Nibbānagāminipaṭipadā · Mini · Cuốn 9 / Volume 9

Insight Meditation Subjects (Vipassanākammaṭṭhāna)

Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw

English

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Yo ca vassasataṃ jīve, apassaṃ udayabbayaṃ.
Ekāhaṃ jīvitaṃ seyyo, passato udayabbayaṃ.

One might live for a full hundred years without knowing and seeing, with insight wisdom, the arising and passing away (udayabbaya) of the material and mental phenomena of the five aggregates. Better and nobler than that person's hundred-year life is just one day, one single day, one morning of life for one who truly knows and sees, with insight wisdom, the arising and passing away of the material and mental phenomena of the five aggregates. (Dhammapada, verse 113.)

Yo ca vassasataṃ jīve, apassaṃ amataṃ padaṃ.
Ekāhaṃ jīvitaṃ seyyo, passato amataṃ padaṃ.

One might live for a full hundred years without knowing and seeing the noble Deathless, Nibbāna. Better and nobler than that person's hundred-year life is just one day, one single day, one morning of life for one who knows and sees the noble Deathless, Nibbāna. (Dhammapada, verse 114.)

Yo ca vassasataṃ jīve, apassaṃ dhammamuttamaṃ.
Ekāhaṃ jīvitaṃ seyyo, passato dhammamuttamaṃ.

One might live for a full hundred years without knowing and seeing the noble supramundane Dhamma. Better and nobler than that person's hundred-year life is just one day, one single day, one morning of life for one who truly knows and sees the noble supramundane Dhamma. (Dhammapada, verse 115.)

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The gift of Dhamma and the 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 ending of craving overcomes all suffering.

Ciraṃ tiṭṭhatu saddhammo, dhamme hontu sagāravā.

May the Buddha’s teaching and dispensation long endure. May all hold the three aspects of the true Dhamma in respect.

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The meditation subject of insight and comprehension knowledge

Miến / Burmese 1

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa.

Purification by knowledge and vision of path and not-path (maggāmaggañāṇadassanavisuddhi)

Chapter on comprehension knowledge (sammasanañāṇa)

Insight wisdom that has become free of the imperfections of insight and follows the right way, the ancient course of insight, is the preliminary path that precedes the noble path. The ten imperfections of insight, beginning with illumination, are not the preliminary path preceding the noble path, and are not the right way of insight. Thus knowledge that clearly and accurately distinguishes both the preliminary path, the right way of insight preceding the noble path, and not-path, that which is not the right way of insight, is called purification by knowledge and vision of path and not-path. Because that knowledge sees, “This is the right way. This is the wrong way,” it is called knowledge purified of the imperfections of insight. (ဝိသုဒ္ဓိ၊ ၂၊ ၂၄၁။)

Comprehension by groups and insight by method

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A practitioner who has accomplished purification by knowledge and vision of path and not-path should begin striving to practise insight by method (nayavipassanā), also called comprehension by groups (kalāpasammasana). (ဝိသုဒ္ဓိ၂၂၄။)

Comprehension by groups (kalāpasammasana) — Grouping material and mental phenomena according to past, future, present, internal, external and so forth, then successively applying the three characteristics and contemplating them with insight. This method is called comprehension by groups. This designation is the usage of the elders dwelling in Jambudīpa.

Insight by method (nayavipassanā) — As the Buddha himself taught in the Discourse on the Characteristic of Not-self and in other teachings on different occasions, beginning with “Yaṃ kiñci rūpaṃ atītānāgatapaccuppannaṃ”, the phenomena called clinging aggregates are present in eleven aspects: past, future, present, internal, external, gross, subtle, inferior, superior, far and near. They are —

1. The collection of material phenomena, the materiality aggregate.

2. The collection of feelings, the feeling aggregate.

3. The collection of perceptions, the perception aggregate.

4. The collection of formations, the formations aggregate.

5. The collection of consciousnesses, the consciousness aggregate.

1. Dividing these phenomena into five groups according to each collection, successively applying the three characteristics and contemplating them with insight, that is, the method…

Methods and objects of insight knowledge

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… of the five aggregates.

2. Dividing them into twelve groups and contemplating them with insight, the method of the twelve bases.

3. Dividing them into eighteen groups and contemplating them with insight, the method of the eighteen elements.

These ways of discerning with insight are called insight by method. The designation “insight by method” is the usage of the elders dwelling on the island of Sīhaḷa. (မဟာဋီ၊ ၂၃၇၆။)

The objects discerned by insight knowledge

1. The six kinds of phenomena arising at the respective doors together with their doors and objects, namely phenomena at the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind doors.

2. The five aggregates: materiality, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness.

3. The six doors: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind.

4. The six objects: visible form, sound, odour, taste, tangible objects and mental objects.

5. The six consciousnesses: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind consciousness.

6. The six contacts: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind contact.

7. Feeling born of eye contact, feeling born of ear contact, feeling born of nose contact…

Groups of objects of insight knowledge, continued

… feeling born of tongue contact, feeling born of body contact and feeling born of mind contact. These are the six feelings.

8. The six perceptions: perception of visible form, sound, odour, taste, tangible objects and mental objects.

9. The six volitions: volition regarding visible form, sound, odour, taste, tangible objects and mental objects.

10. The six cravings: craving for visible form, sound, odour, taste, tangible objects and mental objects.

11. The six applied thoughts: applied thought on visible form, sound, odour, taste, tangible objects and mental objects.

12. The six sustained thoughts: sustained thought on visible form, sound, odour, taste, tangible objects and mental objects.

13. The six elements: earth, water, fire, wind, space and consciousness.

14. The ten kasiṇas.

15. The thirty-two bodily parts.

16. The twelve bases.

17. The eighteen elements.

18. The twenty-two faculties.

19. The three elements: sense sphere, fine-material sphere and immaterial sphere.

20. Nine kinds of existence: sense-sphere existence, fine-material existence, immaterial existence, percipient existence, non-percipient existence, neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient existence, one-aggregate existence (non-percipient beings), four-aggregate existence (the four immaterial planes) and five-aggregate existence (the eleven sense-sphere and fifteen fine-material planes).

21. The four fine-material jhānas.

The remaining objects and three kinds of beings

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22. The four immeasurables: loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity.

23. The four immaterial attainments.

24. The twelve factors of dependent origination.

Remember that these collections of phenomena are the objects discerned. (ဝိသုဒ္ဓိ၊ ၂၊ ၂၄၃-၂၄၄။)

To support three kinds of beings

There are three kinds of beings fit to be guided who are awaiting liberation. To support all three kinds, the Buddha taught different ways of discerning with insight, beginning with the method of the five aggregates.

Developing insight by the method of the five aggregates can lead to arahant fruition. Developing insight by the method of the twelve bases can also lead to arahant fruition. Developing insight by the method of the eighteen elements can likewise lead to arahant fruition. If developing the meditation subject of insight by only one method can accomplish the desired result of arahant fruition, why did the Buddha teach a variety of methods? The answer is that he taught them to support three kinds of beings.

1. Rūpasammūḷha — beings bewildered about material phenomena.

2. Arūpasammūḷha — beings bewildered about mental phenomena.

3. Ubhayasammūḷha — beings bewildered about both materiality and mentality.

Faculties, preferences and how the Buddha taught

Miến / Burmese 6

1. Tikkhindriya — beings with sharp faculties.

2. Majjhimindriya — beings with faculties of medium strength.

3. Mudindriya — beings with weak faculties.

1. Saṅkhittaruci — beings who prefer a concise method.

2. Majjhimaruci — beings who prefer a moderate method, neither very brief nor extensive.

3. Vitthāraruci — beings who prefer an extensive method.

Thus, among the beings fit to be guided who await liberation there are three kinds in each respect. To support those kinds, the Buddha presented his teaching by various methods.

1. (a) A person bewildered about mental phenomena, arūpasammūḷha.
(b) A person with sharp faculties, tikkhindriya.
(c) A person who prefers a concise method, saṅkhittaruci.
To support such people, he taught how to discern with insight by the method of the five aggregates in discourses such as the Discourse on the Characteristic of Not-self.

2. (a) A person bewildered about material phenomena, rūpasammūḷha.
(b) A person with faculties of medium strength, majjhimindriya.
(c) A person who prefers a moderate course, neither very brief nor extensive, majjhimaruci.
To support such people, he taught, showed and instructed them how to discern with insight by the method of the twelve bases.

The method of the eighteen elements and the four truths

Miến / Burmese 7

3. (a) A person bewildered about both materiality and mentality, ubhayasammūḷha.
(b) A person with weak faculties, mudindriya.
(c) A person who prefers an extensive method, vitthāraruci.
To support such people, he taught them how to discern with insight by the method of the eighteen elements.

So that the characteristic of not-self can be defined readily and easily, he also taught how to discern with insight by the method of the teaching on the faculties.

1. Pavatti — the occurrence of the phenomena of the truth of suffering, the five clinging aggregates.

2. Pavattihetu — the causes of those phenomena of the truth of suffering.

3. Nivatti — the cessation of those phenomena of the truths of suffering and its origin.

4. Nivattihetu — the practice that is the cause for the cessation of those phenomena of the truths of suffering and its origin.

Only when one directly realizes these four matters for oneself through the wisdom of right view can the foregoing ways of discerning with insight bring the benefit of path, fruition and Nibbāna. To make it known that without directly realizing the four for oneself through the wisdom of right view one cannot accomplish the result of path, fruition and Nibbāna, the Buddha also taught and instructed in ways of discerning with insight related to the methods of teaching the truths and teaching dependent origination. (မဟာဋီ၊ ၂၈၄-၈၅။)

The four ultimate realities and ways of discerning with insight

Miến / Burmese 8

A point to keep in mind

There are four ultimate realities: consciousness, mental factors, materiality and Nibbāna. Of these, consciousness, mental factors and materiality are ultimate phenomena that are impermanent, suffering and not-self. The sublime reality of Nibbāna is ultimate reality that is permanent, blissful and not-self.

A good person longing for sublime Nibbāna, the fourth ultimate reality, distinguished by the qualities of permanence, bliss and not-self, should define consciousness, mental factors and materiality, the first, second and third ultimate realities, together with their causes. One should then apply the three characteristics to them and diligently discern them with insight.

When discerning in this way —

1. Arrange consciousness and mental factors as one group of mentality, and material phenomena as one group of materiality. Contemplating with insight by this method of the two groups of materiality and mentality can lead to path, fruition and Nibbāna.

2. Arrange material phenomena as one group and mental phenomena in four groups: feeling, perception, formations and consciousness. Contemplating with insight by the method of the five aggregates can lead to path, fruition and Nibbāna.

3. Again, arrange the same materiality and mentality in twelve groups. Contemplating with insight by the method of the twelve bases can lead to path, fruition and Nibbāna.

4. Again, arrange the same materiality and mentality in eighteen groups. Contemplating with insight by the method of the eighteen elements can lead to path, fruition and Nibbāna…

The methods of grouping concern the same ultimate phenomena

Miến / Burmese 9

… in this way.

5. Again, arrange the same materiality and mentality in twenty-two groups according to the method of the teaching on the faculties. Contemplating the mundane faculties with insight can lead to path, fruition and Nibbāna.

6. Again, divide the same materiality and mentality according to the twelve factors. Contemplating them with insight by the method of teaching dependent origination can lead to path, fruition and Nibbāna.

7. Again, according to the method of teaching the truths, arrange them in two groups, one of the truth of suffering and one of the truth of its origin. Contemplating them with insight in this way can lead to path, fruition and Nibbāna.

Thus materiality and mentality, the five aggregates, twelve bases, eighteen elements, twenty-two faculties, twelve factors of dependent origination, and the phenomena of the truths of suffering and its origin, contemplated as objects of insight knowledge for reaching Nibbāna, are all consciousness, mental factors and materiality. The modes of discernment differ, while the ultimate phenomena that are the objects of insight knowledge are the same.

Therefore a practitioner wishing to begin striving in insight should already have both knowledge of defining mentality-materiality (nāmarūpaparicchedañāṇa) and knowledge of discerning conditions (paccayapariggahañāṇa) regarding the objects of insight knowledge —

1. Having defined materiality and mentality.

2. Having defined the causes.

Among the formations thus defined, namely mentality-materiality together with causes and effects, with which phenomena should contemplation by insight begin…

Begin with phenomena that are clear and easy to discern

Miến / Burmese 10

… that is the question to ask. The answer is as follows.

Yepi ca sammasanupagā, tesu ye yassa pākaṭā honti, sukhena pariggahaṃ gacchanti, tesu tena sammasanaṃ ārabhitabbaṃ. (ဝိသုဒ္ဓိ၊ ၂၊ ၂၄၄။)

Ye rūpārūpadhammā yassāti yogino, tesu tena sammasanaṃ ārabhitabbaṃ yathāpākaṭaṃ vipassanābhinivesoti katvā. Pacchā pana anupaṭṭhahantepi upāyena upaṭṭhāpetvā anavasesatova sammasitabbā. (မဟာဋီ၊ ၂၃၉၁။)

Among the mundane material and mental phenomena suitable for contemplation by insight under the three characteristics, whichever material and mental phenomena are clear to the practitioner's knowledge and can readily and easily be defined and discerned without difficulty, those are the phenomena in which the practitioner should undertake comprehension and insight contemplation under the three characteristics. (ဝိသုဒ္ဓိ၊ ၂၊ ၂၄၄။)

(a) The commentator says that the practitioner should undertake comprehension and insight contemplation under the three characteristics of material and mental phenomena that are clear and can readily and easily be defined and discerned without difficulty. The intention is that insight may begin by attending to the material and mental phenomena that are clear.

(b) Later, however, material and mental phenomena that have not yet appeared clearly to knowledge…

Comprehensive discernment after defining the five domains

Miến / Burmese 11

… must also be made clear to knowledge by appropriate means. Then contemplate them comprehensively by insight, without exception, applying the three characteristics to material and mental phenomena, their causes and their effects. (မဟာဋီ၊ ၂၊၃၉၁။)

The commentator's words above refer to —

1. Rūpapariggaha — defining material phenomena.

2. Arūpapariggaha — defining mental phenomena.

3. Rūpārūpapariggaha — defining materiality and mentality.

4. Paccayapariggaha — defining the causes of present materiality and mentality.

5. Addhānapariggaha — defining the causes of past and future materiality and mentality.

Bear in mind that those words are spoken for a practitioner who has fully mastered these five kinds of defining.

1. One has not known material phenomena down to the ultimate level.

2. One has not known mental phenomena down to the ultimate level.

3. One has not known materiality and mentality down to the ultimate level.

4. One has not known the causes of present materiality and mentality.

5. One has not known the causes of past and future materiality and mentality.

For a practitioner newly arrived at the meditation monastery to sit, still carrying this whole mass of not knowing, those words do not instruct one simply to discern whatever appears clear and easy as one pleases, without distinguishing concepts from ultimate phenomena…

Guidelines to follow in insight practice

Miến / Burmese 12

… Bear in mind that they are not words instructing one to discern as one pleases without distinguishing concepts and ultimate phenomena.

Some, however, look only at the commentator's statement above and subsection (a) of the subcommentator's statement, and then teach that insight requires discerning only what is clear. They leave subsection (b) of the subcommentator's statement out of consideration. Yet the teacher of the Mahāṭīkā himself, at ၿဟာဋ္ဌီ၊ ၂၃၅၈, cites the Aparijānana Sutta in the Connected Discourses on the Six Bases of the Saṃyutta Nikāya (သံ၊ ၂၊ ၂၄၉-၂၅၀) and determines that all material and mental phenomena must be discerned and distinguished through the three kinds of full understanding (pariññā). They must be discerned by insight comprehensively, without omission. Read the determination of the commentary below.

According to teachings the Buddha delivered on various occasions, such as the Discourse on the Characteristic of Not-self, and according to the instructions of the foregoing commentaries and subcommentaries, all formations, namely materiality, mentality, causes and effects, past, future, present, internal and external, must be discerned by insight. By what method and according to what guidelines should one discern with insight? The Aṭṭhasālinī commentary, pages 270–271, and the Visuddhimagga, volume two, pages 300–301, in their enumeration of the kinds of insight leading to emergence (vuṭṭhānagāminī vipassanā), explain the guidelines to follow in insight. The explanation of the Aṭṭhasālinī commentary is given next.

Insight leading to emergence

Miến / Burmese 13

Idhekacco āditova ajjhattaṃ pañcasu khandhesu abhinivisati. Abhinivisitvā te aniccādito passati. Yasmā pana na suddhaajjhattadassanamatteneva maggavuṭṭhānaṃ hoti, bahiddhāpi daṭṭhabbameva. Tasmā parassa khandhepi anupādinnasaṅkhārepi “aniccaṃ dukkhamanattā”ti passati. So kālena ajjhattaṃ sammasati, kālena bahiddhāti. Tassevaṃ sammasato ajjhattaṃ sammasanakāle vipassanā maggena saddhiṃ ghaṭiyati. Evaṃ ajjhattaṃ abhinivisitvā ajjhattaṃ vuṭṭhāti nāma. Sace panassa bahiddhā sammasanakāle vipassanā maggena saddhiṃ ghaṭiyati, evaṃ ajjhattaṃ abhinivisitvā bahiddhā vuṭṭhāti nāma. Esa nayo bahiddhā abhinivisitvā bahiddhā ca ajjhattañca vuṭṭhānepi.

One person here begins with the five aggregates internally. After beginning, one sees them as impermanent and so forth. Since emergence by the path does not occur through seeing only the internal, the external must also be seen. Therefore one sees the aggregates of others and formations not clung to as impermanent, suffering and not-self. At times one comprehends internally, at times externally. While comprehending in this way, if insight joins the path during internal comprehension, this is called beginning internally and emerging internally. If insight joins the path during external comprehension, this is called beginning internally and emerging externally. The same method applies to beginning externally and emerging either externally or internally.

Aparo āditova rūpe abhinivisati. Abhinivisitvā bhūtarūpañca upādārūpañca paricchinditvā aniccādito passati. Yasmā pana na suddharūpadassanamatteneva vuṭṭhānaṃ hoti, arūpampi daṭṭhabbameva. Tasmā taṃ rūpaṃ ārammaṇaṃ katvā uppannaṃ vedanaṃ saññaṃ saṅkhāre viññāṇañca “idaṃ arūpan”ti paricchinditvā aniccādito passati. So kālena rūpaṃ sammasati, kālena arūpaṃ. Tassevaṃ sammasato rūpasammasanakāle vipassanā maggena saddhiṃ ghaṭiyati. Evaṃ rūpe abhinivisitvā rūpā vuṭṭhāti nāma. Sace panassa arūpasammasanakāle vipassanā maggena saddhiṃ ghaṭiyati, evaṃ rūpe abhinivisitvā arūpā vuṭṭhāti nāma. Esa nayo arūpe abhinivisitvā arūpā ca rūpā ca vuṭṭhānepi.

Another person begins with materiality. After beginning, one defines the great essentials and derived materiality and sees them as impermanent and so forth. Since emergence does not occur through seeing materiality alone, mentality must also be seen. Therefore one defines feeling, perception, formations and consciousness that have arisen taking that materiality as object, knowing “this is mentality”, and sees them as impermanent and so forth. At times one comprehends materiality, at times mentality. While comprehending in this way, if insight joins the path during comprehension of materiality, this is called beginning with materiality and emerging from materiality. If insight joins the path during comprehension of mentality, this is called beginning with materiality and emerging from mentality. The same method applies to beginning with mentality and emerging either from mentality or from materiality.

“Yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhamman”ti evaṃ abhinivisitvā evameva vuṭṭhānakāle pana ekappahārena pañcahi khandhehi vuṭṭhāti nāmāti ayaṃ tikkhavipassakassa mahāpaññassa bhikkhuno vipassanā. (အဘိဓ္ဓာ၊ ၂၇၀-၂၇၁။)

“Whatever is subject to arising is all subject to cessation.” Beginning in this way, at emergence one emerges from all five aggregates in a single stroke. This is the insight of a bhikkhu of great

wisdom whose insight is sharp. (အဘိဓ္ဓာ၊ ၂၇၀-၂၇၁။)

The meaning of beginning and the cases of emergence

Miến / Burmese 14

Abhinivesoti ca vipassanāya pubbabhāge kattabbanāmarūpaparicchedo veditabbo. Tasmā paṭhamaṃ rūpapariggahaṇaṃ rūpe abhiniveso. Esa nayo sesesupi. (မဟာဋီ၊ ၂၄၇၀။)

Abhinivesa means knowledge of defining mentality-materiality (nāmarūpaparicchedañāṇa), the distinguishing of mentality-materiality by knowledge to be carried out at the stage preceding insight. Thus initially distinguishing and defining material phenomena by knowledge is called rūpe abhinivesa, beginning insight attention with material phenomena. The other cases of beginning follow the same method. (မဟာဋီ၊ ၂၄၇၀။) The distinguishing by knowledge of the formations belonging to the truths of suffering and its origin, which are the objects of insight knowledge, is called abhinivesa.

As regards the supramundane noble path —

1. There is the case of beginning insight attention with internal formations and emerging from internal formations.

2. There is the case of beginning insight attention with the internal and emerging from external formations.

3. There is the case of beginning insight attention with the external and emerging from the external.

4. There is the case of beginning insight attention with the external and emerging from the internal.

5. There is the case of beginning insight attention with material phenomena and emerging from material phenomena.

Emergence from materiality, mentality and the five aggregates

Miến / Burmese 15

6. There is the case of beginning insight attention with material phenomena and emerging from mental phenomena.

7. There is the case of beginning insight attention with mental phenomena and emerging from mental phenomena.

8. There is the case of beginning insight attention with mental phenomena and emerging from material phenomena.

9. There is the case of emerging from all five aggregates in a single stroke. (အဘိဓမ္မာ၊ ၂၇၀။)

1. In this Teaching a practitioner, from the very start of exertion, attends to and discerns the five aggregates internally. Having attended to and discerned them, one successively applies the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering and not-self to those internal five aggregates and contemplates them with insight. If one discerns only the five internal aggregates with insight, insight leading to emergence (vuṭṭhānagāminī vipassanā) cannot arise. This is the insight that occurs together with the path cognitive process, which shifts in a single stroke from formations as object to Nibbāna. Thus one must also discern the five external aggregates with insight. Therefore discern the five aggregates of other persons as well as the formations not clung to of inanimate things, successively applying the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering and not-self so they are seen with insight knowledge. At times that practitioner contemplates internally with insight, successively applying the three characteristics. At times one contemplates externally with insight, successively applying the three characteristics. When that practitioner contemplates in this way, insight knowledge may join noble path knowledge while one is contemplating internally with insight. (At the end of insight knowledge, noble path knowledge…

Beginning with internal and external contemplation

Miến / Burmese 16

… arises, that is the meaning.) This is called beginning by attending to the internal and emerging from the internal. (That is, insight leading to emergence arises.)

[Insight leading to emergence (vuṭṭhānagāminivipassanā) — The stream of insight consciousness emerges from formations as object and runs straight, in a single course, to Nibbāna, which is free from formations. This is the collective name for the three knowledges, equanimity about formations, conformity and change of lineage, called insight that has reached its crest (sikhāppattavipassanā). They have reached the crest of that single course, emerging from formations as object and heading straight to Nibbāna, which is free from formations.] (Visuddhi II, 299. Mahāṭī II, 469.)

2. Another case — The meditator who begins with the internal alternates insight contemplation of the internal and the external. If the insight knowledge joins directly with noble path knowledge while the meditator is contemplating the external, this is called beginning by attending to the internal and emerging from the external.

3–4. The same method applies to beginning by attending to the external and emerging from the external or from the internal.

5. (For the internal comprises two kinds, materiality and mentality, and the external likewise comprises materiality and mentality.) Another meditator, from the very start of exerting effort, begins by attending to material phenomena, out of the two meditation subjects, materiality and mentality. (That is, the meditator starts by discerning material phenomena.) Having attended thus, the meditator distinguishes with knowledge each kind of primary materiality, that is, the four great elements, and each of the 24 kinds of derived materiality, so as to know them distinctly, and sees with insight knowledge by applying the three characteristics in turn…

Beginning with materiality or mentality and emerging

Miến / Burmese 17

… But insight leading to emergence cannot arise merely by contemplating material phenomena alone with insight. Mental phenomena must also be contemplated with insight by applying the three characteristics in turn. Therefore distinguish with knowledge the feeling, perception, group of mental factors belonging to the formations aggregate, and consciousness that arise taking that materiality as their object, knowing “these are mental phenomena”, and see with insight knowledge by applying the three characteristics, impermanence, suffering and non-self, in turn. That meditator at times contemplates material phenomena with insight, applying the three characteristics in turn, and at times contemplates mental phenomena with insight, applying the three characteristics in turn. If, as the meditator contemplates in this way, insight knowledge joins directly with noble path knowledge while material phenomena are being contemplated, this is called beginning by attending to and contemplating material phenomena and emerging from material phenomena.

6. If that meditator’s insight knowledge joins directly with noble path knowledge while mental phenomena are being contemplated, this is called beginning by attending to material phenomena and emerging from mental phenomena.

7–8. Understand the same method for beginning by attending to mental phenomena and emerging from mental phenomena or from material phenomena.

9. “Yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ, sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ” — “Whatever is subject to arising is all subject to cessation.” Know that when one attends in this way and insight leading to emergence arises, one emerges from all five aggregates at once. This is keen insight, the insight of a bhikkhu of great wisdom…

Choosing clearly apparent phenomena to begin contemplation

Miến / Burmese 18

… a bhikkhu of great wisdom who has keen insight. (Abhi-a I, 270–271.)

A ruling in the same form and with the same meaning as the ruling just cited from the Aṭṭhasālinī commentary also occurs on page 300 in volume II of the Visuddhimagga and in the explanation of the Kaḷāra Sutta in the Nidāna division of the Saṃyutta commentary. (Saṃ-a II, 59.) Although the wording differs slightly, the meaning is entirely the same. The Visuddhimagga commentator has set out that ruling in precise detail, as shown above. In the chapter on comprehension knowledge (sammasanañāṇa), some take the following words to mean that one need only contemplate what appears clearly, without distinguishing concept from ultimate reality or separating concept from ultimate reality —

Yepi ca sammasanupagā, tesu ye yassa pākaṭā honti, sukhena pariggahaṃ gacchanti, tesu tena sammasanaṃ ārabhitabbaṃ. (Visuddhi II, 244.)

That is, among mundane material and mental phenomena suitable for insight contemplation by applying the three characteristics, whatever material and mental phenomena are clear to that meditator's knowledge and can be discerned comfortably, easily and without strain, the meditator should begin making the effort to comprehend those material and mental phenomena by applying the three characteristics in turn. (Visuddhi II, 244.)

The good person who is learning should personally reflect and examine what meaning was intended by these words. In fact the commentator is addressing someone who has gained thorough mastery of the five kinds of discernment (pariggaha) and has then moved on to the insight section, the chapter on comprehension knowledge…

Including materiality, mentality, the internal and the external

Miến / Burmese 19

… The commentator is only instructing someone beginning the work of insight to start with material and mental phenomena that are easy to discern. According to the explanation of the Great Subcommentary, after contemplating the readily discernible material and mental phenomena with insight through comprehension, one must also use appropriate means to bring into clear view the material and mental phenomena that do not readily appear to knowledge, then apply the three characteristics and contemplate them with insight. The reasons are —

1. By contemplating only material phenomena, that is, primary and derived materiality, with insight, one cannot reach the noble path.
2. By contemplating only mental phenomena, that is, the four mental aggregates, with insight, one cannot reach the noble path.
3. By contemplating only the five internal aggregates with insight, one cannot reach the noble path.
4. By contemplating only the five external aggregates with insight, one cannot reach the noble path.

For those very reasons the commentator himself sets out and explains all 24 groups of phenomena that serve as objects of insight knowledge and are to be contemplated by comprehension knowledge, as presented on pages 3–4 of this book. With so many phenomena, the question arises which one to begin with in the work of insight. The instruction simply says to begin insight contemplation with phenomena that are easy to discern. But according to the explanation of the Great Subcommentary, later on…

Points to remember and the three characteristics

Miến / Burmese 20

… remember that one must continue insight contemplation until all the remaining ultimate phenomena are covered.

The essential points to remember

When contemplating with insight —
1. At times the internal, that is, the five internal aggregates.
2. At times the external, that is, the five external aggregates of living beings, together with non-clung-to material phenomena in inanimate things.
3. At times material phenomena, that is, primary materiality and derived materiality.
4. At times mental phenomena, that is, the four mental aggregates.
5. At times the characteristic of impermanence.
6. At times the characteristic of suffering.
7. At times the characteristic of non-self.

These aspects are to be applied in turn in insight contemplation. Remember that this practice follows a definite method, distinguishes concept from ultimate reality, and discerns the appropriate objects. A concept is unsuitable as an object of insight contemplation. Only ultimate reality is a suitable object for insight contemplation.

The three characteristics

Eko āditova aniccato saṅkhāre sammasati. Yasmā pana na aniccato sammasanamatteneva vuṭṭhānaṃ hoti, dukkhato pi anattato pi sammasitabbam eva. Tasmā dukkhato pi anattato pi sammasati. Tassevaṃ paṭipannassa aniccato sammasanakāle vuṭṭhānaṃ hoti. Ayaṃ aniccato abhinivisitvā aniccato vuṭṭhāti nāma.

Sace panassa dukkhato anattato sammasanakāle vuṭṭhānaṃ hoti, ayaṃ aniccato abhinivisitvā dukkhato anattato…

Beginning with each characteristic and emerging

Miến / Burmese 21

… vuṭṭhāti nāma. Esa nayo dukkhato anattato abhinivisitvā sesavuṭṭhānesupi. (Visuddhi II, 301.)

1. At the very beginning of developing insight, a meditator contemplates formations as impermanent, examining so as to see with knowledge their nature of arising and then passing away. However, insight leading to emergence cannot arise merely through contemplating impermanence. One must also contemplate suffering, examining so as to see with knowledge the continual oppression and affliction of arising and passing away, and contemplate non-self, examining so as to see with knowledge the absence of any enduring, solid, indestructible self or core. Therefore the meditator also contemplates them as suffering and as non-self. If in the continuum of the meditator who practises and contemplates in this way, insight leading to emergence arises while contemplating formations as impermanent, this is called beginning by attending to impermanence and emerging from formations by way of impermanence.

2–3. If insight leading to emergence arises in that person's continuum while contemplating as suffering or as non-self, this is called beginning by attending to impermanence and emerging from formations by way of suffering or by way of non-self.

Understand in the same way the other cases of emergence when one begins by attending to formations as suffering or as non-self. (Visuddhi II, 301.)

Contemplating the three characteristics in turn. The light of non-self

Miến / Burmese 22

According to the ruling in the commentary above, remember that the meditator must contemplate formations with insight in turn —
1. At times as impermanent.
2. At times as suffering.
3. At times as non-self.

The light of non-self

The characteristics of impermanence and suffering are evident in the world whether Buddhas arise or do not arise. The characteristic of non-self cannot become evident in the world apart from the arising of Buddhas. That characteristic becomes evident only at the time when Buddhas arise. Even wise and good persons of great power and might, Bodhisattas who became accomplished seers such as the seer Sarabhaṅga, could explain formations by presenting them as impermanent and suffering. They could not present and explain them as non-self. If those great and wise persons could present formations as non-self and explain this to an assembly that came before them, that assembly would have been able to penetrate and know noble path and fruition knowledge. The capacity to present and teach the characteristic of non-self is outside the domain of any other person or being and belongs only to the domain of the omniscient, perfectly awakened Buddhas…

Breaking up the compactness of materiality and mentality to see non-self

Miến / Burmese 23

… Therefore the characteristic of non-self is a characteristic that is hard to make evident. Accordingly, when the Buddha teaches the characteristic of non-self, he teaches it together with —

1. The characteristic of impermanence.
2. The characteristic of suffering.
3. Or both the characteristics of impermanence and suffering. (Abhi-a II, 46–47.)

Nānādhātuyo vinibbhujjitvā ghanavinibbhoge kate anattalakkhaṇaṃ yāthāvasarasato upaṭṭhāti. (Abhi-a II, 47.)

When the distinct material and mental elements are analysed and broken up by knowledge one by one down to the ultimate level, so that the compactness of materiality and mentality (rūpaghana, nāmaghana) is broken up, the characteristic of non-self, the light of non-self, becomes evident in the meditator's knowledge in accordance with its own actual nature. (Abhi-a II, 47.)

Only when one can analyse compact materiality and mentality, in particular material and mental groups, and discern each ultimate phenomenon with insight knowledge in terms of characteristic, function, manifestation and proximate cause, distinguishing, contemplating and seeing them with knowledge, will the compactness of materiality and mentality be broken up. Only when the compactness is broken up does knowledge reach ultimate reality. Only when knowledge reaches ultimate reality does the light of non-self shine forth clearly. Only when the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self…

The basis of insight and two methods of contemplation

Miến / Burmese 24

… are contemplated with insight knowledge, made evident to knowledge and seen, can one reach the noble path. Thus consider the following assertions —

1. There is no need to contemplate until material and mental groups are seen.
2. Disciples cannot contemplate material and mental groups.
3. Disciples cannot analyse material and mental groups into elements.
4. Disciples cannot contemplate the ultimate materiality and mentality taught by the Buddha.
5. Only omniscient, perfectly awakened Buddhas can know the material and mental phenomena taught by the Buddha. That is the domain of Buddhas alone.
6. Only arahants can know such materiality and mentality.

Remember that assertions and views of this kind deviate from the intended meaning of the teaching and lack textual support. Only when material and mental groups can be analysed into elements does knowledge reach ultimate reality. Nibbāna is a Dhamma that can be attained by proceeding from the domain of ultimate reality. Bear in mind that it cannot be attained by proceeding from the domain of concepts.

Comprehension by groups and insight into phenomena individually

Samūhaggahaṇavasena pavattaṃ kalāpasammasanaṃ. Phassādiekekadhammaggahaṇavasena pavattā anupadadhammavipassanā. (Mūlaṭī I, 109.)

There are two kinds of insight, insight by the method of grouping (nayavipassanā), called comprehension by groups (kalāpasammasana), and insight into phenomena individually (anupadadhammavipassanā). Formations may be arranged into two groups according to materiality and mentality, five groups according to the five aggregates, twelve groups according to the twelve bases, eighteen groups according to the eighteen elements, twelve groups according to the factors of dependent origination, and in other ways…

Two methods of contemplation and the factors of dependent origination

Miến / Burmese 25

… When material and mental phenomena are contemplated collectively by such arrangements, taking clusters, collections or groups as objects, this is called comprehension by groups, the grouped method of insight. [In this method take collectively as object the material phenomena present in the 42 divisions at the six doors, then contemplate with insight by applying the three characteristics in turn. Likewise, contemplate past, present and future materiality, internal and external, collectively, and gradually apply the three characteristics in turn. For mental phenomena, one can take together the mental phenomena present in a single mind moment, or arrange them separately into groups of feeling, perception, formations and consciousness and contemplate them with insight. The same applies to past, future, present, internal, external and the remaining cases.]

The method of contemplating with insight each material phenomenon separately, such as earth, water, fire and air in each material group, and the method of taking individually the consciousness and mental factors, such as contact, feeling, perception and volition, within the group of consciousness and mental factors at each mind moment, are called the method of insight into phenomena individually (anupadadhammavipassanā).

Of those two methods of insight, the Visuddhimagga instructs a meditator beginning to work on the phenomena to be contemplated with insight to start with the grouped method of insight, called comprehension by groups. (Visuddhi II, 241.)

The factors of dependent origination

The Visuddhimagga explains that the factors of dependent origination are also included in the objects of insight knowledge, beginning with the words “dvādasa paṭiccasamuppādaṅgāni”, the twelve factors of dependent origination. (Visuddhi II, 243.)

Contemplating causes and effects and groups of phenomena

Miến / Burmese 26

Sapaccayanāmarūpavasena tilakkhaṇaṃ āropetvā vipassanāpaṭipāṭiyā “aniccaṃ dukkhaṃ anattā”ti sammasanto vicarati. (M-a I, 281.)

The commentary to the Mūlapaṇṇāsa just cited also instructs one to contemplate mentality and materiality together with their conditions with insight by applying the three characteristics in the sequence of insight knowledges.

Following these instructions, examine so as to see with knowledge the causal relationship among the factors of dependent origination —
1. At times the causal phenomena.
2. At times the resultant phenomena.
For both, look with knowledge at times to see impermanence, at times suffering and at times non-self, and contemplate them in turn as impermanent, as suffering and as non-self.

To gather together the preceding instructions, when contemplating with insight, the meditator is to contemplate —
1. At times the internal.
2. At times the external. Within these —
3. At times material phenomena.
4. At times mental phenomena.
5. At times causal phenomena.
6. At times resultant phenomena.
7. At times as impermanent.
8. At times as suffering.
9. At times as non-self.
10. At times as unattractive…

Contemplating unattractiveness, the past and the future

Miến / Burmese 27

… applying the characteristics in turn in insight contemplation. Further —

Asubhā bhāvetabbā rāgassa pahānāya. (Udānapāḷi, Khu I, 120.)

In the Meghiya Sutta just cited, the Buddha instructed that unattractiveness be developed for abandoning lust. Similarly, in the Vijaya Sutta (Khu I, 308) he also instructed that unattractiveness be developed for cutting lust off at its root. That development of unattractiveness falls under contemplation of suffering among the three characteristics. This is the method of insight contemplation regarding the five present aggregates.

Further, in discourses with the three rounds of exposition, such as the Discourse on the Characteristic of Non-self, the Buddha instructed one to contemplate with insight both the five past aggregates and the five future aggregates, beginning with “yaṃ kiñci rūpaṃ atītānāgatapaccuppannaṃ”, that is, whatever materiality is past, future or present. In accordance with those instructions, remember that past and future aggregates must be contemplated with insight by the same method as present aggregates. Accordingly, counting all the items —
11. At times the past.
12. At times the future.
Remember that these phenomena also are to be contemplated with insight.

These are important points concerning the work of insight that meditators should know beforehand. Again, those material and mental phenomena can be arranged into five groups according to the five aggregates and twelve groups according to the twelve bases…

Insight knowledge and direct knowledge

Miến / Burmese 28

… eighteen groups according to the eighteen elements and twelve factors according to dependent origination, and insight may be practised using each of these methods. In this book, the method chiefly presented is insight contemplation according to the two kinds, materiality and mentality, placing materiality in one group and mentality in another.

Insight knowledge and direct knowledge

Regarding contemplation of the past and future, some teachers hold that one can contemplate them only after attaining direct knowledge (abhiññā), particularly the direct knowledge of recollection of former lives (pubbenivāsānussati). There are two ways of contemplating the past and future, by direct knowledge of recollection of former lives and by insight knowledge. The Pāli of the Connected Discourses on the Aggregates and the commentary to the discourse contain the following —

Ye hi keci, bhikkhave, samaṇā vā brāhmaṇā vā anekavihitaṃ pubbenivāsaṃ anussaramānā anussaranti, sabbe te pañcupādānakkhandhe anussaranti etesaṃ vā aññataraṃ. Katame pañca —
1. “Evaṃrūpo ahosiṃ atītamaddhānan”ti iti vā hi, bhikkhave, anussaramāno rūpaṃyeva anussarati.
2. “Evaṃvedano ahosiṃ atītamaddhānan”ti iti vā hi, bhikkhave, anussaramāno vedanaṃyeva anussarati.
3. “Evaṃsañño ahosiṃ atītamaddhānan”ti. Pe.
4. “Evaṃsaṅkhāro ahosiṃ atītamaddhānan”ti. Pe.
5. “Evaṃviññāṇo ahosiṃ atītamaddhānan”ti iti vā hi, bhikkhave, anussaramāno viññāṇaṃyeva anussarati. (Saṃ II, 71.)

Pubbenivāsanti na kho idaṃ abhiññāvasena anussaraṇaṃ sandhāya vuttaṃ.

Objects recollected through insight knowledge

Miến / Burmese 29

Vipassanāvasena pana pubbenivāsaṃ anussarante samaṇabrāhmaṇe sandhāyetaṃ vuttaṃ. Tenevāha — “Sabbe te pañcupādānakkhandhe anussaranti etesaṃ vā aññataraṃ”ti. Abhiññāvasena hi samanussarantassa khandhāpi upādānakkhandhāpi khandhapaṭibaddhāpi paññattipi ārammaṇaṃ hotiyeva. Rūpaṃyeva anussaratīti evaṃ anussaranto na aññaṃ kiñci sattaṃ vā puggalaṃ vā anussarati. Atīte pana niruddhaṃ rūpakkhandhameva anussarati. Vedanādīsupi eseva nayo. (Saṃ-a II, 266, mục 79.)

Bhikkhus … some persons in the world called ascetics and brahmins can, if they wish, follow back with knowledge and recollect the continuum of aggregates in many previous lives, not just one. In recollecting in this way, all those ascetics and brahmins can, if they wish, recollect the five aggregates subject to clinging or any one of those five aggregates.

Bhikkhus … those ascetics and brahmins —
1. Can follow back with knowledge and recollect that “In the past, material phenomena of such a nature had arisen.”
2. “In the past, feeling of such a nature had arisen.” Pe.
3. “In the past, perception of such a nature had arisen.” Pe.
4. “In the past, formations of such a nature had arisen.” Pe.
5. “In the past, consciousness of such a nature had arisen…

Distinguishing the two ways of recollecting former lives

Miến / Burmese 30

… ” — they can likewise follow back with knowledge and recollect in this way, if they wish to recollect. (Saṃ II, 71, Khajjanīya Sutta.)

Pubbenivāsa means being able to follow back with knowledge and recollect the continuum of aggregates that formerly existed. In using this word the Buddha did not intend recollection by following back a former continuum of aggregates through the power of direct knowledge of recollection of former lives. Rather, he taught this discourse with reference solely to the ascetics and brahmins who, through the power of insight knowledge, follow back and recollect with knowledge the continuum of aggregates that had arisen and existed before. It is for that very reason that the Buddha himself said, “They can follow back with knowledge and recollect the five aggregates subject to clinging or any one of those five aggregates.” The distinction is as follows. If through the power of direct knowledge one follows back with knowledge and recollects the continuum of aggregates that formerly arose and existed, that direct knowledge of recollection of former lives —

1. Can recollect and know the five aggregates including supramundane phenomena. (That is, it can know the five aggregates including supramundane phenomena that formerly arose in the continua of noble and good persons, including Buddhas of the past.)
2. It can also recollect and know the five aggregates subject to clinging. (That is, these do not include supramundane phenomena.)
3. It can also recollect and know what is connected with the aggregates, such as lineage, appearance, food, pleasure, pain and the like.

Discerning past aggregates

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4. One can also recall and know kinds of concepts such as names and designations.

Insight knowledge cannot know items (1), (3), and (4) mentioned above. It can know in sequence only the phenomena that are its objects of contemplation, namely the five aggregates subject to clinging in item (2).

Rūpayeva anussarati means that one follows the sequence with knowledge and recalls only material phenomena. In thus recalling the succession of past aggregates in order with insight knowledge, one does not follow the sequence with knowledge to recall a being or person distinct from ultimate phenomena, that is, a self. One follows the sequence with knowledge and recalls only the materiality aggregate that ceased in the past. The same applies to feeling and the rest. Bear this in mind. (Saṃ. A. 2, 266, paragraph 79.)

Thus, bear in mind that a beginning meditator can discern and see the five past aggregates subject to clinging with insight knowledge. Here, insight knowledge also includes knowledge of the delimitation of mentality and materiality and knowledge of discerning conditions.

An important key

Being able to follow the sequence with knowledge, recall, and discern the five past aggregates is a particularly important part of discerning past causes. If one does not yet know how to discern the five past aggregates, there is no way to discern the past causes included in those aggregates as part of them.

An important key

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Likewise, there is no way to discern how the corresponding past results arise from the corresponding past causes, or how present results arise from the corresponding past causes. Similarly, if one cannot discern the five future aggregates, there is no way to discern how future results arise from present causes or from the corresponding past causes, or how the corresponding future results arise from the corresponding future causes. This is because future results and future causes are only part of the five future aggregates.

An important key to finding past causes and results and future causes and results is the ability to discern one of the three kinds of signs that appear near death, at the time of dying, namely kamma, a kamma sign, and a destination sign. The sign appears and is seen through the power of the kamma about to give its result, so it is an especially important key to finding the kamma about to give, that has given, or that is giving its result. It is the sign that appears at the corresponding one of the six doors near death, at the time of dying, especially the sign that appears at the clear element of the life-continuum mind, the mind-door, near death. Only by discerning those six doors, especially the mind-door, can one go on to discern the object-sign appearing at the relevant door. Only if one can discern that sign can one discern the kamma that gives the result and the ignorance,

Discerning the near-death object

craving, and clinging surrounding that kamma.

In particular, only by discerning the clear element of the life-continuum mind, the mind-door, can one discern the successions of cognitive processes that arise in between. The causes called ignorance, craving, clinging, formations, and kamma are simply phenomena included in those successions of cognitive processes. They are only parts of those cognitive processes.

To find past causes, knowing how to discern the object of the past death-proximate impulsions is extremely important. For discerning the object of those death-proximate impulsions, it is extremely important to be able to discern the clear element of the life-continuum mind, the mind-door, present at the time of dying in that past life. Only by discerning in this way can one discern:

1. The object of the death-proximate impulsions that appears at that clear element of the life-continuum mind, the mind-door.

2. The successions of cognitive processes, including the death-proximate impulsions, that arise in between those moments of life-continuum, the mind-door.

3. The kamma that causes that object to appear.

4. The ignorance, craving, and clinging that bring that kamma about.

Similarly, if a beginning meditator still has a future life, that meditator must discern the object of the death-proximate impulsions that appears at the time of dying near death in this present life. To be able to discern it, at the time of dying

Discerning the near-death object

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one must first know how to discern the clear element of the life-continuum mind, the mind-door, then arising. Only then can one discern the object of the death-proximate impulsions appearing at that mind-door, the kamma about to give its result that makes the object appear, and the ignorance, craving, and clinging that support that kamma as causes.

Likewise, for a beginning meditator who still has a journey through saṃsāra ahead, finding the succession of causes and results, the phenomena of dependent origination, across future lives requires discerning the object of the death-proximate impulsions that appears at the mind-door close to that future death consciousness. That sign appears because of kamma that will bring about another future life. Thus the kamma that causes that sign to appear is a cause of the future aggregates from the second future life onward. These signs may appear due to past kamma called aparāpariya, due to kamma performed and cultivated in the present, or due to future kamma about to give its result among the kammas performed and cultivated before that future death consciousness. By searching on the basis of that sign, the meditator will easily find the kamma. The meditator can also find the ignorance, craving, and clinging that support it. To discern in this manner, it is especially necessary to be able to discern the six doors at the time of dying, particularly the clear element of the life-continuum mind, the mind-door.

Thus, the ability to discern the past and future aggregates is important

Beginning insight with what is easy to discern

and necessary for insight into the past and future aggregates. It is also a particularly important requirement for discerning the phenomena of dependent origination and contemplating dependently arisen phenomena with insight.

Begin insight with what is easy to discern

According to the rule that at the beginning of insight one can start with material or mental phenomena that are easy to discern and readily apparent to knowledge, this book first presents how to begin insight with mentality and materiality now present.

Good practitioner, first develop the concentration you have already attained, stage by stage, to its highest level. If you can develop concentration to the fourth jhāna, reestablish that fourth-jhāna concentration each time you sit in meditation. If you are a pure-insight practitioner and have worked only on the four-elements meditation subject, take the four great elements as the object and develop concentration until the light and strength become powerful.

Since this book presents the materiality meditation subject first, and since it is easier to begin with material phenomena and proceed to insight, begin insight with material phenomena.

First, with regard to the real materiality present in the six doors and 42 parts:

(a) Either comprehend together the 54 or 44 kinds of material phenomena present at each door;

(b) Or comprehend together the material phenomena, such as the 44 kinds present in each part;

Contemplating the three characteristics of materiality

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(c) Or comprehend together all the material phenomena present in the six doors and 42 parts:

1. Take as object the fact that those material phenomena cease after arising. Look with knowledge until it is clearly seen and contemplate them many times as impermanent. Contemplate repeatedly, now internally and now externally. In contemplating externally in this manner, extend the range little by little from near to far, as far as innumerable world systems, and contemplate again and again.

2. Look with knowledge until you see clearly how those material phenomena are incessantly oppressed and afflicted by their arising and cessation, and contemplate them again and again as suffering. Contemplate repeatedly, now internally and now externally, from near to far. Extend your knowledge as far as innumerable world systems and contemplate.

3. Take as object the absence in those material phenomena of the essence called self, a lasting, solid, stable core that does not disintegrate. Look with knowledge until this is clearly seen and contemplate them again and again as non-self. Contemplate now internally and now externally. Gradually extend the range bit by bit from near to far, as far as innumerable world systems, contemplating now internally and now externally.

[Note — Non-real material phenomena are unsuitable for insight contemplation by applying the three characteristics. Therefore, from this point and this section onward, set aside the examination and analysis of non-real material phenomena.]

When practising insight in this manner, applying the three characteristics to the two continuities, internal and external, and alternating very swiftly, contemplate until arising and cessation are seen to occur very quickly and distinctly. As for contemplating as impermanent,

The disappearance of materiality and mentality

Miến / Burmese 37

contemplating as suffering, and contemplating as non-self, contemplate rather slowly. Contemplate with knowledge so as to see arising and cessation as rapidly as possible. Apply the characteristics rather slowly.

Do not take the arising and cessation of the tiny particles, the material groups, as object and apply the characteristics to that. Analyze the material groups into elements and look with knowledge to see the individual ultimate material phenomena arising and ceasing. When you see that, apply the characteristics and practise insight.

Beware of the disappearance of materiality and mentality

Material groups are still only the smallest conceptual lumps, clusters, and combinations, such as concepts of a collection. Since a concept does not actually exist, it cannot withstand prolonged observation. When a beginning meditator diligently develops a meditation subject, the meditator often sees material groups in accordance with their perfections. At that point, if unable to discern the ultimate phenomena present in each material group, such as earth, water, fire, air, colour, odour, taste, and nutritive essence, and therefore knowledge has not reached the ultimate, but the meditator observes the arising and cessation of those groups, applies the characteristic, and contemplates as impermanent, suffering, or non-self, the concepts cannot withstand being pulverized for long by knowledge, that is, they cannot withstand prolonged observation. Before long, the beginning meditator often ceases to see the material groups. When the groups are no longer seen in this way, the power of concentration developed in meditation has not yet diminished greatly, so the meditator can still see a white mass, a white field, a clear mass,

The disappearance of materiality and mentality

or a clear field, seen as a mass, a lump, or a whole large field. If one focuses on that clear or white field so that the mind settles calmly and adheres to it, the mind can settle calmly and adhere to that object. Some beginning meditators call such a condition “the cessation of materiality.” If one relaxes slightly the mind that has settled calmly and adhered to the object, it can fall back into the life-continuum. Some call even that fall into the life-continuum “the cessation of mentality,” supposing they no longer know anything because they do not know the object presently being contemplated. They tend to suppose that phenomena of this sort have been seen with knowledge. Be mindful.

Pay particular attention to the statements presented above:

1. Contemplating only the five internal aggregates with insight;

2. Contemplating only the five external aggregates with insight, and therein:

3. Contemplating only material phenomena with insight;

4. Contemplating only mental phenomena with insight. The statements say that by doing these one cannot attain the noble path. (Abhi. A. 1, 270–271.)

5. The statements say that without distinctly knowing the succession of causes and results, the phenomena of dependent origination, by the three kinds of full understanding, one cannot escape saṃsāra, that is, one cannot attain the noble path. (Dī. 2, 47.)

6. The statements say that without distinctly knowing all five aggregates subject to clinging, material and mental phenomena, by the three kinds of full understanding, one cannot escape the suffering of saṃsāra

How to contemplate mental phenomena with insight

(Saṃ. 2, 249).

Pay particular attention to these statements drawn from the Pāli Canon, the commentaries, and the subcommentaries.

Also note that if one discerns again the four great elements present in that clear field, or discerns the space element, one can soon see the particles of material groups again.

[Note — In contemplating material phenomena with insight, include lifeless material phenomena, termed anupādinnaka-sarīra, in the contemplation.]

How to contemplate mental phenomena with insight

After contemplating material phenomena with insight to a fairly satisfactory degree, switch to contemplating mental phenomena with insight. It is better to switch to contemplating mental phenomena when one can contemplate material phenomena with insight and shift back and forth swiftly.

Since mental phenomena were previously discerned according to base and door, begin contemplating them according to base and door in insight as well. For groups of cognitive-process consciousness with their associated phenomena and for groups of life-continuum consciousness present between one process and the next, take as object the fact that each group of consciousness arises and then ceases, moment by moment, and contemplate “impermanent, impermanent.” Contemplate all processes such as the eye-door process, each process with wholesome impulsions and each process with unwholesome impulsions. Contemplate both the internal and external continuities. First, beginning nearby,

Contemplating cognitive processes at the six doors

contemplate many times, now internally and now externally. Once skilled, extend the range little by little, comprehending the 31 planes together or comprehending as far as innumerable world systems. Contemplate again and again, now internally and now externally. When satisfied with the characteristic of impermanence, look with knowledge until you see how these mental phenomena are constantly oppressed and afflicted by arising and ceasing. Likewise, contemplate again and again, “suffering, suffering.” When fairly satisfied with that characteristic of suffering, take as object the absence in mental phenomena of a firm self, an enduring, stable core that does not disintegrate, and contemplate “non-self, non-self.” In both the internal and external continuities, contemplate all the good groups with wholesome impulsions and bad groups with unwholesome impulsions across all six groups, beginning with the visible-object group. When contemplating mental phenomena in this way:

1. Eye-door and mind-door processes that take a visible object;

2. Ear-door and mind-door processes that take a sound object;

3. Nose-door and mind-door processes that take an odour object;

4. Tongue-door and mind-door processes that take a taste object;

5. Body-door and mind-door processes that take a tangible object;

6. Mind-door processes that take a mental object.

Contemplate these processes fully in sequence, as presented in the tables in the section on the mentality meditation subject. Contemplate again and again.

The order for a practitioner who takes serenity as the vehicle

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If the beginning meditator is a practitioner who takes serenity as the vehicle, it is better to begin insight with the mental phenomena present in the jhāna-attainment cognitive process one has attained. For example, enter the first jhāna. On emerging from that first jhāna, begin contemplating with insight the mental phenomena present in the first-jhāna attainment process, applying the three characteristics in turn. In the same way, contemplate the mental phenomena present in the second-jhāna attainment process and so on. Contemplate with insight all the mental phenomena present in the jhāna-attainment processes one has attained. Apply the three characteristics in turn and contemplate again and again. When satisfied, contemplate with insight the mental phenomena present in all six groups in order, beginning with the eye-door and mind-door processes that take a visible object, applying the three characteristics in turn.

Give priority to contemplating the characteristic that suits you

Evaṃ saṅkhāre anattato passantassa diṭṭhisamugghāṭanaṃ nāma hoti. Aniccato passantassa mānasamugghāṭanaṃ nāma hoti. Dukkhato passantassa nikantipariyādānaṃ nāma hoti. Kuto ayaṃ vipassanā attano attano ṭhāneyeva tiṭṭhatīti. (Vism. Mahāṭī. 2, 464.) For one who sees formations thus as non-self, this is called the uprooting of views. For one who sees them as impermanent, it is called the uprooting of conceit. For one who sees them as suffering, it is called the exhaustion of attachment. Why does each of these insights stand in its own place?

A beginning meditator must cultivate and investigate with insight to become proficient and strong in applying the three characteristics to conditioned phenomena. In cultivating and investigating in this way, only when the other two contemplative knowledges assist one contemplative knowledge by the power of the decisive-support condition (upanissaya) does that contemplative knowledge

Mutual support among the three contemplative knowledges

become sharp, mature, and purified. Only contemplative knowledge thus sharpened, matured, and purified can break up defilements.

Knowledge of contemplation of non-self, receiving the exceptional strength of support from knowledge of contemplation of impermanence and knowledge of contemplation of suffering through the power of the decisive-support condition, becomes sharp, mature, and purified. Therefore, a beginning meditator who has repeatedly pulverized conditioned phenomena by knowledge of contemplation of impermanence and knowledge of contemplation of suffering should repeatedly pulverize those same conditioned phenomena by knowledge of contemplation of non-self. Give priority to contemplating non-self. Then knowledge of contemplation of non-self can become ripe, sharp, mature, and purified. Knowledge of contemplation of non-self thus ripened, sharpened, matured, and purified can dispel the grasping of views firmly attached to those conditioned phenomena. All wrong views rest on self-view and have self-view as their foundation and cause. Knowledge of contemplation of non-self is directly opposed to self-view. Therefore, contemplation of non-self can dispel the grasping of views.

Again, knowledge of contemplation of impermanence, receiving the exceptional strength of support from knowledge of contemplation of suffering and knowledge of contemplation of non-self through the power of the decisive-support condition, becomes sharp, mature, and purified. Therefore, a beginning meditator who has repeatedly pulverized conditioned phenomena by knowledge of contemplation of suffering and knowledge of contemplation of non-self should repeatedly pulverize those same conditioned phenomena by knowledge of contemplation

Contemplation of impermanence and suffering

of impermanence. Give priority to contemplating impermanence. Then knowledge of contemplation of impermanence can become ripe, sharp, mature, and purified. Knowledge of contemplation of impermanence thus ripened, sharpened, matured, and purified can dispel conceit firmly attached to those conditioned phenomena. When grasping conditioned phenomena as permanent, that is, the idea of permanence, is manifest, one can become puffed up with conceit before others, for example, “Kvaṃ nīcaṃ, kvaṃ uccaṃ,” “Here is what is low, and here is what is high.”

Again, knowledge of contemplation of suffering, receiving the exceptional strength of support from knowledge of contemplation of impermanence and knowledge of contemplation of non-self through the power of the decisive-support condition, becomes sharp, mature, and purified. Therefore, a beginning meditator who has repeatedly pulverized conditioned phenomena by knowledge of contemplation of impermanence and knowledge of contemplation of non-self should repeatedly pulverize those same conditioned phenomena by knowledge of contemplation of suffering. Give priority to contemplating suffering. When that knowledge of contemplation of suffering is ripe, sharp, mature, and purified, the knowledge of contemplation of suffering thus ripened, sharpened, matured, and purified can exhaust the grasping of craving, the delight associated with craving, that adheres firmly to those conditioned phenomena as “mine, mine.” Only when the perception of pleasure, the recognition “it is pleasant,” is manifest regarding those conditioned phenomena can craving's grasping, the grasping through craving, manifest and take hold of those conditioned phenomena as “mine, mine.” Knowledge of contemplation of suffering

Life-span present and the five-aggregate method

is directly opposed to that grasping and delight of craving. Therefore, knowledge of contemplation of suffering can exhaust the grasping of craving. (Vism. 2, 464. Mahāṭī. 2, 405–406.)

Therefore, after developing proficiency in all three characteristics, give priority to contemplating one characteristic of your preference for a fairly long time. If the strength of that contemplative knowledge is weak, contemplate the other two characteristics again. Insight knowledge can abandon defilements only by abandoning them factor by factor. Only noble path knowledge can eradicate them without remainder. To reach the noble path, strive to mature the insight knowledges.

Life-span present (addhā-paccuppanna)

As for the material and mental phenomena that have arisen, are arising, and will arise throughout one life, from rebirth-linking to death consciousness:

1. Apply the three characteristics in turn to materiality alone.

2. Apply the three characteristics in turn to mentality alone.

Contemplate with insight very frequently, again and again. It is necessary to contemplate many times in each mode of contemplation. Contemplate again and again, now internally, now externally, now as impermanent, now as suffering, and now as non-self.

The five-aggregate method

Good practitioner, recall that you previously discerned mental phenomena according to base and door. In particular, recall the tables in the section on the mentality meditation subject.

The five-aggregate method

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First, recall the eye-door and mind-door processes with great wholesome impulsions associated with knowledge and accompanied by joy, and so on. The phenomena present in each group of consciousness are:

1. The supporting material phenomena (54) and the visible object are the materiality aggregate;

2. Each feeling is the feeling aggregate;

3. Each perception is the perception aggregate;

4. Each group of the remaining mental factors that are formations is the formations aggregate;

5. Each knowing consciousness, or cognizance, is the consciousness aggregate.

Thus also contemplate with insight material phenomena as one part and mental phenomena as four parts. Contemplate by applying the three characteristics in turn.

1. The remaining eye-door and mind-door processes that likewise take a visible object;

2. Ear-door and mind-door processes that take a sound object;

3. Nose-door and mind-door processes that take an odour object;

4. Tongue-door and mind-door processes that take a taste object;

5. Body-door and mind-door processes that take a tangible object;

6. Mind-door processes that take a mental object.

For each of these processes, likewise practise insight by the five-aggregate method. In every row of the tables presented in the section on the mentality meditation subject, from the mind-door processes that follow the five doors to the bare mind-door processes:

1. If penetrating materiality alone, penetrate the whole row;

2. If penetrating feeling alone, penetrate the whole row;

3. If penetrating perception alone, penetrate the whole row;

Discerning each aggregate from the momentary present to an entire life

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4. Discern thoroughly without omission the mental factors belonging to formations separately.

5. Discern thoroughly without omission the knowing consciousness, that is, consciousness, separately.

Discern with insight, successively applying the three characteristics. When discerning in this way, include the life-continuum moments between cognitive processes, using the method of the five aggregates. Discern likewise in mind-door processes that take mental objects as their object.

Once reasonably proficient in discerning internally with insight by the method of the five aggregates, discern externally with insight in the same way. From near to far, discern repeatedly, alternating internally and externally. Take the thirty-one planes as the scope and extend insight knowledge to the endless world systems.

Whether discerning with insight by the method of the two groups of materiality and mentality or by the method of the five aggregates, strive to discern down to the momentary present (khaṇapaccuppanna). So that knowledge and vision can reach the momentary present clearly and distinctly, include the mental phenomena of the life-continuum between the cognitive processes and discern them down to the momentary present.

Once reasonably proficient in discerning the present with insight by the method of the five aggregates, continue discerning the five aggregates from rebirth-linking to death, called the present by life span (addhāpaccuppanna). Discern thoroughly, without omission, from rebirth-linking to death —

1. materiality separately

2. feeling separately

3. perception separately

4. the mental factors belonging to formations separately

5. the knowing consciousness, that is, consciousness, separately

Discerning each aggregate and discerning materiality and mentality together

Miến / Burmese 47

Discern with insight in both process and process-freed consciousness, successively applying the three characteristics. Discern many times as impermanent, many times as suffering and many times as not-self. When discerning in this way, discern each aggregate thoroughly from rebirth-linking to death. For example, after discerning the materiality aggregate closely and thoroughly with insight from rebirth-linking to death, proceed to the feeling aggregate and discern it likewise. Discern repeatedly, alternating internally and externally.

Also discern materiality and mentality together

Once reasonably proficient in discerning with insight by the method of the two groups of materiality and mentality or by the method of the five aggregates, one can discern materiality and mentality together. First, again discern materiality separately and mentality separately with insight until proficient, both internally and externally. Once able to discern nimbly, alternating back and forth, first discern by base and door, in each mind-moment, as set out in the tables in the section on the meditation subject of mentality —

1. The material basis and the material object.

2. The group of mental phenomena consisting of consciousness and mental factors in each mind-moment.

Take as the object the nature of the breakup and disappearance of those groups of materiality and mentality, or take their very arising and passing away as the object, and discern with insight by successively applying the three characteristics.

At five-door adverting, the mind-moment of adverting to the object, the 54 material phenomena of the physical basis and the visible object arise and cease, and the 11 mental phenomena also arise and cease. In each mind-moment discern natures of this kind, group by group of materiality and mentality…

Alternating materiality and mentality and extending to the three times

Miến / Burmese 48

… so as to see their arising and passing away. Then discern them in succession, one round as impermanent, one round as suffering and one round as not-self. Discern by each base and door. Discern at all six doors. Discern comprehensively the wholesome and unwholesome impulsion processes, as shown in the tables in the section on the meditation subject of mentality. Discern repeatedly, alternating one round internally and one round externally. In this manner, discern —

1. materiality separately

2. mentality separately

3. materiality and mentality together

After successively applying the three characteristics and discerning repeatedly, alternating internally and externally, continue discerning with insight likewise from rebirth-linking to death: (1) materiality separately, (2) mentality separately, and (3) materiality and mentality together. Discern them just as they have arisen, are arising and will arise. Likewise continue discerning with insight from rebirth-linking to death using the method of the five aggregates.

Past, present and future

Once you have repeatedly contemplated and become reasonably proficient in discerning the material and mental phenomena from rebirth-linking to death, called the present by life span (addhāpaccuppanna), by the method of the two groups of materiality and mentality or the method of the five aggregates, extend discernment with insight to materiality and mentality past, present and future.

Aniccādivasena vividhehi ākārehi dhamme passatīti vipassanā. (အဘိ၊ဋ္ဌ၊၁၁၇၅။)

Because it sees formations in various ways, such as impermanence, suffering and not-self…

The objects of insight across lives

Miến / Burmese 49

… it is called insight. (အဘိဉ္ဉာဝေါဂ္ဂ။)

According to the great commentaries, it is the development and contemplation of ultimate formations by applying the three characteristics to them that is called insight. Bear in mind that, if a practitioner has not seen down to ultimate materiality and mentality or distinguished concepts from ultimate phenomena, contemplating and noting gross conceptual masses cannot yet be called insight.

In the past lives that you are able to define and discern, discern from rebirth-linking to death of the life in question. Again discern from rebirth-linking to death in the next past life, up to rebirth-linking and death in the immediately preceding past life. Then discern from rebirth-linking to death of the present life. Next discern from rebirth-linking to death of the first future life and, if there is a further future life, from rebirth-linking to death of the second future life. In this way discern from rebirth-linking to death of as many future lives as you are able, discerning the phenomena present in those lives —

1. Successively apply the three characteristics to materiality separately.

2. Successively apply the three characteristics to mentality separately.

3. Successively apply the three characteristics to materiality and mentality together.

Discern with insight in this way many times, alternating back and forth. Discern one round internally and one round externally. For anyone still unclear, the method of discernment will be set out again. If the good learner can define materiality, mentality, causes and effects, that is, formations, as far back as the fifth past life —

The sequence of discerning lives and aggregates

Miến / Burmese 50

1. From rebirth-linking to death of the fifth past life.

2. From rebirth-linking to death of the fourth past life.

3. From rebirth-linking to death of the third past life.

4. From rebirth-linking to death of the second past life.

5. From rebirth-linking to death of the first past life.

6. From rebirth-linking to death of the present life. If there is a future life…

7. From rebirth-linking to death of the first future life. If there is still another future life…

8. From rebirth-linking to death of the second future life.

In this way, from the farthest past life you can define up to the present, and from the present to the last future life —

1. materiality separately

2. mentality separately

3. materiality and mentality together

Diligently discern with insight by successively applying the three characteristics. Sometimes discern internally, sometimes externally, and sometimes alternately internally and externally. Likewise, by the method of the five aggregates —

1. materiality separately

2. feeling separately

3. perception separately

4. the mental factors belonging to formations separately

5. the knowing consciousness, that is, consciousness, separately

Sometimes discern as impermanent, sometimes as suffering, and sometimes as not-self, alternating internally and externally. Discern repeatedly, many times, alternating back and forth…

Discerning all eleven aspects and the Discourse on the Characteristic of Not-self

Miến / Burmese 51

… When discerning in this way —

1. Whether it is gross (oḷārika) materiality, feeling, perception, formations or consciousness.

2. Whether it is subtle (sukhuma) materiality, feeling, perception, formations or consciousness.

3. Whether it is inferior (hīna) materiality, feeling, perception, formations or consciousness.

4. Whether it is superior (paṇīta) materiality, feeling, perception, formations or consciousness.

5. Whether it is far (dūra) materiality, feeling, perception, formations or consciousness.

6. Whether it is near (santika) materiality, feeling, perception, formations or consciousness.

Whatever materiality, feeling, perception, formations or consciousness there may be, discern them all with insight. When able to discern in this way, one has learned to discern with insight the five aggregates, namely materiality, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness, in the eleven aspects of past, future, present, internal, external, gross, subtle, inferior, superior, far and near. One then also knows how to discern in the way set out in the Discourse on the Characteristic of Not-self below.

Discernment according to the Discourse on the Characteristic of Not-self

1. Tasmātiha bhikkhave yaṃ kiñci rūpaṃ atītānāgatapaccuppannaṃ ajjhattaṃ vā bahiddhā vā oḷārikaṃ vā sukhumaṃ vā hīnaṃ vā paṇītaṃ vā yaṃ dūre santike vā, sabbaṃ rūpaṃ “netaṃ mama, nesohamasmi, na meso attā”ti evametaṃ yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya daṭṭhabbaṃ.

The eleven aspects of materiality in the Discourse on the Characteristic of Not-self

Miến / Burmese 52

2. Yā kāci vedanā. Pe.

3. Yā kāci saññā. Pe.

4. Ye keci saṅkhārā. Pe.

5. Yaṃ kiñci viññāṇaṃ. Pe. (သံ၊ ၂၊၅၆။)

“Netaṃ mama, nesohamasmi, na meso attā”ti samanupassāmīti aniccaṃ dukkhaṃ anattāti samanupassāmi. (ဖ၊၄၊ ၂၃၂။)

Bhikkhus… since the five aggregates are thus impermanent, suffering and not-self, in this sublime Teaching the sons of good families should discern —

1. All material phenomena that are past.

2. All material phenomena that are future.

3. All material phenomena that are present.

4. All material phenomena that are internal.

5. All material phenomena that are external.

6. All material phenomena that are gross (oḷārika).

7. All material phenomena that are subtle (sukhuma).

8. All material phenomena that are inferior (hīna).

9. All material phenomena that are superior (paṇīta).

10. All material phenomena that are far (dūra).

11. All material phenomena that are near (santika).

Regarding all material phenomena present in these eleven aspects —

(a) Netaṃ mama — this materiality is not mine, that is, it is suffering.

(b) Nesohamasmi — this materiality is not what I am, that is, it is impermanent.

Discerning materiality as not mine, not what I am, and not my self

Miến / Burmese 53

(c) Na meso attā — this materiality is not my self, that is, it is not-self.

Thus discern with the light of insight knowledge, accurately and without distortion, the material phenomena present in these eleven aspects, breaking up and penetrating the compactness of materiality and mentality.

The meaning can alternatively be rendered as follows —

Bhikkhus… since the five aggregates are thus impermanent, suffering and not-self, in this sublime Teaching the sons of good families should discern —

1. Whether it is materiality that is past.

2. Whether it is materiality that is future.

3. Whether it is materiality that is present.

4. Whether it is materiality that is internal.

5. Whether it is materiality that is external.

6. Whether it is materiality that is gross (oḷārika).

7. Whether it is materiality that is subtle (sukhuma).

8. Whether it is materiality that is inferior (hīna).

9. Whether it is materiality that is superior (paṇīta).

10. Whether it is materiality that is far (dūra).

11. Whether it is materiality that is near (santika).

Regarding all material phenomena present in these eleven aspects —

(a) Netaṃ mama — this materiality is not mine, that is, it is suffering.

(b) Nesohamasmi — this materiality is not what I am, that is, it is impermanent.

(c) Na meso attā — this materiality is not my self…

Gross, subtle, inferior, superior, far and near materiality and mentality

Miến / Burmese 54

… that is, it is not-self.

Thus discern with the light of insight knowledge, accurately and without distortion, the material phenomena present in these eleven aspects, breaking up and penetrating the compactness of materiality and mentality. (သံ၊ ၂၅၆။)

Discern likewise with respect to the four mental aggregates, namely feeling, perception, formations and consciousness. Understand the rendering of their meaning in the same way.

Gross and subtle, inferior and superior, far and near

When discerning in this way, if you wish to distinguish materiality and mentality as gross, subtle and so forth, you can discern as follows.

1. The twelve material phenomena, consisting of the five sensitivities (pasādarūpa) and seven objective fields (gocararūpa), are called gross materiality because they readily appear and are easily seen by the knowledge of the practitioner who discerns, and thus are regarded as gross.

2. The remaining sixteen material phenomena are called subtle materiality because they do not readily appear and are difficult to see by the knowledge of the practitioner who discerns, and thus are regarded as subtle.

3. Among mental phenomena, unwholesome feeling, perception, formations and consciousness are called gross because they readily appear and are easily seen by the knowledge of the practitioner who discerns.

4. Wholesome feeling, perception, formations and consciousness, as well as the mental phenomena at five-door adverting, the five sense consciousnesses, receiving, investigating, determining, registration, mind-door adverting, registration…

Subtle mental phenomena and the classifications inferior, superior, far and near

Miến / Burmese 55

… rebirth-linking, life-continuum, death and functional impulsion and so forth, namely resultant and functional feeling, perception, formations and consciousness, collectively called indeterminate, are called subtle because they do not readily appear and are difficult to see by the knowledge of the practitioner who discerns. (For the remaining classifications, see the Visuddhimagga commentary, volume two, pages 104–105 and so forth.)

5. Material phenomena produced by unwholesome kamma are inferior.

6. Material phenomena produced by wholesome kamma are superior.

7. Gross mental phenomena are inferior.

8. Subtle mental phenomena are superior.

9. Subtle material phenomena do not readily appear and are difficult to see by the knowledge of the practitioner who discerns. Being far from that knowledge, they are called far.

10. Gross material phenomena readily appear and are easily seen by the knowledge of the practitioner who discerns. Being near to that knowledge, they are called near.

11. Unwholesome feeling, perception, formations and consciousness are called far because they are far from resultant and functional, that is, indeterminate, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness, and also far from wholesome feeling, perception, formations and consciousness. Likewise, wholesome and indeterminate feeling, perception, formations and consciousness are called far because they are far from unwholesome feeling, perception, formations and consciousness.

12. Unwholesome feeling, perception, formations and consciousness are called near because they are near to unwholesome feeling, perception, formations and consciousness. Likewise, wholesome and indeterminate feeling, perception, formations and consciousness are called near because they are near to wholesome and indeterminate feeling, perception, formations and consciousness.

Discernment encompassing all classes of materiality and mentality

Miến / Burmese 56

They receive these respective designations. For other ways of distinguishing them, see the Visuddhimagga, volume two, pages 106–107.

As to the phenomena present in the three times, past, future and present, and in the two continua, internal and external —

1. The material phenomena present at the six doors and in the forty-two bodily parts.

2. The groups of mental phenomena in wholesome and unwholesome impulsion processes, together with the process-freed groups of mental phenomena, namely rebirth-linking, life-continuum and death.

If one can divide them into two groups by the method of materiality and mentality, or into five groups by the method of the five aggregates, and discern with insight thoroughly from past to present and from present to the end of the future, then gross, subtle, inferior, superior, far and near materiality and mentality are all included, without omission. Therefore, as set out above —

1. materiality separately

2. mentality separately

3. materiality and mentality together

One can likewise discern with insight by this method of the two groups of materiality and mentality. For instance, the brahmin woman Pañcaggadāyikā and her husband divided formations into the two groups of materiality and mentality, contemplated them with insight by the method of those two groups, and became established in the path and fruition of non-return. (ဓမ္မပဒဋ္ဌ၊ ၂၃၆၉။)

Again, if one divides that materiality and mentality into five groups by the method of the five aggregates and discerns them with insight, then, like the elders of the group of five named in the Discourse on the Characteristic of Not-self…

Cultivating foulness and foulness in a living body

Miến / Burmese 57

… one can reach arahant fruition. (သံ၊ ၂၊၅၅။)

If one is able, it is better still to discern gross, subtle, inferior, superior, far and near material and mental phenomena separately throughout the three times, past, future and present, and in both continua, internal and external.

Cultivation of foulness (asubhabhāvanā)

In the Girimānanda Sutta (အံ၊၃၊၃၄၃), the Buddha teaches one to strive to develop the perception of foulness (asubhasaññā). Savijjāṇaka-asubha is cultivating foulness in a living body. In the Meghiya Sutta he also teaches, “asubhā bhāvetabbā rāgassa pahānāya”, that is, strive to cultivate foulness to abandon lust. (ဥဒါန၊၁ ၂၀။) In the Vijaya Sutta (သုတ္တနိပါတ၊၃၀၇-၃၀၈), the Buddha teaches cultivation of savijjāṇaka-asubha, foulness of a living body, and avijjāṇaka-asubha, foulness of a corpse. That cultivation of foulness is the basis for contemplation of suffering (dukkhānupassanā).

Foulness in a living body (savijjāṇaka-asubha)

When taking as object the repulsive, foul nature of the thirty-two bodily parts present in the continua of living beings and attending to it to cultivate foulness, there are two ways to discern. The first is to discern for attaining jhāna by attention to repulsiveness (paṭikkūlamanasikāra). The second is to discern so as to see the foulness and danger of the house of the bodily aggregates, called contemplation of danger (ādīnavānupassanā). With the thirty-two bodily parts present in the internal continuum, one can take all thirty-two, several of them, or each part separately as object and attend to its repulsive nature…

From the thirty-two bodily parts to material groups

Miến / Burmese 58

… that is, its repulsive, disgusting nature, one can reach first-jhāna concentration. Likewise, if one attends to the bodily parts externally, one can reach access concentration. This was explained earlier. Here only the way of discerning materiality in these thirty-two bodily parts by contemplation of danger is presented —

Take the repulsive nature of the thirty-two bodily parts as object and discern “foul, foul”. Clearly see its repulsive, foul nature with knowledge. Discern repeatedly, alternating in both the internal and external continua. Gradually extend the scope of discernment as far as you are able.

At that point, owing to the power of knowledge well trained in the domain of ultimate materiality and mentality, while one alternately discerns the repulsive foulness of the thirty-two bodily parts in both the internal and external continua, before long the thirty-two parts may disappear and only particles of material groups become visible. This is owing to the power of knowledge trained in the domain of ultimate realities. If the particles of material groups do not readily appear when alternately discerning the foulness of the thirty-two parts in both continua, discern those parts separately or together, directing discernment so as to see the four great elements present in those bodily parts. Through the power of developed, trained knowledge, the particles of material groups will readily become evident. When the material groups are seen, analyze them by knowledge down to the ultimate level, as explained in the section on the meditation subject of materiality. Then continue discerning those ultimate material phenomena with insight, successively applying the three characteristics.

The house of the bodily aggregates filled with worms

Miến / Burmese 59

Discern alternately internally and externally. Once reasonably proficient in cultivating foulness in this way, define the four great elements in each bodily part and discern with insight the ultimate material phenomena in the respective material groups.

The house of the bodily aggregates filled with worms

Another method of discerning foulness in a living body (savijjāṇaka-asubha) is given in the Pheṇapiṇḍūpama Sutta and its commentary. This great house of the bodily aggregates is filled with various kinds of worms. This house of the bodily aggregates is their dwelling and breeding place, where they excrete and urinate, their infirmary and their cemetery. Take as object the repulsive nature of this house of the bodily aggregates filled with impure, disgusting things, and discern “foul, foul”. Discern repeatedly, alternating internally and externally. (သံ၊၆၄၊ ၂၊ ၂၉၄။)

When you have discerned in this way many times, owing to the power of knowledge trained in the domain of ultimate realities, before long the material groups may become visible. At that point, define the ultimate material phenomena in those groups, then apply the three characteristics to those ultimate material phenomena and discern with insight again. If the material groups do not readily appear but you have become reasonably proficient in that cultivation of foulness, take the worms or the great house of the bodily aggregates filled with worms as object and begin defining the four great elements in those worms or…

The foul nature of ultimate materiality

Miến / Burmese 60

… in the house of the bodily aggregates filled with worms. Through the power of knowledge trained in the domain of ultimate realities, one can soon find the material groups. Define the ultimate material phenomena in those material groups and discern again with insight. Discern both internally and externally.

Among ultimate material phenomena there are also —

1. Duggandha — having a foul smell.

2. Asuci — impure, with a repulsive nature.

3. Byādhi — having the nature of illness.

4. Jarā — having ageing, that is, having a period of maturation.

5. Maraṇa — having death and breakup, that is, having a period of dissolution. (သံဃဋ္ဋဝါဒ။ သံဃဋ္ဋ၊ ၂၊ ၂၉၄။)

These foul qualities are plainly present. Use insight knowledge to see that foul nature and discern “foul, foul”. Discern alternately, one round internally and one round externally.

Thus, as to foulness in a living body (savijjāṇaka-asubha), distinguish and discern three kinds of foulness —

1. The repulsive foulness of the thirty-two bodily parts.

2. The repulsive foulness of the house of the bodily aggregates filled with worms.

3. The repulsive foulness of ultimate material phenomena.

External Foulness and Foulness of the Dead

Miến / Burmese 61

Puna caparaṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhu seyyathāpi passeyya sarīraṃ sivathikāya chaḍḍitaṃ ekāhamataṃ vā dvīhamataṃ vā tīhamataṃ vā uddhumātakaṃ vinīlakaṃ vipubbakajātaṃ. So imameva kāyaṃ upasaṃharati: “Ayampi kho kāyo evaṃdhammo evaṃbhāvī evaṃanatīto”ti. (Dī. 2.235.)

Bhikkhus, further, if a meditating bhikkhu sees a corpse discarded in a charnel ground, dead for one, two, or three days, bloated, livid, and oozing filthy pus, he applies this with knowledge to his very own body: “This body of mine too is of such a nature, will become like that, and cannot escape that nature.” (Dī. 2.235, Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta.)

Dīyabhāṇakamahāsivatthero pana “navasivathikā ādīnavānupassanāvasena vuttā”ti āha. (Dī. A. 2.394, Maj. A. 1.305.)

The arahant elder Mahāsiva, a reciter of the Dīghanikāya, says that the Buddha taught the nine foulness meditations connected with the charnel ground by way of contemplating danger (ādīnavānupassanā). (Dī. A. 2.394, Maj. A. 1.305.)

According to the Pāli text and commentary above, a meditator who wishes to develop external foulness must select a corpse…

External Foulness and Foulness of the Dead

Miến / Burmese 62

…to contemplate. When developing foulness as serenity meditation up to first-jhāna concentration, a male meditator should contemplate a male corpse and a female meditator a female corpse. In this insight section, when contemplating danger, there is no need to choose a male or female corpse. Either the same or a different sex is suitable. In serenity meditation one concentrates on an external corpse until the first jhāna. When the counterpart sign is reached, lust may intrude and disturb the practice, so one develops it with a corpse of the same sex.

Contemplation of danger (ādīnavānupassanā). In this insight section one contemplates to see the drawbacks of the five aggregates in oneself and others. Because one contemplates internally and externally in turn, and because contemplation of danger is a method for seeing drawbacks, one can take any foul corpse whose sign one can apprehend, whether of the same or a different sex.

The Vijayasutta (Suttanipāta 307–308) records an instruction to the four assemblies—bhikkhus, bhikkhunīs, laymen, and laywomen—to develop foulness based on Sirimā's corpse. In serenity one focuses exclusively on an external corpse, specifically on a single corpse, until jhāna is reached. In insight one alternates between internal and external contemplation to see drawbacks and danger. This is the distinction between developing foulness in serenity and in insight.

Method of Contemplation

Miến / Burmese 63

When one can contemplate with insight the material and mental phenomena, namely the five aggregates, of the three periods—past, future, and present—and of the two continuities, internal and external, repeatedly applying the three characteristics in turn, brilliant light will flash forth through the insight knowledge of the good person developing insight. Or if, when sitting down to meditate, one reestablishes the fourth-jhāna concentration one has already attained, brilliant light will likewise flash forth through the knowledge associated with that concentration. The occasion for contemplating external foulness, the foulness of a corpse, has arisen after concentration has been developed step by step and insight has likewise been progressed through in stages. If the light of that knowledge is a little dim and weak, reestablish concentration step by step. When the light arising from the knowledge associated with it again flashes brilliantly, external foulness can be contemplated.

When the light flashes brilliantly through serenity knowledge or insight knowledge, use that light of knowledge to take as object a corpse one has seen and remembers distinctly. Shine the light of knowledge on it as one would shine a flashlight and contemplate it. Its repulsive, filthy foulness will be apparent to knowledge. If it is a corpse that is bloated and oozing pus…

Method of Contemplation

Miến / Burmese 64

…so much the better. Attend to its repulsive, filthy foulness and contemplate the corpse: “Foul, foul.” When the appearance of foulness is clear to knowledge and the meditative mind is firmly settled on that object of foulness, direct knowledge back to your own body and contemplate it. See with knowledge that your own body too is dead, bloated, and foul like that external corpse. When you see your own corpse bloated and filthy, contemplate: “Foul, foul.”

If you direct knowledge to contemplate but the appearance of foulness in your own body still does not emerge, return to external foulness and then contemplate internally again. By practising in this way many times you can come to see the appearance of internal foulness. If it is still unseen, direct knowledge from the present towards the future and contemplate gradually, step by step. Then you will readily see the foulness of your own body when dead. This approach is easy for a meditator who has discerned the causal relationship between present causes and future effects, the phenomena of dependent origination.

When you see the foulness of your own body with knowledge, that is, with the light of knowledge, contemplate internally and externally in turn: “Foul, foul.” In doing so, gradually extend contemplation to people for whom you have felt or now feel lust, alternating between internal and external: “Foul.”

Method of Contemplation

Miến / Burmese 65

When “Foul, foul” has been contemplated internally and externally many times, through the power of previously developed insight or through extensive practice in the domain of ultimate reality, one may see the material groups in the internal and external corpses. Or the foul corpses may gradually disintegrate and appear to knowledge as heaps of bones or powdered bones. If one gradually directs knowledge towards the future of that corpse, the reach of knowledge may extend to bones, a heap of bones, or bone powder. At every stage contemplate “Foul, foul.” If the minute material groups can readily be found, discern the ultimate material phenomena in those groups, particularly temperature-produced materiality, then apply the characteristics and contemplate with insight.

If the minute material groups are not yet easily seen, begin to discern the four great elements in those foul internal and external corpses. The material groups in those corpses will then begin to appear. Analyzing the minute material groups into elements, one can see the temperature-produced octads of materiality that arise in succession from the fire element present in each group. Discern those material phenomena and continue insight contemplation. Make this transition from foulness meditation to insight when the practice of foulness has reached an appropriate degree of mastery.

A Special Point and the Factors of Dependent Origination

Miến / Burmese 66

If the corpse taken as object is still at the stage where maggots are eating it, when some meditators discern the four great elements in that corpse with knowledge, they see, in addition to temperature-produced material octads, various transparent and opaque groups, some containing sensitive materiality (pasādarūpa). This is because they see, intermixed, the material groups of the living maggots infesting the corpse. The transparent sensitive materiality and the material phenomena originating from the four sources that they see belong to those maggots.

When you see material groups in internal and external corpses, analyze those groups into their elements, apply the characteristics to the ultimate material phenomena, and repeatedly contemplate them with insight.

The factors of dependent origination. Drawing on the Paṭisambhidāmagga, the Visuddhimagga, volume two, page 244, lists the factors of dependent origination among the objects of insight knowledge that comprehends the characteristics (lakkhaṇasammasana), in its section on comprehension knowledge (sammasanañāṇa). Therefore the meditator should also contemplate the factors of dependent origination with insight.

The Factors of Dependent Origination

Miến / Burmese 67

The good person should recall how causes and effects were discerned in accordance with the forward teaching of dependent origination: “Avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā—with ignorance as condition, formations arise,” and so on. Then contemplate those factors with insight as they were discerned.

If the present life is taken as the center: (1) ignorance and formations are past; (2) consciousness, mentality-materiality, the six sense bases, contact, feeling, craving, clinging, and becoming are present; (3) birth, aging, and death are future.

If the first past life is taken as the center: (1) ignorance and formations are in the second past life; (2) consciousness, mentality-materiality, the six sense bases, contact, feeling, craving, clinging, and becoming are in the first past life; (3) birth, aging, and death are in the present life.

If the first future life is taken as the center: (1) ignorance and formations are in the present life; (2) consciousness, mentality-materiality, the six sense bases, contact, feeling, craving, clinging, and becoming are in the first future life; (3) birth, aging, and death are in the second future life.

Understand the successive past and future lives in the same way. Link three lives at a time by cause and effect, and contemplate repeatedly.

Some Patterns of Contemplation

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1. With the arising of ignorance, formations arise. Ignorance (arising and passing away) is impermanent. Formations (arising and passing away) are impermanent.

Contemplate the ignorance and formations that have arisen, are arising, and will arise in your own continuity of mentality-materiality, as discerned under the first method of dependent origination. Here ignorance usually occurs in mind-door cognitive processes of the group rooted in greed with wrong view. Formations may be wholesome or unwholesome, likewise in mind-door cognitive processes. For the good person, if one considers this present life in particular, the formations cultivated in the previous life were wholesome formations. Contemplate them in terms of arising and passing away, just as they occurred in that life. Likewise contemplate the characteristics of suffering and non-self.

2. With the arising of formations, rebirth-linking consciousness arises. Formations (arising and passing away) are impermanent. Rebirth-linking consciousness (arising and passing away) is impermanent.

Likewise contemplate all resultant consciousnesses, including all consciousness through the six doors such as eye-consciousness and so forth, as well as life-continuum consciousness and death consciousness. Contemplate the remaining factors of dependent origination up to birth, aging, and death, as causes and effects were discerned under the first method of dependent origination. Contemplate both cause and effect with insight, applying the three characteristics to each in turn.

According to the discourse method, only resultant phenomena among consciousness, mentality-materiality, the six sense bases, contact, and feeling are intended (Mahāṭī. 2.323). However, it is only when contemplating the causal relationship between cause and effect…

Forty Modes of Contemplation in -to

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…that one contemplates those resultant phenomena alone. In insight contemplation, if, following a thorough method of development, one includes five-door adverting, determining, impulsion, mind-door adverting, and impulsion within the relevant cognitive process, there is no fault, since the purpose is to leave out none of the ultimate elements. Contemplate from successive past lives to the end of the future as far as you are able. Contemplate internally and externally in turn. Contemplate the external in general, without distinguishing particular individuals or beings.

In this section on comprehension of the characteristics, the Visuddhimagga (2.246) presents forty ways of developing contemplation, or forty modes in -to, citing the Paṭisambhidāmagga (411). To make them easy to remember, the great elder Mahāvisuddhārāma composed verses in his Paramatthasarūpabhedanī, distinguishing ten items for the characteristic of impermanence, twenty-five for suffering, and five for non-self. The three characteristics are presented below in three groups following those verses.

The characteristic of impermanence: ten items. Rūpaṃ aniccaṃ palokaṃ, calaṃ pabhaṅgu addhuvaṃ; vipariṇāmaṃ asārakaṃ, vibhavaṃ maccu saṅkhataṃ.

1. Aniccato—as impermanent. Anaccantikatāya ādiantavantatāya ca aniccato. (Visuddhi. 2.247.)

1. As Impermanent

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Anaccantikatāyāti accantikatābhāvato, asassatattātipi attho. Sassatā hi accantikā, pariyāyakoṭiyā abhāvato. (Mahāṭī. 2.394.)

[Mentality and materiality have two limits: the earlier limit of arising and the later limit of dissolution. These are called the arising moment and the dissolution moment. Mentality and materiality are not eternal so as to pass beyond the later limit, the dissolution moment. Because they cannot pass beyond that later limit, and because they have the earlier limit of arising and the later limit of dissolution, they are impermanent phenomena.

Contemplate in five groups according to the five aggregates: materiality, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness. See clearly with insight knowledge the foregoing quality of not enduring in material phenomena (feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness), and contemplate them as impermanent.

Saying here that they do not go beyond the arising moment means that material and mental phenomena do not yet exist before the arising moment and are not waiting somewhere ready to arise. After the time of dissolution they do not go elsewhere to lie in heaps like discarded corpses. Only between the two absences—absence before arising and absence after having arisen—do they appear briefly in the phases of arising, presence, and dissolution. Mentality and materiality are termed impermanent because they do not endure outside the limits of arising and dissolution and because they have those limits.] Thus contemplate “aniccaṃ”: having the nature of not lasting, impermanent.

2–4. As Disintegrating, Unsteady, and Fragile

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2. Palokato—as disintegrating. Byādhijarāmaraṇehi palujjanatāya palokato. (Visuddhi. 2.247.) Through sickness, aging, and death they break apart, split, and perish, and thus are liable to utter disintegration. Contemplate “palokaṃ”: of a nature to disintegrate.

3. Calato—as unsteady. Byādhijarāmaraṇehi ceva lābhālābhādīhi ca lokadhammehi pacalitatāya calato. (Visuddhi. 2.247.)

Lokadhammā lābhādihetukā anunayapaṭighā. Tehi, byādhiādīhi ca anavaṭṭhitatā pacalitatā. (Mahāṭī. 2.396.)

Attraction and aversion have their causes in worldly conditions such as gain and loss. Owing to those worldly conditions, disturbances of mind such as attraction and aversion arise. Through sickness, aging, and death, and through gain, loss, and the other worldly conditions, mentality-materiality is unstable and liable to agitation in many ways. Contemplate “calaṃ”: unstable, shifting, and unsteady.

4. Pabhaṅguto—as fragile. Upakkamena ceva sarasena ca pabhaṅgupagamanasīlatāya pabhaṅguto. (Visuddhi. 2.247.)

4–6. As Fragile, Unlasting, and Subject to Change

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Through one’s own intervention, the intervention of others, or their own inherent nature, phenomena are liable to break apart and perish. Pabhaṅgu: having the nature of readily breaking apart and perishing.

5. Addhuvato—as unlasting. Sabbāvatthānipātitāya, thirabhāvassa ca abhāvato addhuvato. (Visuddhi. 2.247.)

Like fruit that drops suddenly before its time, phenomena are liable to fall away at all stages of life, such as tender childhood and the playful years. Even when they have not fallen away, owing to all the circumstances acting on them they lack the stability needed to last. Addhuvaṃ: devoid of stability.

6. Vipariṇāmadhammato—as subject to change. Jarāya ceva maraṇena cāti dvedhā pariṇāmapakatitāya vipariṇāmadhammato. (Visuddhi. 2.247.)

They have the nature of changing by two occurrences: aging (jarā), the phase of presence, and death (maraṇa), the phase of dissolution. Vipariṇāmaṃ: having the nature of change. This means the transition from arising to aging, which is of the nature of presence, and to death, which is of the nature of dissolution.

7–10. As Coreless, Perishing, Subject to Death, and Conditioned

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7. Asārakato—as coreless. Dubbalatāya, pheggu viya sukhabhañjanīyatāya ca asārakato. (Visuddhi. 2.247.) Because they are weak and perish of themselves, and because they are easily broken like sapwood, asārakaṃ: without a firm core.

8. Vibhavato—as perishing. Vigatabhavatāya, vibhavasambhūtatāya ca vibhavato. (Visuddhi. 2.248.)

Once arisen, they perish and come to an end, without growth, increase, or proliferation. They also arise dependent on craving for non-existence (vibhavataṇhā) and the view of non-existence (vibhavadiṭṭhi), which incline to destruction and loss, as if having craving and view for their father. Vibhavaṃ: having the nature of being lost.

9. Maraṇadhammato, or maccu—as subject to death. Maraṇapakatitāya maraṇadhammato. (Visuddhi. 2.248.) Because they are liable to death, that is, to dissolution, maraṇadhammaṃ or maccu: having the nature of death, that is, dissolution.

10. Saṅkhatato—as conditioned. Hetupaccayehi abhisaṅkhatatāya saṅkhatato. (Visuddhi. 2.248.) Because the direct causes of arising, that is, the producing causes…

10. As Conditioned

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…and the strengthening and supporting causes, that is, the conditions, fashion them together, saṅkhataṃ has the nature of being repeatedly fashioned by causes.

The causes directly producing material phenomena here are kamma, the producing cause, the direct cause. The causes belonging to the round of defilements, namely ignorance, craving, and clinging, are causes that support and strengthen that past kamma. The defilements in this round assist wholesome kamma through conditional powers such as decisive support. They assist unwholesome kamma both through conditional powers such as decisive support and through conditions such as conascence.

Consciousness, temperature, and nutriment are also causes that strengthen and support material phenomena. Consciousness, temperature, and nutriment directly produce some materiality originating respectively from consciousness, temperature, and nutriment, and support some other materiality. Their way of producing materiality, however, differs from the way the power of kamma produces kamma-born materiality. Consciousness assists consciousness-born materiality through powers such as conascence. Temperature assists temperature-born materiality through powers such as decisive support. Nutriment assists nutriment-born materiality through powers such as nutriment condition. Thus understand that these are called supporting causes because they are distinct from the power of kamma, which is called a producing cause.

The direct cause, the producing cause, of resultant mental phenomena is kamma. Understand the causes belonging to the round of defilements, namely ignorance, craving, and clinging, in the same way as explained for materiality. The present causes of all wholesome, unwholesome, and indeterminate mental phenomena…

The Characteristic of Suffering: Twenty-Five Items

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…such as basis, object, and contact, should be understood as supporting causes.

See the foregoing qualities clearly with knowledge in the material phenomena (feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness) one is contemplating, and contemplate them in turn as impermanent, as disintegrating, and so forth. This concludes the ten items of the characteristic of impermanence.

The characteristic of suffering: twenty-five items. Dukkhaṃ rogābādhaṃ gaṇḍaṃ, sallāghāto upaddavaṃ; bhayītupasaggā tāṇaṃ, aleṇāsaraṇaṃ vadhaṃ; aghamūlaṃ ādīnavaṃ, sāsavaṃ māraāmisaṃ; jātijaraṃ byādhisokaṃ, paridevupāyāsaṃ; saṅkilesasabhāvakaṃ.

1. Dukkhato—as suffering. Uppādavayapaṭipīḷanatāya, dukkhavatthutāya ca dukkhato. (Visuddhi. 2.247.)

Uppādavayapaṭipīḷanatāyāti uppādena, vayena ca pati pati so so sattasantāno vibādhanasabhāvattā, tehi vā sayameva vibādhetabbattā. Udayabbayavanto hi dhammā abhiṇhaṃ tehi paṭipīḷitāva hontīti yā pīḷanā “saṅkhāradukkhatā”ti vuccati. Dukkhavatthutāyāti tividhassāpi dukkhassa, saṃsāradukkhassa ca adhiṭṭhānabhāvato. (Mahāṭī. 2.394–395.)

[Mentality and materiality, in the person endowed with them, through arising…

Suffering and its three kinds

because of the pressure of arising or the pressure of ceasing, which afflicts and oppresses at each moment. In other words, because one's own mentality and materiality are subject to the pressure of arising and ceasing, that is, because mentality and materiality are constantly afflicted and oppressed by arising and ceasing:

(a) Suffering as pain (dukkhadukkha), namely painful feeling;

(b) Suffering due to change (vipariṇāmadukkha), namely pleasant feeling (pleasant while it lasts, painful when it ceases);

(c) Suffering due to formations (saṅkhāradukkha), namely neutral feeling and the remaining mentality and materiality apart from feeling.

It is also a basis, a foundation, for these three kinds of suffering taken together, or, in other words, for the misery in the round of saṃsāra. Thus it is called dukkha, wretched and miserable suffering.

Suffering due to formations. All conditioned phenomena present in the three planes can be called suffering due to formations. However, painful and pleasant feelings already have the distinct names suffering as pain and suffering due to change. Hence here neutral feeling and all the conditioned phenomena of the three planes remaining apart from feeling are called suffering due to formations. All such conditioned mental and material phenomena of the three planes are called suffering due to formations because the suffering of being conditioned (saṅkhatadukkha) is evident in them, in that they have to be brought about in order to arise, and because they are constantly afflicted and oppressed by arising and ceasing. (Vism. 2, 270. Mahāṭī. 2, 392.)

Contemplating as disease and as calamity

Miến / Burmese 77

2. Rogato — as disease

Paccayāyattavuttitāya, rogamūlatāya ca rogato. (Vism. 2, 247.)

Resultant mentality and materiality can remain and be present only when assisted by the corresponding causes, so their continuance depends on the appropriate causes. In other words, because their continuance depends on the corresponding appropriate causes, and because they resemble a yāpya illness, the source of persistent aches and sicknesses, they are roga, a disease that causes pain and misery.

[Since mentality and materiality are a basis for all kinds of physical and mental disease, they are said to resemble a yāpya illness.]

3. Aghato — as calamity

Vigarahitatāya, avaḍḍhiāvahanatāya, aghavatthutāya ca aghato. (Vism. 2, 247.)

Because they are reproached by the Buddha and the noble ones as unwholesome phenomena are, because they bring great harm to the welfare and development of many beings, and because they are a basis for unwholesome phenomena called agha, they are agha, a calamity that brings harm and disadvantage.

Contemplating as a boil

Miến / Burmese 78

4. Gaṇḍato — as a boil

Dukkhatāsūlayogitāya, kilesāsucipaggharaṇatāya, uppādajarābhaṅgehi uddhumātapakkapabhinnatāya ca gaṇḍato. (Vism. 2, 247.)

They are accompanied by a stabbing pain, the suffering that is of three kinds, suffering as pain, suffering due to change, and suffering due to formations. They cause the filth of defilements such as lust, which is impure and repulsive, to ooze out little by little, through the power of the object or through the power of association, that is, arising together, as applicable. And through the nature of arising, what was absent before suddenly appears, like a swelling. Through the nature of aging while it persists, it ripens, like a boil coming to a head. Through the nature of dissolution at cessation, it breaks open and falls apart. Thus they are gaṇḍa, a boil that swells and ruptures.

Kilesāsucipaggharaṇatāya. The phrase “they cause the filth of defilements such as lust, which is impure and repulsive, to ooze out little by little, through the power of the object or through the power of association, that is, arising together, as applicable” refers to later lust and so on arising with earlier lust and so on as object, and to defilements such as lust arising together with consciousness and mental factors that arise taking an object capable of giving rise to lust or defilement. Understand that the pus oozing from mentality and materiality here is like the pus oozing from an ordinary boil.

Contemplating as a dart and as an affliction

Miến / Burmese 79

5. Sallato — as a dart

Pīḷājanakatāya, antotudanatāya, dunnīharaṇīyatāya ca sallato. (Vism. 2, 247.)

[(a) Because they cause affliction and oppression by arising and ceasing.

(b) Just as painful feeling and so forth pierce into the body, these formations pierce by arising and ceasing when they fall inside the house of the aggregates regarded as self.

(c) Because it is hard to extract the dart of suffering due to conditioned mentality and materiality without the tweezers of the noble path.]

Salla is a harmful, piercing dart.

6. Ābādhato — as an affliction

Aseribhāvajanakatāya, ābādhapadaṭṭhānatāya ca ābādhato. (Vism. 2, 247.)

[(1) A seriously ill person cannot manage all four postures unaided. Bodily activity depends on others, who attend to, lift, or turn the patient, and so on. Likewise the aggregates cannot arise by their own power but depend on causes, like those other people. They bring about this state of dependence. (2) They are also the cause of all very oppressive illnesses.]

Contemplating as adversity and as danger

Miến / Burmese 80

Ābādha is an overpowering, oppressive illness.

7. Upaddavato — as adversity

Aviditānaṃyeva vipulānaṃ anatthānaṃ āvahanato, sabbupaddavavatthutāya ca upaddavato. (Vism. 2, 247.)

[(1) Because they bring great harm and many adversities, such as dangers and calamities from rulers, dangers from thieves, illness, death, and states of deprivation, when people are unaware of these dangers and do not know how to reflect on them, like small children. (2) Because they are the basis and ground of all adversities that beset and oppress.]

Upaddava is adversity that besets and oppresses severely.

8. Bhayato — as danger

Sabbabhayānaṃ ākaratāya, dukkhūpasamasaṅkhātassa paramassāsassa paṭipakkhabhūtatāya ca bhayato. (Vism. 2, 247.)

[(1) Because the aggregates are the source and storehouse of all dangers, whether dangers encountered in this visible present life or dangers encountered in the life beyond. (2) Because they are opposed to the noble reality of Nibbāna, the supreme relief known as the subsiding of all suffering.]

Bhaya is a great danger, contrary in many ways to happiness and the like, or a terrifying and dreadful threat.

Contemplating as menace, calamity, and without protection

Miến / Burmese 81

9. Ītito — as menace

Anekabyasanāvahanatāya ītito. (Vism. 2, 247.)

Because the aggregates bring many kinds of ruin, they are called īti, a terrifying menace.

10. Upasaggato — as calamity

Anekehi anatthehi anubaddhatāya, dosupasaṭṭhatāya, upasaggo viya anadhivāsanārahatāya ca upasaggato. (Vism. 2, 247.)

[(1) Because they are continually beset by many kinds of harm, such as the ruin of relatives externally, and pain and disease internally. (2) Because faults such as lust adhere to them through the power of the object or the power of association. (3) Because they are intolerable, like the harm, epidemics, and so on brought or caused by ogres, nonhuman beings, and malevolent deities.]

Upasagga is a calamity that clings and oppresses.

11. Atāṇato — as without protection

Atāyanatāya ceva, alabbhaneyyakhematāya ca atāṇato. (Vism. 2, 247.)

Contemplating as without shelter and without refuge

Miến / Burmese 82

[(1) Once arisen, the aggregates must cease, because they cannot be protected from cessation after they arise. (2) Even if one clings to the aggregates wishing for protection, security cannot be obtained, that is, freedom from danger cannot be gained.]

Atāṇa is danger through lack of protection.

12. Aleṇato — as without shelter

Allīyituṃ anarahatāya, allīnānampi ca leṇakiccākāritāya aleṇato. (Vism. 2, 247.)

[(1) Because the aggregates are unfit to be clung to when one fears suffering and wishes to take shelter. (2) Because for those who fear suffering, wish to take shelter, and cling to the body of aggregates, that is, the aggregates, they do not perform the function of a hiding place, which is to make suffering disappear.]

Aleṇa is danger through lack of shelter.

13. Asaraṇato — as without refuge

Nissitānaṃ bhayasārakattābhāvena asaraṇato. (Vism. 2, 247.)

Because the aggregates do not have the nature of dispelling and removing dangers and sufferings such as birth, aging, sickness, and death for those who turn to them in fear of dangers and sufferings such as birth, aging, sickness, and death:

Contemplating as a murderer and as the root of calamity

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Asaraṇa is danger through lack of refuge.

14. Vadhakato — as a murderer

Mittamukhapaccattho viya vissāsaghātitāya vadhakato. (Vism. 2, 248.)

Because they kill those who place their trust in them, like an enemy with the smiling face of a friend. Vadha or vadhaka is a murderer, who kills a being conventionally called a human, deva, or Brahmā by cutting off the continuity, with its three instants in each occurrence, in a short time, in a moment.

These phenomena of materiality, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness are a cause of suffering instead of a cause of well-being. Since they kill the person whose trust they thus engender, the aggregates are vissāsaghātī, murderers who kill those who have trusted them. Indeed, through the power of clinging to the aggregates as “etaṃ mama,” “this is mine,” beings come to ruin. This is because the aggregates, called the truth of suffering, arise through craving, called the truth of origin. In other words, the aggregates kill the person who has trusted them because it is their nature to kill those who trust. Thus they are called vissāsaghātī. (Mahāṭī. 2, 393.)

15. Aghamūlato — as the root of calamity

Aghahetutāya aghamūlato. (Vism. 2, 248.)

Aghassa pāpassa hetuttā aghahetuto. (Mahāṭī. 2, 393.)

Contemplating as a drawback

Miến / Burmese 84

Because they are the source of coarse, unwholesome evil, they are aghamūla, the root of harm and misery.

16. Ādīnavato — as a drawback

Pavattidukkhatāya, dukkhassa ca ādīnavatāya ādīnavato. Atha vā ādīnaṃ vāti gacchati pavattatīti ādīnavo. Kapaṇamanussassetaṃ adhivacanaṃ. Khandhāpi ca kapaṇāyevāti ādīnavasadisatāya ādīnavato. (Vism. 2, 248.)

Pavattidukkhatāyāti bhavapavattidukkhabhāvato. Bhavapavatti ca pañcannaṃ khandhānaṃ aniccādiākārena pavattanameva. So ca ādīnavo. Yathāha “Yaṃ bhikkhave pañcupādānakkhandhā aniccā dukkhā vipariṇāmadhammā, ayaṃ bhikkhave pañcasu upādānakkhandhesu ādīnavo”ti. Tenāha “Dukkhassa ca ādīnavatāyā”ti. Ādīnoti bhāvappadhāno niddeso yathā “Kemajjhā”ti. Ativiya kapaṇoti attho. Bhummatthe hi ayaṃ ā-kāro. (Mahāṭī. 2, 396.)

[(1) The continuation of the five aggregates in the modes of impermanence and so forth is called bhavapavatti, the continuation of existence. That very continuation in the modes of impermanence and so forth is also called ādīnava, the drawback of the aggregates. For the Buddha taught thus: “Bhikkhus … the five aggregates subject to clinging are impermanent, suffering, and subject to change. Bhikkhus … that very impermanence, suffering, and liability to change is the drawback in the five aggregates subject to clinging.” Thus, because of suffering in the continuation of existence, that is, the continuation of the five aggregates in the modes of impermanence and so forth,

Contemplating as subject to the taints and as Māra's bait

and (2) because the truth of suffering, the five aggregates, has the drawback of being impermanent, suffering, and subject to change, they are called ādīnava, a danger and drawback.]

[By another explanation, a person in extreme poverty is called ādīnava because their extreme destitution makes for a life of hardship. The five aggregates likewise resemble a destitute person with nowhere to turn, called ādīnava.] Ādīnava is a destitute person with nowhere to turn. (This means that once arisen, the aggregates have nothing to rely on to prevent their cessation when the moment of cessation arrives.)

17. Sāsavato — as subject to the taints

Āsavapadaṭṭhānatāya sāsavato. (Vism. 2, 248.)

Āsavānaṃ ārammaṇādinā paccayabhāvato āsavapadaṭṭhānatā. (Mahāṭī. 2, 393.)

The defilements that are the root causes of mentality and materiality, called ignorance, craving, and clinging, are the taints themselves. Since the mental and material phenomena of the five aggregates assist by the power of conditions, such as the object condition, those taints arise. Thus, because the mental and material phenomena of the five aggregates are the proximate cause of the taints, they are sāsava, the breeding ground for the four taints.

18. Mārāmisato — as Māra’s bait

Maccumārakilesamārānaṃ āmisabhūtatāya mārāmisato. (Vism. 2, 248.)

The five kinds of Māra

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Maccumārassa adhiṭṭhānabhāvena, kilesamārassa paccayabhāvena saṃvattanato āmisabhūtato. Khandhāpi khandhānaṃ āmisabhūtā paccayabhāvena saṃvattanato. Tathevetaṃ abhisaṅkhāre. Devaputtamārassa pana “mametan”ti abhimānavasena āmisabhāveti khandhādimārānaṃ kathaṃ yathārahaṃ āmisabhūtatā vattabbā. (Mahāṭī. 2, 393.)

[There are five kinds of Māra, namely Māra as a deity, Māra as defilement, Māra as the aggregates, Māra as death, and Māra as kamma-formations. Of these, the commentary explains two directly, Māra as defilement and Māra as death. The author of the Great Subcommentary clearly explains how this applies, as appropriate, to all five kinds of Māra.

The aggregates are also the basis for Māra as death, namely dying. (In the absence of aggregates there can be no death.) They are also a cause for the defilements called ignorance, craving, and clinging, which are Māra as defilement, to arise by attaching to them, and a cause for their increase. The aggregates themselves condition the aggregates and make them increase, so the aggregates themselves are also the food, the bait (āmisa), for the aggregates. The aggregates themselves are thus a cause for the aggregates to arise through attachment and to increase. Māra as kamma-formations, namely the wholesome and unwholesome formations that can bring about a new existence, is included in those very aggregates. Due to these formations the aggregates arise. Due to attachment to the aggregates those formations too arise. What are called kamma-formations here are just the mental aggregates termed wholesome and unwholesome formations. As for Māra as a deity, understand the status of bait through the force of the conceited thought “etaṃ mama, mametaṃ,” “all these phenomena are mine.” Thus, for Māra as the aggregates and so on, these very aggregates likewise

Māra’s bait, birth, aging, illness, sorrow, lamentation, and despair

deserve to be called bait, as appropriate. Thus, because the five aggregates are the food, prey, and domain of the five Māras, Māra as a deity, Māra as defilement, Māra as the aggregates, Māra as death, and Māra as kamma-formations, they are called mārāmisa, food and bait for Māra as defilement and Māra as death, or food, bait, and domain of all five Māras.]

19. Jātidhammato — as subject to birth

20. Jarādhammato — as subject to aging

21. Byādhidhammato — as subject to illness

Jāti-jarā-byādhi-maraṇapakatitāya jāti-jarā-byādhi-maraṇadhammato. (Vism. 2, 248.)

[Because they have the nature of birth, namely arising, the nature of aging, namely alteration while persisting, the nature of illness, and the nature of death, namely dissolution.]

19. Jāti means having the nature of arising whenever there is arising.

20. Jarā means having the nature of wearing away and decline.

21. Byādhi means having the nature of illness.

(Maraṇadhammato, being subject to death, is already included in the ten aspects of the characteristic of impermanence.)

22. Sokadhammato — as subject to sorrow

23. Paridevadhammato — as subject to lamentation

24. Upāyāsadhammato — as subject to despair

Soka-parideva-upāyāsahetutāya soka-parideva-upāyāsadhammato. (Vism. 2, 248.)

Sorrow, lamentation, despair, and liability to defilement

Miến / Burmese 88

Because the aggregates are causes for sorrow, lamentation, and despair to arise:

22. Soka means having the nature of worry and sorrow.

23. Parideva means having the nature of lamenting and weeping.

24. Upāyāsa means having the nature of intense distress, to the point of sighing.

25. Saṅkilesikadhammato — as liable to defilement

Taṇhādiṭṭhiduccaritasaṅkilesānaṃ visayadhammatāya saṅkilesikadhammato. (Vism. 2, 248.)

Saṅkilesattayappahānena tadekadesānaṃ vasena kilesavatthūnaṃ saṅgaho daṭṭhabbo. Tādisakā hi dhammā tadanatiṭṭhānato saṅkilesikā ce. Tattha duṭṭhi, taṇhā, eḷādisu (duṭṭhitaṇhāeḷādisu — Sī.) sarīrassa, saṅkilesassa ca saṅgaho daṭṭhabbo. (Mahāṭī. 2, 393.)

Because the aggregates are the domain of the three defiling phenomena, called defilement by craving, by views, and by misconduct, defilements that pollute the mental continuity or the being to which they adhere, they are called saṅkilesikadhamma, liable to defilement. They have the nature of fostering the three defilements, craving, views, and misconduct, or defilement in the form of the ten defilements.

Study these qualities to a satisfactory degree. Then divide mentality and materiality into five according to the five-aggregate method. For each aggregate, see the corresponding meaning clearly with knowledge and contemplate “suffering, suffering,” “disease, disease,” and so forth.

Five aspects of the characteristic of non-self

Miến / Burmese 89

Anattā ca paro ritto, tuccho suññoti tādisā; vedanādayo khandhāpi, tatheva pañcakāpi vā.

Suññato and anattato — as empty and as non-self

Sāmi-nivāsī-kāraka-vedaka-adhiṭṭhāyakavirahitatāya suññato. Sayañca assāmikādibhāvatāya anattato. (Vism. 2, 247.)

1. Anattato — as non-self

[(1) The self as owner, possessing the house of the aggregates.

(2) The self as resident, which remains unaltered even when the house of the aggregates changes and follows it to reside in each life.

(3) The self as agent, carrying out all the tasks to be performed.

(4) The self as experiencer, experiencing the object.

(5) The self as controller, judging and deciding all affairs.

Because the five aggregates themselves have no such nature as owner, resident, agent, experiencer, or controller,] they are called anattā, non-self, that is, they are no self as owner, resident, agent, experiencer, or controller.

2. Suññato — as empty

Because each aggregate is devoid of a self as owner, resident, agent, experiencer, or controller, it is called suñña, empty of any self as owner, resident, agent, experiencer, or controller.

Contemplating as alien and as void

Miến / Burmese 90

3. Parato — as alien

Avasatāya, avidheyyatāya ca parato. (Vism. 2, 247.)

Avasatāyāti avasavattanato. Yathā parasantako puriso parassa vasaṃ na gacchati, evaṃ subhasukhādibhāvena vase vattetuṃ asakkuṇeyyato. Avidheyyatāyāti “mā jīratu, mā mīyatū”tiādinā vidhātuṃ asakkuṇeyyato. (Mahāṭī. 2, 392.)

The aggregates arise only in accordance with their causes, as explained in the section on the succession of causes and results, the phenomena of dependent origination. Just as a person who is master of himself does not have to obey someone else’s wishes, the aggregates do not conform to our wishes, even though we wish them to give rise to no painful feeling and the like, to give rise only to pleasant feeling and the like, or to be attractive and beautiful. Because they do not conform to our wishes, and because they cannot be commanded, “Do not age, do not fall ill, do not die,” and so forth, they are para, a stranger who places no trust in us.

4. Rittato — as void

Yathāparikappitehi dhuvasubhasukha-attabhāvehi rittatāya rittato. (Vism. 2, 247.)

Contemplating as void and as hollow

Miến / Burmese 91

[Outside the Dispensation, adherents of wrong views imagine that the material and mental phenomena of the five aggregates are (1) dhuva, lasting, (2) subha, beautiful, (3) sukha, pleasant, and (4) atta, a self. Yet the material and mental phenomena of the five aggregates are always devoid of the permanence, beauty, pleasure and selfhood that those adherents of wrong views ascribe to them. Therefore,] ritta means phenomena intrinsically void, entirely without any core called permanence, beauty, pleasure or self.

5. Tucchato — as hollow

Rittatāyeva tucchato, appakattā vā. Appakampi hi loke tucchanti vuccati. (Vism. 2, 247.)

(Within the material and mental phenomena of the five aggregates there is no permanence, beauty, pleasure or core of self called dhuva, subha, sukha and atta. Because they are devoid of these qualities, the material and mental phenomena of the five aggregates are tuccha, hollow phenomena. In another sense, although devoid of permanence, beauty, pleasure and selfhood, the material and mental phenomena of the five aggregates do indeed exist in their ultimate nature. They exist in the mode of arising and ceasing. The lifespan of the ultimate phenomena that arise and cease is very, very short. Ultimate material and mental phenomena have the opportunity to exist for only an extremely brief time. Because they have the opportunity to exist for only an extremely brief time, they too are tuccha, hollow phenomena. Indeed, in the world people also call what is scant tuccha.

Why phenomena are impermanent, suffering and non-self

Miến / Burmese 92

The word is used in this sense. Thus the material and mental phenomena of the five aggregates) are tuccha, hollow through the absence of permanence, beauty, pleasure and self. Or they are tuccha, hollow phenomena on account of their scantness and smallness.

Rūpaṃ, bhikkhave, aniccaṃ. Yopi hetu yopi paccayo rūpassa uppādāya, sopi anicco. Aniccasambhūtaṃ, bhikkhave, rūpaṃ kuto niccaṃ bhavissati? (Saṃ. 2, 20, Sahetuaniccasutta.)

Bhikkhus … materiality is impermanent. There is a direct cause that brings materiality into being, a hetu or janaka, a productive cause. There is also a supporting condition, a paccaya or upatthambhaka. That very cause or condition is itself impermanent. Bhikkhus … how could materiality that comes into being from impermanent causes be permanent? (Saṃ. 2, 20.)

As the Buddha taught in discourses such as the one above, the very causes that produce the five aggregates, such as ignorance, craving, clinging, formations and kamma, are impermanent, suffering and non-self. Thus their effects, the five material and mental aggregates, can only be impermanent, suffering and non-self as well. The meditator must contemplate repeatedly until knowledge sees that the causes themselves are impermanent, suffering and non-self and that their effects too can only be impermanent, suffering and non-self.

Methodical insight in 200 ways

Miến / Burmese 93

Thus, for the materiality aggregate, or for each aggregate: 1. Contemplation of impermanence (aniccānupassanā), 10 ways. 2. Contemplation of suffering (dukkhānupassanā), 25 ways. 3. Contemplation of non-self (anattānupassanā), 5 ways. In all there are 40 modes of development.

Since there are 40 modes of development for each aggregate, comprehension knowledge, called nayavipassanā, methodical insight, has 200 modes for all five aggregates.

Good people, contemplate each row of the tables in the section on mentality meditation, for eye-door processes and the corresponding processes, first taking impermanence alone for each set of five aggregates, all five aggregates in every row. Contemplate all six processes, beginning with the process with visible form as its object. Contemplate one round internally and one round externally. Then add the modes one by one until all 40 modes of development are complete. There are 40 rounds of contemplation in all.

Likewise, from the succession in the past all the way to the end of the future, contemplate by the five-aggregate method, adding and contemplating all 40 contemplations, one at a time. There are 40 rounds here too. The more often you can repeat the contemplation, the better. Contemplate both internally and externally.

If you wish, you may also contemplate the 40 rounds by the twofold method of materiality and mentality. For all six types of cognitive process, such as the eye-door process, use the twofold method of materiality and mentality and contemplate one round internally and one round externally.

The development of wisdom can be fulfilled

Miến / Burmese 94

Then the twofold method of materiality and mentality may also be used to contemplate from the succession in the past all the way to the end of the future. Contemplate both internally and externally. Contemplate again and again many times.

Evaṃ kālena rūpaṃ kālena arūpaṃ sammasitvāpi tilakkhaṇaṃ āropetvā anukkamena paṭipajjamāno eko paññābhāvanaṃ sampādeti. (Vism. 2, 252.)

Anukkamenāti udayabbayañāṇādikānukkamena paññābhāvanaṃ sampādeti arahattaṃ adhigacchati. (Mahāṭī. 2, 405.)

Thus the meditator may use the method of the five aggregates, or, if capable, the methods of the 12 bases and the 18 elements, or the twofold method of materiality and mentality: 1. At times contemplate materiality alone. 2. At times contemplate mentality alone. 3. At times contemplate materiality and mentality together in pairs.

Another way: 1. At times contemplate materiality alone. 2. At times contemplate feeling alone. 3. At times contemplate perception alone. 4. At times contemplate formations alone. 5. At times contemplate consciousness alone. 6. At times contemplate internally. 7. At times contemplate externally,

The sevenfold method of insight contemplation of materiality

Miến / Burmese 95

8. At times contemplate past, future, present, internal and external. 9. At times apply the characteristic of impermanence. 10. At times apply the characteristic of suffering. 11. At times apply the characteristic of non-self.

If the meditator can contemplate insight extensively in this way, then after examining in this manner, they can practise in the proper sequence of the successive insight knowledges and bring the development of wisdom to fulfilment, that is, attain the fruit of arahantship. If the development is still incomplete, repeated contemplation is required. If it still cannot be fulfilled, the meditator can switch to the sevenfold method for materiality and the sevenfold method for mentality.

Ādānanikkhepato vayovuḍḍhatthaṅgamito, āhārato ca ututo kammato cāpi cittato, sammatito satta rūpāni vipassati. (Vism. 2, 253.)

1. Contemplating materiality from taking up to laying down (ādānanikkheparūpa). Apply all three characteristics in turn and contemplate with insight the material phenomena present from rebirth-linking to death. Contemplate one round internally and one round externally.

2. Contemplating materiality by growth and cessation in the stages of life (vayovuḍḍhatthaṅgamarūpa). Contemplate the cessation in successive stages of the materiality that develops with age. Following the usual estimate, set your lifespan at 100 years. The actual lifespan may be slightly more or less.

Dividing the lifespan and each day and night into periods

Miến / Burmese 96

Divide the 100 years as follows:
1. Into 3 portions (33–34–33), about 33 years each.
2. Into 10 portions of 10 years each.
3. Into 20 portions of 5 years each.
4. Into 25 portions of 4 years each.
5. Into 33 portions of 3 years each.
6. Into 50 portions of 2 years each.
7. Into 100 portions of 1 year each.
8. Into 300 portions of 1 season each.
9. Into 600 portions of 2 months each.
10. Into 2,400 portions of 1 half-month (pakkha), that is, 15 days each.

Apply all three characteristics in turn to the material phenomena arising in each of those periods and contemplate them with insight, one portion after another. Contemplate until you understand clearly that the materiality present in one portion does not pass into the next. Contemplate so as to see it cease within each respective period. Then, for the material phenomena present within a single day:

1. Divide it into two portions, one for daytime and one for nighttime. 2. Divide the daytime into three portions, morning, midday and evening, and the night into three watches, purimayāma, majjhimayāma and pacchimayāma, the first watch of the night, the midnight watch and the watch before dawn. [This means dividing a single day into six portions.]

Apply all three characteristics in turn to the material phenomena present in each of those periods and contemplate them with insight. (Within the 100-year period divided as above, divide every single day, day after day, into six parts for contemplation. Bear in mind that this contemplation is not confined to a single day.)

Contemplating materiality by activities during the day

Miến / Burmese 97

After contemplating insight in this way, for each of the six periods of the day, contemplate the material phenomena present in it: 1. Materiality arising when going forward. 2. Materiality arising when going back. 3. Materiality arising when looking straight ahead. 4. Materiality arising when looking to the side.

Apply all three characteristics in turn to each of these kinds of materiality and contemplate them with insight. (Contemplate in this way on each day of the period set at 100 years.)

Then, on each day, contemplate the moments of such actions as going forward and going back, dealt with under postures and clear comprehension: 1. Materiality arising when lifting the foot from the ground. 2. Materiality arising when carrying the lifted foot forward as far as the supporting foot. 3. Materiality arising when carrying the advancing foot past the supporting foot. Alternatively, materiality arising when moving the foot aside to avoid thorns, sticks and the like. 4. Materiality arising when lowering the foot that has been carried past the supporting foot. 5. Materiality arising when setting that foot on the ground. 6. When about to take another step, before lifting the foot,

Contemplating nutriment- and temperature-produced materiality

the materiality arising when pressing the foot against the ground.

Distinguish the material phenomena arising in each of the six kinds of moment above, lifting, carrying forward, carrying across, lowering, setting down and pressing. Apply all three characteristics in turn and contemplate with insight. (Understand this instruction as an upalakkhaṇa, an illustration of corresponding cases. As with moving forward, apply the characteristics and contemplate with insight the materiality present in every moment of the postures and the activities dealt with under clear comprehension throughout the day.) In the period fixed and divided into 100 years, contemplate every bodily movement that actually occurs, day after day.

3. Contemplating materiality in relation to nutriment (āhāramayarūpa)

1. Materiality of the four continuities arising when hungry, produced by the four causes of kamma, consciousness, temperature and nutriment. 2. Materiality of the four continuities arising after eating and becoming full. Each day, apply the characteristics in turn and contemplate with insight the material phenomena of the four continuities arising at those two times.

4. Contemplating materiality in relation to temperature (utumayarūpa)

On each day: 1. Material phenomena of the four continuities arising when it is hot. 2. Material phenomena of the four continuities arising when it is cold.

Contemplating kamma- and consciousness-produced materiality

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Apply the characteristics in turn to these material phenomena and contemplate them with insight.

5. Contemplating kamma-produced materiality (kammajarūpa)

On each day: 1. Eye door (cakkhudvāra), the 54 kinds of materiality arising in the eye. 2. Ear door (sotadvāra), the 54 kinds arising in the ear. 3. Nose door (ghānadvāra), the 54 kinds arising in the nose. 4. Tongue door (jivhādvāra), the 54 kinds arising in the tongue. 5. Body door (kāyadvāra), the 44 kinds arising in the body. 6. Mind door (manodvāra), the 54 kinds arising in the heart.

Contemplate so that knowledge sees that these material phenomena do not pass from one door to another, but dissolve and cease at their respective doors. Then apply the characteristics and contemplate them with insight. Contemplate with insight the material phenomena present at those respective doors, day after day.

6. Contemplating consciousness-produced materiality (cittasamuṭṭhānarūpa)

On each day: 1. Somanassita, material phenomena of the four continuities arising at times of gladness. 2. Domanassita, material phenomena of the four continuities arising at times of mental distress and sadness. Apply all three characteristics in turn and contemplate with insight all the material phenomena of the four continuities arising in this way, day after day.

Conventional materiality and the seven ways of contemplating mentality

7. Contemplating conventional materiality (sammatarūpa)

Anindriyabaddha means unconnected with the faculties, such as the life faculty of kamma-produced materiality. Contemplate the material phenomena of the pure octad produced by temperature that occur in the inanimate world, for example iron, copper, tin, lead, gold, silver, pearls, rubies, cat's-eye gems, red stones, crystals, coral, gardens, flower gardens, dust, trees, water, earth, forests and mountains. Good people, use the light of knowledge that arises from insight to analyse the four great elements present in those inanimate objects such as gold, silver, rubies, trees, water, earth, forests and mountains. When knowledge sees the particles that are material groups, analyse the eight or nine types of ultimate materiality present in those groups. Apply all three characteristics in turn to those ultimate material phenomena and contemplate them with insight.

[Note — The material phenomena from Nos. 1 through 6 are materiality of the animate world. Contemplate both the internal and the external continua. Conventional materiality in No. 7 is inanimate, non-clung-to materiality. Contemplate it in the external inanimate world.]

The sevenfold method for contemplating mentality (arūpasattaka)

The seven methods for insight contemplation of mentality are: (1) by grouping (kalāpa), (2) by pairs (yamaka), (3) by successive steps (satika), (4) in serial order (paṭipāṭi), (5) by uprooting wrong view (diṭṭhiugghāṭana),

Contemplating by grouping

(6) by uprooting conceit (mānasamugghāṭana), and (7) by exhausting attachment (nikantipariyādāna). There are these seven methods.

1. Contemplating by grouping (kalāpa), that is, gathering together for contemplation

Apply in turn the characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self to the material phenomena present in the seven domains of the sevenfold method for materiality described above. With subsequent insight consciousness, turn back to contemplate the consciousness doing that insight contemplation, applying in turn the characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self. This method of insight contemplation is called contemplation by grouping.

Gather together into a single group the material phenomena in the seven domains described in the sevenfold method for materiality, beginning with materiality from taking up to laying down, without dividing them into seven domains, and contemplate the materiality so grouped as impermanent. With subsequent insight consciousness, turn back to contemplate the insight consciousness contemplating impermanence as impermanent. With subsequent insight consciousness, turn back to contemplate the insight consciousness contemplating impermanence as suffering. With subsequent insight consciousness, again turn back to contemplate with insight the insight consciousness contemplating impermanence as non-self.

Next, contemplate with insight the material phenomena present in those seven domains as suffering. With subsequent insight consciousness, turn back to contemplate with insight the insight consciousness contemplating suffering as impermanent. Contemplate with insight as suffering. Contemplate with insight as non-self.

Next, contemplate with insight the material phenomena present in those seven domains as non-self. With subsequent insight consciousness, turn back to contemplate with insight the insight consciousness contemplating non-self as impermanent. Contemplate with insight as suffering. Contemplate with insight as non-self. This way of contemplating is called contemplation by grouping

Earlier and later insight consciousness

(kalāpa). It is the way of gathering together the material phenomena of the seven domains and contemplating them with insight.

The commentary to the Analysis of Knowledge says that for ordinary people and trainees, the consciousness contemplating with insight consists only of mind-door cognitive processes with great wholesome impulsions. (အဘိ၊ ၂၊၃၈၈။)

Sekkhā vā puthujjanā vā kusalaṃ aniccato dukkhato anattato vipassanti. Kusale niruddhe vipāko tadārammaṇatā uppajjati. (Paṭṭhāna 1, 133.)

Good people who are noble trainees, as well as good people who are ordinary persons, contemplate wholesome phenomena with insight as impermanent, suffering and non-self. When the wholesome phenomenon, that is, the wholesome insight impulsion, has ceased, sense-sphere resultant registration arises after that wholesome insight impulsion. (Paṭṭhāna 1, 133.)

Taṃ kusalassa javanassa ārammaṇabhūtaṃ vipassitakusalaṃ ārammaṇaṃ katvā uppajjatīti attho. (အဘိ၊၈၊၃၊၄၃၆။)

The sense-sphere resultant consciousness takes as its object the very wholesome phenomenon that was contemplated. That wholesome phenomenon was the object of the wholesome insight impulsion. The sense-sphere resultant consciousness arises performing the function of registration, taking as its object the very wholesome phenomenon contemplated by the wholesome insight impulsion. (အဘိ၊၈၊၃၊၄၃၆။)

According to the passages quoted above, remember that registration can occur after insight impulsions that are still weak.

The insight mind-door impulsion process

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Tilakkhaṇārammaṇikavipassanāya tadārammaṇaṃ na labbhati. Vuṭṭhānagāminiyā balavavipassanāya tadārammaṇaṃ na labbhati. (အဘိ၊ ၂၁၄၇။)

According to the explanation in the commentary above, remember that there is no registration after strong, powerful insight impulsions. Thus two cases are possible after insight impulsions, with registration or without registration. Those insight mind-door impulsion processes are as follows.

The insight mind-door impulsion process

Insight meditation subjects

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa.

Purification by knowledge and vision of path and not-path (maggāmaggañāṇadassanavisuddhi)

Chapter on comprehension knowledge (sammasanañāṇa)

Insight wisdom that has become free of the imperfections of insight and follows the right way, the ancient course of insight, is the preliminary path that precedes the noble path. The ten imperfections of insight, beginning with illumination, are not the preliminary path preceding the noble path, and are not the right way of insight. Thus knowledge that clearly and accurately distinguishes both the preliminary path, the right way of insight preceding the noble path, and not-path, that which is not the right way of insight, is called purification by knowledge and vision of path and not-path. Because that knowledge sees, “This is the right way. This is the wrong way,” it is called knowledge purified of the imperfections of insight. (ဝိသုဒ္ဓိ၊ ၂၊ ၂၄၁။)

Remember that this whole mind-door impulsion process, together with its associated mental factors, is designated in conventional usage (vohāra) as: 1. Consciousness contemplating impermanence, consciousness contemplating suffering, consciousness contemplating non-self and so forth. 2. First consciousness, second consciousness and so forth. 3. Earlier consciousness, later consciousness and so forth.

The reason is that the object of the first insight mind-door process is the material phenomena present in the seven domains. The object of the second insight mind-door impulsion process is the first insight mind-door impulsion process itself,

Contemplating by pairs

that is, mental phenomena. Within one and the same impulsion process with a single object, it is extremely difficult for some consciousnesses to take materiality as their object and others to take mentality as their object. Therefore remember that the process taking materiality as its object is one process, and the process taking mentality as its object is another. Remember also that such expressions as earlier consciousness and later consciousness are conventional terms for the entire process. Registration may or may not be present. If registration occurs, it can occur as registration of a past object or as rooted registration.

2. Yamaka — contemplating by pairs

Contemplate materiality from taking up to laying down as impermanent. Then with later consciousness contemplate the consciousness that contemplated it, separately as impermanent, as suffering and as non-self. (Understand the same method when contemplating materiality as suffering and when contemplating it as non-self.)

Understand the same method for materiality in terms of growth and cessation in the stages of life, nutriment-produced materiality, temperature-produced materiality, kamma-produced materiality, consciousness-produced materiality and conventional materiality. In the grouping method, the material phenomena in the seven domains are gathered into a single domain without division. In this method of pairs, divide them into individual domains and contemplate. The difference lies there. Although contemplated separately by domain, each domain should be contemplated thoroughly. In particular, with materiality in terms of growth and cessation in the stages of life, follow the divisions given in the sevenfold method for materiality: contemplate the materiality of the first age period, then contemplate the contemplating knowledge, that is, the contemplating consciousness. Contemplate the materiality of the second age period, then contemplate the contemplating knowledge, that is, the contemplating consciousness. Continue in this way through the successive ages already delimited, contemplating the materiality and then the insight consciousness that contemplated it. Contemplate thoroughly. Understand the other kinds of materiality in the same way.

Contemplating by successive steps and in serial order

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3. Contemplating by successive steps (satika)

After contemplating materiality from taking up to laying down as impermanent: 1. Use the second consciousness, that is, the second insight mind-door impulsion process, to contemplate the first consciousness that contemplated in that way, that is, the first insight mind-door impulsion process. 2. Use the third consciousness to contemplate the second. 3. Use the fourth consciousness to contemplate the third. 4. Use the fifth consciousness to contemplate the fourth as impermanent. (Contemplate as suffering. Contemplate as non-self. Contemplate each characteristic in turn.)

Understand the same method when contemplating materiality from taking up to laying down as suffering and as non-self. Understand it likewise for the kinds of materiality beginning with materiality in terms of growth and cessation in the stages of life. When contemplating materiality in each of the seven ways for materiality, in every case contemplate in four successive steps the insight mind-door impulsion processes that contemplated that materiality, four steps at a time. This is precisely the contemplation of an earlier insight process by a later insight process.

4. Contemplating in serial order (paṭipāṭi)

After contemplating materiality from taking up to laying down as impermanent: 1. Use the second consciousness to contemplate as impermanent the first consciousness that contemplated in that way. 2. Use the third consciousness to contemplate the second. 3. Use the fourth consciousness to contemplate the third. 4. Use the fifth consciousness to contemplate the fourth. 5. Use the sixth consciousness to contemplate the fifth. 6. Use the seventh consciousness to contemplate the sixth,

Contemplating successive mind moments and abandoning views and conceit

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7. Contemplate the seventh consciousness by means of the eighth.

8. Contemplate the eighth consciousness by means of the ninth.

9. Contemplate the ninth consciousness by means of the tenth.

10. Contemplate the tenth consciousness by means of the eleventh. Continue to contemplate them successively as impermanent.

[One should also develop comprehension as suffering and develop comprehension as non-self. Understand in the same way the comprehension of the nutriment-octad materiality itself (ojāṭṭhamakarūpa) as suffering or non-self, and the comprehension of wind-octad materiality (vāyoaṭṭhamakarūpa) and so on as impermanent, suffering, or non-self.]

5. Diṭṭhiugghāṭana—a way of contemplating to uproot wrong view. When one repeatedly contemplates formations with insight in terms of their nature of non-self, that is, as non-self, wrong view is uprooted. Knowledge that contemplates non-self, supported by the strong decisive-support condition of the knowledges that contemplate impermanence and suffering, can uproot wrong view, namely the view of self.

6. Mānugghāṭana—a way of contemplating to uproot conceit. When one repeatedly contemplates formations with insight in terms of their impermanent nature, that is, as impermanent, conceit is abandoned. Knowledge that contemplates impermanence, supported by the strong decisive-support condition of the knowledges that contemplate suffering and non-self, can abandon conceit.

7. Exhausting Attachment

Miến / Burmese 107

7. Nikantipariyādāna—a way of contemplating to exhaust craving and attachment and prevent their arising. When one repeatedly contemplates formations with insight in terms of suffering, that is, as suffering, the subtle attachment known as craving is exhausted. Knowledge that contemplates suffering receives exceptional support through the strong decisive-support condition of the knowledges that contemplate impermanence and non-self, and can therefore exhaust craving. Thus craving no longer arises.

A point to note. When formations are contemplated solely as non-self, knowledge that contemplates non-self cannot uproot wrong view. When they are contemplated solely as suffering, knowledge that contemplates suffering cannot exhaust craving. When they are contemplated solely as impermanent, knowledge that contemplates impermanence cannot uproot conceit. Remember that only when one contemplation knowledge receives support from the other two can it uproot or eradicate the corresponding defilement. (See Visuddhi. 2.262–264 and Mahāṭī. 2.415–416.)

Following these instructions, the good person should repeatedly contemplate with insight the formations in the three periods and the two continuities, applying the three characteristics in turn by way of the twofold classification as mentality and materiality, the five aggregates, the factors of dependent origination, and so on. Then, as regards those formations:

1. One may give priority to non-self alone.

2. One may give priority to impermanence alone.

Giving priority to one characteristic and gaining familiarity

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3. One may give priority to suffering alone.

Contemplate with insight repeatedly in at least one of these ways. When a meditator's knowledge contemplating non-self has matured regarding formations in the three periods of past, future, and present, and the two continuities, internal and external, how could the perception of a self in those formations still find a footing in that knowledge? Likewise, when a meditator's knowledge contemplating impermanence has matured regarding those formations, how could the perception of permanence in them still find a footing in that knowledge? Likewise, how could the banner of conceit that rises up as “I, I” find a footing? The banner of conceit can intrude only into a continuity where the perception of permanence is present.

Likewise, in the continuity of a meditator whose knowledge contemplating suffering has matured regarding those formations, how could the perception of those formations as pleasure still find a footing? Craving and attachment that cling to those formations can find a footing only in a continuity where those formations are perceived as pleasure. Thus craving and attachment can no longer find a footing in the continuity of a good person whose knowledge contemplating suffering has matured.

Familiarity has been attained. Sattavato panassa rūpakammaṭṭhānepi arūpakammaṭṭhānepi paguṇaṃ hoti. (Visuddhi. 2.264.)

End of the chapter on comprehension knowledge

Miến / Burmese 109

When the meditator can proficiently develop both the sevenfold contemplation of materiality and the sevenfold contemplation of immateriality in the two continuities, internal and external, the meditator has become proficient in both the materiality and mentality meditation subjects.

If one is able to contemplate in all three periods, past, future, and present, and in both continuities, internal and external, that is diligence beyond the ordinary measure.

End of the chapter on comprehension knowledge (sammasanañāṇa).

Chapter on Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away

Miến / Burmese 110

Chapter on Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away (udayabbayañāṇa)

Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away by Mentality-Materiality and the Five Aggregates

Miến / Burmese 111

The objects of knowledge of arising and passing away are the aggregates, bases, elements, truths, and factors of dependent origination. Among the factors of dependent origination, only the factors from ignorance through becoming are objects of the knowledge contemplating arising and passing away. (Paṭisaṃ. 52.)

A good person wishing to develop knowledge of arising and passing away should first contemplate in the present:

1. Materiality alone (internally and externally in turn).

2. Mentality alone (internally and externally in turn).

3. Mentality and materiality together (internally and externally in turn).

Contemplate repeatedly with insight, applying now the characteristic of impermanence, now that of suffering, and now that of non-self. As presented in the tables in the section on mentality meditation, in each row of all six types of cognitive processes beginning with the eye-door process, contemplate both materiality separately and mentality separately until knowledge reaches the momentary present. Likewise, for each row in the tables in the mentality meditation section, by way of the five aggregates…

Contemplating the Five Aggregates in Three Periods, Internally and Externally

Miến / Burmese 112

1. Materiality alone.

2. Feeling alone.

3. Perception alone.

4. Formations alone.

5. Consciousness alone.

Applying now the characteristic of impermanence, now that of suffering, and now that of non-self, contemplate repeatedly with insight up to the momentary present. Contemplate internally and externally in turn.

Likewise, for the factors of dependent origination—ignorance, formations, consciousness, mentality-materiality, the six sense bases, contact, feeling, craving, clinging, and becoming (= kamma-becoming + rebirth-becoming)—at this stage take only the arising and passing away of those factors as object. The distinction into cause and effect comes later. Apply the three characteristics in turn and contemplate with insight. Contemplate up to the momentary present.

Past, future, present, internal, external. When one can repeatedly contemplate these formations in the present up to the momentary present with insight, knowledge has become clear. Then contemplate from the successive past lives already discerned up to the present, and from the present to the end of the future:

1. Materiality alone.

2. Mentality alone.

3. Mentality and materiality together. Then again:

1. Materiality alone.

2. Feeling alone.

Detailed Development of Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away

3. Perception alone.

4. Formations alone.

5. Consciousness alone.

Using the twofold classification into mentality-materiality and the classification into five aggregates, repeatedly contemplate with insight, internally and externally in turn:

1. At times, apply the characteristic of impermanence.

2. At times, apply the characteristic of suffering.

3. At times, apply the characteristic of non-self.

One needs to contemplate impermanence many times, suffering many times, and non-self many times. After doing so one can give priority to the characteristic one sees most clearly and contemplate it for a considerable time. When proficiency has been reached, and the arising and passing away of those formations appears exceptionally clearly and rapidly to knowledge up to the momentary present, one may move on to the detailed method of developing knowledge of arising and passing away.

1. Samudayadhammānupassī = udayadassana—contemplating arising separately. In the practice section of the Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta, the Buddha instructed contemplation in three ways for each establishment of mindfulness:

1. Samudayadhammānupassī—contemplating the nature of arising.

2. Vayadhammānupassī—contemplating the nature of passing away.

3. Samudayavayadhammānupassī—contemplating the nature of arising and passing away. The meaning of this instruction was also…

Contemplating the Arising of the Materiality Aggregate

Miến / Burmese 114

…explained by the venerable Sāriputta, the great general of the Dhamma, in the text of the Paṭisambhidāmagga, beginning “Avijjāsamudayā rūpasamudayo—with the arising of ignorance, materiality arises.” Following these instructions the meditator should develop the detailed contemplation of arising and passing away.

Here the materiality aggregate and the four mental aggregates, beginning with the feeling aggregate at rebirth-linking, are given as examples. A good person already proficient in contemplating the causal connection, namely dependent origination according to the first method, will be able to apply the same pattern to contemplate the five aggregates present in each of the remaining mind moments, namely the individual mind moments presented in the tables in the section on mentality meditation. One should clearly see with knowledge and contemplate the causal relationship here according to the pattern of the first method of dependent origination.

The materiality aggregate

1. With the arising of ignorance (20), rebirth-linking materiality (kamma-born) arises.

2. With the arising of craving (20), ″.

3. With the arising of clinging (20), ″.

4. With the arising of formations (34), ″.

5. With the arising of kamma (= the kammic potency of the 34), rebirth-linking materiality (kamma-born) arises.

* The nature of arising of kamma-born materiality at rebirth-linking.

6. With the arising of consciousness, consciousness-born materiality arises.

* The nature of arising of consciousness-born materiality.

7. With the arising of temperature, temperature-born materiality arises.

Temperature- and Nutriment-Born Materiality, Feeling and Perception at Rebirth-Linking

Miến / Burmese 115

* The nature of arising of temperature-born materiality.

8. With the arising of nutriment, nutriment-born materiality arises.

* The nature of arising of nutriment-born materiality.

[Note. At the rebirth-linking moment only kamma-born materiality is present. Specifically, at the arising submoment of rebirth-linking there is only kamma-born materiality. Consciousness-born, temperature-born, and nutriment-born materiality are yet to arise. They are included here for the materiality aggregate present at later mind moments.]

Feeling aggregate at rebirth-linking

1. With the arising of ignorance (20), feeling at rebirth-linking arises.

2. craving (20) ″ ″

3. clinging (20) ″ ″

4. formations (34) ″ ″

5. With the arising of kamma (= the kammic potency of the 34), feeling at rebirth-linking arises.

6. basis (= heart-base) ″ ″

7. object (= object of rebirth-linking consciousness) ″ ″

8. contact (= 34 feeling = 33) ″ ″

* The nature of arising of feeling at rebirth-linking.

Perception aggregate at rebirth-linking

1. With the arising of ignorance (20), perception at rebirth-linking arises.

2. craving (20) ″ ″

3. clinging (20) ″ ″

4. formations (34) ″ ″

The Perception and Formations Aggregates at Rebirth-Linking

5. With the arising of kamma (= the kammic potency of the 34), perception at rebirth-linking arises.

6. basis (= heart-base) ″ ″

7. object (= object of rebirth-linking consciousness) ″ ″

8. contact (= 34 perception = 33) ″ ″

* The nature of arising of perception at rebirth-linking.

Formations aggregate at rebirth-linking (= volition)

1. With the arising of ignorance (20), formations at rebirth-linking arises.

2. craving (20) ″ ″

3. clinging (20) ″ ″

4. formations (34) ″ ″

5. With the arising of kamma (= the kammic potency of the 34), formations at rebirth-linking arises.

6. basis (= heart-base) ″ ″

7. object (= object of rebirth-linking consciousness) ″ ″

8. contact (= 34 volition = 33) ″ ″

* The nature of arising of formations at rebirth-linking.

Formations aggregate at rebirth-linking (= 34 feeling, perception, and consciousness = 31)

1. With the arising of ignorance (20), formations at rebirth-linking arises.

2. craving (20) ″ ″

3. clinging (20) ″ ″

4. formations (34) ″ ″

5. With the arising of kamma (= the kammic potency of the 34), formations at rebirth-linking arises.

6. basis (= heart-base) ″ ″

7. object (= object of rebirth-linking consciousness) ″ ″

The Formations and Consciousness Aggregates at Rebirth-Linking

8. the three remaining mental aggregates ″ ″

* The nature of arising of formations at rebirth-linking.

[The three remaining mental aggregates are the feeling, perception, and consciousness aggregates. Of the 34 mental phenomena, the 31 mental factors apart from those three aggregates belong on the side of the effect. Contact is among them. Hence only the other three phenomena, feeling, perception, and consciousness, stand on the side of the cause.]

Consciousness aggregate at rebirth-linking

1. With the arising of ignorance (20), consciousness at rebirth-linking arises.

2. craving (20) ″ ″

3. clinging (20) ″ ″

4. formations (34) ″ ″

5. kamma (= the kammic potency of the 34) ″ ″

6. mentality-materiality ″ ″

* The nature of arising of consciousness at rebirth-linking.

Mentality = the associated mental factors (= 33).

Materiality = heart-base materiality among the 30 material phenomena + materiality as object.

Follow this method to contemplate the five aggregates at each mind moment presented in the tables in the section on mentality meditation: the five aggregates at life-continuum, the five aggregates at death, the five aggregates at five-door adverting, the five aggregates at eye-consciousness, and so on. This mode of contemplation presents little difficulty for good people already proficient in discerning causes and effects by the first method of dependent origination.

2. Contemplating Passing Away Separately

Miến / Burmese 118

A point to note. The figure 20 given for ignorance, craving, and clinging is only an example. The figure 34 given for formations is likewise only an example. Discern and develop contemplation in accordance with what has arisen, is arising, and will arise in your own continuity of mentality-materiality. The number of consciousnesses and mental factors may vary. Formations may vary between wholesome and unwholesome. Contemplate from successive past lives to the end of the future as far as you are able.

2. Vayadhammānupassī = vayadassana—contemplating passing away separately.

Avijjānirodhā rūpanirodhoti paccayanirodhena rūpakkhandhassa vayaṃ passati. (Paṭisaṃ. 54.)

Avijjānirodhā rūpanirodhoti aggamaggakkhaṇena avijjāya anuppādanirodhato anāgatassa rūpassa anuppādanirodho hoti paccayābhāve abhāvato. (Mahāṭī. 2.421.)

The meditator has seen very distinctly, with the eye of insight wisdom, how effects such as materiality arise because causes such as ignorance arise. When the causes such as ignorance cease through the arahant path, never to arise again, that is, they cease by cessation through non-arising (anuppādanirodha), effects such as materiality also cease, never to arise again, in the same way. If the meditator directs insight knowledge towards the future and contemplates the moment of the arahant path and the period after the death consciousness at final Nibbāna, this will be readily seen. Here the good person should also understand…

Cessation After Arising and Cessation Through Non-Arising

Miến / Burmese 119

…cessation after arising (uppādanirodha) and cessation through non-arising (anuppādanirodha).

Uppādanirodha. Formations that are causes and formations that are effects alike pass away once they have arisen. Because of impermanence those formations arise and immediately dissolve, in the momentary present. This arising followed by dissolution is called cessation after arising. As long as the causes continue to render assistance, the effects continue in succession throughout that period, arising and ceasing according to the nature of cessation after arising. (Remember that the causes too are resultant formations that have arisen from their respective causes.) After cessation, the causes are still present, so there is further arising and ceasing. For that reason it is called cessation after arising, a cessation still followed by renewed arising. It is also commonly called momentary cessation (khaṇikanirodha).

Anuppādanirodha. The stream-entry path, once-return path, and non-return path eradicate their respective defilements without remainder. The knowledge of the arahant path, called the supreme path (aggamagga), eradicates the remaining defilements such as ignorance without remainder. When the noble path knowledges, up through the knowledge of the arahant path, have eradicated their respective defilements without remainder, those defilements have no further opportunity to arise in the continuity of mentality-materiality. They cease completely, without remainder, never arising again. Such cessation without further arising is called anuppādanirodha.

Contemplating Cessation Through Non-Arising in the Materiality Aggregate

Miến / Burmese 120

When causes such as ignorance have ceased by cessation through non-arising, anuppādanirodha, the effects such as materiality, which could continue to arise in the future after the death consciousness at final Nibbāna if the causes still remained, likewise have no further opportunity to arise. They cease by cessation through non-arising. This too is called anuppādanirodha. They cease because, in the absence of the causes, the effects too are absent.

The meditator should direct insight knowledge towards the future up to the arahant path one will attain and towards the future up to the death consciousness at final Nibbāna, and contemplate with insight knowledge so as to see clearly that nature of cessation through non-arising. Once one has truly seen with the eye of insight wisdom that, because the causes cease through non-arising, the effects also cease through non-arising, continue with the following mode of contemplation.

Pattern of contemplation for the materiality aggregate

1. With the cessation of ignorance, (kamma-born) materiality ceases.

2. With the cessation of craving, (kamma-born) materiality ceases.

3. With the cessation of clinging, (kamma-born) materiality ceases.

4. With the cessation of formations, (kamma-born) materiality ceases.

5. With the cessation of kamma, (kamma-born) materiality ceases.

[This is cessation through non-arising. Future materiality ceases by cessation without arising again.]

Contemplating the cessation of materiality

Miến / Burmese 121

* The cessation of kamma-produced materiality is its dissolution. (Uppādanirodha.)

6. With the cessation of consciousness, consciousness-produced materiality ceases. (Anuppādanirodha.)

* The cessation of consciousness-produced materiality is its dissolution. (Uppādanirodha.)

7. With the cessation of temperature, temperature-produced materiality ceases. (Anuppādanirodha.)

* The cessation of temperature-produced materiality is its dissolution. (Uppādanirodha.)

8. With the cessation of nutriment, nutriment-produced materiality ceases. (Anuppādanirodha.)

* The cessation of nutriment-produced materiality is its dissolution. (Uppādanirodha.)

The beginning meditator must contemplate so as to distinguish clearly the two kinds of cessation in this mode of contemplation: anuppādanirodha, cessation without subsequent arising, and uppādanirodha, cessation after which there is subsequent arising. In the canonical Paṭisambhidāmagga (53), uppādanirodha is called vipariṇāmalakkhaṇa, the characteristic of change. It is the dissolution of formations at the moment of dissolution. In this method of contemplation too, in all six groups beginning with the visible-object group, divide each group of consciousness shown in the tables in the section on the mentality meditation subject into five aggregates (as explained in the first method of dependent origination), and contemplate all the wholesome and unwholesome impulsion processes. Contemplate now internally, now externally. To give a model for the mental aggregates in this contemplation, a way to contemplate the feeling aggregate associated with eye-consciousness follows.

How to contemplate the feeling aggregate associated with eye-consciousness

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1. With the cessation of ignorance, feeling associated with eye-consciousness ceases.

2. With the cessation of craving, feeling associated with eye-consciousness ceases.

3. With the cessation of clinging, feeling associated with eye-consciousness ceases.

4. With the cessation of formations, feeling associated with eye-consciousness ceases.

5. With the cessation of kamma, feeling associated with eye-consciousness ceases.

6. With the cessation of eye-base, feeling associated with eye-consciousness ceases.

7. With the cessation of visible object, feeling associated with eye-consciousness ceases.

8. With the cessation of eye-contact (= 7), feeling associated with eye-consciousness ceases.

9. With the cessation of light, feeling associated with eye-consciousness ceases.

10. With the cessation of attention, feeling associated with eye-consciousness ceases. (Anuppādanirodha.)

* The cessation of feeling associated with eye-consciousness is its dissolution. (Uppādanirodha.)

As far as you are able, contemplate according to the same pattern from successive past lives to the end of future lives.

3. Samudayavayadhammānupassī — contemplating the nature of arising and vanishing

Udayavayadassana — the method of seeing arising and vanishing.

Samudayadhammānupassī vā kāyasmiṃ viharati, vayadhammānupassī vā kāyasmiṃ viharati, samudayavayadhammānupassī vā kāyasmiṃ viharati. (Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta, Mahā. 173.)

Avijjāsamudayā rūpasamudayoti, pe, avijjānirodhā rūpanirodho. (Paṭis. 53, 54.)

Contemplating the arising and vanishing of the materiality aggregate

Miến / Burmese 123

Tesaṃ vasena evaṃ rūpassa udayo, evaṃ rūpassa vayo, evaṃ rūpaṃ udeti, evaṃ rūpaṃ vetīti paccayato ceva khaṇato ca vitthārena manasikāraṃ karoti. (Vism. 2, 267.)

Following the instructions in the Pāli Canon and commentaries, the good practitioner training in the detailed method of developing knowledge of arising and vanishing should look with insight knowledge to see clearly how results arise because causes arise and cease because causes cease. Then practise this repeatedly, relating causes and results. To contemplate in this manner:

Sapaccayanāmarūpadassanaṃ tilakkhaṇaṃ āropetvā vipassanāpaṭipāṭiyā “aniccaṃ dukkhaṃ anattā”ti sammasanto vicarati. (Ma. A. 1, 281.)

In accordance with such instructions from the commentaries, contemplate with insight, applying the three characteristics in turn to both causes and results. Thus the method presented here relates causes and results and applies the characteristic of impermanence. Understand in the same way how to contemplate with insight applying the characteristics of suffering and non-self separately.

Seeing the arising and vanishing of the materiality aggregate

1. With the arising of ignorance, kamma-produced materiality arises. With the cessation of ignorance, kamma-produced materiality ceases.

Ignorance — (arising–ceasing) impermanent. Kamma-produced materiality — (arising–ceasing) impermanent.

2. With the arising of craving, kamma-produced materiality arises. With the cessation of craving, kamma-produced materiality ceases.

Arising and vanishing of materiality and feeling associated with eye-consciousness

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Craving — (arising–ceasing) impermanent. Kamma-produced materiality — (arising–ceasing) impermanent.

3. With the arising of clinging, kamma-produced materiality arises. With the cessation of clinging, kamma-produced materiality ceases.

Clinging — (arising–ceasing) impermanent. Kamma-produced materiality — (arising–ceasing) impermanent.

4. With the arising of formations, kamma-produced materiality arises. With the cessation of formations, kamma-produced materiality ceases.

Formations — (arising–ceasing) impermanent. Kamma-produced materiality — (arising–ceasing) impermanent.

5. With the arising of kamma, kamma-produced materiality arises. With the cessation of kamma, kamma-produced materiality ceases.

Kamma (= volition) — (arising–ceasing) impermanent. Kamma-produced materiality — (arising–ceasing) impermanent.

6. With the arising of consciousness, consciousness-produced materiality arises. With the cessation of consciousness, consciousness-produced materiality ceases.

Consciousness — (arising–ceasing) impermanent. Consciousness-produced materiality — (arising–ceasing) impermanent.

7. With the arising of temperature, temperature-produced materiality arises. With the cessation of temperature, temperature-produced materiality ceases.

Temperature — (arising–ceasing) impermanent. Temperature-produced materiality — (arising–ceasing) impermanent.

8. With the arising of nutriment, nutriment-produced materiality arises. With the cessation of nutriment, nutriment-produced materiality ceases.

Nutriment — (arising–ceasing) impermanent. Nutriment-produced materiality — (arising–ceasing) impermanent.

How to contemplate the feeling aggregate associated with eye-consciousness

1. With the arising of ignorance, feeling associated with eye-consciousness arises. With the cessation of ignorance, feeling associated with eye-consciousness ceases.

Ignorance — (arising–ceasing) impermanent. Feeling associated with eye-consciousness — (arising–ceasing) impermanent.

Arising and vanishing of feeling associated with eye-consciousness

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2. With the arising of craving, feeling associated with eye-consciousness arises. With the cessation of craving, feeling associated with eye-consciousness ceases.

Craving — (arising–ceasing) impermanent. Feeling associated with eye-consciousness — (arising–ceasing) impermanent.

3. With the arising of clinging, feeling associated with eye-consciousness arises. With the cessation of clinging, feeling associated with eye-consciousness ceases.

Clinging — (arising–ceasing) impermanent. Feeling associated with eye-consciousness — (arising–ceasing) impermanent.

4. With the arising of formations, feeling associated with eye-consciousness arises. With the cessation of formations, feeling associated with eye-consciousness ceases.

Formations — (arising–ceasing) impermanent. Feeling associated with eye-consciousness — (arising–ceasing) impermanent.

5. With the arising of kamma, feeling associated with eye-consciousness arises. With the cessation of kamma, feeling associated with eye-consciousness ceases.

Kamma (= volition) — (arising–ceasing) impermanent. Feeling associated with eye-consciousness — (arising–ceasing) impermanent.

6. With the arising of eye-base, feeling associated with eye-consciousness arises. With the cessation of eye-base, feeling associated with eye-consciousness ceases.

Eye-base — (arising–ceasing) impermanent. Feeling associated with eye-consciousness — (arising–ceasing) impermanent.

7. With the arising of visible object, feeling associated with eye-consciousness arises. With the cessation of visible object, feeling associated with eye-consciousness ceases.

Visible object — (arising–ceasing) impermanent. Feeling associated with eye-consciousness — (arising–ceasing) impermanent.

Arising and vanishing of feeling and explanatory notes

Miến / Burmese 126

8. With the arising of eye-contact, feeling associated with eye-consciousness arises. With the cessation of eye-contact, feeling associated with eye-consciousness ceases.

Eye-contact — (arising–ceasing) impermanent. Feeling associated with eye-consciousness — (arising–ceasing) impermanent.

9. With the arising of light, feeling associated with eye-consciousness arises. With the cessation of light, feeling associated with eye-consciousness ceases.

Light — (arising–ceasing) impermanent. Feeling associated with eye-consciousness — (arising–ceasing) impermanent.

10. With the arising of attention (= five-door adverting — 11), feeling associated with eye-consciousness arises. With the cessation of attention, feeling associated with eye-consciousness ceases.

Attention — (arising–ceasing) impermanent. Feeling associated with eye-consciousness — (arising–ceasing) impermanent.

Explanatory notes

For the good practitioner who has become proficient and reached a satisfactory level in the first method of dependent origination, this much suffices to grasp this method of contemplation. Divide each group of consciousness shown in the tables of the mentality meditation section into the five aggregates, and contemplate according to this detailed method of developing knowledge of arising and vanishing.

In these methods, one can also look with insight knowledge so as to see clearly the causal connection between causes of the first past life and present results. One can also contemplate causes of the second past life and results of the first past life, and the causal connection between present causes and future results,

looking with insight knowledge so as to see clearly. As presented in the first method in the dependent origination section, look with insight knowledge to see clearly the causal relationship between the corresponding causes and results. These methods can be used to contemplate as many successive past and future lives as one has discerned.

One may also contemplate by dividing them into two groups: ignorance, craving, and clinging, which belong to the round of defilements, and formations and kamma, which belong to the round of kamma.

If those causes belong to the first past life, first discern the clear life-continuum mind, the mind-door, of the first past life. Then contemplate with insight knowledge to see clearly the arising and vanishing, the impermanent nature, of the causes that arise between those clear life-continuum moments. Understand successive past and future lives in the same way. As explained in the dependent origination section, ignorance, craving, and clinging:

Mind-door adverting (1) | Impulsion (7) | Registration with joy (2) | / Registration without joy (2)
12 | 34 | 34 | / 12

generally arise in a mind-door process of this kind. There are processes accompanied by joy and processes unaccompanied by joy. Some have registration and some do not. There can sometimes be registration without joy, and there can also be registration with joy, as appropriate. For good practitioners who are still ordinary people, ignorance, craving, and clinging generally

Mind-door processes and the distinction between formations and kamma

are impulsions of the greed group associated with wrong view. Look with insight knowledge to see clearly the impermanence of the mental phenomena present in that process, their arising and vanishing down to the momentary present, that is, in each group of consciousness. Contemplate with insight, applying the three characteristics in turn. The group of formations and kamma generally arises according to the process sequence below.

Mind-door adverting (1) | Impulsion (7) | Registration with joy (2) | / Registration without joy (2)
12 | 34 | 34 | / 12

In this mind-door process, if there is great wholesome consciousness accompanied by joy and associated with knowledge, both joy and wisdom are present. There are 34 mental phenomena. If there is consciousness accompanied by equanimity and associated with knowledge, wisdom is present and joy is absent. There are 33 mental phenomena. Registration may or may not occur. Registration with joy or registration without joy can occur as appropriate. Look with knowledge to see clearly the arising and vanishing of the mental phenomena of formations and kamma in each group of consciousness, down to the momentary present. Contemplate with insight, applying the three characteristics in turn.

Formations and the power of kamma

The power of kamma is a phenomenon unsuitable for insight contemplation by applying the characteristics. When contemplating with insight by applying the characteristics, take the group of wholesome formations as primary. This emphasis is stated specifically for human beings. Therefore one should also know the distinction between formations that can be contemplated with insight and the power of kamma. Taking a wholesome act of giving as an example,

Formations, the power of kamma, and the groups to contemplate

Miến / Burmese 129

the explanation is as follows:

1. Before giving: the volition arising before the wholesome deed, prior volition (pubbacetanā), is formation. While giving: the volition arising as the wholesome deed is done, volition at relinquishing the gift (muñcacetanā), is the power of kamma.

2. Among the seven impulsions that arise while kamma is being performed, the volition accompanying the first through sixth impulsions is formation. The volition in the seventh impulsion is the power of kamma.

3. In the groups of impulsion consciousness arising while kamma is being performed, volition is the power of kamma. The group of accompanying associated phenomena is formation. (Vism. 2, 250–251.)

In accordance with the distinctions set out above, contemplate together with insight all the mental phenomena in each group of consciousness throughout the wholesome mind-door impulsion process that arose or will arise in the performance of kamma, down to the momentary present. If you can contemplate in this way, understand that you have contemplated both formations and the power of kamma with insight.

Contemplate all of them with insight

The five rebirth-linking aggregates, the five life-continuum aggregates, the five death-consciousness aggregates, the five mind-door adverting aggregates, the five eye-consciousness aggregates, and so forth. Divide each group of consciousness present in the processes such as the eye-door process, as shown in the tables of the mentality meditation section, into five aggregates, and contemplate with insight as above. Contemplate both the internal and external continuities. In contemplating in this way:

Dependent origination, the first method

Miến / Burmese 130

1. One can contemplate by relating causes and results between the past and the present.

2. One can contemplate by relating causes and results between past lives.

3. One can contemplate by relating causes and results between the present and the future.

4. One can contemplate by relating causes and results between future lives.

Dependent origination, the first method

Nāyaṃ, bhikkhave, kāyo tumhākaṃ, napi aññesaṃ. Purāṇamidaṃ, bhikkhave, kammaṃ abhisaṅkhataṃ abhisañcetayitaṃ vedaniyaṃ daṭṭhabbaṃ.

Tatra kho, bhikkhave, sutavā ariyasāvako paṭiccasamuppādaññeva sādhukaṃ yoniso manasi karoti — “Iti imasmiṃ sati idaṃ hoti, imassuppādā idaṃ uppajjati. Imasmiṃ asati idaṃ na hoti, imassa nirodhā idaṃ nirujjhati. Yadidaṃ avijjāpaccayā saṅkhārā, saṅkhārapaccayā viññāṇaṃ, pe, evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti. Avijjāya tveva asesavirāganirodhā saṅkhāranirodho, saṅkhāranirodhā viññāṇanirodho, pe, evametassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa nirodho hotī”ti. (Saṃ. 1, 295, Natumhasutta.)

Bhikkhus … this body of materiality and body of mentality, the whole of material and mental phenomena, belong neither to you (that is, they are no self of yours, since there is no self) nor to others (they are no self of others). This body of materiality and body of mentality consists of phenomena brought about by what is old, what came before. They are formed by wholesome or unwholesome kamma, have wholesome or unwholesome volition as their root cause, and are a basis for feeling.

The formula of dependent origination

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Bhikkhus … here the noble disciple learned through hearing the teachings (āgamasuta) and through practice (adhigamasuta), or the disciple of the Tathāgata who is noble, attends carefully to and develops just the phenomena of dependent origination, the succession of causes and results:

“When this cause is present, this result is present and arises. From the presence and arising of this cause, this result is present and arises. When this cause is absent, this result is absent. With the cessation of this cause, this result ceases. The succession of causes and results, the phenomena of dependent origination, is as follows:

“From the arising of ignorance, formations arise. From the arising of formations, (resultant) consciousness arises. pe. Thus this entire mass of sheer suffering, unmixed with happiness, comes to be and arises.” One contemplates in this way.

“With the remainderless cessation of ignorance itself (through the arahant path), formations cease. With the cessation of formations, (resultant) consciousness ceases. pe. Thus comes the complete cessation of the entire mass of sheer suffering, unmixed with happiness.” One contemplates in this way. (Saṃ. 1, 295.)

In accordance with such teachings, a beginning meditator can also use the first method of dependent origination to contemplate arising alone, vanishing alone, or both arising and vanishing. One should contemplate in this way.

Contemplation of the nature of arising and vanishing

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Samudayadhammānupassī — contemplating the nature of arising

1. With the arising of ignorance, formations arise.

2. With the arising of formations, rebirth-linking consciousness arises. With the arising of formations, life-continuum consciousness arises. With the arising of formations, death consciousness arises. With the arising of formations, eye-consciousness arises. pe.

As presented in the first method of dependent origination, look with knowledge to see clearly the succession of causes and results and contemplate only the nature of arising. Contemplate both the internal and external continuities. Contemplate relating causes and results in each set of three lives, from successive past lives to the present and from the present to the end of future lives. A beginning meditator who has reached a satisfactory level in seeing the succession of causes and results by the first method of dependent origination will no longer find this difficult.

Vayadhammānupassī — contemplating the nature of vanishing

A beginning meditator whose knowledge of the succession of causes and results, such as formations arising from the arising of ignorance, has become clear as far as the final future life, should look with insight knowledge to see clearly that at the future time of attaining arahant-path knowledge, through that arahant path, in the forward order of contemplation, all defilements such as ignorance will cease without arising again. Because of that cessation, all the results such as formations will likewise cease without arising again. See clearly with insight knowledge that cessation without renewed arising (anuppādanirodha), and contemplate according to the model below.

Contemplating vanishing and contemplating both arising and vanishing

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1. With the cessation of ignorance, formations cease. With the cessation of formations, rebirth-linking consciousness ceases. With the cessation of formations, life-continuum consciousness ceases. With the cessation of formations, death consciousness ceases. With the cessation of formations, eye-consciousness ceases. pe.

Contemplate cessation alone in this manner. Contemplate in all three periods and in both continuities.

Samudayavayadhammānupassī — contemplating the nature of arising and vanishing

Look with insight knowledge to see clearly both arising and vanishing, namely such phenomena as formations arising because ignorance arises and formations ceasing because ignorance ceases. Then contemplate according to the model below.

1. With the arising of ignorance, formations arises. With the cessation of ignorance, formations ceases.

Ignorance — (arising–ceasing) impermanent. Formations — (arising–ceasing) impermanent.

2. With the arising of formations, rebirth-linking consciousness arises. With the cessation of formations, rebirth-linking consciousness ceases.

Formations — (arising–ceasing) impermanent. Rebirth-linking consciousness — (arising–ceasing) impermanent.

3. With the arising of formations, life-continuum consciousness arises. With the cessation of formations, life-continuum consciousness ceases.

Formations — (arising–ceasing) impermanent. Life-continuum consciousness — (arising–ceasing) impermanent.

4. With the arising of formations, eye-consciousness arises. With the cessation of formations, eye-consciousness ceases.

Formations — (arising–ceasing) impermanent. Eye-consciousness — (arising–ceasing) impermanent.

Benefits that can be attained

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This much suffices for a beginning meditator who has reached a satisfactory level in discerning the succession of causes and results by the first method of dependent origination to grasp the method. Contemplate throughout the lives called kamma-becoming (kammabhava) and rebirth-becoming (upapattibhava). As explained in the first method in the section on dependent origination, wherever all six groups are to be contemplated, contemplate all six. Contemplate in all three periods, past, future, and present, and in both the internal and external continuities. Link the sets of three lives in contemplation. At a minimum, contemplate through the entire range once for each of the three characteristics, from as many successive past lives as you have discerned to the end of future lives.

Benefits that can be attained

Tass'evaṃ manasikaroto “kuto kirime dhammā ahutvā sambhonti, hutvā paṭiventī”ti ñāṇaṃ visadataraṃ hoti. Tass'evaṃ paccayato ceva khaṇato ca dvedhā udayabbayaṃ passato saccapaṭiccasamuppādanayalakkhaṇabhedā pākaṭā honti. (Vism. 2, 267.)

Contemplating with knowledge so as to see clearly that a result arises because its cause arises is called seeing arising according to conditions (paccayato udayadassana). Contemplating with knowledge so as to see clearly that a result ceases because its cause ceases is called seeing vanishing according to conditions (paccayato vayadassana). Contemplating with knowledge so as to see clearly that a result arises because its cause arises and ceases because its cause ceases is called seeing arising and vanishing according to conditions (paccayato udayabbayadassana).

Contemplating with knowledge so as to see clearly the arising of conditioned causes and conditioned results at their respective moments of arising is called seeing arising according to moments (khaṇato udayadassana). With those same conditioned causes and conditioned results,

The four truths become evident

contemplating with knowledge so as to see clearly their dissolution at the respective moments of dissolution is called seeing vanishing according to moments (khaṇato vayadassana). Contemplating with knowledge so as to see clearly the arising and vanishing of those same conditioned causes and conditioned results in their respective moments of arising and dissolution, down to the momentary present, is called seeing arising and vanishing according to moments (khaṇato udayabbayadassana), the method of contemplating arising and vanishing moment by moment.

When one has attended to and cultivated insight into the conditioned mentality and materiality that are causes and results in this way, applying the three characteristics in turn by both ways of seeing arising and vanishing, namely according to conditions and according to moments, the vision of insight knowledge becomes especially clear: “These conditioned phenomena, previously absent, suddenly arise now. Having arisen, they cease and disappear.” In the knowledge of a beginning meditator who sees arising and vanishing in both these ways, the following become evident:

1. The four truths;

2. The phenomena of dependent origination;

3. The four methods;

4. The five characteristics.

How the four truths become evident

1. Paccayato udayadassana — seeing arising according to conditions. By seeing with insight knowledge how results arise because causes arise, the beginning meditator directly penetrates and knows the generative causes that can directly bring about the resultant conditioned mental and material phenomena. Therefore, the truth of origin becomes evident in that meditator’s knowledge.

The truths become apparent through contemplating arising and passing away

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2. Khaṇato udayadassana — Seeing with insight the arising, moment by moment, of formations comprising mentality, materiality, causes and effects, down to the momentary present. As insight penetrates the suffering of birth in formations, the truth of suffering becomes apparent to the meditator's knowledge.

3. Paccayato vayadassana — Seeing with insight that with the cessation of the cause the effect ceases. As insight penetrates that when the cause is absent and does not exist, the effect dependent on it, the effect that can arise only when that cause exists, does not arise, the truth of cessation becomes apparent to the meditator's knowledge. (This is anuppādanirodha, cessation by non-arising.)

4. Khaṇato vayadassana — Seeing with insight the dissolution, moment by moment, of formations comprising mentality, materiality, causes and effects, down to the momentary present, that is, seeing with insight the momentary dissolution of formations. As insight penetrates the suffering of death, the decay and destruction of formations, the truth of suffering itself becomes apparent to the meditator's knowledge. (This refers to the suffering of death in each moment.)

5. Paccayato udayabbayadassana — Seeing with insight arising and passing away in terms of causes, namely, with the arising of the cause the effect arises, and with the cessation of the cause the effect ceases. Khaṇato udayabbayadassana — Seeing with insight the arising and passing away of formations comprising materiality, mentality, causes and effects, moment by moment, down to the momentary present. Seeing in these two ways by the knowledge of arising and passing away

The mundane truth of the path and the five mundane path factors

is insight right view itself. In other words, it is the group of phenomena headed by right view, with right intention, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. That group of phenomena is the mundane truth of the path. This mundane truth of the path can abandon, by substitution of opposites, the darkness of delusion that conceals formations comprising materiality, mentality, causes and effects, preventing their being known. Because the group of phenomena belonging to the mundane truth of the path can abandon that element of delusion by substitution of opposites, the truth of the path becomes apparent to the meditator's knowledge.

Another explanation — The mundane truth of the path called right view is the phenomenon of non-delusion that provides a supporting condition for attaining the truth of the path called the supramundane noble path. Just as a burning lamp makes itself visible, that phenomenon of non-delusion makes itself evident as right view free of delusion. (Right view makes itself evident through knowing the four truths.) Thus the truth of the path becomes apparent. In becoming apparent in this way, it becomes apparent only when it can dispel the darkness called delusion that conceals the four truths and prevents their being known. This is why that right view is called the mundane truth of the path. (Vism. 2, 268. Mahāṭī. 2, 423–424.)

The mundane truth of the path — The five mundane path factors

1. The knowledge that penetrates to the ultimate level the formations comprising materiality, mentality, causes and effects, called the truths of suffering and its origin, and the knowledge that penetrates the impermanence, suffering and non-self of those formations,

The five path factors in insight knowledge

these insight knowledges constitute the mundane path factor of right view.

2. The directing of insight consciousness towards those formations as its object, and the directing of insight consciousness towards their impermanence, suffering and non-self as its object, constitutes the mundane path factor of right intention.

3. The exertion to penetrate those formations to the ultimate level, and the exertion to penetrate their impermanence, suffering and non-self, constitutes the mundane path factor of right effort.

4. The remembering and holding of those formations, the remembering and holding of their impermanence, suffering and non-self, and the immersion in those formations as object and in their impermanence, suffering and non-self as object, constitutes the mundane path factor of right mindfulness. (It has the nature of neither forgetting nor losing sight of the object.)

5. The firm settling of insight consciousness on those formations as object, and the firm settling of insight consciousness on one of their aspects, impermanence, suffering or non-self, constitutes the path factor of right concentration. (This is momentary insight concentration.)

At the mundane stage these five path factors and the three path factors of virtue, right speech, right action and right livelihood, have different objects. Thus they cannot arise together in the same moment of consciousness.

How the phenomena of dependent origination become apparent

Only the five path factors described above can arise together in one moment of insight consciousness.

1. Paccayato udayadassana — Seeing the arising of an effect because its cause arises. As insight penetrates that “when this cause is present, this effect comes into being,” the phenomena of dependent origination in the forward order become apparent to the meditator’s knowledge, just as taught: with the arising of ignorance, formations arise; with the arising of formations, consciousness arises, and so on.

2. Paccayato vayadassana — Seeing with insight that because the cause ceases, the effect ceases. As insight penetrates that “because this cause ceases, this effect ceases,” the phenomena of dependent origination in the reverse order become apparent to the meditator’s knowledge, just as taught: with the cessation of ignorance, formations cease; with the cessation of formations, consciousness ceases, and so on.

3. Khaṇato udayabbayadassana — Seeing with insight the arising and passing away of formations, moment by moment, down to the momentary present, formations as causes and formations as effects, that is, causal mentality and materiality and resultant mentality and materiality. As insight penetrates the conditioned characteristic (saṅkhatalakkhaṇa) of arising, presence and dissolution (uppāda, ṭhiti, bhaṅga) in these formations, the resultant phenomena that arise in dependence on their causes, that is, dependently arisen phenomena (paṭiccasamuppanna),

become apparent to the meditator's knowledge. Indeed, conditioned phenomena have the nature of arising and passing away. Since those conditioned phenomena come into being only in dependence on causes, they are also called dependently arisen. (This means that because the causes themselves are impermanent, suffering and non-self, the dependently arisen effects that come into being in dependence on those causes are likewise impermanent, suffering and non-self.) (Vism. 2, 268. Mahāṭī. 2, 424.)

How the four methods become apparent

1. Paccayato udayadassana — Seeing with insight that with the arising of a cause its effect arises. As insight penetrates the uninterrupted, recurrent arising of the stream of mentality and materiality in which causes and effects are linked, the method of unity (ekattanaya), seeing the stream of mentality and materiality as one continuous stream, becomes apparent to the meditator's knowledge.

Previously, in discerning causes and effects in their relationship in the section on dependent origination, at the stage of knowledge discerning conditions, the meditator already understood that the past stream of mentality and materiality that established the past causes and the present stream of mentality and materiality arise recurrently as one unbroken stream. In particular, according to the statement "Sabhāvo vāyaṃ cittassa paṇḍaratā" (Mūlaṭī. 1, 25), because all consciousness has the nature of luminosity, the meditator sees the past mind-consciousness element that established the past causes and the present mind-consciousness element as a continuum of mentality, under the aspect of impermanence,

suffering and non-self, and understands that they arise recurrently and without interruption as one continuous stream.

Again, throughout a lifetime the consciousness that occurs most frequently is life-continuum consciousness. In accordance with such teachings as “Pabhassaram idaṃ, bhikkhave, cittaṃ” (A. 1, 5), that life-continuum consciousness is clear, radiant and sparkling. The process consciousnesses that arise from time to time between life-continuum consciousnesses are likewise bright (paṇḍara) and pure. Life-continuum consciousness is bright too. When the meditator surveys with insight the mental continuum of the mind-consciousness element, comprising life-continuum and process consciousness, from past to present and from the present back as far into the past as can be discerned, the meditator sees with insight that they arise again and again without a break, as a single stream under the aspect of impermanence, like beads strung on a single thread. The meditator knows with insight whether that past mind-consciousness element is their own and whether it belongs to the same continuous stream as their present mind-consciousness element. Understand the future in the same way.

However, because the aspect of impermanence has not yet been attended to extensively, the meditator may know only to some degree the arising and passing away down to the momentary present in certain consciousness moments, or in a few such moments. In other consciousness moments, or in many consciousness moments, the meditator does not yet know arising and passing away down to the momentary present. Now at this stage of knowledge of arising and passing away, the meditator also knows that the mind-consciousness element is arising continuously

in this way. The meditator also knows the arising and passing away of that mind-consciousness element, moment by moment, under the aspects of impermanence, suffering and non-self, down to the momentary present. The meditator also knows that causes and effects are linked and arise repeatedly without interruption under the aspects of impermanence, suffering and non-self. At that time, the insight knowledge that knows and sees in this way can effectively abandon the annihilationist view that mistakenly holds, “The one who acts is one person, and the one who experiences the result is someone else.” This is because insight knowledge sees that the cessation of earlier phenomena is linked to the arising of subsequent phenomena, that is, the phenomena arising next in succession. (Vism. 2, 268. Mahāṭī. 2, 424.)

2. Khaṇato udayadassana — Seeing with insight the momentary arising, down to the momentary present, of the causal and resultant formations of mentality and materiality that arise in causal succession in this way. As insight penetrates that new ultimate mental and material phenomena come into being in each moment, the method of diversity (nānattanaya) becomes apparent to the meditator’s knowledge. (Although there is a single unbroken stream when viewed as a continuum of mentality and materiality, it is a continuum of arising and passing away, never a continuum devoid of arising and passing away. The earlier and later continuities of mentality and materiality, as well as earlier and later mentality and materiality, are distinct and separate. Because the meditator sees dissolution down to the momentary present, they know that earlier and later ultimate elements are distinct, group by group. This means the meditator’s knowledge has broken through the compactness of continuity (santatighana), of combination (samūhaghana) and of function (kiccaghana).)

The method of discerning the absence of agency in cause and effect

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When knowing and seeing in this way, the meditator can effectively abandon the eternalist view that mistakenly holds, “The same person acts and that very person experiences the result.” (Vism. 2, 268. Mahāṭī. 2, 424.)

3. Paccayato udayabbayadassana — Seeing with insight that because a cause arises its effect arises, and because a cause ceases its effect ceases. When the cause is present, the effect comes into being. When the cause is absent, the effect is absent. Since things happen in accordance with this natural regularity, insight penetrates that among ultimate material and mental phenomena nothing arises according to the wishes of an individual or being. Thus the method of absence of agency (abyāpāranaya) becomes apparent to the meditator’s knowledge. (This means that on the side of the causes there is no intention, “We will bring the effects into being,” and on the side of the effects there is no intention, “When the causes arise, we, the effects, will arise.” In ignorance, too, there is no intention, “I will make formations arise.” Likewise in formations there is no intention, “We will make consciousness arise.” Understand in this way that there is no such intention on either side, in causes or in effects.)

When there is knowing and seeing in this way, that insight knowledge can effectively abandon the self-view that mistakenly holds that there is a supreme self that creates and an individual self that is created. (This is because insight knowledge regularly knows and sees that there is no agency on either side, cause or effect, and that causes and effects alike are simply groups of impermanent phenomena, groups of suffering phenomena and groups of non-self phenomena.)

The method of discerning regularity and the five characteristics

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4. Paccayato udayadassana — Seeing with insight that because a cause arises its effect arises. As insight penetrates the arising of effects that correspond to their causes, the meditator sees with insight that effects arise because of causes. The effects do not arise haphazardly or without order, just any way they might. Effects arise only in conformity with their causes. When effects arise from causes such as ignorance, craving, clinging, formations and kamma, only effects that correspond to these causes arise, namely consciousness, mentality and materiality, the six bases, contact and feeling. The meditator knows and sees that a different effect that does not correspond to its cause does not arise. Thus the method of such regularity (evaṃdhammatānaya) becomes apparent.

When there is knowing and seeing in this way, that insight knowledge can effectively abandon the wrong view denying the efficacy of action (akiriyadiṭṭhi), which rejects kamma as a cause, holding that “even when one acts, it amounts to no action.” (Vism. 2, 268. Mahāṭī. 2, 424–425.)

How the five characteristics become apparent

1. Paccayato udayadassana — Seeing with insight that because a cause comes into being its effect comes into being. When a cause is present, the effect arises. Thus causes condition their effects by their presence alone, so the absence of agency or intention in conditioned phenomena

becomes apparent. Again, when the cause is absent, the effect is also absent, so the fact that conditioned effects are linked to their causes and conditions likewise becomes apparent. As insight penetrates that formations have no such agency or intention and arise only in relation to their causes, the meditator knows and sees that there is no supreme self (paramatta), a creating self, and no individual self (jīva-atta), a created self. Thus the characteristic of non-self becomes apparent to the meditator's knowledge. That knowledge discloses the emptiness of self.

2. Khaṇato udayabbayadassana — Seeing with insight the momentary arising and passing away, the nature of arising and passing away in the conditioned phenomena called causal formations and resultant formations. With insight the meditator penetrates that these phenomena, previously absent before their arising, now come fully into being and then pass into absence. (The meditator penetrates with insight the two absences, absence before arising and absence after arising and passing away, and their manifestation as uppāda, ṭhiti and bhaṅga only between those two absences.) Again, these formations are apparent only in the three phases of arising, presence and dissolution, uppāda, ṭhiti and bhaṅga. They are apparent neither before nor after. They have only a beginning, uppāda or arising, and an end, bhaṅga or dissolution. Because insight penetrates that conditioned phenomena have a beginning and end in arising and passing away in this manner, the characteristic of impermanence becomes apparent to the meditator's knowledge.

Suffering, individual characteristics and the characteristic of the conditioned

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3. As insight penetrates that those formations are continually and truly oppressed, over and over, by the two events of arising and passing away, the characteristic of suffering becomes apparent to the meditator's knowledge, in addition to the characteristic of impermanence.

4. As insight penetrates that conditioned phenomena can be present only between their arising (uppāda) and dissolution (bhaṅga), that is, that they are bounded by arising and dissolution, the individual characteristic (sabhāvalakkhaṇa), the particular nature and capacity of each conditioned phenomenon, also becomes apparent to the meditator's knowledge, in addition to the characteristics of impermanence and suffering.

5. When the individual characteristics of the various conditioned phenomena become apparent to the meditator's knowledge, the characteristic of the conditioned (saṅkhatalakkhaṇa) becomes apparent as well. This is their capacity to be present only temporarily, in the extremely brief interval of arising, presence and dissolution. This is because the meditator penetrates with insight that at the very moment of arising (udaya) the nature of dissolution (vaya) is absent, and at the very moment of dissolution (vaya) the nature of arising (udaya) is also absent.

These are the distinctive understandings, knowledges and benefits obtained through paccayato udayabbayadassana, seeing arising and passing away according to causes with insight, seeing effects come into being when their causes come into being and cease when their causes cease, and through khaṇato udayabbayadassana, seeing arising and passing away according to moments, seeing formations arise and pass away in their individual moments.

The sequence of insight practice in arising and passing away

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(Vism. 2, 268. Mahāṭī. 2, 425.)

The sequence of insight practice in arising and passing away

Santativasena hi rūpārūpadhamme udayato, vayato ca manasi karontassa anukkamena bhāvanāya balavuppattikāle ñāṇassa tikkhavisadabhāvappattiyā khaṇato udayabbayā upaṭṭhahantīti. Ayañhi paṭhamaṃ paccayato udayabbayaṃ manasi karonto avijjādike paccayadhamme vissajjetvā udayabbayavante khandhe gahetvā tesaṃ paccayato udayabbayadassanamukhena khaṇatopi udayabbayaṃ manasi karoti.

Tassa yadā ñāṇaṃ tikkhaṃ visadaṃ hutvā pavattati, tadā rūpārūpadhammā khaṇe khaṇe uppajjantā, bhijjantā ca hutvā upaṭṭhahanti. (Mahāṭī. 2, 422.)

The material and mental phenomena occurring in a single lifetime, from rebirth-linking to death, are called phenomena present by period (addhāpaccuppanna). The mental phenomena occurring within each cognitive process, beginning with the eye-door process, are called phenomena present by continuity (santatipaccuppanna). In each material group there is the fire element, or temperature (utu), which produces a succession of materiality extending through four, five, six generations and so forth. Such a material succession is called a succession produced by a single temperature. There is also nutritive essence (ojā) in each material group. When it receives support from the kamma-produced digestive fire and from nutriment-produced nutritive essence, it produces a succession of materiality through four, five, six generations and so forth. Such a material succession is called a succession produced by a single nutriment. The successions of materiality of four origins present within the span of such a single temperature or a single nutriment

The present by continuity and the momentary present

are phenomena present by continuity. The mental phenomena present in a single consciousness moment comprising the three submoments of uppāda, ṭhiti and bhaṅga, and the material phenomena present in their three phases of uppāda, ṭhiti and bhaṅga, are the mental and material phenomena called the momentary present (khaṇapaccuppanna).

First the meditator must attend and develop insight so as to see material and mental phenomena under the aspects of arising and of dissolution, in terms of the present by continuity. As one develops insight by attending in this way, the knowledge of insight development gradually grows strong and becomes sharp, clear and thoroughly purified. At that point the nature of arising and passing away in formations, in each individual moment, becomes apparent to the meditator's knowledge down to the momentary present.

Indeed, at first the meditator attends to and develops paccayato udayabbayadassana, arising and passing away according to causes, for example: "With the arising of ignorance, materiality arises. With the cessation of ignorance, materiality ceases." While attending in this way, the meditator sets aside the causes such as ignorance, that is, sets aside the contemplation of how effects such as materiality arise because of causes such as ignorance, and takes up with insight the causal and resultant aggregates in which arising and passing away have become apparent. Taking as the gateway the insight that effects arise because causes arise and cease because causes cease, namely paccayato udayabbayadassana, the meditator also attends to those aggregates

Tender insight knowledge and its imperfections

moment by moment, cultivating attention to their nature of arising and passing away (udayabbaya).

(With the arising of ignorance, materiality arises. With the cessation of ignorance, materiality ceases. Ignorance arises and passes away and is impermanent. Materiality arises and passes away and is impermanent. This refers to developing attention in such ways.)

With repeated attention in this way, there comes a time when the meditator's knowledge becomes sharp and clear. Then material and mental phenomena become apparent to the meditator's knowledge as arising and passing away in each moment, moment by moment. When they become apparent in this way, the meditator gains tender insight knowledge, taruṇavipassanāñāṇa, called contemplation of arising and passing away (udayabbayānupassanā). Such a meditator is called one who has begun insight (āraddhavipassaka). (Mahāṭī. 2, 422.)

The section on imperfections (upakkilesa)

Until tender insight knowledge is attained: 1. Paccayato udayabbayadassana — the method of contemplating arising and passing away according to causes. 2. Khaṇato udayabbayadassana — the method of contemplating arising and passing away according to moments.

While the meditator contemplates extensively by these two methods of insight, and also when they then return to insight contemplation of the five aggregates subject to clinging classified as past, future, present, internal, external and so forth, the ten kinds of insight imperfections, that is, phenomena that defile insight, commonly arise.

Those in whom the imperfections of insight do or do not arise

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Vipassanupakkilesā hi paṭivedhappattassa ariyasāvakassa ceva vippaṭipannakassa ca nikkhittakammaṭṭhānassa kusītapuggalassa nuppajjanti. Sammāpaṭipannakassa pana yuttapayuttassa āraddhavipassakassa kulaputtassa uppajjantiyeva. (Vism. 2, 269.)

These ten imperfections that defile insight:

1. They do not arise in the continuum of a noble disciple who has reached penetration, the knowledge of path and fruition, nor in the continuum of a meditator who has reached strong and powerful insight, beginning with contemplation of disenchantment (nibbidānupassanā). (Mahāṭī. 2, 427.)

2. They do not arise in the continuum of a person whose practice is misguided, for example through a breach of virtue, a breakdown of concentration or a departure from the proper practice of wisdom.

3. They do not arise in the continuum of a meditator who has worked hard at the practices of insight but has become discouraged and turned back from the work of insight along the way, then abandoned the work of developing insight.

4. They do not arise in the continuum of a person who, though accomplished in virtue and the like, makes no effort to develop insight owing to laziness.

Remember that they do not arise in the continua of these four kinds of persons. Remember also that they invariably arise in the continuum of a man or woman of good family called one who has begun insight (āraddhavipassaka), one who practises correctly, with no deviation in the practice of virtue, concentration and wisdom, is equally devoted at the outset and thereafter, and perseveres in developing wisdom. (Vism. 2, 269. Mahāṭī. 2, 427.)

1. Obhāsa—Light

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As presented above, when one repeatedly contemplates mentality, materiality, causes, and effects, namely formations, with insight by applying the characteristics in various ways, insight knowledge becomes sharp. The insight consciousness associated with that knowledge, or the insight consciousness together with its mental factors, produces mind-born groups of eight with nutritive essence as the eighth (cittajaojaṭṭhamaka). The visible object, namely color (vaṇṇa), in those groups shines very brightly. The fire element, or temperature, in each mind-born octad produces successive new temperature-born groups of eight with nutritive essence as the eighth (utujāojaṭṭhamaka). The visible object, namely color, in each of these groups also shines very brightly.

Mind-born and temperature-born color shine strongly or weakly according to the strength of knowledge. Mind-born color spreads internally alone. Temperature-born color spreads internally and externally, the farther the stronger the knowledge. It can spread as far as ten thousand world systems.

Taṃ tasseva paññāyati. Tena phuṭṭhokāse rūpagatampi passati. Passanto ca cakkhuviññāṇena passati, udāhu manoviññāṇenāti vīmaṃsitabbaṃ vadanti. Dibbacakkhulābhino viya taṃ manoviññāṇaviññeyyamevāti vuttaṃ viya dissatīti. (Mahāṭī. 2.429.)

That light is apparent only to the meditator. When the light of knowledge spreads externally, in the places it reaches the meditator can also see…

Light and the Consciousness That Knows Materiality

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…the visible objects, that is, the material things present there. When the meditator thus sees visible objects in the external world, the teachers say one should investigate whether this seeing is by eye-consciousness or by mind-consciousness. According to the teacher who composed the Great Subcommentary, good people who have attained the direct knowledge of the divine eye see visible objects far and near through mind-consciousness called the direct-knowledge consciousness of the divine eye. Similarly, here the insight objects are seen only through mind-consciousness called insight consciousness. The author appears to regard this explanation as reasonable. (Mahāṭī. 2.429.)

The above explanations and observations of the teacher of the Great Subcommentary are of particular interest to meditators practising insight.

If one accepts that there is light in insight consciousness or that light arises through insight knowledge, one should also accept the Buddha's statement in the Adhicittasutta, also called the Nimittasutta (Aṅ. 1.258), that serenity and insight meditation consciousness, called higher mind (adhicitta), has brilliant, flashing light (pabhassara). For the consciousnesses developing serenity and insight called higher mind can produce mind-born groups of eight with nutritive essence as the eighth. Each individual serenity and insight meditation consciousness…

Light From Mind-Born and Temperature-Born Materiality

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…has the power to produce very many material groups. Each fire element, or temperature, in those mind-born groups of eight with nutritive essence as the eighth can in turn produce successive temperature-born groups of eight with nutritive essence as the eighth. The color, namely the visible object, in each mind-born and temperature-born group can shine according to the strength of knowledge. Knowledge is also included among the associated phenomena arising together with serenity and insight meditation consciousness called higher mind.

Thus a good meditator should be able to accept the Buddha's teaching that serenity and insight meditation consciousness called higher mind has brilliant, flashing light. Understand that in the expressions "the light of serenity knowledge" and "the light of insight knowledge," the name "light," belonging to the effect, mind-born and temperature-born materiality, is applied to its cause, knowledge. This is figurative usage concerning cause and effect (kāraṇūpacāra, also called phalūpacāra).

If one accepts this, one can also accept the explanation in the Aṅguttaraṭīkā, volume three, in its commentary on the Pacalāyamānasutta (Aṅ. Ṭī. 3.177–178). As presented earlier in this book in the serenity meditation section, light begins to appear through serenity meditation consciousness during the development of concentration, from the stage of preparatory concentration that approaches access and absorption concentration. (The Great Subcommentary and the Aṅguttaraṭīkā are both works of the same teacher, the venerable Dhammapāla, called Ācariya Dhammapāla.)

Why Is Light Explained Again at This Stage?

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On this understanding, light can occur before one reaches the stage of tender insight in the knowledge of arising and passing away. Because light can be produced by serenity and insight consciousness called higher mind, it may be present throughout the concentration section, from preparatory concentration close to access and absorption, and throughout the insight section, from the beginning of discerning mentality and materiality. This is the light of serenity knowledge and the light of insight knowledge.

Why explain it again? If light is manifest throughout the development of serenity and insight called higher mind, why is the appearance of obhāsa, namely vipassanobhāsa, the light of insight knowledge, explained again upon reaching the stage of tender insight in the knowledge of arising and passing away? The answer is as follows.

Tattha obhāsoti vipassanobhāso. Tasmiṃ uppanne yogāvacaro “Na vata me ito pubbe evarūpo obhāso uppannapubbo, addhā maggappattosmi phalappattosmī”ti amaggameva “maggo”ti, aphalameva ca “phalan”ti gaṇhāti. Tassa amaggaṃ “maggo”ti aphalaṃ “phalan”ti gaṇhato vipassanāvīthi ukkantā nāma hoti. So attano mūlakammaṭṭhānaṃ vissajjetvā obhāsameva assādento nisīdati. (Visuddhi. 2.270.)

Light and Deviation From the Course of Insight

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Among those ten corruptions of insight, obhāsa is light, namely vipassanobhāsa, the light of insight, meaning light that arises through insight knowledge. When that light of insight knowledge appears, the meditator thinks, “Never before has such light appeared in my continuity. Today I have reached the noble path and the noble fruition.” The meditator takes obhāsa, the light that is not the noble path, to be the noble path, and obhāsa, the light that is not the noble fruition, to be the noble fruition. By apprehending it thus, the meditator deviates from the course of insight. This is because the meditator abandons the fundamental meditation subject, the work of developing insight, and sits enjoying that very light of obhāsa. (Visuddhi. 2.270.)

According to the foregoing explanation in the Visuddhimagga commentary, the light appearing at the stage of tender insight called knowledge of arising and passing away differs from the light that previously appeared through serenity and insight meditation consciousness. It is a new, distinctive light not previously experienced. Depending on the person, it may spread over an area the size of a room or fill the whole sky.

If one takes that very light to be the path or fruition, or to be light emanating from path and fruition knowledge, and then…

How to Return to the Course of Insight

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…stops developing insight and takes delight in that light of obhāsa, the delight, namely nikanti, is what constitutes a corruption. When conceit or wrong view arises on account of the light, that is what constitutes a corruption. Thus the light of obhāsa is the basis for those corruptions. Craving, namely nikanti, conceit, and wrong view that arise taking it as object are the corruptions themselves.

“Etaṃ mama, esohamasmi, eso me attā—This light of obhāsa is mine. This light of obhāsa is what I am. This light of obhāsa is my self.” When one grasps in this way, craving, conceit, and wrong view arise.

How to return to the right course. First discern the four great elements in the light of obhāsa. When you can distinguish with knowledge each group of the four great elements, continue contemplating so as to see the space element as well. Then you will see only minute material groups. They are extremely subtle material groups. Analyze those groups with knowledge to break up compactness (ghana), and discern the ultimate material phenomena.

The minute material groups called obhāsa that spread internally are mind-born and temperature-born groups of eight with nutritive essence as the eighth. Those spreading externally are temperature-born groups of eight with nutritive essence as the eighth. Discern these ultimate material phenomena produced by mind and temperature, distinguish them with knowledge, apply the three characteristics in turn, and…

2. Knowledge and 3. Rapture

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…contemplate them with insight. In this way the meditator returns to the course of insight. Then continue to contemplate with insight as before the materiality, mentality, causes, and effects, namely the formations whose contemplation was under way.

2. Ñāṇa—insight knowledge. As the meditator strives to bring knowledge of arising and passing away to its highest development, the insight knowledge able to apply the characteristics to formations and examine them arises sharp, swift, clear, and pure, like the thunderbolt hurled by Sakka, king of the gods. (Visuddhi. 2.271.)

3. Pīti—rapture in insight. Rapture is the delight and gladness that arises together with insight knowledge. There are five kinds of rapture:

1. Khuddikāpīti—minor rapture, which can make the hairs stand on end and raise gooseflesh.

2. Khaṇikāpīti—momentary rapture, which flashes from time to time like lightning.

3. Okkantikāpīti—showering rapture, which surges in the body in waves.

4. Ubbegāpīti—uplifting rapture, which can raise the body and make it fly.

5. Pharaṇāpīti—pervading rapture, which causes superior mind-born materiality to spread through, fill, and permeate the whole body.

4. Passaddhi—Insight Tranquillity

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At this stage of tender insight the five kinds of rapture often occur in the meditator’s continuity. Pervading rapture in particular often arises very strongly. (Visuddhi. 2.272.)

4. Passaddhi is the tranquillity of consciousness and its mental factors arising together with insight consciousness. When the meditator sits attending to the phenomena that are the objects of insight in a place suitable for sitting and staying, there is no distress, heaviness, or stiffness in body or mind. The meditation object is agreeable. The mind and mental factors are free of sickness and crookedness. What arises is tranquillity and lightness of mind and mental factors, meaning the ability to shift swiftly back and forth in insight contemplation: now materiality, now mentality, now cause, now effect, now internal, now external, now past, now future, now present, now impermanence, now suffering, now non-self, and so on. There also arise pliancy, wieldiness for meditation, purity from defilements, proficiency in meditation, and rectitude. [This means all twelve mental factors in six pairs, from kāyapassaddhi and cittapassaddhi to kāyujukatā and cittujukatā, occur conspicuously together with insight knowledge.] (Visuddhi. 2.272.)

5. Happiness, 6. Confidence, and 7. Energy

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5. Sukha—insight happiness. The mental factor of happiness, ease of mind, arises with insight knowledge. The meditator's entire material body is suffused with superior materiality produced by the insight consciousness associated with that happiness, and it spreads throughout the body. This means that superior mind-born materiality pervades the whole body. (Visuddhi. 2.272.)

6. Adhimokkha—confidence. In the meditator's continuity there also arises confidence in the work of developing insight, called adhimokkha. It is very strong and firm, able to resolve decisively and render very clear the insight consciousness and mental factors associated with insight knowledge. In particular, this is confidence in the three noble trainings of virtue, concentration, and wisdom.

7. Paggaha—energy. In the meditator's continuity, together with insight knowledge, there also arises firm energy, neither slackening nor retreating, strengthened by the power of prior development. It strongly supports and upholds the associated phenomena, the consciousness and mental factors of insight meditation, protecting them from laziness in the work of development and sustaining that work. This energy is called paggaha…

8. Mindfulness and 9. Equanimity

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…and that energy too is arising.

8. Upaṭṭhāna—mindfulness. At that time, in the meditator's continuity, mindfulness arises together with the insight knowledge being developed. By clearly distinguishing and noting the impermanent, suffering, non-self, and foul nature of formations, mindfulness adheres firmly to the formations that are objects of insight knowledge. Being free of the defilement of its opposites, the hindrances, it cannot be shaken by them. Mindfulness stands firm on the formations that are its objects, like an unmoving rocky mountain or a stone pillar embedded deep in the ground.

Whichever object among materiality, mentality, causes, and effects, namely formations, the meditator turns to, it can be brought to mind, attended to, and individually comprehended in insight practice. Those objects are vividly present before the meditator's powerful mindfulness. This means the meditator can contemplate any formation they wish. At this stage, if desired, the meditator can contemplate formations one by one by the method of insight into successive individual phenomena (anupadadhamma-vipassanā). (Visuddhi. 2.272.)

9. Upekkhā—insight equanimity and adverting equanimity. With regard to those objects—materiality, mentality, causes, and effects, namely formations—the insight meditation consciousness is kept in balance by…

Insight Equanimity and Adverting Equanimity

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…the mental factor of neutrality (tatramajjhattatā) associated with insight knowledge. This is called insight equanimity (vipassanupekkhā). The mental factor volition associated with mind-door adverting, the reviewing and determining consciousness just before insight impulsion, is called adverting equanimity (āvajjanupekkhā), because when examining the impermanent, suffering, non-self, and foul nature of formations, it arises with the capacity to regard those objects of formations impartially.

At that time, in the meditator's continuity, or to insight knowledge, the nature of arising and passing away of formations, namely their arising and dissolution, is exceedingly clear. Because it is so clear, special effort is no longer needed in insight contemplation of formations. The meditator has reached a stage at which balance and calm can be maintained and contemplation proceeds easily and evenly. Because the arising and passing away of formations is so clear, the balance and evenness of the mental factor of neutrality when contemplating arising and passing away is called insight equanimity in this section on tender insight.

That arising and passing away is the arising and passing away of formations. Note that the commentaries use the expression "equanimity regarding formations" in place of "equanimity regarding arising and passing away." At that time, in the meditator's continuity, insight equanimity is strong. Adverting equanimity is also strong. At that time adverting equanimity arises sharp and brilliant like the thunderbolt hurled by Sakka, king of the gods. (Visuddhi. 2.273.)

Eight Phenomena That Serve as Bases for Corruptions

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Of the corruptions listed here, the phenomena from number 2, knowledge, to number 9, equanimity, are bases for corruptions. These eight phenomena—knowledge, rapture, tranquillity, happiness, confidence, energy, mindfulness, and equanimity—are mental formations arising with insight knowledge in a meditator practising insight. All are included among the 34 mental phenomena, consciousness and mental factors, arising together with insight knowledge in a single mind moment. For ordinary people and trainees, those phenomena belong to wholesome insight impulsion, so they are distinct from the corruptions themselves. However, when those phenomena are taken as objects:

“Etaṃ mama, esohamasmi, eso me attā—This phenomenon is mine. This phenomenon is what I am. This phenomenon is my self.” (This is my knowledge. This is my rapture…)

When one grasps in this way, craving, conceit, and wrong view arise. Those very craving, conceit, and wrong view are the corruptions.

When one grasps any of those phenomena, from knowledge and rapture through to equanimity, as path and fruition knowledge, one again deviates from the course of insight. The meditator abandons the fundamental meditation subject, the work of developing insight, and sits delighting in one of the phenomena from knowledge and rapture through to equanimity, taking it for the path or fruition though it is neither. Consequently the course of insight is diverted.

How to Overcome Them and 10. Nikanti—Attachment to Insight

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The phenomena from knowledge and rapture through to equanimity arise associated with insight impulsion that takes the appearance of impermanence, suffering, or non-self in formations as object. Some phenomena, such as adverting equanimity, arise associated with mind-door adverting immediately preceding insight impulsion. They arise in the following sequence of the mind-door impulsion process:

Mind-door adverting (once) | Impulsion (7 times) | Rooted registration / rootless registration (twice)
12 | 34 | 34 / 12

Sometimes registration occurs and sometimes it does not. Analyze those mind-door insight impulsion processes with knowledge until each compact mass of mentality is broken up. See clearly with insight knowledge the arising and passing away at each mind moment, then apply the three characteristics in turn and contemplate with insight.

10. Nikanti—attachment to insight. Nikanti is attachment to insight, a very subtle clinging and infatuation with insight. Because the development of insight is distinguished by the phenomena from illumination through equanimity, subtle infatuation with insight arises in the meditator's continuity, functioning as clinging to insight and appearing as quietness. The subtlety and quiet appearance of that attachment…

Discerning and Contemplating Attachment to Insight

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…arise because insight has become exceedingly sharp. Because the meditator fails to recognize this attachment as a defilement, discerning it with knowledge as a defilement becomes difficult.

A state of mind such as this often arises in the meditator's continuity: "Such delight, fascination, and joy in the development of insight have never arisen before in my continuity. Surely today I have reached the path and fruition." The meditator may understand it as great joy in developing insight and fail to recognize the subtle attachment itself. Nevertheless, that attachment can be discerned by sharp insight knowledge.

Nikanti is associated with greed-rooted consciousness accompanied by pleasant feeling, so it may arise in the group rooted in greed with wrong view or the group rooted in greed with conceit. Because conceit is a mental factor associated only occasionally (kadāci), at times conceit is absent. Because it is accompanied by pleasant feeling, rapture is present.

Mind-door adverting (once) | Impulsion (7 times) | Rooted registration / rootless registration (twice)
12 | 34 | 34 / 33 / 12

Sometimes registration occurs and sometimes it does not. When it occurs, it may be a great resultant registration consciousness accompanied by pleasant feeling or a rootless investigating consciousness accompanied by pleasant feeling, as appropriate. Analyze with knowledge the mind-door impulsion process containing this subtle attachment until each compact mass of mentality is broken up. Then discern the mental phenomena occurring together with nikanti, apply the three characteristics in turn, and develop insight comprehension.

Purification by Knowledge and Vision of the Way

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This attachment is also a corruption. If one takes that very attachment as object and grasps it as “Etaṃ mama, esohamasmi, eso me attā—Mine, what I am, my self,” the corruptions of craving, conceit, and wrong view may again arise. Thus it is also a basis for corruptions. Therefore nikanti bears both names: corruption and basis for corruption. (Extracted from Visuddhi. 2.269–274 and Mahāṭī. 2.427–434.)

The section on purification by knowledge and vision of the way (paṭipadāñāṇadassanavisuddhi)—the higher stage of insight knowledge.

With regard to the phenomena from illumination through attachment, the material and mental phenomena presented in the sevenfold contemplation of materiality and the sevenfold contemplation of immateriality, and the material and mental phenomena discerned by the respective doors and bases in the earlier section:

1. By the twofold classification into mentality and materiality.

2. By the five aggregates.

3. By the twelve bases.

4. By the eighteen elements.

Using the method one prefers among these, clearly discern with knowledge the arising and passing away of ultimate phenomena up to the momentary present. Repeatedly contemplate with insight by applying the three characteristics in turn. Contemplate in all three periods, past, future, and present, and in both continuities, internal and external. This contemplation needs to be repeated many times. Strive to clarify knowledge of formations in the momentary present. The three characteristics…

The four contemplations and four establishments of mindfulness

for each characteristic, keep making repeated efforts so that the vision of knowledge becomes ever clearer.

How the four contemplations relate to the four establishments of mindfulness

1. When contemplating with insight in this way, first take materiality alone as the main subject and give it priority, then continue to contemplate mentality with insight. This is called developing the establishment of mindfulness through contemplation of the body.

2. When contemplating mental phenomena with insight, as explained in the mentality meditation section and elsewhere, the beginning meditator about to develop the three kinds of establishment of mindfulness beginning with contemplation of feeling must follow the rule, “Saṅkhittena vā vitthārena vā pariggahite rūpakammaṭṭhāne” (Ma. A. 1, 280), that is, the materiality meditation subject must already have been discerned, whether in brief or in detail. The meditator must discern together the supporting materiality and the object materiality of the mental phenomena headed by feeling. Having discerned these, if one gives priority to discerning feeling and contemplates the mental phenomena with insight, this is called developing the establishment of mindfulness through contemplation of feeling. The pattern of contemplation is:

(a) Base; (b) object; (c) feeling, that is, all the mental phenomena headed by feeling.

(a) Base — arising and vanishing — impermanent; (b) object — arising and vanishing — impermanent; (c) feeling — arising and vanishing — impermanent.

In this way, in every group of process consciousness discerned by base and door, and in the groups of life-continuum consciousness as far as one is able,

Contemplating feeling, mind, and phenomena

contemplate those three items. In doing so, as shown in the tables of the mentality meditation section, contemplate through the entire row, from five-door adverting to the registration of the mind-door process. In each group of consciousness:

(a) Contemplate the supporting materiality alone; (b) contemplate the object materiality alone; (c) contemplate feeling alone, that is, the mental phenomena headed by feeling.

Look to see arising and vanishing clearly and contemplate as impermanent. Contemplate likewise when applying the characteristics of suffering and non-self. Contemplate in all three periods and in both continuities. Extend the contemplation as far as your knowledge permits.

3. In the three methods of discerning the mentality meditation subject, if one gives priority to the mind that knows the object, namely consciousness, and then contemplates with insight after discerning the mental phenomena, this is called developing the establishment of mindfulness through contemplation of mind. The pattern is:

(a) Base; (b) object; (c) consciousness, that is, discern and contemplate with insight all the mental phenomena headed by the mind that knows the object, namely consciousness.

4. In contemplating mental phenomena with insight, if one gives priority to contact (cetanā), discerns the mental phenomena, and then develops insight, this is called developing the establishment of mindfulness through contemplation of phenomena. The pattern is:

(a) Base; (b) object; (c) contact, that is, all the mental phenomena headed by contact.

Classifications used in contemplation of phenomena

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Contemplate these phenomena with insight, applying the three characteristics in turn.

Alternatively, when one divides material and mental phenomena into two parts by the mentality-and-materiality method and contemplates with insight, after contemplating material phenomena with insight, one then contemplates mental phenomena. If one discerns the mental phenomena with feeling at their head and contemplates them with insight, that falls under establishment of mindfulness through contemplation of feeling. If one discerns them with the mind that knows the object, namely consciousness, at their head and contemplates them with insight, that falls under establishment of mindfulness through contemplation of mind. If one discerns them with contact at their head and contemplates them with insight, that falls under establishment of mindfulness through contemplation of phenomena. Again:

1. Divide mentality and materiality into five parts by the five-aggregate method;

2. Divide mentality and materiality into twelve parts by the twelve-base method;

3. Divide mentality and materiality into eighteen parts by the eighteen-element method;

4. Divide mentality and materiality into twelve factors by the method of dependent origination;

5. By the five-hindrance method;

6. By the seven-awakening-factor method;

7. Divide into two parts, the truth of suffering and the truth of origin, according to the method of teaching the truths.

Contemplating with insight by such methods is also called developing the establishment of mindfulness through contemplation of phenomena.

The pattern of contemplation in the sections on postures and clear comprehension

The method of discerning the five aggregates, namely material and mental phenomena, in the section on the four postures of walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, and in the various passages on clear comprehension, such as going forward, going back, bending, and stretching,

Contemplating the aggregates in postures and clear comprehension

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has already been presented in the mentality meditation section and elsewhere. Discern again those same five aggregates, namely material and mental phenomena:

1. Either dividing them into two parts by the mentality-and-materiality method;

2. Or dividing them into five parts by the five-aggregate method;

3. Or dividing them into twelve parts by the twelve-base method;

4. Or dividing them into eighteen parts by the eighteen-element method;

5. Or dividing them into twelve factors by the method of dependent origination.

Contemplate with insight by such methods. If contemplating with insight by the method of dividing into mentality and materiality:

1. Contemplate materiality alone; 2. contemplate mentality alone; 3. contemplate materiality and mentality together.

Contemplate with insight, applying the three characteristics in turn. Contemplate in all three periods and in both continuities. Having seen the arising and vanishing of mentality and materiality down to the momentary present in the five aggregates, namely material and mental phenomena, present in each posture passage such as walking and each passage on clear comprehension, in all three periods of past, future, and present and in both the internal and external continuities, apply the characteristics and contemplate with insight. Once able to do that, continue contemplating with insight by the first method of dependent origination:

1. Contemplate how results such as formations arise because causes such as ignorance arise;

2. Contemplate how results such as formations cease because causes such as ignorance cease;

End of the chapter on knowledge of arising and vanishing

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3. Contemplate how results such as formations arise because causes such as ignorance arise and how results such as formations cease because causes such as ignorance cease. Look with knowledge to see clearly the arising and vanishing of both, causes and results, then contemplate with insight in each case, applying the three characteristics in turn. Contemplate in all three periods and in both continuities.

After contemplating repeatedly in this way, when appropriate also contemplate the unattractive nature of those conditioned mental and material phenomena. After becoming proficient in contemplating all three characteristics, one may give priority to a characteristic of one's preference. Likewise, in methods such as the mentality-and-materiality method and the five-aggregate method, give priority to the object of your preference and contemplate it again and again.

End of the chapter on knowledge of arising and vanishing.

Chapter on knowledge of dissolution

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Toward knowledge of dissolution

When one contemplates conditioned phenomena proficiently with insight in all four postures, the earlier and later knowledges developed in meditation follow one another in succession. Insight knowledge thus becomes very strong, powerful, sharp, subtle, mature, and increasingly purified. When insight knowledge has thus become sharp, subtle, mature, and purified, if one no longer attends to the arising of those formations and attends exclusively to their dissolution:

Ñāṇe tikkhe vahante saṅkhāresu lahuṃ upaṭṭhahantesu uppādaṃ vā ṭhitiṃ vā pavattaṃ vā nimittaṃ vā na sampāpuṇāti. Khayavayabhedanirodheyeva sati santiṭṭhati. (Vism. 2, 277.)

Na sampāpuṇātīti aggahaṇato. (Mahāṭī. 2, 439.)

1. Uppāda — the arising of formations, the phase of arising.

2. Ṭhiti — the persistence of formations, the phase of presence.

3. Nimitta — the sign of formations, such as material groups.

4. Pavatta — upādinnakapavatta, that is, owing to the arising of causal phenomena,

Taking only dissolution as the object

the resultant phenomena arise.

By not attending to those items, insight knowledge no longer reaches them. Earlier insight knowledges developed in meditation provide strong support for the later insight knowledges through the power of the decisive-support condition (upanissaya). Mindfulness associated with those later knowledges, which have received that exceptional power, is firmly established solely in the exhaustion, vanishing, breakup, and cessation of formations. (Here mindfulness is mentioned to indicate knowledge.) At that time:

1. Aniccaṃ khayaṭṭhena — take the exhaustion, vanishing, breakup, and cessation of formations as object, see it clearly with knowledge, and contemplate “impermanent, impermanent.”

2. Dukkhaṃ bhayaṭṭhena — because formations keep being exhausted, vanishing, breaking up, ceasing, and disappearing, take this fearful and dangerous nature as object, see it clearly with knowledge, and contemplate “suffering, suffering.”

3. Anattā asārakaṭṭhena — take the lack of a self as a firm core in formations as object, see it clearly with knowledge, and contemplate “non-self, non-self.”

4. When appropriate, also contemplate the unattractive nature.

A point to bear in mind

When taking only the dissolution of formations as object and applying a characteristic in insight contemplation in this way, see the dissolution of formations as fast as you can. When applying a characteristic in insight contemplation as impermanent, suffering, or non-self, contemplate rather slowly.

When material groups disappear

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See the dissolution of many cognitive processes, many groups of consciousness, or material phenomena over many moments, as fast as you can. There is no need to chase each dissolution you can see in each group of consciousness and each material moment in order to apply the characteristic of impermanence. Take as object the dissolution of many groups of consciousness and materiality over many moments, then apply the characteristic rather slowly, for example, “impermanent, impermanent.” Do likewise for suffering and non-self. In other words, contemplate to see the dissolution of formations itself very quickly. Apply the characteristic rather slowly and at ease. Contemplate again and again in all three periods and both continuities, using the mentality-and-materiality method, the five-aggregate method, and so forth.

Material groups have disappeared

Nimittanti saṅkhāranimittaṃ, yaṃ saṅkhārānaṃ samūhādighanavasena, santatiparicchedena ca saviggahānaṃ viya upaṭṭhānaṃ, taṃ saṅkhāranimittaṃ. (Mahāṭī. 2, 439.)

From the chapter on purification of view, in the section on knowledge of the delimitation of mentality and materiality, the beginning meditator has developed insight, using knowledge to break up the masses of materiality and mentality (rūpaghana and nāmaghana) so as to see material and mental phenomena. The meditator has now reached the chapter on knowledge of dissolution. Before reaching knowledge of dissolution, in the respective chapters the meditator could still see:

1. Uppāda — one could still see arising, the nature of appearing, in formations, namely conditioned mentality and materiality as causes and as results.

2. Ṭhiti — one could still see the temporary persistence, the nature of aging, of those formations.

From the signs of formations to knowledge of dissolution

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3. Pavatta — one could still see phenomena of the nature of the continuation of existence, called upādinnakapavatta (Mahāṭī. 2, 439) or bhavapavatti (Mahāṭī. 2, 447), the manifestation of resultant phenomena owing to the manifestation of their causes.

4. Nimitta — although one has broken up the masses of materiality and mentality called rūpaghana and nāmaghana with knowledge, and is practising so that the vision of knowledge reaches the ultimate, sometimes a number of material and mental groups still remain that knowledge cannot keep up with or penetrate. This is because the material and mental groups arise exceedingly abundantly and swiftly. In the material and mental groups that knowledge cannot keep up with or penetrate, masses and clusters of mentality and materiality, such as compactness of grouping and compactness of function, have yet to break up. Thus one still tends to see them as individual material and mental groups, that is, as very small masses and clusters. This is seeing the sign, the marks that are a basis for formations.

On reaching this chapter on knowledge of dissolution, however, because insight knowledge has become exceptionally sharp, subtle, and purified, formations appear extremely swiftly to the beginning meditator's knowledge:

1. Uppāda — knowledge cannot keep up with and apprehend the arising, the nature of appearing, of formations.

2. Ṭhiti — knowledge cannot keep up with and apprehend the persistence, the nature of aging, of formations.

3. Pavatta — the manifestation and arising of resultant aggregates such as consciousness, mentality and materiality, the six bases, contact, and feeling due to the manifestation and arising of causes such as ignorance, craving, clinging, formations, and kamma,

Why arising, persistence, and signs are no longer evident

called bhavapavatti, the nature of the continuation of existence, is also something knowledge cannot keep up with and apprehend. Why?

Na sampāpuṇātīti aggahaṇato (Mahāṭī. 2, 439). Since the beginning meditator's insight knowledge no longer takes arising, uppāda, as its object, and takes only dissolution and cessation as its object, it sees only the vanishing of those formations. Thus knowledge no longer reaches the arising, appearance, or persistence of conditioned causes and conditioned results. Knowledge penetrates and remains firmly established solely in the nature of cessation and breakup, momentary cessation (khaṇikanirodha), of conditioned causes and results as they are exhausted, break up, cease, and disappear at each moment. Since it does not take arising as its object, insight knowledge no longer reaches the manifestation of causes and the manifestation of results, the nature of arising. Hence insight knowledge no longer reaches upādinnakapavatta, seeing arising according to conditions (paccayato udayadassana), in which the results are present because the causes are present.

4. Nimitta — Further, at the chapter on knowledge of dissolution, because the beginning meditator's insight knowledge has become exceedingly sharp and subtle, the meditator no longer sees lumps and clusters of materiality whose compactness of grouping or compactness of function has yet to break up. Particles of material groups, the smallest masses and clusters, appear to have an existing shape owing to causal continuity, and likewise for mental groups. These are called signs of formations because they are marks by which the formations are recognized. Insight knowledge no longer sees those signs of formations. For knowledge contemplating dissolution sees only the individual material and mental phenomena being exhausted, vanishing, breaking up, disappearing, and ceasing,

Clearly seeing ultimate phenomena dissolving

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that is, reaching cessation at each moment. Though insight knowledge does not see the masses and clusters called material groups and mental groups, in this chapter on knowledge of dissolution the beginning meditator can see ultimate material and mental phenomena with exceptional clarity and distinctness, unlike in the preceding chapters on knowledge. This is indeed setting foot in the domain of individual ultimate phenomena.

At that point, while seeing the formations at this stage breaking up and dissolving exceedingly swiftly, the good practitioner should contemplate in all three periods and in both continuities: 1. material phenomena alone, 2. mental phenomena alone, 3. materiality and mentality together.

Apply the three characteristics in turn and contemplate with insight proficiently. Likewise, by the five-aggregate method, separate each of the five aggregates subject to clinging present in the eleven modes, such as past, future, present, internal, external, and so forth. Apply the three characteristics in turn and contemplate with insight proficiently.

[Note — Bear in mind that the meaning here is not that formations start arising exceedingly fast only when one reaches the chapter on knowledge of dissolution. It is the momentary nature of formations that they can arise and cease many koṭis of times in the blink of an eye, a flash of lightning, or a snap of the fingers. Before insight knowledges have become sharp and subtle, one does not yet know or see this inherent nature of formations.

Applying insight again to the knowledge that contemplates

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Now, on reaching the section on knowledge of dissolution, insight knowledges have become sharp and subtle, so by insight knowledge one knows and sees formations breaking up and dissolving exceedingly swiftly. That is the meaning here. Furthermore, it is only because the beginning meditator does not attend to the arising, persistence, occurrence, and signs of these formations that knowledge does not keep up with and apprehend them. From this statement also bear in mind that if one attends to them, one can still apprehend them. The Udāna (77) also records that after awakening the Buddha was still able to develop and contemplate such phenomena as formations arising from ignorance and consciousness arising from formations, and so on. The elders of the Sakyan lineage recorded this.]

Contemplating again with insight the very knowledge that contemplates with insight, paṭivipassanā

Ñātañca ñāṇañca ubhopi vipassati. (Vism. 2, 278.)

When the beginning meditator sees only the dissolution of formations with insight knowledge in this way, contemplate both kinds of phenomena called ñāta and ñāṇa with insight. The formations called ñāta are the material and mental phenomena, causes and results in all three periods and in both continuities, that are to be contemplated and known by insight knowledge. The insight knowledge that is contemplating those phenomena called ñāta is called ñāṇa. Contemplating with insight, the knowledge called ñāṇa itself belongs to the succession of wholesome impulsion processes at the mind-door. Registration

Patterns for contemplating the object and contemplating knowledge

may or may not arise. At this stage, however, since one is close to strong insight knowledge such as knowledge of disenchantment (nibbidāñāṇa), registration is usually absent.

Mind-door adverting | Impulsion (7 occurrences) | Rooted registration / rootless registration (2 occurrences)
12 | 34/33 | 34/33 / 12/11

The good practitioner should contemplate with insight even that very insight knowledge that is contemplating, namely the succession of wholesome mind-door impulsion processes, applying the three characteristics in turn.

Some patterns of contemplation

1. Contemplating materiality: materiality dissolves, impermanent. The contemplating knowledge also dissolves, impermanent.

2. Contemplating mentality: mentality dissolves, impermanent. The contemplating knowledge also dissolves, impermanent.

(Contemplate suffering and non-self in the same way.)

When contemplating in this way: 1. sometimes internally; 2. sometimes externally; within these, 3. sometimes material phenomena; 4. sometimes mental phenomena; 5. sometimes causal phenomena; 6. sometimes resultant phenomena.

Contemplate with insight, applying the three characteristics in turn. Shift to the past and the future and contemplate with insight in the same way. Likewise, using the five-aggregate method, divide into five parts and also contemplate with insight the aggregates subject to clinging present in the eleven modes. Here the five-aggregate pattern of contemplation given in the Anattalakkhaṇasutta is a particularly valuable method for the good practitioner's insight knowledge to mature very quickly.

The power to see dissolution

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When contemplating causal and resultant phenomena with insight in this chapter on knowledge of dissolution, because the meditator does not attend to upādinnakapavatta, the presence of results owing to the presence of causes, the meditator does not see that mode. However, the meditator has already contemplated upādinnakapavatta regularly and known and seen it with insight knowledge in the chapters on knowledge of discerning conditions, comprehension knowledge, and knowledge of arising and vanishing. Thus even in this chapter on knowledge of dissolution, if one surveys with insight knowledge and takes causes such as ignorance and results such as formations as object, one can readily know and see them. With insight knowledge one can also see the dissolving nature of those causes and results.

The power to see dissolution

A beginning meditator who is developing knowledge of contemplation of dissolution for the first time and has just reached the section on that knowledge, while it is still immature, does not immediately and invariably see only the dissolution of formations whenever sitting down. Before reaching knowledge of dissolution, at the beginning of contemplation one still sees both arising and vanishing to some extent. While contemplating with insight, once knowledge becomes sharp and subtle, one no longer sees the arising of formations and sees only their vanishing. Only when knowledge of dissolution reaches its peak does one invariably see solely the dissolution of formations with knowledge. (Mahāṭī. 2, 441.)

Tato pana pubbabhāge anekākāravokārā anupassanā icchitabbā. (Mahāṭī. 2, 441.)

For knowledge of dissolution to mature, before that knowledge reaches its peak,

Giving priority to the contemplation one prefers

in the earlier stage one needs to cultivate insight by various methods. (Mahāṭī. 2, 441.)

One may give priority to the contemplation one prefers

In this chapter on knowledge of dissolution, when contemplating the vanishing of formations with insight, if contemplation of material phenomena goes more readily, one may give it priority. If contemplation of mental phenomena goes more readily, one may likewise give priority to contemplating mental phenomena with insight. One should do this only after having repeatedly contemplated with insight and become proficient in the patterns of contemplation. Further, if the power to see dissolution in mental phenomena has grown strong and the patterns of contemplation have been completed, one may, if desired, give priority to contemplating with insight only the mental phenomena of the good group in wholesome impulsion processes. Among these, also give priority to contemplating mental phenomena in wholesome mind-door impulsion processes. Among these too, if the good practitioner takes serenity as the vehicle, give priority to contemplating with insight the jhāna mental phenomena present in the jhāna-attainment processes. The same applies to the three characteristics. After contemplating all three proficiently, one may give priority to the characteristic one prefers and finds easier to contemplate. One can also contemplate with insight using the patterns base + object + feeling, base + object + consciousness, and base + object + contact, including the dissolution of the very knowledge that contemplates. The pattern is:

1. Contemplate the base: the base dissolves, impermanent. The contemplating knowledge also dissolves, impermanent.

2. Contemplate the object: the object dissolves, impermanent. The contemplating knowledge also dissolves, impermanent.

3. Contemplate feeling: feeling dissolves, impermanent. The contemplating knowledge also dissolves, impermanent.

With the patterns base + object + consciousness and base + object + contact, continue contemplating in the same way. Likewise when applying the characteristics of suffering and non-self.

Contemplating dissolution and turning to mindfulness of breathing

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Contemplate. Contemplate all six doors in full. Contemplate in both the internal and the external continua. Contemplate in all three times.

In the methods of contemplation by postures and clear comprehension, likewise take as the object of insight the dissolution of the formations present at the moments of each posture and each activity dealt with under clear comprehension.

For the factors of dependent origination, likewise take their dissolution alone as object, apply the characteristics and contemplate with insight. In contemplating thus, take only dissolution as object of insight, setting aside causal relationships such as the arising of formations because of ignorance. Contemplate all three times and both continua. At times turn back and contemplate with insight the very knowledge that is contemplating. This is responsive insight (paṭivipassanā).

From this stage until reaching the noble path, in the successive stages of knowledge the meditator must cultivate insight extensively: see with insight the dissolution alone of formations comprising mentality, materiality, causes and effects in the three times, past, future and present, and in the two continua, internal and external, and at times see the dissolution alone of the insight knowledge doing the contemplating. Apply the three characteristics in turn.

In contemplating in this way, jhāna mental phenomena are among the mental phenomena contemplated. In particular, these include the four jhānas of mindfulness of breathing. If the meditator can develop extensive insight into those four jhānas as far as knowledge of dissolution, the modes of contemplation in the four tetrads of mindfulness of breathing taught by the Buddha are also covered. For those whose knowledge is still immature, however, the tetrads are presented briefly as follows.

Mindfulness of breathing — First tetrad

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

2. Rassaṃ vā assasanto “rassaṃ assasāmī”ti pajānāti. Rassaṃ vā passasanto “rassaṃ passasāmī”ti pajānāti.

3. “Sabbakāyapaṭisaṃvedī assasissāmī”ti sikkhati. “Sabbakāyapaṭisaṃvedī passasissāmī”ti sikkhati.

4. “Passambhayaṃ kāyasaṅkhāraṃ assasissāmī”ti sikkhati. “Passambhayaṃ kāyasaṅkhāraṃ passasissāmī”ti sikkhati. (M. 1, 70.)

1. When breathing in long, one clearly knows, “I am breathing in long.” When breathing out long, one clearly knows, “I am breathing out long.”

2. When breathing in short, one clearly knows, “I am breathing in short.” When breathing out short, one clearly knows, “I am breathing out short.” (M. 1, 70.)

3. One trains: “I will breathe in, clearly knowing the whole in-breath, its beginning, middle and end.” One trains: “I will breathe out, clearly knowing the whole out-breath, its beginning, middle and end.”

4. One trains: “I will breathe in, calming the bodily formation called the coarse in-breath.” “I will breathe out, calming the bodily formation

The first tetrad and preparation for contemplating mentality and materiality

called the coarse out-breath." (M. 1, 70.)

In this first tetrad: 1. Dīgha means long, the length of the in-breath and out-breath. 2. Rassa means short, the shortness of the in-breath and out-breath. 3. Sabbakāya means the whole, the whole beginning, middle and end of the in-breath and out-breath. 4. Passambhayaṃ means training to make it calm, subtle and tranquil.

The practice of the first tetrad of mindfulness of breathing was explained in full in the section on serenity meditation, up to the calming of the breath and attainment of the fourth jhāna. For good people who have practised the first tetrad of mindfulness of breathing in this way up to the fourth jhāna, the modes of contemplation in the second tetrad and following tetrads are now outlined.

When good people have practised the concentration of the fourth jhāna of mindfulness of breathing they have attained to the point of mastery in five ways, make that fourth jhāna of mindfulness of breathing the basis for insight. That is, each time you sit to meditate, enter that jhāna first. When you emerge:

1. Rūpapariggaha — discern material phenomena. 2. Arūpapariggaha — discern mental phenomena. 3. Rūpārūpapariggaha — discern mentality and materiality. 4. Nāmarūpavavatthāna — distinguish mentality and materiality,

Mindfulness of breathing — Second tetrad

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5. Paccayapariggaha — discern the causes of present mentality and materiality. 6. Addhānapariggaha — discern the causes of past and future mentality and materiality.

Having carried out those tasks in succession, when you can contemplate mentality and materiality together with their causes extensively by the knowledges of comprehension, arising and passing away, and dissolution, continue practising the modes of contemplation in the second and subsequent tetrads below.

Mindfulness of breathing — Second tetrad

1. “Pītipaṭisaṃvedī assasissāmī”ti sikkhati. “Pītipaṭisaṃvedī passasissāmī”ti sikkhati. 2. Sukhapaṭisaṃvedī, pe. 3. Cittasaṅkhārapaṭisaṃvedī, pe. 4. Passambhayaṃ cittasaṅkhāraṃ, pe. (Saṃ. 3, 279. Vi. 1, 78.)

1. One trains: “I will breathe in, clearly knowing rapture.” One trains: “I will breathe out, clearly knowing rapture.” 2. Clearly knowing pleasure, pe. 3. Clearly knowing mental formation, pe. 4. Calming mental formation, pe.

1. Taking the counterpart sign of mindfulness of breathing as object, enter the first and second jhānas, which are accompanied by rapture. When the meditator enters the jhāna attainment, owing to the attainment of jhāna, with respect to the counterpart sign of mindfulness of breathing

Clearly knowing rapture in serenity and insight

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which they know clearly, the meditator clearly knows jhāna rapture on the basis of the object. Breathing while clearly knowing jhāna rapture in this way is called clearly knowing rapture in terms of the object. Breathe while clearly knowing rapture in this way. (This is the serenity section.) (Vism. 1, 279.)

Knowledge that penetrates ultimate phenomena at the ultimate level, in accordance with their actual nature, is called non-delusion (asammoha). The meditator should enter the first jhāna of mindfulness of breathing. Having emerged, see with knowledge the complete dissolution and disappearance of the rapture accompanying that jhāna, or of all its mental phenomena with rapture taken as predominant. Apply the three characteristics in turn and examine with insight. Likewise enter the second jhāna. Having emerged, see with knowledge the complete dissolution, destruction and disappearance of the rapture accompanying the second jhāna, or of all its mental phenomena with rapture taken as predominant. Apply the three characteristics in turn and examine with insight. During insight contemplation, because the meditator penetrates the individual and common characteristics of that rapture, or of the jhāna mental phenomena together with rapture, the meditator clearly knows rapture in terms of non-delusion, that is, freedom from confusion. Breathe while clearly knowing it in this way. (This is the insight section.) (Vism. 1, 279.)

2. In the serenity section, when one successively enters the first, second and third jhānas separately and breathes, in the insight section,

Clearly knowing pleasure and calming mental formation

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when one breathes while successively contemplating with insight the pleasure associated with each jhāna, or its mental phenomena with pleasure taken as predominant, taking their dissolution as object, this is called breathing while clearly knowing pleasure. Breathe while clearly knowing pleasure in this way. (Vism. 1, 280.)

3. In the serenity section, when one successively enters each of the four jhānas of mindfulness of breathing and breathes, in the insight section one breathes while contemplating with insight the two phenomena feeling and perception called mental formation, or feeling accompanied by perception, or all jhāna mental phenomena with feeling taken as predominant, taking their dissolution as object. This is called breathing while clearly knowing mental formation. Breathe while clearly knowing mental formation in this way. Train so as to be able to breathe in this way. (Vism. 1, 280.)

4. In the serenity section, when one successively enters each of the four jhānas of mindfulness of breathing and breathes, this is called breathing while calming and bringing to cessation the coarse mental formations. In the insight section, enter each of those jhānas in turn. Each time you emerge, discern its mental phenomena with feeling taken as predominant. When one contemplates with insight taking as object their complete decay, passing away, breakup and cessation, that is, khaya, vaya, bheda and nirodha, this is called breathing while calming and bringing to cessation the coarse mental formations. Train so as to be able to breathe in this way. (Vism. 1, 280.)

Mindfulness of breathing — Third tetrad

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In pītipaṭisaṃvedī, rapture is taken as predominant to indicate feeling. In sukhapaṭisaṃvedī, it is pleasant feeling. In the steps concerning mental formation, perception and feeling are the two phenomena called mental formation, but the teaching gives prominence to feeling associated with perception. Thus understand that the Buddha taught this second tetrad by way of contemplation of feeling (vedanānupassanā). (Vism. 1, 280.)

Mindfulness of breathing — Third tetrad

1. “Cittapaṭisaṃvedī assasissāmī”ti sikkhati. “Cittapaṭisaṃvedī passasissāmī”ti sikkhati. 2. Abhippamodayaṃ cittaṃ, pe. 3. Samādahaṃ cittaṃ, pe. 4. Vimocayaṃ cittaṃ, pe. (Saṃ. 3, 279. Vi. 1, 78.)

1. One trains: “I will breathe in, clearly knowing the jhāna consciousness.” One trains: “I will breathe out, clearly knowing the jhāna consciousness.” 2. Making the mind deeply glad, buoyant and joyful, pe. 3. Establishing the mind firmly and evenly on the object, pe. 4. Liberating the mind from opposing phenomena, pe.

1. In the serenity section, enter each of the four jhānas of mindfulness of breathing in succession and breathe. In the insight section, enter each of those jhānas in turn. Each time you emerge, see the dissolution of that jhāna consciousness, or of all its mental phenomena with the jhāna consciousness taken as predominant,

Clearly knowing the mind and gladdening it

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and then breathe while contemplating with insight. This is called breathing while clearly knowing the jhāna consciousness. Train so as to be able to breathe in this way. (Vism. 1, 280.)

2. In the serenity section, enter the first jhāna of mindfulness of breathing, which is accompanied by rapture, and breathe. Enter the second jhāna of mindfulness of breathing, which is accompanied by rapture, and breathe. On entering those jhānas, the rapture accompanying the jhāna consciousness makes that consciousness deeply glad, buoyant and joyful. Breathe while using jhāna rapture in this way to make the jhāna consciousness deeply glad, buoyant and joyful. Train so as to be able to breathe in this way.

In the insight section, enter the first jhāna of mindfulness of breathing, which is accompanied by rapture. When you emerge from the first jhāna, contemplate with insight to see the dissolution of the rapture accompanying it, or of all its mental phenomena with rapture taken as predominant. Enter the second jhāna of mindfulness of breathing, which is accompanied by rapture. When you emerge, contemplate with insight to see the dissolution of the rapture accompanying it, or of all the mental phenomena of the second jhāna with rapture taken as predominant. During insight contemplation, because the rapture accompanying jhāna is taken as object, the insight consciousness contemplating that rapture is also deeply glad, buoyant and joyful. Train so as to be able to breathe while making the mind deeply glad, buoyant and joyful in this way. Breathe in this way. (Vism. 1, 280–281.)

Understand this as when one meets a cheerful and dearly loved friend, and joy blossoms in one's own continuum, the continuum of the person meeting that friend.

Concentrating the mind in serenity and insight

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3. Samādahaṃ cittaṃ — Breathing while establishing the mind firmly. Here too there are two parts, serenity and insight. In the serenity section, when one enters the first jhāna of mindfulness of breathing and breathes, enters the second jhāna and breathes, enters the third jhāna and breathes, or enters the fourth jhāna and breathes, this is called breathing while establishing the jhāna consciousness firmly and evenly on the exceedingly clear and radiant counterpart sign of mindfulness of breathing that is the object of those jhānas. Train so as to be able to breathe in this way. Breathe in this way. (Vism. 1, 281.)

[Note — During attainment of the fourth jhāna of mindfulness of breathing there is no breathing. Why, then, does the instruction say to enter the fourth jhāna of mindfulness of breathing and breathe while establishing jhāna consciousness firmly on the counterpart sign of mindfulness of breathing? The answer is as follows: “Assāsapassāse nissāya uppannanimittampettha assāsapassāsasāmaññameva vuttaṃ.” (Mahāṭī. 1, 139.) According to this explanation in the subcommentary, the counterpart sign of mindfulness of breathing that arises in dependence on the in-breath and out-breath is included under the general designation of mindfulness of breathing. Thus taking the counterpart sign of mindfulness of breathing as object is also called taking the in-breath and out-breath themselves as object. This is why the commentary explains it in the way given above.] In the insight section the following passage occurs:

Tāni vā pana jhānāni samāpajjitvā vuṭṭhāya jhānasampayuttaṃ cittaṃ khayato vayato sammasato vipassanākkhaṇe lakkhaṇapaṭivedhena uppajjati khaṇikacittekaggatā. Evaṃ uppannāya khaṇikacittekaggatāya vasenāpi ārammaṇe cittaṃ samaṃ ādahanto samaṃ ṭhapento “samādahaṃ

Momentary concentration in insight

cittaṃ assasissāmi passasissāmīti sikkhatī”ti vuccati. (Vism. 1, 281.)

Khaṇikacittekaggatāti khaṇamattatthitiko samādhi. Sopi hi ārammaṇe nirantaraṃ ekākārena pavattamāno paṭipakkhena anabhibhūto appito viya cittaṃ niccalaṃ ṭhapeti. Tena vuttaṃ “evaṃ uppannāyā”tiādi. (Mahāṭī. 1, 142.)

Enter the first jhāna of mindfulness of breathing. Having emerged, see the dissolution of the consciousness associated with that first jhāna, or of all its mental phenomena with the jhāna consciousness taken as predominant, and contemplate with insight. When contemplating in this way, at the moment of insight the meditator clearly penetrates the individual and common characteristics of that jhāna consciousness, or of the jhāna mental phenomena associated with it. Because the meditator penetrates each and every moment of consciousness, the mind developing insight is firmly established on the aspect of impermanence, suffering or non-self in the formations called jhāna phenomena. The concentration accompanying insight knowledge firmly established in this way is called momentary one-pointedness of mind (khaṇikacittekaggatā), that is, momentary concentration (khaṇikasamādhi). With that momentary concentration, breathe while establishing the mind developing insight evenly and firmly on one of the aspects of impermanence, suffering or non-self in the jhāna formations discerned with jhāna consciousness taken as predominant. Train so as to be able to breathe in this way. The same method applies to the second and subsequent jhānas. (Vism. 1, 281. Mahāṭī. 1, 142.)

A point concerning momentary concentration and liberating the mind

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A point requiring particular attention

Here, after entering and emerging from each jhāna of mindfulness of breathing, while contemplating with insight the formations belonging to jhāna, called jhāna phenomena, with jhāna consciousness taken as predominant, insight concentration that is firmly established on one aspect of those formations, such as impermanence, is called momentary one-pointedness of mind (khaṇikacittekaggatā), that is, momentary concentration (khaṇikasamādhi). Pay attention to this point. Note the advanced level of the momentary concentration referred to in the insight section.

4. Vimocayaṃ cittaṃ — Breathe while liberating the mind from opposing phenomena. Here too there are two parts, serenity and insight. In the serenity section, breathe while entering those jhānas, freeing the mind from the hindrances by the first jhāna, from applied and sustained thought by the second, from rapture by the third, and from pleasure and pain by the fourth. Train, strive and practise repeatedly so as to be able to breathe in this way. (Vism. 1, 281.)

In the insight section, enter the first jhāna of mindfulness of breathing. Having emerged, see with insight the nature of decay and passing away (khaya, vaya) of the jhāna consciousness associated with the first jhāna, that is, of all the mental phenomena of the first jhāna with jhāna consciousness taken as predominant. Apply the characteristics and contemplate with insight. Likewise:

Enter the second jhāna. Pe.

Enter the third jhāna. Pe.

Enter the fourth jhāna. Having emerged from it, with respect to the jhāna consciousness associated with the fourth jhāna, that is, to all the mental phenomena of the fourth jhāna with jhāna consciousness taken as predominant,

Liberating the mind through insight contemplations

see with insight their nature of decay and passing away (khaya, vaya). Apply the characteristics and contemplate with insight.

The meditator breathes while liberating the mind: by contemplation of impermanence (aniccānupassanā), from the perception of permanence. By contemplation of suffering (dukkhānupassanā), from the perception of pleasure. By contemplation of non-self (anattānupassanā), from the perception of self. As a result of applying the three characteristics and contemplating with insight in this way, by contemplation of disenchantment (nibbidānupassanā), the aspect of becoming disenchanted with and withdrawing from formations, the meditator is freed from delighting in formations and joyfully taking pleasure in them. By repeatedly applying the characteristics and contemplating the phase of dissolution (bhaṅga) of formations, through contemplation of dispassion (virāgānupassanā), the aspect of no longer being infatuated with formations, the meditator is freed from craving that clings to formations. By contemplation of cessation (nirodhānupassanā), contemplating the phase of cessation of formations, the meditator is freed from origination. By repeatedly applying the characteristics to the phase of dissolution (bhaṅga) of formations and contemplating with insight, through contemplation of relinquishment (paṭinissaggānupassanā), the aspect of abandoning defilements by substitution of opposites and inclining to Nibbāna by turning towards it, the meditator liberates the mind from clinging to formations as permanent and so forth. When one can breathe in this way, it is called breathing while liberating the mind from opposing phenomena. Train, strive and practise repeatedly so as to be able to breathe in this way. (Vism. 1, 281.)

Understand that the Buddha taught this third tetrad by way of contemplation of consciousness (cittānupassanā). (Vism. 1, 281.)

Mindfulness of breathing — Fourth tetrad

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1. “Aniccānupassī assasissāmī”ti sikkhati. “Aniccānupassī passasissāmī”ti sikkhati. 2. Virāgānupassī, pe. 3. Nirodhānupassī, pe. 4. Paṭinissaggānupassī, pe.

1. One trains: “I will breathe in while repeatedly contemplating formations as impermanent.” One trains: “I will breathe out while repeatedly contemplating formations as impermanent.”

2. Repeatedly contemplating the phase of dissolution of formations and Nibbāna, where there is dispassion, that is, contemplation of dispassion (virāgānupassanā). Pe.

3. Repeatedly contemplating the momentary cessation of formations, the phase of dissolution in each moment, and Nibbāna, where there is cessation, that is, contemplation of cessation (nirodhānupassanā). Pe.

4. Insight knowledge can relinquish defilements by substitution of opposites. Noble path knowledge can relinquish defilements permanently by eradication. One trains: “I will breathe in while repeatedly contemplating the phase of dissolution of formations and Nibbāna, where formations cease and are relinquished, so as to fulfil those two kinds of knowledge.” Pe. One trains likewise with the out-breath. (Saṃ. 3, 279. Vi. 1, 78.)

Aniccanti pañcakkhandhā. (Vism. 1, 281.)

1. The five aggregates subject to clinging, together with their causes, are present under eleven aspects: past, future, present, internal, external, gross, subtle, inferior, superior, far and near,

Contemplations of impermanence, dispassion, cessation and relinquishment

and are impermanent phenomena. Those five aggregates comprise jhāna mental phenomena and miscellaneous formations (pakiṇṇakasaṅkhāra), formations of mentality, materiality and phenomena called compounded formations. In terms of the teaching on the truths, these are the phenomena of the truths of suffering and its origin. The insight knowledge that repeatedly contemplates those formations as impermanent is called the knowledge of contemplation of impermanence. Breathe while endowed with that knowledge of contemplation of impermanence, that is, train so as to be able to breathe in this way.

2–3–4. The higher insight knowledges, beginning with knowledge of contemplation of dissolution, can make defilements fade, cease and be relinquished by substitution of opposites. They also turn towards and enter upon the direction of Nibbāna, because they incline to Nibbāna. Hence they are called knowledge of contemplation of dispassion, knowledge of contemplation of cessation and knowledge of contemplation of relinquishment.

Noble path knowledge makes defilements fade, cease and be relinquished permanently by eradication. Since it takes Nibbāna as object, it also turns towards and enters upon the direction of Nibbāna. Thus it too is called knowledge of contemplation of dispassion, knowledge of contemplation of cessation and knowledge of contemplation of relinquishment.

Breathe while fulfilling those knowledges of contemplation of dispassion, of cessation and of relinquishment. That is, breathe while contemplating with insight, taking the dissolution of formations as object. Breathe while taking as object Nibbāna, where formations cease. Train so as to be able to breathe in this way. (See Vism. 1, 281–282.)

The scope of practice of the four tetrads

Miến / Burmese 195

The Buddha taught this fourth tetrad of mindfulness of breathing by way of pure insight. He taught the preceding three tetrads by way of serenity and insight. (Vism. 1, 282.)

Yasmā panettha ādimeva catukkaṃ ādikammikassa kammaṭṭhānavasena vuttaṃ, uttarāni pana tīṇi catukkāni ettha pattajjhānassa vedanācittadhammānupassanāvasena vuttāni. (Vism. 1, 269.)

The Buddha taught the first tetrad by way of a serenity meditation subject for a beginner practising the meditation subject of mindfulness of breathing. This is the establishment of mindfulness through contemplation of the body. For a meditator who has attained jhāna in this first tetrad, the Buddha taught the three tetrads, the second, third and fourth, by way of the establishments of mindfulness through contemplation of feeling, of mind and of phenomena. (Vism. 1, 269.)

According to these explanations in the commentary, one must strive to attain jhāna in the first tetrad before progressing in succession to the second, third and fourth tetrads. In the fourth tetrad the Buddha instructs one to contemplate with insight the formations of mentality and materiality called miscellaneous formations (pakiṇṇakasaṅkhāra), in addition to the jhāna mental phenomena. Therefore, good people, contemplate with insight all the formations called the truths of suffering and its origin.

In this meditation subject of mindfulness of breathing, the four tetrads as taught by the Buddha comprise sixteen modes for the in-breath and sixteen for the out-breath. When one can fully practise all these thirty-two aspects,

Benefits of Mindfulness of Breathing

Miến / Burmese 196

if one knows how to breathe as the Buddha taught, one can obtain the following benefits.

Benefits and merits. Ānāpānassati, bhikkhave, bhāvitā bahulīkatā cattāro satipaṭṭhāne paripūreti. Cattāro satipaṭṭhānā bhāvitā bahulīkatā satta bojjhaṅge paripūrenti. Satta bojjhaṅgā bhāvitā bahulīkatā vijjāvimuttiṃ paripūrenti. (Ma. 3.124.)

Bhikkhus… Mindfulness of breathing, fully developed in thirty-two aspects and repeatedly practised, fulfills the four establishments of mindfulness. The four establishments of mindfulness, fully developed and repeatedly practised, fulfill the seven noble factors of awakening. The seven noble factors of awakening, fully developed and repeatedly practised, fulfill the two phenomena of true knowledge and liberation: true knowledge is the four noble path knowledges, and liberation is the four noble fruition knowledges. (Ma. 3.124.)

May the good person strive to practise and develop so as to become a person who knows how to breathe in accordance with the intention of the Buddha, the one endowed with great compassion.

End of the chapter on Knowledge of Dissolution (bhaṅgañāṇa).

From Knowledge of Fearfulness to Equanimity About Formations

Miến / Burmese 197

The meditator repeatedly develops knowledge contemplating dissolution, taking as its object momentary cessation (khaṇikanirodha), the complete breaking up and disappearance of all mundane formations of the three planes, past, future, and present, internal and external. When that knowledge has reached its highest development, seeing the dissolution of formations continuously and distinctly, both formations in the meditator's continuity and the arising of those formations throughout the three planes appear oppressed, afflicted, and endangered by incessant dissolution. Because this suffering is so apparent, even the fine-material and immaterial planes, which are considered peaceful and pleasant, appear with a frightening nature of suffering. This is knowledge of appearance as fearful (bhayatupaṭṭhānañāṇa).

Furthermore, insight knowledge repeatedly sees the defects of formations in the three periods, the two continuities, and the three planes: impermanence, suffering, non-self, alteration, and dissolution. This is knowledge contemplating danger (ādīnavānupassanāñāṇa).

Disenchantment, Desire for Deliverance, and Re-observation

Miến / Burmese 198

When these defects have been seen repeatedly, insight knowledge arises with disenchantment towards all formations in the three periods and three planes. This is knowledge contemplating disenchantment (nibbidānupassanāñāṇa).

In the mental continuity of a man or woman meditating who has thus become disenchanted, there is no longer delight in even a single formation among the formations of the three periods and three planes. They wish to escape from all formations. Insight knowledge arising with that desire to escape from all formations is knowledge of desire for deliverance (muñcitukamyatāñāṇa).

With the mind wishing to escape from all formations, again distinguish and discern all formations with insight knowledge, contemplating them as impermanent, contemplating them as suffering, contemplating them as non-self, and contemplating them as foul. Insight knowledge contemplating in this way is knowledge of re-observation (paṭisaṅkhānupassanāñāṇa). At this stage one may again contemplate using the forty modes of development, the forty modes of contemplation in -to, presented in the section on comprehension knowledge. (See the Visuddhimagga for other modes of contemplation.)

When the formations of the three periods and three planes have been distinguished and repeatedly contemplated with insight, alternating internal and external, materiality and mentality, cause and effect, impermanence, suffering, non-self, and foulness, the dissolution of those formations appears very clearly and extremely rapidly to insight knowledge…

Insight Consciousness Settles on Dissolution

Miến / Burmese 199

…The dissolutions appear to come thick and fast. Continue contemplating that very dissolution with insight, applying the three characteristics in turn.

When one can contemplate in this way, the mind developing insight gradually reaches a stage of balance and equanimity regarding formations, with neither fear nor longing for them. The mind developing insight settles firmly on the dissolution of those very formations as its object.

When the meditating mind has become steady, the five-door cognitive processes that know the five objects, visible form, sound, odor, taste, and touch, no longer occur. On both the side of the mental phenomena taken as object and the side of the contemplating insight knowledge, usually only the mind-door impulsion processes occur. At that time:

While contemplating with insight, alternating internal and external, materiality and mentality, and applying the three characteristics in turn:

If, while contemplating internally, the insight meditation consciousness settles firmly on internal formations, continue contemplating only internal formations. If, while contemplating externally, the insight meditation consciousness settles firmly on external formations, continue contemplating only external formations. If one keeps switching back and forth between internal and external, insight concentration can dissipate.

Likewise, if, while contemplating material phenomena with insight, the insight meditation consciousness settles on those material formations, that is, on the dissolution of those material formations as its object…

The Course to Follow With Strong Mindfulness

Miến / Burmese 200

…continue contemplating those very material phenomena with insight. If, while contemplating mental phenomena with insight, the insight meditation consciousness settles firmly on those mental formations, that is, on the dissolution of those mental formations as its object, continue contemplating those very mental phenomena with insight. If at this point one keeps switching back and forth between materiality and mentality, insight concentration can dissipate.

At this stage one should make a special effort with mindfulness to balance confidence with wisdom and energy with concentration. Only when the five faculties of confidence, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom are balanced can one reach noble path knowledge and noble fruition knowledge.

When taking the dissolution of mental phenomena as object and contemplating with insight by applying the three characteristics in turn, if balanced equanimity towards the dissolution of formations has yet to be reached, though the mode of contemplation has been familiar for some time, give priority to contemplating mental phenomena of sense-sphere wholesome impulsion. If the good person takes serenity as their vehicle, at this stage they may give priority to contemplating the jhāna mental phenomena, the wholesome jhāna phenomena in the consciousness of a jhāna attainment. Of the three characteristics, give special priority to applying non-self in insight contemplation.

As one contemplates in this way, the insight meditation consciousness will settle firmly on the dissolution of formations as its object. At that time…

Prioritizing the Object and Characteristic Seen Clearly

Miến / Burmese 201

…the meditator no longer hears external sounds. When sounds are no longer heard and the insight meditation consciousness settles firmly and immovably on the dissolution of formations, the power of insight meditation has become especially strong.

At that stage, as explained above, try contemplating now internally, now externally. If the meditating mind is steady internally, contemplate internally. If it is steady externally, contemplate externally. If the meditating mind is steady with material phenomena, contemplate material phenomena. If it is steady with mental phenomena, contemplate mental phenomena. Give priority to the characteristic that suits you.

When contemplating in this way, some meditators prefer to contemplate both mentality and materiality together. Some prefer to contemplate materiality alone. Some prefer to contemplate mentality alone. Some prefer contemplating as impermanent, some prefer contemplating as suffering, and some prefer contemplating as non-self.

Contemplate the formations you see more clearly and apply the characteristic you see more clearly in insight contemplation. In practising this way, some meditators may no longer see the dissolution of material phenomena at all and may see only the dissolution of mental phenomena. At that point, simply apply the characteristic to the dissolution of mental phenomena and contemplate it. Do not make a special search for the unseen dissolution of material phenomena to contemplate.

Contemplating Mental Phenomena and Attaining Equanimity

Miến / Burmese 202

At that time, for one who takes bare insight as their vehicle, the dissolving mental phenomena usually consist of only the mind-door impulsion processes practising insight and the life-continuum consciousnesses. Contemplate the preceding consciousness with the subsequent consciousness, that is, contemplate the preceding insight consciousness with the subsequent insight consciousness.

For one who takes serenity as their vehicle, the dissolving mental phenomena usually consist of only the mental phenomena in the jhāna attainment consciousness and the group of mental phenomena of insight impulsion. At that time continue repeatedly applying the characteristics and contemplating with insight both the jhāna mental phenomena given priority as objects and the mental phenomena of the insight impulsion that contemplates them. At this stage one who takes serenity as their vehicle often does better by contemplating the jhāna mental phenomena they prefer and giving priority to the characteristic of non-self.

Some meditators still see the dissolution of both mentality and materiality. At that time, whether contemplating materiality and mentality in turn or together, take only dissolution as object and continue insight contemplation, giving priority to the characteristic that suits you. Occasionally turn back and contemplate with insight the very knowledge that is doing the contemplating.

When insight is practised in these various ways, balanced equanimity regarding formations in the three planes, sense-sphere, fine-material, and immaterial, becomes firmly established. The repulsive and foul nature of formations likewise becomes firmly established.

Bhayañca nandiñca vippahāya sabbasaṅkhāresu udāsīno hoti majjhatto. (Visuddhi. 2.294.)

Knowledge of Equanimity About Formations

Miến / Burmese 203

Seeing the defects of formations clearly, the meditator wishes to escape from them. While contemplating with insight by applying each characteristic to the dissolution of formations, the meditator sees no formation that can be grasped as “I” or “mine.” Therefore:

1. One abandons the extreme of fear of formations (bhaya).

2. One abandons the extreme of delight in and longing for formations (nandi).

After these two extremes are abandoned, impartiality and balance towards all formations arise. This knowledge of the meditator is knowledge of equanimity about formations (saṅkhārupekkhāñāṇa).

End of the chapter on Knowledge of Equanimity About Formations.

Towards Purification by Knowledge and Vision

Miến / Burmese 204

Towards Purification by Knowledge and Vision (ñāṇadassanavisuddhi)

From Equanimity About Formations to Noble Path Knowledge

Miến / Burmese 205

Towards Purification by Knowledge and Vision. From equanimity about formations to noble path knowledge.

When knowledge of equanimity about formations matures and actually knows the noble reality of Nibbāna as peace, as the element that neither arises nor passes away because it is free of mental and material formations, the mind relinquishes the arising of all formations, no longer sees their dissolution, and rushes into Nibbāna alone, the peaceful element where formations are absent and stilled, where there is no arising or passing away. (Visuddhi. 2.294.)

As long as knowledge of equanimity about formations has yet to see the noble reality of Nibbāna, the element of cessation, in its peaceful nature (santisukha), the bliss of peace, equanimity about formations has yet to mature. In the meantime, only formations are its object. That is, the knowledge still occurs taking only the dissolution of formations as its object. (Visuddhi. 2.295.)

At that time, for knowledge of equanimity about formations to mature, contemplate:

1. At times, material phenomena.

2. At times, mental phenomena.

3. At times, internally.

4. At times, externally.

Maturing Equanimity About Formations

Miến / Burmese 206

5. At times, apply the characteristic of impermanence.

6. At times, apply the characteristic of suffering.

7. At times, apply the characteristic of non-self. Contemplate repeatedly with insight.

8. At times, the phenomena that are causes.

9. At times, the phenomena that are effects. Here too, contemplate repeatedly with insight, applying the three characteristics in turn. Contemplate in the same way in the past and future. Again, contemplate with insight by way of the five aggregates.

If the meditator takes serenity as their vehicle, return to insight contemplation, giving priority to the mental phenomena in the jhāna attainment one prefers, and, among the three characteristics, giving priority to non-self. Give particular priority to contemplating the mental phenomena of the fourth jhāna by applying the characteristic of non-self. Occasionally also turn back and contemplate with insight the knowledge that is contemplating, namely the mental phenomena of insight impulsion. When knowledge of equanimity about formations has matured:

1. From the nature of dissolution of formations, called pavatta, occurrence,

2. Knowledge will move on to the nature that neither arises nor passes away, called appavatta, non-occurrence.

If one still cannot reach that point, make an effort to develop insight into successive individual phenomena (anupadadhamma-vipassanā). For example, enter the first jhāna. On emerging, discern all thirty-four first-jhāna mental phenomena. Contemplate each jhāna mental phenomenon individually with insight by applying a characteristic. Contemplate internally and externally in turn. Likewise, with the jhānas one has attained up through the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception…

Contemplating Phenomena Individually and Seeing the World as Empty

Miến / Burmese 207

…contemplate the jhānas with insight using the method of contemplating successive individual phenomena. Contemplate all three characteristics. Contemplate both sense-sphere mental phenomena and material phenomena with insight using the method of contemplating successive individual phenomena. When contemplating material phenomena by this method, contemplate each ultimate element, starting with the earth element, in each material group, such as the eye decad, by applying a characteristic to each individual phenomenon. Contemplate with insight every material phenomenon present at the six doors and in the forty-two parts of the body, leaving none out. Contemplate internally and externally in turn.

[Disciples cannot contemplate with insight the individual mental phenomena present in the attainment of the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception by the method of contemplating successive individual phenomena. They can contemplate it with insight only by comprehension in groups (kalāpasammasana). Therefore, skip that jhāna when contemplating by the method of successive individual phenomena.]

One can also reach path and fruition knowledge by this method of insight into successive individual phenomena. If one still has not reached them, return to insight contemplation by the method of comprehension in groups as explained above, from comprehension knowledge through equanimity about formations. Success is possible in accordance with the strength of one’s perfections.

Look so as to see emptiness.

Suññato lokaṃ avekkhassu, Mogharāja sadā sato. Attānudiṭṭhiṃ ūhacca, evaṃ maccutaro siyā. Evaṃ lokaṃ avekkhantaṃ, maccurājā na passati. (Khu. 1.448.)

One Whom the King of Death Cannot See

Miến / Burmese 208

Mogharāja: good man Mogharāja. Sadā: by day or by night, at any time, continually. Sato: endowed with steady mindfulness of the four establishments of mindfulness. Attānudiṭṭhiṃ: identity view (sakkāyadiṭṭhi), the view of self that has become accustomed to taking formations as self. Ūhacca: uproot it by insight knowledges such as the knowledge distinguishing mentality-materiality and the knowledge discerning conditions. Lokaṃ: the world of mental and material formations. Suññato: as empty, devoid of any core of permanence, pleasure, self, or purity. Avekkhassu: look again and again with the eye of insight wisdom and develop comprehension. Evaṃ: when comprehension has been developed in this way. Maccutaro: one who can cross beyond the King of Death, the ruler of the thirty-one planes. Siyā: one will become such. Evaṃ: as empty in this way. Lokaṃ: the world of mental and material formations. Avekkhantaṃ: one who is looking again and again with the eye of insight wisdom and developing comprehension. Maccurājā: the King of Death, ruler of the thirty-one planes. Na passati: never sees.

One whom the King of Death cannot see. In accordance with the teaching above, if the good person knows how to contemplate the world of formations with insight knowledge to see it as empty, they can become one whom the King of Death cannot see. They can realize noble, deathless Nibbāna through noble path and fruition knowledge.

One can cross from pavatta to appavatta, from the domain of occurrence to the domain of non-occurrence. Train in dwelling in the domain where there is no arising or passing away, also called the domain where arising and passing away end, or the domain of the end of dissolution, for a duration…

Five Reviews and Closing Words

Miến / Burmese 209

…determined in advance. Train in setting a duration and dwelling there whenever you wish.

1. Reviewing the path.

2. Reviewing fruition.

3. Reviewing Nibbāna.

4. Reviewing the defilements already abandoned.

5. Reviewing the defilements still to be abandoned.

Learn these five kinds of reviewing (paccavekkhaṇa) from teachers and practise them.

If still unsatisfied, examine patiently in many ways, repeatedly, over many days, months, and years, whether the defilements that should have been exhausted in one's continuity are truly exhausted. One should avoid jumping to a firm conclusion.

One should also examine repeatedly whether one's knowledge of the Four Truths is firmly established. One should repeatedly seek counsel from eminent teachers proficient in both study and practice.

Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw
Cittala Taung Monastery
Pa-Auk Tawya
Myanmar Era 1367

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