Nibbānagāminipaṭipadā · Mini · Cuốn 3 / Volume 3

Meditation on Materiality

Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw

English

Mục lục / Contents

Four-elements meditation
The brief method of four-elements meditation
The four great elements
Begin with the round letter o
Points to remember (a) — Discern the elements in balance
(b) Drawing the elements from one place to another
(c) Hardness, roughness, heaviness — softness, smoothness, lightness
(d) Discernment according to the convention of bodily postures
(e) When one is not yet proficient in tranquillity meditation
Guidelines to follow
1. Anupubbato — discern in sequence
2. Nātisīghato — do not go too quickly
3. Nātisaṇikato — do not go too slowly
4. Vikkhepapaṭibāhanato — prevent distraction towards external objects
5. Paññattisamatikkamato — go beyond conventional names
6. Anupubbamuñcanato — successively set aside elements that are unclear
7. Lakkhaṇato — give priority to individual characteristics
8. Adhicitta Sutta, also called Nimitta Sutta (Aṅ 1,258)
9. Anuttarasītibhāva Sutta (Aṅ 2,379)
10. Bojjhaṅga Sutta (Saṃ 3,71–73)
How to balance the five faculties
How to balance the seven awakening factors
Light and the scope of access concentration
Further explanations
Difficulties
Six kinds of transparency
Analysing the elements in material clusters
Doṇamatta — about one doṇa
The perceptions of a being and of a self have dissolved
Three kinds of compactness of materiality (rūpaghana)
There is no compactness of object (ārammaṇaghana) in material phenomena

Discerning by way of the elements (dhātuso paccavekkhati)

How to discern derived materiality

Vaṇṇa — colour

Gandha — odour

Rasa — taste

Ojā — nutritive essence

Jīvita — material life faculty

Sex materiality — materiality that accounts for maleness and femaleness

Tables for Meditation on Materiality

What is the mind-door?

Analysing material clusters at the six doors — discerning materiality

Transparent materiality of the eye

Transparent materiality of the body

Eye-sensitivity

Body-sensitivity

Ear-sensitivity

Nose-sensitivity

Tongue-sensitivity

The body's basis — the body-door

Mind-door and heart-base

The clarity of the bhavaṅga mind-door and body-sensitivity

Note

The twenty-eight kinds of materiality

(1) The four great elements

(2) The five kinds of sensitive or transparent materiality (pasādarūpa)

(3) The seven kinds of objective materiality (gocararūpa)

(4) The two kinds of sex materiality

(5) The heart-base

(6) The material life faculty

(7) Nutritive materiality

(8) Delimiting materiality

(9) The two kinds of intimation

(10) Alterable materiality, five or three kinds

(11) The four characteristics of materiality

How to discern consciousness-produced materiality

How to discern temperature-produced materiality

How to discern nutriment-produced materiality

An example of discernment at the eye

Essential points to remember

A point to note

The detailed method of four-elements meditation

Four parts in which the fire element predominates
Six parts in which the wind element predominates
Nine kamma-produced material clusters
Eight consciousness-produced material clusters
Four temperature-produced material clusters
Three kinds of sound
Two nutriment-produced material clusters
How to discern the four characteristics of materiality
How materiality arises and ceases
When to contemplate “materiality, materiality”
The characteristic of alteration
Points to remember when discerning materiality
Arouse diligence
Section on clear comprehension of bodily postures
How to contemplate bodily postures with clear comprehension
Yathā yathā vā panassa kāyo paṇihito hoti
An interpretation by the subcommentator
When giving an everyday simile
Similar methods of contemplation
Four kinds of clear comprehension (sampajañña)
A summary of the essential points to remember in contemplation
Front and back cover
Title page
The gift of Dhamma and aspiration
Contents — ๓
Contents — ๒
Contents — ๑
Contents — ๐
Contents — ๔
Index in Burmese alphabetical order — 189
Index in Burmese alphabetical order — 190
Index in Burmese alphabetical order — 191
Index in Burmese alphabetical order — 192
Index in Burmese alphabetical order — 193
Index in Burmese alphabetical order — 194
Index in Burmese alphabetical order — 195
Index in Burmese alphabetical order — 196
Index in Burmese alphabetical order — 197

Front and back cover

Bìa / Cover

Nibbānagāminipaṭipadā — The Practice Leading to Nibbāna (Abridged). Volume 3. Meditation on Materiality (Rūpakammaṭṭhāna). Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw.

Kathañca, bhikkhave, bhikkhu na rūpaññū hoti? Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu “yaṃ kiñci rūpaṃ sabbaṃ rūpaṃ cattāri mahābhūtāni catunnañca mahābhūtānaṃ upādāyarūpan”ti yathābhūtaṃ nappajānāti. Evaṃ kho, bhikkhave, bhikkhu na rūpaññū hoti.

Bhikkhus, how does a bhikkhu fail to know materiality? Here, a bhikkhu does not distinguish and know as it really is that all materiality consists of the four great elements and the twenty-four kinds of derived materiality dependent on them. This is how a bhikkhu fails to know materiality. (Ma 1,282.)

So gaṇanato (samuṭṭhānato) rūpaṃ ajānanto rūpaṃ pariggahetvā arūpaṃ vavatthapetvā rūpārūpaṃ pariggahetvā paccayaṃ sallakkhetvā lakkhaṇaṃ āropetvā kammaṭṭhānaṃ matthakaṃ pāpetuṃ na sakkoti.

If a meditating bhikkhu does not know materiality by its number, the twenty-eight kinds, and by its origins, kamma, consciousness, temperature and nutriment, he cannot discern materiality with wisdom, define mentality, discern mentality and materiality together, distinguish their conditions clearly, apply the three characteristics, and bring insight practice to its culmination in path and fruition knowledge. (Ma-ṭṭha 2,63.)

Title page

Nibbānagāminipaṭipadā

The Practice Leading to Nibbāna (Abridged) — Volume 3

Meditation on Materiality (Rūpakammaṭṭhāna)

Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw

The gift of Dhamma and aspiration

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.

Ciraṃ tiṭṭhatu saddhammo, dhamme hontu sagāravā.

May the Buddha's dispensation endure for a long time.
May all honour the three kinds of true Dhamma.

Contents — ๓

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa.
Homage to the Blessed One, the Arahant, the Perfectly Enlightened One.

Meditation on Materiality — Contents

Four-elements meditation — 1

The brief method of four-elements meditation — 1

The four great elements — 3

Begin with the round letter ๐ — 5

Points to remember (a) — Discern the elements in balance — 14

(b) Drawing the elements from one place to another — 15

(c) Hardness, roughness, heaviness — softness, smoothness, lightness — 16

(d) Discernment according to the convention of bodily postures — 22

(e) When one is not yet proficient in tranquillity meditation — 22

Guidelines to follow — 23

1. Anupubbato — discern in sequence — 24

2. Nātisīghato — do not go too quickly — 24

3. Nātisaṇikato — do not go too slowly — 24

4. Vikkhepapaṭibāhanato — prevent distraction towards external objects — 25

5. Paññattisamatikkamato — go beyond conventional names — 27

6. Anupubbamuñcanato — successively set aside elements that are unclear — 27

Contents — ə

Đầu sách / Front matter - 4

7. Lakkhaṇato — give priority to individual characteristics — 28

8. Adhicitta Sutta, also called Nimitta Sutta (Aṅ 1,258) — 31

9. Anuttarasītibhāva Sutta (Aṅ 2,379) — 31

10. Bojjhaṅga Sutta (Saṃ 3,71–73) — 31

How to balance the five faculties — 31

How to balance the seven awakening factors — 36

Light and the scope of access concentration — 38

Further explanations — 42

Difficulties — 48

Six kinds of transparency — 52

Analysing the elements in material clusters — 54

Doṇamatta — about one doṇa — 59

The perceptions of a being and of a self have dissolved — 61

Three kinds of compactness of materiality (rūpaghana) — 64

There is no compactness of object (ārammaṇaghana) in material phenomena — 67

Discerning by way of the elements (dhātuso paccavekkhati) — 69

How to discern derived materiality — 72

Vaṇṇa — colour — 78

Gandha — odour — 78

Rasa — taste — 79

Ojā — nutritive essence — 80

Jīvita — material life faculty — 81

Sex materiality — materiality that accounts for maleness and femaleness — 82

Tables for Meditation on Materiality — 84

Contents — ก

Đầu sách / Front matter - 5

What is the mind-door? — 90

Analysing material clusters at the six doors — discerning materiality — 91

Transparent materiality of the eye — 92

Transparent materiality of the body — 92

Eye-sensitivity — 93

Body-sensitivity — 94

Ear-sensitivity — 95

Nose-sensitivity — 96

Tongue-sensitivity — 97

The body's basis — the body-door — 98

Mind-door and heart-base — 99

The clarity of the bhavaṅga mind-door and body-sensitivity — 100

Note — 101

The twenty-eight kinds of materiality — 103

(1) The four great elements — 103

(2) The five kinds of sensitive or transparent materiality (pasādarūpa) — 103

(3) The seven kinds of objective materiality (gocararūpa) — 104

(4) The two kinds of sex materiality — 104

(5) The heart-base — 104

(6) The material life faculty — 105

(7) Nutritive materiality — 105

(8) Delimiting materiality — 106

(9) The two kinds of intimation — 106

(10) Alterable materiality, five or three kinds — 106

(11) The four characteristics of materiality — 107

Contents — ဃ

Đầu sách / Front matter - 6

How to discern consciousness-produced materiality — 109

How to discern temperature-produced materiality — 110

How to discern nutriment-produced materiality — 115

An example of discernment at the eye — 128

Essential points to remember — 133

A point to note — 134

The detailed method of four-elements meditation — 138

Four parts in which the fire element predominates — 139

Six parts in which the wind element predominates — 140

Nine kamma-produced material clusters — 142

Eight consciousness-produced material clusters — 143

Four temperature-produced material clusters — 147

Three kinds of sound — 148

Two nutriment-produced material clusters — 149

How to discern the four characteristics of materiality — 150

How materiality arises and ceases — 151

When to contemplate “materiality, materiality” — 156

The characteristic of alteration — 157

Points to remember when discerning materiality — 158

Arouse diligence — 158

Section on clear comprehension of bodily postures — 163

How to contemplate bodily postures with clear comprehension — 163

Yathā yathā vā panassa kāyo paṇihito hoti — 177

An interpretation by the subcommentator — 179

Contents — c

Đầu sách / Front matter - 7

When giving an everyday simile — 181

Similar methods of contemplation — 182

Four kinds of clear comprehension (sampajañña) — 183

A summary of the essential points to remember in contemplation — 187

Meditation on Materiality — Four-elements meditation

Miến / Burmese 1

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa.
Homage to the Blessed One, the Arahant, the Perfectly Enlightened One.

To distinguish and know materiality, mentality, their causes and effects, that is, the conditioned phenomena in the internal and external continuities across the three periods of time, by the three kinds of full understanding (pariññā), one must first develop one of two kinds of concentration, access concentration or absorption concentration. In the preceding volumes of the Nibbānagāminipaṭipadā (Abridged), the section on tranquillity meditation covered concentration and purification of mind. We now continue with the section on meditation on materiality, explaining how to discern and distinguish with wisdom the material phenomena that come under purification of view.

The brief method of four-elements meditation

Duvidhañhi kammaṭṭhānaṃ — rūpakammaṭṭhānaṃ arūpakammaṭṭhānañca. Rūpapariggaho arūpapariggahotipi etadeva vuccati. Tattha bhagavā rūpakammaṭṭhānaṃ kathento saṅkhepamanasikāravasena vā vitthāramanasikāravasena vā catudhātuvavatthānaṃ katheti. (Abhi-ṭṭha 2,252; Ma-ṭṭha 1,280; Dī-ṭṭha 2,314.)

References printed on this page: Abhi-ṭṭha, vol. 2, p. 252; Ma-ṭṭha, vol. 1, p. 280; Dī-ṭṭha, vol. 2, p. 314.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Abhi-ṭṭha, tập 2, tr. 252; Ma-ṭṭha, tập 1, tr. 280; Dī-ṭṭha, tập 2, tr. 314.

Two ways of attending to the four elements

Miến / Burmese 2

The tranquillity section has forty meditation subjects and deals with concentration. The insight section has two kinds of meditation, meditation on materiality and meditation on mentality. These are also called discernment of materiality (rūpapariggaha), distinguishing materiality with wisdom, and discernment of mentality (arūpapariggaha), distinguishing mentality with wisdom. In teaching meditation on materiality, the Buddha teaches the defining of the four elements (catudhātuvavatthāna), distinguishing the individual characteristic of each element with wisdom, either by (1) attention in brief or (2) attention in detail. (Abhi-ṭṭha 2,252; Ma-ṭṭha 1,280; Dī-ṭṭha 2,314.)

This book presents the brief practice of four-elements meditation first and then explains the detailed practice.

Puna caparaṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhu imameva kāyaṃ yathāṭhitaṃ yathāpaṇihitaṃ dhātuso paccavekkhati: “Atthi imasmiṃ kāye pathavīdhātu āpodhātu tejodhātu vāyodhātū”ti. (Ma 1,73.)

Bhikkhus, further, a meditating bhikkhu discerns this very body, however it is placed or positioned, by way of the elements: “In this body there is the earth element, the water element, the fire element and the wind element.” He discerns each element in this way. (Ma 1,73.)

The passage above teaches four-elements meditation in the section on attention to the elements in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta. The meditator should insert the hand of wisdom between the bones and sinews …

References printed on this page: Abhi-ṭṭha, vol. 2, p. 252; Ma-ṭṭha, vol. 1, p. 280; Dī-ṭṭha, vol. 2, p. 314; Ma, vol. 1, p. 73.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Abhi-ṭṭha, tập 2, tr. 252; Ma-ṭṭha, tập 1, tr. 280; Dī-ṭṭha, tập 2, tr. 314; Ma, tập 1, tr. 73.

The four great elements

Miến / Burmese 3

… between the flesh and skin of this body. Direct wisdom there to see and know the individual characteristics of earth, water, fire and wind. If these are difficult to see immediately, insert the hand of wisdom between the bones, sinews, flesh and skin, and examine from the head down to the feet and from the feet up to the head as follows.

1. Earth element (pathavīdhātu)
Three coarse qualities: hardness, roughness and heaviness.
Three light qualities: softness, smoothness and lightness.

2. Water element (āpodhātu)
Flowing and cohesion.

3. Fire element (tejodhātu)
Heat and cold.

4. Wind element (vāyodhātu)
Supporting and pushing.

Hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness and lightness are characteristics of the earth element …

Discerning each quality throughout the body

Miến / Burmese 4

… flowing and cohesion are characteristics of the water element, and heat and cold are characteristics of the fire element. Supporting is the characteristic of the wind element, and pushing is its function.

First re-establish the fourth jhāna of mindfulness of breathing that you have already attained. If you wish, establish concentration up to the fourth jhāna of the white kasiṇa. Remember to establish concentration each time you sit. Then proceed as follows.

1. Starting where hardness is distinct, discern hardness throughout the body from the head down to the feet. In the same way:
2. Starting where roughness is distinct, discern roughness. Pe.
3. Starting where heaviness is distinct, discern heaviness. Pe.
4. Starting where softness is distinct, discern softness. Pe.
5. Starting where smoothness is distinct, discern smoothness. Pe.
6. Starting where lightness is distinct, discern lightness. Pe.
7. Starting where flowing is distinct, discern flowing. Pe.
8. Starting where cohesion is distinct, discern cohesion. Pe.
9. Starting where heat is distinct, discern heat. Pe.
10. Starting where cold is distinct, discern cold. Pe.
11. Starting where supporting is distinct, discern supporting. Pe.
12. Starting where pushing is distinct, discern pushing throughout the body from the head down to the feet.

Begin with pushing

Miến / Burmese 5

Whichever of these twelve elemental qualities you examine, discern it throughout the whole body. See it everywhere in the body. First try to discern hardness throughout the body. If you succeed, continue with the other elements. If you do not succeed, begin with pushing. Pushing is a great help in discerning the other elemental qualities with wisdom.

Begin with the round letter “ဝ”

Although the thirty-three consonants begin with ka and kha, a young child is first taught the round letter “ဝ” because it is easy. The pushing quality of the wind element is like the letter “ဝ”. Many meditators find it easy to discern. Therefore, if the method above has not worked, begin with the equivalent of the round letter “ဝ”.

Place your meditation mind roughly at the centre of your head. Each time you breathe in and each time you breathe out, direct wisdom to that very spot and look for the quality of pushing. With each inhalation and exhalation, keep directing wisdom to the pushing. Do not observe the breath. The pushing resembles the pressure inside your cheeks when you blow into a flute. When you find it, let your meditation mind settle quietly on pushing alone.

If you still do not succeed by this method, take up the concentration of the fourth jhāna of mindfulness of breathing that you have already attained or, if you wish, that of the fourth jhāna of the white kasiṇa …

Recognizing pushing throughout the body

Miến / Burmese 6

… and develop that concentration again. Once the power of concentration is full, discern pushing again as described above.

As explained earlier in this work, the fourth jhāna of mindfulness of breathing or the fourth jhāna of the white kasiṇa serves as a foundation and supporting condition for your insight. Develop this concentration until it has sufficient power and the light is strong. Follow this instruction every time you sit, especially when you encounter difficulties.

When pushing becomes distinct inside the head, let the meditation mind rest quietly on that very quality. As the mind settles on it, pushing becomes clearer. Once it is clear, gradually examine with wisdom until you see pushing from the inside of the head to the outside. Insert the hand of wisdom between the bones, sinews, flesh and skin. Once pushing is distinct throughout the head, extend wisdom down through the neck, chest, abdomen and whole body. Insert the hand of wisdom between the bones, sinews, flesh and skin as you examine. When you see pushing clearly throughout the body, from the head to the feet, you have successfully discerned one elemental quality. You have now written one complete letter “o”. If, as you breathe in and out …

From pushing to hardness and roughness

Miến / Burmese 7

… pushing is hard to distinguish where you are attending, or you are more inclined to start in the abdomen, begin where pushing is distinct in the abdomen. From there proceed in the same way until you see it throughout the whole body.

Once pushing is distinct throughout the body, proceed in the same way with hardness. Begin at a spot where hardness is distinct, such as where the teeth of the two jaws meet. Discern hardness throughout the body. When it becomes distinct, observe pushing and hardness over and over. Try to discern them in every posture, whether walking, standing or sitting.

By repeatedly discerning pushing and hardness, you may see roughness with wisdom, a quality like the roughness felt when rubbing the body with the hand. If you do not see it, begin at a spot where roughness is distinct. Turn the hand over and rub its palm against the robe. Rub the tongue against the tips of the upper teeth. You may then see roughness distinctly. Starting there, discern it throughout the body. If you do not succeed, take roughness where it is distinct and discern it together with pushing and hardness. Use a quality already clear to find one that is unclear, as a tame elephant is used to lure and catch a wild one. If this succeeds, well and good. If it does not, re-establish …

Heaviness and supporting

Miến / Burmese 8

… the jhāna concentrations you have already attained.

Samāhito yathābhūtaṃ jānāti passati. (Aṅ 3,259.)
One who is concentrated knows and sees things as they really are, without distortion. As the Buddha taught this, develop concentration again until its power is full. When concentration is strong, return to discerning pushing, hardness and roughness.

When you succeed, begin at a spot where heaviness is distinct and discern it throughout the body. If it is unclear, press your buttocks slightly against the seat, or press down gently on the hand resting on the thigh. When you succeed, take note of it. Repeatedly discern pushing, hardness, roughness and heaviness. If the other qualities also become clear to wisdom while you discern just one quality, so much the better.

Next discern supporting. Just as a house that is about to collapse stands firm when propped up with a piece of timber, this body has a quality that supports it and maintains its posture. When you walk, it supports the body in walking so that it does not fall. When you stand, it supports the body in standing so that it does not fall. When you sit, it supports the body in sitting so that it does not fall. When you lie down, it supports and maintains the lying posture …

References printed on this page: Aṅ, vol. 3, p. 259.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Aṅ, tập 3, tr. 259.

Recognizing supporting and softness

Miến / Burmese 9

… This is supporting. It may be easier to discern supporting together with hardness. If supporting is unclear, lean the body slightly and discern with wisdom the support that keeps it from falling. When you succeed, continue until you see supporting throughout the body. Discern it with hardness, seeing the support that keeps the body from falling in each posture, like a house held up by a prop. Because this makes it easier to see, supporting, a quality of the wind element, is taught here after the three coarse qualities of earth, hardness, roughness and heaviness. This proceeds from the easier to the more difficult.

Once you succeed, discern pushing, hardness, roughness, heaviness and supporting over and over. This sharpens the blade of wisdom on the whetstone of concentration. Once you have mastered this, proceed to softness. Touch the inside of the lower lip gently with the tongue and take softness as your object. You may discern the gentle softness there. Let the meditation mind rest quietly on that softness.

Once it is clear, continue from the soles of the feet to the top of the head until you see softness throughout the body. Try to see the whole body as soft as a mass of fluffed cotton.

When you can discern softness well …

Smoothness, lightness and heat

Miến / Burmese 10

… go on to discern smoothness. Moisten the soft inner surface of the lip with saliva and gently stroke it with the tongue. You may then see smoothness. Let the meditation mind rest quietly on that smoothness. Once it is clear, discern it throughout the whole body, as if stroking a body made smooth by oil.

Then discern lightness. Repeatedly discerning softness and smoothness may make lightness apparent to wisdom. If it is unclear, gently lift a finger or a hand resting on the thigh. Lightness may then become clear. If it is still unclear, return to discerning heaviness. Once heaviness is distinct throughout the body, slowly lift a finger from the thigh as before and attend carefully to lightness. You may see lightness distinctly, like a piece of cotton floating in the wind.

Hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness and lightness belong to the earth element. Supporting and pushing belong to the wind element. Discern these eight qualities repeatedly. Once proficient, go on to discern the heat of the fire element. When you put the right hand on the left, you may discern the heat in the right hand. Take that heat as your object. You may also discern heat wherever it is distinct in the body. As you examine heat in this way …

Cold, cohesion and flowing

Miến / Burmese 11

… and heat becomes distinct to wisdom, insert the hand of wisdom between the bones, sinews, flesh and skin so that you discern heat distinctly throughout the body.

When you succeed, go on to discern cold. Begin wherever cold is distinct. If you cannot readily find such a spot, look for cold at the tip of the nose as you breathe in. Take cold alone as the object. When it gradually becomes distinct, discern cold throughout the body.

When you discern cold from the feet to the top of the head, you have succeeded in discerning the fire element. You have now found ten qualities: hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness, lightness, heat, cold, supporting and pushing. If you alternate among these ten qualities repeatedly, the characteristic of cohesion belonging to the water element may become clear to wisdom. If cohesion remains unclear despite your efforts, repeatedly discern just pushing and hardness. Cohesion will then become clear. It is the quality that holds the entire body together, as though it were bound tightly with a cord.

When you discern cohesion distinctly with wisdom, discern flowing at a spot where it is distinct. If you cannot find it, start at the roots of the teeth where saliva seeps out and discern flowing until you see it throughout the body …

Discerning all twelve qualities in sequence

Miến / Burmese 12

… A practitioner proficient in discerning the thirty-two parts of the body already knows how to discern the twelve parts in which the water element predominates. It may be easier to attend to a part in which flowing predominates, such as blood. If you can discern flowing throughout the body, like a stream of water flowing up and down, you have succeeded in discerning both qualities of the water element. Repeatedly discern the twelve qualities in this order: pushing, hardness, roughness, heaviness, supporting, softness, smoothness, lightness, heat, cold, cohesion and flowing. Each time you discern a quality, try to see it distinctly throughout the body, from the feet up to the head and from the head down to the feet. Then train to see it quickly. Going through the twelve qualities once is one round. Practise until you can discern two or three rounds in a minute.

When you succeed by training in this way, you have learned the round letter “ဝ”. Now change to the sequence taught by the Buddha: hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness, lightness, flowing, cohesion, heat, cold, supporting and pushing. It is like returning to the order ka, kha and so on once you have learned to write the round letter. When you can discern quickly in the order of the teaching:

Taṃ taṃ anusārinā ñāṇahatthena vinibbhujitvā vinibbhujitvā … (Visuddhi 1,347.)

Insert the hand of wisdom between the bones, sinews, flesh and skin. With wisdom, distinguish separately the individual characteristics of each of the four elements …

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 1, p. 347.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 1, tr. 347.

Surveying the entire body and identifying each element

Miến / Burmese 13

… In this way the task of discerning has succeeded, but the path has not yet come to its end. Some meditators see material clusters while discerning the qualities in this way. Others do not yet see them. Those who do not see material clusters should practise in accordance with this instruction:

Sakalampi attano rūpakāyaṃ āvajjetvā. (Visuddhi 1,346.)

Direct wisdom to the whole of your own material body. As instructed in the Visuddhimagga, survey your whole body from above and discern the twelve qualities: hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness, lightness, flowing, cohesion, heat, cold, supporting and pushing. Train to survey the entire body. After surveying it from the head for some time, many meditators find that their head becomes unbearably heavy and hard. Therefore, survey from about the neck down and discern the twelve qualities. If you can discern them in this way, take only the elemental qualities as your object. Do not take the body as the object. Once you discern all twelve qualities so quickly and clearly with wisdom that they seem to appear together, identify hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness and lightness as earth element, flowing and cohesion as water element, heat and cold as fire element, and supporting and pushing as wind element.

Do not discern them under the name “earth element” before you see hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness and lightness. Do not discern them under the name “water element” before you see flowing and cohesion. Do not discern them under the name “fire element” before you see heat and cold. Do not discern them under the name “wind element” before you see supporting and pushing …

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 1, p. 346.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 1, tr. 346.

Points to remember — Balancing the elements

Miến / Burmese 14

… Take care that the meditation does not become a matter of mere words. If you do not yet see those qualities, first train to see them. Only when each quality is distinctly known and distinguished with wisdom, as plainly as a ruby in the palm of the hand, should you spend a period discerning earth, water, fire and wind. Let the meditation mind rest quietly on the four great elements as its object and develop concentration.

(a) Discern the elements in balance

Whether you are discerning each of the twelve qualities, hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness, lightness, flowing, cohesion, heat, cold, supporting and pushing, or discerning earth, water, fire and wind, do not stay too long with just one quality or element. It may become excessive. This can be unbearable, especially when hardness, pushing or heat becomes excessive. Likewise, excessive softness, lightness or cohesion can also be unbearable. The excessive element can obstruct the practice at each sitting, so that concentration is not attained. Therefore, do not focus on one element for too long. Keep all four elements balanced as you discern them.

Drawing the elements from one place to another

Miến / Burmese 15

Ruppanañcettha sītādivirodhipaccayasannipāte visadisuppatti. (Mahāṭīkā 2,86.)

Material phenomena have the characteristic of alteration (ruppana). This alteration means that under opposing conditions such as cold and heat, the later succession of material phenomena arises unlike the earlier succession. (Mahāṭīkā 2,86.)

Ultimate phenomena cease in the very place where they arise. They do not move from one place to another. Thus, when you begin discerning pushing inside the head, do not suppose that the pushing arising inside the head is gradually drawn down to the feet. Pushing is distinct throughout the body. Search with wisdom for the pushing that is distinct at each place throughout the body. Understand the other qualities in the same way. All four great elements are present in each part of the body. As long as the supporting power of the conditions persists, the resultant material phenomena keep arising. The earlier and later successions of materiality differ, but their uninterrupted arising and ceasing follows the same pattern. Therefore material phenomena do not move from place to place. By the power of the conditions, new material phenomena arise at different locations …

References printed on this page: Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 86.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Mahāṭīkā, tập 2, tr. 86.

The six qualities of the earth element

Miến / Burmese 16

… over and over. Accordingly, remember that a quality of an element cannot be drawn from one place to another.

(c) Hardness, roughness and heaviness — softness, smoothness and lightness. In the Sutta Piṭaka, the Buddha teaches the earth element in two ways: kakkaḷa, hardness, and kharigata, roughness (Ma 2,84). In its explanation of the brief method, the Visuddhimagga likewise explains only hardness and roughness: thaddhākāro vā pharusākāro vā (Visuddhi 1,346). This work follows the Abhidhamma Piṭaka in presenting six qualities of the earth element for discernment. The Abhidhamma Piṭaka says:
Kakkaḷaṃ mudukaṃ saṇhaṃ pharusaṃ (sukhasamphassaṃ dukkhasamphassaṃ) garukaṃ lahukaṃ. (Abhi 1,170.)

The commentary explains that hardness is stiffness, softness is the absence of stiffness, smoothness is a smooth texture and roughness is a coarse texture. Pleasant contact is what serves as a condition for pleasant feeling, and painful contact is what serves as a condition for painful feeling. Heaviness is weightiness, and lightness is the opposite. The six qualities of earth are (1) kakkaḷa, hardness, (2) pharusa, roughness, (3) garuka, heaviness, (4) muduka, softness, (5) saṇha, smoothness, and (6) lahuka, lightness. The earth, fire and wind elements that condition pleasant feeling are called pleasant contact. The earth, fire and …

References printed on this page: Ma, vol. 2, p. 84; Visuddhimagga, vol. 1, p. 346; Abhi, vol. 1, p. 170; Abhi-ṭṭha, vol. 1, p. 368.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Ma, tập 2, tr. 84; Visuddhimagga, tập 1, tr. 346; Abhi, tập 1, tr. 170; Abhi-ṭṭha, tập 1, tr. 368.

Balancing opposite qualities

Miến / Burmese 17

… wind elements that condition painful feeling are called painful contact. Pleasant and painful contact are therefore not individual characteristics of those three elements. Although the Abhidhamma Piṭaka enumerates hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness and lightness in its exposition of the tangible object, the Aṭṭhasālinī makes clear that these qualities are taught specifically in relation to the earth element.

Although the suttas teach only hardness and roughness when explaining how to discern the earth element, there is a practical reason for presenting six qualities here in accordance with the Abhidhamma Piṭaka. When a meditator works hard on the twelve elemental qualities, or on four-elements meditation, some elements may become excessive. Because of this excess some meditators lose concentration and fail to discern the elements. Especially when hardness, heaviness and cohesion become excessive, the whole head can become so hard and heavy that it is difficult to bear. At such a time, give priority to the opposite quality to bring the elements into balance.

1. If hardness becomes excessive, give priority to softness. If softness becomes excessive, give priority to hardness. In this way balance the elements. Likewise:
2. If roughness becomes excessive, discern smoothness. If smoothness becomes excessive, discern roughness. Pe.
3. If heaviness becomes excessive, discern lightness. If lightness becomes excessive, discern heaviness. Pe.

Correcting excess in an element

Miến / Burmese 18

4. If flowing becomes excessive, discern cohesion. If cohesion becomes excessive, discern flowing. Pe.
5. If heat becomes excessive, discern cold. If cold becomes excessive, discern heat. Pe.
6. If supporting becomes excessive, discern pushing. If pushing becomes excessive, give priority to supporting, and thus balance the elements.

All six qualities of the earth element are presented here so that difficulties of this kind can be dealt with. Sometimes hardness, roughness and heaviness stand out excessively and become unbearable. Temporarily give priority to softness, smoothness and lightness, and persevere until the elements are balanced. Sometimes softness, smoothness and lightness become strong, and the body moves as if floating in the air. Then give priority to hardness, roughness and heaviness to restore balance.

Sometimes flowing becomes as strong as a river rushing along, and concentration breaks down. Give priority to cohesion to restore balance. Sometimes cohesion becomes so pronounced that you can scarcely breathe and it is difficult to bear. Give priority to flowing to restore balance. Sometimes heat becomes intensely strong, as though you were being scorched by fire. The body grows hot and sweat pours out. Temporarily turn to cold to bring the elements into balance. Sometimes, if cold …

Balancing wind and developing concentration

Miến / Burmese 19

… becomes excessive, counter it with heat. When supporting becomes excessive, take pushing as the object and restore balance. When pushing becomes strong, temporarily direct attention to supporting to restore balance. If the body continues to sway strongly even after you have given priority to supporting, give priority to hardness, roughness and heaviness, the coarse qualities of earth. Think of a sheet of paper fluttering in the wind on a table. It becomes still when weighed down with a heavy object.

The twelve elemental qualities are presented here so that the meditator can correct deficiency and excess and develop concentration. Such imbalances occur more often in those whose vehicle is pure insight and less often in those whose vehicle is tranquillity. A practitioner of pure insight goes directly to insight without first establishing jhāna as a foundation. When beginning with the four great elements, such a practitioner may have to spend a long time discerning until the qualities, initially unclear or only faintly discernible, become distinct to knowledge. During this extended training, when the practice gains strength, some elements may occasionally become excessive. At such a time, take the opposite element as the object to restore balance.

Why, then, do the suttas and the Visuddhimagga present only the two qualities kakkaḷa and kharigata, hardness and roughness, for the earth element …

Why the suttas teach hardness and roughness

Miến / Burmese 20

… and explain only those two? This question can be asked, and there is a reason.

However soft an object may be, if it is examined closely with wisdom, hardness is evident to a degree corresponding to that object. What has much hardness is called hard, and what has little hardness is called soft. In the same way, however smooth an object may be, if it is examined closely with wisdom, roughness is evident to a corresponding degree. What has much roughness is called rough, and what has little roughness is called smooth. Heaviness also generally accompanies hardness and roughness. When softness and smoothness are evident, lightness generally accompanies them. Thus, on discerning hardness and roughness, hardness, softness, roughness, smoothness, heaviness and lightness all become evident. That is why in the suttas the earth element is taught by way of just kakkaḷa and kharigata.

Similarly, when flowing is strong and predominant, flowing is what becomes evident. When flowing is weak or diminished, cohesion can become evident. In the twenty parts classed under earth, the power of the earth element predominates, so the flowing quality of the water element is diminished and weak. Thus, in the parts classed under earth, flowing diminishes and cohesion tends to become more …

Qualities of water, fire and wind

Miến / Burmese 21

… evident. In the parts classed under fire and wind, flowing and cohesion are also present, though weak. Consider cement. If it is mixed with a suitable small amount of water, cohesion is strong and it sets into a solid lump. If a little cement is mixed with a great deal of water, flowing is strong and cohesion weakens, so it cannot set into a solid lump. Understand the matter by this simile. Accordingly, the Visuddhimagga instructs the meditator to discern both qualities of the water element: dravatā, flowing, and ābandhanabhāva, cohesion.

In the four parts classed under fire, the distinctive power of the fire element predominates. In the parts classed under earth, water and wind, its power is less, though still present. The fire element with predominant power is called hot. The fire element with diminished or weak power is called cold. This is why both are presented here for discernment. The Visuddhimagga also instructs the meditator to discern paripācanabhāva, the function of maturing. In accordance with this instruction, when the characteristics of heat and cold are unclear, one can also discern the function of maturing.

For the wind element the instruction is to discern both vitthambhanabhāva, supporting, and samudīraṇabhāva, pushing. Just as one props up something that is about to fall with a wooden brace so that it stands firmly, there is a quality that keeps the body firmly in whatever posture it has been placed …

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 1, p. 347.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 1, tr. 347.

Discerning the elements in every posture

Miến / Burmese 22

… and that quality is supporting. Supporting is the quality that pushes back against co-arisen material phenomena to keep them firm in whatever posture has been assumed. The power that pushes so as to keep things firm is called supporting. The power that pushes so as to cause movement is called pushing.

Since supporting is the individual characteristic and pushing is the function, the two are very closely connected. The Visuddhimagga therefore instructs the meditator to discern both supporting and pushing.

(d) Discernment in bodily postures and with clear comprehension. If you discern only one element while sitting, discern that element in all four postures, walking, standing, sitting and lying down. Discern it also during bodily actions and movements such as bending and stretching, within the scope of clear comprehension. If you can discern two elements while sitting, pe. If you can discern all four, discern all four in every posture and during every bodily action and movement. Discern so that the successive postures are connected.

(e) When tranquillity is not yet your vehicle. If you have never practised any of the tranquillity meditation subjects, such as mindfulness of breathing or the white kasiṇa …

Four-elements meditation and the guidelines for practice

Miến / Burmese 23

… this meditation on the elements is itself one of the forty tranquillity meditation subjects, the defining of the four elements (catudhātuvavatthāna). Through the power of wisdom it can bring about the concentration called access concentration. It is also meditation on materiality, practised for purification of view. When this meditation has been developed to access concentration, the light arising from the wisdom associated with concentration can help you turn to the thirty-two parts of the body. If you pass from those parts to the colour kasiṇas, such as the white kasiṇa, you can attain the fourth jhāna. You can then become one whose vehicle is tranquillity.

Guidelines to follow. As explained above, survey the entire body. Discern hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness and lightness as earth element, flowing and cohesion as water element, heat and cold as fire element, and supporting and pushing as wind element. Continue for a long time in the order earth, water, fire and wind. Let the meditation mind settle quietly on the four elements. In practising in this way, follow the guidelines below.

Guidelines 1–3: sequence and pace

Miến / Burmese 24

Evaṃ manasi karontena hi anupubbato, nātisīghato, nātisaṇikato, vikkhepapaṭibāhanato, paññattisamatikkamato, anupubbamuñcanato, lakkhaṇato, tayo ca suttantāti imehi dasahākārehi manasikārakosallaṃ anuvattitabbaṃ. (Mahāṭīkā 1,434.)
In attending in this way, cultivate skill in attention in ten ways: in sequence, neither too fast nor too slowly, warding off distraction, going beyond concepts, setting aside in sequence, by characteristic, and in accordance with three discourses. [The Pāli begins on the preceding page.]

1. Anupubbato — discern in sequence. When attending to four-elements meditation, discern in the sequence taught by the Buddha and learned from your teacher: earth element, water element, fire element and wind element. Do not reverse the order or skip about among the elements.

2. Nātisīghato — do not go too fast. When attending to the four great elements in the sequence taught by the Buddha, do not attend in undue haste. For one who attends too quickly, attention to the meditation subject may indeed continue without interruption, but the qualities of the four great elements, the object of the meditation, may remain unclear. When the object is unclear, the meditation mind cannot bring about a superior state such as access concentration. Therefore do not attend too quickly.

3. Nātisaṇikato — do not go too slowly. Do not attend with excessive slowness and hesitation either. For one who attends to the four great elements in such a slow and hesitant way, meditation on the elements does not reach completion …

References printed on this page: Mahāṭīkā, vol. 1, p. 434.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Mahāṭīkā, tập 1, tr. 434.

Guideline 4: preventing outward distraction

Miến / Burmese 25

… and cannot serve as a condition for attaining higher knowledge such as insight knowledge, path knowledge and fruition knowledge.

4. Vikkhepapaṭibāhanato — prevent the mind from scattering towards external objects. Prevent the mind from leaving its meditation object, the four great elements, and scattering towards other ultimate or conceptual objects. When the mind strays towards ultimate or conceptual objects other than the four great elements, the practitioner declines and falls away from the meditation subject.

Bahiddhā vikkhepe hi sati kammaṭṭhānā parihāyati paribhaṃsati. (Mahāṭīkā 1,434.)
When there is outward distraction, the practitioner declines and falls away from the meditation subject.

Follow this rule strictly. While developing concentration with the individual characteristics of the four great elements as the object, if you pursue other ultimate or conceptual objects, the practice is no longer the defining of the four elements, which distinguishes each element's individual characteristic with wisdom. Only when you discern the four great elements can it be called four-elements meditation. This applies especially when developing concentration: following external objects other than the four elements cannot be called four-elements meditation. If you are a practitioner whose vehicle is pure insight, pay particular attention to this point. Practitioners of pure insight usually begin with meditation on materiality and proceed towards purification of view …

References printed on this page: Mahāṭīkā, vol. 1, p. 434.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Mahāṭīkā, tập 1, tr. 434.

Keeping the mind on the four elements

Miến / Burmese 26

… by beginning with either the brief or the detailed method and developing meditation on the four great elements themselves. Examine the elements. Following other objects outside the four elements is unprofitable and unsuitable. Examine your own practice: if you alternate at will between discerning the elements and pursuing other objects, have you been able to see the minute particles called material clusters? If you have seen them, can you discern and distinguish with wisdom the four great elements in each cluster?

If you cannot see the material clusters, or see them but cannot discern and distinguish the four great elements in each cluster, follow the rule against pursuing other objects while developing concentration through four-elements meditation. Only when you can discern the four elements in each cluster do you begin to reach the domain of ultimate reality.

Ekapadikamagge puriso setu nidassito. (Mahāṭīkā 1,434.) To cross a stream, a river or a ravine, people lay a single plank as a bridge, so narrow that there is room for only one foot at a time. Suppose a man is walking along that narrow bridge …

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 222; Mahāṭīkā, vol. 1, p. 434.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 222; Mahāṭīkā, tập 1, tr. 434.

Guidelines 5–6: going beyond names and setting aside unclear qualities

Miến / Burmese 27

… and looks around at various sights as he walks. He will not reach the other side and may fall into the stream, river or ravine. Apply this simile here.

5. Paññattisamatikkamanato — go beyond concepts. Do not rest the meditation mind on the name “earth element”. Rest it on the earth element’s hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness and lightness. Do not rest it on the name “water element”. Rest it on flowing and cohesion. Do not rest it on the name “fire element”. Rest it on heat and cold. Do not rest it on the name “wind element”. Rest it on supporting and pushing. Do not let the mind stop at the names. Keep it on the four great elements as ultimate objects.

6. Anupaṭṭhānamuñcanato — set aside some qualities that are unclear. At this stage the priority is to attain purification of mind, that is, concentration. If certain qualities are not yet distinct to wisdom, they may temporarily be set aside.

References printed on this page: Mahāṭīkā, vol. 1, p. 434.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Mahāṭīkā, tập 1, tr. 434.

Guideline 7: attending to characteristics

Miến / Burmese 28

They may be set aside without being discerned for the time being. If an element becomes so excessive that bodily pain grows intense, and if the pain becomes unbearable and obstructs concentration, some qualities that are distinct may also temporarily be set aside. When pain predominates and you cannot keep the meditation mind firmly on the four elements, the mind goes back and forth between the meditation object and the painful bodily feeling. If this obstructs purification of mind and concentration, attend again in such a way as to balance the elements. At least one characteristic each of earth, water, fire and wind must nevertheless be distinct. If all twelve are distinct, so much the better.

7. Lakkhaṇato — give priority to the individual characteristic of each of the four great elements. At the beginning, when the individual characteristics are not apparent to wisdom, it may be necessary to discern by way of function or manifestation. As concentration on the four elements grows strong, the meditation mind can remain firmly on them for an hour, two hours or more. As it remains steady, the strength of meditation and discernment grows. Through concentration, elements that were previously unclear become distinct. Then discern as follows.

Focusing on the individual characteristics

Miến / Burmese 29

1. Earth element: hardness and roughness.
2. Water element: flowing and cohesion.
3. Fire element: heat and cold.
4. Wind element: supporting.

Direct the meditation mind intently to the individual characteristics of the four great elements so that concentration from attention to the elements becomes sharper. If the power of concentration is still weak, give priority to hardness, flowing, heat and supporting alone, and develop concentration.

The practitioner puts aside conventional names and attends solely to the individual characteristics of the four great elements. Only these individual characteristics stand out clearly to the practitioner's knowledge. Through repeated attention and discernment, the meditation consciousness gains the condition of repetition (āsevanapaccaya). The entire material body appears as a mass of elemental qualities. Through the power of attention it appears as something inanimate, with no being in it. Like the interconnected parts of a large machine moving back and forth, the body appears as a mass of elemental qualities moving in succession.

Sace pana bahiddhāpi manasikāraṃ upasaṃharati … [The quotation continues on the next page.]

External elements and two obstacles to access concentration

Miến / Burmese 30

[The complete Pāli transcription across pages 29–30 remains to be checked. The following renders the author's Burmese explanation.]

If the meditator extends attention to the four great elements outside, discerning them in the external world, moving people and vehicles, men and women and so forth no longer appear to that meditator’s knowledge as beings. They appear as masses of the four great elements. Their activities appear as the workings of a machine made up of the four great elements. Even what they chew, eat and drink appears as a mass of the four great elements being put into a mass of the four great elements. (Mahāṭīkā 1,434–435.)

The meditation mind, now supported by the condition of repetition, may encounter either of two situations:
(a) Excessive energy gives rise to distraction or restlessness (uddhacca).

(b) Deficient energy gives rise to indolence (kosajja).

Owing to either of these, the meditator may fail to enter the course of tranquillity practice that leads to access concentration. At such a time …

References printed on this page: Mahāṭīkā, vol. 1, p. 434–435.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Mahāṭīkā, tập 1, tr. 434–435.

Balancing the five faculties

Miến / Burmese 31

8. Adhicitta Sutta, also called Nimitta Sutta (Aṅ 1,258).
9. Anuttarasītibhāva Sutta (Aṅ 2,379).
10. Bojjhaṅga Sutta (Saṃ 3,71–73).

Practise balancing energy and concentration according to the methods given in these three discourses. They teach how to balance the five faculties and the seven awakening factors. For details, consult the respective Pāli discourses and commentaries. Here only a summary is given. The ten guidelines for practising four-elements meditation are cited from the Great Subcommentary to the Visuddhimagga. (Mahāṭīkā 1,434–435; Abhi-ṭṭha 2,216–217.)

In four-elements meditation, confidence in the practice is the faculty of faith. The effort to know the individual characteristics of the four elements and to keep the mind firmly on them is the faculty of energy. Mindfulness that takes note of the four elements is the faculty of mindfulness. Steadiness of the meditation mind on the four elements is the faculty of concentration. Penetration of their individual characteristics is the faculty of wisdom. Practise so that these five faculties are balanced.

When faith in the practice of attending to the four elements becomes too strong …

References printed on this page: Aṅ, vol. 1, p. 258; Aṅ, vol. 2, p. 379; Saṃ, vol. 3, p. 71–73; Mahāṭīkā, vol. 1, p. 434–435; Abhi-ṭṭha, vol. 2, p. 216–217.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Aṅ, tập 1, tr. 258; Aṅ, tập 2, tr. 379; Saṃ, tập 3, tr. 71–73; Mahāṭīkā, tập 1, tr. 434–435; Abhi-ṭṭha, tập 2, tr. 216–217.

Adjusting excessive faith or energy

Miến / Burmese 32

… conviction about the practice predominates. The wisdom that penetrates the characteristics of each element is weak, and energy, mindfulness and concentration are diminished. With faith too strong, energy cannot support the co-arisen phenomena in staying with the four elements. Mindfulness cannot make their individual characteristics clear to knowledge. Concentration cannot keep the mind from scattering outside the four elements. Wisdom cannot penetrate their individual characteristics, because excessive faith dominates it.

Therefore, reduce the predominance of faith by closely investigating ultimate phenomena, especially by examining and penetrating the individual characteristics of the four great elements, or by ceasing for a time to attend in the way that strengthens faith excessively.

If the effort to know the four elements and keep the mind steady on them is too strong, faith cannot fulfil its function of conviction, mindfulness cannot make the object clear, concentration cannot prevent distraction, and wisdom cannot penetrate. Excessive energy inclines towards restlessness, which often scatters the mind to objects outside the four elements.

Balancing faith and wisdom

Miến / Burmese 33

Therefore, calm excessive energy by developing tranquillity, concentration and equanimity as awakening factors.

The noble ones particularly praise balance between faith and wisdom and between energy and concentration. In four-elements meditation, if faith is strong and the wisdom that penetrates the individual characteristics is weak, the practitioner cannot see those characteristics distinctly and clearly. With faith and wisdom unbalanced, the practitioner may think highly of a little experience in meditation.

Conversely, some discern the individual characteristics of the four elements easily and quickly and see them distinctly, but have little faith in the practice. They doubt that by practising properly they can see material clusters and discern the four elements in each cluster. Sometimes they assert that only a Perfectly Enlightened Buddha can see materiality and mentality. Relying on their own understanding, they say that it suffices to contemplate in insight the ultimate phenomena taught in the Abhidhamma. They look on others with a cold and dismissive expression …

Strong learning with weak faith

Miến / Burmese 34

… because confidence in the Buddha's instructions for practice is weak. The commentary records the following.

Balavapañño mandasaddho kerāṭikapakkhaṃ bhajati, bhesajjasamuṭṭhito viya rogo atekiccho hoti. One whose wisdom is strong and whose faith is weak inclines towards cunning, like an illness caused by medicine that cannot be cured. (Visuddhimagga, vol. 1, p. 126.)

When learning from the texts and knowledge gained by realization are strong but faith is weak, one may incline towards deceit. As with an illness caused by medicine, it is very difficult to cure with the medicine of the Buddha's true Dhamma the wrong view that arises from misunderstanding what one has learned. One may debate and argue, going round in circles like a whirlwind, as Saccaka did. It is difficult for such a person to succeed in meditation. Faith and wisdom therefore need to be balanced.

Again, the concentration that holds the mind steadily on the four elements may be strong, while the effort to see their individual characteristics clearly and keep the mind on them is weak. Then concentration inclines towards indolence (kosajja) …

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 1, p. 126.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 1, tr. 126.

Balancing concentration and energy

Miến / Burmese 35

… which can overwhelm a person whose concentration is strong but whose energy is weak. Therefore, when developing concentration on the individual characteristics of the four great elements and the meditation mind rests firmly on them, do not leave it reclining at ease on that object. This slackening is a sign of declining energy. If the mind is left that way, indolence grows, the individual characteristics gradually become indistinct and the practice declines. Increase the effort to know each individual characteristic distinctly and keep the mind steady on it.

Again, because energy can incline towards restlessness, if energy is excessive and concentration weak, a practitioner makes too much effort to discern the four elements and keep the mind firmly on them. Restlessness may then overwhelm that person, scattering the mind towards other objects.

In brief, balance the concentration that stays steadily on the four elements with the energy that strives to discern each individual characteristic and to keep the mind steady on it …

Mindfulness and the first three awakening factors

Miến / Burmese 36

… then the meditation mind does not fall into indolence. When the energy to discern each characteristic and keep the mind steady on it is balanced with concentration, the mind does not fall into restlessness. Therefore balance concentration and energy.

When faith and wisdom are balanced and energy and concentration are balanced, access concentration can arise. Mindfulness, the repeated noting of each of the individual characteristics of the four great elements, is always necessary. See the Visuddhimagga.

Practise balancing the seven awakening factors.

1. The mindfulness awakening factor is mindfulness that does not forget the individual characteristics of the four great elements as its object and repeatedly takes note of them.
2. The investigation-of-phenomena awakening factor is wisdom that penetrates and examines closely each individual characteristic of the four great elements.
3. The energy awakening factor is the effort that makes investigation and exertion distinct on the individual characteristics of the four great elements, particularly the effort that keeps the meditation mind firmly on that object so that the concentration awakening factor arises.

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 1, p. 125–126.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 1, tr. 125–126.

The remaining awakening factors and how to raise a sluggish mind

Miến / Burmese 37

4. The joy awakening factor is the delight of the meditation mind in the individual characteristics of the four great elements as its object.
5. The tranquillity awakening factor is the quieting of consciousness and its mental factors as they take those characteristics as object.
6. The concentration awakening factor is the steadiness of the meditation mind on those characteristics.
7. The equanimity awakening factor is balance among co-arisen phenomena (tatramajjhattatā). It keeps the meditation mind on those characteristics from veering into excitement and distraction or sinking into sluggishness and indolence.

These are the seven awakening factors in the practice of four-elements meditation.

If energy is deficient or the mind lacks interest in practice, it may become sluggish and indolent with respect to four-elements meditation. Then do not develop tranquillity, concentration and equanimity. Develop investigation of phenomena, energy and joy. Strive to know each individual characteristic of the four great elements distinctly, to rouse the mind and to bring forth joy. Raise the sinking mind.

If energy is excessive or there is too much examination, the meditation mind becomes restless and often leaves the individual characteristics of the four elements for outside objects …

Calming the mind and developing access concentration

Miến / Burmese 38

… and becomes unsettled and agitated. Then do not develop investigation, energy and joy. Develop tranquillity, concentration and equanimity. Reduce examination and the intense effort to know the individual characteristics distinctly. Do not strive to excite or delight the mind. Endeavour to quiet consciousness and its mental factors, to discern the individual characteristics evenly and to keep the meditation mind steady on them.

Light and the scope of access concentration. Tasseva vāyamamānassa nacireneva catudhātuppabhedāvabhāsanapaññāpariggahito sabhāvadhammārammaṇattā appanaṃ appatto upacāramatto samādhi uppajjati. (Visuddhi 1,347.)

When faith and wisdom and energy and concentration are brought into balance, and the practitioner attends to the individual characteristics of the four great elements, the five faculties in that continuum become balanced, clear and sharp. Lack of faith, sluggishness (līna), heedlessness (pamāda), restlessness and delusion about the individual characteristics of the four elements recede. The seven sublime awakening factors gain great power …

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 1, p. 347.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 1, tr. 347.

The five jhāna factors at access concentration

Miến / Burmese 39

… and become fully developed. With the strong support of the seven awakening factors the jhāna factors become firm:

1. Applied thought (vitakka) brings the mind to the individual characteristics of the four great elements.
2. Sustained thought (vicāra) repeatedly examines that object.
3. Joy (pīti) delights in that object.
4. Pleasure (sukha) experiences it pleasantly.
5. One-pointedness (ekaggatā) is the mind's settling and remaining firm on the single object of those characteristics.

These five jhāna factors become particularly sharp and distinct. The hindrances directly opposed to the jhāna factors, together with the defilements that arise with them, are suppressed. The meditator who practises as described attains access concentration, with the individual characteristics of the four great elements as its object. This is the meaning of the commentary quoted above.

In accordance with the ten guidelines for four-elements meditation given above, the practitioner endeavours to hold the meditation mind steady on the individual characteristics of the four great elements and to balance the seven awakening factors …

Seven conditions supporting four-elements meditation

Miến / Burmese 40

… in the following ways:

1. Treat the practice of four-elements meditation with respect and care, and practise it diligently.
2. Attend to and discern the four great elements continually in all four postures: lying down, sitting, standing and walking.
3. Make use of suitable climate, lodging, food and opportunities to hear the Dhamma.
4. Take careful note of the individual characteristics of the four great elements as the object, the sign of tranquillity meditation.
5. Bring the seven awakening factors into play as appropriate.
6. Keep body and life free from danger.
7. Do not let the practice decline midway.

The practitioner makes steady effort so that four-elements meditation advances step by step, moderating excessive exertion through balanced practice and progressively increasing effort. In the continuum of a person practising in this way there arises the wisdom that attends to the elements and distinguishes and penetrates the individual characteristics of each of the four great elements …

Wisdom illuminates the characteristics of the four elements

Miến / Burmese 41

… and illuminates those characteristics. Just as a lamp illuminates objects for someone who has eyes to see, the wisdom associated with tranquillity meditation that attends to the four great elements illuminates their individual characteristics with its own light. These are hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness, lightness, flowing, cohesion, heat, cold, supporting and pushing.

The meditation wisdom that illuminates each characteristic in this way also knows its beginning, middle and end, namely its arising, presence and dissolution. It does not lose sight of any of these three phases. It can fully grasp and distinguish the arising, presence and dissolution of each characteristic.

The concentration associated with that meditation wisdom does not reach absorption. It reaches only the highest degree of access, which is sense-sphere concentration. This is how access concentration can arise in the continuum of a meditator who discerns each of the four elements' individual characteristics and practises in accordance with the rules above. (Visuddhi 1,347; Mahāṭīkā 1,435–436.)

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 1, p. 347; Mahāṭīkā, vol. 1, p. 435–436.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 1, tr. 347; Mahāṭīkā, tập 1, tr. 435–436.

Further explanation of light

Miến / Burmese 42

The statements of the commentary and subcommentary above are readily understood by the wise. Here they are explained a little further for beginners.

If you follow the vehicle of tranquillity and have practised a subject such as mindfulness of breathing or the white kasiṇa to the fourth jhāna, light can arise owing to that concentration. When you emerge from that jhāna and develop concentration by taking the four elements as object, light can also arise owing to the wisdom associated with concentration in attending to the four elements.

If you follow the vehicle of pure insight and practise four-elements meditation alone, light may begin to arise as you develop concentration on the individual characteristics of the four elements, at the stage of preparatory concentration before you reach access or as you approach it.

There are differences according to each person's perfections (pāramī). When concentration on the four elements grows strong, some see brightness around them, as though in a lit room. Others initially notice no light. They keep discerning the four elements in the body, and when concentration grows strong …

Different experiences as concentration strengthens

Miến / Burmese 43

… they begin to see a dull, smoky colour. Some see the characteristics of the four elements as spreading and think their bodies are growing bigger. Others see the shape of the body disappear and only a mass of elements remain. They think that the mass is gradually shrinking. Such changes can occur as attention and concentration grow strong. The meditator should be especially mindful at this stage, so that the mind is not disturbed by wishing the elements to spread or shrink. If the mind changes about much at this stage, meditation concentration can gradually weaken and restlessness can intervene.

When concentration is strong, the meditator may no longer see hands, feet, head and torso as separate bodily parts, but only a mass of the qualities of the four great elements. Concentration now has strength. What matters particularly is to overcome the perception of a being (sattasaññā), the conventional designations “I”, “another person”, “man”, “woman”, “person” and “being”. The meditator should make an effort to overcome that perception.

In making that effort the meditator may begin to see a dull, smoky brightness within the mass of elements. For one whose perfections and concentration are strong, this stage may pass quickly …

From a smoky mass to a transparent mass

Miến / Burmese 44

… If you distinguish the four elements with wisdom within that dull, smoky mass, continue discerning and develop concentration, before long you may see a bright white mass like cotton or a cloud. If you continue discerning the four elements in that white mass and developing concentration, you may see a very clear mass like ice, glass or a mirror. As long as the masses called compactness (ghana) have not been broken up, the four great elements are still seen in groups and masses.

The Buddha taught five kinds of transparent materiality (pasādarūpa): eye-sensitivity, ear-sensitivity, nose-sensitivity, tongue-sensitivity and body-sensitivity.

Cakkhādippasādo rūpādīnaṃ gahaṇasamatthānaṃ … ādāsatalaṃ viya vippasannattā pasādarūpaṃ. [The full Pāli transcription remains to be checked.] These kinds of materiality support the corresponding consciousnesses, such as eye-consciousness that knows visible form, by the force of the dependence condition (nissayapaccaya). Because they are exceptionally clear, like the surface of a mirror, they are called transparent materiality.

According to this commentary, the mass the meditator sees consists of material clusters with transparent materiality and material clusters that are not transparent. The five kinds of transparent materiality are present in the transparent clusters of this body. They are absent from the non-transparent clusters …

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 81.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 81.

Transparent clusters and the arising of light

Miến / Burmese 45

… In this body the transparent and non-transparent clusters are intermingled like rice flour and turmeric powder. Body-sensitivity is distributed throughout the body, wherever touch is felt. Clusters containing any of the five kinds of sensitivity, including body-sensitivity, are transparent. When the power of concentration from attending to the four elements grows strong, the meditator sees them as groups or masses resembling ice, crystal or glass. At this stage the transparent and non-transparent clusters still cannot be distinguished from each other. If you continue to discern and distinguish the four elements with wisdom within the transparent mass and develop concentration, flashes of light can appear as concentration grows stronger.

There is visible form in the material clusters produced by the consciousness engaged in tranquillity meditation on the four elements. The fire element in those consciousness-produced clusters gives rise in succession to temperature-produced clusters, which also contain visible form. Light comes from the visible form in both kinds of clusters. Light from visible form in the consciousness-produced clusters spreads within the body. Light from visible form in the temperature-produced clusters can spread within and beyond the body, as far as the power of wisdom permits. These lights arise in connection with the consciousness of tranquillity meditation, which depends on the heart-base (hadayavatthu) …

The light of wisdom and when to change meditation subjects

Miến / Burmese 46

… and the consciousness of insight meditation. The light passes through the transparent mass and radiates outward, at first in flashes. Light arising because of wisdom associated with concentration in attending to the four elements is called the light of wisdom (ñāṇāloka). Like a lamp it illuminates ultimate phenomena so that the meditator can see and know them as they really are. When concentration is strengthened further, wisdom grows stronger and the light becomes more brilliant. Therefore, if you want stronger light, develop concentration further.

If your vehicle is pure insight and you have begun to develop concentration with four-elements meditation, you may wish to change meditation subjects:

1. When the light is weak.
2. When you wish to develop concentration by changing to a tranquillity subject such as the white kasiṇa.
3. When you wish to practise the four protective meditations (caturārakkhakammaṭṭhāna).

If you change subjects, the best time is when the light is strong but material clusters have not yet become apparent. If you distinguish and discern material clusters internally and externally to the point of seeing ultimate phenomena before turning to tranquillity, then when you direct attention to a sign of tranquillity, such as the skeleton sign, the sign tends to break up into minute material clusters. Instead of seeing a skeleton, you see only the particles …

Changing from the four elements to tranquillity meditation

Miến / Burmese 47

… so it may be rather difficult to steady a tranquillity sign in order to develop concentration. Even so, you can succeed if you persevere.

If you practise pure insight and wish to turn to another tranquillity subject, first develop concentration taking the four elements as object. As explained above, continue to develop concentration with the four elements in the mass as clear as ice, crystal or a mirror. When the brilliant light shines continuously for an hour or two, you can practise in the order set out in the section on tranquillity meditation:

1. The thirty-two parts of the body.
2. Meditation on foulness (asubhakammaṭṭhāna).
3. The white kasiṇa and the other colour kasiṇas.

When you have attained the fourth jhāna with the white kasiṇa, you may turn to other tranquillity meditation subjects, particularly the four protective meditations. Consult the section on tranquillity meditation for the ten kasiṇas, eight attainments, four divine abidings and four protective meditations. If you wish to turn to insight, continue as explained below.

When practitioners whose perfections were strongly developed in the past follow the method of four-elements meditation, a mass as clear as ice, crystal or a mirror appears …

Difficulties when concentration declines

Miến / Burmese 48

… and while they discern the four elements within it, or shortly afterwards, the transparent mass may break up and minute material clusters begin to appear. If your perfections are still weak and concentration is insufficient for seeing material clusters, continue discerning until you see the space element.

Sometimes, as you develop concentration on the individual characteristics of the four great elements, concentration declines and the clear mass becomes white again. If concentration declines further, the white becomes smoky again. If it declines still further, even the smoky colour disappears, and only the individual characteristics of the four elements are discerned, as at the beginning. These difficulties occur more often in those whose vehicle is pure insight.

Then apply energy, taking the individual characteristics of the four great elements themselves as object and holding the meditation mind steadily on them to strengthen concentration. Try to keep the mind steady on the four elements like a lamp sheltered from the wind. If you can keep the meditation mind firmly on the four elements for an hour or two, the smoky colour will gradually reappear. Then continue to discern the four elements themselves distinctly …

When the transparent mass has not broken up

Miến / Burmese 49

… and continue developing concentration. You will see white like a cloud, in patches, masses or a white expanse. If you distinguish the four elements with wisdom in that white mass and continue developing concentration, you will again see a transparent mass like ice, crystal or a mirror.

As concentration rises and falls, the smoky, white and transparent appearances may recur many times, and the transparent mass may return to white and then smoky again. Those whose vehicle is tranquillity generally encounter little difficulty at this stage. If there is difficulty, re-establish the concentration you have attained, such as the fourth jhāna of mindfulness of breathing or of the white kasiṇa. When concentration is sufficiently strong, discern the four elements again and develop concentration step by step. Before long the transparent mass will reappear. If you distinguish the four elements in it with wisdom and continue developing concentration, the mass may break up according to the strength of your perfections, and minute material clusters may begin to appear. If they do not appear, continue looking for the space element in that transparent mass.

In the Mahārāhulovāda Sutta and similar discourses, when teaching meditation on the six elements the Buddha also taught the discernment of the space element. The commentary explains this instruction as follows.

References printed on this page: Ma, vol. 2, p. 86.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Ma, tập 2, tr. 86.

The commentary on the space element

Miến / Burmese 50

[Full transcription of the Pāli passages on this page remains to be checked.]

Why did he teach the space element in detail? To show derived materiality. The four great elements have been shown, but not the materiality derived from them. Also, materiality delimited by space becomes distinct. Space delimits materiality, so that materiality is manifest. This is why the Teacher explained it.

The subcommentary explains that, when the four great elements were taught earlier, derived materiality had not been taught by way of characteristic and so forth. Hence the question, “Why did he teach the space element in detail?” The answer, “To show derived materiality,” is one reason. Another reason is that materiality can be discerned distinctly through its delimitation by space. The verse points to the delimitation of material clusters in this way.

The four great elements are ultimate material phenomena fit for insight contemplation under the three characteristics, so it is readily understood why they are taught in detail. Why, then, did the Buddha teach the space element in detail, although it is not fit to be contemplated in insight under the three characteristics? He taught it in order to show how to discern and practise with derived materiality.

In the preceding part of the Mahārāhulovāda Sutta, the Buddha had explained in detail only how to discern the four great elements …

References printed on this page: Ma-ṭṭha, vol. 3, p. 97; Ma-ṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 63.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Ma-ṭṭha, tập 3, tr. 97; Ma-ṭīkā, tập 2, tr. 63.

Space as the boundary between material clusters

Miến / Burmese 51

… without teaching how to discern derived materiality. Because all derived materiality depends on the four great elements, he taught derived materiality together here under the space element, by characteristic and so forth. By teaching how to discern the space element, he indicated how to discern all derived materiality. This is one reason for teaching the space element in detail.

There is another reason. The Buddha taught the space element in detail to show how to discern material phenomena so that they are easy to distinguish. The space element is the gap between material clusters, the delimiting materiality that separates one cluster from another and prevents them from merging. As the space element delimits them, the clusters as a whole stand out clearly to the meditator's wisdom. When the clusters stand out, the material phenomena within each cluster likewise become distinct and easier to discern. To show this method the Buddha taught the discernment of the space element in detail. (Majjhima Nikāya Commentary, vol. 3, p. 97; Majjhima Nikāya Subcommentary, vol. 2, p. 63.)

References printed on this page: Ma-ṭṭha, vol. 3, p. 97; Ma-ṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 63.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Ma-ṭṭha, tập 3, tr. 97; Ma-ṭīkā, tập 2, tr. 63.

Six kinds of transparency

Miến / Burmese 52

There are five kinds of transparent materiality: eye-sensitivity, ear-sensitivity, nose-sensitivity, tongue-sensitivity and body-sensitivity. Together with the clarity of mentality, the life-continuum or mind-door, there are six kinds of transparency in all.

Of these, body-sensitivity is distributed throughout the body. Material clusters containing one of the five kinds of transparent materiality, including body-sensitivity, are transparent clusters.

[The Pāli quotation on pasādarūpa remains to be checked.] The five kinds of materiality such as eye-sensitivity support their corresponding consciousnesses, such as eye-consciousness that takes visible form as object, through the condition of dependence on a prenascent base (vatthupurejātanissaya). Because they are clear like a mirror's surface they are called transparent materiality.

Apart from these transparent clusters, the remaining clusters produced by the four causes, kamma, consciousness, temperature and nutriment, are non-transparent. The two kinds are intermingled throughout the body, like rice flour evenly mixed with turmeric powder. Before the meditator sees the space element and the material clusters, wisdom is not yet sharp enough, and both kinds of cluster appear as one continuous mass. Thus these clusters, particularly those concealed by transparent materiality …

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 81.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 81.

Light in connection with consciousness

Miến / Burmese 53

… appear as a single mass or expanse. With the aid of the light arising owing to wisdom associated with concentration in attending to the four elements, look carefully for the space element within that transparent expanse. You will then see gaps between material clusters. When the space element appears as the boundary, material clusters themselves begin to appear.

Among mental phenomena, the life-continuum (bhavaṅga), the mind-door, is likewise clear and has radiant light. The Buddha taught in the Aṅguttara Nikāya: Pabhassaramidaṃ, bhikkhave, cittaṃ. “Bhikkhus, this mind is luminous.” The subcommentary explains that all consciousness is clear by nature. Consciousness is intrinsically clear, and is defiled by the accompanying unwholesome mental factors. (Aṅguttara Nikāya, vol. 1, p. 9; Mūlaṭīkā, vol. 1, p. 125.) [Full Pāli transcription of the subcommentary remains to be checked.]

Among those consciousnesses, life-continuum consciousness is clear and produces consciousness-produced materiality. The visible form in each such material cluster shines more or less brilliantly depending on the power of the wisdom associated with that life-continuum consciousness. The fire element in each consciousness-produced cluster successively gives rise to new temperature-produced clusters. Their visible form also shines more or less brilliantly, depending on the power of the wisdom associated with life-continuum consciousness …

References printed on this page: Aṅ, vol. 1, p. 9; Mūlaṭīkā, vol. 1, p. 125.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Aṅ, tập 1, tr. 9; Mūlaṭīkā, tập 1, tr. 125.

Beginning to analyse material clusters

Miến / Burmese 54

… and radiates. Visible form in the consciousness-produced clusters and in the temperature-produced clusters is the effect. Because life-continuum consciousness is a cause of their brightness through the predominance condition, it too is called pabhassara, luminous. Among consciousnesses, wholesome consciousness of tranquillity or insight meditation, or an arahant's functional consciousness, is particularly clear. As explained above, tranquillity and insight meditation consciousnesses can likewise give rise to brilliant light.

Broadly, there are two kinds of material cluster: transparent and non-transparent. The minute clusters that contain any of the five kinds of sensitive materiality are clear, and the other clusters are not. On first seeing material clusters, some meditators still see large masses, or masses the size of a grain of rice or a broken grain. Others see what resembles broken grains or tiny diamonds against a dark background. Within these masses, if you continue to discern the four elements or the space element distinctly, you will see the minute material clusters. Thus the clear masses like broken grains or little diamonds …

Seeing material clusters and seeing ultimate materiality

Miến / Burmese 55

… should be understood as aggregates of transparent material clusters. Similarly, if you discern the four elements or the space element in the masses against a dark, velvet-like background, you can see the minute non-transparent material clusters gathered there.

When you see material clusters, begin by discerning the four elements within each cluster, whether transparent or non-transparent. Discern and distinguish them with wisdom. You will see the material clusters appearing and vanishing very rapidly. Until you can analyse them, the work to be done in insight cannot be carried out. As long as you see only the minute clusters, meditation knowledge is still within the domain of concepts.

A material cluster is a minute aggregation of ultimate material phenomena still concealed by the concepts of a collection and of shape. It is many times smaller than a minute particle of dust. Until you can analyse it with wisdom and discern the eight, nine or ten kinds of materiality in each cluster, your seeing has not reached ultimate reality. What is called a material cluster is still the concept of a smallest group, within the concepts of a collection and of shape. If, without analysing the clusters and distinguishing ultimate material phenomena, you take the appearance and disappearance of whole clusters as the object of contemplation of arising and dissolution …

How to discern the four elements in each material cluster

Miến / Burmese 56

… you are contemplating only conceptual arising and dissolution and practising insight on a concept. Therefore analyse the material clusters. To see ultimate materiality with wisdom, discern and distinguish the ultimate material phenomena present in each cluster.

To discern and distinguish them with wisdom, begin with the four great elements. Here discerning means distinguishing with wisdom to the point of seeing ultimate reality. If the clusters appear and disappear too quickly for you to attend closely to the four elements in each one, act as when you meet someone you do not wish to see and pretend you have not seen them. Do not attend to the appearance and disappearance of the clusters. Act as if you do not see them appear or disappear. Attend intently to the four great elements in each cluster. Discern, comprehend and distinguish them with wisdom.

If you cannot discern the four elements in each cluster, start by discerning earth throughout the body. At this stage you may see only minute material clusters instead of a single large mass of body. Discern earth in all the clusters throughout the body. Then discern earth in one cluster. If that cluster vanishes, continue discerning earth in the next. If you succeed …

Training to discern individual qualities in the clusters

Miến / Burmese 57

… go from cluster to cluster discerning earth alone. Earth has six qualities: hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness and lightness. In a cluster where hardness, roughness and heaviness are distinct, softness, smoothness and lightness are indistinct. Where softness, smoothness and lightness are distinct, hardness, roughness and heaviness are indistinct. If earth is difficult to discern, give priority to hardness alone. When you succeed, gradually add the other qualities one at a time. Practise until you are familiar with discerning hardness, roughness and heaviness, or softness, smoothness and lightness, in each cluster.

Practise repeatedly, discerning hardness first in all the clusters and then in one cluster. When you succeed, repeatedly discern hardness and roughness in all clusters and then in one. When you succeed, repeatedly discern hardness, roughness and heaviness in all clusters and then in one. Understand the same procedure for clusters in which softness, smoothness and lightness are distinct. Proceed in this way with water, fire and wind.

Of the two qualities of water, flowing and cohesion, usually only one stands out more clearly. Both may be distinct before the clusters have been broken up, but only one predominates in any given cluster. Of the fire element's two qualities, heat and cold, only one is found in a given cluster. When heat is distinct, cold is indistinct, and vice versa. Supporting and pushing, the two qualities of wind, are present in every cluster. Supporting is its characteristic, and pushing its function.

Concentration when discerning four elements in each cluster

Miến / Burmese 58

Practise repeatedly until wisdom sees the four great elements in each material cluster together. When you succeed, concentration rests firmly on the individual characteristics of the four elements within each cluster. When it reaches its highest degree, this concentration is called access concentration in a figurative sense. It is sense-sphere concentration.

Since its objects are ultimate phenomena, which are subtle and impermanent, arising and dissolving immediately, further development cannot bring this concentration to absorption. In the strict sense, concentration is called access when it operates close to absorption. There is no absorption in this attention to the four elements. Nevertheless, in its characteristic of concentration, the highest degree reached in this practice resembles the access concentration that is close to absorption. Thus concentration resting firmly on the four elements in each cluster, when it reaches its highest degree, is also called access concentration figuratively. (Visuddhi 1,347; Mahāṭīkā 1,435–436.)

[The Pāli transcription at the foot of the page remains to be checked.] Understand “access concentration” here in a figurative sense. In the strict sense, access concentration operates close to absorption. Why does this concentration, though similar in characteristic, fail to reach absorption? Because it takes phenomena with individual characteristics as object.

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 1, p. 347; Mahāṭīkā, vol. 1, p. 435–436; Mahāṭīkā, vol. 1, p. 435.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 1, tr. 347; Mahāṭīkā, tập 1, tr. 435–436; Mahāṭīkā, tập 1, tr. 435.

Doṇamatta — about one doṇa

Miến / Burmese 59

In a body of average size, wisdom can analyse the amount of earth element. Considered at the finest scale, in material clusters many times smaller than a minute particle of dust, the amount of earth, meaning the aggregate of clusters in which earth predominates, is likened to about one doṇa. [The measure requires further checking.]

The earth element is held together by the cohesion of a corresponding quantity of water element. Fire keeps it from liquefying under the flowing quality of water. Wind supports it and makes it stand firm. Just as a prop keeps something from falling, the supporting and pushing of the wind element keep it steady. Thus it does not scatter, disperse or crumble. Since it does not disintegrate in this way, distinct male and female forms are distinguished in terms of convention. Through the support of subtle conditions its appearance stands out like a solid mass. (Visuddhimagga, vol. 1, p. 361.) [The details of the prop in the simile remain to be checked.]

According to the commentary above, roughly speaking, the aggregate of clusters in this body in which earth predominates amounts to about one doṇa. The meditator cannot see every characteristic of the four elements in every cluster in the entire aggregate. There are clusters in which the elements can be discerned …

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 1, p. 361.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 1, tr. 361.

Discerning all the kinds of materiality

Miến / Burmese 60

… and clusters in which they cannot. In other words, the meditator can distinguish some material clusters with wisdom to the level of ultimate reality, but cannot do so for others. According to the strength of wisdom in the perfections each person has accumulated, and the strength of wisdom arising from suitable conditions, some discern many and some few. Nevertheless, every kind must be discerned. Read the explanation below.

[The full transcription of the Pāli quotation remains to be checked.] All kinds of materiality and mentality in one's own continuum and all kinds in the continuum of others should be brought together by their common nature, without separating them as men, women, persons, beings, devas or brahmās. Gathering the phenomena together and contemplating them in insight is the domain of a disciple's insight knowledge, namely comprehension in groups (sammasana).

According to that explanation, all the kinds of materiality among the twenty-eight must be distinguished in both the internal and external continuities, as presented in the section on meditation on materiality. (Ma-ṭīkā 3,274–275.)

References printed on this page: Ma-ṭīkā, vol. 3, p. 274–275.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Ma-ṭīkā, tập 3, tr. 274–275.

Discerning all kinds of material clusters at the six doors

Miến / Burmese 61

More explicitly, there are very many eye-decad clusters in the eye. The reference is to those present at the same time. The meditator can discern the ultimate material phenomena in some of these clusters but not in others. Understand it in this way. Even though not every individual cluster of a given type can be discerned at the level of ultimate reality, all types of cluster must be discerned, such as eye-decad and body-decad clusters. Understand likewise for all six doors: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and heart.

Discern at the ultimate level the four great elements in the transparent clusters and the four great elements in the non-transparent clusters at all six doors. When you succeed, the tranquillity part of attention to the four elements, called the defining of the four elements (catudhātuvavatthāna), is complete. You have also entered the domain of purification of view.

The perception of a being and the perception of a self have dissolved. [Full transcription of the Pāli continuing on the next page remains to be checked.] Formerly, when this bhikkhu was an ignorant ordinary person, whether a householder or one gone forth, the perception of a being or person persisted as long as he had not analysed this body, however placed or disposed, by way of the elements. When he analyses it by way of the elements, the perception of a being disappears, and his mind rests on the elements alone. Therefore the Blessed One teaches that he discerns this very body by way of the elements: “In this body there is the earth element, the water element, the fire element and the wind element.” Just as a skilled butcher …

The simile of the butcher

Miến / Burmese 62

… or his apprentice. Pe. The wind element.

[The transcription of the subcommentary at the head of the page remains to be checked.] He analyses by way of the elements to distinguish the compactness of continuity, grouping and function. When he analyses in this way, the perception of a being, that is, the perception associated with holding to a self or the conventional perception of a person, no longer persists. When the meditator who attends to the elements practises in this way, the simile fits. Hence it is said that his mind rests on the elements alone.

In teaching four-elements meditation in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the Buddha included the simile of the butcher. Its meaning is as follows.

Whether raising a cow, taking it to the slaughterhouse, tying it there, killing it, or looking at it after killing it, the butcher still has the perception “cow” as long as he has not separated the parts, such as meat, bones, sinews and liver. But once he separates those parts and sits selling the meat at a crossroads, the perception “cow” disappears from his continuum of consciousness. The perception “beef” …

References printed on this page: Ma-ṭṭha, vol. 1, p. 276; Ma-ṭīkā, vol. 1, p. 365–366.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Ma-ṭṭha, tập 1, tr. 276; Ma-ṭīkā, tập 1, tr. 365–366.

From the perception of a being to discernment of the elements

Miến / Burmese 63

… arises. The butcher does not think, “I am selling a cow. These people are buying a cow.” He thinks, “I am selling beef. These people are buying beef.” That is the simile.

In the same way, in the continuum of a meditating bhikkhu, while discernment of ultimate reality is obscured and he is still an ignorant ordinary person, whether a householder or one gone forth, the perceptions of a being and of a person do not disappear. So long as he has not broken up with wisdom the compactness of materiality as continuity, grouping and function, and has not separately analysed earth, water, fire and wind within each cluster and discerned them as aggregates of elemental characteristics, that perception persists. But when he breaks up each kind of compactness with wisdom and examines and discerns ultimate earth, water, fire and wind in each cluster, the perception of a being disappears from his continuum. His mind rests on the elements alone. This is what the simile illustrates.

For this reason the Buddha taught as follows. A meditating bhikkhu discerns this very body, however placed or disposed …

Discerning the body by elements and three kinds of compactness

Miến / Burmese 64

… and examines each portion as a collection of elemental characteristics: “In this body there is the earth element, the water element, the fire element and the wind element.” He examines it in this way because there is no person or being there.

“Bhikkhus, just as a skilled butcher or his apprentice, having slaughtered a cow and divided it into portions such as meat and bones, would sit at a crossroads to sell them, so too a meditating bhikkhu discerns this very body, however placed or disposed: ‘In this body there is the earth element, the water element, the fire element and the wind element.’” He examines each portion as a collection of elemental characteristics because there is no person or being there. (Majjhima Nikāya Commentary, vol. 1, pp. 275–276; Majjhima Nikāya Subcommentary, vol. 1, pp. 365–366.)

Three kinds of compactness of materiality (rūpaghana). [The transcription of the Great Subcommentary quotation remains to be checked.]

In materiality there are three kinds of compactness: continuity (santatighana), grouping (samūhaghana) and function (kiccaghana). As stated earlier, in four-elements meditation the compactness of continuity, the mass formed by the succession of material phenomena, has not dissolved so long as material clusters have not been seen. The concept of continuity still obscures wisdom. At that time the object being discerned, the individual characteristics of the four elements, consists of material characteristics not yet freed from compactness of continuity, grouping and function …

References printed on this page: Ma-ṭṭha, vol. 1, p. 275–276; Ma-ṭīkā, vol. 1, p. 365–366; Ma-ṭīkā, vol. 1, p. 365.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Ma-ṭṭha, tập 1, tr. 275–276; Ma-ṭīkā, tập 1, tr. 365–366; Ma-ṭīkā, tập 1, tr. 365.

Breaking up compactness of continuity and grouping

Miến / Burmese 65

… and still concealed by the concepts of continuity, grouping and shape.

When wisdom becomes sharp, material clusters begin to appear as explained above. The great mass formed by the succession of material phenomena has then broken up. The meditator no longer sees the broad transparent mass, area or expanse as before, but sees minute material clusters appearing and vanishing very quickly. That is the breaking up of compactness of continuity. The two remaining kinds, compactness of grouping and of function, have not yet broken up.

If you distinguish and discern earth, water, fire and wind in each cluster with wisdom, compactness of grouping begins to break up. If you go on to discern derived materiality in each cluster, compactness of grouping breaks up completely. The knowledge that discerns materiality (rūpapariggahañāṇa) has then broken up compactness of continuity as well as compactness of grouping. If you cannot distinguish and discern with wisdom the eight, nine or ten ultimate material phenomena in a cluster and see only the cluster as a whole, the concepts of grouping and shape remain. Wisdom is still caught within the domain of concepts …

Breaking up compactness of function

Miến / Burmese 66

… and has not gone beyond that domain. Only when you distinguish each material phenomenon in each cluster separately with wisdom and discern its ultimate characteristic does seeing reach ultimate reality. The concept of grouping disappears, and compactness of grouping breaks up.

If you can discern the ultimate material phenomena in each cluster by their characteristic, function, manifestation and proximate cause, as presented in the section on these four aspects, compactness of continuity and grouping and also compactness of function have broken up. Wisdom has broken up the great mass formed by the functions of material phenomena taken together.

Each material phenomenon has its own function. Earth provides a foundation for the material phenomena in its cluster. This is its function as foundation (patiṭṭhānarasa). Water increases the material phenomena. This is its function of growth (brūhanarasa). Fire matures the material phenomena in its cluster. This is its function of maturation (paripācanarasa). Wind pushes. This is its function of causing movement (samudīraṇarasa). Each material phenomenon has its own function in this way. Discern and distinguish each function with wisdom. The texts, commentaries and subcommentaries instruct us in this way. As long as each separate function is unknown, discernment of materiality is still obscured by compactness of function. Though the functions of material phenomena differ …

Materiality has no compactness of object

Miến / Burmese 67

… if you do not know the differences but apprehend them as though there were only one function, compactness of function still obscures discernment. Break up that compactness with wisdom and discern ultimate material phenomena.

(Abhidhamma, vol. 1, p. 9; Abhidhamma, vol. 1, p. 238; Abhidhamma, vol. 1, p. 238; Abhidhamma, vol. 1, p. 287; Abhidhamma, vol. 1, p. 287; Abhidhamma Commentary, vol. 1, p. 96; Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 437.) [Full Pāli transcription of the seven passages remains to be checked.]

Phenomena with an object and phenomena without an object. Which phenomena have an object? The aggregates of feeling, perception, formations and consciousness. These are phenomena with an object.

Which phenomena have no object? All materiality and the unconditioned element. These are phenomena without an object.

Which phenomena have an object? Wholesome phenomena of the four planes and unwholesome phenomena, resultant consciousnesses of the four planes, and indeterminate functional phenomena of the three planes. These are phenomena with an object.

Which phenomena have no object? Materiality and Nibbāna. These are phenomena without an object.

Phenomena without an object do not take an object. Even among phenomena with an object, compactness of object is distinguished according to differences in how the object is taken.

In some teachers' traditions it is said that both materiality and mentality have four kinds of compactness: continuity, grouping, function and object. However, the texts, commentaries and subcommentaries quoted above explain that materiality has no compactness of object and has only three kinds, continuity, grouping and function …

References printed on this page: Abhi, vol. 1, p. 9; Abhi, vol. 1, p. 238; Abhi, vol. 1, p. 287; Abhi-ṭṭha, vol. 1, p. 96; Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 437.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Abhi, tập 1, tr. 9; Abhi, tập 1, tr. 238; Abhi, tập 1, tr. 287; Abhi-ṭṭha, tập 1, tr. 96; Mahāṭīkā, tập 2, tr. 437.

Phenomena that take an object and those that do not

Miến / Burmese 68

… as explained above.

In the Dhammasaṅgaṇī, the Buddha divides ultimate phenomena into two groups, those that take an object (sārammaṇa) and those that do not (anārammaṇa). The four mental aggregates, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness, fall into the categories of wholesome, unwholesome, resultant and indeterminate functional phenomena. The Buddha teaches that these take an object. In the same Dhammasaṅgaṇī he teaches that all materiality and the unconditioned element, Nibbāna, do not take an object.

Only among phenomena that take an object is there compactness of object (ārammaṇaghana), compactness in the taking of an object. This is explained in the commentaries and subcommentaries above. Such phenomena can take a conceptual object, such as the sign of mindfulness of breathing or of the white kasiṇa. They can also take an ultimate object, such as the individual characteristics of the four elements in a material cluster. They can take objects of both kinds. In taking an object, consciousness and its associated mental factors arise together in a single mind-moment, at least eight mental phenomena. At times, as in tranquillity or insight meditation consciousness, there are as many as thirty-four consciousness and mental factors together in a single mind-moment. Though they take the same object, the consciousness and mental factors arising together at each moment take it in different ways …

Compactness of object and discerning by way of the elements

Miến / Burmese 69

[The transcription of the two Pāli quotations at the head of the page remains to be checked.] Consciousness is so called because it cognizes an object. Cognition is the apprehension of an object.

According to the commentary and subcommentary, of these mental phenomena consciousness is what cognizes the object. For example, when you direct the mind to discern earth in a material cluster, if it apprehends that object, that is, if it discerns earth, it is said to know earth. If it does not apprehend the object, that is, does not discern earth, it cannot be said to know earth. Thus knowing, or consciousness, is cognizing the object. Contact is contact with the object, bringing the knowing consciousness and its object together. Feeling experiences the taste of the object. Other phenomena with an object also have their own ways of taking it. Understand them in the same way.

Though phenomena with an object differ in how they take it, if you have not distinguished contact, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness as such, and apprehend them as one mass, this is called compactness of object. (Mahāṭīkā 2,437.)

Therefore compactness of object applies only to phenomena that take an object. For materiality, understand that the commentary teaches three kinds of compactness: continuity, grouping and function.

Discerning by way of the elements (dhātuso paccavekkhati). In teaching attention to the elements in the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the Buddha instructed the meditator to discern by way of the elements …

References printed on this page: Ma-ṭṭha, vol. 1, p. 280; Mūlaṭīkā, vol. 1, p. 87; Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 437.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Ma-ṭṭha, tập 1, tr. 280; Mūlaṭīkā, tập 1, tr. 87; Mahāṭīkā, tập 2, tr. 437.

Discerning the four elements at the ultimate level

Miến / Burmese 70

… that is, to examine each portion as a collection of elemental characteristics, because there is no person, being or self there. The commentary and subcommentary explain that this is an instruction to break up the three kinds of compactness with wisdom and discern the ultimate characteristics of earth, water, fire and wind within each material cluster. Therefore remember that, in four-elements meditation, only when you discern and distinguish the individual characteristics of the four elements in each material cluster to the level of ultimate reality are you practising as the Buddha intended and able to discern by way of the elements.

Only when you distinguish each characteristic of the four elements in each material cluster with wisdom does seeing with wisdom reach ultimate reality. Then the light of non-self truly shines forth. At that point the perception of a being and the perception of a self dissolve.

[The Pāli quotation at the foot of the page remains to be checked.] Only when you analyse each material and mental phenomenon separately as an ultimate phenomenon, breaking up with wisdom each compactness of materiality and mentality, can the characteristic of non-self appear in wisdom in accordance with its actual nature …

References printed on this page: Abhi-ṭṭha, vol. 2, p. 47.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Abhi-ṭṭha, tập 2, tr. 47.

Two ways of clinging to self

Miến / Burmese 71

… and stand out clearly to the meditator's knowledge. (Abhi-ṭṭha 2,47.)

Only when the light of non-self truly shines do the perception of a being and the perception of a self dissolve. In connection with these two perceptions, the subcommentators describe two ways of clinging to self.

1. Clinging through a view of self (attadiṭṭhi). Some adherents of teachings outside the Buddha's dispensation hold that the self is destroyed at death. This is annihilationism. Others hold that it is not destroyed at death. This is eternalism. They say that the self owns the bodily aggregate. Although the bodily aggregate changes from one life to another, the self remains unchanged and always accompanies it. They say that the self acts, experiences, gives commands and makes the bodily aggregate act as it wishes. This is eternalism. Both annihilationism and eternalism are forms of clinging through a view of self.

2. Clinging through worldly convention or ordinary usage. People take men, women, persons, beings, humans, devas and brahmās to exist in reality just as they are spoken of in everyday usage. This is clinging through worldly convention or usage. It is the perception of a being.

When a meditator practises diligently in accordance with the method of four-elements meditation, discerning the four great elements and their accompanying derived materiality in each material cluster …

References printed on this page: Abhi-ṭṭha, vol. 2, p. 47.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Abhi-ṭṭha, tập 2, tr. 47.

When both kinds of clinging dissolve and how to discern derived materiality

Miến / Burmese 72

… and distinguishing them with wisdom to the level of ultimate reality, the meditator sees with wisdom that those material phenomena arise and dissolve extremely rapidly. They are impermanent, disintegrating and unstable. The meditator sees no self that owns them and no self hidden behind the material clusters within or outside the body. There is no basis for saying, “This materiality is a man” or “This materiality is a woman.” A self, man or woman as ordinarily spoken of cannot be found. At that point both kinds of clinging to self, through wrong view and through worldly convention, have dissolved in the meditator’s continuum.

How to discern derived materiality. Once you can discern the four great elements in transparent and non-transparent material clusters at all six doors, you can proceed to discern derived materiality. It is better still to discern the four great elements in the transparent and non-transparent clusters of the thirty-two bodily parts as well. When you have discerned the four great elements in both kinds of cluster at the six doors and in the thirty-two parts, wisdom will have become sharper and the derived materiality can gradually become evident. First direct your attention to the eye. You may readily see the minute material clusters. If you do not, attend closely to the four great elements in the eye …

Discerning the four elements at the six doors and in the thirty-two parts

Miến / Burmese 73

… and as wisdom sharpens you will readily see the minute material clusters. Then continue discerning the four great elements in the transparent and non-transparent clusters. Understand the same procedure for the ear, nose, tongue, body and heart. For the thirty-two parts, direct your attention to whichever part you wish to discern. When you see that part, discern the four great elements in it. When you see minute material clusters, discern the four great elements distinctly in the transparent and the non-transparent clusters. When you have succeeded at the six doors and in the thirty-two parts, you can proceed to discern derived materiality.

[The full transcription of the three Pāli passages on this page, the last of which continues onto page 74, remains to be checked.] When the four great elements have been discerned, derived materiality becomes evident. The great elements are delimited by derived materiality, and derived materiality by the great elements. Just as sunlight is distinguished by shade and shade by sunlight, the two kinds of materiality distinguish one another.

“Blue, yellow and so forth” refers to colour and other such derived materiality. Derived materiality depends on the great elements in the same cluster and is not found apart from those great elements. The comparison of shade and sunlight shows how the two delimit one another …

References printed on this page: Abhi-ṭṭha, vol. 2, p. 241; Mūlaṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 154.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Abhi-ṭṭha, tập 2, tr. 241; Mūlaṭīkā, tập 2, tr. 154.

The great elements and derived materiality delimit one another

Miến / Burmese 74

… because sunlight is a condition for shade, and shade arises on account of sunlight. Through this relationship between the condition and what it conditions, the two delimit one another. (Anuṭīkā 2,156.)

To the knowledge of the meditator discerning and distinguishing the four great elements in each material cluster, derived materiality becomes evident. Distinguish the great elements by the derived materiality in the same cluster, and distinguish derived materiality by the great elements in that cluster. Just as sunlight is distinguished by shade and shade by sunlight, distinguish the great elements and the derived materiality in a cluster by means of each other.

This explanation in the commentary is a valuable guide for a meditator discerning materiality with wisdom to the level of ultimate reality. The subcommentators also explained it clearly so that it could be put into practice. Their explanation follows.

When the great elements are delimited by derived materiality in the same cluster, they can be described as brown or yellow, fragrant or foul-smelling, and so on. Derived materiality in the cluster, such as colour (vaṇṇa) and odour (gandha), delimits the great elements so that they stand out. Because the derived materiality in the cluster depends on and is not found apart from those great elements, it is in turn delimited by the great elements in the same cluster. For shade to appear, its cause, sunlight, must …

References printed on this page: Anuṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 156; Abhi-ṭṭha, vol. 2, p. 241.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Anuṭīkā, tập 2, tr. 156; Abhi-ṭṭha, tập 2, tr. 241.

The simile of sunlight and a tree’s shade

Miến / Burmese 75

… be evident. At night there is no sunlight, so the shade is not evident. Thus sunlight is the cause that gives rise to shade. With sunlight evident as the cause, shade, here the shade of a tree, appears. Because sunlight is the cause that gives rise to the tree’s shade, sunlight and shade delimit one another. (Mūlaṭīkā 2,154; Anuṭīkā 2,156.)

This explanation shows how what is produced and what produces it also distinguish one another.

On a sunny day, direct your attention to the sunlight falling on the ground and to the shade of a tree. You can readily see the sunlight and the tree’s shade on the ground. The tree’s shade appears on account of sunlight. Without sunlight the shade does not appear. The sunlight distinguishes the shade, and the shade likewise distinguishes the sunlight. Yet sunlight is the cause that produces the shade, and shade is what sunlight produces. It is through this relationship between what is produced and what produces it that the two distinguish one another.

In the same way, when the meditator discerns a material cluster in this manner …

References printed on this page: Mūlaṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 154; Anuṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 156.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Mūlaṭīkā, tập 2, tr. 154; Anuṭīkā, tập 2, tr. 156.

Derived materiality within a material cluster

Miến / Burmese 76

… the meditator can discern the four great elements within it only after seeing the material cluster with wisdom. If the cluster has not been seen, the four elements within it cannot yet be discerned. To see the cluster with wisdom, one must at least see its colour (vaṇṇa), the visible form (rūpārammaṇa) present in it. Once the cluster is seen, the four great elements within it can be discerned in turn.

Conversely, once the four great elements within a cluster have been discerned, the meditator can go on to discern the derived materiality in the same cluster, such as colour (vaṇṇa), odour (gandha), taste (rasa) and nutritive essence (ojā). This is possible because that derived materiality cannot exist apart from a cluster containing the four great elements.

Derived materiality in a cluster arises in dependence on the four great elements. It can arise because the great elements in the same cluster support it through conditions such as conascence and dependence. Conversely, the great elements cannot arise on their own without derived materiality. When the meditator knows that a colour is attractive or unattractive, that a smell is pleasant or foul, and so forth, it is because of the derived materiality in the cluster. The great elements are what produces …

Why discern both the great elements and derived materiality?

Miến / Burmese 77

… and derived materiality in the same cluster is what is produced. This relationship between what produces and what is produced shows how the great elements and their derived materiality delimit one another. The great elements are like sunlight, and derived materiality is like the shade of a tree that appears owing to sunlight.

According to this explanation, when discerning material phenomena to the level of ultimate reality, one cannot discern derived materiality without discerning the great elements, nor the great elements without discerning derived materiality. For example, if one cannot discern the space element and colour, both kinds of derived materiality, one cannot see material clusters with wisdom. Without seeing the clusters, discerning the four elements in each cluster remains only a hope. If one cannot discern the four great elements in each cluster, one has not yet known ultimate materiality. Genuine insight knowledge cannot arise in the continuum of someone who does not yet know ultimate materiality.

Furthermore, if one cannot yet discern the four great elements in each material cluster, discernment of the derived materiality in the same cluster is still far off. Therefore, having discerned the four great elements in each material cluster, proceed to discern the derived materiality in that cluster.

Colour and odour

Miến / Burmese 78

Colour (vaṇṇa). Every material cluster contains colour, that is, visible form. Colour is easy to see. Light shines brilliantly owing to the wisdom associated with the successive consciousnesses of tranquillity and insight meditation arising in the meditator's continuum. With the aid of that light the meditator can see the visible form of the material clusters with wisdom associated with the great wholesome insight impulsions (javana) at the mind-door.

Odour (gandha). Every material cluster contains odour. Odour can be known by the great wholesome insight impulsions at the mind-door. But for some meditators, when attention is directed to the odour in a material cluster in the eye, away from the nose, it may not stand out clearly and may even be impossible to take as an object. This difficulty occurs particularly for those whose vehicle is pure insight.

Then discern nose-sensitivity together with the clarity of the life-continuum (bhavaṅga), the mind-door. Attend intently to the four great elements at the nose-base inside the nose, and the material clusters will be easy to see. These include transparent clusters, namely nose-decads and body-decads. First discern the nose-sensitivity in the nose-decad clusters. Having successfully discerned the four great elements in the transparent and non-transparent material clusters at the six doors, you can then, inside the heart …

Using two doors to discern odour

Miến / Burmese 79

… readily see the flashing clarity of the life-continuum, the mind-door, depending on the heart-base (hadayavatthu) in the non-transparent heart-base decad clusters. Discern that clarity as well.

Discern nose-sensitivity and the clarity of the life-continuum together. Then direct your attention to the odour in the material cluster you wish to discern. Odour is a phenomenon that can be known by nose-consciousness and by mind-consciousness. Nose-consciousness depends on nose-sensitivity. Mind-consciousness, here the great wholesome insight impulsions at the mind-door, depends on the heart-base, with the life-continuum as its door.

Therefore, when odour is difficult to discern, attending to these two kinds of clarity together and then discerning the odour is an aid for beginners. Once you succeed, you can discern odour with mind-consciousness alone, that is, with the great wholesome insight impulsions at the mind-door. This aid is useful because odour is habitually taken as an object by nose-consciousness. If you succeed, well and good. If you do not, develop again the concentration you have already attained, repeatedly discern the four great elements in each material cluster, and then go on to discern odour as above. You may succeed. Discern odour in the transparent and non-transparent clusters at the six doors.

Taste (rasa). Discern taste in the transparent and non-transparent material clusters at all six doors …

Taste and nutritive essence

Miến / Burmese 80

… in which taste may occur in any of six forms: sweet, sour, salty, pungent, astringent and bitter. Taste can be known by tongue-consciousness and by mind-consciousness. Once you have discerned the four great elements, colour and odour in the material clusters, go on to discern their taste. First try with mind-consciousness alone. If this is difficult, discern tongue-sensitivity together with the clarity of the life-continuum and direct your attention to the taste of the saliva on your tongue. This can help you succeed. Because beings are accustomed to taking taste as an object through tongue-consciousness, the aid of tongue-consciousness may make it easier.

When the power of meditation grows strong, colour, odour and taste can all be known and discerned by mind-consciousness alone, namely by the great wholesome insight impulsions at the mind-door. See the following commentary.

Sabbopi panesa pabhedo manodvārikajavaneneva labbhati. (Abhidhamma Commentary, vol. 2, p. 388.) [The Pāli wording of the sentence on mind-door impulsion remains to be checked.] All this differentiation is obtained by mind-door impulsion alone. Before the power of meditation is strong enough, the aid of nose-consciousness and tongue-consciousness helps one discern odour and taste more quickly.

Nutritive essence (ojā) is the nutriment in each material cluster. There are four kinds: kamma-produced, consciousness-produced, temperature-produced and nutriment-produced nutritive essence. Attend closely within the material cluster and you will see its nutritive essence …

References printed on this page: Abhi-ṭṭha, vol. 2, p. 388.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Abhi-ṭṭha, tập 2, tr. 388.

Nutritive essence and the material life faculty

Miến / Burmese 81

… Nutritive essence is a phenomenon that can be known by mind-consciousness. Beyond the place where nutritive essence is discerned, one can see minute material clusters produced by it in succession. Many meditators see nutritive essence as a fine substance in the middle of a material cluster. They can also recognize the increase in material clusters produced from that substance. The manner of this increase will be explained later. Discern it at all six doors.

The material life faculty (jīvita). This quality sustains life and protects the kamma-produced material phenomena in its own cluster. It is present only in kamma-produced material clusters. First look for it and discern it in transparent clusters. A transparent cluster contains a kind of sensitive materiality and is necessarily kamma-produced, so it certainly contains the life faculty. Therefore begin by discerning the life faculty in transparent clusters.

When beginning to discern the life faculty in a transparent cluster, discern the quality of being alive. Many meditators see vitality and the sustaining of life, rather than movement. Once you see this, go on to discern its function of protecting the kamma-produced material phenomena in the same cluster. The life faculty sustains and protects the kamma-produced material phenomena in its own cluster alone. It does not protect those in another cluster.

If you have found and discerned the life faculty in transparent clusters, go on to look for it in some of the non-transparent clusters …

Finding the life faculty and sex materiality

Miến / Burmese 82

… The non-transparent clusters with a life faculty include sex-decads and life-nonads, found throughout the body, and heart-base decads in the heart. Clusters produced by consciousness, temperature and nutriment are likewise non-transparent, but they have no life faculty.
Heart-base decads, sex-decads and life-nonads are non-transparent and contain a life faculty. Discern the life faculty in the transparent clusters and in some non-transparent clusters at the six doors.

Sex materiality (bhāvarūpa) is materiality that indicates maleness or femaleness. It is found at all six doors in some non-transparent clusters. If you have understood, discerned and seen the life faculty in a transparent cluster, look for the life faculty in a non-transparent cluster. If you do not see it, do not go on looking for sex materiality there, because without a life faculty there can be no sex materiality. If you find the life faculty in a non-transparent cluster, continue looking for sex materiality in that cluster.

If it is a life-nonad, it contains the life faculty but no sex materiality. If it is a sex-decad, it contains both. A cluster without a life faculty cannot contain sex materiality. Only where a life faculty is present can sex materiality occur. Sex materiality is certainly produced by kamma. The life faculty protects the kamma-produced material phenomena in its own cluster. Therefore look for sex materiality only in a cluster containing a life faculty. If the cluster is neither a life-nonad nor a heart-base decad …

Discerning sex materiality and reading the tables

Miến / Burmese 83

… but a sex-decad, you will see sex materiality. A male meditator should discern male sex materiality (purisabhāvarūpa). A female meditator should discern female sex materiality (itthibhāvarūpa). Males have male sex materiality and females have female sex materiality, one kind in each person. Male sex materiality is the sign by which a person is known to be male, and female sex materiality is the sign by which a person is known to be female. Once you see it, discern it in turn at the six doors. It is present at all six doors in sex-decad clusters.

Among the material phenomena, many meditators find nutritive essence, the life faculty and sex materiality difficult to discern. Once you can analyse and discern the phenomena explained above, earth, water, fire, wind, colour, odour, taste and nutritive essence, in the transparent decads and in the non-transparent octads, nonads and decads at the six doors, discern all the material phenomena as presented in the tables in the section on meditation on materiality.

[Full transcription of the Pāli passage at the foot of the page remains to be checked.] At the eye-door there are three kamma-produced decads: the eye-decad, body-decad and sex-decad. The groups produced by temperature, consciousness and nutriment each contain eight material phenomena. The same applies at the ear-door, nose-door and tongue-door. At the body-door there are the body-decad, the sex-decad and the three octads produced by temperature, consciousness and nutriment. At the mind-door there are the heart-base decad, the body-decad, the sex-decad and the three octads produced by temperature, consciousness and nutriment.

The tables below follow that explanation in the commentary.

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 259.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 259.

Eye-door — 54 material phenomena

Miến / Burmese 84

54 material phenomena at the eye-door
1. Decad — eye-sensitivity | 2. Decad — body-sensitivity | 3. Decad — sex materiality | 4. Octad — consciousness-produced nutritive essence | 5. Octad — temperature-produced nutritive essence | 6. Octad — nutriment-produced nutritive essence
1. Earth element | 1. Earth element | 1. Earth element | 1. Earth element | 1. Earth element | 1. Earth element
2. Water element | 2. Water element | 2. Water element | 2. Water element | 2. Water element | 2. Water element
3. Fire element | 3. Fire element | 3. Fire element | 3. Fire element | 3. Fire element | 3. Fire element
4. Wind element | 4. Wind element | 4. Wind element | 4. Wind element | 4. Wind element | 4. Wind element
5. Colour | 5. Colour | 5. Colour | 5. Colour | 5. Colour | 5. Colour
6. Odour | 6. Odour | 6. Odour | 6. Odour | 6. Odour | 6. Odour
7. Taste | 7. Taste | 7. Taste | 7. Taste | 7. Taste | 7. Taste
8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence
9. Life faculty | 9. Life faculty | 9. Life faculty | | |
10. Eye-sensitivity | 10. Body-sensitivity | 10. Sex materiality | | |
Kamma-produced, transparent | Kamma-produced, transparent | Kamma-produced, non-transparent | Consciousness-produced, non-transparent | Temperature-produced, non-transparent | Nutriment-produced, non-transparent

1. The eye-decad is transparent. Its tenth material phenomenon is eye-sensitivity, on which visible form impinges.
2. The body-decad is transparent. Its tenth material phenomenon is body-sensitivity, on which tangible objects, namely earth, fire and wind, impinge.
3. The sex-decad is non-transparent. Its tenth material phenomenon is sex materiality.
4. The consciousness-produced octad is non-transparent. Its eighth material phenomenon is nutritive essence produced by consciousness dependent on the heart-base.
5. The temperature-produced octad is non-transparent. Its eighth material phenomenon is nutritive essence produced by fire, that is, temperature, in a material cluster.
6. The nutriment-produced octad is non-transparent. Its eighth material phenomenon is nutritive essence produced by nutriment, that is, nutritive essence.

Note. These 54 material phenomena are collectively called the physical eye (sasambhāracakkhu). Eye-sensitivity is also called the sensitive eye (pasādacakkhu).

Ear-door — 54 material phenomena

Miến / Burmese 85

54 material phenomena at the ear-door
1. Decad — ear-sensitivity | 2. Decad — body-sensitivity | 3. Decad — sex materiality | 4. Octad — consciousness-produced nutritive essence | 5. Octad — temperature-produced nutritive essence | 6. Octad — nutriment-produced nutritive essence
1. Earth element | 1. Earth element | 1. Earth element | 1. Earth element | 1. Earth element | 1. Earth element
2. Water element | 2. Water element | 2. Water element | 2. Water element | 2. Water element | 2. Water element
3. Fire element | 3. Fire element | 3. Fire element | 3. Fire element | 3. Fire element | 3. Fire element
4. Wind element | 4. Wind element | 4. Wind element | 4. Wind element | 4. Wind element | 4. Wind element
5. Colour | 5. Colour | 5. Colour | 5. Colour | 5. Colour | 5. Colour
6. Odour | 6. Odour | 6. Odour | 6. Odour | 6. Odour | 6. Odour
7. Taste | 7. Taste | 7. Taste | 7. Taste | 7. Taste | 7. Taste
8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence
9. Life faculty | 9. Life faculty | 9. Life faculty | | |
10. Ear-sensitivity | 10. Body-sensitivity | 10. Sex materiality | | |
Kamma-produced, transparent | Kamma-produced, transparent | Kamma-produced, non-transparent | Consciousness-produced, non-transparent | Temperature-produced, non-transparent | Nutriment-produced, non-transparent

1. The ear-decad is transparent. Its tenth material phenomenon is ear-sensitivity, on which sound impinges.

Note. These 54 material phenomena are collectively called the physical ear (sasambhārasota). Ear-sensitivity is also called the sensitive ear (pasādasota). Understand the remaining five clusters, such as the body-decad, as explained for the eye-door.

Nose-door — 54 material phenomena

Miến / Burmese 86

54 material phenomena at the nose-door
1. Decad — nose-sensitivity | 2. Decad — body-sensitivity | 3. Decad — sex materiality | 4. Octad — consciousness-produced nutritive essence | 5. Octad — temperature-produced nutritive essence | 6. Octad — nutriment-produced nutritive essence
1. Earth element | 1. Earth element | 1. Earth element | 1. Earth element | 1. Earth element | 1. Earth element
2. Water element | 2. Water element | 2. Water element | 2. Water element | 2. Water element | 2. Water element
3. Fire element | 3. Fire element | 3. Fire element | 3. Fire element | 3. Fire element | 3. Fire element
4. Wind element | 4. Wind element | 4. Wind element | 4. Wind element | 4. Wind element | 4. Wind element
5. Colour | 5. Colour | 5. Colour | 5. Colour | 5. Colour | 5. Colour
6. Odour | 6. Odour | 6. Odour | 6. Odour | 6. Odour | 6. Odour
7. Taste | 7. Taste | 7. Taste | 7. Taste | 7. Taste | 7. Taste
8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence
9. Life faculty | 9. Life faculty | 9. Life faculty | | |
10. Nose-sensitivity | 10. Body-sensitivity | 10. Sex materiality | | |
Kamma-produced, transparent | Kamma-produced, transparent | Kamma-produced, non-transparent | Consciousness-produced, non-transparent | Temperature-produced, non-transparent | Nutriment-produced, non-transparent

1. The nose-decad is transparent. Its tenth material phenomenon is nose-sensitivity, on which odour impinges.

Note. These 54 material phenomena are collectively called the physical nose (sasambhāraghāna). Nose-sensitivity is also called the sensitive nose (pasādaghāna).

Tongue-door — 54 material phenomena

Miến / Burmese 87

54 material phenomena at the tongue-door
1. Decad — tongue-sensitivity | 2. Decad — body-sensitivity | 3. Decad — sex materiality | 4. Octad — consciousness-produced nutritive essence | 5. Octad — temperature-produced nutritive essence | 6. Octad — nutriment-produced nutritive essence
1. Earth element | 1. Earth element | 1. Earth element | 1. Earth element | 1. Earth element | 1. Earth element
2. Water element | 2. Water element | 2. Water element | 2. Water element | 2. Water element | 2. Water element
3. Fire element | 3. Fire element | 3. Fire element | 3. Fire element | 3. Fire element | 3. Fire element
4. Wind element | 4. Wind element | 4. Wind element | 4. Wind element | 4. Wind element | 4. Wind element
5. Colour | 5. Colour | 5. Colour | 5. Colour | 5. Colour | 5. Colour
6. Odour | 6. Odour | 6. Odour | 6. Odour | 6. Odour | 6. Odour
7. Taste | 7. Taste | 7. Taste | 7. Taste | 7. Taste | 7. Taste
8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence
9. Life faculty | 9. Life faculty | 9. Life faculty | | |
10. Tongue-sensitivity | 10. Body-sensitivity | 10. Sex materiality | | |
Kamma-produced, transparent | Kamma-produced, transparent | Kamma-produced, non-transparent | Consciousness-produced, non-transparent | Temperature-produced, non-transparent | Nutriment-produced, non-transparent

1. The tongue-decad is transparent. Its tenth material phenomenon is tongue-sensitivity, on which taste impinges.

Note. These 54 material phenomena are collectively called the physical tongue (sasambhārajivhā). Tongue-sensitivity is also called the sensitive tongue (pasādajivhā).

Body-door — 44 material phenomena

Miến / Burmese 88

44 material phenomena at the body-door

1. Decad — body-sensitivity	2. Decad — sex materiality	4. Octad — consciousness-produced nutritive essence	5. Octad — temperature-produced nutritive essence	6. Octad — nutriment-produced nutritive essence
1. Earth element	1. Earth element	1. Earth element	1. Earth element	1. Earth element
2. Water element	2. Water element	2. Water element	2. Water element	2. Water element
3. Fire element	3. Fire element	3. Fire element	3. Fire element	3. Fire element
4. Wind element	4. Wind element	4. Wind element	4. Wind element	4. Wind element
5. Colour	5. Colour	5. Colour	5. Colour	5. Colour
6. Odour	6. Odour	6. Odour	6. Odour	6. Odour
7. Taste	7. Taste	7. Taste	7. Taste	7. Taste
8. Nutritive essence	8. Nutritive essence	8. Nutritive essence	8. Nutritive essence	8. Nutritive essence
9. Life faculty	9. Life faculty			
10. Body-sensitivity	10. Sex materiality			
Kamma-produced, transparent	Kamma-produced, non-transparent	Consciousness-produced, non-transparent	Temperature-produced, non-transparent	Nutriment-produced, non-transparent

Note. These 44 material phenomena are collectively called the physical body (sasambhārakāya). Body-sensitivity is also called the sensitive body (pasādakāya). In the detailed method of four-elements meditation, the forty-two bodily parts are used to further distinguish materiality at the body-door. Where that method gives forty-four material phenomena in certain parts, understand them to be the forty-four listed above.

Mind-door — 54 material phenomena

Miến / Burmese 89

54 material phenomena at the mind-door
1. Decad — heart-base | 2. Decad — body-sensitivity | 3. Decad — sex materiality | 4. Octad — consciousness-produced nutritive essence | 5. Octad — temperature-produced nutritive essence | 6. Octad — nutriment-produced nutritive essence
1. Earth element | 1. Earth element | 1. Earth element | 1. Earth element | 1. Earth element | 1. Earth element
2. Water element | 2. Water element | 2. Water element | 2. Water element | 2. Water element | 2. Water element
3. Fire element | 3. Fire element | 3. Fire element | 3. Fire element | 3. Fire element | 3. Fire element
4. Wind element | 4. Wind element | 4. Wind element | 4. Wind element | 4. Wind element | 4. Wind element
5. Colour | 5. Colour | 5. Colour | 5. Colour | 5. Colour | 5. Colour
6. Odour | 6. Odour | 6. Odour | 6. Odour | 6. Odour | 6. Odour
7. Taste | 7. Taste | 7. Taste | 7. Taste | 7. Taste | 7. Taste
8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence | 8. Nutritive essence
9. Life faculty | 9. Life faculty | 9. Life faculty | | |
10. Heart-base | 10. Body-sensitivity | 10. Sex materiality | | |
Kamma-produced, non-transparent | Kamma-produced, transparent | Kamma-produced, non-transparent | Consciousness-produced, non-transparent | Temperature-produced, non-transparent | Nutriment-produced, non-transparent

1. The heart-base decad is non-transparent. Its tenth material phenomenon is the heart-base, the support for the arising of the mind element and the mind-consciousness element.

Note. These 54 material phenomena are collectively called the physical heart (sasambhārahadaya). The heart materiality is also called the heart-base (hadayavatthu).

What is the mind-door?

Miến / Burmese 90

Here the commentator calls the heart the mind-door. (Visuddhimagga 2,259.) The following explanation of the mind-door concerns this use of the term.

[Full transcription of the two Pāli quotations remains to be checked.] Mind here means the life-continuum. The life-continuum together with the moment of adverting is the mind-door. The mind-door is the life-continuum. Since the heart is its support, the term mind-door is applied to the heart-base, naming the support after what depends on it.

According to the commentary and subcommentary:

1. The life-continuum is called the mind-door.
2. The life-continuum together with mind-door adverting is also called the mind-door.
3. The heart-base is called the mind-door by transferring the name to the support (ṭhānūpacāra).

Transfer of the name to the support. The life-continuum, or the life-continuum together with mind-door adverting, arises in dependence on the heart-base. Their name “mind-door” is transferred to the heart-base on which they depend. The heart-base itself is thus called the mind-door by transfer of the name to the support. (Saṃ-ṭṭha 3,5; Visuddhimagga 2,259; Mahāṭīkā 2,410.)

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 259; Saṃ-ṭṭha, vol. 3, p. 5; Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 410.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 259; Saṃ-ṭṭha, tập 3, tr. 5; Mahāṭīkā, tập 2, tr. 410.

The life-nonad and material clusters at the six doors

Miến / Burmese 91

The life-nonad (jīvitanavakakalāpa). The preceding tables do not include the life-nonad. However, the Visuddhimagga mentions it among the clusters in the bodily parts classed under fire and wind. You can discern it as part of your practice. It should especially be discerned in those bodily parts, since they are found throughout the body. (Visuddhimagga 2,223.)

Analysing material clusters at the six doors, that is, how to discern materiality. Body-decads and sex-decads are distributed throughout the six doors. Clusters containing sensitive materiality, such as eye-decads and body-decads, are intermingled at the doors like rice flour and turmeric powder thoroughly mixed.

Eye-decads are found only in the eye, ear-decads only in the ear, nose-decads only in the nose, tongue-decads only in the tongue, and heart-base decads only in the heart. Body-decads and sex-decads are found in the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and heart. Hence the eye contains two kinds of transparent cluster, eye-decads and body-decads. In the ear …

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 223.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 223.

Transparent clusters and the characteristics of eye- and body-sensitivity

Miến / Burmese 92

… there are ear-decads and body-decads. In the nose there are nose-decads and body-decads. In the tongue there are tongue-decads and body-decads. In the body there is one transparent kind, the body-decad. In the heart too there is one transparent kind, the body-decad. Since the eye, ear, nose and tongue each have two kinds of transparent cluster with two kinds of sensitive materiality, distinguish them with wisdom. At this stage you see them simply as minute transparent clusters.

Eye-sensitivity. Rūpābhighātārahabhūtappasādalakkhaṇaṃ … cakkhu. (Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 74.) The phenomenon characterized by the sensitivity of the four elements capable of receiving the impact of visible form is called the eye. In other words, the sensitivity of the four elements capable of receiving the impact of visible form is called eye-sensitivity.

Body-sensitivity. Phoṭṭhabbābhighātārahabhūtappasādalakkhaṇo … kāyo. (Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 74.) The phenomenon characterized by the sensitivity of the four elements capable of receiving the impact of tangible objects, namely earth, fire and wind, is called the body. In other words, the sensitivity of the four elements capable of receiving the impact of tangible objects …

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 74.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 74.

How to discern eye-sensitivity

Miến / Burmese 93

… is called body-sensitivity.

Accordingly, eye-sensitivity can receive the impact of visible form, and body-sensitivity can receive the impact of tangible objects. In the eye, eye-decads containing eye-sensitivity and body-decads containing body-sensitivity are intermingled. To distinguish eye-sensitivity from body-sensitivity and eye-decads from body-decads, distinguish them according to the object that impinges on them. These kinds of sensitive materiality have as their characteristic the sensitivity of the four elements in their own cluster. It is therefore especially necessary to have discerned those four elements first.

To discern eye-sensitivity, first discern the four great elements in the eye. When the minute material clusters appear, take one transparent cluster as object and discern it. Go on to discern the ten material phenomena in it. Discern the sensitive materiality among the ten, or discern the sensitivity in several transparent clusters. Direct attention to visible form in one or more clusters a suitable distance away from that sensitive materiality. If visible form impinges on it …

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 74.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 74.

How to discern body-sensitivity in the eye

Miến / Burmese 94

… it is eye-sensitivity, and the cluster containing it is an eye-decad. Distinguish the ten material phenomena in that cluster in turn with wisdom, to the level of ultimate reality. If visible form does not impinge on the sensitive materiality, it may be body-sensitivity, because the eye has only two kinds of sensitive materiality. Test it as follows.

Body-sensitivity is the sensitive materiality that can receive the impact of a tangible object, earth, fire or wind. Attend closely with wisdom to the four great elements in the eye. When you see the material clusters, discern the sensitivity in one or more transparent clusters. Direct attention to a tangible object, earth, fire or wind, in one or more clusters near that sensitivity. Attend closely to it, for example to hardness. If the tangible object impinges on the sensitive materiality, the sensitivity it impinges on is body-sensitivity. Its cluster is a body-decad. If no tangible object impinges, it may be eye-sensitivity. Test it by the method for discerning eye-sensitivity given above.

Three kamma-produced clusters in the eye and ear-sensitivity

Miến / Burmese 95

In this way you can distinguish eye-decads and body-decads in the eye. Go on to discern at the ultimate level the ten phenomena in an eye-decad and the ten in a body-decad. Among the non-transparent clusters in the eye, discern the sex-decad at the ultimate level. You have then discerned three kinds of cluster in the eye. All three are produced by kamma done in a past life with ignorance, craving and clinging and accumulated through formations and kamma. Discern the body-decads and sex-decads at the other five doors in the same way.

Ear-sensitivity. Saddābhighātārahabhūtappasādalakkhaṇaṃ … sotaṃ. (Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 74.) The sensitivity of the four elements capable of receiving the impact of sound is called ear-sensitivity. Attend closely to the four great elements inside the ear. When the clusters appear, discern sensitive materiality in one or more transparent clusters and hold it as object. Direct attention to a sound, such as the sound of breathing or an external sound. If that sound …

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 74.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 74.

Distinguishing ear-sensitivity and discerning nose-sensitivity

Miến / Burmese 96

… impinges on that sensitive materiality, the sensitivity it impinges on is ear-sensitivity. Its cluster is an ear-decad. Discern each of the ten material phenomena in it at the ultimate level. If no sound impinges on the sensitivity in the ear, it may be body-sensitivity. Test it by taking a tangible object as explained above. In the ear too, discern ear-decads, body-decads and sex-decads at the ultimate level. These are kamma-produced clusters.

Nose-sensitivity. Gandhābhighātārahabhūtappasādalakkhaṇaṃ … ghānaṃ. (Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 74.) The sensitivity of the four elements capable of receiving the impact of an odour is called nose-sensitivity. Discern the four great elements at the nose-base inside the nose. When the clusters appear, discern the sensitivity in one or more transparent clusters. Take as object an odour in one or more material clusters anywhere in the body. If the odour impinges on that sensitivity, the sensitivity it impinges on is nose …

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 74.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 74.

Distinguishing nose-sensitivity and discerning tongue-sensitivity

Miến / Burmese 97

… sensitivity. The cluster whose tenth material phenomenon is nose-sensitivity is called the nose-decad. Analyse it and discern the ten ultimate material phenomena. If odour does not impinge on the sensitivity, it may be body-sensitivity. To make certain, test it with a tangible object as explained above. When you succeed, discern nose-decads, body-decads and sex-decads in the nose at the ultimate level. These are kamma-produced clusters.

Tongue-sensitivity. Rasābhighātārahabhūtappasādalakkhaṇā … jivhā. (Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 74.) The sensitivity of the four elements capable of receiving the impact of taste is called tongue-sensitivity. Attend closely to the four elements in the tongue. When minute clusters appear, discern the sensitivity in one or more transparent clusters. Direct attention to taste in one or more nearby clusters. If taste impinges on that sensitivity, it is tongue-sensitivity. The cluster whose tenth phenomenon is tongue-sensitivity is a tongue-decad. Analyse it and discern the ten ultimate material phenomena. If taste does not impinge on that sensitivity …

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 74.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 74.

The body-door and discerning sex materiality

Miến / Burmese 98

… it may be body-sensitivity. To make certain, test it by taking a tangible object in one or more clusters near that sensitivity. Once certain, discern the ten ultimate material phenomena in each of the three kinds of kamma-produced cluster in the tongue: tongue-decads, body-decads and sex-decads.

The bodily base, or body-door. Here there are only two kamma-produced clusters under consideration, body-decads and sex-decads. Wherever touch can be known in the body, there are body-decads. Sex-decads are distributed at all six doors: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and heart. Both kinds of sex materiality do not occur in one person. Through sex materiality one can distinguish a man from a woman. This does not mean that sex materiality is known by eye-consciousness. Because of it, the outward shapes, features and gestures of males or females can be recognized.

A male meditator looks for male sex materiality in certain non-transparent clusters containing the life faculty. In looking, he may notice a quality of firmness and recognize male sex materiality by this sign. That firmness differs from the hardness of the earth element …

Female sex materiality and the heart-base

Miến / Burmese 99

… and the difference is generally discernible. Likewise, when a female meditator looks for female sex materiality in certain non-transparent clusters with the life faculty in her own continuum, she may notice a quality of softness and recognize female sex materiality by that sign. This softness can be distinguished from the softness of the earth element. Discern it at all six doors.

The mind-door and the heart-base. Manodhātumanoviññāṇadhātūnaṃ nissayalakkhaṇaṃ hadayavatthu. (Visuddhimagga 2,77.) The heart-base has the characteristic of supporting the mind element and the mind-consciousness element. It is the materiality on which the consciousnesses called the mind element and mind-consciousness element depend.

First discern the four great elements inside the heart. When minute clusters appear, discern the clarity of the life-continuum, the mind-door. If you discerned it while developing tranquillity, it will not be difficult to recognize here. Keep the meditation mind on that clarity and then form the wish to bend or straighten a finger. Continue observing so as to see distinctly the consciousness that wants to bend or straighten it and the consciousness while bending or straightening it. Once you discern that consciousness, go on to discern the heart-base on which it depends. This method can succeed. If you succeed …

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 77.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 77.

Analysing the heart-base decad

Miến / Burmese 100

… continue observing until you understand that the clear life-continuum, the consciousness wishing to bend or straighten the finger and so forth belong to the mind-consciousness element and depend on the same kind of heart-base. The heart-base occurs in the minute clusters beneath the mind element and mind-consciousness element just described. Saying that those consciousnesses depend on the heart-base means that the mind element and the mind-consciousness element arise in dependence on it. Without it they could not arise in that way. The cluster containing the heart-base is the heart-base decad. Analyse it and discern its ten ultimate material phenomena.

Initially discerning the wish to bend or straighten is simply a quick means of establishing which materiality serves as the heart-base. After discerning the clear life-continuum, some meditators can readily discern the heart-base that supports it. Once you have discerned the material phenomena in the heart-base decad at the ultimate level, analyse the body-decads and sex-decads in the heart and discern their ultimate material phenomena as well. Thus the heart also contains three kinds of kamma-produced cluster.

The clarity of the life-continuum and body-sensitivity. There are two kinds of clarity in the heart. In accordance with the teaching Pabhassaramidaṃ, bhikkhave, cittaṃ, “Bhikkhus, this mind is luminous,” the life-continuum dependent on the heart-base is clear and shines with flashes of light. (Aṅguttara Nikāya, vol. 1, p. 9.)

References printed on this page: Aṅ, vol. 1, p. 9.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Aṅ, tập 1, tr. 9.

Distinguishing the clear life-continuum from body-sensitivity

Miến / Burmese 101

According to the subcommentary, Sabhāveneva panetaṃ cittaṃ pabhassaraṃ, this consciousness is luminous by nature. All consciousness arising in dependence on the heart-base is luminous by nature and becomes defiled by unwholesome mental factors. (Mūlaṭīkā, vol. 1, p. 125.) [Pāli and details of the subcommentary to be checked.]

According to these explanations, the clear life-continuum in the heart gives rise to flashes of light. This is the clarity of mentality. Body-sensitivity, which supports body-consciousness, is also found there. This is the transparency of materiality. Body-sensitivity appears within minute transparent clusters. The clear life-continuum is a clarity dependent on the non-transparent heart-base and is not itself a minute material cluster. As explained in the section on tranquillity and on pages 53–54 above, the colour of consciousness-produced and temperature-produced material clusters can shine. The life-continuum, the mind-door, is clear, whereas the heart-base on which it depends is not transparent. Body-decads containing body-sensitivity are distributed throughout the heart and occur as minute clusters around the clear life-continuum.

Note. To explain how to discern the kamma-produced clusters at the six doors, this work describes discerning the four great elements in the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and heart. This method is given for those whose wisdom is still weak …

References printed on this page: Mūlaṭīkā, vol. 1, p. 125.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Mūlaṭīkā, tập 1, tr. 125.

When minute clusters are visible throughout the body

Miến / Burmese 102

… Understand it in that way. When a person of sharp wisdom surveys the whole body to discern the four elements, that person sees minute material clusters rather than large masses. The four elements in both transparent and non-transparent clusters at the six doors can be discerned at the ultimate level. At this stage, even when attention is directed to the eye, only clusters are seen, without the shape of an eye. A person who sees clusters in this way need not look for the eye again in order to discern the four elements there separately. If the clusters at the eye are readily seen, analyse the eye-decads, body-decads and sex-decads among them to the ultimate level. Understand the same for the ear, nose, tongue, body and heart. The method is similar for the remaining clusters produced by consciousness, temperature and nutriment.

The kamma-produced material phenomena at the six doors are the first material phenomena to arise in a life. Some arise together with rebirth-linking consciousness. As long as the power of previously performed and accumulated kamma remains effective, they continue arising and dissolving throughout life. After discerning kamma-produced materiality at all six doors, go on to discern the remaining materiality produced by consciousness, temperature and nutriment. First, however, you need to know what kinds of material phenomena must be discerned …

The twenty-eight kinds of materiality and the four great elements

Miến / Burmese 103

… The twenty-eight kinds of materiality are therefore set out below.

Material phenomena are divided into two kinds, the great elements and derived materiality. The four elements are called great material elements (mahābhūtarūpa) because their characteristics stand out more than those of other material phenomena and they appear as the large material body. The twenty-four material phenomena arising in dependence on the four elements are called derived materiality (upādāyarūpa). They make the four elements distinct, for example through colours such as white and yellow.

The four great elements are also called elements (dhātu). A phenomenon that bears its own characteristic and appears in accordance with it is called an element. The earth element bears the characteristics of hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness and lightness. Water bears flowing and cohesion. Fire bears heat and cold. Wind bears supporting and pushing. Thus the four great elements are also called the elements.

(1) The four great elements: earth, water, fire and wind.

(2) Five kinds of sensitive materiality (pasādarūpa).
1. Eye-sensitivity (cakkhupasāda), the sensitive materiality in the eye.

Sensitive materiality, objects, sex materiality and the heart-base

Miến / Burmese 104

2. Ear-sensitivity (sotapasāda), the sensitive materiality in the ear.
3. Nose-sensitivity (ghānapasāda), the sensitive materiality in the nose.
4. Tongue-sensitivity (jivhāpasāda), the sensitive materiality in the tongue.
5. Body-sensitivity (kāyapasāda), the sensitive materiality in the body.

(3) Seven kinds of objective materiality (gocararūpa).
1. Visible form (rūpārammaṇa), that is, colour (vaṇṇa).
2. Sound (saddārammaṇa).
3. Odour (gandhārammaṇa).
4. Taste (rasārammaṇa).
5. Tangible object (phoṭṭhabbārammaṇa).

Note. Earth, fire and wind can be touched and are therefore called tangible materiality. Counting all three gives seven kinds of objective materiality. But in counting distinct material phenomena, one already counted is not counted again. These three have already been included among the four great elements, so only four objective phenomena are added in reckoning the twenty-eight.

(4) Two kinds of sex materiality (bhāvarūpa).
1. Female sex materiality (itthibhāvarūpa).
2. Male sex materiality (purisabhāvarūpa).

(5) One kind of heart materiality (hadayarūpa). The heart-base (hadayavatthu) is the material support for cognizing consciousness, namely the mind element and mind-consciousness element. It is found in the blood inside the heart.

The life faculty, nutriment and the names of the eighteen material phenomena

Miến / Burmese 105

(6) One material life faculty. The life faculty (jīvitindriya), also called jīvita, is materiality that sustains life. It is present in kamma-produced clusters and protects the kamma-produced phenomena in its own cluster.

(7) One kind of nutriment materiality. Edible food (kabaḷīkārāhāra) is the nutritive essence, ojā, in the food that is eaten.

Note. This follows the treatment of conditions in the Paṭṭhāna. Nutritive essence is found in every cluster produced by kamma, consciousness, temperature and nutriment. It is accordingly called kamma-produced, consciousness-produced, temperature-produced and nutriment-produced nutritive essence. Food that is eaten spreads through the body as temperature-produced material clusters. Their nutritive essence is called edible food according to the nutriment condition in the Paṭṭhāna and the method of the discourses. See the section on discerning nutriment-produced materiality for details.

These eighteen material phenomena are called materiality with intrinsic nature (sabhāvarūpa), since each has its own characteristic. They are called materiality with characteristics (salakkhaṇarūpa) because they share impermanence, suffering and non-self. They are called concretely produced materiality (nipphannarūpa), since they are produced by kamma, consciousness, temperature or nutriment. They are called materiality proper (rūparūpa), because they actually undergo alteration. Since they can be contemplated in insight under the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self …

Delimitation, intimation and alteration

Miến / Burmese 106

… and are fit for such contemplation, they are also called materiality for comprehension (sammasanarūpa). The remaining ten differ from them. They lack individual intrinsic nature and characteristics, are not concretely produced, are not materiality proper, and are not taken as objects of comprehension.

(8) One kind of delimiting materiality (paricchedarūpa). The space element is the gap between material clusters, that is, delimiting materiality. The gap marks the boundary so that one cluster does not merge with another. Because it serves as a boundary it is called delimiting materiality. The space element is not actual ultimate materiality. When two or more clusters arise, the concept of a gap arises in dependence on them.

(9) Two kinds of intimation (viññattirūpa).
1. Bodily intimation (kāyaviññatti), a bodily gesture that makes another person understand.
2. Verbal intimation (vacīviññatti), expression by means of the mouth, that is, speech that makes another person understand.

(10) Five kinds of alteration, or three kinds (vikārarūpa).
1. Lightness of materiality (rūpassa lahutā), the lightness of materiality produced by consciousness, temperature and nutriment.
2. Malleability of materiality (rūpassa mudutā), the pliancy of such materiality.
3. Wieldiness of materiality (rūpassa kammaññatā), its suitability for activity.

Four characteristics of materiality

Miến / Burmese 107

The two intimations, together with the three just mentioned, are also collectively called alterations of materiality, the different modes in which it manifests.

(11) Four characteristics of materiality (lakkhaṇarūpa).
1. Accumulation (upacaya). (a) The first arising of materiality proper in a life. (b) Its subsequent growth until the material phenomena needed in that life are complete, that is, until the faculties are complete.
2. Continuity (santati). Once the faculties are complete, materiality proper continues to arise in uninterrupted succession.

Note. The Buddha divided the arising of materiality proper into two kinds according to its stage in time, to suit the faculties of his hearers. Both are the arising (uppāda) of materiality proper.

3. Ageing (jaratā), the maturation, growing old and deterioration of materiality proper. This denotes the phase of its presence.
4. Impermanence (aniccatā), the cessation of materiality proper, that is, dissolution (bhaṅga).

The space element, the five alterations and the four characteristics, ten in all, are unsuitable for insight contemplation under the three characteristics and are called materiality not for comprehension (asammasanarūpa). Since they are not concretely produced by kamma, consciousness, temperature or nutriment …

Why discern materiality that is not concretely produced?

Miến / Burmese 108

… they are called non-concretely produced materiality (anipphannarūpa). They are not materiality proper. The space element is simply the delimiting interval.

(Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 354.) [The Pāli sentence on the delimiting interval remains to be transcribed.] The delimiting interval is the gap or boundary between material clusters, by which one cluster is kept distinct from another.

Intimations are only the modes of bodily gesture and speech, that is, modes in which materiality proper operates. The characteristics are only its modes of arising, presence and dissolution. The alterations are only the various modes of materiality produced by consciousness, temperature and nutriment. They are therefore not materiality proper and are unsuitable for insight contemplation. Nevertheless, in discerning material phenomena at the ultimate level during the discernment of mentality and materiality under purification of view, the Visuddhimagga directs that these ten be discerned along the way. The Buddha likewise teaches by way of characteristic, function and so forth in such discourses as the Mahārāhulovāda. (Visuddhimagga 2,225.)

If the space element is not seen, material clusters are not seen. If the clusters are not seen, the actual ultimate material phenomena within each cannot be discerned. If wisdom does not reach ultimate reality, non-self cannot be seen. If non-self is not seen …

References printed on this page: Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 354; Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 225.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Mahāṭīkā, tập 2, tr. 354; Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 225.

Discerning characteristics and beginning with consciousness-produced materiality

Miến / Burmese 109

… genuine insight knowledge cannot arise. Thus the space element is to be discerned during discernment of mentality and materiality in purification of view. Once the actual ultimate material phenomena in each cluster can be discerned, their arising, presence and dissolution will also be seen. Discern the characteristics of materiality accordingly. Arising, presence and dissolution are the characteristics of the conditioned. Only by seeing these characteristics can one distinguish a conditioned phenomenon from the one before or after it. This breaks up the compactness of material continuity. Once compactness breaks up, wisdom can reach ultimate reality. Only then can non-self be seen. When non-self is seen, the three characteristics become clear and genuine insight knowledge can arise. (Aṅ 1,150.)

When contemplating bodily postures, practising clear comprehension or discerning materiality produced by consciousness, temperature and nutriment, one cannot avoid seeing the alterations. They are only modes of materiality proper. Therefore the discourses and commentary teach that they be discerned in passing at this stage. They occur only in dependence on materiality proper. From insight knowledge of comprehension and knowledge of arising and dissolution onward, one is instructed not to contemplate these phenomena in insight.

How to discern consciousness-produced materiality. For someone who already knows how to discern the heart-base, discerning consciousness-produced materiality here is easy. Within the heart …

References printed on this page: Aṅ, vol. 1, p. 150.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Aṅ, tập 1, tr. 150.

How consciousness produces clusters and how to discern temperature-produced materiality

Miến / Burmese 110

… apart from rebirth-linking consciousness, the consciousnesses belonging to the mind element and mind-consciousness element that arise in dependence on the heart-base throughout life can produce octads with consciousness-produced nutritive essence. Each consciousness can produce many clusters distributed throughout the body. Focus on the clear life-continuum and observe the clusters that arise continuously from consciousness dependent on the heart-base. If this is unclear, keep attention on the clear life-continuum and try bending and straightening a finger. Clearly observe the clusters produced by the wish to bend and straighten, distributed at the six doors. If still unclear, blink gently. You may see many consciousness-produced clusters around the eyes. Understand similarly for the five other doors. These clusters are non-transparent. On analysis each has eight material phenomena. Consult the table and discern those ultimate phenomena at each of the six doors in turn.

How to discern temperature-produced materiality. Tattha utu nāma catusamuṭṭhānā tejodhātu, uṇhutu sītutūti evaṃ panesa duvidho hoti. (Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 251.) Here temperature is the fire element of four origins. It is of two kinds, hot temperature and cold temperature.

The fire element present in kamma-produced clusters, such as the eye-decad, at the six doors and in clusters produced by consciousness, temperature and nutriment is called temperature (utu). This fire element produces new octads with temperature-produced nutritive essence. These are the offspring generation of temperature. In those new clusters …

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 251.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 251.

Generations of temperature-produced materiality

Miến / Burmese 111

… there is also fire, that is, temperature. This fire element produces further octads with temperature-produced nutritive essence. These are the grandchild generation of temperature. In this way the clusters continue for more or fewer generations according to their respective origins, kamma, consciousness, temperature and nutriment.

Kamma-produced fire. When the fire element serving as temperature is found in kamma-produced clusters, such as eye-decads, it produces successive temperature-produced clusters for four or five generations as described above.

(Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 250.) [The Pāli passage on generations of temperature-produced materiality remains to be transcribed.] On reaching its phase of presence, kamma-produced fire produces an octad with temperature-produced nutritive essence. The temperature in that octad in turn produces another octad. In this way four or five generations follow in succession.

In producing materiality in this way, the fire element, or temperature, can produce new octads only upon reaching presence, for by the regular course of materiality it gains strength at that phase. The four or five successive productions are stated according to the strength of the continuing material process.

(Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 401.) [Subcommentary transcription on the strength of successive clusters to be checked.]

1. Kamma-produced fire is supported by kamma …

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 250; Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 401.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 250; Mahāṭīkā, tập 2, tr. 401.

Support for fire and the production of external materiality

Miến / Burmese 112

2. Consciousness-produced fire is supported by superior consciousnesses, such as those of jhāna, insight meditation, path and fruition.
3. Temperature-produced fire is supported by favourable temperature.
4. Nutriment-produced fire is supported by superior nutritive essence, such as celestial nutritive essence.

With such strong support, understand that temperature can give rise to many successive material clusters internally and externally. (Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 252.) [The Pāli wording of the Visuddhimagga quotation remains to be checked.]

External production here includes materiality produced within and spreading outside, materiality continuing until the body becomes a corpse, and temperature-produced materiality in parts detached from the body. Materiality produced as far as the exterior also includes octads produced by fire in consciousness-produced materiality. These clusters come about owing to superior consciousnesses such as those of tranquillity and insight meditation. They can appear as the light of tranquillity and the light of insight both internally and externally.

Note. Nutritive essence is also found in the octads produced by fire in consciousness-produced materiality. When supported by kamma-produced fire and nutriment-produced nutritive essence, this nutritive essence can produce octads …

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 252.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 252.

Consciousness-produced fire

Miến / Burmese 113

… with nutriment-produced nutritive essence. In brief, generally the fire element in a cluster can produce octads, and its nutritive essence can also produce materiality. Remember this.

Fire, that is, temperature, is also present in the octads produced by ordinary sense-sphere consciousness dependent on the heart-base, apart from the superior consciousnesses of tranquillity and insight. It produces new octads containing temperature-produced nutritive essence. Consciousness-produced fire is the grandparent generation. Fire in its temperature-produced cluster is the offspring generation, and produces another temperature-produced octad. Fire in that grandchild cluster produces another temperature-produced octad in turn. Thus the clusters continue for two or three generations.

Evaṃ dve tisso vā pavattiyo ghaṭeti. (Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 251.) In this way it sustains two or three successive occurrences.

Fire in materiality produced by tranquillity consciousness at preparatory, access or absorption concentration, by insight consciousness, or by path and fruition consciousness can produce successive temperature-produced octads both internally and externally. According to the strength of the wisdom accompanying tranquillity and insight consciousness and the strength of concentration …

References printed on this page: Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 251.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 251.

Succession of materiality produced by superior consciousness

Miến / Burmese 114

… they spread to a greater or lesser extent and arise repeatedly in succession.

[Full transcription of the opening subcommentary to be checked.] For ordinary consciousness-produced materiality, two or three successive occurrences are stated. Materiality produced by superior consciousness can continue for many occurrences owing to the strength of the consciousness that originates it.

The consciousnesses of tranquillity and advanced insight, and the exalted and supramundane consciousnesses, are very superior and powerful. In particular, impulsions belonging to jhāna attainment or fruition attainment can produce many material clusters over a long time. Materiality produced by an uninterrupted succession of superior consciousnesses over many minutes or hours is likewise materiality produced by superior consciousness. Since such materiality has the power to spread widely, fire in each cluster can produce temperature-produced materiality for many generations, inside and outside. Remember that this fire produces materiality only when it has reached its phase of presence. (Mahāṭīkā 2,403.)

Note. Nutritive essence in the clusters produced by fire in consciousness-produced materiality can also produce nutriment-produced octads internally when supported by kamma-produced fire and nutriment-produced nutritive essence.

References printed on this page: Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 403.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Mahāṭīkā, tập 2, tr. 403.

Fire in nutriment-produced materiality

Miến / Burmese 115

Fire, that is, temperature, is also present in nutriment-produced material clusters, to be explained next. When it reaches its phase of presence, nutriment-produced fire produces another temperature-produced octad. This is the offspring generation.

(Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 403.) [Great Subcommentary transcription to be checked.] The number of successive occurrences for nutriment-produced fire is expressed as in the case of nutriment as condition. The number may differ according to the support available, since it is not fixed.

Fire in the offspring temperature-produced cluster in turn produces another temperature-produced octad. This is the grandchild generation. Fire in the grandchild cluster produces a further octad, the great-grandchild generation. The clusters can continue in this manner for ten or twelve occurrences. When supported by the nutritive essence of superior food, such as celestial nutritive essence, fire can produce temperature-produced octads for a longer time.

Note. If supported by kamma-produced fire and nutriment-produced nutritive essence, the nutritive essence in these temperature-produced octads can also produce nutriment-produced octads within the continuum when it reaches its phase of presence.

How to discern nutriment-produced materiality. Tattha āhāro nāma kabaḷīkāro āhāro. Here nutriment means edible food. (Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 251.)

References printed on this page: Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 403; Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 251.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Mahāṭīkā, tập 2, tr. 403; Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 251.

When nutritive essence performs the function of nutriment

Miến / Burmese 116

… is called nutriment. It performs the function of nutriment only after it has been made into a morsel and swallowed, while it cannot do so outside the body. That is why the text says “edible nutriment” (kabaḷīkāro āhāro) rather than simply “nutriment.” Alternatively, it is called “edible” because it is present in a substance that can be made into a morsel and swallowed. (Abhidhamma Commentary, vol. 3, p. 377.)

“Only after it has been made into a morsel and swallowed” means that it is swallowed together with a substance that is eaten, drunk or otherwise taken in. What is drunk or tasted is, by its nature, also classed as a morsel. (Mūlaṭīkā, vol. 3, p. 190.)

Nutritive essence on its own cannot be swallowed. This is why the text says that it is swallowed together with a substance that is eaten, drunk or otherwise taken in. In the case of food to be chewed or eaten, what is eaten may be taken as edible in morsels. The words “what is drunk, pe, is also classed as a morsel” extend the description to liquids and the other items covered by the abbreviated passage. Alternatively, the statement is to be understood as applying to the usual case. (Anuṭīkā, vol. 3, p. 258.)

The nutritive essence (ojā) present in each kind of material cluster, whether produced by kamma, consciousness, temperature or nutriment, is called nutriment (āhāra). Although the nutritive essence in materiality of all four origins is called nutriment, it performs the function of producing nutriment-produced materiality only after something edible, chewable, drinkable or lickable, such as a morsel of rice, has been brought to the mouth and swallowed. As long as that food or drink remains outside the body, the nutritive essence of the four origins cannot perform this function. For this reason, in the Paṭṭhāna the Buddha used the expression “edible nutriment” (kabaḷīkāro āhāro). (Paṭṭhāna, vol. 1, p. 7; Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 251; Abhidhamma Commentary, vol. 3, p. 377.)

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Abhi-ṭṭha, tập 3, tr. 377; Mūlaṭīkā, tập 3, tr. 190; Anuṭīkā, tập 3, tr. 258; Paṭṭhāna, tập 1, tr. 7; Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 251.

The name “edible nutriment” and materiality in food

Miến / Burmese 117

To put it another way, nutritive essence cannot itself be made into a morsel, but it is present in food that can be made into a morsel and eaten. With the support of food it can perform the function of producing nutriment-produced materiality. Hence the nutritive essence in materiality of the four origins is called edible nutriment. This name denotes the nutritive essence that depends on edible food. The name of its support is applied to what depends on that support, a figurative usage based on the locus (ṭhānūpacāra). (Abhidhamma Commentary, vol. 3, p. 377.)

Food in the stomach, feces, pus and urine: in these four bodily parts, materiality originating from temperature is predominant, according to the commentary. (Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 223.)

According to that explanation, these four parts are collections of temperature-produced materiality, that is, temperature-produced octads containing nutritive essence. Edible food is a collection of such clusters. Their nutritive essence is nutriment. It cannot be made into a morsel by itself, apart from the other material phenomena in the cluster. Only a collection of many temperature-produced clusters …

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Abhi-ṭṭha, tập 3, tr. 377; Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 223.

Food does not move as ultimate material phenomena

Miến / Burmese 118

… can be made into a morsel and eaten. The Buddha accordingly called that nutritive essence edible nutriment. This explanation still employs conventional language. The point is explained further below.

Whether the newly eaten food is still on a plate or in a bowl, has reached the stomach, or is being chewed in the mouth, attend closely to the four elements in it. Only particles in the form of material clusters appear. These clusters, or the material phenomena in them, cease very quickly where they arise.

To say that materiality “comes” is conventional usage. It ceases where it arises and does not go elsewhere. (Anuṭīkā, vol. 1, p. 162.)

As this explanation shows, ultimate material phenomena cease where they arise and cannot move from one place to another. Thus the temperature-produced octads on the plate or in the bowl do not move into the mouth, and those in the mouth do not move to the stomach to remain there as newly eaten food. They do not last long enough to do that. They cease after a lifespan of seventeen mind-moments. Yet every such temperature-produced octad contains the fire element, or temperature. That fire element …

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Anuṭīkā, tập 1, tr. 162.

The succession of materiality in food

Miến / Burmese 119

… ordinarily has the capacity to produce new material clusters. As long as the support of temperature-produced fire has not run out, clusters arise in succession, whether on the plate, in the bowl, in the mouth or in the stomach. Viewed as ultimate phenomena, these temperature-produced octads cannot literally be shaped, eaten or swallowed as one speaks of a morsel of rice. The teachers of old accordingly explain edible nutriment as the nutritive essence present in what can be made into a morsel and eaten, although the essence itself cannot be shaped. On this explanation, neither the individual nutritive essence in a temperature-produced cluster nor the collection of such ultimate phenomena can be eaten or swallowed in the ultimate sense. What we call edible food is the continuous mass of successive generations of materiality produced by the fire element in these clusters. This is a description in terms of conventional truth.

The temperature-produced octads conventionally called newly eaten food are continually produced anew by the fire element in each cluster, as explained above. They arise successively from fire, one of the four great elements. The teachers of old call this successive arising through the ongoing operation of the elements. In meditation on materiality, particularly in discerning materiality produced by consciousness, temperature and nutriment …

Nutriment as a condition for materiality

Miến / Burmese 120

… it is particularly important to see this successive arising through the operation of the elements in depth. To help make this clear, passages from the canonical text, commentary and subcommentary follow. Make an effort to understand their meaning.

References printed for these passages: Paṭṭhāna, vol. 1, pp. 7 and 156; Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, pp. 170 and 80; Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, pp. 282 and 104. The full Pāli transcription remains to be checked.

Of the four nutriments, the one discussed here as supporting materiality is edible nutriment. It conditions this body by way of nutriment condition. Internal nutriment conditions materiality produced by nutriment and the material phenomena in its own cluster. The Visuddhimagga explains that the Questions section of the Paṭṭhāna also speaks of nutriment conditioning nutriment-produced materiality, the body and the aggregates. The exact scope of the terms in the second quotation remains to be checked.

The commentary says that nutriment supports material phenomena because its nature is to sustain. Edible nutriment has nutritive essence (ojā) as its characteristic. This essence is the extract of the taste present in food that has entered the stomach. It is materiality dependent on the great elements and has the function of sustaining. It is called edible because it can be made into a morsel and swallowed. Conventionally, nutriment is what beings eat, chew, drink or taste. With external nutriment as its condition, internal nutriment produces materiality. It conditions that materiality by way of nutriment condition, so the materiality is called nutriment-produced. It supports the body by producing nutritive octads, and the nutritive essence also functions as nutriment for the other material phenomena in its own cluster. This is the explanation of nutriment condition.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Paṭṭhāna, tập 1, tr. 7; Paṭṭhāna, tập 1, tr. 156; Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 170; Mahāṭīkā, tập 2, tr. 282; Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 80; Mahāṭīkā, tập 2, tr. 104.

Nutriment as a condition for materiality, continued

Miến / Burmese 121

Here nutriment means edible nutriment (kabaḷīkārāhāra). Nutriment-produced materiality arises from nutritive essence that has reached its phase of presence, with kamma-produced materiality in the body as a condition. It comprises the nutritive octad, the space element, lightness, malleability, wieldiness, production and continuity. These are the material phenomena meant in the statement that edible nutriment conditions this body by way of nutriment condition.

In nutriment-produced materiality, nutritive essence at its phase of presence produces a further nutritive octad. The essence in the ensuing clusters produces ten or twelve successive generations. Food eaten by a hen nourishes the developing egg and its embryo. Food eaten by a mother spreads to the fetus and produces materiality. Nutriment applied to the body also produces materiality. Kamma-produced nutritive essence is called clung-to nutriment (upādinnakāhāra). On reaching its phase of presence it produces materiality, and the nutritive essence in the ensuing clusters produces five or six successive generations. (Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 251.) The complete Pāli transcription and the detail concerning the egg remain to be checked.

The subcommentary's phrase "with clung-to kamma-produced materiality as a condition" shows that nutriment which is not clung to cannot perform this sustaining function by itself in the absence of that condition. The phrase "in those material phenomena, having reached the phase of presence" relates to the support of kamma-produced fire. The distinction between nutriment clung to and not clung to was explained earlier. To clarify nutriment that is not clung to in this account of nutriment condition, the text next discusses kamma-produced nutritive essence. (Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 403.) The precise syntax of the Pāli passage remains to be checked.

The practical method follows, based on the substance of the canonical passage, commentary and subcommentary just cited.

As explained, newly eaten food is swallowed together with the material phenomena in its clusters, whether or not it has been formed into a morsel. In the stomach it is conventionally called the bodily part consisting of newly eaten food …

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 251; Mahāṭīkā, tập 2, tr. 403.

Nutritive essence in newly eaten food

Miến / Burmese 122

… and consists of successive temperature-produced nutritive octads which have yet to spread throughout the body. Their nutritive essence is temperature-produced. This very essence is directly called edible nutriment.

When supported by digestive fire, the subtle nutritive essence in the clusters called edible nutriment produces another nutritive octad. Digestive fire is kamma-produced fire, the fire element in the life-faculty nonads around the stomach. The new clusters are nutriment-produced nutritive octads arising from temperature-produced nutritive essence. The edible nutriment swallowed is temperature-produced nutritive essence, and the new clusters are its direct products.

The more temperature-produced clusters there are in what is called newly eaten food, and hence the more temperature-produced nutritive essence, the more nutriment-produced octads can arise as explained. Conventionally, they spread as nourishment. In ultimate terms, clusters arise in uninterrupted succession and spread throughout the body, reaching all six doors. The nutritive essence in these nutriment-produced clusters is edible nutriment that has acquired the characteristic of nutritive essence, in the words of the commentary, “Ojālakkhaṇo kabaḷīkāro āhāro,” edible nutriment has nutritive essence as its characteristic.

Nutritive essence with the characteristic of edible nutriment

Miến / Burmese 123

To acquire the characteristic of nutritive essence means that only the essence in these nutriment-produced octads can act as a conditioning phenomenon by the power of nutriment condition (āhārapaccaya). It thereby enables the essence of the four origins, also called edible nutriment, to generate more nutritive octads. As for the temperature-produced nutritive essence in the octads initially constituting newly eaten food …

1. With respect to kamma-produced nutritive essence in kamma-produced clusters.
2. With respect to consciousness-produced nutritive essence in consciousness-produced clusters.
3. With respect to temperature-produced nutritive essence in temperature-produced clusters.
4. With respect to nutriment-produced nutritive essence in other clusters, namely the essence in nutriment-produced materiality generated by the essence in the temperature-produced clusters that were swallowed.

… it cannot support the nutritive essence of any of these four origins by way of nutriment condition or serve as its sustaining support. The temperature-produced essence in the clusters initially constituting newly eaten food, when supported by kamma-produced digestive fire, has only the productive capacity (janaka) to generate new nutritive octads. The clusters that arise through this capacity are called nutriment-produced nutritive octads.

The nutritive essence in each nutriment-produced cluster arises in dependence on the great elements of that same cluster. Prior to spreading through the body as nutriment-produced clusters, it does not arise in dependence on the four elements in a separate octad among the temperature-produced octads that constitute newly eaten food. Only the nutritive essence in those nutriment-produced clusters that have spread through the body as nourishment …

Supporting and supported nutritive essence

Miến / Burmese 124

… can support the following:

1. Kamma-produced nutritive essence in kamma-produced material clusters.
2. Consciousness-produced nutritive essence in consciousness-produced material clusters.
3. Temperature-produced nutritive essence in temperature-produced material clusters.
4. Nutriment-produced nutritive essence in other nutriment-produced material clusters.

It acts as a conditioning phenomenon for nutritive essence of these four origins by way of nutriment condition, sustaining successive generations of new nutritive octads. Only on reaching its phase of presence and receiving the support of nutriment-produced nutritive essence can the essence of the four origins produce new clusters.

Remember that two kinds of nutriment-produced clusters are involved here. Accordingly, nutriment-produced nutritive essence is of two kinds, supporting and supported. The supporting essence occurs in nutriment-produced octads generated by temperature-produced nutritive essence in newly eaten food, as explained above. The supported essence has reached its phase of presence and was produced by another nutritive essence. It is nutriment-produced nutritive essence in a cluster distinct from the one performing the supporting function. It is sustained by the supporting essence by way of nutriment condition, as are the essences produced by kamma, consciousness and temperature. Only when sustained by this power …

External nutriment and internal nutriment

Miến / Burmese 125

… can kamma-, consciousness- and temperature-produced nutritive essence, together with essence produced by another nutriment, generate new nutritive octads in succession. The supporting nutriment-produced essence must itself be directly generated by the productive power (janakasatti) of temperature-produced essence in the octads of newly eaten food, with the assistance of kamma-produced digestive fire. That productive power is the productive aspect of nutriment condition. This temperature-produced essence, or the temperature-produced materiality containing it, is called external nutriment (bāhira-āhāra). It is in this sense that the text says:

“Only with external nutriment as a condition does internal nutriment produce materiality.” (Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 104.)

The meaning is that internal nutriment can produce nutritive octads only with external nutriment as a condition. Internal nutriment here comprises nutritive essence produced by kamma, consciousness and temperature, and nutriment-produced essence in other clusters generated by another nutriment.

Nutritive essence produced by another nutriment (aññāhārasamuṭṭhita-āhāra-ojā). Nutriment-produced essence that has reached its phase of presence and was generated by essence in another cluster, as just explained, and nutriment-produced essence generated by the essence in the temperature-produced octads of the food the meditator has just eaten are both called internal nutriment. As for the temperature-produced material phenomena constituting newly eaten food, whether they are in the stomach or in the intestines …

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Mahāṭīkā, tập 2, tr. 104.

External nutriment supports internal nutriment

Miến / Burmese 126

… they are called external nutriment. Internal nutriment here refers to the nutriment-produced essence in the octads generated by temperature-produced nutritive essence, the external nutriment, with the support of kamma-produced digestive fire. Only with the support of this internal nutriment can the essence of the four origins produce nutritive octads. The internal nutriment's capacity to generate these clusters depends on the external nutriment. External nutriment is thus the proximate condition for the arising of nutritive octads from internal nutriment that has acquired the characteristic of nutritive essence.

When temperature-produced essence, called external nutriment, generates nutriment-produced nutritive octads, it can do so only with the support of digestive fire, the fire element in clung-to kamma-produced materiality.

The newly arisen materiality consists of nutriment-produced nutritive octads. They contain essence that has acquired the characteristic of nutritive essence and are directly produced by the edible nutriment that was consumed, namely the temperature-produced essence called external nutriment. These clusters arise in continuous succession and spread to all six doors. The nutritive essence in them, with the support of digestive fire, can sustain the essence of the four origins for seven days even after a single meal. Thus a single intake of external nutriment can sustain the essence of the four origins for seven days through the ongoing production of nutriment-produced nutritive octads and the support of digestive fire. The expression "rice sustains life for seven days" …

Discernment while eating

Miến / Burmese 127

… is derived from this passage. Celestial nutritive essence can likewise sustain it for one or two weeks. Nutriment eaten by the mother spreads into the fetus. With the support of digestive fire in the fetal continuum, it can generate nutriment-produced nutritive octads in the fetus. With the support of the same digestive fire, this essence can in turn sustain the nutritive essence of the four origins there by way of nutriment condition.

External nutriment rubbed onto the body can likewise generate nutriment-produced nutritive octads only when sustained by kamma-produced digestive fire in the life-faculty nonads throughout the body. The essence in the resulting octads has acquired the characteristic of nutritive essence. With the support of digestive fire, it sustains the essence of the four origins by way of nutriment condition, enabling nutritive octads to arise. The practical method of discernment is as follows.

1. While eating or drinking. This may be discerned during the meal itself. Nutriment produces materiality in such places as the mouth, throat, stomach and intestines, and the resulting materiality can spread throughout the body. A meditator who can strengthen concentration while eating or drinking should choose a place to discern, such as the mouth or stomach, and direct attention to the newly eaten food there …

Discernment after eating and an example at the eye door

Miến / Burmese 128

… and discern the four elements present in that food closely. Material clusters may then appear as particles. Discern with knowledge how, with the support of digestive fire, the kamma-produced fire in life-faculty nonads around the food being discerned, the nutritive essence in temperature-produced clusters generates successive new clusters that spread throughout the body.

2. After eating or drinking. This may also be discerned during sitting meditation after a meal. Strengthen concentration gradually, then attend closely to the four elements in the newly eaten food still in the stomach. The material clusters will appear as particles. The old food in the intestines can be discerned similarly. Supported by digestive fire, essence in the temperature-produced clusters gives rise to successive nutriment-produced nutritive octads which spread throughout the body. Discern this with knowledge. These clusters are opaque. On analysis there are eight material phenomena in each. Once you discern their spread to all six doors, you can proceed in turn through the forty-two bodily components of the six doors.

Discernment at the eye door as an example. Gradually strengthen concentration and discern with knowledge the nutriment-produced nutritive octads spreading as far as the eye door. Discern the eight material phenomena with knowledge …

Kamma-produced nutritive essence at the eye door

Miến / Burmese 129

… until they are discerned as ultimate phenomena. Among these eight, the nutritive essence capable of sustaining essence of the four origins, and hence endowed with the characteristic of nutritive essence, is identified as nutriment-produced nutritive essence.

1. Kamma-produced nutritive essence. When the kamma-produced essence in the eye decad meets nutriment-produced essence that has spread to the eye, it is sustained by both nutriment-produced essence and digestive fire. It then brings about four or five successive generations of material clusters. From the nutritive essence of the eye decad a nutritive octad arises. When the essence in that new cluster reaches its phase of presence, with the same support it produces another nutritive octad. In this way the clusters arise for four or five generations. (Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 251.)

Note. The number of generations may be greater or smaller depending on the strength of the supporting kamma, the quality of external nutriment and other conditions. There is also fire, or temperature, in the clusters arising over those four or five generations. Note that, on reaching its phase of presence, that fire can likewise produce successive temperature-produced nutritive octads.

Nutritive essence in the body decad and sex decad is also present at the eye door …

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 251.

Consciousness-produced nutritive essence at the eye door

Miến / Burmese 130

… When supported by digestive fire and nutriment-produced nutritive essence, these essences successively generate nutriment-produced nutritive octads. Fire, or temperature, in those clusters also successively generates temperature-produced nutritive octads. Discern these processes with knowledge and distinguish each phenomenon until it is seen as an ultimate phenomenon.

2. Consciousness-produced nutritive essence. Each consciousness-produced octad present at the eye door contains nutritive essence. When supported by digestive fire and nutriment-produced essence, consciousness-produced essence likewise generates nutriment-produced nutritive octads for two or three generations. Discern the successive arising of the clusters over those two or three generations.

The two or three generations are stated with reference to ordinary sense-sphere consciousness, as distinct from advanced states of tranquillity and insight meditation. Through the power of exalted and supramundane consciousness, more generations of nutritive octads may arise, because the materiality produced by those consciousnesses spreads farther and is more powerful. (Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 251; Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 403.)

Note. Fire, or temperature, in these clusters can also generate new temperature-produced nutritive octads. When materiality is produced by powerful consciousness such as tranquillity, insight, path or fruition consciousness, the fire in it can produce successive generations of temperature-produced octads within the body and extending outside it …

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 251; Mahāṭīkā, tập 2, tr. 403.

Temperature-produced nutritive essence at the eye door

Miến / Burmese 131

… for a long time. The light of knowledge is also supported by visible objects in these consciousness-produced and temperature-produced material clusters.

3. Temperature-produced nutritive essence. As explained in the discernment of temperature-produced materiality at the eye door, each temperature-produced nutritive octad arising from fire produced by kamma, consciousness, temperature or nutriment contains nutritive essence. Supported by digestive fire and nutriment-produced essence, each such temperature-produced essence in turn brings about ten or twelve successive generations of clusters. Discern this.

“When temperature-originated nutritive essence reaches its phase of presence, it produces a nutritive octad. The nutritive essence in it continues the process for ten or twelve generations.” (Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 252.)

Discern each kind separately, in accordance with the tables for meditation on materiality.

Note. Fire, or temperature, in these nutriment-produced nutritive octads also brings about ten or twelve successive generations of clusters. (Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 403.)

4. Nutriment-produced nutritive essence. As explained, at the eye door nutriment-produced nutritive octads spread owing to the essence of the temperature-produced nutritive octads in the edible nutriment that was consumed. The essence that has acquired the characteristic of nutritive essence in these nutriment-produced clusters is the nutritive essence …

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 252; Mahāṭīkā, tập 2, tr. 403.

Nutriment-produced nutritive essence at the eye door

Miến / Burmese 132

… produced by nutriment. These octads arise continuously with the support of digestive fire. Food eaten on just one occasion can sustain the continuous arising of nutriment-produced clusters for seven days. The nutritive essence in these successive clusters, when sustained by the essence of another nutriment-produced cluster and when it has itself reached its phase of presence, produces successive new clusters. Their number depends on the strength of digestive fire, the kamma-produced fire that digests the food, and on the quality of the supporting essence, the external nutriment consumed. “Dasa dvādasa vāre pavattiṃ yāpeti” means that it continues the arising of materiality for ten or twelve generations. Discern this.

Here the supported nutritive essence belongs to a nutriment-produced nutritive octad. The essence that supports it also belongs to a nutriment-produced nutritive octad. Both the causal essence and the resultant essence are nutriment-produced, but they belong to different clusters.

Note. Every nutriment-produced nutritive octad also contains fire, or temperature. This fire can produce new temperature-produced nutritive octads. Discern this.

A point to remember

Miến / Burmese 133

Every material cluster necessarily contains fire, or temperature, and nutritive essence. As explained, with the appropriate conditions, temperature and nutritive essence in each cluster bring about an increase in clusters in pairs. For example, when the eye decad is analysed, there are ten material phenomena. Among them are fire, or temperature, and nutritive essence. Sustained by clung-to kamma-produced materiality and on reaching its phase of presence, temperature generates a temperature-produced nutritive octad. Likewise, when sustained by digestive fire and nutriment-produced nutritive essence, nutritive essence at its phase of presence generates a new nutriment-produced nutritive octad. These may be called offspring clusters.

Analysing the temperature-produced nutritive octad generated by fire in the eye decad reveals eight material phenomena. These include fire and nutritive essence. They are temperature-produced fire and temperature-produced nutritive essence. With the support of clung-to kamma-produced materiality, this temperature-produced fire in turn generates another temperature-produced nutritive octad. It may be called a grandchild cluster.

“It is called temperature-originated materiality because temperature, with clung-to materiality as its condition and on reaching its phase of presence, produces materiality in the continuum.” (Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 251.)

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 251.

A point about temperature-produced materiality

Miến / Burmese 134

The subcommentary explains that temperature can produce materiality even in the absence of clung-to materiality. In a being's continuum, however, it does not produce materiality wholly apart from that condition. Hence the phrase "with clung-to materiality as its condition." Since temperature of all four origins can produce materiality, the text speaks of temperature of the four origins. (Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 404.) The full transcription and one syntactic detail remain to be checked.

The substance of the commentary and subcommentary is as follows. Fire in each cluster, called temperature, can produce a temperature-produced nutritive octad even when kamma-produced materiality, called clung-to materiality, is absent. Yet during the course of a being's material continuum it does not produce such clusters in isolation from clung-to kamma-produced materiality. Production by fire in the total absence of clung-to kamma-produced materiality is a different case from the one explained here. The commentary accordingly says that fire, or temperature, can produce these clusters only with kamma-produced materiality, called clung-to materiality, as a supporting condition. Of the kinds of fire under discussion, fire in temperature-produced materiality can produce further temperature-produced octads in the absence of clung-to kamma-produced materiality. (Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 251; Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 404.)

More explicitly, this body contains materiality produced by kamma accumulated in the past. It is called clung-to kamma-produced materiality (upādinnaka-kammajarūpa). Kamma performed and accumulated in the past in relation to an object produces these material phenomena as though taking them as "my result." When the kamma conditioning those material phenomena can no longer continue to give its result …

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Mahāṭīkā, tập 2, tr. 404; Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 251.

When kamma-produced materiality ceases

Miến / Burmese 135

… because its time to give results has expired, no new kamma-produced materiality arises. When this materiality is absent, so are the fire element and nutritive essence produced by kamma. The temperature-produced nutritive octads formerly generated by kamma-produced fire cannot arise. Nor can kamma-produced nutritive essence generate nutriment-produced nutritive octads with the support of digestive fire and nutriment-produced nutritive essence.

Likewise, when kamma-produced materiality has ceased, the material bases for mentality, namely eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and heart-base, are absent. Without those bases, consciousness and mental factors in the present five-aggregate continuum lack the conditions to arise. Thus materiality produced by consciousness and its mental factors is no longer produced. Its fire and nutritive essence are consequently absent, as are the temperature-produced octads generated by consciousness-produced fire and the nutriment-produced octads generated by consciousness-produced essence.

Likewise, when kamma-produced materiality has ceased, so has kamma-produced digestive fire. Without its support, temperature-produced nutritive essence in the octads of newly eaten food cannot produce nutriment-produced octads. Without nutriment-produced essence that has acquired the characteristic of nutritive essence, there is also no essence capable of sustaining that in other clusters. At that point the continuum of nutriment-produced clusters at the eye …

Materiality continuing after kamma-produced materiality ceases

Miến / Burmese 136

… has ceased as well.

After kamma-produced materiality ceases, only temperature-produced materiality can continue to arise in the corpse. Its materiality consists of successive temperature-produced nutritive octads generated by fire in each cluster. That fire retains the power to generate new temperature-produced octads even without the support of kamma-produced materiality.

Thus in the living material continuum associated with the faculties, temperature produced by kamma, consciousness or nutriment still needs the support of kamma-produced materiality, called clung-to materiality, to generate new temperature-produced nutritive octads. Fire in temperature-produced octads, when generating new clusters, can do so without that support. Understand temperature-produced materiality in the inanimate world similarly.

The nutritive essence in a temperature-produced octad generated by fire in the eye decad can in turn generate a new nutriment-produced octad when sustained by digestive fire and nutriment-produced nutritive essence. This is a grandchild cluster. Discern in this way how fire and nutritive essence in the temperature-produced octads generated by fire in the eye decad produce temperature- and nutriment-produced clusters successively for four or five generations of offspring and descendants.

Discerning successive production in the clusters

Miến / Burmese 137

The eye decad itself contains kamma-produced nutritive essence. With the support of digestive fire and nutriment-produced nutritive essence, it generates a nutriment-produced nutritive octad. That octad in turn contains fire and nutritive essence. As above, these can generate successive clusters for four or five generations. Discern this, and study closely how the clusters increase in pairs until it is clear. (See Mahāṭīkā, vol. 2, p. 401.)

Discern fire and nutritive essence similarly in each kind of cluster present at the eye, such as the body decad, sex decad, and consciousness-, temperature- and nutriment-produced octads. Discern in the same way at the six doors and in the forty-two bodily components.

A point to note. When successive clusters have arisen for two, three, four, five, ten, twelve or more generations, spreading from within to outside, the fire and nutritive essence in the last generation can no longer generate new temperature- or nutriment-produced clusters.

By carefully remembering this account of how materiality arises, consulting the tables for meditation on materiality and practising systematically under a teacher, the meditator can discern with wisdom the material phenomena produced by the four causes of kamma, consciousness, temperature and nutriment, to the level of ultimate reality.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Mahāṭīkā, tập 2, tr. 401.

The detailed method of four-elements meditation

Miến / Burmese 138

Discerning materiality at the six doors, produced by kamma, consciousness, temperature and nutriment, is the brief method of four-elements meditation. From there one can proceed to the detailed method, which comprises the following bodily components.

1. Earth-element components: 20.
2. Water-element components: 12.
3. Fire-element components: 4.
4. Wind-element components: 6.
Total: 42 components.

The twenty earth components and twelve water components, thirty-two in all, were already presented with their counts of material phenomena in the section on tranquillity meditation subjects. Discern the four elements in each component. When material clusters appear, distinguish the material phenomena according to the method given in the table for the body door.

1. In sweat, tears, saliva and nasal mucus there are sixteen material phenomena in each case: eight in a consciousness-produced cluster and eight in a temperature-produced cluster. They arise from consciousness and temperature.

2. In newly eaten food, old food, pus and urine, there are only the eight material phenomena of a temperature-produced cluster in each case.

Four components in which fire predominates

Miến / Burmese 139

3. In the remaining twenty-four components there are forty-four material phenomena in each, as presented for the body door. Discern them. Distinguish solid fat from liquid fat, and pooled blood from circulating blood. Pooled blood (sannicitalohita) collects around the heart, liver and similar places and does not circulate. Circulating blood (saṃsaraṇalohita) follows the vessels and spreads throughout the body. Discern the forty-four material phenomena in each kind of blood.

The four bodily components in which the fire element predominates:

1. Warming heat (santappanatejo), such as the intense heat of an intermittent fever: thirty-three material phenomena.
2. Burning heat (ḍahatejo), which burns intensely throughout the body: thirty-three.
3. Ageing heat (jīraṇatejo), which causes the body to age, mature and deteriorate: thirty-three.
4. Digestive heat (pācakatejo), which digests food and belongs to the life-faculty nonad: nine.

Note. These four components do not appear as distinct parts with a shape, as the earth and water components do. They are opaque particles of material clusters in which fire predominates. Look for and discern heat-predominant clusters among those particles. If it is difficult to discern warming and burning heat, when experiencing malaria or …

Six components in which wind predominates

Miến / Burmese 140

… another fever, take the sensation of the fever while it is occurring, or as experienced before, and try discerning it.

The thirty-three material phenomena just mentioned comprise nine in the kamma-produced life-faculty nonad, eight in the consciousness-produced nutritive octad, eight in the temperature-produced nutritive octad and eight in the nutriment-produced nutritive octad.

The six bodily components in which the wind element predominates:

1. Upward winds (uddhaṅgamavāta): thirty-three material phenomena.
2. Downward winds (adhogamavāta): thirty-three.
3. Winds in the abdomen outside the intestines (kucchisayavāta): thirty-three.
4. Winds in the intestines (koṭṭhāsayavāta): thirty-three.
5. Winds that follow the vessels and spread through the limbs large and small (aṅgamaṅgānusārīvāta): thirty-three.
6. In-breath and out-breath (assāsapassāsavāta): nine.

The thirty-three are the nine phenomena of the life-faculty nonad and the three nutritive octads produced by consciousness, temperature and nutriment. The life-faculty nonad is kamma-produced.

For each of the six wind-predominant components, first discern clearly with wisdom the wind you intend to examine. For example, when discerning upward winds …

Discerning winds and breathing

Miến / Burmese 141

… first discern the wind moving upwards in places such as within the intestines. If you do not see it, re-establish and strengthen the concentration already attained, step by step. When the light of concentration grows strong, try discerning the wind. Once it is seen with wisdom, proceed to discern the four elements in it, with wind predominant. As you recognize the elements and concentration grows stronger, the material clusters may appear. Analysing them reveals the thirty-three material phenomena already presented. Discern and distinguish these ultimate material phenomena with wisdom.

“Assāsapassāsā — assāsapassāsā cittasamuṭṭhānā.” In-breath and out-breath originate from consciousness. (Visuddhimagga, vol. 1, pp. 345–346.)

In the consciousness-produced component consisting of in-breath and out-breath, sound is also present in addition to the nutritive octad. (Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 223.) The exact Pāli reading before saddo remains to be checked.

According to the commentary, in-breath and out-breath are collections of consciousness-produced sound nonads. Discern the clarity of the life-continuum. Attend closely to see with wisdom the in-breath and out-breath produced by consciousnesses following the life-continuum and dependent on the heart-base. When the breath is seen with wisdom, continue discerning its four elements. As concentration strengthens, the particles of the material clusters …

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 1, tr. 345–346; Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 223.

Clusters in breathing and the nine kamma-produced groups

Miến / Burmese 142

… begin to appear clearly. Through the force of consciousness-produced wind, the earth element in one cluster strikes the earth element in another, or the great elements of different clusters collide very closely. Since sound arises in this way, these are consciousness-produced sound nonads. They arise from consciousnesses dependent on the heart-base. Attend closely to see them with wisdom. When the breath is of good quality, lightness, malleability and wieldiness may also be present. In that case the cluster is a dodecad with sound and lightness and the other two qualities.

For all six components of the wind element, first see the wind and then attend closely to discern its four elements. When the material clusters appear as particles, analyse the material phenomena with wisdom, as explained, to the level of ultimate reality.

Nine kamma-produced material clusters. Grouping the material clusters at the six doors and in the forty-two bodily components by origin gives four kinds: kamma-produced, consciousness-produced, temperature-produced and nutriment-produced. Of these, nine kinds are kamma-produced:

1. Eye decad.
2. Ear decad.
3. Nose decad.
4. Tongue decad.

Nine kamma-produced and eight consciousness-produced clusters

Miến / Burmese 143

5. Body decad.
6. Femininity decad.
7. Masculinity decad.
8. Heart-base decad.
9. Life-faculty nonad.

There are nine kamma-produced clusters altogether. Present kamma-produced materiality arises from kamma performed and accumulated in a past life. Past kamma-produced materiality arose from kamma performed and accumulated before that past time. Future kamma-produced materiality arises either from kamma performed and accumulated in a past life that can ripen in later lives (aparāpariyavedanīya), or from kamma performed and accumulated in the present life that ripens in the next life (upapajjavedanīya). In the section on knowledge discerning conditions, you will understand how these material phenomena arise and can see this for yourself. It belongs to the knowledge of discerning conditions. For now, take these phenomena as materiality arising from kamma.

The kamma-, consciousness-, temperature- and nutriment-produced material phenomena presented at the six doors and in the forty-two components are concrete materiality, uncombined with non-concrete materiality. They can be discerned in insight under the three characteristics. There are also consciousness-, temperature- and nutriment-produced clusters containing non-concrete materiality. Both clusters consisting solely of concrete materiality and clusters containing non-concrete materiality are presented separately below.

Eight consciousness-produced material clusters:

1. Pure consciousness-produced octad.
2. Nonad with bodily intimation as its ninth phenomenon.

Composition of the consciousness-produced clusters

Miến / Burmese 144

3. Undecad with lightness and the other qualities: the octad, lightness, malleability and wieldiness.

4. Dodecad with bodily intimation and lightness and the other qualities: the octad, bodily intimation, lightness, malleability and wieldiness.

5. Decad with verbal intimation and sound: the octad, verbal intimation and sound.

6. Group of thirteen with verbal intimation, sound and lightness and the other qualities: the octad, verbal intimation, sound, lightness, malleability and wieldiness.

7. Consciousness-produced sound nonad in in-breath and out-breath: the octad and sound.

8. Consciousness-produced dodecad with sound and lightness and the other qualities in in-breath and out-breath: the octad, sound, lightness, malleability and wieldiness.

1. The first cluster is the consciousness-produced nutritive octad, present at the six doors and in some of the forty-two bodily components. Its material phenomena are concrete and can be taken as objects of insight. The method of discernment has already been explained.

2. Nonad with bodily intimation. Attend closely to discern the meditating consciousness at the clear mind door, or discern the clarity of the life-continuum, and then try bending and straightening a finger …

Discerning bodily intimation while bending and stretching

Miến / Burmese 145

… Follow the process as far as the finger, discerning how consciousness-produced clusters spread there owing to the consciousnesses intending to bend or straighten and those carrying out the movement. The particles of the material clusters will appear. Each cluster contains eight material phenomena. With bodily intimation, the expression of the bending or straightening movement, there are nine.

3. Undecad with lightness and the other qualities. When discerning the consciousness-produced nutritive octads already described, one can at times see their lightness, malleability and wieldiness. Wieldiness is the ease and flexibility with which a movement such as bending or straightening can be carried out. When these qualities appear clearly, discern them together with the material phenomena of the cluster.

4. Dodecad with bodily intimation and lightness and the other qualities. Discern as for the second cluster. The second does not include the three non-concrete material phenomena of lightness, malleability and wieldiness. The fourth includes all three. They are present when a movement such as bending or straightening is light, agile and flexible. They are absent when the movement is heavy and sluggish. See and distinguish them clearly with wisdom.

Note. In discerning bodily actions and in the practice of clear comprehension, the two clusters with bodily intimation, the nonad and the dodecad, appear clearly and are important. Without knowing how to discern and distinguish them with wisdom, discernment at the level of ultimate reality in the practice of clear comprehension and contemplation of bodily actions …

Discerning verbal intimation and sound

Miến / Burmese 146

… is difficult to achieve.

5. Decad with verbal intimation. Try pronouncing individual syllables such as ka and kha. First discern the clarity of the life-continuum, the mind door. Then see with wisdom the consciousness that intends to pronounce them and the consciousnesses that are pronouncing them. Distinguish the consciousness-produced particles and discern how they spread to places where speech is articulated, such as the throat. See sound arise when the predominant earth element in consciousness-produced clusters strikes the predominant earth element in kamma-produced clusters at the place of articulation. Also distinguish with wisdom the movement of the mouth in speaking or reciting, which is verbal intimation.

6. Group of thirteen with verbal intimation, sound and lightness and the other qualities. Discern as above. When speaking or reciting is easy, flexible and effective, lightness, malleability and wieldiness are also present. The material phenomena of the fifth and sixth clusters appear clearly in the practice of clear comprehension when speaking.

7. Consciousness-produced sound nonad in in-breath and out-breath.
8. Consciousness-produced dodecad with sound, lightness and the other qualities in in-breath and out-breath.

Four temperature-produced material clusters

Miến / Burmese 147

Although one classification recognizes six consciousness-produced material clusters, the Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 223, explains that a consciousness-produced sound nonad occurs in in-breath and out-breath.

“Assāsapassāso iti vā.” Or it is called in-breath and out-breath. (Abhidhamma, vol. 2, p. 86.)

The explanation accords with the Pāli just cited. Discern the four elements in in-breath and out-breath with wisdom. As concentration strengthens, the material clusters begin to appear clearly. Each contains nine material phenomena, including sound. When breathing is light, flexible, gentle and even, lightness, malleability and wieldiness are also present. This is the consciousness-produced dodecad with sound, lightness and the other qualities in in-breath and out-breath.

Four temperature-produced material clusters:

1. Pure temperature-produced octad, with nutritive essence as the eighth phenomenon. These are concrete material phenomena.
2. Temperature-produced sound nonad, comprising the octad and sound. These are concrete material phenomena.
3. Undecad with lightness and the other qualities, comprising the octad, lightness, malleability and wieldiness.
4. Dodecad with sound, lightness and the other qualities, comprising the octad, sound, lightness, malleability and wieldiness.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Abhi, tập 2, tr. 86.

Three kinds of sound

Miến / Burmese 148

Of the four temperature-produced clusters, the first and second consist of concrete materiality suitable for insight. The first occurs at the six doors and in some of the forty-two components. The second includes sounds such as stomach rumbling. These two clusters are found internally and externally, in both the animate and the inanimate world.

The third and fourth contain non-concrete material phenomena, which are unsuitable for insight. These accompanying phenomena are discerned along with the others at the stage of distinguishing mentality and materiality. These two clusters are absent from external inanimate objects and occur only in the continua of beings, internally and externally. For insight, when lightness, malleability and wieldiness are set aside, these clusters correspond to the first and second respectively. Remember that only concrete materiality is an object of insight.

Three kinds of sound:

1. The sound of breathing belongs to the consciousness-produced sound nonad in in-breath and out-breath.
2. The sound of speech belongs to the decad with verbal intimation.
3. Sounds such as stomach rumbling or wind blowing belong to the temperature-produced sound nonad.

The first two occur only in the continua of living beings, internally and externally. The third occurs in both animate and inanimate things. Sounds such as wind blowing belong to temperature-produced sound nonads in inanimate things. Strengthen concentration gradually. When the light becomes strong …

Two nutriment-produced material clusters

Miến / Burmese 149

… use that light to direct attention to the wind that is blowing. When you see the wind, discern its four elements. When concentration is strong enough, the material clusters begin to appear clearly. Discern the nine ultimate material phenomena. Finger snapping, impact, the sound of a flute and similar sounds can be discerned in the same way. Verbal intimation is unsuitable for insight. Sound and the concrete material phenomena arising in the same cluster as sound have an origin and are suitable for insight.

Two nutriment-produced material clusters:

1. Pure nutriment-produced octad, with nutritive essence as the eighth phenomenon.
2. Undecad with lightness and the other qualities, with wieldiness as the eleventh phenomenon.

The first can be found at the six doors and in some of the forty-two components wherever nutriment-produced clusters occur. It is concrete materiality suitable for insight.

The second is also found at the six doors and in some components where nutriment-produced clusters occur, but it contains non-concrete materiality. These non-concrete phenomena are unsuitable for insight and are discerned along with the other phenomena only when distinguishing materiality. For insight, set aside the non-concrete phenomena and discern only concrete materiality. When this is done …

Discerning the four characteristics of materiality

Miến / Burmese 150

… the material phenomena suitable for insight are the same as in the first cluster. Both clusters occur only in the continua of living beings, internally and externally.

Production (upacaya) can be discerned when one can discern materiality from its first appearance at rebirth-linking in the kalala stage until the faculties have fully developed. Continuity (santati), ageing (jaratā) and impermanence (aniccatā) are the arising, presence and dissolution of concrete materiality at the six doors and in the forty-two bodily components.

First analyse the individual clusters at the six doors and in the forty-two components. Discern how the eight, nine or ten concrete material phenomena in each cluster arise, remain and dissolve together. Then, at each door and in each component in turn, discern the arising, presence and dissolution of the concrete material phenomena present there. Finally, gather together all the discernible concrete material phenomena at the six doors and in the forty-two components and discern arising, presence and dissolution.

Note. This does not mean that all material phenomena arise, remain and dissolve simultaneously. The point is to gather the material phenomena suitable for insight and discern them under the phases of arising, presence and dissolution (uppāda, ṭhiti, bhaṅga).

The arising and dissolution of materiality

Miến / Burmese 151

The way material phenomena arise and dissolve requires some explanation. Their lifespan is measured as seventeen mind-moments. Each mind-moment has three submoments: arising (uppāda), presence (ṭhiti) and dissolution (bhaṅga). Materiality thus lasts for seventeen full mind-moments, or fifty-one submoments. Its lifespan is neither shorter nor longer than that.

Take any mind-moment and call it moment one. Throughout life, as long as kamma can give results, kamma-produced material clusters arise at the arising, presence and dissolution submoments of each consciousness. Materiality that arises at the arising of consciousness one dissolves at the dissolution of consciousness seventeen. Materiality that arises at the presence of consciousness one dissolves at the arising of consciousness eighteen. Materiality that arises at the dissolution of consciousness one dissolves at the presence of consciousness eighteen. Seventeen and eighteen are counted from the moment conventionally designated as one.

Throughout life, consciousness-produced materiality arises at the arising submoment of each consciousness dependent on the heart-base. Materiality produced concurrently with the arising of the consciousness conventionally called one dissolves at the dissolution submoment of the consciousness conventionally called seventeen.

When the fire element begins producing materiality

Miến / Burmese 152

The fire element in all four kinds of clusters, produced by kamma, consciousness, temperature and nutriment, can produce temperature-produced materiality when it reaches the material phase of presence. Kamma-produced materiality arising at the arising of consciousness one reaches its material phase of presence at the presence of that same consciousness. The kamma-produced fire in it generates corresponding temperature-produced materiality.

Likewise, kamma-produced materiality that arose at the dissolution of the consciousness immediately preceding consciousness one reaches presence at the arising of consciousness one. Each instance of kamma-produced fire in that materiality produces a corresponding temperature-produced cluster. The temperature-produced materiality arises concurrently with the arising of consciousness one.

Kamma-produced materiality arising at the dissolution of consciousness one reaches presence at the arising of consciousness two. Its kamma-produced fire can generate corresponding temperature-produced nutritive octads. Kamma-produced materiality arising at the presence of consciousness one reaches its material presence at the dissolution of that consciousness. Its kamma-produced fire then generates new temperature-produced nutritive octads. Thus temperature-produced materiality generated by kamma-produced fire can arise at the arising, presence or dissolution submoment of consciousness. Likewise, when seventeen mind-moments or fifty-one submoments are complete …

Temperature- and nutriment-produced materiality at the submoments

Miến / Burmese 153

… materiality can cease at the corresponding arising, presence or dissolution submoment of consciousness.

Since consciousness-produced materiality arises at the arising of consciousness, it reaches its material phase of presence at the presence of that consciousness. Its consciousness-produced fire, or temperature, then generates new temperature-produced nutritive octads. Counting that consciousness as the first, the temperature-produced materiality dissolves at the arising of the eighteenth consciousness, when its lifespan of seventeen mind-moments or fifty-one submoments is complete. The wording of the parenthetical phrase concerning presence remains to be checked.

The temperature-produced fire in temperature-produced materiality, discussed earlier, can also produce a new temperature-produced cluster at its phase of presence. Since temperature-produced materiality can arise at all three submoments of consciousness, its fire can produce temperature-produced materiality at the arising, presence or dissolution of consciousness. Likewise, when seventeen mind-moments or fifty-one submoments are complete, that materiality can dissolve at the corresponding arising, presence or dissolution submoment.

Nutriment-produced materiality can also arise and dissolve at any of the three submoments of consciousness. Kamma-produced materiality can arise at all three; consciousness-produced materiality can arise at the arising submoment; and temperature-produced materiality can arise at the arising, presence …

Arising, presence and dissolution within a single mind-moment

Miến / Burmese 154

… or dissolution submoment. Nutriment-produced material phenomena generated by nutritive essence can therefore arise at all three submoments. When nutritive essence of the four origins has reached presence, if sustained by nutriment-produced nutritive essence in another cluster it can generate new nutriment-produced nutritive octads. Since nutriment-produced materiality can arise at the arising, presence or dissolution of consciousness, the fire in it can likewise reach presence at any of these submoments and produce a new temperature-produced nutritive octad. That materiality can likewise cease at all three kinds of submoment.

Consider any one mind-moment. Among material phenomena produced by kamma, consciousness, temperature and nutriment, some are arising at the very arising of that consciousness, some are still present because their seventeen mind-moments or fifty-one submoments are not yet complete, and others are dissolving because their lifespan is complete.

Take an ordinary example. Untwist a tightly wound piece of coir rope. You can see that it is made of many fibres of various lengths: four inches, five inches, a span, a cubit and so forth. Looking at any one point along the rope, you can see the beginnings of some fibres, the ends of others and the middle portions of others.

How continuity conceals arising and dissolution

Miến / Burmese 155

As in the example, at each submoment of consciousness, whether arising, presence or dissolution, there are material phenomena that are arising, others that are dissolving and others that are present. Since materiality and mentality arise differently and these material phenomena follow one another, someone who has not seen materiality with wisdom at the ultimate level recognizes only conventional masses and groups.

Mental phenomena do not occur as two or three consciousnesses coexisting in a single mind-moment. Another consciousness can arise only when the preceding one has ceased. As for materiality, at each submoment many material phenomena can arise, many can dissolve and many can remain present. The duration of arising is the same for consciousness and materiality, and so is that of dissolution. The duration of presence differs. Materiality remains present for sixteen mind-moments and one submoment, or forty-nine submoments. The presence of some material phenomena overlaps that of others, with some clusters overlapping for several mind-moments. Material phenomena arise, dissolve and remain present in succession.

If the compactness of continuity (santatighana) cannot be broken down, one takes the succession as a single, continuous entity. One thinks, “I was the same yesterday and today,” or “That person was the same yesterday and today.” Mistakenly one clings to the actual existence of an I, another person, a man, a woman, a person or a being. While that clinging prevails, penetrating insight that sees accurately at the ultimate level remains distant.

When to discern “materiality, materiality”

Miến / Burmese 156

“So sabbānipi tāni ruppanalakkhaṇena ekato katvā ‘etaṃ rūpan’ti passati.” The meditator groups all these phenomena by their characteristic of alteration and sees, “This is materiality.” (Visuddhimagga, vol. 2, p. 223.)

At this point the meditator can discern and distinguish with wisdom both concrete and non-concrete materiality at the six doors and in the forty-two components, at the ultimate level. Take as the object the difference within the material continuum: the material phenomena that arise later differ in appearance from those that arose earlier. Since all share the characteristic of alteration (ruppanalakkhaṇa), the Visuddhimagga teaches grouping them and discerning, “This is materiality.” Following that instruction, one can now group all the concrete and non-concrete materiality at the six doors and in the forty-two components and discern “material phenomena, material phenomena.”

If you cannot yet see and gather all the material phenomena at the six doors and in the forty-two components, first gather, at each door, the fifty-four or forty-four concrete material phenomena and any discernible non-concrete material phenomena according to their common characteristic of alteration. Then discern in one of the following ways:

1. “This is materiality, materiality.”
2. “Material phenomena, material phenomena.”
3. “Materiality, materiality.”

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 2, tr. 223.

The characteristic of alteration

Miến / Burmese 157

Do likewise with the forty-two components. In each component, gather the discernible concrete and non-concrete material phenomena and discern them together by their characteristic of alteration.

When you can gather the material phenomena at each door or in each component and discern and distinguish them with wisdom, gather all the concrete and non-concrete material phenomena at the six doors and in the forty-two components according to their common characteristic of alteration. Discern them in one of these ways:

1. “This is materiality, materiality.”
2. “Material phenomena, material phenomena.”
3. “Materiality, materiality.”

The characteristic of alteration. Owing to adverse conditions such as heat or cold, the material continuum arises differently, changing to another form. When heat becomes excessive, material continua with more heat arise in succession. When cold becomes excessive, material continua with more cold arise in succession. That is the meaning of alteration here. Ultimate phenomena such as the earth element in each of these continua retain their own characteristics, such as hardness or flowing. Because their own characteristics do not change, they are called ultimate realities.

Points to remember in discerning materiality

Miến / Burmese 158

1. Before seeing material clusters, take each individual characteristic of the four elements as an object to develop concentration, with mindfulness and clear comprehension, as far as access concentration. At this stage discern only earth, water, fire and wind.

2. Once you can see and analyse the clusters, discern the material phenomena in each cluster at the ultimate level: for example, earth, water, fire, wind, colour, odour, taste, nutritive essence, life faculty and eye sensitivity. Discern them cluster by cluster.

3. When you can gather material phenomena at one door or in one component, or all the material phenomena throughout the body at the six doors and in the forty-two components, by their common characteristic of alteration, discern them in one of these ways:

1. “This is materiality, materiality.”
2. “Material phenomena, material phenomena.”
3. “Materiality, materiality.”

Rouse diligence. In the Great Discourse on the Cowherd (Mahāgopālakasutta) in the Majjhima Nikāya and its commentary, the meditating bhikkhu is discussed as follows … (Majjhima Nikāya, vol. 1, p. 282; Majjhima Commentary, vol. 2, pp. 163–164.)

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Ma, tập 1, tr. 282; Ma-ṭṭha, tập 2, tr. 163–164.

Knowing materiality by number and origin

Miến / Burmese 159

1. Know all materiality, the great elements and derived materiality, as twenty-eight kinds.

2. Know their causes and origins:
(a) Which are kamma-produced.
(b) Which are consciousness-produced.
(c) Which are temperature-produced.
(d) Which are nutriment-produced.
(e) Which arise from one cause.
(f) Which arise from two causes.
(g) Which arise from three causes.
(h) Which arise from all four causes.
(i) Which are not produced by any cause, namely the four characteristics of materiality.

Without analysing and discerning in this way with wisdom, one cannot see. Without seeing, one cannot know. Without knowing, one cannot discern clearly. Without clear discernment, one cannot attain path, fruition and Nibbāna. Only when one can discern, see, know, recognize clearly and distinguish with wisdom can one attain path, fruition and Nibbāna. (Majjhima Nikāya, vol. 1, p. 282; Majjhima Commentary, vol. 2, pp. 163–164.)

Therefore a meditator aspiring to the noble and peaceful state of Nibbāna should analyse with wisdom the material phenomena that are evident as produced by kamma, consciousness, temperature and nutriment, down to each ultimate constituent of each material cluster …

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Ma, tập 1, tr. 282; Ma-ṭṭha, tập 2, tr. 163–164.

Diligence in knowing materiality as it really is

Miến / Burmese 160

… Discern and distinguish each constituent with wisdom until ultimate reality is seen. Only when you can discern and distinguish materiality at the six doors and in the forty-two components as described can you know as it really is both the number of the twenty-eight kinds and the origin of each.

If you have not seen the clusters with wisdom, or have seen them but cannot distinguish their constituents at the ultimate level, knowing the twenty-eight kinds and which arises from which cause remains as far off as the sky is from the earth. Thus, if you aspire to the Nibbāna taught by the Buddha and to the accurate insight knowledge that leads to it, strive diligently to discern and distinguish materiality with wisdom in both respects, number and origin, as presented in the canonical text, commentary and subcommentary.

If a meditator holds that even without knowing as it really is:

1. The number of the twenty-eight kinds of materiality.
2. Their origin, that is, which material phenomenon arises from which cause.

… insight knowledge can nevertheless be attained …

Conclusion of the discernment of materiality

Miến / Burmese 161

… and path, fruition and Nibbāna can be reached, then on that view the meditator would have to establish a teaching opposed to that of the Perfectly Enlightened Buddha, who possessed omniscient knowledge. To reject the instructions that he analysed and taught with omniscient knowledge, the meditator would first need to possess in their own continuum a kind of wisdom superior to that omniscient knowledge.

Postures and clear comprehension

Miến / Burmese 162

The section on postures (iriyāpatha) and clear comprehension (sampajañña).

How to contemplate postures with clear comprehension

Miến / Burmese 163

“Kiñcāpi hi yaṃ kiñci kammaṭṭhānaṃ satassa sampajānasseva sampajjati.” Any meditation subject succeeds only for one who is mindful and clearly comprehending. (Visuddhimagga, vol. 1, p. 276.)

According to this commentary, whether practising a subject of tranquillity or insight, the meditator should contemplate systematically according to the methods in the sections on postures and clear comprehension. A brief account follows.

“Puna caparaṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhu —
1. Gacchanto vā ‘gacchāmī’ti pajānāti.
2. Ṭhito vā ‘ṭhitomhī’ti pajānāti.
3. Nisinno vā ‘nisinnomhī’ti pajānāti.
4. Sayāno vā ‘sayānomhī’ti pajānāti.” (Majjhima Nikāya, vol. 1, p. 71.)

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Visuddhimagga, tập 1, tr. 276; Ma, tập 1, tr. 71.

The four postures and seven groups of activities

Miến / Burmese 164

Again, bhikkhus, the meditating bhikkhu:

1. When walking, clearly knows, “I am walking.”
2. When standing, clearly knows, “I am standing.”
3. When sitting, clearly knows, “I am sitting.”
4. When lying down, clearly knows, “I am lying down.” (Majjhima Nikāya, vol. 1, p. 71.)

This is the method of contemplation in the section on postures.

“Puna caparaṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhu —
1. Abhikkante paṭikkante sampajānakārī hoti.
2. Ālokite vilokite sampajānakārī hoti.
3. Samiñjite pasārite sampajānakārī hoti.
4. Saṅghāṭipattacīvaradhāraṇe sampajānakārī hoti.
5. Asite pīte khāyite sāyite sampajānakārī hoti.
6. Uccārapassāvakamme sampajānakārī hoti.
7. Gate ṭhite nisinne sutte jāgarite bhāsite tuṇhībhāve sampajānakārī hoti.” (Majjhima Nikāya, vol. 1, p. 72.)

Again, bhikkhus, the meditating bhikkhu:

1. Acts with clear comprehension when going forward and returning.
2. Acts with clear comprehension when looking ahead and looking around.
3. Acts with clear comprehension when bending and stretching.
4. Acts with clear comprehension when carrying the outer robe, bowl and robes.
5. Acts with clear comprehension when eating, drinking, chewing and tasting.
6. Acts with clear comprehension when defecating and urinating.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Ma, tập 1, tr. 71; Ma, tập 1, tr. 72.

The relation between postures and clear comprehension

Miến / Burmese 165

7. Acts with clear comprehension when walking, standing, sitting, sleeping, waking, speaking and remaining silent. (Majjhima Nikāya, vol. 1, p. 72.)

This is the method of contemplation in the section on clear comprehension.

Of these two passages, the first sets out the preliminary method of contemplation under postures and the second that under clear comprehension. The two methods are related. The commentary and subcommentary explain in detail how to practise in accordance with the Buddha's intention. These explanations are summarized here.

"Gacchanto vā gacchāmīti pajānāti, ṭhito vā ṭhitomhīti pajānāti, nisinno vā nisinnomhīti pajānāti, sayāno vā sayānomhīti pajānātī"ti imasmiñhi ṭhāne addhānairiyāpathā kathitā. "Abhikkante paṭikkante ālokite vilokite samiñjite pasārite"ti imasmiṃ majjhimā. "Gate ṭhite nisinne sutte jāgarite"ti idha pana khuddakacuṇṇikairiyāpathā kathitā. Tasmā etesupi vuttanayeneva sampajānakāritā veditabbā.

In the passage on knowing that one is walking, standing, sitting or lying down, sustained postures are explained. Going forward and returning, looking ahead and looking around, bending and stretching are postures of intermediate duration. In the passage on walking, standing, sitting, sleeping and waking, brief postures are explained. Acting with clear comprehension should be understood here too according to the method already stated. (Majjhima Commentary, vol. 1, p. 273.)

In the section on postures the Buddha teaches insight while walking, standing, sitting and lying down. In the section on clear comprehension he teaches insight during activities such as going forward and returning. Then, in that same section, with the words "when walking, when standing" and so on, he again teaches insight in the postures of walking, standing, sitting and lying down. Thus it occurs once under postures and twice under clear comprehension. All three concern walking, standing …

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Ma, tập 1, tr. 72; Ma-ṭṭha, tập 1, tr. 273.

Three durations of posture

Miến / Burmese 166

… sitting and lying down. The Buddha taught insight contemplation on these occasions. The commentary explains the teaching as just cited. Its substance is as follows.

1. The four postures of walking, standing, sitting and lying down in the section on postures refer to sustained postures. When walking, standing, sitting or lying down for a long time, discern the mental and material phenomena of the five aggregates. Contemplate those phenomena and their conditions under the three characteristics.

2. The six activities of going forward, returning, looking ahead, looking around, bending and stretching refer to postures of intermediate duration. While engaged in these activities, for example when going for alms, discern the mental and material phenomena of the five aggregates and contemplate them and their conditions under the three characteristics.

3. The five activities of walking, standing, sitting, sleeping and waking in the seventh item of clear comprehension refer to brief postures, such as walking from one place to another in the monastery, walking in meditation, or shifting forward or back during sitting meditation. Even in these brief postures at the monastery, whether walking, standing, sitting or lying down, discern the mental and material phenomena of the five aggregates and contemplate them and their conditions under the three characteristics …

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Ma-ṭṭha, tập 1, tr. 273.

Contemplation during and after an activity

Miến / Burmese 167

… in the practice of insight. (Majjhima Commentary, vol. 1, p. 273.)

The commentary also gives the view of the Elder Mahāsīva of Rohaṇa. His view is as follows.

In the postures of walking, standing, sitting and lying down, and in the activities of going forward, returning, looking ahead, looking around, bending and stretching, the instruction is to discern the mental and material phenomena of the five aggregates while actually doing those things and contemplate them and their conditions under the three characteristics.

The instruction in the seventh item, “gate ṭhite nisinne sutte jāgarite bhāsite tuṇhībhāve,” concerns clear comprehension after walking, standing, sitting, sleeping, waking or speaking, or while remaining silent. After completing the activity, discern and contemplate with insight the mental and material phenomena that arose during it. The commentary presents the Elder Mahāsīva’s explanation in this way. See the commentary for the fuller account. (Majjhima Commentary, vol. 1, pp. 273–274.)

1. Following these instructions, while walking, standing, sitting, lying down, going forward, returning, looking ahead, looking around, bending or stretching, discern and contemplate with insight the mental and material phenomena then present.

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Ma-ṭṭha, tập 1, tr. 273; Ma-ṭṭha, tập 1, tr. 273–274.

The knowing that relinquishes the notion of a being

Miến / Burmese 168

2. After walking, standing, sitting, sleeping or waking, discern and contemplate with insight the past mental and material phenomena that arose while walking, standing, sitting, sleeping, lying down or waking.

While walking, contemplate with insight the mental and material phenomena then present. After walking, discern and contemplate those that arose during the walk. How is this done? The answer is as follows.

Tattha kāmaṃ soṇasiṅgālādayopi gacchantā ‘gacchāmā’ti jānanti. Na panetaṃ evarūpaṃ jānanaṃ sandhāya vuttaṃ. Evarūpañhi jānanaṃ sattūpaladdhiṃ na pajahati, attasaññaṃ na ugghāṭeti, kammaṭṭhānaṃ vā satipaṭṭhānabhāvanā vā na hoti. Imassa pana bhikkhuno jānanaṃ sattūpaladdhiṃ pajahati, attasaññaṃ ugghāṭeti, kammaṭṭhānañceva satipaṭṭhānabhāvanā ca hoti. Idañhi “ko gacchati, kassa gamanaṃ, kiṃ kāraṇā gacchatī”ti evaṃ sampajānanaṃ sandhāya vuttaṃ. Ṭhānādīsupi eseva nayo.

Even dogs and jackals know, as they walk, “We are walking.” The instruction was given with a different kind of knowing in mind. That ordinary knowing does not relinquish the notion of a being or uproot the perception of self, and it does not constitute a meditation subject or the development of the establishments of mindfulness. The knowing of this bhikkhu relinquishes the notion of a being, uproots the perception of self, and constitutes both a meditation subject and the development of the establishments of mindfulness. The instruction refers to clear comprehension in this sense: “Who walks? Whose walking is it? For what reason does walking occur?” The same applies to standing and the other postures. (Majjhima Commentary, vol. 1, pp. 255–256.)

In the contemplation of postures and clear comprehension, even animals such as dogs and jackals know, when they walk, “We are walking.” The Buddha’s teaching concerns a different kind of knowing. The animals’ knowing does not remove the view that there is a being, uproot the perception of self, or constitute an insight meditation subject or the development of the establishments of mindfulness. The knowing of the meditating bhikkhu …

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Ma-ṭṭha, tập 1, tr. 255–256.

Who walks, whose walking it is, and why it occurs

Miến / Burmese 169

… removes the notion of a being and uproots the perception of self. It constitutes both an insight meditation subject and the development of the establishments of mindfulness. The bhikkhu understands through three questions:

1. Who walks?
2. Whose walking is it?
3. For what reason does walking occur?

It was with this knowing in mind that the Buddha taught contemplation of postures and clear comprehension. The same method applies to standing and the other postures. (Majjhima Commentary, vol. 1, pp. 255–256.)

Tattha ko gacchatīti na koci satto vā puggalo vā gacchati. Kassa gamananti na kassaci sattassa vā puggalassa vā gamanaṃ. Kiṃ kāraṇā gacchatīti cittakiriyavāyodhātuvipphārena gacchati. Tasmā esa evaṃ pajānāti: ‘gacchāmī’ti cittaṃ uppajjati, taṃ vāyaṃ janeti, vāyo viññattiṃ janeti. Cittakiriyavāyodhātuvipphārena sakalakāyassa purato abhinīhāro gamananti vuccati. Ṭhānādīsupi eseva nayo.

Here, “Who walks?” No being or individual walks. “Whose walking is it?” It is not the walking of any being or individual. “For what reason does walking occur?” It occurs through the activity of the wind element set in motion by consciousness. The meditator understands that the thought “I will walk” arises, generates wind, and the wind generates intimation. The advance of the whole body through this activity of the wind element is called walking. The same applies to standing and the other postures. (Majjhima Commentary, vol. 1, p. 256.)

Vāyaṃ janetīti vāyodhātuadhikaṃ rūpakalāpaṃ janeti. Adhikatā cettha sāmatthiyato, na pamāṇato. Gamanacittasamuṭṭhitaṃ sahajātarūpakāyassa thambhanasandhāraṇacalanānaṃ paccayabhūtena ākāravisesena pavattamānaṃ vāyodhātuṃ sandhāyāha “vāyo viññattiṃ janetī”ti.

To generate wind means to generate a cluster in which the wind element predominates in efficacy. The expression “wind generates intimation” refers to the wind element produced by the intention to walk, as it occurs in a particular mode that conditions the stiffening, support and movement of the co-arising material body. (Majjhima Subcommentary, vol. 1, p. 352.)

1. As to “Who walks?”, no being or individual walks …

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Ma-ṭṭha, tập 1, tr. 255–256; Ma-ṭṭha, tập 1, tr. 256; Ma-ṭīkā, tập 1, tr. 352.

The intention to walk and the wind element

Miến / Burmese 170

… there is no substantial individual or being acting as the walker.

2. As to “Whose walking is it?”, it is not the walking of any being or individual.

3. For what reason does walking occur? The consciousness that intends to walk generates the wind element. Material clusters in which the force of the wind element predominates spread throughout the body and walking occurs. In other words, mentality and materiality bring about the action. The meditating bhikkhu therefore knows as follows:

1. The consciousness intending to walk arises, together with its associated phenomena.
2. That consciousness generates the wind element, that is, it produces material clusters in which the force of the wind element predominates. Predominance here refers to its characteristic and efficacy, rather than its quantity or size.
3. The predominant wind element generates bodily intimation, producing either the bodily-intimation nonad or the dodecad with bodily intimation, lightness and the other qualities.
4. The consciousness-produced wind element with predominant efficacy …

Materiality that brings about movement and materiality that is moved

Miến / Burmese 171

… namely, the clusters and material phenomena with predominant wind, spreads throughout the body and brings about walking.

5. The appearance of the entire material body of the four origins as though carried forward, with collections of material phenomena arising successively at new locations ahead, is called walking. (Majjhima Commentary, vol. 1, p. 256.)

This instruction is easier for a meditator already skilled in discerning materiality of the four origins at the six doors and in the forty-two components, especially consciousness-produced materiality. It is important to remember that ultimate phenomena do not move from one place to another, and that ultimate material phenomena arise in collections called material clusters. Distinguish two kinds of materiality:

1. Materiality that brings about movement.
2. Materiality that is moved.

Also distinguish two kinds:

1. Prominent materiality (padhāna).
2. Less prominent materiality (appadhāna).

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Ma-ṭṭha, tập 1, tr. 256.

Two ways of distinguishing materiality in postures

Miến / Burmese 172

In the section on postures the Buddha taught two methods. The first begins, “Gacchanto vā ‘gacchāmī’ti pajānāti,” when walking, one clearly knows, “I am walking.” The second begins, “Yathā yathā vā panassa…”. In the first method:

1. The material phenomena in the bodily-intimation nonad and the dodecad with bodily intimation, lightness and the other qualities are called posture materiality and are prominent. They bring about movement.
2. The remaining materiality of the four origins throughout the body, at the six doors and in the forty-two components, is less prominent. It is the materiality that is moved.

In the second method, taught with the words “Yathā yathā vā panassa…”:

1. The material phenomena in the bodily-intimation nonad and the dodecad with bodily intimation, lightness and the other qualities are called posture materiality and are less prominent. They still bring about movement.
2. The remaining materiality of the four origins throughout the body is prominent. It is still the materiality that is moved.

Do the material phenomena that bring about movement actually carry the materiality of the four origins from one place to another …

Material phenomena arise at new locations

Miến / Burmese 173

… or not? They do not. Materiality of the four origins is not actually carried away. Through the force of the wind element in consciousness-produced clusters, produced by the intention to walk and by the consciousnesses involved in walking, materiality of the four origins appears as though it were moved. It does not arise again at the old location but arises at new locations.

Purato abhinīhāro purato bhāgena kāyassa pavattanaṃ, yo “abhikkamo”ti vuccati.

The subcommentary explains that carrying forward means the continuation of the body in a forward direction, which is called advancing. (Majjhima Subcommentary, vol. 1, p. 352.)

Carrying forward means that collections of material phenomena of the four origins appear in front. This mode of arising is called stepping forward or advancing.

Among the phenomena appearing as that which brings about movement is bodily intimation, also called posture materiality. It occurs in the bodily-intimation nonad and the dodecad with bodily intimation, lightness and the other qualities. These are consciousness-produced. Material phenomena appearing as that which is moved are of all four origins, including consciousness-produced materiality. To avoid confusion, the distinction is explained further below.

1. All seventy-five consciousnesses known as mind element or mind-consciousness element, after excluding the four immaterial resultants and the ten instances of fivefold sense consciousness, arise dependent on the heart-base. From the first life-continuum onwards, at each arising submoment they produce consciousness-originated materiality, namely consciousness-produced nutritive octads …

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Ma-ṭīkā, tập 1, tr. 352.

Consciousnesses that produce and sustain posture materiality

Miến / Burmese 174

… By its nature, consciousness can produce materiality only at its arising submoment. It cannot produce consciousness-originated materiality during presence or dissolution. A single arising of consciousness can produce many consciousness-produced clusters.

“Hetū hetusampayuttakānaṃ dhammānaṃ taṃsamuṭṭhānānañca rūpānaṃ hetupaccayena paccayo.” Roots condition the phenomena associated with them and the material phenomena originating from them by way of root condition. (Paṭṭhāna, vol. 1, p. 1.)

“Cittādhipati cittasampayuttakānaṃ dhammānaṃ taṃsamuṭṭhānānañca rūpānaṃ adhipatipaccayena paccayo.” Predominant consciousness conditions the phenomena associated with it and the material phenomena originating from it by way of predominance condition. (Paṭṭhāna, vol. 1, p. 2.)

These teachings use the plural “taṃsamuṭṭhānānañca rūpānaṃ,” the material phenomena originating from them, when speaking of consciousness-produced materiality. They indicate that one consciousness can produce many consciousness-produced clusters.

2. The twenty-six exalted and supramundane absorption impulsions, when arising in a realm of five aggregates, also produce consciousness-produced nutritive octads. They can sustain an existing posture and keep it steady but do not produce a new posture.

3. The twenty-two consciousnesses comprising mind-door adverting, sense-sphere impulsions and smile-producing consciousness:
(a) Produce consciousness-produced nutritive octads.
(b) Sustain an existing posture.
(c) Produce both kinds of intimation and can thus produce new posture materiality.
(Abhidhamma Commentary, vol. 1, pp. 361–362.)

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Paṭṭhāna, tập 1, tr. 1; Paṭṭhāna, tập 1, tr. 2; Abhi-ṭṭha, tập 1, tr. 361–362.

Consciousness-produced materiality occurs on both sides

Miến / Burmese 175

According to this classification, the two consciousness-produced clusters containing posture materiality, that is, intimation, generated by consciousnesses capable of producing posture materiality, belong to the material phenomena appearing as that which brings about movement. The nutritive octads generated by the remaining consciousnesses belong to the material phenomena appearing as that which is moved. Thus consciousness-produced materiality occurs on both sides.

In this method of contemplating posture, prominent materiality is posture materiality, the material phenomena containing intimation. They make the materiality of the four origins called the body appear to walk. No actual carrying takes place. The phenomena arise in succession at new locations and thereby appear to be carried. Ultimate phenomena do not move from one place to another. They cease where they arise.

As long as the supporting power of kamma, consciousness, temperature and nutriment has not run out, new material phenomena continue to arise in succession with the support of those conditions. They arise at new locations rather than at exactly the same location. This uninterrupted succession at new locations is due to the power of the great elements with predominant wind in the bodily-intimation nonads and the dodecads with bodily intimation, lightness and the other qualities …

Practising while standing and then walking

Miến / Burmese 176

… Bodily intimation in the clusters that bring about movement supports the arising of new materiality at the locations required by the intention of the mind.

The method of discernment. Stand in one place and progressively develop the concentration already attained up to the fourth jhāna. When the light is strong and bright, define the four elements and discern with wisdom the materiality present at the six doors and in the forty-two components. Then discern the clarity of the life-continuum and the consciousness that intends to walk. Walk a little. Discern the bodily-intimation nonads and the dodecads with bodily intimation, lightness and the other qualities produced by the intention to walk. Discern them at the ultimate level. They are posture materiality.

See bodily intimation as the expression of walking, due to the four co-arising great elements with the wind element predominant in efficacy. Once this is understood, give priority to the prominent material phenomena appearing as that which brings about movement, namely the bodily-intimation nonads and the dodecads with bodily intimation, lightness and the other qualities. As wisdom becomes sharper, discern the materiality of the four origins at the six doors and in the forty-two components appearing as that which is moved, namely the less prominent materiality. Discern separately materiality that brings about movement and materiality that is moved. When you can gather all of it together and discern it …

Knowing the posture of the body

Miến / Burmese 177

… discern it in one of the following ways:

1. “This is materiality, materiality.”
2. “Material phenomena, material phenomena.”
3. “Materiality, materiality.”

Contemplate similarly when standing, sitting and lying down.

“Yathā yathā vā panassa kāyo paṇihito hoti”

The contemplation of postures has a further part. The Buddha taught another way of contemplating posture as follows.

“Yathā yathā vā panassa kāyo paṇihito hoti, tathā tathā naṃ pajānāti.” However the bhikkhu’s body, a collection of material phenomena, is disposed, exists or arises, he clearly knows it in that way. (Majjhima Nikāya, vol. 1, p. 71.)

The commentary and subcommentary explain the substance of this contemplation as follows.

“Yathā yathā vā panassa kāyo paṇihito hoti, tathā tathā naṃ pajānātī”ti sabbasaṅgāhikavacanametaṃ. Idaṃ vuttaṃ hoti: yena yena vā ākārena tassa kāyo ṭhito hoti, tena tena naṃ pajānāti. Gamanākārena ṭhitaṃ gacchatīti pajānāti. Ṭhānanisajjāsayanākārena ṭhitaṃ sayānoti pajānātīti.

The meaning is that however the body is disposed, he knows it in that way. If the body is walking, he knows that it is walking. If it is standing, sitting or lying down, he knows it accordingly. (Majjhima Commentary, vol. 1, p. 257.)

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Ma, tập 1, tr. 71; Ma-ṭṭha, tập 1, tr. 257.

A discourse phrase that includes all four postures

Miến / Burmese 178

Sabbasaṅgāhikavacananti sabbesaṃ catunnampi iriyāpathānaṃ saṅgaṇhanavacanaṃ. Pubbe visuṃ visuṃ iriyāpathānaṃ vuttattā idaṃ tesaṃ ekajjhaṃ gahetvā vacananti attho.

The subcommentary explains that all four postures are included without exception. Earlier, the postures were stated individually. Here, the discourse phrase brings all four together. (Majjhima Subcommentary, vol. 1, p. 353.)

“Yathā yathā vā panassa kāyo paṇihito hoti, tathā tathā naṃ pajānāti.” However the bhikkhu’s body, a collection of material phenomena, is disposed, exists or arises, he clearly knows it in that way. This instruction covers all four postures. Earlier the Buddha taught each posture separately in such phrases as “Gacchanto vā ‘gacchāmī’ti pajānāti,” when walking, he clearly knows, “I am walking.” Thus the subsequent phrase beginning “Yathā yathā vā panassa…” restates the teaching and brings the four postures together. (Majjhima Nikāya, vol. 1, p. 71.)

The point is that however the body of the meditating bhikkhu, a collection of material phenomena, exists, it should be discerned as it exists. If the material body is walking, discern it as walking. If it is standing, sitting or lying down, discern it as standing, sitting or lying down. (Majjhima Commentary, vol. 1, p. 257; Majjhima Subcommentary, vol. 1, p. 353.)

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Ma-ṭīkā, tập 1, tr. 353; Ma, tập 1, tr. 71; Ma-ṭṭha, tập 1, tr. 257.

An explanation by the subcommentator

Miến / Burmese 179

Purimanayo vā iriyāpathappadhāno vuttoti tattha kāyo appadhāno anunipphādīti idha kāyaṃ padhānaṃ appadhānañca iriyāpathaṃ anunipphādaṃ katvā dassetuṃ dutiyanayo vuttoti evampettha dvinnaṃ nayānaṃ viseso veditabbo.

According to the subcommentary, the earlier method treats posture as primary and the body as secondary, while the later method treats the body as primary and posture as secondary. This is the distinction between them. (Majjhima Subcommentary, vol. 1, p. 353.)

The meaning is as follows. In “Gacchanto vā ‘gacchāmī’ti pajānāti,” when walking, he clearly knows, “I am walking,” the Buddha teaches the first method. It takes posture materiality, the phenomena containing bodily intimation and appearing as that which brings about movement, as prominent. In this method the collection of materiality of the four origins appearing as that which is moved is secondary and less prominent. Even while giving priority to posture materiality and discerning that which brings about movement, the meditator can go on to discern fully the collection of materiality of the four origins appearing as that which is moved, namely the secondary and less prominent phenomena.

On the other hand, with “Yathā yathā vā panassa kāyo paṇihito hoti, tathā tathā naṃ pajānāti,” however the bhikkhu’s body, a collection of material phenomena, is disposed, exists or arises, he discerns it accordingly, the Buddha teaches the second method. In this method the material body of the four origins, that is, the collection of material phenomena appearing as that which is moved …

Dẫn thư in trên trang này: Ma-ṭīkā, tập 1, tr. 353.

Discerning prominent and less prominent materiality in the four postures

Miến / Burmese 180

… is given priority for further contemplation and discernment. This material body, comprising materiality of the four origins, is prominent in the second method. By first discerning the materiality of the four origins that is moved, the meditator can in due course also discern fully the posture materiality that brings about movement. Here the latter is secondary and less prominent.

To show this way of practising, the Buddha also taught the second method, beginning with “Yathā yathā vā panassa…”. This is how the two methods differ. This is the substance of the subcommentary just cited.

The meditator should therefore practise as follows.

1. When walking, contemplate so as to discern the prominent and less prominent materiality.
2. When standing, contemplate so as to discern the prominent and less prominent materiality.
3. When sitting, contemplate so as to discern the prominent and less prominent materiality.
4. When lying down, contemplate so as to discern the prominent and less prominent materiality.

Remember that these phenomena belong to the materiality aggregate (rūpakkhandha), the collection of material phenomena.

An everyday simile

Miến / Burmese 181

To make this easier to understand, take an everyday simile. Suppose a man is carrying a sack of rice. Someone with both ordinary eyesight and the eye of knowledge can attend closely to the man carrying the sack and gradually come to see the sack being carried as well. Conversely, by closely following the sack being carried, they can gradually come to see the man who carries it.

The man carrying the sack corresponds to the material phenomena appearing as that which carries, namely posture materiality in the bodily-intimation nonad and the dodecad with bodily intimation, lightness and the other qualities. The sack being carried corresponds to materiality of the four origins appearing as that which is carried.

Likewise, if the meditator gives priority to discerning and contemplating the material phenomena appearing as that which carries, in due course they can also fully discern and contemplate materiality of the four origins appearing as that which is carried. This is the first method of contemplating postures.

Conversely, if the meditator gives priority to discerning and contemplating materiality of the four origins appearing as that which is carried, they can in due course also fully discern and contemplate the material phenomena appearing as that which carries, including posture materiality and intimation. This is the second method of contemplating postures, taught with the words “Yathā yathā vā panassa…”.

Similar cases of contemplation

Miến / Burmese 182

A good friend who wishes to discern and contemplate postures and clear comprehension until the eye of knowledge reaches ultimate reality should firmly bear in mind the instructions in the canonical text, commentary and subcommentary. Even one with wisdom may sometimes forget. Without mindfulness, one tends to overlook things. Be mindful.

Similar cases of contemplation:

1. When going forward, prominent and less prominent materiality.
2. When going back, prominent and less prominent materiality.
3. When looking straight ahead, prominent and less prominent materiality.
4. When looking around, prominent and less prominent materiality.
5. When bending the limbs, prominent and less prominent materiality.
6. When stretching the limbs, prominent and less prominent materiality.
7. When carrying the outer robe, prominent and less prominent materiality.
8. When carrying the bowl, prominent and less prominent materiality.
9. When carrying the lower and upper robes, prominent and less prominent materiality.
10. When eating, prominent and less prominent materiality.
11. When drinking, prominent and less prominent materiality.
12. When chewing what is to be chewed, prominent and less prominent materiality.
13. When licking what is to be licked, prominent and less prominent materiality.
14. When defecating, prominent and less prominent materiality.
15. When urinating, prominent and less prominent materiality.
16. When walking, prominent and less prominent materiality.
17. When standing, prominent and less prominent materiality.

Four kinds of clear comprehension

18. When sitting, prominent and less prominent materiality.
19. When sleeping, prominent and less prominent materiality.
20. When waking, prominent and less prominent materiality.
21. When speaking, prominent and less prominent materiality.
22. When remaining silent, prominent and less prominent materiality.

Discern these material phenomena and distinguish them with wisdom.

There are four kinds of clear comprehension:
1. Clear comprehension of benefit (sātthakasampajañña).
2. Clear comprehension of suitability (sappāyasampajañña).
3. Clear comprehension of the domain (gocarasampajañña).
4. Clear comprehension of non-delusion (asammohasampajañña).
(Majjhima Commentary, vol. 1, p. 258.)

1. Clear comprehension of benefit. Activities that increase wholesome qualities, the genuinely good qualities that lead out of the round of rebirths, are beneficial. Activities that increase unwholesome qualities are unbeneficial. The knowledge that distinguishes the two, abandons what is unbeneficial and chooses what is beneficial is called clear comprehension of benefit.

2. Clear comprehension of suitability. Even when an activity is beneficial, distinguish what is suitable (sappāya) from what is unsuitable (asappāya). The knowledge that abandons unsuitable circumstances and chooses only what is suitable for practice is called clear comprehension of suitability.

Clear comprehension of the domain and of non-delusion

Miến / Burmese 184

3. Clear comprehension of the domain. Carry the meditation subject along when going for alms and when returning from the village. The knowledge that continually keeps the meditating mind within the object of a tranquillity or insight meditation subject is called clear comprehension of the domain. One who regularly develops a tranquillity subject and continually keeps the meditating mind on its object possesses this clear comprehension. One who has reached the stage of developing insight and continues to practise it on the way out for alms and on the way back also possesses it, and will possess clear comprehension of non-delusion as well.

4. Clear comprehension of non-delusion (asammohasampajañña).

Paramatthato hi dhātūnaññeva gamanaṃ, dhātūnaṃ ṭhānaṃ, dhātūnaṃ nisajjanaṃ, dhātūnaṃ sayanaṃ. Tasmiṃ tasmiṃ koṭṭhāse saddhiṃ rūpena —
Aññaṃ uppajjate cittaṃ, aññaṃ cittaṃ nirujjhati.
Avīcimanusambandho, nadīsotova vattatīti.
Evaṃ abhikkamādīsu asammuyhanaṃ asammohasampajaññaṃ nāmāti.
(Majjhima Commentary, vol. 1, p. 265.)

In ultimate terms, only material and mental elements walk, stand, sit and lie down. Indeed, in each corresponding part of walking, standing, sitting and lying down …

The succession of consciousness and clear comprehension of non-delusion

Miến / Burmese 185

… together with materiality, one consciousness arises and another ceases. Between one consciousness and the next there is no intervening phenomenon, even for an instant. Like the unbroken flow of a river, successive consciousnesses arise without a gap. Knowing this without delusion when stepping forward and in other activities is called clear comprehension of non-delusion. Material phenomena last for seventeen mind-moments. Thus the consciousness that arises together with a material cluster is one consciousness, and the consciousness that ceases together with it is another. Contemplate so as to know this.

To develop clear comprehension of non-delusion, the good friend should discern:

1. When walking, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
2. When standing, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
3. When sitting, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
4. When lying down, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
5. When going forward, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
6. When going back, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
7. When looking straight ahead, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
8. When looking around, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
9. When bending the limbs, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
10. When stretching the limbs, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
11. When carrying the outer robe, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
12. When carrying the bowl, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.

Discerning the five aggregates in postures and activities

Miến / Burmese 186

13. When carrying the lower and upper robes, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
14. When eating, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
15. When drinking, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
16. When chewing what is to be chewed, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
17. When licking what is to be licked, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
18. When defecating, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
19. When urinating, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
20. When walking, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
21. When standing, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
22. When sitting, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
23. When sleeping, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
24. When waking, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
25. When speaking, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.
26. When remaining silent, mentality and materiality, that is, the five aggregates.

Continue in this way to discern mentality and materiality, the five aggregates, in each case of posture and clear comprehension. Clear comprehension of non-delusion begins only when one can discern those mental and material phenomena systematically at the ultimate level and distinguish them with wisdom. At present the good friend has reached the stage of discerning and contemplating the material phenomena called the materiality aggregate among the five aggregates. Therefore, in the postures and activities of clear comprehension, discern and contemplate prominent and less prominent materiality. This is still incomplete. After distinguishing and fully discerning the five aggregates with wisdom …

Summary of points to remember in contemplation

Miến / Burmese 187

… seek out and discern their conditions. Then contemplate the five aggregates, the mental and material phenomena, together with their conditions under the three characteristics. To enable such contemplation, four major sections are still to be presented: meditation on mentality, dependent origination, the four aspects beginning with characteristic (lakkhaṇādi-catukka), and insight.

Summary of points to remember in contemplation

1. If you are developing a tranquillity subject such as mindfulness of breathing, continue diligently with that same subject in the postures and activities of clear comprehension, such as walking, standing, sitting, lying down, going forward and going back. If you can practise in this way, you possess clear comprehension of the domain.

2. If you are developing four-elements meditation and are discerning one, two, three or all four elements, continue to discern those same one, two, three or four elements in the postures and activities of clear comprehension.

3. When you can discern the material phenomena present at the six doors and in the forty-two bodily components at the ultimate level …

Conclusion of meditation on materiality

Miến / Burmese 188

… and distinguish them with wisdom, in each case of posture and clear comprehension give priority in turn to discerning prominent and less prominent materiality, namely the material phenomena appearing as that which carries and those appearing as that which is carried. Then discern and contemplate all those prominent and less prominent material phenomena together.

The meditator must then go on to discern the mental phenomena capable of producing the materiality of these postures and activities of clear comprehension, namely the succession of consciousnesses in the mind-door impulsion process. To be able to discern those mental phenomena, the good friend should continue diligently with the section on meditation on mentality.

Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw
Cittala Hill Monastery
Pa-Auk Tawya
Myanmar Era 1367

Index in Burmese alphabetical order — 189

Six kinds of sensitivity — 52

Coarse perception — 43

Difficulties — 48

Called internal nutriment — 125

Meaning of the commentary — 166

Meaning of the explanations in the commentary and subcommentary — 134

Meaning of the commentary and subcommentary — 121

Aṭṭhasālinī commentary — 17

Clinging to the view of self — 71

Favourable support — 112

Halo of boundless light — 70

Illness caused by medicine — 34

Materiality unbound to faculties — 106

Temporarily leaving aside what is unclear — 27

Contemplating in sequence (anupubbato) — 24

Delimitation of the interval (antaraparicceda) — 108

Kamma ripening in later lives (aparāpariyavedanīya) — 143

Preventing distraction towards external objects — 25

Do not get caught in conventional names — 27

Materiality underlying masculinity and femininity — 82

Prominent material phenomena — 103

Arūparūpa — 106

Range of access concentration and light — 38

Kinds of light — 42

Material phenomena to be contemplated — 83

Materiality without its own characteristic (alakkhaṇarūpa) — 106

Similar cases of contemplation — 182

Materiality without its own nature (asabhāvarūpa) — 106

Materiality unsuitable for insight (asammasanarūpa) — 106

Materiality unsuitable for contemplation — 107

Knowledge of clear comprehension of non-delusion — 185

Developing clear comprehension of non-delusion — 185

Three kinds of sound — 148

Consciousness-produced sound nonad in breathing — 146

Index in Burmese alphabetical order — 190

Breath dodecad with sound and lightness — 146

Material phenomena that are carried — 172

Before seeing the space element — 108

What the space element is — 108

Water element — 3

What is called cognition of an object — 69

Nutriment-produced octad — 84

Clusters with nutriment-produced nutritive essence — 123

Nutriment-produced nutritive essence — 131

Two nutriment-produced clusters — 149

How to discern nutriment-produced materiality — 115

What nutriment is — 116

The single material phenomenon of nutriment — 105

How to balance the five faculties — 31

Contemplating postures and clear comprehension — 22, 163

Temperature-produced octad — 84

Collection of materiality containing temperature-produced nutritive essence — 117

Temperature-produced nutritive essence — 131

Four temperature-produced clusters — 147

How to discern temperature-produced materiality — 110

What is called temperature — 110

Meditation subject at access concentration — 23

What is called access concentration — 58

Kamma ripening in the next life (upapajjavedanīya) — 143

How to discern derived materiality — 72

What is called derived materiality — 103

Clung-to kamma-produced materiality — 134

Equanimity awakening factor — 37

Nutritive essence is the extract of taste — 80

The coir rope simile — 154

Index in Burmese alphabetical order — 191

What is called edible nutriment — 122

The name edible nutriment — 117

Kamma-produced nutritive essence — 129

Nine kamma-produced material clusters — 142

Body sensitivity — 92, 94

Body decad — 84

Bodily-intimation nonad — 143

Dodecad with bodily intimation and lightness — 145

Favourable support of kamma — 111

The fetus as an example — 127

The expression “neither a crow nor a chicken” — 26

Coarseness or roughness — 7

Surveying the whole body — 13

Analysing material clusters at the six doors — 91

Seven kinds of objective materiality — 104

Knowledge of clear comprehension of the domain — 184

Four kinds of compactness — 67

Nose sensitivity — 96

Nose decad — 86

Nose sensitivity (ghānapasāda) — 96

When wishing to discern eye sensitivity — 93

Eye sensitivity — 92

Eye decad — 84

Like a lump of cooked rice — 59

Consciousness-produced octad — 84

Consciousness-produced nutritive essence — 130

Consciousness-produced fire — 113

Eight consciousness-produced material clusters — 143

How to discern consciousness-produced materiality — 109

Like a mechanism — 29

A case concerning the Dispensation — 161

Water meditation subject — 14

Index in Burmese alphabetical order — 192

Illness arising from medicine — 34

Like mixing rice flour and turmeric powder in water — 45, 52

Mixing rice flour and turmeric powder evenly — 91

Tongue sensitivity — 97

Tongue sensitivity element — 97

Tongue decad — 87

Life-faculty nonad — 91

Life faculty sustains materiality — 81

The single material phenomenon of life faculty — 105

Light of knowledge — 131

The hand of knowledge — 3

The sword of knowledge — 9

One with sharp wisdom — 102

For one whose wisdom is still immature — 101

An explanation by the subcommentator — 179

Mind door by figurative usage based on the locus — 90

Four bodily components of the fire element — 139

Fire element — 3

Fire, or temperature, and nutritive essence — 133

Four fire-predominant bodily components — 139

The knowing of animals — 168

Arouse diligence — 158

The saying “rice sustains life for seven days” — 126

Supporting — 8

Sustaining — 22

Further explanations — 42

Index in Burmese alphabetical order — 193

Reaching purification of view — 25, 61

About one measure (doṇamatta) — 59

Energy awakening factor — 36

In the canonical Dhammasaṅgaṇī — 16

Elements, called great elements — 103

Attention to the elements — 2

Meditative wisdom in attending to the elements — 40

Meditative concentration in attending to the elements — 29

Discerning by way of elements — 69

Brief method of four-elements meditation — 1

Detailed method of four-elements meditation — 138

Section on four-elements meditation — 1

Contemplate to balance the elements — 14

Drawing the elements from one place to another — 15

Not too slowly (nātisaṇikato) — 24

Not too quickly (nātisīghato) — 24

Ear sensitivity — 96

Concrete materiality (nipphannarūpa) — 105

Like delimiting by sunlight — 74

The cause likened to sunlight — 75

Celestial nutritive essence — 127

Perception of a cow — 63

The butcher simile — 62

An everyday simile for comparison — 181

Going beyond concepts (paññattisamatikkamanato) — 27

Earth element — 3

The eye of wisdom that sees ultimate reality — 63

One who has not yet discerned ultimate materiality — 77

What is called delimiting materiality — 106

The single delimiting material phenomenon — 106

Index in Burmese alphabetical order — 194

Five kinds of sensitivity or transparent materiality — 103

What is called sensitive materiality — 44, 52

Investigation-of-phenomena awakening factor — 37

Joy — 39

Joy awakening factor — 37

There is no individual or being — 64

Materiality expressing masculinity — 83

The nature of breaking — 15

A house about to collapse — 8

The characteristic of alteration — 157

What alteration means — 157

Ceasing where it arises — 118

Production extending externally — 112

What is called external nutriment — 126

Balancing the seven awakening factors — 36

The life-continuum is also called the mind door — 90

Clarity of the life-continuum mind door and body sensitivity — 100

Sex decad — 84

Two kinds of sex materiality — 104

Loose dust — 21

Sequence of the Buddha’s teaching — 12

Set aside elements that are not yet evident — 27

Clarity of the mind door — 53

Mind door and heart-base — 99

What the mind door is — 90

Half believing and half doubting — 33

Mahāgopālaka Sutta — 158

The four great elements — 3, 103

What are called the great elements — 103

Mahārāhulovāda Sutta — 50

The Elder Mahāsīva's view — 167

Index in Burmese alphabetical order — 195

Hardness, roughness, heaviness, softness, smoothness and lightness — 16

Nutriment eaten by the mother — 127

Like being heated by fire — 18

Like sky and earth — 77, 160

Like a cake seller — 9

Like flour — 59

An example of discernment at the eye — 128

Grandchild cluster — 115, 133

Great-grandchild cluster — 115

Power of superior consciousness — 114

Like one catching with an arrow — 7

Yathā yathā vā panassa kāyo paṇihito — 177

Section on meditation on materiality — 1

Analyse the material clusters by elements — 54

Three kinds of material compactness — 64

How materiality arises and dissolves — 151

How to discern material phenomena — 91

When to contemplate “materiality, materiality” — 156

No compactness of object in materiality — 67

Twenty-eight material phenomena — 103

Summary of points to remember in contemplation — 187

Give priority to the individual characteristic (lakkhaṇato) — 28

What characteristic materiality is — 108

Discerning the four characteristics of materiality — 150

Four kinds of characteristic materiality — 107

Dodecad with bodily intimation and lightness — 145

Like dust rising into the air — 18

Forty-two bodily components — 138

Clinging to self in conventional usage — 71

An everyday simile — 181

A point to remember — 133

Index in Burmese alphabetical order — 196

How to discern in practice — 127

Like a ruby resting in the palm — 14

A principle to follow in practice — 6

A rule to follow — 25

Rules to follow — 23

ဝ

Begin with the round letter “ဝ” — 5

Wind element — 3

Six bodily components in which the wind element predominates — 140

Five or three kinds of alteration of materiality — 106

Preventing distraction (vikkhepapaṭibāhanato) — 25

Two kinds of intimation — 106

A person given to criticism — 33

ဿ

People skilled in distinguishing the truths — 34

Mindfulness as a factor of awakening — 36

A point to note — 134, 137

Points to note — 14

A point to remember when discerning materiality — 158

Perceptions of a being and of a self have fallen away — 61

Perceptions of a being and of a self will fall away — 71

Clear comprehension of suitability — 183

Knowledge of clear comprehension of suitability — 183

The bowl breaks and the body is bruised — 26

Materiality with its own nature — 105

When one has yet to practise with tranquillity as the vehicle — 22

Concentration as a factor of awakening — 37

Naming according to conventional truth — 119

Four kinds of clear comprehension — 183

Materiality suitable for contemplation (sammasanarūpa) — 106

Materiality with characteristics — 105

Clear comprehension of benefit — 183

A landmark in the Dispensation — 74

How temperature- and nutriment-produced materiality arise in successive generations — 136

Offspring generation — 115

Direct offspring — 126

Offspring clusters — 133

Pleasure (sukha) — 39

Index in Burmese alphabetical order — 197

Three discourses — 31

A pure-insight practitioner — 19

Ear-sensitivity — 95

Ear-decad — 85

Like the shade of a tree — 77

What is meant by apprehending — 56

Material phenomena that carry — 172

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One kind of heart materiality — 104