

PARADIGM SHIFT

Paradigm Shift

Original Thai text written by

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Translator's Preface

This English translation is quite literal, and every effort has been made to maintain the integrity and style of the original text by *Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño*, which was written in Thai with Pali terms. *Ācariya Thoon's* writing technique is distinctive as he makes indirect statements rather than attributing actions to a particular individual. This can be challenging to translate as the greatest discrepancy between the Thai and English languages is the prevalence of the English personal pronoun and the Thai's lack thereof.

In addition, many Pali terms have multiple definitions such as *paññā* which denotes wisdom, insight, knowledge, and thought. As such, some Pali terms were used consistently throughout this text, while others were translated in order to better capture the essence of the situational definition. I apologize in advance for any mistranslations or misinterpretations. May all of the efforts of those involved in this translation bear fruit as this book serves as a valuable *dhamma* resource for the reader's generation of wisdom.

The Translator

San Francisco, USA

Author's Preface

This book you are about to read, “Paradigm Shift,” was given this title because Buddhism was born from Buddha’s paradigm shift. He found that this world is not as attractive as is commonly believed. Animals and mankind in our world possess a viewpoint that is *micchā-diṭṭhi* (false perception of the truth) as a foundation. Buddha used *paññā* (insight, wisdom, knowledge) to contemplate *sacca-dhamma* (the inherent truths of the world) and developed a paradigm of *sammā-diṭṭhi* (correct perception of the truth). He realized that everything in this world falls under the Three Common Characteristics: *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (suffering), and *anattā* (cessation of existence in the supposed form). That which we understand to be who we are is not truly us. In the same vein, possessions do not actually belong to us.

Realization and understanding of this truth must be known by *sati-paññā* (mindfulness and wisdom) and by causality that is aligned with the truth. Whether a mindset is correct or incorrect may be discerned through reasoning that is *dhammāधिपateyya* (the undisputable truth). Therefore, *sammā-diṭṭhi* is the delineated avenue for *dhamma* practice.

In this era, there are many people who are interested in and actively practice *dhamma*. However, the methods that are taught are misaligned with the teachings from Buddha’s era. It is taught that tranquil *samādhi* (meditation) will generate *paññā*. Consequently, practitioners believe and practice according to teachings from manuals, textbooks, or instructors. The ten *vipassanūpakilesas* (imperfections or defilements of insight) is a

path that is astray from achieving the desired results of *arriya-puggala* (those who have attained a level of enlightenment).

Practitioners should observe their intrinsic nature in order to determine whether or not it corresponds to *paññāvimutti* or *cetovimutti*. Both are detailed in this book. If one uses the mode of practice that is suitable to one's character, then the practice will be simple and will produce results. Consequently, these results will confirm that one's beliefs are founded in reason and causality. In sharp contrast, the *Kālāmas* (one who believes in things without using thought or reason) have not seen results and blindly follow manuals, textbooks, or their instructor.

May all the readers frequently utilize this text as an example or model to aid in extinguishing personal problems. May all the readers forever flourish in *dhamma*, so as to cease rebirth in the Three Realms of existence (*kāmaloka*: the world of sense desire, *rūpaloka*: form-sense sphere, and *arūpaloka*: formless, immaterial sphere).

Phra Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño

(Phra Banyapisantaera)

Paradigm Shift

Buddhism emerged in the world because of *Prince Siddhattha's* paradigm shift. In previous rebirths, *Prince Siddhattha* had aspired to be a Buddha. He thought this to himself, voiced his aspiration, and received a confirming prophesy from the *Buddha Dīpaṃkara*. He cultivated the ten perfections (*pāramī*) over a prolonged period of twenty aeons. In his final rebirth, *Prince Siddhattha* was born to the *Sākyan* clan in *Kapilavastu*. He was the son of *King Suddhodana* and *Queen Mahāmāyā*. *Prince Siddhattha's* cultivation of the ten perfections was fulfilled and perfect. This would be his final birth in the eternal cycle of rebirth in the Three Realms of Existence (*kāmaloka*: the world of sense desire, *rūpaloka*: form-sense sphere, and *arūpaloka*: formless, immaterial sphere).

Many people have read the part of the Buddha's history in which *Prince Siddhattha* encounters the four divine messengers (people who were old, aging, deceased, as well as an ascetic). Following the experience, *Prince Siddhattha* used his individual wisdom and insight (*paññā*) to reason that when humans are born, they cannot maintain their lives at any one stage. Every component of the body must naturally age, become sick, and die. Therefore, an impoverished or wealthy social status is irrelevant. Overflowing riches and an abundance of wealth cannot eternally preserve a person's youth. Once born into the world, humans find ways to survive, continue to live momentarily, and eventually die. Further, no part of the human body is of real substance or significance. Regardless of whether this is pleasing or not, there is no way to

resist nature. Once born, all humans and animals alike must invariably carry on in this manner.

Prince Siddhattha realized and subsequently internalized this paradigm. He used insight to probe and analyze the lives of others as well as his own. *Prince Siddhattha* clearly realized and understood that all lives must transpire in this fashion. Despite his colossal wealth and separate palaces for each of the three seasons, nothing could halt the process of aging, sickness, and death.

The frequent use of insight-wisdom to contemplate in this manner generated a change in *Prince Siddhattha's* perception. Upon employing insight-wisdom in his analysis of aging, sickness, and death, *Prince Siddhattha* understood that all these afflictions were the products of birth. Aging, sickness, and death could not result without birth. Thus, *Prince Siddhattha* concluded that aging, sickness, and death were consequences of birth.

Prince Siddhattha continued to examine the causes and catalysts of human birth. He used insight-wisdom to diligently and constantly analyze this while standing, walking, sitting, and lying down. No matter how much he deliberated, he could not pinpoint the cause or factors of birth. At one point, he recalled the ascetic who sat in peaceful meditation. He thought that if only he could ordain as an ascetic, he would have a better opportunity to use insight to examine the cause of birth. This is how wisdom can change perception.

Prince Siddhattha used wisdom to plan how he would ordain as an ascetic. It was unlikely that the king would grant him

permission. *Princess Yasodharā* could not know of his intentions either. *Prince Siddhattha* spent his time designing a flawless plan that no one would be aware of, except for his servant, *Channa*.

This is how wisdom was used to completely flip the prince's paradigm. He thought that life as a layperson would definitely come to an end and he absolutely would not return to the palace. Life in the palace was pleasurable and convenient in every possible way and this would be his last experience with such luxury. *Prince Siddhattha* did not know what life beyond the palace walls entailed, but he was not at all apprehensive. If others could survive out there, then he could as well. Those people were all comprised of the same elements as he was, and he would eat whatever they ate. The prince was aware that life outside the palace walls would be starkly different. That was trivial. What was of paramount importance was finding the cause and catalysts of human birth.

Prince Siddhattha wanted to ordain in order to discover the cause of human birth, and he was able to do so according to plan. A change in perception requires insight-wisdom, as one discerns which mindsets are incorrect, and which are correct. Discernment through reason that is based on the undisputable truth (*dhammādhipeyya*) will produce a righteous paradigm.

Wisdom Does Not Arise From Tranquil Meditation

Bhikkhu Siddhattha studied under two ascetics. He believed their methods would elucidate the cause of birth. The ascetics taught a method of serene meditation in which mental absorption (*jhāna*) would arise. *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* successfully meditated until he reached the pinnacle of meditation, formless meditation or absorption (*arūpa-jhāna*). While he sat in equanimity he felt extremely elated. Upon release from the serene meditative state, *Bhikkhu Siddhattha's* happiness faded. This pattern repeatedly occurred and produced identical results. His original understanding that tranquil meditation would help solve the enigma of birth proved to be quite contrary.

Bhikkhu Siddhattha consequently changed his outlook. The meditative route of practice did not illuminate any truths nor did it eliminate suffering. Meditating to equanimity did not purify the mind and did not bring one closer to final deliverance on the path to enlightenment (*nibbāna*). Tranquil meditation did not generate wisdom that could be employed to solve and eliminate problems from the mind. *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* decided that tranquil meditation was not the correct method of practice. He subsequently departed from the two ascetics.

Up to this point, people will argue that their masters taught that meditation to equanimity would spontaneously generate insight-wisdom (*paññā*). Does this not conflict with the results from the Buddha's practice?

The Buddha's history should be studied closely so that we are not

so easily susceptible to this breed of teaching. We should establish a new paradigm that is aligned with the correct perception of the truth (*sammā-ditṭhi*). It is untrue that wisdom arises from tranquil meditation. Even the two ascetics, who meditated to heights of serenity from that day until their deaths, did not see any inklings of wisdom. What kind of meditation being practiced is superior to that of the Buddha's? These methods that are being taught and practiced are unconvincing.

In the Buddha's history, his supreme meditative attainments in equanimity did not cause wisdom to arise. The belief and understanding that wisdom will emerge once the mind is in a meditative state of serenity must be modified. Masters who promote and teach this misunderstanding should revisit the Buddha's history. They should re-interpret his teachings such that a true and accurate understanding is established, instead of solely conveying their personal interpretations. They should examine the reasons behind the results of the Buddha's training with the two ascetics. It will become clear that the philosophy that permeates in our era significantly differs. It is unfortunate that certain practitioners lack knowledge and place all their faith in their instructor. If a master teaches an incorrect belief, the pupils will subscribe to the incorrect belief as well.

Wisdom Arises From Reflective Introspection

Bhikkhu Siddhattha's episode of wagering with the golden tray was of great consequence. He had trained in various methodologies for over five years. Yet he still was not established in the stream of *dhamma* as an *ariya-puggala* (one who has attained one of four levels of enlightenment). He continued to search for the right path. Although he tried every approach to eliminate defilements (*kilesa*), desire (*taṇhā*), and mental intoxications (*āsava*) from his mind, *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* was unsuccessful.

Then, he arrived at the incident with the golden tray at the *Neranjara River*. This was the site of *Bhikkhu Siddhattha's* final change in perception. According to texts, before releasing the golden tray, *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* had an aspiration, “*If I am to be enlightened as a Buddha in this life, may this golden tray float up the river, against the current.*” Upon its release, the golden tray immediately floated up the river, against the current. *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* was confident that he would become the Enlightened One in that very lifetime. Pay close attention to the method that brought him to the final enlightenment, because it is a critical transition. *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* would change his perception one final time. He would change his perception from being false to true upon wagering with the golden tray.

Bhikkhu Siddhattha confidently proclaimed unto himself that he had independently discovered the path that would lead to purification of the mind and final deliverance through enlightenment (*vimutti-nibbāna*). No one was his master. Through

Careful consideration, it will become clear that this path was not identified as the equanimous meditation that is frequently taught by masters. The distinguished and prominent method was the use of wisdom to develop the correct perception of the truth. *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* was on the verge of discovering what was concealing the cause of birth for humans. He would uncover this with lucid insight founded in the ultimate truth (*sacca-dhamma*) during this period.

Once *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* saw the golden tray float upstream against the current, he employed wisdom for consideration of this parallel. He internalized and compared the golden tray to the state of his own mind. This was the first time in his five years as an ascetic that *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* used wisdom for contemplation by internalizing something and comparing it to his mind and conscious. This marked the first instance in his life that he employed -wisdom in reflective introspection.

He reflected that the golden tray's floating upstream was likened to a mind that is liberated from desire and greed. There would be no more rebirths in the Three Realms (*kāmaloka*: the world of sense desire, *rūpaloka*: form-sense sphere, and *arūpaloka*: formless, immaterial sphere). The focal point here is that *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* utilized insight-wisdom to think against the grain. This implies that he contemplated the situation that is the reverse of the norm by comparing the golden tray to his own mind. He then contemplated where the golden tray would wind up if it continued to float along with the current. It would be carried out to the ocean, where it would drift endlessly. As the waves would carry the tray along the ocean's currents, the mind that is completely

enveloped in defilements and greed will obviously transpire according to the ways of defilements and desire.

The mind is frequently reborn within the Three Realms because it is obscured by delusion (*moha*) and absence of knowledge, or ignorance (*avijjā*). Before ordination as an ascetic, *Prince Siddhattha* used insight-wisdom to contemplate the cause of human birth. No matter how hard he tried to figure it out, he could not uncover the cause. Now, *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* had discovered it.

He subsequently announced to himself that the method of practice that would arrive at the ultimate cessation of suffering was now known. *Maggā-maggañāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*: the path of practice was realized and understood by individual insight. No one was his master. He could distinguish the right path from the wrong. He no longer wondered or possessed any doubts whatsoever about modes of practice. *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* had already spent five years wandering and searching for the true path. In that time, he consistently practiced equanimous meditation and never attempted to use wisdom to contemplate any issues. Consequently, his mind was shrouded by ignorance and desire. Ignorance of the truth causes rebirth.

Realization and understanding of the truth (*ñāṇa-dassana*) had arisen in *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* and he was thus *lokavidū*: one who clearly knows the Three Realms. The ignorance and desire that had once concealed the truth were now exposed. Just as brightness drives away darkness, the mind that possesses insight of wisdom (*paññā-ñāṇa*) abolishes ignorance and desire. The more *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* used insight to consider the foundations

of the ultimate truth, the more he understood the ultimate truth and realized the truth for what it was. Once the mind realizes and understands in terms of the ultimate truth, the mind will release its clinging to various things. This is how the mind eliminates ignorance and delusions.

Bhikkhu Siddhattha discovered the path of perception aligned with the truths of the world on his own. Wisdom is deemed to have arisen once this correct perception occurs. It is then followed by correct thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*). *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* used both of these principles to facilitate his practice. Therefore, take note: it is not correct that sitting in tranquil meditation will cause the emergence of insight-wisdom, as is commonly understood.

Āsavakkhayañāṇa

After crossing the *Neranjara River*, *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* encountered a Brahmin who offered him the bundle of hay that he was carrying. *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* laid the hay down underneath the thirty-five year old Bodhi tree. As he sat down, his mind was powerful and brave. In that instant, *āsavakkhayañāṇa* arose. He knew that mental intoxications and defilements (*āsava*) would be extinguished within a *carimakacitta* (likened to a quick snap of lightning or snap of the fingers). *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* daringly resolved, “*I will sit in this place until I become a Buddha. If I do not become enlightened, I will forever sit in this place. Even if my skin, bones, tendons and muscles deteriorate, if I do not become enlightened, I will forever sit in this place.*”

Bhikkhu Siddhattha made a bold and audacious resolution because *āsavakkhayañāṇa* had already arisen within him. The daring reconfirmation would not enlighten him in any way. *Āsavakkhayañāṇa* itself would not help him reach enlightenment, either. *Āsavakkhayañāṇa* is merely insight (*ñāṇa*) that mental intoxications and defilements will be extinguished. Buddhists typically interpret *āsavakkhayañāṇa* as an insight that arises for the purpose of eliminating mental intoxications, defilements and desires (*āsava*, *kilesa* and *taṇhā*) from the mind. I wish to reemphasize that this is not the case.

This is likened to a person on a journey to a final destination. The path is one that is unfamiliar. The final destination is also unknown. Yet, the person is confident that the path will definitely lead to the final destination. From the commencement of the trip,

to the journey itself, to the last stride that crosses over into the final destination, there is no doubt. It is not necessary to look back at the path traversed.

Likewise, the *āsavakkhayañāṇa* that arises follows similarly. The topics of *dhamma* that are suitable to one's character have already been selected and followed. Starting from the basics, to the intermediate, up to the advanced subjects, the *dhamma* practice has been completed wholesomely. At this point, *āsavakkhayañāṇa* merely signals the fact that the practitioner will extinguish mental intoxications. It does not eliminate mental intoxications, defilements and desires from the mind in any way. Manuals define *āsavakkhayañāṇa* as what will extinguish mental intoxications from the mind. This interpretation is not entirely accurate. As one is about to cross the finish line, one does not have to take further action. One can simply wait to reap the fruits of one's practice within a *carimakacitta*.

This can also be compared to eating a meal for the purpose of eliminating hunger. There must be a starting point that will lead up to this final goal. It commences with the search for raw materials that will be suitable for one's physical needs. The food is prepared flavorfully and is consumed. During the meal, each of the flavors is clearly distinguishable. The food is consumed to gratify physical needs up until the point where one knows that hunger has been completely eliminated. Similarly, *āsavakkhayañāṇa* is the knowledge that mental intoxications will soon be terminated. And in a few moments, mental intoxications are completely extinguished. The knowledge that all mental intoxications have been terminated is known on one's own.

In texts, the Buddha's enlightenment is described as occurring during the full moon in the month of June. He sat underneath the Bodhi tree and began *paṭhamayāma*¹, *majjhimayāma*² through *pacchimayāma*³. The insight (*ñāṇa*) that arose follows:

1. *Pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa*: reminiscence of past or previous births.
2. *Cutūpapātañāṇa*: the knowledge of the deceased and the rebirth of beings that directly results from deeds (*kamma*).
3. *Āsavakkhayañāṇa*: the knowledge that all mental intoxications (*āsava*) will be destroyed.

Both *pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa* and *Cutūpapātañāṇa* should not be included in the important night of the Buddha's enlightenment. *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* had realized and understood both of these mundane, worldly insights (*ñāṇa*) prior to that night. The night of the full moon in June was the final, decisive night that would resolutely separate *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* from the conventions of the world.

In that night, there could only be *āsavakkhayañāṇa*. It is the insight that all mental intoxications and defilements will be completely eliminated from the mind. *Nibbāna* indicates that mental intoxications, defilements and desires of all magnitudes will absolutely cease from the mind. Thus, "*nibbānaṃ paramaṃ suññaṃ*." This means, defilements and mental intoxications will

1. The first watch- 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm
2. The middle watch- 10:00 pm to 2:00 am
3. The last watch- 2:00 am to 6:00 am

be terminated. *Nibbāna* indicates the complete obliteration of the cause of birth within the various realms.

This is likened to immersing glowing, red coals in water. The cause of fire is extinguished just as mental intoxications, defilements and desires are terminated from the mind. This is clearly evidenced by *Bhikkhu Siddhattha's* daring aspiration, “*I will sit in this place until I become a Buddha.*” *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* already knew that mental intoxications would permanently cease within a *carimakacitta*. This is why it is not fitting to incorporate the two insights into this night of supreme importance.

Textbooks should not refer to other insights after the emergence of *āsavakkhayañāṇa* within *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* had already occurred. Recreational usage of the worldly insights would not be appropriate because they would not have been applicable to the cessation of rebirth within this world. Textbooks define *āsavakkhayañāṇa* as the insight that terminated all mental intoxications.

The truth is that *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* did not have to do anything or train any further in *dhamma* practice. Those who have attained the ultimate enlightenment (*arahant*) will comprehensively know the characteristics of achieving the ultimate enlightenment. *Āsavakkhayañāṇa* will only arise in three types of people:

1. Those who will be enlightened as a Buddha
2. Those who will be enlightened as a *paccekabuddha* (a Buddha who attains enlightenment on his own and does not teach the dispensation)

3. Those who will attain ultimate enlightenment, or *arahantship*, as a disciple of the Buddha

Those who have attained more junior stages of holiness of *anāgāmi*⁴, *sakadāgāmi*⁵ and *sotāpanna*⁶ will not experience *āsavakkhayañāṇa*. Upon cremation, their remains will not turn into relics, unlike those who have achieved *arahantship*.

Many people say that human remains may turn into relics because of aspirations. I would like to refute this claim because it is untrue. Only the remains of those who experience *āsavakkhayañāṇa* and achieve *arahantship* will transform into relics. This is a defining symbol of those who are free from mental intoxications, defilements and desires and rebirth.

Everyone is entitled to their interpretation. However, reason and causality must be employed to determine which interpretation is more accurate. Those disciples who will achieve ultimate emancipation as an *arahant* will all experience *āsavakkhayañāṇa*. They may reach enlightenment while in any posture. Whether it is while standing, walking, sitting, lying down, or half-sitting half-lying down like *Ananda Bhikkhu*, *āsavakkhayañāṇa* may arise.

There are four distinctions of *arahant*: *sukha-vipassako*⁷, *tevijjo*⁸, *chaḷabhiñño*⁹, and *paṭisambhidappatto*¹⁰. These titles are based

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4. One who has achieved the third stage of holiness, a non-returner
 5. One who has attained the second stage of holiness and will be reborn only once
 6. One who has achieved the first stage of holiness or stream-entry
 7. One who does not possess any supernatural powers
 8. One who possesses the ability to recollect former lives (*pubbenivāsānussatiñāṇa*) and understand the birth and deaths of beings (*cutūpapātañāṇa*)
 9. One who possesses the six supernatural powers (*abhiññā*): the divine eye, divine ear, penetration of the minds of others, power to dive or soar above earth, ability to recollect former lives, and *āsavakkhayañāṇa*
 10. A combination of *tevijjo* and *chaḷabhiñño*. One who also possesses the four analytic insights, penetrating discrimination: 1) discrimination of meanings and consequence; 2) analytic insight of origin and ideas; 3) analytic insight of language; 4) analytic insight of ready wit, sagacity

on the innate characteristics of each person as they fit into each division. At any rate, the significant aspect every *arahant* shares is that *āsavakkhayañāṇa* has occurred in the same way.

Once *āsavakkhayañāṇa* arises, it is possible but unnecessary to make a bold resolution as the Buddha did. Regardless, one will reach enlightenment as an *arahant* in a short moment. It is unfitting to imitate this resolution because it is conceited to place oneself on a par with the Buddha. It is possible to do so, but highly inappropriate.

Reaching *arahantship* in the Buddha's era is the same as it is in the present era. The purification (*sappurisa-dhamma*) of the mind is identical within all Buddhas, *paccekabuddhas*, and *arahant* disciples. *Nibbāna* is reached by the same purification. In this era, many claim to have reached these heights because their meditative attainments have yielded equanimity and emptiness. The lack of emotion and anger that result from this meditation are symptoms used to commonly self-prescribe the attainment of *nibbāna*. These people believe they have actually reached *nibbāna*. Consequently, there are numerous *arahant* imposters in our present era.

The Dispensation of Buddhism

Once the Buddha was enlightened, he enjoyed the bliss of enlightenment (*vimutti-sukha*) at seven locations for durations of seven days each. The Buddha initially thought of the two ascetics and was able to know through his insight that the two had passed away seven days before his enlightenment. He thought that if the two teachers had the opportunity to listen to the *dhamma*, they would have reached ultimate enlightenment in this lifetime. It was a shame that the two instructors were so trapped in the misconceptions of tranquil meditation and mental absorption of the immaterial sphere (*arūpa-jhāna*) that they could not find a way out. They had been reborn to eternally long lives in the formless sphere (*arūpa-brahma*) and would remain there even after the emergence of the *Buddha Metteyya*.

Then, the Buddha thought of the five ascetics who had cared for him at the *Donkasiri* Mountain. At that moment they were at the *Isipatana* (deer forest) in *Rājagaha* city. The Buddha delivered his first sermon there and all five ascetics attained ultimate enlightenment. The roots of Buddhism had completely arisen in the world in the form of the Triple Gem (*ratanattāya*), which is the Buddha, the *Dhamma*, and the *Saṅgha*.

The Buddha subsequently spent that year's rain retreat in that location (present day *Sārnath*). During the retreat, the Buddha delivered a discourse to *Yasa Kulaputta* and his peers, and they all achieved *arahantship*. He also preached to *Yasa Kulaputta's* mother and father, who attained the first level of holiness (*sotāpanna*). These were the first laymen to become *ariya-*

puggala (individuals who have reached a level of enlightenment, one of the Noble or Holy Ones) in the Buddha's era. We should study the history of *Yasa Kulaputta's* parents in order to understand and personally apply their methods of practice.

After the rains retreat, the Buddha preached to the thirty young men until they all attained *arahantship*. From there, he taught the three *jaṭila* (matted hair ascetics, usually worshipping fire) and their one thousand followers. They all reached *arahantship*. Changing wrong perception to right perception is an important starting point for the dispensation of Buddhism. The existence of incorrect understanding within the mind is misaligned with the path to *nibbāna*.

This is why the Buddha emphasized the importance of correct perception of the truth (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) as the inaugural step. Everyone has held false perceptions of the truth (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) for a long time. Further, the attainment of various levels of tranquil meditation will not be able to eradicate these false perceptions from the mind. Moreover, the inspiration derived from absorbing meditation will further exacerbate these false perceptions. The practitioner will erroneously identify his method as well-aligned with the correct path. If a master the practitioner holds in high esteem confirms this falsehood, he will be reassured even further. Thus, in our era, it is difficult to rectify these invalid understandings so that they can become correct perception.

There were many people who became *ariya-puggala* during the Buddha's era. The Buddha was able to provide examples of practice that would convert wrong perception into right perception. It was then that additional topics of *dhamma*

followed. This is likened to washing the toxins from a container before placing food into it. If a mind holds the correct paradigm of the truth then the practice will be unproblematic, simple, and unhindered by doubt.

Although the Buddha's teachings were righteous and delineated in the correct perception of truth, people in present times have misinterpreted them. These people have written their personal viewpoints into these teachings and have attributed them to the Buddha. More recent generations will read these false accounts, follow in the misunderstandings, and bestow these incorrect teachings unto others. Many teachers have differing inferences of *dhamma* and have consequently incorporated these individual understandings into various inscriptions. Contemporary generations will be befuddled and unable to discern the accuracy of the teachings. A faithful practitioner who holds the master in high esteem will wholly believe in and adopt the teachings.

If an un-revered master has delineated correct teachings, the *dhamma* will have no benefit. With sparse education and devoid of encompassing knowledge of cause and effect, both ascetics and laypersons alike will be unable to discern the meaning of *dhamma*. Even if they possess knowledge, it will merely be memorized from textbooks.

If the texts are correctly written, the resulting realizations and understandings will be correct. If not, the realizations and understanding will be incorrect. If these erroneous textbooks are used to instruct others, the practitioners will develop wrong paradigms and understandings. There will be a false perception of the *texts and manuals*. The subsequent results of practice will

also be seriously flawed. Those who subscribe to these beliefs will be oblivious to their incorrect judgment and mistakenly believe they are on the right path.

In present times, it is difficult to develop the correct perception in all practitioners because they have studied different instructions on topics of *dhamma*. Each master has good intentions and claims to relay the Buddha's teachings. The goal of practicing *dhamma* for the ultimate attainment of *nibbāna* is shared across the board.

Read the histories of both the ascetics as well as the laypersons who were *ariya-puggala* during the Buddha's era. How did each person practice in order to attain nobleness? How are people, in contemporary times practicing for the goal of realizing *dhamma*? The discrepancy between these two methods is unambiguously apparent.

You have studied the *dhamma* in the Buddha's teachings. I have studied it as well. Each person relates their interpretation of *dhamma* to others and inscribes their understandings for posterity. No one proclaims that their teachings are incorrect or that their writings are false. What is worse, they intimidate others by claiming that others' teachings and writings are erroneous. They each believe their teaching is the only authority.

That is why so many factions and denominations have arisen in our times. During the Buddha's era, many people heard sermons on *dhamma* from the Buddha and many *ariya-puggala* without any problems. Each student experienced *dhamma* that was rich in logical cause and effect because instructors taught *dhamma* in an identical way.

In those times, people listened to *dhamma* with mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and insight-wisdom (*paññā*). They used discernment to contemplate this *dhamma* with reason until understanding was reached. That *dhamma* was then applied, as suitable, to each person's character. Consequently, they became *ariya-puggala* (Noble Ones) in a level appropriate to the individual merits and perfections (*pāramī*) cultivated. The attainment of *sotāpanna*, *sakadāgāmi*, *anāgāmi*, or *arahant* was dependent upon the different degrees of individual perfections and accumulated virtues.

Becoming an *ariya-puggala* in those times was simple. The Buddha taught *dhamma* that was aligned with each person's character, disposition, and relative perfections. *Dhamma* practice was fitting. Many people achieved levels of enlightenment. The Buddha provided different models of *dhamma* practice to different groups, according to their perfections. Similar perfections warranted similar examples of *dhamma*.

Study this well: it is not that any model of *dhamma* will help one attain a level of enlightenment. If the example is aligned with one's intrinsic nature, then one will become an *ariya-puggala*. However, if the model is not suitable to one's character, then no matter how diligently one practices, one will not attain enlightenment. This is similar to taking medicine that does not correspond to the diagnosis. No matter how much is consumed, the ailment will not be cured. *Dhamma* practice is just the same.

A Model of Wisdom for Contemplation

I will illustrate how a person employed wisdom (*paññā*) for contemplation. The Buddha provided many examples of individuals in the *Tiṭṭaka* (Pali Canon), but to address them all would enlarge this book too much. Therefore, I will only highlight a few models to demonstrate this concept.

During the era of the *Buddha Kassapa*, there was a girl who routinely trained in the perfection of insight-wisdom (*paññā-pāramī*). She habitually used insight-wisdom to reflect on the deaths that would occur to herself, other people, and animals. She analyzed the deaths that had already occurred to other people and animals. Both humans and animals would meet their deaths in the future. She regularly contemplated this while in all of the four postures: standing, walking, sitting, and lying down.

Even while she was working, she would have mindfulness and insight and constantly reflect on how humans were born, lived momentarily, and would pass away from one another. None of the money, gold, riches, and worldly possessions that belonged to a person could be taken along upon death. The worldly belongings would all be inherited by the person's children and grandchildren. Upon their deaths, the possessions would fall into the hands of subsequent generations. No one can claim ownership of these worldly belongings. They are merely items that humans temporarily rely on during their fleeting lifetimes on this Earth.

The girl used wisdom to train her mind with these thoughts daily. Her mind experienced a sorrowful awakening that tedious and repetitive birth and death were not worth the daily suffering. The

more she used wisdom to reflect over death, the more she realized and understood the insignificance of the physical form. Her mind did not cling and fasten itself to anything. Upon her death, she enjoyed bliss in the heavenly world. Once her accumulated merit had been depleted, she was reborn as a human.

In this rebirth, she was born to a family of weavers during the era in which the *Buddha Gotama* was still alive. One day, the Buddha descended to the Hall of Truth to preach *dhamma*. Typically, he would begin his sermon once he was seated. However, this time he remained silent because the girl was unfinished with spooling thread. Once she had completed the task, she carried the basket of spools and walked by the Hall of Truth. She saw a mass of people sitting in silence and consequently sat down to observe and find out what had happened. She did not have any intention of listening to *dhamma*, but listened to the sermon by chance.

Once she was seated, the Buddha immediately began his discourse. The topic he selected to serve as a model of *dhamma* was that of the termination of life. Nothing can be maintained in a particular state forever. Following birth, there is temporary existence and ultimately, death. The Buddha made an analogy to a spool of thread. When used in weaving, the thread on the spool will eventually run out. Likewise, the lives of humans and animals emerge, momentarily exist, and eventually terminate. The four elements of earth, water, wind, and fire that all beings are comprised of will disintegrate into the earth element.

Upon hearing the sermon on the spool of thread as an analogy for the cessation of life, she understood and employed insight-

wisdom to contemplate the spool of thread. She internalized the spool and self-reflected such that it shared the same characteristics as her own life. It was a transient existence. The body that is supposed to be the “self” only exists momentarily. It will eventually deteriorate and disintegrate, as nothing can subsist perpetually. Once she understood this truth, wisdom arose.

Her old habit from past rebirths of using insight to contemplate death was triggered and linked to her newfound wisdom. The old insight-wisdom she had cultivated was infused with the new. She had insight into the *dhamma* (truth) that everything that arises must ultimately reach death. Nothing can exist eternally. After wisdom emerged so that she realized and understood this truth, she achieved the first level of enlightenment as a *sotāpanna*.

Understand the methods of *dhamma* practice during the Buddha’s era in order to discern whether or not our current individual techniques correspond. Individual perception should be reset to align with the truth. It should correspond to the Three Common Characteristics: impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self or cessation of existence in supposed form (*anattā*). These are all correct perceptions of the truth. Consequently, insight will have arisen within us.

It is not that wisdom emerges from sitting in serene meditation. This concept or inferred understanding is nowhere to be found in the Buddha’s teachings. So why is this being taught and followed? If it is in fact true, can you point to a person in the Buddha’s era that supports this theory? I have extensively studied the Buddha’s history. There does not exist a single person in the Buddha’s era who was able to generate wisdom from sitting in

tranquil meditation. The accounts of *ariya-puggala* in those times should be studied in order to change the incorrect paradigm into a true and correct one.

I have the courage to state this because I have researched the history of *ariya-puggala* in the Buddha's era. I am ready to answer any questions and address any doubts that you may have. If you are truly secure and confident, do not go behind my back and allege that my words and books are incorrect. Instead, discuss the history of *ariya-puggala* in the Buddha's era with me. Show me the person who proves your theory. I am confident enough to assert this because I already have accounts of *ariya-puggala* as proof. I am certain enough to write a book for people to read in its entirety.

I do not have the audacity to change the *Tipiṭaka* (Pali Canon). I only want people to understand the correct meaning of the *Tipiṭaka*. It is perfect in itself, but people have interpreted, explained, and expanded it while lacking rationality at many points. This is embodied in the statement that sitting and meditating to equanimity will lead to the emergence of wisdom. What is this? Why is it being taught and practiced? The Buddha never taught this to his followers. Why have these instructions been written and taught in current times such that many people are misunderstood?

According to the Noble Eightfold Path, wisdom does not result from sitting in serene meditation in any way. The path of meditating to equanimity corresponds to supernormal powers (*abhiññā*), four absorptions of the fine-material sphere (*rūpa-jhāna*), and the four absorptions of the formless sphere

(*arūpa-jhāna*), which combine as the eight levels of meditative attainment (*samāpatti*). Sages and ascetics practiced these methods prior to the advent of Buddhism. None of them generated wisdom from tranquil meditation.

Even the Buddha had once trained in this way. But he discerned that it was not the method for liberation from suffering. That is precisely why *Bhikkhu Siddhattha* departed from the two ascetics. The Buddha had already explicitly stated that serene meditation was not aligned with deliverance from defilements (*kilesa*), and desires (*taṇhā*), nor was it the path to *nibbāna*. It was merely a way to temporarily suppress defilements (*kilesa*), and desires (*taṇhā*).

Cetovimutti

The term “meditation” refers to two different types. I will explain both of these classifications for the practitioners’ research and understanding.

1. Tranquil Meditation

2. Alert and Focused Meditation

Tranquil meditation will be explained first, followed by a description of alert and focused meditation. The reader will be able to discern the differences and connection between the two forms of meditation from this book.

There is a group of people who can practice tranquil meditation. These people possess the *cetovimutti* (deliverance through concentration) character. In past rebirths, this group lived as ascetics, hermits and sages trained by intensely staring at various objects. They were skilled in tranquil meditation and higher levels of meditative attainment (*jhāna samāpatti*). Once reborn in this lifetime and ordained in the Buddhist religion, they will be content with the form of meditation familiar to their character that had been developed in past lives.

They heard the Buddha’s sermons on how to flourish in meditation and insight-wisdom (*vipassanā-panna*), but were more pleased with their old meditative practices. They set out to various forest destinations far from society, and continuously and steadily practiced meditation. Because they had previously trained in meditation, the achievement of equanimity was simple. They were able to attain serenity in the four absorptions of the fine-

material sphere (*rūpa-jhāna*) and the four absorptions of the formless sphere (*arūpa-jhāna*) such that an empty void existed within their minds. There were no emotions that could agitate their minds.

As an example, in the times of the *Buddha Gotama*, thirty monks reached the pinnacle of meditative states. One day, the leader of the group convened a meeting to discuss every monk's meditative attainments. Each and every monk articulated the identical statement, that he did not possess lustful feelings, defilements, desires, or mental intoxications. The leader proclaimed that, *"Since we have all reached the same state we are liberated from all defilements and desires. We have reached emancipation from mental intoxications and have all attained arahantship. In order to confirm our achievement as arahants, let us prepare to pay our respects to the Buddha."*

Once the thirty monks neared the temple, the Buddha had insight-wisdom to know that all thirty monks were mistakenly self-important in their diagnosis as *arahant*. They had merely attained equanimity and higher states of meditation (*jhāna-samāpatti*), which were misaligned with the path to liberation from defilements and desires. Tranquil meditation and higher states of meditation are purely techniques used to suppress defilements and desire.

The Buddha sent Ananda to tell the thirty monks that, *"Tonight, you all may spend the night in the cemetery. Tomorrow morning, you may pay your respects to the Buddha."* Thus, the thirty monks searched for a place to rest in the cemetery. During this time, the Buddha created a vision (*nimitta*) of a teenage girl with an

attractive figure. She was lying face up without any fabric covering her body, like a person grinning and sleeping all alone in the cemetery.

One monk walked by, saw this and called the other monks over. The thirty monks were skilled in serene meditation and higher states of meditation. Upon seeing this vision, the feelings of lust and desire that had been stifled by tranquil meditation and higher states of meditation began to revitalize. All of the monks relapsed into passionate lust and their faces turned crimson red.

The leader announced, *“We have heard the dhamma from Buddha on methods of practicing insight meditation (vipassanā). Let us all practice insight meditation tonight. Use wisdom to contemplate loathsomeness and impurity (asubha), the filthiness, and unattractiveness of that teenage girl. Each and every part of the body is foul. Use introspective reflection to relate that truth to your own body. Use wisdom to examine your own body such that you realize that it is identically loathsome. Contemplate the defiled external remains. Analyze the repugnance of your internal body so that you realize and understand the filthiness.”*

In that night, all thirty monks achieved *arahantship*. They had begun their training in tranquil meditation and were skilled in higher states of meditation. They then turned to alert and focused meditation that was supported with wisdom. The thirty monks in this illustration are *ariya-puggala* of *cetovimutti* character. Let us comprehend this accordingly.

Those with *cetovimutti* nature are prominent in tranquil meditation and are proficient in entering higher states of

meditation. However, in the final stages, they must use alert and focused meditation that is supported by wisdom. There is no instance of the Buddha's instructing the use of wisdom for contemplation upon the mind's entering a meditative state of equanimity. This type of instruction is widely divergent from the Buddha's teachings.

The Buddha originally taught that once the mind enters a serene meditative state, it should remain there until the mind is satiated. Do not force a release and do not apply pressure. Once the tranquility is satisfied, the mind will gradually withdraw itself. Be mindful of the release and be alert and focused in *upacāra-samādhi*. This is called alert and focused meditation¹¹. Thereafter, continue by drawing that focus into wisdom or insight meditation. This is the original principle that the Buddha laid forth. Let all of us who are interested in meditation understand this accordingly.

There were few of *cetovimutti* character during the Buddha's era, and they were fortunate enough to ordain while the Buddha was still alive. The Buddha was able to assist in converting their misperceptions into correct paradigms. This is illustrated by the account of the thirty monks previously described. If practitioners of meditation in current times are similar to the thirty monks, they will lack the possibility of rectifying their incorrect perceptions and mistaken self-importance. They must be left to the product of volitional action (*kamma*). They will carry on prolonged lives in the *brahma* realm upon death. They will

11. This is similar to waking up in the morning. Before fully awakening, do not open your eyes. Use this partially awake and fully conscious state to contemplate your dream or any other issues. Your consciousness will be especially sharp and keen. In meditation, the alert and focused release from the tranquil state (*upacāra-samādhi*) is likened to the partially awake and fully conscious state described here.

completely miss out on the opportunity to achieve *arahantship* despite their sufficient cultivation of the ten perfections (*pāramī*).

No one will be able to transform their paradigms from being erroneous into accurate. This is due to the arrogance and haughtiness that arise in pair with skilled meditation in tranquility and supernormal powers (*abhiññā*). They will be too conceited, egotistic, and smug to bow down to anyone. They will misunderstand that others cannot achieve comparable heights in their practice. Even the Buddha's *arahant* disciples will be unable to assist with the dilemma of turning their wrong perceptions into accurate perceptions of the truth. Those excepted from hopelessness are only those who had previously been associated or were once nemeses with these disciples.

There are some people of the *cetovimutti* class in contemporary times. This is evident in their ability to effortlessly achieve tranquility in meditation and remain sitting for prolonged periods. However, wisdom does not emerge to aid in ameliorating problems. There lacks broad, encompassing insight in order to discern the symptoms of the mind. Thus, masters and teachers are approached for counsel about characteristics of the mind that have arisen. If the master does not understand, then he will merely issue a brief reply that this type of indication is correct and that the practitioner should carry on.

In modern times, those of the *cetovimutti* type are able to practice tranquil meditation but encounter problems because they lead off with desire. Meditation linked with craving, such as wanting for insight-wisdom to arise, yearning for purification of the mind, longing to eliminate defilements and greed, desiring to see

heaven, hell, and previous births, and aspiring to attain various levels of enlightenment as an *ariya-puggala* will all directly fall into the path of defilements and desires.

The mind's volitional impulses toward evil will deceive the mind into unknowingly losing its way. Those who meditate with desires, as explained above, will encounter troubles as the ten imperfections or defilements of insight (*vipassanūpakilesa*) infiltrate the mind. Their mind will be deluded by aberrations as it experiences various visions (*nimitta*) in different forms.

There were people who were deluded by the defilements of insight in the Buddha's era, and he helped turn their incorrect perceptions into correct viewpoints. These people were able to achieve levels of holiness as *ariya-puggala*. However, during present times, if someone fits this description, correcting their perceptions will be a daunting task. This is because the person will be overly self-confident and will not believe others who advise that their practice is flawed.

If those who are similarly deceived by the defilements of insight come together and discuss their experiences, they will harmonize like drums and cymbals. They will be able to converse about their various visions, all day and all night, without any end in sight. Discussions of different visions and *dhamma* will appear to be clearly unmistakable and credible. Those who are oblivious will deem the *dhamma* genuine and subscribe to those beliefs. In reality, it is purely fake *dhamma*.

The Ten *Vipassanūpakilesa*

What are the ten imperfections or defilements of insight (*vipassanūpakilesa*)? Study them well. I will explain each form such that it is sufficient enough to serve as a guideline, because the ten imperfections or defilements of insight obstruct and close off the path to *nibbāna*. Exercise caution by constantly observing yourself and discern whether certain characteristics match one of the imperfections. If there is a fit with one of the imperfections, the mind may be confused and misled. Wrong perceptions are misconstrued as correct, making it difficult to rectify the mind so that it returns to a normal state. The main cause of imperfections is practicing meditation without broad, encompassing wisdom.

This is likened to a bottle with an interior coat of poison that is invisible to the eye. Once the bottle is filled with a premium medicine, the toxins will absorb all of the remedy. As the medicine is consumed, the high-quality remedy will turn into a poisonous concoction and cause harmful injury. Similarly, those who practice and possess false views (*micchā-ditṭhi*) have misconceptions that are deeply ingrained in the mind and left unaddressed.

Once meditation is conducted and tranquility has begun to emerge, false perceptions will exacerbate the meditation. The mind will become deranged and unknowingly develop false views and imperfections. Various visions will arise and the mind will depart in order to cling to them. While sitting in meditation, the mind will be delighted and continue to sit for an extended period. It will seem as if the body and mind are buoyant and there is a desire to remain sitting in that manner.

At another point, the various visions will fade and disappear. The mind will be shaken and anxious, unable to persist in meditation. The irritation will eventually be so great that meditation cannot be reinitiated. In this way, those who meditate with the desire to know and see various things will be tricked by evil and misled into false view. The mind will obviously develop imperfections, as will be explained hereafter.

1. Illumination (*obhāsa*). Practitioners who begin to experience a modest degree of serenity in meditation will experience luminous auras in various forms. The mind will rush outward to fasten itself to the illumination. The brilliance of low and high intensities and assorted colors will generate pleasure in auras. Once the intensity of the illumination fades, it will be quite frustrating to continue sitting in meditation. The mind will be irritated and immediately withdraw from meditation. The mind will pine for the luminous auras, not wanting for the illumination to fade.

2. Contentment (*pīti*). At the point when preliminary tranquility has been achieved in meditation, the mind will be content. While sitting in meditation, tears flow, hair stands on its ends, and the mind and body are relaxed. A feeling of contentment persists and its permanence is desired. These symptoms occur because one does not possess broad, encompassing insight of one's misperceptions. Consequently, there is a misunderstanding that higher virtues have been attained. Once contentment has waned, the mind will yearn for it and long for its frequent occurrence. The mind will be despondent. Those whose meditation is led by desire will experience these elements. Thus, practitioners of

meditation must be cautious and have proficient insight at all times.

3. Tranquility (*passaddhi*). Upon attaining minor levels of serenity in meditation there will be tranquility of the body and mind. Tranquility denotes silence. There is detachment as if the site of sitting meditation is not recognized. Turning to face different directions, the location cannot be discerned. Tranquility of the mind is like being disconnected from the world. The peaceful silence feels like sitting all alone in the world. No emotions can disturb or affect the mind in any way. There is a feeling of solidity in stable meditation. It will be possible to sit in meditation for elongated periods without any worries or concerns. These qualities will exist momentarily and dissolve. The mind will hunger for them and desire their eternal existence.

4. Bliss (*sukha*). Upon entering a calm state of meditation, a significant degree of bliss and pleasure will arise within the mind. While inhaling and exhaling there will be constant delight, as this bliss arises from meditation. There is a great sense of contentment and pleasure, and a desire for it to endure perpetually. Soon thereafter, the bliss will grow faint and disappear. Practitioners of meditation will feel regret and long for constant, unremitting bliss. Meditation for the purpose of generating bliss will adversely cause misapprehension and delusion. It will be delusional meditation so enthralled with bliss that wisdom does not arise at all.

5. Insight (*ñāṇa*). As the mind frequently achieves calmness through meditation, insight of knowledge will occur as whispers of knowledge within the mind regarding various issues. Some issues will concern worldly matters while others relate to

dhamma. In some cases, the information will spontaneously be known. Other times, knowledge of specific, desired information will arise. For the most part, the initial knowledge that emerges will be true. That is why there is arrogance that insight of knowledge has occurred. There is a misunderstanding and misperception that true wisdom (*paññā*) has arisen within one self. One will want to tell others about whatever knowledge one possesses. There will likely be boasting that one's practice is skilled, daring and proficient, and that one possesses all-encompassing knowledge of various topics. In truth, the defilements of insight have arisen within, unnoticed. After a while, the knowledge will mutate such that it is no longer true.

If this occurs, there will be narcissistic belittlement and criticism of the inferior practice methods of others, all for the purpose of garnering praise and admiration. One misunderstands that one possesses virtue and is a knower of the world. In actuality, one possesses defilements of insight¹². This kind of person will be highly conceited and unwilling to listen to others as they warn of divergence from the path. This misperception will be irreparable in this lifetime. This is due to the mind's volitional impulses tricking one into believing in one's attainment of *sotāpanna*, *sakadāgāmi*, *anāgāmi*, or even *arahant*. There is confidence in one's achievement as a *ariya-puggala*.

If a favored individual asks what level of virtue he has attained, one will respond that he has achieved this or that level. If the

12. When one acquires wisdom (*paññā*) through insight (*ñāṇa*), conceit and egotism (*attā*) inflates. Therefore, wisdom attained through these means is the remedy that is tainted by the poison (*attā*) coating the bottle. Instead of implementing true wisdom for its direct, intended purpose (elimination of desires and greed), it is ineffective because of the toxic (the self-importance that arises) contamination.

question originates from a disliked individual, one will answer that he does not possess any virtue. If one is pleased with someone in the same faction, one will glorify that favored person through conversational inferences to others in the faction. For this reason if insight occurs in someone during contemporary times, repair will be difficult. False perceptions will persist until death. This insight of knowledge is caused by meditating without wisdom to discern the symptoms of the mind. That is why insight of visions (*ñāṇa nimitta*) unknowingly occurs.

6. *Adhimokkha* refers to the belief that all that has occurred is real, such as the fervor in assurance that illumination (*obhāsa*), contentment (*pīti*), tranquility (*passaddhi*), bliss (*sukha*), and insight (*ñāṇa*) are all aligned with the path to *nibbāna*. Due to this type of passionate conviction, this false perception is difficult to remedy. Regardless of reasoning and explanations that show these characteristics are incorrect, one will continue to be steadfast in the accuracy of the path. Further, despite indications that the methods are false perceptions, one will maintain that they are correct. Thus, it is difficult to turn these misperceptions into correct perceptions of the truth.

Practitioners should examine their beliefs. Otherwise, they will be lacking in reason (*saddhā-vippayutta*) and want others to glorify them as virtuous in practice and in their higher attainments. If other practitioners share these misperceptions, they will speak the same language. They will converse all day and night, without end. The deeper the meditation, the more severe the false perceptions. Talking about *dhamma* will be so comprehensive that people who do not know better will misperceive the speakers

for *arahants*. In actuality, they are false insight fanatics who are just chatting.

7. *Paggaha* is well-exerted energy in diligence. Regardless of whether it is walking or sitting meditation, there is serious exertion in work. Meditation is the primary method of practice. It is maintained while standing, walking, sitting and lying down. However, practice in the way of developing wisdom is not known. Each day and each night, diligence intensifies. There is caution and weariness of external stimuli by way of the six senses (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, mind, and body). If false perception is already installed in the mind, meditative accomplishments will augment the false perception, regardless of the force of meditation. Consequently, more misperceptions will emerge. The opportunity to attain a level of enlightenment in this lifetime will instantly be nullified.

8. *Upaṭṭhāna* is established mindfulness. The movements of every outer element of the body will be known through mindfulness. The movements will be sluggish and inactive. The act of extending or contracting the leg or arm will be measured. There will be established mindfulness during every posture, and vigilance of each occurrence. However, wisdom to contemplate and accurately perceive the truth is not known in any way. The foundations of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self or cessation of existence in supposed form (*anattā*) are regurgitated from texts. Personal wisdom is not possessed, and there is disinterest in employing wisdom to consider various topics. There is solely the existence of established mindfulness. At times, there are symptoms arising from defilements and

volitional impulses. They are spotted through attentiveness. Thus, defilements and desire are concealed inside the mind. Mindful meditation is used to suppress the actions of defilements and desire.

9. *Upekkhā* is indifference of the mind. The mind is neutral to external issues. Whether there are issues of the past or future, the mind is situated in the present and in indifference. The mind does not possess love, hate, or anger and is unaffected by worldly stimuli. There is no concern or attachment to anything. The mind is firmly neutral at all times. Again, there is a lack of panna to develop correct paradigms of the truth.

10. *Nikanti* is delight and contentment in all matters that have occurred. The sum of the first to last defilements of insight appears to confirm that the path of practice is accurate. There is unwavering satisfaction in all products of practice. In the mere carrying on of day to day living, there is confidence that higher virtues have arisen within. It seems as if there are no more responsibilities left to complete. These are the characteristics of those who possess this last form of defilements of insight. There is resolute contentment in the results of one's practice. Those who identify with these symptoms will be beyond assistance. Even virtuous masters will be unable to aid in any way. This is false perception that was initiated in the beginning stages and persisted without the prospect of a cure.

I have detailed topics for reflection in the matter of the ten defilements of insight. Few people will study and understand that these are dangers that obstruct the path to *nibbāna*. These ten imperfections or defilements of insight, also called *kilesa-māra*

(evil defilements), arise from wrong paradigms. Those who meditate without recognizing these evil defilements will encounter a multitude of dilemmas.

Practitioners whose meditation is sustained by desires will be particularly easily deceived by evil defilements of the mind. If the practice of meditation is normal and ordinary, everything will be fine. Meditation will relax the mind temporarily, as the mind is occupied by worldly matters during each day. Deliberation over this and contemplation of that prevent the mind from resting.

If the meditation is conducted for the purpose of relaxation, defilements of insight, or evil defilements will not arise in any way. Resting, in this case through meditation, is necessary. There are many types of jobs and careers in the world such as in government, commerce, and labor. People cannot work continuously, all day. Once tired, they must rest and recharge in order to carry on with work. This is analogous to the mind's relaxing through meditation. The ten defilements of insight will not occur. Therefore, those who practice meditation should not do so with aspirations that compel the generation of the previously described desires.

Dhamma practice is the way to fix and repair issues that arise in the mind. Practitioners must initially set out in the right direction by establishing a foundation of right perception. Train the mind in correct perceptions of the truth. Consequently, future practice will not be problematic. Manage both dislikes and likes by knowing how to naturally lighten or load up the mind.

This is comparable to driving along an unfamiliar road. One must exercise special caution. During curves or hairpin turns, one should judge which speed will ensure safety. If the car drives so speedily that the driver loses control, the approaching curve can lead to fatal repercussions. If the driver is skilled, the car is in good condition, the streets are level, and the road is familiar, then the destination will be reached with certainty.

Alternatively, if these four conditions are unsatisfied, opposite results will be achieved. *Dhamma* practice is analogous. If the practitioner trains for the ultimate attainment of *nibbāna* and possesses correct methods based in right perception, then the objective will definitely be reached.

The reason that matters of deliverance through concentration (*cetovimutti*) are discussed here is for practitioners to reflect upon themselves in order to discern whether they possess *cetovimutti* (deliverance through concentration) or *paññāvimutti* (deliverance through wisdom) intrinsic nature. If one does not know one's own character, finding a topic of *dhamma* to supplement and apply to oneself will be a daunting task. This is like taking medicine that does not correspond to the ailment. Despite the daily consumption of medicine, the sickness is not cured. *Dhamma* practice follows similarly.

Paññāvimutti

Deliverance through wisdom (*paññāvimutti*) and deliverance through concentration (*cetovimutti*) exist in the same person. The discrepancy lies in the different development of behavior. *Cetovimutti* character corresponds to those who have cultivated perfections in the fashion of ascetics and sages. Tranquil meditation and higher meditative attainments (*jhāna*) were practiced to perfection.

Upon being reborn in this lifetime, their training must begin with *jhāna* and serene meditation. Once the mind has reached equanimity, it will withdraw into the state of alert and focused meditation (*upacāra-samādhi*). Thereafter, it will turn towards wisdom in order to contemplate the ultimate truth (*sacca-dhamma*). Once the mind realizes the truth and clearly understands according to the truth, a level of holiness will be attained that corresponds to the cultivated perfection. These traits describe those with *cetovimutti* nature.

Those with *paññāvimutti* character cultivated perfection of wisdom (*paññā pāramī*) during past lives. They will only be able to practice alert and focused meditation during their new rebirths. However, they will be exceptionally expert in wisdom. When alert and focused meditation unites with wisdom, there will be comprehensive realization and lucid understanding in contemplation of the ultimate truth. Consequently, a level of holiness as a *ariya-puggala* (one who has attained a level of enlightenment) will be achieved that is consistent with the perfection developed.

Identification with these characteristics corresponds to the *paññāvimutti*. Understand this accordingly. If a different meaning is interpreted, consider that it is each man for himself. Alternatively, any questions or doubts can be addressed by directly contacting me. I am ready to explain this for your comprehension. In contemporary times, people have differing interpretations of the Buddha's teachings. However, it is up to you to determine which interpretation is the most accurate.

For those who possess *paññāvimutti* character, if the applicable methods are studied, known and applied, *dhamma* practice will be relatively simple. Models of *dhamma* practice are not intricately complex or confusing. During the Buddha's era, those with *paññāvimutti* character listened to *dhamma* from the Buddha or the many people who had attained a level of enlightenment. There were many who were able to immediately achieve a level of enlightenment. If they were not able to at that instant, they were able to apply the *dhamma* to their practice and eventually achieve a level of enlightenment.

If they were asked about higher meditative attainments or tranquil meditation, they would not know the characteristics. This is because they possessed *paññāvimutti* character. By simply conducting alert and focused meditation and using wisdom to contemplate the ultimate truth, they were able to completely realize and understand the ultimate truth and achieve a level of enlightenment.

Those of *paññāvimutti* character during the Buddha's era totaled as much as seventy percent. The methods of the *paññāvimutti*

are not complicated, formal, or fixed. Wisdom can be used to contemplate truths wherever one happens to be. Whether standing, walking, sitting, or lying down, every posture can facilitate the use of wisdom. Even while at work, one's tasks can be used as examples for internalized reflection through wisdom.

Models and illustrations of *dhamma* that can be used to support the development of wisdom are plentiful. If the basics of the Three Common Characteristics are known (impermanence, suffering, and cessation of existence in supposed form), there will be an abundance of the ultimate truth in every location, whether it is underwater, on land, or anywhere in the world. Wherever one sticks the tip of a needle, one will find the ultimate truth (*sacca-dhamma*).

Practitioners have two responsibilities:

1. The burden of education (*gantha-dhura*)¹³
2. The duty of using wisdom for discernment (*vipassanā-dhura*)

Practitioners must study and educate themselves in order to develop comprehension. They must then employ wisdom to comprehensively realize and understand the truth according to the truth of any matter. This is why studying is an important starting point. Whether it is a worldly or *dhamma*-related task, one must first study in order to understand it. This is because the

13. Education in this sense does not necessarily denote formal education in a classroom or through a text. It implies the examination of a particular issue one faces. One must study the characteristics in order to understand the reality and truth of the issue. Then, one must use panna (insight, wisdom) to draw that understanding of the truth inward for reflective introspection. In this way, one will see the *sacca-dhamma* of how the truth and oneself are one and the same.

world and *dhamma* are grouped together. If *dhamma* is not known, everything will appear to be worldly.

Those who recognize *dhamma* will be able to use wisdom to contemplate the worldly issues in terms of *dhamma*. From there, they will be able to clearly separate the worldly and *dhamma* aspects from one another.

As an analogy, rain is water that is clear and fresh by nature. If rain falls into the ocean and merges with the marine water, it will also become salty. If the water is scooped up and dropped onto the tip of the tongue it will be impossible to discriminate the rain water from the salty. To separate salt water and fresh water, one must utilize advanced technology to divide the two.

Dhamma practice for separating a pure mind from defilements (*kilesa*), desire (*taṇhā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*) is similar. It is not that just sitting in tranquil meditation or attaining *jhāna* will deflate and eradicate defilements, desire and ignorance from the mind, thus the Buddha's proclamation,

“Paññāya parisujhati”

The mind is purified by paññā.

No one has achieved a level of enlightenment by tranquil meditation in higher meditative absorptions (*jhāna*). So, let us readjust this paradigm. Otherwise, there will be eternal delusion of serene meditation and meditative absorptions.

Practice According to One's Character

Those with *paññāvimutti* character will find *dhamma* practice to be simple. This is because they are *ugghaṭitaññu*, those who realize and understand *dhamma* easily. If the *paññāvimutti* apply the *cetovimutti* methods, which do not match their innate character, they will find that practice is difficult. Even though they inherently possess mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) they will be misguided and be unable to re-embark on the path that is true to their natural character.

That is why there is confusion. This is like hiding money in your pocket and forgetting that you put it there. Once you are hungry and want to buy something to eat, you will starve because you do not think that you have cash. If you check inside your pocket, you will be surprised to find that you have been carrying it all along.

The misunderstanding that one does not possess mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom will pose a great problem in *dhamma* practice. This is because those with *paññāvimutti* character have different models of practice from those of *cetovimutti* nature. The majority of people during modern times or during the Buddha's era are *paññāvimutti*. If they train in the ways of *cetovimutti*, there will be a clash because these methods do not complement their own innate traits.

Thus the ancient saying, *monkey see, monkey do*. One desires to imitate others. Once one recognizes that one's character follows that of *paññāvimutti*, one should practice accordingly in order to produce results in this lifetime.

As for the question of how one can identify which type of character is innate, the answer is that one must observe oneself during meditation. Meditative phrases are optional, but be mindful of inhaling and exhaling. Let the mind transpire as usual. Do not pressure or compel the mind. Sit in a comfortable posture and breathe regularly. Be mindful of one's breathing.

One will understand one's inherent character soon thereafter. There is a simple way to test for one's intrinsic nature. Once the mind has converged into alert focus, it will gradually fall into tranquility. This state is called *appanā-samādhi* (attainment-concentration). If one identifies with these symptoms, realize that one is inherently *cetovimutti*.

Those of *paññāvimutti* nature are able to train through meditative phrases and the mind can converge into alert focus, but the mind will not be able to dive deeper into serenity. The *paññāvimutti* are only able to practice with alert and focused meditation. From that meditative state, the mind will wander. Even if the mind is pulled back into the meditative state, it will only stay for a short time, only to depart once again.

If these characteristics sound familiar, one should realize that one identifies with *paññāvimutti*. Once the mind is alert and focused and leans towards reflection, allow it to persist in contemplation¹⁴. It is necessary to use these methods because they correspond to one's intrinsic nature. Understand this accordingly.

14. Contemplation in this sense relates to the topic of consideration that is selected prior to commencing with meditation. The issue being contemplated should fall under the Three Common Characteristics (impermanence, suffering, and cessation of existence in supposed form).

We must practice in a way that matches our innate character. It is not necessary to aim for tranquility because it cannot be achieved in spite of all efforts. Time will be wasted. Those who are *paññāvimutti* can only practice alert and focused meditation and wisdom collaborate, they will generate a prominent force. All stimuli will be put to good use as models for contemplation of the truth. Any object that changes must be reflected inward and compared to our own impermanence. Any item that deteriorates and ceases to exist in its supposed form must be contemplated in terms of non-self or cessation of existence (*anattā*). Internalize the parallel and consider that our body will definitely deteriorate and cease existing just like those items. Nothing can permanently exist in this world.

Those who had attained a level of enlightenment with *paññāvimutti* character were abundant in the Buddha's era. In modern times, if a Buddha were to emerge, many people would attain levels of enlightenment. There are many people in various locations that are serious about *dhamma* practice. The method commonly stressed is meditation for equanimity. If the *paññāvimutti* try to practice in this manner, they will be unsuccessful. The master will direct them to negate all thoughts because the mind will be distracted.

This kind of instruction prevents the practitioner from using wisdom to contemplate the ultimate truth. The pervasive teaching is that one should maintain the mind in the present at all times, and in all postures. In that case, one does not have a difficult task ahead of oneself. So how will wisdom develop? By only being aware of the present, one will not think of ways to prevent against

impending natural disasters or invent cures for various diseases and maladies.

Likewise, by disregarding the importance of preventative and corrective measures, there will not be a method contrived to remedy the situation once defilements and desires attack. Further, the minds of normal laypeople have prolific defilements and desires. Upon death in this lifetime, defilements and desires will compel a rebirth in the future. Therefore, it is not the case that situating the mind in the present will generate calm and extinguish defilements and desires.

Sati, Samādhī, Paññā

Mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhī*), and wisdom (*paññā*) are all old treasures inherent in every human. Regardless of the era, every person is born with mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom in tow. During infant years, these three qualities exist but do not function or emerge. When a toddler is two to three years of age, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom begin to perform.

This is comparable to the mango tree that exists within the mango seed. If the seed is sliced open, the mango tree cannot be seen. Once it is planted in soil, the mango tree will sprout from the mango seed. This is analogous to mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom during baby years.

During the period associated with two to three years of age, the toddler has mindfulness to recollect various things. Concentration in action and speech is apparent. Wisdom in consideration before acting or speaking corresponds to the wisdom of the toddler years. The baby will not know the difference between right and wrong action, speech, or thought, but once the toddler grows up, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom will be fully operational.

Without righteousness, moral shame (*hiri*) and moral fear (*ottappa*), mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom will all become tools used to commit sinful actions, speech and thoughts. This will cause false perceptions and concentration in the wrong direction (*micchā-samādhī*). Wisdom will be used to think in unethical ways. Thoughts will be selfish, putting one's interests or the welfare of one's faction first. Bad people have evil character,

are unafraid of sin, and only think of personal benefit. They are self-interested and find pleasure in the suffering of others. These people are not lauded by the wise and are not acknowledged by society. This is how mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom are used in unjust ways and unknowingly become wrong mindfulness, wrong concentration, and wrong wisdom.

This is like a weapon that is fierce, powerful, and capable of great destruction. If this weapon is in the hands of policemen or soldiers, it can be used to conquer enemies in any circumstance. But if the weapon falls in the hands of an enemy, we will always be defeated. Therefore, practitioners must possess correct perception of the truth as the foundation for mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom.

The Buddha proclaimed the religion and disseminated the *dhamma* (truth) to many practitioners. He explained and clarified wrong and right to these practitioners by using logical principles of cause and effect as support. Immoral actions or speech result in harmful consequences. Most importantly, if someone possesses false perception, their actions and speech will be corrupt as a consequence. This is because everyone inherently possesses incorrect views. Because they are oblivious to their ignorance, they habitually conduct themselves immorally.

Accordingly, the Buddha used comparative examples backed by rationality to help *dhamma* listeners understand the truth. He taught and educated people about the ultimate truth, which exists in every person born into this world. Hence, the ultimate truth is ancient. The Buddha drew on old stories descriptive of typical human behaviors for lessons. In other words, he used

narratives about humans to teach humans. Beforehand, certain viewpoints were perceived as true and accurate. Once the Buddha demonstrated that those viewpoints were in fact inaccurate, listeners who used wisdom based in the principles of causality were able to accept the truth.

The Buddha necessitated that people first identify their mistakes. Upon recognition of one's errors, it is possible to change false perceptions into perceptions that are true. This is called *sammā-diṭṭhi*, the perception that is correct and aligned with the world's truths. Once true paradigms arise in the mind in this way, an individual's wisdom has emerged.

Wrong is perceived as wrong. Right is viewed as right. The distinction between virtuous and corrupt in terms of action, speech, and thought is immediately known. Immorality is desisted as no one desires depravity, while righteousness is praised by the wise. As the mind trains in cultivating correct paradigms in this fashion, understand that wisdom has arisen. Although it is wisdom or knowledge of a worldly level, at least it is *dhamma* (truth) of a worldly level. In other words, the ultimate truth in this world is realized and understood with clarity.

Doesn't all *dhamma* exist in this world? With clear knowledge and understanding of the realities of this world, why continue to be infatuated with it? Those who are frequently born into this world are intoxicated with and attached to the world. They have been continuously reborn in this world and will continue to be delusional with the world in a future of endless rebirths. This is the wrong paradigm that the world is pleasant and fitting to live in.

Mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhī*), and comprehensive insight of the truth (*paññā*) are all primary weapons for those with *paññāvimutti* character. Other principles of *dhamma* practice are only secondary, supporting weapons. They are used as appropriate and according to the unique character of each individual.

This is comparable to people inflicted with various ailments. The doctor must prescribe different medication to each individual. The patients rely on him to check their symptoms and analyze x-ray films in order to accurately diagnose the ailment. If the doctor is knowledgeable, he may make the proper decision as to which medicine to prescribe or whether an operation is necessary. If he uses the proper method of treatment, the patient will be able to recover from the sickness.

Training in *dhamma* is similar in that respect. Mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhī*), and wisdom (*paññā*) must be developed in order to serve as the x-ray machine that illuminates the image of defilements and desire that exist within the mind. Then, find a way to sever defilements and desire from the mind.

At this point, are we qualified to be the surgeon? Do we possess comprehensive knowledge and wisdom of defilements and desire? If we do not recognize and understand defilements and desire, how will we destroy them? Those who are capable of extinguishing defilements, desire and mental intoxications (*āsava*) must be armed with mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom.

Another analogy can be made to a military commander going out to battle its enemy. The commander must prepare the following three items:

1. Provisions
2. Arsenal
3. Military Troops

Upon entering actual battle, there must be a group of spies sent to gauge the strength of the enemy. The enemy also possesses food supplies, weapons, and troops. The commander must first apprehend the enemy's provisions because if he can seize their food supply, there will be a greater chance of victory. Likewise, those who practice *dhamma* for the purpose of extinguishing defilements and desire must know how to cut off the supplies that fuel defilements and desire.

These provisions refer to tangible appearance, sound, scent, taste, and delicate sensation. These are collectively branded as the five fine sense pleasures (*kāma-guṇa*). Defilements and desire of the mind materialize as greed (*lobha*), anger (*dosa*), delusion (*moha*), and ignorance (*avijjā*) because the mind is pleased by the five fine sense pleasures.

Cutting off supplies implies being cautious such that the mind is not pleased or averse to the five fine sense pleasures. On the surface, these five fine sense pleasures seem general and of a basic level. If these are properly considered, the five fine sense pleasures are relevant to the basic, intermediate, as well as the most advanced and detailed level of practice. If the five fine sense

pleasures are shed in their entirety, enlightenment at the *anāgāmi* level followed by *arahantship* will be achieved. *Dhamma* practice of this advanced level is only accomplished by a minority of individuals.

As for *sotāpanna* and *sakadāgāmī*, the five fine sense pleasures have not yet been extinguished. A prime model of this principle is *Visākhā*. According to historical accounts she achieved *sotāpanna* at the age of seven. During her teenage years, she was delighted by the five fine sense pleasures, consequently married, and gave birth to twenty children.

Studying the history of those who have attained various levels of enlightenment will facilitate *dhamma* practice and the selection of relevant topics for contemplation. The Buddha clearly designated and allocated topics according to qualifications of each level of holiness. The criterion for *sotāpanna*, *sakadāgāmī*, *anāgāmi*, and *arahant* are clearly and comprehensively specified in manuals.

Dhamma practice for the ultimate attainment of final enlightenment is dependent on each practitioner's degree of individual mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom as well as how refined these three qualities are. Scholarly knowledge cannot be regarded as mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. For example, many parents are illiterate and uneducated in terms of both *dhamma* and the world. Yet, they have mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom to teach their children and grandchildren to be virtuous individuals. Likewise, during the Buddha's era, many people were still able to achieve a level of holiness despite their limited education.

During the Buddha's era, *dhamma* books were not yet available for people to read. Those who were to understand *dhamma* had to listen to the Buddha and other *ariya-puggala*, live and in person. In order for listeners to understand the foundations of truth it was necessary to have mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom as well as individual rationality in discernment. Many groups of people listened to the Buddha's sermons and subsequently realized *dhamma*.

King Bimbisāra and his court of one hundred and twenty thousand had neither previously known the Buddha nor understood the basics of *dhamma*. They had not recognized the concepts of mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom despite the fact that they already completely possessed the three qualities. Once they listened to the Buddha's preaching they had the mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom to absorb the truth from him. One hundred and ten thousand of *King Bimbisāra's* court attained the first level of enlightenment as *sotāpanna*. The remaining ten thousand dedicatedly took refuge in the Triple Gem.

So, let us carefully consider this. When did those individuals sit in meditation such that tranquility and wisdom emerged? In reality, all of us possess mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom but we have been applying them in mundane tasks. So now, all we have to do is channel mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom towards *dhamma*. It is not complicated or confusing at all.

Wisdom to Contemplate the Present

The term “present” can be classified in two ways:

1. The present in terms of meditation
2. The present in terms of developing wisdom

Practitioners must be familiar with both of these definitions of “present” in order to use the appropriate designation in *dhamma* practice. For instance, mindfulness of the present is a principle used in meditation. Do not think of the past or the future to come. Remain firmly situated in the present. This is the present in terms of meditation. Commonly, this is all that is taught and understood.

As for the present in terms of developing wisdom, life in the present is used as a pivot or center. Look back into the past and analyze the suffering endured, both physically and mentally. We have evaded the clutches of death on numerous occasions and are lucky to have survived up until this point in the present. Many have passed away from us and we will follow in the exact same fashion. Some reached old age while others did not.

Use wisdom to consider the concepts and principles of aging, sickness, and death, which are all forthcoming. As in the frequently chanted prayer: *aging is normal and inescapable; sickness is normal and inescapable; death is normal and inescapable*. While alive in the present, wisdom can be used to reflect on the events bound to occur to us. We will age, become sick, and ultimately die. From this model, you can enhance your wisdom through contemplation of your own examples.

Present rebirth indicates the current life as we know it. If there is happiness and comfort, use wisdom to consider how good actions were cultivated in past lives. In the present life, the righteous actions have taken fruit in the form of happiness and comfort. The good *kamma* that everyone has cultivated in past lives includes charity, observing precepts, kindness, practicing *dhamma*, reciting prayers, building temples and pagodas, being good to parents and society, and many others. These virtues have resulted in happiness and comfort in the present life. This is how the present relates to the use of wisdom. Contemplation of the past is called *atītaṃpaññā*. It is wisdom in reflecting on past lives in order to motivate and console oneself.

Anāgataṃpaññā is the use of wisdom to contemplate future births in order to console oneself that we will be able to maintain our human status in upcoming lifetimes. In those births, we will only conduct good *kamma*, just as we have in the current life. As for this life, virtuous deeds will be committed to our fullest capability. While mental intoxications have not been extinguished in this lifetime, a future rebirth is guaranteed. However, the merits of good deeds in this lifetime will bring about a rebirth in a righteous family, one that is founded in right perception, honesty, and morality. These virtues will bring about prosperity in rebirths. In a future life, the virtuous deeds and cultivated perfections of the present life will serve as the ladder to ultimate enlightenment. This model illustrates how wisdom is used to contemplate the present in terms of how it shapes the future.

Contemplate these principles of the present rationally. Tranquil meditation is not the only classification of present that is used in

dhamma practice. It is necessary to study insight development (*vipassanā*), in order to contemplate the present in terms of both meditation as well as developing wisdom. These two forms of practice come as a pair. In which circumstance is it appropriate to use the classification of present that relates to meditation? When is it suitable to use the classification of the present that is associated with insight development?

Performing tranquil meditation will not spontaneously generate wisdom, as is widely believed. Change this perception and interpret insight development (*vipassanā*) more accurately. *Vipassanā* means wisdom. Wisdom denotes thought or contemplation. Thought is derived from and corresponds to perception. If a viewpoint is incorrect, the resulting thought will be erroneous. Correspondingly, correct thought is correlated with correct perception.

Therefore, let us study and understand the characteristics of true and false paradigms. Once comprehension is made, the selection of correct perceptions will follow the undisputable truth (*dhammādhigateyya*). This is the first step that the Buddha outlined during his dispensation of Buddhism. The Buddha stated, *“The footprints of all legged animals are encompassed by a footprint of an elephant. Likewise, the ultimate truth is encompassed by the correct perception of truth (sammā-diṭṭhi).”*

Thus, the correct perception of truth is the main root of Buddhism. It is a topic of *dhamma* that will lead the way to *nibbāna* when applied in practice. Therefore, it is clear and definite that correct perception is the major root from which all other headings of

dhamma spring. Form an understanding of the Three Common Characteristics, namely impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self or cessation of existence in supposed form (*anattā*), because every single thing that arises in this world possesses these three attributes. Consequently, practitioners must understand this truth.

Paññā Leads Sīla, Samādhi

Scholarly knowledge is merely a map that provides routes and direction. The original blueprint that the Buddha provided is accurately directed towards the final destination. After the fifth *saṅgīti* (general convocation of the *Saṅgha* in order to settle questions of doctrine and fix the text of the Pali Canon), the interpretations of the *dhamma* began to deviate. They were no longer aligned with the Buddha's original teachings.

In the era of commentary (*atthakathā*) and sub-commentary (*ṭīkā*), alterations and additions were made that corresponded to conventions of that time. Modifications and repositioning of various topics and headings of *dhamma* were made. The new meanings digressed from the original teachings that the Buddha had laid forth. This is strikingly evident, particularly with regard to the Threefold Training or Discipline (*sikkhāttaya*).

The Threefold Training is abridged from the Noble Eightfold Path. There are three categories that are commonly studied and known: moral conduct (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). When taken for the sake of study, this sequence will not yield any problems. However, if applied in practice, this will obviously conflict with the Noble Eightfold Path. The Buddha organized the Noble Eightfold path such that it would be effective and interrelated, as well as correspond to a simple and harmonious practice.

It starts with the grouping of correct perception (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and right thought or contemplation (*sammā-saṅkappa*) under the heading of wisdom (*paññā*).

Together, right speech, or speech that is true and fair (*sammā-vācā*), right action, or action according to what is just (*sammā-kammanta*), and right livelihood, or conducting a life and business that is moral and legal (*sammā-ājīva*) comprise the middle group, as topics of moral conduct (*sīla*).

Right effort, or fair and just diligence in actions, speech, and thought (*sammā-vāyāma*), right mindfulness (*sammā-satī*), and right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) are the last grouping and fall under concentration (*samādhi*).

If the progression of the Noble Eightfold Path is followed, the ordering of *dhamma* categories that corresponds to the original sequence is wisdom (*paññā*), moral conduct (*sīla*), and concentration (*samādhi*). This is the rational progression. If the Threefold Discipline is arranged such that it follows the Noble Eightfold Path that the Buddha has delineated, practice will be simple. This is because everything must start from correct perception.

Why did the Buddha choose wisdom (*paññā*) as the starting point?

I have ample rationale for the reader to understand the answer accordingly. There are three headings under wisdom (*paññā*) that you should study and comprehend:

1. Wisdom acquired by learning (*suta-maya-paññā*)
2. Wisdom through reasoning (*cintā-maya-paññā*)
3. Wisdom through practice (*bhāvanā-maya-paññā*)

These three types of wisdom can be practiced in this interrelated sequence, starting with:

Suta-maya-paññā

Suta-maya-paññā is wisdom related to the acquisition of knowledge by studying. For example, the categories of moral conduct (*sīla*) in terms of five precepts, eight precepts, ten precepts, and two hundred and twenty seven precepts can be studied and understood. How should each category and each precept be adhered to in order to achieve purity? Once all of the precepts are known, *cintā-maya-paññā* can be used to rationalize the way to abide by each precept, as well as reflect on its exceptions. Each precept has different exceptions.

Exceptions are a matter of intention. Discard the behaviors prohibited in each precept. If the behavior through action and speech and instead, practice good action and speech.

There are three fundamentals in regards to observing the precepts. Certain precepts are observed physically, verbally, or by intention. Intention is the basis used for adherence of precepts in the following manner:

1. Observance physically and by intention
2. Observance verbally and by intention
3. Observance physically, verbally, and by intention

Precepts and moral conduct (*sīla*) are an educational concept. There are rules and regulations for proper behavior that were established subsequently. They were intended to uphold the

courteous deportment of the individual as well as the peace and harmony of society. This function is similar to laws of governance. If someone acts in a way that is unjust and afflicts society, rules are instituted in order to force behavior to remain within a particular frame of proper conduct. Likewise, precepts are regulations that keep behavior within certain borders. That is why the Buddha established precepts.

Those who observe precepts must use wisdom to study and understand the differing categories clearly. Doesn't this imply that wisdom is the precursor? Wisdom is congenital and personal to every single person born into this world. So, use this wisdom to generate personal as well as societal benefit. This wisdom of the worldly level is pervasively employed in the world and can be used to study *dhamma*. *Suta-maya-paññā* is wisdom related to learning or studying that is used to discern wrong from right. The Buddha clearly stated that if one does not first study and understand an issue, problems will subsequently follow. In Pali, this is:

“Nisamma karaṇaṃ seyyo”

Before acting or speaking, one must contemplate with wisdom every time.

Consider whether a particular action or speech is wrong or right. If the realization is that it is wrong, regardless of the desire to do or say it, one must refrain. Alternatively, if the action or speech is just as well as a benefit to oneself as to others, then one should do or say it. The Buddha plainly stated that wisdom (*paññā*) is the precursor for moral conduct (*sīla*). The explanation of *suta-maya-*

paññā was for the education of the classifications of precepts. The reader probably understands this accordingly.

Concentration (*samādhi*) is one topic that many people teach and practice. There is a misconception that once equanimity in meditation is reached, wisdom will arise. It is as if tranquil meditation is an enchantment that compels the emergence of insight. This assertion disregards the history of the Buddha. There are historical accounts of ascetics and sages before and during the Buddha's time. Why aren't these studied? Even in present times, in India, Nepal, and many other countries, there are people who practice serene meditation. None of them have appeared to have generated wisdom in any way.

According to the original principles the Buddha laid forth, insight-wisdom (*paññā*) must be used to study and comprehend the classifications of concentration before actually practicing meditation (*samādhi*). What are the characteristics, before actually practicing meditation? What are the characteristics, and how does one practice each classification of meditation? There is momentary concentration (*khaṇika-samādhi*), access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*), attainment concentration (*appanā-samādhi*), right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*), false concentration (*micchā-samādhi*), delusional concentration (*moha-samādhi*), and the ways to enter mental absorptions of the fine-material sphere and the immaterial sphere (*rūpa-jhāna* and *arūpa-jhāna*), alert and focused meditation, and tranquil meditation.

All of these classifications of meditation must be researched and understood with wisdom in terms of each of the corresponding

principles and methods of commencement. This is called comprehensive wisdom related to the execution of meditation. There are manuals on meditation because it is an academic topic. *Suta-maya-paññā* (wisdom acquired through learning) must be used to study the correct procedures to perform and practice meditation. This way, one will not sit with one's eyes shut and repetitively ponder a meditative phrase in an aimless and irrational manner.

Some people who practice meditation only attain a minor degree of tranquility, and boast that they are skilled. Once some arbitrary level of supernormal powers (*abhiññā*) is attained, they proceed to fall deeper into the depths of self-delusion. If meditation reaches the heights of mental absorptions of the fine-material sphere and the immaterial sphere (*rūpa-jhāna* and *arūpa-jhāna*), they will misunderstand that they have attained *arahantship*. This is just like the aforementioned thirty monks. The reader ought to understand the reasons inherent in these explanations.

On many occasions, practitioners of meditation have described to me the characteristics of their tranquil meditation, the states of their mind, the visions and understandings, etc. Eventually, they asked if their expressed practice was correct and whether or not they would be able to attain *nibbāna*. I had to find a diplomatic way out and responded that they should just carry on. I have never practiced or taught anyone these methods. Whether the practice was right or wrong was a question that should be presented to the respective teachers.

Once, on a similar occasion, I explained with good intentions how this mode of practice diverged from the path to *nibbāna*. The

person left and retorted that I was the one who practiced incorrectly and had been a monk for many years, yet was completely ignorant of the practice of meditation. From then on, I had to be careful not to respond by saying that the method of practice was wrong. This would only be told to people who have strong faith in me and on an individual basis.

In contemporary times, there are many masters who teach meditation both in Thailand and abroad. Meditation is heavily emphasized in these practices. Many masters similarly teach that, once the mind is calm in meditation, wisdom will arise. In some schools, meditation is practiced in order to generate psychic powers that can be harnessed and used to heal the sick. In Buddhism, meditation is used to build mental strength, which can enhance wisdom in developing intelligence and expansive and comprehensive wisdom. This facilitates the realization and understanding of the ultimate truth. Therefore, meditation is not solely restricted to Buddhist practitioners. Those of other religions or agnostics can meditate and attain equanimity. Likewise, with or without moral conduct, tranquil meditation can be practiced as well.

After *suta-maya-paññā* (wisdom acquired by learning) has been attained by studying the characteristics and stages of meditation, *cintā-maya-paññā* can be used to analyze which type of meditation is best suited to one's character. That form of meditation should then be practiced. One can perform meditation in order to test one's nature. Once a meditative phrase is repeated while sitting in meditation for around ten minutes, one will have an idea of whether one corresponds to the character of the *paññāvimutti* or *cetovimutti*.

Mostly, it will be *paññāvimutti*, if various issues are contemplated after the mind is alert and focused in meditation. If this is the case, then practice alert and focused meditation in order to supplement wisdom in thinking about the ultimate truths. Practitioners must utilize both *suta-maya-paññā* and *cintā-maya-paññā* in a continuous manner. The first level of wisdom is acquiring understanding through learning. *Cintā-maya-paññā* is the level of wisdom related to reasoning wrong from right.

As for the question of how and when *bhāvanā-maya-paññā* (insight-wisdom through practice) comes into play, the response is that at this time, the point at which *bhāvanā-maya-paññā* is relevant for practice has not been reached. It is a form of wisdom of an advanced level called *vipassanā-ñāṇa* that will merge with attainment (*paññā*) in order to attain sublime paths of the holy life (*ariya-magga*) and the fruits of the holy life (*ariya-phala*).

In the initial stages, practice in the level of the two wisdoms to the point of expertise. Each type of wisdom should be properly matched with its counterpart. Namely, *suta-maya-paññā* corresponds to understanding by education and *cintā-maya-paññā* is paired with actual practice. The common phrase, “practice *vipassanā*” simply denotes *cintā-maya-paññā*. It is the form of wisdom used in contemplation as referred to in the two responsibilities:

1. The burden of education (*gantha-dhura*)
2. The duty of using wisdom for discernment (*vipassanā-dhura*)

This principle is evident in texts. However, the responsibility of concentration in terms of the duty of meditation does not exist because it is an academic principle already incorporated into other *dhamma* topics. *Suta-maya-paññā* is wisdom related to learning about moral conduct and concentration. *Cintā-maya-paññā* is wisdom to analyze and select models of meditation which are appropriate for one's character. It is a form of wisdom for the sake of understanding the topics of *dhamma* that exist in the bachelors, masters, and doctorate levels, as well as the post-doctorate levels.

Cintā-maya-paññā

Once understanding has emerged from education, use insight-wisdom to consider and select the topic of *dhamma* practice that is necessary and that best matches one's innate character. This is called *dhamma-vicaya*, selecting the category of *dhamma* suitable for practice. A certain inherent nature will correspond to a particular *dhamma* topic that will be the anecdote to one's dilemmas of the mind. Categories that are not necessarily relevant should be passed over, initially. This is the way to employ *dhamma* that matches one's intrinsic character.

This is analogous to selecting medication to cure a particular ailment. Only the medications that correspond to the sickness one possesses should be chosen. The selection of *dhamma* topics is the same. It is not that any arbitrary category of *dhamma* can be chosen and practiced, such that all defilements and desires are extinguished and one becomes an *ariya-puggala* (one who has attained a level of enlightenment).

People who hold this viewpoint have not studied sufficiently and have not read the history of *ariya-puggala* during the Buddha's era. Why did the Buddha lay forth many methods of *dhamma*? The character and cultivated perfections of those who were to become *ariya-puggala* were not identical. As such, the Buddha provided different models of *dhamma*. Each example was only relevant and meaningful to a certain individual, because the individual's cultivated behavior matched with the particular example of *dhamma*.

In the present, many resolutely assert that if practice does not correspond to four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) it will be impossible to become an *ariya-puggala*. Further, many groups claim that if practice does not transpire in the way of the seven *abhidhamma* (higher doctrine), then the achievement as an *ariya-puggala* will be unfeasible as well. These people speak in the same way as the blind who grope an elephant. They claim that the whole elephant corresponds to whatever part they touch. What has happened to Buddhists in current times?

The Buddha had proclaimed, "*Oh bhikkhus, the footprints of all animals are encompassed by a footprint of an elephant. Bhikkhus, the categories of dhamma that I, the Tathagata, have laid forth with righteousness are all encompassed by correct perception and wisdom aligned with the truth.*" Those who have encountered this declaration would not dare issue the steadfast claim that only particular categories of *dhamma* would enable one to reach holiness as an *ariya-puggala*. Because manuals have been erroneously inscribed from the past, people in contemporary

times have correspondingly read and understood according to those misperceptions.

The seven *abhidhamma* are suitable topics only for beings in heaven. In the seventh rains retreat, the Buddha visited his mother in the *Tāvātimsā* level of heaven and preached *dhamma* to heavenly beings. When he returned to the human realm, he repeated the doctrine only to *Sāriputta*. The Buddha did not use *abhidhamma* in his preaching to the rest of the fellowship for their attainment as an *ariya-puggala*. During the six years after the Buddha had attained enlightenment, *abhidhamma* had not arisen.

The Buddha had given discourses on other topics of *dhamma* and many people attained a level of *ariya-puggala*. Why isn't this studied and understood? That way, the Buddha's teachings would be understood correctly and there would not be the definite statement that one topic of *dhamma* is more significant than all others. Read the historical accounts of *ariya-puggala* (the Noble Ones). What subjects of *dhamma* were listened to such that they were able to become *ariya-puggala*? How did each model of *dhamma* practice differ? That way, one will not argue that others are wrong and that one's own viewpoint is superior and correct.

Bhāvanā-maya-paññā

Bhāvanā-maya-paññā is also known as *vipassanā-ñāṇa*. It is a form of wisdom of an advanced and detailed level. It continues from *suta-maya-paññā* and *cintā-maya-paññā*. Once the two *paññā* have built a foundation out of the correct perception of the truth, there will be clear realization and understanding. This

is called *vipassanā*. It is insight that creates lucid realization and understanding of the ultimate truth, called *yonisomanasikāra*. There will be detailed comprehension of the ultimate truth being reflected on, such that any and all doubt is eliminated. Attachment to things that the mind had once been infatuated with will be released. This occurrence is called *bhāvanā-maya-paññā*, clear realization and true understanding.

This is comparable to a person who fishes in a pond. In order to catch a fish for a meal, he grabs randomly with his hands. Suddenly, he grasps hold of a cobra and tightens his grip. In that moment, he feels that it is really a fish. He continues to imagine how the fish should be prepared in order to be savory. Experience solely through the sensation of touching is likely to lead to the wrong decision. Once the cobra is brought above water and he sees that it is, in fact, a snake, the feeling that he had caught a fish completely vanishes.

Likewise, we can extract the misunderstanding that something belongs to us and that this is our “self,” and examine it with wisdom. The mind will clearly realize and understand according to the ultimate truth that the four elements (earth, water, wind, fire) congregated in the form dubbed “self” is merely a culmination of elements. In a short time, the combination of elements will disintegrate back into the earth element. The delusional volitional mind (*saṅkhāra-citta*) created the blend of elements for temporary inhabitation. In hardly a few days, it will all disband.

Train the Mind in *Ñāṇa-dassana*

There are two methods of training the mind in *ñāṇa-dassana*, the realization and understanding of the truth. The most important aspect is to know which character one possesses. Those with *cetovimutti* character should train as previously described. The *paññāvimutti* should steadily practice clear comprehension and circumspective mindfulness (*sati-sampajañña*) and alert and focused meditation. They should constantly train their wisdom in comprehensive understanding of the truth.

The truth exists pervasively in this world. Internally, it is in the form of our bodies. Externally, the truth resides in things that are created by humans, naturally occurring, and existing ubiquitously. Once created, all things exist only momentarily and eventually dissolve. Nothing can persist eternally. Everything must fall under the laws of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and cessation of existence in supposed form (*anattā*).

Impermanence is an effect we experience in the present. Everyone is unhappy with change. Although the notion is impossible, we all want personal belongings to remain with us forever. Thus, in order to use insight to contemplate impermanence, we must first understand the concept of permanence in the present. How long can things exist and what causes them to change? The cause and factors that contribute to the transformation must be realized and understood with wisdom. It will be evidently realized and understood that we cannot force things to exist according to our desires. The mind must accept the truth in all things in order to not perpetuate its suffering.

Bhāvanā-maya-paññā is wisdom of a broad, comprehensive, and all-encompassing level. It is the wisdom that succeeds *suta-maya-paññā* and *cintā-maya-paññā*. Once the two wisdoms shift the paradigm such that it is the correct perception according to the truth, a preliminary level of wisdom has arisen. The use of wisdom to contemplate other topics of *dhamma* to the point of increased comprehension is considered insight development (*vipassanā*). Once insight development is fruitful and one has insight to realize and understand the truth more clearly, one will be *yonisomanasikāra*.

Upon contemplating the ultimate truth, comprehensive understanding will occur, doubt and questioning will be absolved, and attachment will be released. These characteristics describe *bhāvanā-maya-paññā*. It is a form of wisdom that integrates into attainment (*paññavedha*), which is the fruit of practice. This is the path to achievement as an *ariya-puggala* (one who has achieved a level of enlightenment) that the Buddha has laid forth.

My explanation corresponds to research I have conducted, and if someone wants to interpret the Buddha's teachings differently, that is their prerogative. The reader should use individual rationality to analyze and conclude which texts are credible, and which are not.

In modern times, many different Buddhist factions span the globe, each interpreting the Buddha's teachings differently. The models used for *dhamma* practice differ as well. It is left to the individual to reach *nibbāna* in their practice because everyone shares commonality in being Buddhist. Anything is possible in the tail end of the Buddhist dispensation. Everyone shares the viewpoint

that practice is aimed at the final goal of *nibbāna*. People practice according to their individual interpretations of Buddhist models. In present times, no one can change the beliefs and perceptions, such that they are all the same. The unification is unlikely to occur because each sect is firm in its individual convictions and viewpoints.

Thus, in practice, insight of knowledge (*ñāṇa*) and realization (*dassana*) must exist as the ultimate deciding factor. If both realization and understanding exist simultaneously, it will be possible for *dhamma* practice to be successful. *Ñāṇa* refers to knowledge and understanding, while *dassana* denotes the realization or perception. Both of these must be practiced and present in the mind. If only knowledge is present and realization is absent, the knowledge is apt to be incorrect. If realization or perception (*dassana-paññā*) is the only element present, wrong perception is likely to be generated, as well.

This is comparable to studying a tiger through pictures. The tiger's characteristics, its tendency to eat animals and humans, and the pattern of its stripes are known through the picture. Similarly, seeing a live tiger without previous knowledge of its defining attributes will result in the inability to label the animal. If prior information about the tiger is known and it is encountered in a live situation, fear is highly probable. If the tiger is already feared, it will be quite simple to find an escape path far from its jaws. It is unnecessary to ask others which way to flee, as we will be able to be decisive in that moment. The forest or thorns are no longer a matter of contention. Our feet will take us far away from the tiger's ferocious bite.

Practicing *dhamma* is the same. The important factor is training realization and understanding of the truth (*āṅāṅa-dassana*) to emerge within the mind, in order to realize and understand according to the ultimate truth. Our countless past lives were destroyed by death. Aspire that this life be the final in the cycle of rebirth. This world is laden with suffering, adverse consequences, and harm. There is nothing of enough significance or relevance in this world to provide comfort or safety.

Ten Beliefs of *Kālāmā Sutta*

The *Kālāmā Sutta* is another issue that will be explained for the reader's information. While the Buddha was still alive, he had insight to know that towards the end of the age of Buddhism, people would change, modify, and embellish the original teachings the Buddha had delineated. Buddhists will misunderstand that the teachings are attributed to the Buddha. The matter of the *Kālāmā Sutta* is logically reasonable and believable. It is the Buddha's word, as laid forth, about the ten beliefs.

I have authored a book about the *Kālāmā Sutta* in which all ten beliefs are detailed. In this text, only one belief will be expounded for the reader to study and understand. The Buddha cautioned Buddhists not to believe in manuals and Scriptures. Some may contend that if manuals and Scriptures are not to be trusted, then what can be? Each individual must use reason to analyze and decide.

The Buddha's teaching is true and accurate. He foretold that in the future (which refers to our current era) everyone will read texts written by their masters. Each book will claim to be the Buddha's teaching of *dhamma*. Upon reading the texts, it is clearly evident that the teachings are not cohesive. Different connotations abound for each topic of *dhamma*. For instance, it is plainly obvious that each master construes insight development (*vipassanā*) differently. Further, there are many more topics of *dhamma* that are interpreted in diverse ways.

To illustrate, if the Threefold Discipline is arranged according the

Noble Eightfold path, the original sequence will be wisdom (*paññā*), moral conduct (*sīla*), and concentration (*samādhi*). The three *paññā* are *suta-maya-paññā*, *cintā-maya-paññā*, and *bhāvanā-maya-paññā*. *Suta-maya-paññā* is understanding acquired by education and *cintā-maya-paññā* refers to selecting the model of *dhamma* that corresponds to one's intrinsic nature for practice.

Once practice reaches the point of increased comprehensive realization and understanding, one will be *yonisomanasikāra*, one who possesses detailed and correct understanding according to the truth such that all doubt and curiosity cease. This is called *bhāvanā-maya-paññā*, the wisdom that connects to attainment (*paṭivedha*), which is the Noble Path (*magga*), the Noble Fruition (*magga-phala*), and *nibbāna*.

The three forms of wisdom must first initiate from the foundations of correct perception of the truth (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and right thought and contemplation of *dhamma* topics (*sammā-saṅkappa*), and are further practiced in the way of the ultimate truth. For example, practicing a category of moral conduct (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), or any other *dhamma* topics will be simple if this logical sequence of practice is understood. Ambiguity will not exist.

Dhamma in texts are merely classifications and labels. It must be internalized and reflected upon in order to truly become *dhamma*. Gluttony, anger, delusion, desire, and defilements of all magnitudes all exist within our minds. Practice must be focused directly inward as,

***“Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā,
manosetṭhā manomayā”***

All truth is congregated in the mind.

Physical *dhamma* practice is merely a shield preventing inappropriate behavior from getting out to others. No one desires improper speech. These actions must be inhibited because everyone detests negative behavior.

Wisdom to Contemplate Suffering

Wisdom (*paññā*) in the contemplation of suffering (*dukkha*) mainly manifests in the mind, as it is the receptor and congregation of all suffering. Physical affliction derives from pain or various ailments, and all corresponding suffering converges in the mind. The mind and body are connected and affect one another.

This is likened to how sound obviously arises as two hands are clapped together. As the mind and body are interdependent, suffering evidently results. Once the mind and body are separated in death, the mind will not be affected by physical suffering. The corpse that is not sustained by a soul will rot and deteriorate. As the corporal form has ceased existing as a human, the human form is *anattā*.

Thus, in using insight-wisdom to contemplate non-self (*anattā*), self (*attā*) must first be understood. The meaning of self must be comprehended. What part of the body is the self? Use wisdom to consider each and every component of the body in order to realize its elemental existence. Isn't it true that people are infatuated and in love with each other's elemental entities? While alive, people have fondness for and love one another according to each person's delusion. It is possible to hug and kiss loved ones while they are still alive.

Once a loved one dies, bathing the body in perfume and patting it with powder will not make it embraceable. The human body is not inherently fragrant and is normally bathed in order to rinse off the filth. Dirt and grime abound in the human body, and if everyone refrained from showering for a couple of days, a filthy

odor would emanate. Those accustomed to pleasant fragrances will be instantly repulsed. It is possible for people to live together when they are accustomed to the stench.

Practitioners who emphasize loathsomeness and impurity (*asubha*) contemplate that every part of the body is filthy. While alive, it is dirty to a certain degree, and upon death, the magnitude of foulness amplifies even more. The filth and stench of a human corpse is much more repugnant than that of an animal. This is the model of *dhamma* practice to prevent lust and infatuation for one another. Thus, *bees hunt for pollen, flies seek out the putrid, and scholars strive for virtue*. Precisely, which one are we? If we are one of the flies, our practice is horribly atrocious. Delusion in things we are fond of as well as in ego and self or self-conceit (*attā*) will persist for eternity.

Consequently, it is crucial to realize and understand self (*attā*) in order to comprehend non-self (*anattā*). Let the mind recalibrate its paradigm and consider that prior misperceptions and misunderstandings were merely dreams in the past. Use individual wisdom and insight to realize and understand the truth, and all curiosity and doubt related to those misperceptions will cease. Thus one will hold the correct paradigm of the truth. This is evident in the Pali phrase,

“Yo dhammaṃ passati so maṃ passati”

One who realizes dhamma is one who sees the Buddha.

Therefore, let us use our own insight to its utmost benefit while still alive in this world. Do not use wisdom in ways that bury yourself alive, or in ways that tie yourself to this world. If we were

able to tie ourselves down, we must also be able to untie ourselves. Thus, one is one's own refuge. Others only point out the way to practice. We must train our mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), and personal ability.

The *dhamma* that the Buddha delineated is only a map detailing various paths. We, as the travelers, must carefully examine and understand the map because we are unfamiliar with the course. This is comparable to the necessity of a flashlight while traversing an unknown trail in the dark. The course is littered with various intersections and signs, each pointing to a different destination. Some intersections lead to lower worlds (*apāyabhūmi*), heaven, or *nibbāna*. If all of this is understood, difficulties will be absent in one's travels.

Dhamma practice is analogous. The Buddha laid forth a map for practice that was clear and obvious. We must employ wisdom to contemplate and understand in terms of cause and effect. In this way, doubts related to one's practice will not exist and time will not be squandered.

The remaining days to live are limited. The precise arrival of death is unknown, so do not take life for granted and miss out on one's opportunity. Many people have died before us, including those who were younger, our peers, older colleagues, as well as the contemporaries of our parents. As apparent in present times, they have all passed on, one after the other. We too will die, and the exact date will be death's final decision. On that day, we will pass on just like those who went before us. There are two meanings for death:

1. Virtue does not exist, while heedlessness does
2. The cessation of breathing and hence, the inability to cultivate any virtue

We must perform as many good deeds as we can before our final breath. This is the advantageous benefit of being born. The value of life must be cultivated, so do not behave like an animal. We, humans, are the foremost in wisdom. Accordingly, we must utilize mindfulness and wisdom in positive ways and train the mind to have perpetual, individual virtue.

In present times, many instructors interpret meaning from the Buddha's teachings and teach their students accordingly. It is quite possible that some teachers' instructions are misaligned with the path to *nibbāna*. So, how can one discern whether a master's teachings are correct or incorrect? No teacher will admit to wrong instruction. Each master proclaims that he is also one who teaches the true path. If we have developed mindfulness and insight, the answer to this quandary will be immediately discerned.

Practitioners are likened to a herd of oxen searching for a leader to bring them across the river to the shore that is safe. There are many leaders with similar physical characteristics. There may be an ox within the group of leaders that had crossed the river before. It is likely that the herd does not know which ox this is, and each ox must make an independent decision. If the experienced ox is selected, the herd is fortunate. The elected ox will lead the herd on a path that is safe and free of obstacles that waste time. The leader will bring the herd straight to the other shore, safe and sound.

Alternately, if the group chooses an ox ignorant of the path, obstacles and hurdles will abound in crossing the river. They may get lost, run into a cluster of rocks, go astray into a pack of crocodiles, or get swept along with the current. Eventually, the leader and the herd will drown and sink in the river's swirling current. They might get swept into the ocean, floating around endlessly, without direction. The same is true of practitioners in modern times.

This is the tail end of Buddhism, and anything is possible. In the present, there are many who understand *sammā-diṭṭhi* in terms of its scholarly, inscribed definition. However, there are not so many that understand *sammā-diṭṭhi* in terms of actual practice. You can observe this phenomenon within the multitude of practitioners.

I have taught models of *dhamma* in terms of practice, and have authored many books on methods for *dhamma* practice. Each book emphasizes the importance of mindfulness and wisdom (*sati-paññā*) first and foremost, followed by instructions for mindfulness and concentration (*sati-samādhi*). In terms of concentration, alert and focused meditation is heavily emphasized because most people possess the *paññāvimutti* character.

Those with the *paññāvimutti* intrinsic nature cannot be fruitful in tranquil meditative practices. After a couple minutes of sitting and repeating a meditative phrase, the *paññāvimutti* will begin thinking about different things. Even after yanking the mind back into the reiterations, the mind will only repeat the phrase momentarily before departing on another tangent. Mostly, thoughts will revert to worldly issues that the practitioner is

accustomed to. Consequently, the mind is consumed with irrelevant reflections and is annoyed and upset with its own thoughts. For the most part, these thoughts concern worldly matters. Although reflections are, at times, related to *dhamma*, it is still insufficient to change any misperceptions.

The level of *dhamma* topics used for reflection is sometimes incongruously applied. At times, *arahant*-level topics are inappropriately drawn from for the contemplation of cessation of defilements and desire in the way of the *arahant*. This kind of thought overestimates and is beyond the capabilities of the practitioner. After meditating on those thoughts, the amount of desires and greed are still identical to the initial amount, before the practitioner started. Consequently, the practitioner concludes that perfections were lacking and the resulting feeling of defeat is discouraging. The practitioner's diligence and determination will fade as well.

This is one precise reason why I have studied the histories of those in the Buddha's era who were to realize *dhamma* and become *ariya-puggala* - to understand the reasons for their attainments. This is also why I have provided examples of *ariya-puggala* with *paññāvimutti* as well as those with *cetovimutti* innate characteristics. Practitioners will be able to change their paradigms to match their intrinsic nature, making *dhamma* practice simpler.

It is unnecessary to force one's mind to attain a specific level of *dhamma*. Aspiring to achieve insights and become a noble individual is how practicing with desires as the forerunner will result in problems. Defilements will easily deceive the mind. Once

more tranquil meditation is practiced one will be oblivious as defilements trick the mind.

As previously detailed in the ten imperfections of insight (*vipassanūpakilesa*), it is untrue that practice under any heading of *dhamma* will capably lead to similar realizations. Read the accounts of *ariya-puggala* during the Buddha's era. There were numerous *ariya-puggala* during those times, both the ordained and lay people. Try adjusting practice methods to correspond to their ways, and results may emerge in this lifetime. Models of *dhamma* practice should be continuously changed until one that is suitable to one's intrinsic character is encountered. In this era, no one can help us, and we must find ways to assist ourselves. Thus, understand that one is one's own refuge.

Principles of *dhamma* are rampant and easy to acquire and read. As for models of *dhamma* to be used in practice that are suitable for our innate nature, these are not beyond our abilities. This is analogous to someone who knows the way and does not get lost. It is easy to reach the desired destination. Models of *dhamma* to support and reinforce practice such that it heads towards *nibbāna* are not difficult to realize and understand on one's own. At times, there is a match between the topic and one's character, yet there is a lack of continuity in practice. Consequently, results of practice do not manifest at that time.

Practice will be simple if it follows the Noble Eightfold Path laid forth by the Buddha, because it is a model that is connected and continuous. The Noble Eightfold Path can be applied in worldly as well as transcendental practice. Practitioners commonly head toward transcendental *dhamma*. They aim for the elimination of

defilements, desires, and mental intoxications in order to become *ariya-puggala*. If the *dhamma* from the Noble Eightfold Path is practiced in worldly terms, there will be good results in terms of positive effects on society.

The world is comprised of various societies, which share commonalities and hold discrepancies in various aspects. We must stand in the middle, listening to each group's opinions. What are their intentions if their perceptions are such and such? Their thoughts correspond to their perceptions and viewpoints. Do specific actions contribute to their benefit, or to that of another's? We must analyze the reasons for their actions in order to model our own after good behavior, while rejecting the example of poor conduct. Familiarize oneself with one's wrong and right perceptions in order to change these viewpoints in a positive direction.

Studying *dhamma* through observations of other people is easy to understand. Someone's character is easily determined by their natural behavior. Greed or anger are character traits that manifest in different ways. After observing others, we reflect on ourselves to see if we act in the same way. If we behave similarly, we must change our perceptions.

Everyone desires one-sided praise from others. This reflects the tendency for people to want others' understanding, without being willing to provide any reciprocal sympathy. Even if one is wrong in action or speech, one will attempt to say something to cover it up and pretend that the wrongdoing never happened. People do not want others to know of their offenses. Gossiping and insulting others is typical human behavior. Let us examine

whether or not we also possess this character. If the answer is in the affirmative, this must change. Train oneself to understand others, and in doing so, one's arrogance and self-conceit will be reduced.

We are flawed, and others can see our weaknesses. Everyone serves as a mirror of reflection for one another. The first point of interest is behavior and manners which manifests both physically and verbally. These two forms of behavior are the doorway to society that is exposed on a daily basis. If one thinks in a negative direction, one should guard the physical and verbal expression of it from others. Even if the mind contains anger or hatred, one must exercise patience.

Fools tend to gossip and malign others, creating a mountain out of an anthill. False occurrences are portrayed as true, and they lack patience and restraint in verbal expression. Additionally, these defective people do not admit to their wrongdoings. Consequently, people are malevolent, vindictive, and seek vengeance on one another. As practitioners, we should not let these situations arise. Be conscious of oneself at all times. Thus the Thai saying, *speech is worth a few dimes, silence is golden*. One should revisit and review one's words.

Sammā-diṭṭhi is correct perception in terms of worldly *dhamma*. Righteousness that one should cultivate within the mind is practicing such that fairness emerges and within oneself. If the mind is righteous, then thought, action, and speech will be just, both for oneself and others. Consequently, bliss will exist within the family unit. Even relatives, friends, or society will be happy. Those who are just, garner respect and credibility. Righteous

people desire relationships with like-minded people. Consequently, identifying righteous people is easy because their actions and speech are clear indicators. Good people are people who are fair and just. Therefore, we must practice being just in order to be good people.

Wherever determination exists, therein lies success. Virtue is not beyond anyone's abilities. Those who desire goodness, find it easy to perform moral actions and difficult to commit bad deeds. Fools want to be malicious, and consequently find it easy to perform bad deeds and difficult to act morally. In human society, both the just and fools coexist. This is reinforced by King Bhumipol of Thailand's speech to his people,

"In one country, there exist both good and bad people. No one can transform all people into righteous and moral individuals. Bringing normalcy and peace to the people does not indicate making everyone moral and just. It lies within promoting those who are good and having just people govern the land; in controlling situations such that bad people do not have authority and do not cause trouble and unrest."

These words clearly indicate that governance by a good person will result in prosperity. Governance by a bad individual will result in deterioration of society. In every society and different occupations, if a moral person is in charge, tasks will be completed successfully.

The Four *Nimitta*

In the Scriptures, three types of visions (*nimitta*) are referenced:

1. *Supina-nimitta* (dreams). Those who are sleeping will have dreams. At times, those dreams are frightening, while during other times they are pleasant. Sometimes they are about abnormal physical conditions, or concern the past or the future. Occasionally dreams are about memories or about attachment and clinging to the senses. Some people do not dream while they sleep, while others do. The subject matter in dreams is sometimes false, and other times it is true.

To illustrate, when *King Pasenadi* fell asleep, he dreamt of sixteen things. He related his dreams to the Buddha, and the Buddha hypothesized their significance in what is known as *Buddhadhamnai*, or the Buddha's Prophecies. I have explained these in depth in my book entitled, "Natural Disasters." A few of the items will be discussed hereafter.

King Pasenadi dreamt of various types of trees, hardly large enough to bear flowers and fruit. Yet, the trees were so filled with the burden of heavy fruit and blossoming flowers that the branches could not withstand the weight.

The Buddha prophesized that in the distant future adolescent girls, too young to be wed, will be filled with sexual lust and desire. They will get married at a young age, against the customs of society. They will copulate without shame. Upon becoming pregnant, they will find ways to abort the baby. After their birth, some children will not have parents or shelter. The newborns will

be homeless and deserving of great pity. These occurrences will occur in the future. Other prophecies can be found in the book I have authored.

If practitioners who possess wisdom apply their dreams in terms of *dhamma*, the dreams will serve as great resources for the cultivation of wisdom. Therefore, visions will be wasted if wisdom is not used to interpret them. I, for one, agree that dreams should be interpreted in order to support wisdom. They should be internalized and deciphered in terms of analogies that relate to the four elements and the five aggregates. They should correspond to impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self or cessation of existence in supposed form (*anattā*) in order to be a model of wisdom development for oneself. This is called *paṭibhāga-nimitta*, the use of insight-wisdom to contemplate and elaborate. Visions (*nimitta*) denote meaning. Therefore, interpret the visions according to that which it relates.

2. *Uggaha-nimitta* is vision that occurs while sitting in meditation. Once the mind converges into concentration, various forms of visions will arise. They can be scary, pleasant and pleasing, or even disgusting and repulsive. Every time visions arise, employ wisdom in the interpretation and related application of its meaning. If there is a lack of insight in contemplating the *uggaha-nimitta*, then the visions will be useless. Therefore, it is imperative that benefit is derived from the visions, because it is an excellent resource in supporting the development of wisdom.

3. *Phassa-nimitta* is a form of vision that arises while fully awake. It occurs while the person is neither sleeping nor performing

tranquil meditation. This type of vision results from the sensation from the five bodily sensing mechanisms:

3.1 *Cakkhu-nimitta*. When the eyes perceive a form, meaning related to the form arises in the mind. The connotation may be that the form is pleasant and pleasing, and subsequently, feelings of love, fondness, and happiness arise. This is called *sukha-vedanā*, and mind's enjoyment of happiness. Likewise, if the eyes sense a form that is displeasing, *dukkha-vedanā*, the mind's consumption of adverse feeling, arises. If the internal sense organs come into contact with the external sense objects, the feeling of indifference, neither love nor hate, is referred to as *upekkhā*. *Phassa-nimitta* is when eyes sense a form, and lust and desire arise within the mind. Emotion springs from the form, and *saṅkhāra*, volitional thought and imagination, related to the form is bound to arise. Once thoughts of the form occur in a lustful way, volitional thought will imagine in terms of the various volitional situations or fantasies. Therefore, volitional thoughts and volitional situations are intimately related.

This is similar to how anything can be written, according to the mind's desires, once a pen and paper are ready. Likewise, if the mind is partial to love and desire, then volitional thought will use the form to fantasize in a lustful fashion. The mind imagines in terms of lust and greed, painting and conjuring up images of volitional situations. The form is used as visions for volitional thought and imagination all the time. *Phassa-nimitta* depends on the physical form for definition and consequently creates emotion

according to the world's conventions¹⁵. Both humans and animals that are delusional with the world are stuck in the very same spot. They have persisted in being reborn in this world, and will continue to hold worldly delusions. The mind that is infatuated with sense pleasures will become more and more delusional with each passing day. Those who lack wisdom will be unable to find a way out, as the mind is completely obscured by the darkness of ignorance (*avijjā*).

Practitioners must study well and understand the root of the cause. The mind cannot distinguish wrong from right, nor what is or isn't suitable. Once the eyes perceive form, defilements and volitional thoughts infiltrate. Volitional situations are created to describe and define an object and one comes to believe that the assumed form is true. Consequently, the blossoming of imagination is triggered. Thoughts of beauty, love, fondness, and fragrant aromas are woven into full-fledged situations.

As for thoughts in the opposite spectrum, of how the human physical form is dirty and filthy, or how there is not a single component of the human body that is pleasantly fragrant - why aren't reflections about these subjects? Dreams of love can vividly carry on all day, while standing, walking, sitting, and lying down. When a person has departed or it has been many years since their death, emotions of love are dug up and delightfully reflected

15. *Phassa-nimitta* occurs when the internal sense organs perceive the external sense objects and a description or definition of the perceived form is constructed from the information gathered. Thereafter, one's thoughts transpire in the volitional direction that corresponds to worldly conventions. As an example, one sees an object. The eyes perceive the form and the internal sense organs determine that the form is a red rose. The red rose subsequently revives thoughts of when one was on a date and a man gave a red rose to a woman as a symbol of love. These volitional thoughts generate emotions of happiness or sadness according to one's past experience of a red rose. These emotions are worldly conventions that result from *phassa-nimitta*.

upon, as if the person were still by one's side. There are fantasies of adorable conversations, endearing smiles as sweet as sugar, and the sensation of physical contact. This is what is called, *building a castle in the air and painting dreams*. One believes in the promise made in this lifetime that love will persist until the destruction of the skies and the obliteration of the Earth. Why are people capable of thinking in terms of theatrical performances that deceive the mind into being obsessed and deluded? What is more, these thoughts are intentionally maintained, without any inkling of tiring or resting.

This is likened to a worm eating a pile of feces. The worm believes it is consuming a highly desired dish, and is completely uninterested in an offering of the finest, first-rate cuisine. The mind that is infatuated with physical form is just the same. As practitioners, we must reset this paradigm. Practice thinking in the opposite direction, as the Buddha instructed. Thoughts of beauty have been deeply ingrained and persisted for so long that the mind is delusional. Therefore, train in wisdom and try to think in terms of loathsomeness and impurity (*asubha*) as previously explained, in order for the mind to be liberated from the cavernous abyss.

3.2 *Sota-nimitta* refers to when the ears perceive a sound. This is a form of vision impressed in the mind that is capable of generating the emotion of love. It is an alluring sound that charms and enchants the mind, and that one wishes one could forget. The mind is interested in hearing the sound constantly, particularly as the sound that relates to love for one another is enchantingly imprinted in the mind. During the teenage and elderly years or

even as one steps away from the coffin, music is still used as a liaison for the emotions of love. In the way that the mind is attached to love, emotions are correspondingly used to rejuvenate access to the sounds in music. In other words, both young men and women use sound as liaisons for tying down each other's hearts.

This is comparable to two people sitting in a boat, floating in the middle of the ocean. Once the boat sinks, the two people will hold onto one another until their final breaths. Likewise, a pleased and obsessed mind will use sound to tie itself down. In other words, aren't those who frequently traverse the cycle of birth and death in this world infatuated with sound? Practitioners must reflect on and observe their minds constantly. If the mind is pleased with sound, immediately reverse the inclination, and train such that the mind is no longer attached to it. Use wisdom to continually train the mind to recognize and learn the methods in which sound is used as a liaison for attachment. In this way, the mind will realize and understand the resulting suffering, harm, and adverse consequences that transpire in terms of defilements and desires. Do not allow sound to dupe the mind into believing that sound is a normal aspect of the world. Otherwise, we will be swallowed up in the world's conventions for eternity.

3.3 *Ghāna-nimitta* Fragrant scent is akin to this concept. The aromas of various flowers, incense, and heartwood are not as significant as the scent of humans. While alive, humans sniff and smell one another according to their relative obsessions. Each party puts on an aromatic façade by showering in powder or perfumes. These sweet-smelling scents are applied in an attempt

to conceal and restrict one's organic human stench from proliferating outward, as well as to deceive others into believing that one is naturally fragrant. Those who are delighted by aromatic scents will walk straight into the trap of obsession and infatuation. Thus the saying,

“Bees hunt for pollen, Flies seek out the putrid, And scholars strive for virtue.”

So, let us observe ourselves and consider which insect we are. If one happens to be a fly, what steps must be taken to transform perception into that which corresponds to a bee? The reader is probably a bee searching for pollen, or a scholar seeking virtue. Morality already inherently exists because virtuous individuals have a non-diluting, fragrant aroma that emanates in all directions. This is strikingly divergent from the stench of corrupt, immoral people. Therefore, practitioners should not become infatuated with only fragrant scents, but should also strive to familiarize themselves with reeking stench. Aromatic and filthy odors are a pair, and exist in concert within each one of us. How can one best maintain the fragrant aroma within oneself for eternity?

“Sīlagandho anuttaro”

Those who are innately virtuous will possess aromatic scents that resist the world conventions in every realm.

Those lacking mindfulness and wisdom (*sati-paññā*) are delusional for thinking that human scents and various floral aromas are pleasing, and consequently cycle in this world incessantly.

3.4 *Rasa-nimitta* The term *rasa* (flavor, essence, taste) is commonly interpreted as a culinary term. This connotation is partially accurate as each individual's form aggregate has been trained differently. For instance, one person is accustomed to Chinese chow mein and jasmine rice, while the other is familiar with cheeseburgers and French fries. Practitioners must train their bodies to be receptive to both cuisines in order to be unattached to particular flavors in food. Practice being someone who is easy to care for.

However, those with ailments are excluded from this, as they are restricted in the consumption of only specific, physically compatible food types. In other words suitable foods are compatible with a person's physical elements and facilitate comfort. One's unfruitful practice cannot be blamed on food. Monks in the Buddha's era or even in contemporary times are particularly attached to flavors they are accustomed to, and they are afraid to venture out to different locations. They are afraid that the food out there will be incompatible with their physical form, and consequently inedible. Thereafter, they will physically waste away and become emaciated and sick. These situations have already transpired during the Buddha's era.

The term *rasa* (flavor) can be interpreted in numerous ways, such as action or speech that is completely devoid of flavor. Compliments or accolades are referred to as having a good flavor. *Dhamma* has a flavor superior to all others. Thus, *rasa* (flavor) can be connoted differently. Practitioners should shed lowly, worldly flavors and consume the superior flavors of *dhamma* in order to experience positive results.

3.5 *Phoṭṭhabba-nimitta* refers to the human skin perceiving hot, cool, or icy temperatures. If the weather is moderate and typical for the particular season, the human body will receive it well. The weather will provide comfort. On the other hand, extreme temperatures affect both the mind and body. However, those accustomed to the weather extremes will be able to live comfortably. Therefore, find a location that is suitable for one's physical composition. Such a location is called *utusappāya*. If it is possible to select a location with weather that is fitting for one's body, practice will be simple and free of obstacles.

Regarding the subject of females and males, if there is sensation from skin contact and one lacks comprehensive wisdom, it is more than likely that emotions will arise. The mind will want to slip deeper into the lustful sensation. If one experiences a soft cushion or bed and is someone who seeks out pleasure, lustful sensations will arise as well. The imagination will conjure up fantasies of the opposite sex. Thus, novices should take special care to study and understand both the internal sense organs and external sense objects. As for lay practitioners, these people will find it difficult to train because of the frequent proximity to and intermingling with the opposite sex. For instance, take *Visākhā*, who attained *sotāpanna* as an adolescent. When she reached her teens, she married because she was still pleased by fine sense pleasures.

The aforementioned five sense pleasures will be completely known only by those who have the corresponding character and potential primed to attain *anāgāmi* (third level of enlightenment) or *arahant* (ultimate enlightenment). The *sotāpanna* are not yet complete in their knowledge of sense pleasures. Even for the

sakadāgāmī (second level of enlightenment), there are subtle magnitudes of lust and aversion-repulsion (*paṭigha*) sleeping deep in their minds. They will boast to other laypeople that they are free from all sensations. However, it is natural for the mind to seek out sensations. As a result, emotions arise and are deeply impressed on the mind. Such emotions arise from perception and sensation through the sense bases and are linked to the mental aggregate (*nāma-khandha*) called *vedanā*.

The term, *vedanā* is defined as emotions within the mind that arise from tangible form (*rūpa-khandha*), as previously described. The four elements (earth, water, wind, and fire) congregate as the tangible form. As the internal sense organs come into contact with the external sense objects, emotions arise within the mind. Details of this process will not be explained here because they are already described in many manuals. I have explained the internal and external *sense bases* in order to serve as resources for *dhmma* practice. The effectiveness of the application of these resources is dependent on the individual's personal ability. In order to have a complete grasp on the sensations, one must have mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). Understand this accordingly.

The three visions (*nimitta*) that have been discussed here include *supina-nimitta*, *uggaha-nimitta*, and *phassa-nimitta*. *Supina-nimitta* refers to dreams while sleeping, and *uggaha-nimitta* is meditating to the point of equanimity and where various images arise. These images can be adorable, frightening, repulsive, or filthy. *Phassa-nimitta* denotes perception through the sense bases, as was previously detailed.

4. *Paṭibhāga-nimitta* As there are many who do not understand this concept, I will break it down into simpler terms. *Paṭi* refers to practice or training. *Bhāga* means to elaborate, analyze, explain, and hypothesize. *Nimitta* refers to meaning. As an example, if the eyes perceive a tangible form, the form will generate an emotional response. Likewise, perceiving sound through the ears will result in the use of sound in emotions.

When taken together, *paṭibhāga-nimitta* refers to how wisdom must be used in practice in order to contemplate meanings, as previously explained. From here on out, train the mind to oppose the world's conventions. When the eyes perceive an old person of say, eighty years of age, this image can be used as a vision whose meaning can be contemplated with wisdom. The discomforts and inconveniences of an elderly individual can be internalized and applied to oneself. If we were eighty years old, like this person, discomfort and inconvenience would emerge within us in the same way. Similarly, upon seeing an afflicted or sick individual, use insight to internalize and apply the parallel in the same way.

We have taken part in many funerals. Upon seeing a coffin, one must use insight to apply the coffin as a meaningful vision. At this time, the person is lying in the coffin. This parallel can be internalized and personally applied by realizing that in the near future, we too will be lying in a coffin. It is an inevitable and inescapable truth for all people. Thus, we must derive some benefit from attending the funeral. It is as if we are realizing the truth and being awakened by seeing the life of the deceased and that of our own, which will transpire in the same way. It is their

turn to depart from us. In the days ahead, it will be our turn to leave our friends and relatives and be separated from the things we love.

Dhamma practice necessitates the use of insight in clarifying and elaborating the meaning in various situations and internalizing and comparing it to oneself. If the vision is related to the four elements, internalize it in terms of earth, water, wind, and fire. Make sure it relates to the principles of the Three Common Characteristics: impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self or cessation of existence in supposed form (*anattā*), and the causes of suffering. If the vision is related to something that has ceased being, then use insight to contemplate in terms of *anattā*, the non-existence as an animal, individual, self, us, or them. For issues related to defilements and desires, wisdom should be used to think in terms of the evil defilement that incites feelings of love and pleasure within the mind. In every situation, use *paṭibhāga-nimitta*, the insight, to contemplate the meaning of the visions.

If one applies wisdom in the contemplation of death so frequently that it becomes habitual, one is practicing *paññāvimutti*. One who applies individual insight in the examination of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self or cessation of existence in supposed form (*anattā*) or other issues are practitioners who train in *paññāvimutti*. Therefore, the reader should understand visions and their corresponding rationale and meanings that I have explained. Use *paṭibhāga-nimitta* wisdom to analyze every single issue that the eyes, ears, nose, and body perceive. Insight must be used in every situation because the external sense

objects are models used in practice. Therefore, we must continue to be diligent in applying insight-wisdom in the contemplation of ultimate truth.

The Five *Khandha*

The five aggregates (*khandha*) are *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, and *viññāṇa*. The Buddha proclaimed that attachment to the aggregates (*upādāna-khandha*) is the cause of suffering. Suffering results because we cling to idea of self and want the five aggregates to linger according to our desires. False perception that the five aggregates are actually the self is a misperception and misunderstanding that has persisted until the present. Those who do not understand this will continue to be attached to and cling to the self. As a consequence, distress and suffering result from this misperception.

The five aggregates are separated into two categories, namely tangible form aggregate (*rūpa-khandha*) and intangible aggregate (*nāma-khandha*). The tangible form aggregate is the collection of the earth, water, wind, and fire elements. The intangible form aggregate is comprised of *vedanā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhāra*, and *viññāṇa*. The tangible form aggregate must exist in order for the intangible aggregate to operate. Likewise, in order for the tangible form aggregate to exist, it must rely on the intangible aggregate.

Thus, tangible form aggregate and intangible aggregate are mutually dependant on each other. Once the tangible form aggregate perceives something, the intangible aggregate will collect information. If the intangible aggregate is operating, the tangible form aggregate is the source. While one is still alive and breathing, both *rūpa* and *nāma* work together. The two separate upon one's death. This is likened to building a house for temporary usage. After a time, the house will deteriorate. Similarly, when

the time arrives, *rūpa* and *nāma* must separate.

Guidelines for *dhamma* practice in the level of tangible form aggregate and intangible aggregate are widespread and taught by many instructors. For the most part, sitting meditation is taught, while introspection and insight development (*vipassanā*) are not. Practicing *dhamma* without knowledge of the various stages makes it difficult to produce results. The steps related to *dhamma* practice in order to attain levels of enlightenment as *sotāpanna*, *sakadāgāmī*, *anāgāmi*, and *arahant* differ in depth and detail. Defilements and desire are eradicated in both coarse and detailed levels corresponding to the stage of practice.

This is similar to someone with a *dhamma* certification of a bachelor's degree level being unable to answer a question of a doctorate level. The education of solely the bachelor's level cannot sufficiently address questions under the heading of an advanced post-doctorate degree. Likewise, training in *dhamma* will be simpler if it follows the relative, delineated processes. However, most *dhamma* practitioners follow random guidelines that do not match up and consequently do not understand *dhamma*. The majority of *dhamma* that is practiced nowadays is derived from the level of the *arahant*. It is uncertain whether we will have the perfection to achieve *arahantship* in this lifetime. If our perfection is insufficient, then our practice will not produce any results.

If one has cultivated enough perfection to attain enlightenment of a particular level, the corresponding examples of *dhamma* will present themselves such that one will achieve the particular level

of *ariya-puggala*. In this lifetime, there is ample opportunity for one to become a *sotāpanna*. Once one has attained *sotāpanna*, one has effectively entered the stream of *ariya-puggala* and subsequent levels of *ariya-puggala* will be simple to achieve.

As for the question of whether one will be aware of the level of *ariya-puggala* achieved, the answer is that one will know oneself without seeking confirmation from others. Even if the Buddha were present, one would not need confirmation from him. Those who achieved *ariya-puggala* in the Buddha's era as well as the present era will know themselves well. Achievement of each stage of *ariya-puggala* effectively dispels the doubt corresponding to the relative level. Comparison to texts and scriptures for the sake of confirmation of either right or wrong is unnecessary. One will know oneself and does not need confirmation from anyone else. Further, one does not boast of one's knowledge in front of other people. One will live normally, just like others, and will maintain one's habits.

If you have any questions concerning this text and have the time to ask me directly, I am always ready to elaborate on every matter. Other people's answer may not be aligned with the question. However, you may find your own answers from reading this book.

May you all have mindfulness and wisdom and true perception and comprehensive understanding of the ultimate truth according to the perfections you have cultivated.

Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño



About the Author

Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño was born in 1935, and ordained as a monk in 1961. He was a pupil of renowned *Venerable Ācariya Khao Anālayo* of Wat Tam Klong Paen in the Nong Bua Lam Phu province of Thailand. In his early years, *Ācariya Thoon* set out to various forest destinations and practiced *dhamma* until he profoundly realized and understood according to the truth that the Buddha had laid forth.

Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño's remarkable life achievements truly exemplify his dedication to sustaining Buddhism for posterity. In 1985, *Ācariya Thoon* built and established Wat Pa Ban Koh in Udon Thani as a site for practitioners to train in the Buddha's *dhamma*. *Ācariya Thoon* also built and supported many temples in Thailand, as well as abroad in the principal cities of Hong Kong, San Francisco, and New York. In 2001, he designed a majestic pagoda that was erected in just 15 months, due to the incredible faith of his followers both in Thailand and overseas. A grand museum at Wat Pa Ban Koh was built for *Ācariya Thoon* to live in, as well as to honor his remarkable life story and house his relics. For his priceless contributions to Buddhism, *Ācariya Thoon* received the royal distinction of Phra Banyapisantaera in 2005.

Not only was *Ācariya Thoon* exceptional in terms of wisdom, but he was also talented in a number of other ways. Herbal medicines sold at Wat Pa Ban Koh are produced from organically grown herbs according to *Ācariya Thoon's* original recipes. And in 2008,

Ācariya Thoon designed and hand-carved four large wooden Buddha statues, for a tribute to the four great milestones in the Buddha's history. He also organized leadership conventions for children in order to familiarize them with their Buddhist supports and to provide them with the wisdom to survive in our increasingly wayward world.

Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño used a variety of media to connect people to the Buddha's *dhamma*. He authored over 100 poems, wrote and produced didactic plays, and gave countless *dhamma* sermons around the globe. *Ācariya Thoon* also authored over twenty highly acclaimed books on *dhamma* practice, both in Thai and translated into English. For his eloquence in writing Buddhist books, *Ācariya Thoon* received the honorable *Saemadhammajakka* award in 1990. His most popular books include *The Cause of Suffering*, *Paññā to Train the Mind*, *Sammā-diṭṭhi*, and *Sappurisa-dhamma*. *Paradigm Shift* was *Ācariya Thoon's* penultimate book authored before his passing in November 2008, and the book he was most proud of because of its comprehensive nature.

Ācariya Thoon was famous for his unique, straightforward approach to *dhamma* practice that emphasized the need to identify the suffering, harmful consequences, and dangers inherent in all things, as well as the necessary cultivation of individual mindfulness, alert and focused concentration, and insight-wisdom. He successfully developed a distinctive and practical method for people to eliminate the suffering that emerged in their daily lives.

About the Author

Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño entered final *nibbāna* on November 11, 2008 at Wat Pa Ban Koh in Udon Thani, Thailand. He was 73 years of age and had been ordained for 48 years.

About the Translator

San Francisco native Neecha Thian-Ngern holds a Bachelors of Science in Electrical Engineering from UC San Diego and a Masters in Business Administration. Neecha has been a devout follower of *Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño* since the age of 16.

Back in Chicago, 1999, in a single, explosive moment, *Venerable Ācariya Thoon* gave Neecha a new perspective on life. He led her to realize a simple, yet comprehensive truth: *No one can make you suffer. Things happen, and you suffer. The cause is within you.*

Today, Neecha applies *Ācariya Thoon's* methods of contemplation to solve issues in her daily life. Under the tutelage of Mae Yo, *Ācariya Thoon's* foremost disciple, and through the constant application of rational internalized reflection, Neecha has been able to dramatically limit the frequency of her emotional volcanic eruptions as well as conflicts with friends, family, and coworkers.

Deeply grateful for *Ācariya Thoon's* unique and practical approach to *dhamma* practice, Neecha is inspired to communicate his message to the English speaking public. Neecha has been entrusted with translating all of *Ācariya Thoon's* books. To date, she has published three of his books and five sermons. Neecha produces video content for KPY Productions and is one of the organizers and instructors at the annual KPY Retreats.