration

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…Thus, just as a young child who cannot yet stand unaided, though lifted up and made to stand, repeatedly falls to the ground, so too at access concentration the mind repeatedly falls into the life-continuum. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 124.)

“Evameva upacāre uppanne cittaṃ kālena nimittamārammaṇaṃ karoti, kālena bhavaṅgaṃ otarati.” (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 124.)
Thus, when access concentration has arisen, the meditating mind sometimes takes the tranquillity sign—the counterpart sign—as object, and sometimes falls into the life-continuum. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 124.)

At absorption concentration, however, the jhāna factors have arisen with their full strength. Because they have become fully powerful, just as a strong man can stand after rising from his seat for a whole day, so too absorption concentration can continue throughout a night or a day, as an unbroken succession of impulsions following the initial access process in which absorption arose. At the time of absorption jhāna, jhāna impulsion consciousness occurs uninterruptedly. One can enter jhāna all night or all day. This is the reason for the difference between the two kinds of concentration. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 124.)

A point to bear in mind

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A POINT TO BEAR IN MIND

When a meditator takes one of the foregoing kinds of jhāna, whether access or absorption, as a basis for insight and strives to make it a supporting condition for insight, material clusters begin to appear when he discerns the four great elements and his concentration becomes keen. When he can analyse those material clusters and individually distinguish, with knowledge, the ultimate material phenomena associated with the four great elements in each cluster—their characteristics, functions, manifestations, and proximate causes—he attains Knowledge of Discernment of Materiality (rūpaparicchedañāṇa or rūpapariggahañāṇa). At that point he is said to have personally penetrated genuine ultimate materiality with right view.

Mental phenomena, in turn, occur both as cognitive-process consciousness (vīthicitta) and as process-free consciousness (vīthimuttacitta). The mental phenomena at every mind-moment occur as groups. The groups of consciousness and mental factors present in each such mind-moment are termed non-material clusters or mentality-clusters (arūpakalāpa or nāmakalāpa). (Mahāṭīkā 1, p. 273.) When one discerns with knowledge the ultimate characteristics, functions, manifestations, and proximate causes of the consciousness and mental factors in each mentality-cluster, one attains Knowledge of Discernment of Mentality (nāmaparicchedañāṇa or nāmapariggahañāṇa). One is then said to have personally penetrated genuine ultimate mentality with right view. (Only the consciousness belonging to the eighty-one mundane types is meant here.)

Insight knowledge must come first

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If a meditator striving to develop a meditation practice has not yet seen even materiality-clusters and mentality-clusters, or, though seeing them, cannot analyse them, he does not yet know genuine ultimate materiality and mentality. He has not yet attained even Knowledge of Delimitation of Mentality-Materiality.

Again, if he has not looked into the past and future, and knows nothing at all of genuine ultimate past and future mentality-materiality, he has not yet personally penetrated with the eye of wisdom how past causes produce present effects or how present causes produce future effects. In that case he has not yet attained Knowledge of Discerning Conditions (paccayapariggahañāṇa).

The distance between a meditator who has not attained even genuine Knowledge of Delimitation of Mentality-Materiality and genuine Knowledge of Discerning Conditions, and genuine insight knowledge, is as great as that between sky and earth. Since he has not attained even genuine insight knowledge, he is much farther still from the Noble Path knowledge, Noble Fruition knowledge, and Nibbāna that are genuine ultimate Noble Truths. The reason is as follows:

“Pubbe kho Susima dhammaṭṭhitiñāṇaṃ, pacchā nibbāne ñāṇaṃ.” (Saṃyutta Nikāya 2, p. 96.)

Dear Susima, insight knowledge called dhammaṭṭhitiñāṇa, which understands formations well as impermanent, suffering, and non-self, comes first. The Noble Path knowledge taking the cessation truth, Nibbāna, as object comes afterwards. (Saṃyutta Nikāya 2, p. 96.)

Do not mistake falling into the life-continuum for Nibbāna

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This is a brief statement of the Buddha's reply to the Venerable Susima, who was insisting that Noble Path knowledge taking Nibbāna as object was the outcome of the jhāna attainments. According to this teaching, the Noble Path is the outcome of insight knowledge, and can arise only at its culmination. It is a phenomenon that can arise at the conclusion of genuine insight knowledges when they have afforded support in advance as a strong decisive-support condition (upanissayapaccaya).

Therefore a good person who has not yet attained correct insight knowledge has not yet obtained an entrance to Nibbāna. He stands at a place from which he cannot move, like a post sunk firmly into the ground. For such a person, still so far removed from Noble Path knowledge, Fruition knowledge, and Nibbāna, when attending to a meditation object brings concentration to a high level, it is common to fall into the life-continuum at access concentration, or at a stage resembling access concentration, as the Visuddhimagga commentary cited above warns. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 124.)

The meditator may describe that fall into the life-continuum by saying, “I no longer know anything,” or, “Both mentality and materiality have ceased.” When this happens, do not conclude that Nibbāna has been realized. It is actually only falling into the life-continuum. Because genuine ultimate materiality and mentality are not yet known, it is not yet even genuine insight knowledge.

The life-continuum still has an object

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The meditator describes this fall into the life-continuum as “knowing nothing” because life-continuum consciousness does not take any present object at all. It takes just one of the three objects—kamma, a kamma sign, or a destination sign—taken at the time near death in the preceding existence. That this consciousness takes the same object taken near death in the past existence can be understood only by a meditator who correctly discerns that past death-proximate object and correctly understands, through Knowledge of Discerning Conditions, how past causes produce present effects. It is not within the range of one who does not discern that object or how past causes produce present effects. He therefore says he knows nothing. The Abhidhamma commentary, however, says:

“Catubhūmakacittañhi no vijānanalakkhaṇaṃ nāma natthi, sabbaṃ vijānanalakkhaṇameva.” (Abhidhamma Commentary 1, p. 155.)

Among all the consciousness belonging to the four planes—sense sphere, fine-material sphere, immaterial sphere, and supramundane—there is none lacking the characteristic of knowing an object. All consciousness has that characteristic. Life-continuum consciousness too therefore knows one of the three objects—kamma, a kamma sign, or a destination sign—taken near death in the past existence. It is not consciousness knowing nothing.

A further point: statements such as “The object and the mind knowing the object have ceased” also require care. I wish to call your attention to the following explanations of cessation attainment and fruition attainment.

Cessation attainment

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“Kasmā samāpajjantīti saṅkhārānaṃ pavattibhede ukkaṇṭhitvā diṭṭheva dhamme acittakā hutvā ‘nirodhaṃ nibbānaṃ patvā sukhaṃ viharissāmā’ti samāpajjanti.” (Visuddhimagga 2, p. 347.)

Why do they enter cessation attainment? Non-returners and Arahants who possess the eight mundane jhāna attainments become disenchanted with the arising and dissolution of formations—materiality, mentality, causes, and effects. They enter cessation attainment with the intention, “In this very life, we shall abide in bliss, without consciousness or mental factors, having reached Nibbāna, the cessation of consciousness and mental factors.” (Visuddhimagga 2, p. 347.)

According to this commentary, the cessation of consciousness and mental factors belongs to cessation attainment. Cessation attainment itself is within the range only of Non-returners and Arahants who possess the eight attainments—the four fine-material jhānas and four immaterial jhānas. Through the combined power of tranquillity and insight, they must alternate between these attainments and their contemplation with insight; only after undertaking the four preliminary duties, before entering cessation attainment, can they enter the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception and then reach cessation attainment. (See Visuddhimagga 2, pp. 347–348.)

A Non-returner or Arahant wishing to enter cessation attainment first enters the first jhāna. On emerging…

The preliminary duties for cessation attainment

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…he contemplates the first-jhāna mental phenomena with insight under the three characteristics. He then enters the second jhāna and contemplates its mental phenomena under the three characteristics. He proceeds in this way up to the base of nothingness. After contemplating its mental phenomena with insight, and on emerging from that attainment, he undertakes the following:

1. Resolving that requisites separate from his body, such as his dwelling and robes, will not be destroyed.

2. Considering the Saṅgha's expectation: resolving to be able to emerge from cessation attainment if the Saṅgha needs him for some duty.

3. Considering a summons by the Perfectly Enlightened Buddha: resolving to be able to emerge from cessation attainment if the Buddha needs him, for example to lay down a training rule.

4. Considering the remaining duration of his life: examining when his life faculty will be exhausted, and resolving to emerge from cessation attainment before his lifespan ends.

After undertaking these preliminary duties, he enters the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. After one or two impulsions of that attainment have occurred, he reaches cessation attainment. (Visuddhimagga 2, pp. 349–350.) Thus, cessation attainment, in which consciousness and mental factors cease…

Fruition attainment and the Four Noble Truths

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…is within the range only of Non-returners and Arahants possessing the eight attainments. A good person who has not attained those eight attainments, and who is not yet a Non-returner or Arahant, is still very far from cessation attainment.

Again, to say that the condition of knowing nothing is fruition attainment, when one does not know even genuine ultimate materiality and mentality and has not attained genuine insight knowledge, is also incorrect. Fruition attainment consists of many fruition impulsions taking the unconditioned element, peaceful Nibbāna—the cessation of the formations called materiality, mentality, causes, and effects, subject to arising and dissolution—as object. That is to say, there is knowledge of Nibbāna, the unconditioned element, peaceful because formations cease. The fruition impulsions, or fruition consciousness and its mental factors, which take that peaceful Nibbāna as object, are clearly present. Fruition attainment is not an attainment in which consciousness ceases.

Fruition attainment is within the range of noble ones beginning with Stream-enterers. Every noble person must understand the Four Noble Truths. The Buddha himself declared in the Kūṭāgārasutta, Saccasaṃyutta, Saṃyutta Nikāya, that it is impossible to end suffering in saṃsāra without understanding the Four Truths. (Sutta no. 1104.)

The Kūṭāgārasutta — The Peaked House

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THE KŪṬĀGĀRASUTTA

“Yo ca kho, bhikkhave, evaṃ vadeyya: ‘Ahaṃ dukkhaṃ ariyasaccaṃ yathābhūtaṃ anabhisamecca, dukkhasamudayaṃ ariyasaccaṃ yathābhūtaṃ anabhisamecca, dukkhanirodhaṃ ariyasaccaṃ yathābhūtaṃ anabhisamecca, dukkhanirodhagāminiṃ paṭipadaṃ ariyasaccaṃ yathābhūtaṃ anabhisamecca sammā dukkhassantaṃ karissāmī’ti, netaṃ ṭhānaṃ vijjati.” (Saṃyutta Nikāya 3, p. 394.)

Dear bhikkhus, if someone were to say, “Without personally penetrating as it really is, with right-view knowledge, the Noble Truth of Suffering; without personally penetrating as it really is, with right-view knowledge, the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering; without personally penetrating as it really is, with right-view knowledge, the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering; and without personally penetrating as it really is, with right-view knowledge, the Noble Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering, I shall properly make an end of suffering in the round of rebirths,” there is no possibility that what he says could occur. (Saṃyutta Nikāya 3, p. 394.)

“Yo ca kho, bhikkhave, evaṃ vadeyya: ‘Ahaṃ dukkhaṃ ariyasaccaṃ yathābhūtaṃ abhisamecca, dukkhasamudayaṃ ariyasaccaṃ yathābhūtaṃ abhisamecca, dukkhanirodhaṃ ariyasaccaṃ yathābhūtaṃ abhisamecca, dukkhanirodhagāminiṃ paṭipadaṃ ariyasaccaṃ yathābhūtaṃ abhisamecca sammā dukkhassantaṃ karissāmī’ti, ṭhānametaṃ vijjati.” (Saṃyutta Nikāya 3, p. 394.)

The foundation must be built first

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Dear bhikkhus, if someone were to say, “Having personally penetrated as it really is, with right-view knowledge, the Noble Truth of Suffering; having personally penetrated as it really is, with right-view knowledge, the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering; having personally penetrated as it really is, with right-view knowledge, the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering; and having personally penetrated as it really is, with right-view knowledge, the Noble Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering, I shall properly make an end of suffering in the round of rebirths,” it is possible for what he says to occur. (Saṃyutta Nikāya 3, p. 394.)

In this discourse the Buddha teaches that, just as there is no possibility of building a peaked roof as the upper part of a house without first building all of its lower supporting structure, so too there is no possibility of ending suffering in saṃsāra—of going to Nibbāna, which ends that suffering—without personally penetrating the Four Noble Truths as they really are, with right-view knowledge, up to the highest level of ultimate truth. One cannot realize Nibbāna at all in this way, he teaches.

Again, when someone has first built all the lower supporting structure of a house, it is possible to build its upper structure, the peaked roof…

Knowledge of the Four Truths and fruition attainment

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…In the same way, if someone has personally penetrated the Four Noble Truths as they really are, with right-view knowledge, up to the highest level of ultimate truth, it is possible for him to make an end of suffering in the round of rebirths. That is, he can realize Nibbāna, which brings that suffering to an end.

Therefore realizing Nibbāna through Noble Fruition knowledge—being able to enter fruition attainment—is within the range only of noble persons who have personally penetrated the Four Noble Truths as they really are, with right-view knowledge, up to the highest level of ultimate truth. It is not within the range of those who do not yet know even genuine ultimate materiality and mentality.

“Tattha purimāni dve saccāni vaṭṭaṃ, pacchimāni vivaṭṭaṃ. Tesu bhikkhuno vaṭṭe kammaṭṭhānābhiniveso hoti, vivaṭṭe natthi abhiniveso.” (Abhidhamma Commentary 2, p. 109.)

Of these Four Truths, the Truth of Suffering and the Truth of its Origin are the truths of the round (vaṭṭasacca). The Truth of Cessation and the Truth of the Path are the truths of release from the round (vivaṭṭasacca). A meditator undertakes the insight meditation subject by attending to the two truths of the round. There is no undertaking of the insight meditation subject by attending to the two truths of release from the round. (Abhidhamma Commentary 2, p. 109.)

According to this commentary, when beginning insight meditation the meditator must first strive to understand personally, with right-view knowledge, the Truth of Suffering and the Truth of its Origin…

The truths of suffering and its origin

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…The Truth of Suffering is simply the five aggregates considered in eleven ways: past, future, present, internal, external, gross, subtle, inferior, superior, far, and near. This is taught in such discourses as the Khandhasutta of the Khandhasaṃyutta (Saṃyutta Nikāya 2, p. 39) and in the Khandhavibhaṅga (Vibhaṅga, p. 1). The Truth of Origin is the formations headed by ignorance, craving, and clinging, as explained above.

Therefore the meditator cannot omit past and future when striving:
1. To understand the Truth of Suffering as it really is, with right-view knowledge.
2. To understand the Truth of Origin as it really is, with right-view knowledge.
3. To understand as it really is, with right-view knowledge, how suffering arises because of its origin.

The Truth of Suffering includes not only the five present aggregates but also the five past aggregates and five future aggregates. Again, the five past causes included in the Truth of Origin—ignorance, craving, clinging, formations, and kamma—belong to the past five aggregates. Their five present effects—consciousness, mentality-materiality, six bases, contact, and feeling—belong to the present five aggregates. The five present causes—ignorance, craving, clinging, formations, and kamma—included in the Truth of Origin…

From insight to Path and Fruition

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…are also a part of the five present aggregates. The five future effects—the Truth of Suffering, namely consciousness, mentality-materiality, six bases, contact, and feeling—that will arise because of present causes also form part of the five future aggregates. Understand all successive past and future existences in the same way. Therefore, to know the Truth of Origin as it really is, and to know how the Truth of Suffering arises because of that origin, one must examine past and future aggregates without omitting them.

Only when one discerns and analyses these formations called the Truth of Suffering and the Truth of Origin up to the highest level of ultimate truth can one personally penetrate with right-view knowledge how ultimate phenomena are causally connected—causes and effects and their conditional relationship. When one can discern with knowledge the successive causes belonging to the Truth of Origin and successive effects belonging to the Truth of Suffering in the three times—past, future, and present—one must contemplate both truths with thorough insight, applying the three characteristics.

Only by thoroughly contemplating with insight these two truths of the round do Noble Path and Fruition knowledges arise at the culmination of insight knowledge, taking the cessation truth, Nibbāna, as object. The eight Path factors associated with the consciousness taking that object are the Truth of the Path. The unconditioned Nibbāna taken as object by those knowledges is the Truth of Cessation…

The procedure for entering fruition attainment

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…Only by personally penetrating these Four Truths with right-view knowledge can one become a noble person. Only after becoming a noble person can one enter fruition attainment. Good meditator, read the following passage:

“Phalasamāpattikāmena hi ariyasāvakena rahogatena paṭisallīnena udayabbayādivasena saṅkhārā vipassitabbā. Tassa pavattānupubbavipassanassa saṅkhārārammaṇagotrabhuñāṇānantaraṃ phalasamāpattivasena nirodhe cittaṃ appeti. Phalasamāpattininnatāya ca panettha sekkhassāpi phalameva uppajjati, na maggo.” (Visuddhimagga 2, p. 342.)

A noble disciple wishing to enter fruition attainment approaches a suitable lodging, withdraws from other objects, and dwells alone. He thoroughly contemplates formations—the Truth of Suffering and the Truth of Origin—with insight under the three characteristics, beginning with Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away among the nine insight knowledges. In the continuity of that disciple, whose insight knowledge proceeds in due order from its beginning, the change-of-lineage knowledge (gotrabhuñāṇa) arises, still taking formations as object as impermanent, suffering, or non-self; immediately afterwards consciousness enters absorption on Nibbāna, the cessation truth, by the power of fruition attainment—that is, by the power of fruition impulsions. In the continuity of the meditator entering fruition attainment, the mind that inclines towards that attainment…

Fruition attainment requires genuine insight

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…is the reason that even in the continuity of a noble learner only Noble Fruition consciousness arises; Noble Path consciousness does not arise. (Visuddhimagga 2, p. 342.)

[Note — Question: Just as the change-of-lineage knowledge preceding Noble Path knowledge takes Nibbāna as object, why does the knowledge called gotrabhuñāṇa preceding Noble Fruition in fruition attainment not take Nibbāna as object? Answer: Noble Fruition phenomena are not phenomena that lead out of the round of rebirths. They are only the results of the Noble Path. Only Noble Path phenomena are phenomena that lead out of the round. This is why they differ. (Mahāṭīkā 2, p. 518.)]

Thus fruition attainment is an attainment that only noble persons can enter: they must be able to thoroughly contemplate the genuine ultimate formations called the Truth of Suffering and the Truth of Origin under the three characteristics, in the succession of insight knowledges beginning with Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away.

If, good meditator, you believe and accept that only the Buddha could understand the material and mental phenomena he taught, whereas disciples cannot understand them, and consequently do not endeavour to understand them, then you do not yet know the Truth of Suffering—the five aggregates considered in the eleven ways taught by the Buddha. In other words, you do not know even your own body. Again, if you have not looked into past and future, then how past causes produce present effects…

A concluding reminder on fruition attainment

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…and how present causes produce future effects are still unknown to you. You do not yet know dependent origination, the conditional relationship between causes and effects. You do not yet know how the Truth of Suffering arises because of the Truth of Origin. Fruition attainment is not an attainment that a person so filled with unknowing can enter. Be mindful of this.

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[Editorial note: Source page 140 is blank. The numbering is retained to keep the translation aligned with the original.]

The light of knowledge

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THE LIGHT OF KNOWLEDGE

The light of knowledge has been mentioned as appropriate in the preceding discussion. In particular, it was said that brilliant, radiant light appears when concentration reaches the fourth jhāna. To remove doubts concerning this statement, I shall now discuss the light of wisdom, the light of knowledge.

THE ĀLOKASUTTA

In the Ālokasutta of the Book of Fours of the Aṅguttara Nikāya (Aṅguttara Nikāya 1, p. 456), and elsewhere, the Buddha teaches four kinds of light: moonlight, sunlight, firelight, and the light of wisdom. The Manorathapūraṇī Aṅguttara commentary explains the light of wisdom, or knowledge. To make this matter clearer, the original Pāli and the connected explanation from the commentary are given here.

AN EXTRACT FROM THE PACALĀYAMĀNASUTTA

“No ce te evaṃ viharato taṃ middhaṃ pahīyetha, tato tvaṃ Moggallāna ālokasaññaṃ manasi kareyyāsi, divāsaññaṃ adhiṭṭhaheyyāsi. Yathā divā tathā rattiṃ, yathā rattiṃ tathā divā. Iti vivaṭena cetasā apariyonaddhena sappabhāsaṃ cittaṃ bhāveyyāsi. Ṭhānaṃ kho panetaṃ vijjati, yaṃ te evaṃ viharato taṃ middhaṃ pahīyetha.” (Aṅguttara Nikāya 2, p. 463.)

The perception of light

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‘Yathā divā tathā rattinti yathā divā ālokasaññā adhiṭṭhitā, tathā naṃ rattimpi adhiṭṭhaheyyāsi. Yathā rattiṃ tathā divāti yathā ca te rattiṃ ālokasaññā adhiṭṭhitā, tathā naṃ divāpi adhiṭṭhaheyyāsi. Sappabhāsanti dibbacakkhuñāṇatthāya sahobhāsaṃ.’ (Source cited in the original: Aṅguttara Commentary, vol. 3, p. 174.)

‘Sahobhāsanti sañāṇobhāsaṃ. Thinamiddhavinodanaāloko pi vā hotu kasiṇāloko pi vā parikammāloko pi vā, upakkilesāloko viya sabbopāyaṃ āloko ñāṇasamuṭṭhāno vā’ti.’ (Source cited in the original: Aṅguttara Subcommentary, vol. 3, p. 177–178.)

Dear Moggallāna, if, while you are dwelling having reflected, “The eight directions shine brightly; when I close my eyes and look up towards the sky, the constellations are visible,” your drowsiness is still not abandoned, attend to the perception of light that dispels drowsiness [the perception and knowledge connected with light occurring in the preliminary work for the divine eye]. Establish the perception of daytime firmly; resolve on it. Just as you have established the perception of light by day, establish it by night. Just as you have established it by night, establish it by day. Thus…

The Buddha's sixth instruction for overcoming drowsiness

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…with an open mind, unobstructed by drowsiness, develop the mind accompanied by the light of knowledge occurring in the preliminary work for the divine eye. It is possible that, while you cultivate in this way, drowsiness will be abandoned in your continuity. (Aṅguttara Nikāya 2, p. 463.)

The brief meaning is as follows. After ordaining and becoming a bhikkhu, the Venerable Mahāmoggallāna was practising strenuously without sleep for seven whole days, in a small grove near Kallavālaputta village in Magadha, which he used as his alms resort. Exhausted, he sat nodding at the end of the seventh day. The Buddha came and taught him the Pacalāyamānasutta. The passage above is the sixth instruction in that discourse for dispelling drowsiness.

In this sixth instruction, the Buddha told him to develop sappabhāsaṃ cittaṃ, the mind accompanied by light. The commentators explain this as the mind accompanied by the light of knowledge occurring in the preliminary work for the divine eye. This light dispels sloth and torpor. Light can arise through the light kasiṇa. It can also arise through the development of the other kasiṇas, especially the fire kasiṇa and white kasiṇa. The light arising through these light, fire, and white kasiṇas is the fundamental supporting light for attaining the knowledge of the divine eye. (See Visuddhimagga 2, p. 58.)

Four kinds of the light of knowledge

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The Buddha instructed him to establish this light firmly until the whole day and night were alike illuminated. In explaining this, the Aṅguttara commentator cited above sets out four kinds of the light of knowledge.
FOUR KINDS OF THE LIGHT OF KNOWLEDGE

1. Light dispelling sloth and torpor (thinamiddhavinodana-āloka): the light developed for the knowledge of the divine eye, especially light arising through the light kasiṇa; light arising through the knowledge of the divine eye.

2. Kasiṇa light (kasiṇāloka): the light of a well-developed light kasiṇa; the light arising from well-developed kasiṇa meditation.

3. Preparatory light (parikammāloka): the light arising through preparatory development (parikammabhāvanā).

4. Light that is an imperfection of insight (upakkilesāloka): the light that is one of the corruptions or imperfections of insight knowledge.

There are thus four kinds of the light of knowledge. All four are lights that arise because of knowledge. The Buddha speaks of the mind associated with the knowledge producing this light as sappabhāsaṃ cittaṃ, the mind accompanied by light. In the Pacalāyamānasutta quoted above, however, the meditation on the light kasiṇa and the knowledge of the divine eye…

Preparatory light

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…are especially intended. The Buddha instructed him to develop that mind accompanied by light.

Among the four kinds of light listed above, preparatory light—light arising through preparatory development—has three subdivisions:
1. Preparatory development preceding access and absorption concentration.
2. Preparatory development preceding direct knowledge (abhiññā).
3. Preparatory development preceding the Noble Path.

In the tranquillity section there are three kinds of concentration—preparatory, access, and absorption—or three kinds of development: preparatory development, access development, and absorption development. The Visuddhimagga commentary calls preparatory concentration momentary concentration (khaṇikasamādhi). (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 140.) This momentary concentration is a high level of concentration close to access concentration. It is momentary concentration obtained through preparatory development. Light can also arise through this preparatory development, preparatory concentration, and its associated knowledge. It is called preparatory light (parikammāloka).

Light also arises through the preparatory development that is the basis for the knowledge of the divine eye. This too is called preparatory light. A good person wishing to obtain the knowledge of the divine eye must develop the meditating mind so that it is directed towards and inclined towards that knowledge, by taking another object—one of fourteen ways of practising—different from the object of the basic fourth jhāna that supports direct knowledge…

The kasiṇa light supporting the divine eye

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…Of the fire, white, and light kasiṇas, one should make any one a proximate supporting condition for the arising of the knowledge of the divine eye. Of these three, the light kasiṇa is the most suitable. Extend the kasiṇa disk while at the access-jhāna stage. Having thus extended it, do not bring about absorption by the power of the jhāna taking that kasiṇa as object; do not develop it up to jhāna. For one who has not developed that kasiṇa object up to the access-jhāna stage, absorption through the power of direct knowledge cannot yet be accomplished.

If, however, absorption is brought about with that kasiṇa object—if it is developed up to jhāna—the kasiṇa object can only support the basic jhāna that forms the basis for direct knowledge. It cannot support the preliminary work that leads to direct knowledge. This is a disadvantage. Therefore the meditator extends the light kasiṇa, or one of the fire and white kasiṇas, as far as desired, developing it only up to the access stage of the basic fourth-jhāna concentration, that is, the access stage of the knowledge of the divine eye. (Visuddhimagga 2, p. 58; Mahāṭīkā 2, p. 62.)

‘Vaḍḍhitaṭṭhānassa antogadhameva rūpagataṃ passitabbaṃ. Rūpagataṃ passato panassa parikammassa vāro atikkamati. Tato āloko antaradhāyati. Tasmiṃ antarahite rūpagatampi na dissati.’ (Source cited in the original: Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 58.)

‘Parikammassa vāro atikkamatīti idha parikammaṃ nāma yathāvutta…’

Why the kasiṇa light disappears

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“…kasiṇārammaṇaṃ upacārajjhānaṃ, taṃ rūpagataṃ passato na pavattati. Kasiṇālokavasena ca rūpagatadassanaṃ, kasiṇāloko ca parikammavasenāti tadubhayampi parikammassa appavattiyā na hoti. Tenāha ‘tato āloko antaradhāyati, tasmiṃ antarahite rūpagatampi na dissatī’ti. Rūpagataṃ passato parikammassa vāro atikkamati; parikammamatikkantassa kasiṇārammaṇaṃ ñāṇaṃ na hotīti rūpagataṃ na dissati.” (Mahāṭīkā 2, p. 62.)

Here the access concentration of the fourth jhāna—access jhāna—takes the very bright kasiṇa counterpart sign as object. Established at that access stage, the meditator must extend the kasiṇa counterpart sign, especially that of the light kasiṇa. He should look only at materiality within the area of the extended kasiṇa disk. If he looks at materiality beyond the area into which he has extended the kasiṇa rays, he passes beyond the turn of preparatory work. This is a disadvantage.

Here, preparatory work means the access concentration of the fourth jhāna taking the counterpart sign of the light, fire, or white kasiṇa as object. That access concentration cannot occur in the continuity of one looking at materiality outside the kasiṇa rays, since his mind is dispersed among many external objects. He sees the material objects only through the power of the kasiṇa rays. Those rays arise only through the preparatory work supporting direct knowledge. Therefore…

Renewing the light

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…when the preparatory work does not occur—when its turn has been overstepped—neither the kasiṇa light nor access jhāna can occur. With the passing of that turn of preparatory work, the light disappears. When it disappears, the material objects are no longer seen. The meditator looking at materiality outside the light has overstepped the turn of preparatory work. In his continuity, knowledge taking the kasiṇa counterpart sign as object no longer occurs; materiality therefore cannot be seen. (Because the knowledge taking the kasiṇa counterpart sign as object does not occur, the light produced by that knowledge also disappears. Without light, material objects are not seen.) (Visuddhimagga 2, p. 58; Mahāṭīkā 2, p. 62.)

“Atha tena punappunaṃ pādakajjhānameva pavisitvā tato vuṭṭhāya āloko pharitabbo. Evaṃ anukkamena āloko thāmagato hotīti ettha āloko hotūti yattakaṃ ṭhānaṃ paricchindati, tattha āloko tiṭṭhateva. Divasampi nisīditvā passato rūpadassanaṃ hoti.” (Visuddhimagga 2, p. 58.)

When material objects are not seen in this way, the meditator must repeatedly re-enter the fourth jhāna, the basic jhāna supporting direct knowledge. On emerging, he extends the light again. (Extending the light means extending the light kasiṇa disk; it does not mean merely thinking, “I shall extend the light,” and supposing that the work has been accomplished. The method is the same for the fire and white kasiṇas.)

Making the light steady

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‘Yattakaṃ ṭhānaṃ paricchinditvā kasiṇaṃ vaḍḍhitaṃ, thāmagatassa ālokassa tattakaṃ pharitvā avaṭṭhānaṃ.’ (Source cited in the original: Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 62.)

When the area has been delimited and the kasiṇa disk extended to that distance, the powerful light arising there remains throughout the delimited area. (Mahāṭīkā 2, p. 62.)

By practising progressively in this way, the light gains strength, becomes firm, and endures. The procedure is as follows. Repeatedly enter the basic jhāna supporting direct knowledge, then emerge and extend the light. Through this, the light becomes strong, firm, and enduring. At that time delimit the desired area and resolve, “Let light arise in this area.” The light then remains in the area thus delimited and resolved upon. One possessing the knowledge of the divine eye can sit and look for a whole day, seeing material objects. (Visuddhimagga 2, p. 58.)

‘Evaṃ anukkamenāti punappunaṃ pādakajjhānaṃ samāpajjitvā tato tato vuṭṭhāya abhiṇhaṃ ālokassa pharaṇavasena āloko thāmagato hoti ciraṭṭhāyī. Tathā ca sati tattha sucirampi rūpagataṃ…’

Preparatory light preceding direct knowledge and the Noble Path

Miến / Burmese 150

“…passateva. Tena vuttaṃ ‘ettha āloko…pe…hotī’ti.” (Mahāṭīkā 2, p. 62.)

This is what it means to practise progressively. The meditator repeatedly enters the basic jhāna that supports direct knowledge. He repeatedly masters the eight attainments belonging to each of the first eight kasiṇas, from the earth kasiṇa to the white kasiṇa, through fourteen methods. In particular, he repeatedly enters the fourth jhāna taking the light kasiṇa as object. On emerging from that basic jhāna, he repeatedly extends the light. It thereby gains strength, becomes firm, and endures for a long time. Taking that stable light as object, he again establishes access concentration of the fourth jhāna, quickly and repeatedly. The light then shines more brilliantly in the same area. Throughout the area pervaded by that light, the meditator sees the material objects. This is why the commentator explains the passage in the manner cited above. (Mahāṭīkā 2, p. 62.)

This light is preparatory light that precedes direct knowledge.

There is also preparatory light preceding the Noble Path. In the commentary on mindfulness of breathing, the Visuddhimagga (Visuddhimagga 2, p. 308) explains…

An extract from the Nimittasutta

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…that the three kinds of sense-sphere wholesome consciousness called preparation, access, and conformity, included in the Path process preceding the Noble Path, are termed preparatory work because they occur at its preparatory stage and prepare the way for it to arise. Light arises through insight knowledge called preparatory work as well. The reason is that the sublime higher mind—the mind developing tranquillity or insight—has the ability to produce light. Read the following extract from the Nimittasutta, cited by the commentators in discussing the Adhicittasutta.

“Yato ca kho, bhikkhave, adhicittamanuyutto bhikkhu kālena kālaṃ samādhinimittaṃ manasi karoti, kālena kālaṃ paggahanimittaṃ manasi karoti, kālena kālaṃ upekkhānimittaṃ manasi karoti; taṃ hoti cittaṃ muduñca kammaññañca pabhassarañca, na ca pabhaṅgu, sammā samādhiyati āsavānaṃ khayāya.” (Aṅguttara Nikāya 1, p. 258.)

“Adhicittanti samathavipassanācittaṃ.” (Aṅguttara Commentary 2, p. 227.)

“Ekādasamepi adhicittaṃ samathavipassanācittameva.” (Aṅguttara Commentary 2, p. 228.)

“Pabhassaranti paṇḍaraṃ parisuddhaṃ.” (Aṅguttara Commentary 1, p. 45.)

“Parisuddhatātiādīsu pana upekkhāsatipārisuddhibhāvena parisuddhaṃ. Parisuddhattāyeva pariyodātaṃ, pabhassaranti vuttaṃ hoti.” (Visuddhimagga 2, p. 5.)

“Pabhassaranti pariyodātaṃ sabhāvaparisuddhaṭṭhena.” (Aṅguttara Subcommentary 1, p. 99.)

The luminous mind of tranquillity and insight

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Bhikkhus, when a bhikkhu devoted to the higher mind—that is, the mind developing tranquillity or insight—attends from time to time to the sign that causes concentration, from time to time to the sign that causes energy, and from time to time to the sign that causes equanimity, his mind becomes pliant and workable in tranquillity and insight. It shines brilliantly and brightly. It is not liable to break down, and becomes well concentrated for the destruction of the taints. (Aṅguttara Nikāya 1, p. 258.)

The commentators explain the words parisuddha, pariyodāta, and pabhassara with reference to one another. The Venerable Ledi Sayādaw also renders pabhassara as “having brilliant light” on page 21 of his Nissaya on the Visuddhimagga, second volume.

These Pāli commentaries and subcommentaries state that brilliant, radiant light can appear through a high level of tranquillity meditation and insight meditation. In accordance with the subcommentarial statement “sabbopāyaṃ āloko ñāṇasamuṭṭhāno”—all this light originates from knowledge—these are all lights of knowledge arising through knowledge.

What is the light of knowledge?

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One may now ask what is meant by the light of knowledge. The Visuddhimagga Mahāṭīkā answers this in its second volume, in the discussion of imperfections of insight within Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away. Those explanations concern light arising through Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away. They do not, however, explain it only as an imperfection. They explain the three other lights—light dispelling sloth and torpor, kasiṇa light, and preparatory light—together with light that is an imperfection of insight, since all four are alike light produced by knowledge. Remember also the Buddha's teaching that brilliant, radiant light, pabhassara, arises through every high level of tranquillity and insight meditation. The explanation of the Visuddhimagga Mahāṭīkā is as follows:

‘Vipassanobhāsoti vipassanācittasamuṭṭhitaṃ sasantatipatitaṃ utusamuṭṭhānañca bhāsuraṃ rūpaṃ. Tattha vipassanācittasamuṭṭhitaṃ yogino sarīraṭṭhameva pabhassaraṃ hutvā tiṭṭhati, itaraṃ sarīraṃ muñcitvā ñāṇānubhāvānurūpaṃ samantato pattharati; taṃ tasseva paññāyati, tena phuṭṭhokāse rūpagatampi passati; passanto ca cakkhuviññāṇena passati udāhu manoviññāṇenāti vīmaṃsitabbanti vadanti. Dibbacakkhulābhino viya taṃ manoviññāṇaviññeyamevāti vuttaṃ (yuttaṃ) viya dissatīti.’ (Source cited in the original: Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 428–429. The two readings vuttaṃ/yuttaṃ printed in the source are retained.)

How the light arises

Miến / Burmese 154

Vipassanobhāsa, the light of insight knowledge, means:
1. The light of the very bright colour element—materiality—in consciousness-produced nutritive-essence-as-eighth clusters produced by insight consciousness.
2. The light of the very bright colour element in temperature-produced, nutritive-essence-as-eighth clusters arising successively through temperature—the fire element present in those consciousness-produced clusters. (Mahāṭīkā 2, pp. 428–429.)

Explanation: Apart from rebirth-linking consciousness, each consciousness depending on the heart-base in the heart can, at its own arising sub-moment, produce consciousness-produced nutritive-essence-as-eighth clusters, also called consciousness-produced material clusters. A single consciousness can produce many such clusters. At each such mind-moment, consciousness depending on the heart-base can produce them at its arising sub-moment. Each such cluster contains the eight material phenomena: earth, water, fire, air, colour, odour, flavour, and nutritive essence. They are called consciousness-produced (cittaja) because consciousness produces them, and nutritive-essence-as-eighth (ojaṭṭhamaka) because nutritive essence is the eighth of their eight material phenomena. Among these eight, the colour element in clusters produced by the mind developing tranquillity or insight is luminous materiality (bhāsurarūpa), very bright materiality.

[Note: There are also teachings about consciousness that cannot produce materiality. Actually, the sense consciousnesses such as eye-consciousness…

The mental phenomena associated with meditation

…are also said not to produce materiality. Which other consciousnesses can or cannot produce consciousness-produced materiality is discussed separately in the treatises.]

Each consciousness-produced cluster contains one such luminous colour element. As the number of consciousness-produced clusters increases, the number of luminous colour elements also increases. Their brightness accords with the power of knowledge: the greater the power of knowledge, the brighter they are; when it is weaker, their brightness diminishes. The mind developing tranquillity or insight and its associated mental phenomena usually comprise about thirty-four mental phenomena.

1. The mental phenomena of the first jhāna: 34.
2. The mental phenomena of the second jhāna: 32.
3. The mental phenomena of the third jhāna: 31.
4. The mental phenomena of the fourth jhāna: 31.
5. The mental phenomena of compassion jhāna, with the additional compassion mental factor: 35/33/32.
6. The mental phenomena of appreciative-joy jhāna, with the additional appreciative-joy mental factor: 35/33/32.
7. The mental phenomena of insight consciousness, according to whether knowledge and joy are associated or dissociated: 34/33/33/32, respectively.

Consciousness-produced and temperature-produced light

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Among those mental phenomena is knowledge, generally called the non-delusion mental factor (paññindriya-cetasika). The meaning is that the colour element shines in proportion to the strength of this knowledge: strongly when that knowledge is strong, weakly when it is weak.

Every consciousness-produced nutritive-essence-as-eighth material cluster also contains the fire element, called temperature (utu). This fire element produces further temperature-produced nutritive-essence-as-eighth clusters. In accordance with the strength of the mind developing tranquillity or insight, the fire element in each consciousness-produced cluster produces many generations of such temperature-produced clusters when it reaches its presence phase. The colour element in each of these temperature-produced clusters is likewise luminous materiality (bhāsurarūpa), very bright materiality. Its brightness too accords with the strength of knowledge. The Mahāṭīkā calls this temperature-produced materiality “sasantatipatitaṃ utusamuṭṭhānaṃ”: temperature-produced materiality falling successively within one's own material continuity.

[Note: “Temperature-produced materiality falling successively within one's own material continuity” could include materiality produced by the kamma-produced fire element in kamma-produced clusters, and by the nutriment-produced fire element in nutriment-produced clusters, arising in one's own material continuity. Do not take that as the intended meaning here. The discussion concerns only temperature-produced materiality associated with the mind developing tranquillity or insight, produced by the consciousness-produced fire element…

The extent of the light

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…It does not mean all temperature-produced materiality indiscriminately. Otherwise it would misleadingly imply that the colour element in kamma-produced clusters and in temperature-produced clusters arising from kamma-produced fire also shines. That is a different matter; it does not concern the mind developing tranquillity or insight.] This is not like the bodily radiance of Buddhas, whose continuity is endowed with the power of past knowledge. Rather, just as tightly packed pieces of salt or turmeric can be wrapped in fine cotton cloth and strung in uninterrupted succession, and when one end is set alight the fire passes from one piece to another for a long time, so the colour of the temperature-produced clusters arising successively from the consciousness-produced materiality of tranquillity and insight shines through and illuminates the colour of other kamma-produced, consciousness-produced, temperature-produced, and nutriment-produced clusters. Therefore the meditator sees light pervading the ten directions, within and outside the body and all around it. Before analysing that light up to ultimate truth, it is perceived only in that general way. When ultimate materiality can be discerned, one knows with the eye of wisdom that the rays are simply the colour element in the consciousness-produced nutritive-essence-as-eighth clusters produced by the mind developing tranquillity or insight and in the temperature-produced clusters arising from them…

The two kinds of luminous materiality

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…The “colour of other materiality” mentioned here means the colour in consciousness-produced clusters arising through life-continuum consciousness between the periods of tranquillity and insight, and in kamma-produced and nutriment-produced clusters, together with the colour in temperature-produced materiality produced by the fire element in those clusters.]

Of the two kinds of materiality—the consciousness-produced materiality produced by the mind developing tranquillity or insight, and the temperature-produced materiality arising from its fire element—the colour in consciousness-produced nutritive-essence-as-eighth clusters spreads only within the meditator's body; it does not spread outside. The colour in temperature-produced nutritive-essence-as-eighth clusters spreads both inside and outside the body, in all ten directions, its range according to the strength of the knowledge associated with tranquillity and insight. Stronger knowledge produces light spreading farther; weaker knowledge produces a more limited range. This light is visible only to that meditator. (This does not refer to the light of devas and Brahmās in celestial mansions.) The meditator also sees the material objects in the area touched by that pervading light. The teachers say to investigate whether this seeing occurs through eye-consciousness or through mind-consciousness…

The strength of the pāramīs and concentration

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…Following the Mahāṭīkā teacher's explanation, however, just as one possessing the knowledge of the divine eye sees material objects through mind-consciousness, so here too it is appropriate to say that all these material objects are known through mind-consciousness—the mind developing tranquillity or insight. (Mahāṭīkā 2, pp. 428–429.)

THE STRENGTH OF THE PĀRAMĪS AND THE STRENGTH OF CONCENTRATION

The power of wisdom is great in noble persons such as the Venerable Sāriputta, who have fulfilled and accumulated pāramīs supporting great wisdom. The higher the level of their pāramīs, the greater the power of their knowledge; when the pāramīs are limited, the power of knowledge is also limited. Another condition closely connected with the strength of knowledge is concentration.

“Samāhito yathābhūtaṃ jānāti passatī.” (Aṅguttara Nikāya 3, p. 259.)
One whose mind is concentrated knows and sees things as they really are. (Aṅguttara Nikāya 3, p. 259.) Thus, as the Buddha teaches, concentration is a condition most closely connected with the greatness or limitation of knowledge and wisdom. When concentration is powerful, knowledge too becomes powerful; when concentration weakens, knowledge also weakens. Therefore, if you wish the light of knowledge to shine more brightly, the light produced by knowledge…

Naming the cause after its result

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…to shine brilliantly, radiantly, and brightly, develop concentration repeatedly until it becomes very deep and powerful.

NAMING THE CAUSE AFTER ITS RESULT

According to the Mahāṭīkā explanation above, “light of knowledge” (ñāṇāloka) is a figurative expression naming the cause after its result (phalūpacāra). The term light (āloka), belonging to the colour element in consciousness-produced and temperature-produced materiality resulting from the mind developing tranquillity or insight associated with knowledge, is applied to its cause, knowledge. Remember that this is a figurative usage. It does not mean that knowledge itself has light. Only the material phenomena produced by knowledge have light.

A passage from the Mahāṭīkā:
“Obhāso dhammoti kāraṇūpacārenāha. Īdisaṃ obhāsaṃ vissajjento mama ariyamaggoti attho.” (Mahāṭīkā 2, p. 427.)

The statement of this Mahāṭīkā passage is to be understood as naming the cause after the result (kāraṇūpacāra), rather than naming the result after the cause. It does not mean that the name “light of knowledge” is used by applying to knowledge the name of the light of material phenomena that are its effects.

A rebuttal and an analogy

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Some teachers accept neither that the mind developing tranquillity or insight has light nor that light arises through it. They accept that Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away at its immature stage has light—or that light arises through it—but reject light associated with tranquillity and other insight consciousness. Their argument is as follows:

Kiṃ pana cittassa vaṇṇo nāma atthīti? Natthi. Nīlādīnaññhi aññataravaṇṇaṃ vā hotu avaṇṇaṃ vā (suvaṇṇaṃ vā) yaṃ kiñci parisuddhatāya “pabhassaran”ti vuccati. (Aṅguttara-aṭṭhakathā 1, 45.)

Pabhassaratādayo nāma vaṇṇadhātuyaṃ labbhanakavisesāti āha “kiṃ pana cittassa vaṇṇo nāma atthī”ti. Itaro arūpatāya “natthī”ti paṭikkhipitvā pariyāyakathā ayaṃ tādisassa cittassa parisuddhabhāvanādīpanāyāti dassento “nīlādīnan”tiādimāha. Tathā hi “so evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte”ti vuttaṃ. (Aṅguttara-ṭīkā 1, 99–100.)

If asked whether consciousness has colour, the answer is no. Whether it is one of the colours such as blue, an indistinct colour, or a golden colour, anything pure in colour is called pabhassara, luminous. (Aṅguttara Commentary, vol. 1, p. 45.)

Người dịch: giữ dạng in avaṇṇaṃ vā (suvaṇṇaṃ vā), không âm thầm thay bằng dạng ở ấn bản khác. Các số dẫn theo nguyên tác Mini.

Understanding figurative language

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Because clarity, brilliance, and luminosity are distinctions found in the colour element, the commentator raises the question, “Does consciousness have any colour?” Since consciousness is immaterial, the subcommentator rejects this with “natthi”—it does not. He explains that “Pabhassaramidaṃ, bhikkhave, cittaṃ” is a figurative teaching (pariyāyakathā), intended to show the purity of life-continuum consciousness and of meditation consciousness, such as the mind developing tranquillity or insight, similar to the life-continuum.

To make clear that this is a figurative teaching, he quotes: “So evaṃ samāhite citte parisuddhe pariyodāte”—when that bhikkhu's mind has become concentrated in the fourth jhāna, pure and clear. (Dīgha Nikāya 1, pp. 76–77; Majjhima Nikāya 1, pp. 314–315, 346–347; Vinaya 1, p. 5.) In praising fourth-jhāna concentration, the Buddha describes the mind as pure and luminous. Such teachings do not primarily mean that the meditation consciousness itself literally possesses brilliant light. They are expressed figuratively, by naming the cause after its result or the result after its cause.

When praising the fourth jhāna, the Buddha uses “parisuddhe pariyodāte”—pure and brilliantly clear. Nevertheless, understand the sense of this teaching as figurative, naming cause after effect or effect after cause.

The mind-door: the transparent life-continuum

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Therefore this book too does not mean that the mind developing tranquillity or insight itself possesses light. It means the brightness of the colour element in materiality produced by that consciousness and in temperature-produced materiality arising subsequently through its fire element. Since the light arises dependent upon the power of the knowledge associated with tranquillity and insight, it is figuratively called the light of knowledge, naming cause after effect or effect after cause.

THE MIND-DOOR: THE TRANSPARENT LIFE-CONTINUUM

Here, while the opportunity arises, I shall also discuss the mind-door, the transparent life-continuum. In the Accharāsaṅghātavagga of the Aṅguttara Nikāya, the Buddha teaches concerning life-continuum consciousness, and the commentaries and subcommentaries explain it.

Pabhassaramidaṃ, bhikkhave, cittaṃ. (Aṅguttara 1, 9.) Này các tỳ-khưu, tâm này trong sáng.

Pabhassaranti paṇḍaraṃ parisuddhaṃ. Cittanti bhavaṅgacittaṃ. (Aṅguttara-aṭṭhakathā 1, 46.) ‘Trong sáng’ nghĩa là trong trắng, thanh tịnh. ‘Tâm’ là tâm hữu phần.

According to those Pāli and commentarial passages, the Buddha also describes life-continuum consciousness as pabhassara—consciousness with brilliant, radiant light. The subcommentator explains that this teaching too is figurative, in the sense already described, naming the cause after its result.

Why the life-continuum is called luminous

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As explained above, brilliance and luminosity are distinctions belonging to the colour element. Life-continuum consciousness is immaterial, and does not itself possess light. Nevertheless, like the mind developing tranquillity or insight explained above, it can produce light. Depending on the heart-base, life-continuum consciousness produces consciousness-produced material clusters. Every such cluster contains the colour element. According to the strength of knowledge associated with the life-continuum, that colour too is luminous materiality (bhāsurarūpa). Every cluster also contains a fire element, which produces successive temperature-produced nutritive-essence-as-eighth clusters. The colour element in each of those clusters too is luminous materiality; it shines in proportion to the strength of the knowledge associated with life-continuum consciousness.

To indicate the brightness of the colour elements in the consciousness-produced clusters produced by the life-continuum and in the temperature-produced clusters arising from them, the Buddha said: “Pabhassaramidaṃ, bhikkhave, cittaṃ”—bhikkhus, this life-continuum consciousness is luminous.

According to these explanations, the life-continuum itself does not have light; only its resulting material phenomena do. This is a figurative expression attributing to the life-continuum, the cause, the name of the light belonging to those resulting material phenomena.

Because that material light arising dependent on life-continuum consciousness is very clear and bright, it is called the transparent mind-door, the transparent life-continuum…

Light as an imperfection of insight

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…Nevertheless, the name light of the life-continuum does not mean that the life-continuum itself possesses light. It names the cause after its result. The transparent mind-door, the transparent life-continuum, is so called because of the clarity and brightness of the light in the material phenomena arising dependent upon it.

LIGHT AS AN IMPERFECTION OF INSIGHT

Question: If the mind developing tranquillity or insight is luminous (pabhassara)—if such consciousness can produce brilliant light—why is light said to arise only at the immature stage of Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away?

Answer: The answer is as follows.

Tasmiṃ uppanne yogāvacaro “na ca me ito pubbe evarūpo obhāso uppannapubbo, addhā maggappattosmi phalappattosmī”ti amaggameva “maggo”ti aphalameva ca “phalan”ti gaṇhāti. (Visuddhimagga 2, 270.)

When that light of insight arises in a meditator, he thinks, “Such light has never arisen in me before. Surely I have attained the Noble Path; surely I have attained Noble Fruition.” He takes it in this way…

Do not mistake light for Path or Fruition

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…He thus takes light, which is neither the Noble Path nor Noble Fruition, to be the Noble Path or Noble Fruition. (Visuddhimagga 2, p. 270.)

Because insight knowledge has matured into the stage called immature Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away, light arises, and the commentator explains that the meditator thinks, “Such light has never arisen in me before.” This does not mean that light had never arisen at all before and that it arises for the first time only now. Pay particular attention to this point, and consider the following passage as well.

Yathā ca obhāse, evaṃ sesesupi aññatarasmiṃ uppanne yogāvacaro “na ca me ito pubbe evarūpaṃ ñāṇaṃ uppannapubbaṃ, evarūpā pīti, passaddhi, sukhaṃ, adhimokkho, paggaho, upaṭṭhānaṃ, upekkhā, nikanti uppannapubbā, addhā maggappattosmi phalappattosmī”ti amaggameva “maggo”ti aphalameva ca “phalan”ti gaṇhāti. (Visuddhimagga 2, 271.)

Just as with light (obhāsa), so too, when any of the remaining states arises—knowledge, joy, tranquillity, bliss, resolution, exertion (paggaha, or energy), establishment (upaṭṭhāna, or mindfulness), equanimity (both equanimity about insight and equanimity in adverting; equanimity about insight is the mental factor of specific neutrality), and attachment (nikanti)—the meditator thinks, “Such knowledge, joy, tranquillity, bliss, resolution, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attachment have never arisen in me before. Surely I have attained the Noble Path; surely I have attained Noble Fruition.” He takes knowledge and the other states that are not the Noble Path to be the Noble Path, and states that are not Noble Fruition…

What is new at this stage

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…to be Noble Fruition. (Visuddhimagga 2, p. 271.)

Here it is said only that knowledge, joy, tranquillity, bliss, resolution, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attachment of this particular kind have not arisen before. It does not mean that no knowledge, joy, tranquillity, bliss, resolution, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, or attachment has ever arisen in all of saṃsāra or in this life. It means that this particularly developed kind of insight knowledge, joy, and so forth has not arisen before. Other kinds of knowledge and joy have already arisen, even though this particular kind has not. At the very least, the stages of Knowledge of Delimitation of Mentality-Materiality, Knowledge of Discerning Conditions, Knowledge of Comprehension, and immature Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away have already occurred. There cannot have been an entire course of meditation in which joy never arose even once.

Similarly, it is said only that light of this particular kind has not arisen before. It does not mean that no light at all has ever arisen. Because the light arising through other high levels of tranquillity or insight consciousness and the light arising through this immature Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away differ, the commentator draws special attention to this distinctive light, called illumination (obhāsa)…

A practical reminder

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…Understand it in this way. Therefore, good meditator, if, through practising some meditation, concentration becomes reasonably strong and brilliant, radiant light spontaneously appears, do not conclude that you have already reached Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away. You would have suffered a serious loss within this dispensation. Genuine Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away can arise only when one is able to contemplate with insight, under the three characteristics, genuine ultimate mentality-materiality together with its causes.

From mindfulness of breathing to insight

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FROM THE ĀNĀPĀNA MEDITATION SUBJECT TO INSIGHT

Good meditator, after attaining fourth-jhāna concentration based on mindfulness of breathing and practising its five kinds of mastery, take that fourth jhāna as the basis for insight. On each occasion, enter it; on emerging, undertake:

1. Discernment of materiality (rūpapariggaha): discerning material phenomena.

2. Discernment of mentality (arūpapariggaha): discerning mental phenomena.

3. Discernment of materiality and mentality together (rūpārūpapariggaha).

4. Delimitation of mentality-materiality (nāmarūpavavatthāna): defining and distinguishing mentality and materiality.

5. Discernment of conditions (paccayapariggaha): discerning the causes of that mentality-materiality in the three times.

After carrying out these tasks in succession, thoroughly contemplate with insight that mentality-materiality together with its causes, applying the three characteristics in the order of the insight knowledges. You can then reach the Noble Fruition of Arahantship. (Visuddhimagga 1, pp. 278–279.)

Here:
1. Long (dīgha): the length of the in-breath and out-breath.
2. Short (rassa): the shortness of the in-breath and out-breath.
3. The whole body (sabbakāya): the whole breath from beginning to middle to end.
4. Calming (passambhaya): calming the breath, practising until it becomes subtle.
The preceding brief explanation completes the first tetrad within the sixteen-step procedure of mindfulness of breathing. I shall now continue by briefly describing the second tetrad, in accordance with the commentary…

The second tetrad (dutiyacatukka)

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THE SECOND TETRAD (DUTIYACATUKKA)

1. Pītipaṭisaṃvedī assasissāmīti sikkhati. Pītipaṭisaṃvedī passasissāmīti sikkhati.

2. Sukhapaṭisaṃvedī…pe…

3. Cittasaṅkhārapaṭisaṃvedī…pe…

4. Passambhayaṃ cittasaṅkhāraṃ…pe… (Saṃyutta 3, 279; Vinaya 1, 88.)

1. He trains: “I shall breathe in experiencing joy.” He trains: “I shall breathe out experiencing joy.”
2. Experiencing bliss…pe…
3. Experiencing the mental formation…pe…
4. Calming the mental formation…pe…

1. Enter the first and second jhānas, which possess joy, taking the ānāpāna counterpart sign as object. Because, on entering jhāna, the meditator knows that counterpart sign distinctly with the consciousness that has attained jhāna, he distinctly knows joy through the object. He is thus said to breathe in and breathe out experiencing joy. This is the tranquillity method.

Knowledge that penetrates ultimate phenomena according to their ultimate nature is called non-delusion (asammoha). The meditator enters the first and second jhānas, emerges, and contemplates with insight the joy associated with those jhānas—or the mental phenomena of the jhānas headed by joy…

Experiencing joy, bliss, and the mental formation

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…observing with knowledge the nature of their arising and dissolution, applying the three characteristics. During insight, the meditator distinctly knows joy through non-delusion, by penetrating with insight knowledge both the individual characteristics and the general characteristics of joy—or of the jhāna mental phenomena associated with joy. Practise breathing in and out experiencing joy in this way. This is the insight method. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 279.)

2. In the tranquillity method, enter the first, second, and third jhānas successively and breathe in and out. In the insight method, emerge from each and breathe in and out contemplating with insight the dissolution of bliss—or of the jhāna mental phenomena headed by bliss. In this way he is said to breathe in and out experiencing bliss. Practise in this manner. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 280.)

3. In the tranquillity method, enter all four ānāpāna jhānas successively and breathe in and out. In the insight method, emerge and take perception and feeling, called the mental formation (cittasaṅkhāra), or all the jhāna mental phenomena headed by perception and feeling, as object. Breathe in and out contemplating their dissolution with insight. Thus he is said to breathe in and out experiencing the mental formation. Practise until you know it in this way. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 280.)

4. In the tranquillity method, enter the four ānāpāna jhānas successively and breathe in and out, calming and bringing to cessation the gross mental formation…

The third tetrad (tatiyacatukka)

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…In the insight method, enter each of those four jhānas, emerge, discern the mental phenomena headed by feeling, and breathe in and out contemplating their dissolution with insight. Thus he is said to breathe in and out calming and bringing to cessation the gross mental formation. Practise in this way. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 280.)

In “experiencing joy,” feeling is indicated under the heading of joy. In “experiencing bliss,” pleasant feeling itself is indicated. In the two expressions concerning the mental formation, feeling is indicated under the heading of the mental formation, namely perception and feeling. Therefore understand that the Buddha teaches the second tetrad by the method of contemplation of feeling. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 280.)

THE THIRD TETRAD (TATIYACATUKKA)

1. Cittapaṭisaṃvedī assasissāmīti sikkhati. Cittapaṭisaṃvedī passasissāmīti sikkhati.

2. Abhippamodayaṃ cittaṃ…pe…

3. Samādahaṃ cittaṃ…pe…

4. Vimocayaṃ cittaṃ…pe…

1. He trains: “I shall breathe in experiencing the mind.” He trains: “I shall breathe out experiencing the mind.”
2. Gladdening the mind…pe…
3. Concentrating the mind…pe…
4. Liberating the mind from opposing states…pe…

Experiencing and gladdening the mind

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1. In the tranquillity method, breathe in and out entering the four ānāpāna jhānas successively. In the insight method, enter each, emerge, and take the jhāna consciousness—or all its mental phenomena headed by consciousness—as object. Contemplate with insight so as to see their dissolution. Thus he is said to breathe in and out experiencing the mind distinctly. Practise in this way.

2. In the tranquillity method, enter the first ānāpāna jhāna accompanied by joy and breathe in and out; enter the second ānāpāna jhāna accompanied by joy and breathe in and out. At attainment, the joy associated with jhāna consciousness greatly delights and gladdens that consciousness. Breathe in and out gladdening the mind in this way. Practise until you can do so.

In the insight method, enter the first ānāpāna jhāna accompanied by joy, emerge, and contemplate the dissolution of joy—or of all the jhāna mental phenomena headed by joy—with insight. Enter the second jhāna accompanied by joy, emerge, and contemplate the dissolution of its joy—or of its mental phenomena headed by joy—with insight. At the insight stage, the insight consciousness taking jhāna joy as object is greatly delighted and gladdened. Practise breathing in and out with the mind gladdened in this way. (Visuddhimagga 1, pp. 280–281.)

Just as, on meeting an intimate friend dearly loved by oneself, delight and joy arise in one's own continuity…

Concentrating the mind

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…understand it in this way.

3. “Samādahaṃ cittaṃ”—concentrating the mind. This way of breathing in and out is twofold: tranquillity and insight. In tranquillity, breathe in and out entering the first ānāpāna jhāna, the second jhāna, the third jhāna, and the fourth jhāna. The jhāna consciousness remains well established on the very clear, bright ānāpāna counterpart sign that is the object of those attainments. Thus he is said to breathe in and out concentrating the mind. Practise until you can do so.

[Note: During ānāpāna fourth-jhāna attainment there is no breathing. Why, then, is one instructed to enter that jhāna and breathe in and out, concentrating the mind on the ānāpāna counterpart sign? The answer is in accordance with the subcommentarial passage: “Assāsapassāsanissayā uppannanimittaṃ ettha assāsapassāsavacaneneva vuttaṃ.” (Mahāṭīkā 1, p. 319.) The ānāpāna counterpart sign arises dependent on in-breaths and out-breaths; it too is called ānāpāna. Thus taking the counterpart sign as object is here explained as taking ānāpāna as object.] In the insight method:

Tāni vā pana jhānāni samāpajjitvā vuṭṭhāya jhānasampayuttaṃ cittaṃ khayato vayato sammasato vipassanākkhaṇe lakkhaṇapaṭivedhena uppajjati khaṇikacittekaggatā. Evaṃ uppannāya khaṇikacittekaggatāya vasenapi ārammaṇe cittaṃ samaṃ ādahanto samaṃ ṭhapento “samādahaṃ cittaṃ assasissāmi passasissāmīti sikkhatī”ti vuccati. (Visuddhimagga 1, 281.)

Momentary concentration in insight

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Khaṇikacittekaggatāti khaṇamattaṭṭhitiko samādhi. Sopi hi ārammaṇe nirantaraṃ ekākārena pavattamāno paṭipakkhena anabhibhūtatāya appito viya cittaṃ niccalaṃ ṭhapeti. Tena vuttaṃ “evaṃ uppannāyā”tiādi. (Mahāṭīkā 1, 342.)

Enter the first ānāpāna jhāna, emerge, and contemplate with insight the dissolution of its consciousness—or of all its mental phenomena headed by consciousness. Likewise, enter and emerge from the second, third, and fourth jhānas and contemplate their mental phenomena in the same way. At the insight stage, because one penetrates clearly, at each mind-moment, the individual and general characteristics of jhāna consciousness and its associated mental phenomena, the insight consciousness becomes well established on their impermanent, suffering, or non-self nature. Concentration associated with such well-established insight knowledge is called momentary one-pointedness of mind (khaṇikacittekaggatā), or momentary concentration (khaṇikasamādhi).

Through that momentary concentration, breathe in and out with insight consciousness well concentrated on the impermanent, suffering, or non-self nature of the mental formations—the mental phenomena of jhāna headed by consciousness. Practise until you can do so. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 281; Mahāṭīkā 1, p. 342.)

Please note: Here momentary one-pointedness of mind or momentary concentration means the concentration of insight that becomes firmly established, after entering and emerging from each ānāpāna jhāna, on one of the characteristics, such as impermanence, of the mental formations of jhāna headed by consciousness…

Liberating the mind

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…Remember this meaning of momentary concentration. In the insight section, I shall explain the level reached by the momentary concentration intended here.

4. “Vimocayaṃ cittaṃ”—breathe in and out liberating the mind from opposing states. This too is twofold: tranquillity and insight. In tranquillity, breathe in and out entering the first jhāna, freeing the mind from the hindrances; the second jhāna, freeing it from applied and sustained thought; the third jhāna, freeing it from joy; and the fourth jhāna, freeing it from bliss and pain.

In insight, enter those jhānas, emerge, and contemplate their consciousness—or all their mental phenomena headed by consciousness—so as to see their constantly dissolving nature. Through contemplation of impermanence, the meditator abandons perception of permanence; through contemplation of suffering, perception of bliss; through contemplation of non-self, perception of self. Through contemplating under these three characteristics, contemplation of disenchantment abandons delight in formations; contemplation of dispassion, which sees the fading away of formations, abandons craving for them; contemplation of cessation, which repeatedly contemplates their dissolution, abandons their arising; and contemplation of relinquishment, which sees their dissolution and directs the mind towards Nibbāna, abandons the taking up of formations…

The fourth tetrad (catutthacatukka)

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…and clinging to them as permanent and so forth. Thus he is said to breathe in and out freeing the mind from opposing states. Endeavour to develop the practice until you can breathe in and out in this way. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 281.)

Understand that the Buddha teaches this third tetrad by the method of contemplation of mind. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 281.)

THE FOURTH TETRAD (CATUTTHACATUKKA)

1. Aniccānupassī assasissāmīti sikkhati. Aniccānupassī passasissāmīti sikkhati.

2. Virāgānupassī…pe…

3. Nirodhānupassī…pe…

4. Paṭinissaggānupassī…pe…

1. He trains: “I shall breathe in repeatedly contemplating formations as impermanent.” He trains: “I shall breathe out repeatedly contemplating formations as impermanent.”

2. Repeatedly contemplating the dissolution of formations and Nibbāna, where passion ceases (virāgānupassanā)…pe…

3. Repeatedly contemplating cessation by momentary dissolution and Nibbāna, the cessation of formations (nirodhānupassanā)…pe…

4. Repeatedly contemplating, with insight knowledge that abandons defilements temporarily and with Noble Path knowledge that eradicates them, both the dissolution of formations and Nibbāna, where formations cease…

The four tetrads and the four foundations of mindfulness

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…repeatedly contemplating them in this complete manner, he trains: “I shall breathe in”; he trains: “I shall breathe out.” (Saṃyutta Nikāya 3, p. 298.)

The Buddha teaches this fourth tetrad through pure insight. He teaches the preceding three tetrads through both tranquillity and insight.

Yasmā panettha paṭhamacatukkaṃ ādikammikassa kammaṭṭhānavasena vuttaṃ, itarāni pana tīṇi catukkāni ettha pattajjhānassa vedanā-citta-dhammānupassanāvasena vuttāni. (Visuddhimagga 1, 269.)

The Buddha teaches the first tetrad through the tranquillity meditation subject for a beginner undertaking mindfulness of breathing. It is mindfulness established in contemplation of the body. He teaches the second, third, and fourth tetrads through mindfulness established in contemplation of feeling, mind, and phenomena, for the meditator who has already attained jhāna through that first tetrad. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 269.)

According to these commentarial explanations, develop the first tetrad until jhāna is attained, then proceed successively to the second, third, and fourth tetrads. In explaining the impermanent phenomena included in “contemplating impermanence” of the fourth tetrad, the commentator states, “Aniccanti pañcakkhandhā”—impermanence means the five aggregates. (Visuddhimagga 1, p. 281.) Those five aggregates include the mental phenomena of jhāna and the aggregates of clinging called suffering…

The fruits of developing mindfulness of breathing

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…namely the ultimate mentality-materiality called formations. Before contemplating those five aggregates with insight, one must first discern them with knowledge and likewise discern their causes. To enable such discernment, five further major sections have been written: the meditation subject of materiality, the meditation subject of mentality, dependent origination, the fourfold treatment of characteristics, and insight meditation. Continue studying those sections if you wish.

When mindfulness of breathing is developed in accordance with the Buddha's teaching, completely through the four tetrads—the sixteen ways concerning in-breaths and sixteen concerning out-breaths, thirty-two in all—the following benefits taught by the Buddha can be obtained:

Ānāpānassati, bhikkhave, bhāvitā bahulīkatā cattāro satipaṭṭhāne paripūreti. Cattāro satipaṭṭhānā bhāvitā bahulīkatā satta bojjhaṅge paripūrenti. Satta bojjhaṅgā bhāvitā bahulīkatā vijjāvimuttiṃ paripūrenti. (Majjhima 3, 124.)

Bhikkhus, mindfulness of breathing, developed fully through the thirty-two ways and cultivated repeatedly, fulfils the four foundations of mindfulness. The four foundations of mindfulness, developed fully and cultivated repeatedly, fulfil the seven enlightenment factors. The seven enlightenment factors, developed fully and cultivated repeatedly, fulfil knowledge (vijjā), namely the four Noble Path knowledges, and liberation (vimutti), namely the four Noble Fruition knowledges…

The author's concluding aspiration

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…These two, knowledge and liberation, are brought to fulfilment. (Majjhima Nikāya 3, p. 124.)

Good meditator, may you practise diligently to become one who breathes in and out in accordance with the wish of the Buddha, the Great Compassionate One…

Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw

Cittala Taung Monastery

Pa-Auk Tawya

Kawza Era 1367

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