



# PARADIGM ṬḤIHS

Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño



# PARADIGM SHIFT

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Khippapañño



WAT SAN FRAN

# Paradigm Shift

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## Translator's Note

**P**ARADIGM SHIFT WAS originally translated in 2008. Since then, my understanding of the Thai and Pāli languages, Luang Por Thoon's writing, and the Dhamma in general has evolved. As a result, while some of the original text remains in this 2025 edition, many passages were significantly edited or completely retranslated to more accurately capture the essence of Dhamma concepts and to better facilitate the reader's understanding.

The Sanskrit version of words like “karma” and “dharma” are prevalent in Buddhism's English narrative today. However, the Theravāda tradition uses Pāli, so those familiar Sanskrit words will take on slightly different spellings in some cases—such as “kamma” and “dhamma.” Additionally, there are differences in meaning highlighted by instances when dhamma is capitalized or not. In its uppercase form, Dhamma means the Buddha's teachings, while its lowercase form refers to the laws of nature, the truth about the way things are, or mental objects.

The widespread practice of silent, sitting meditation that is the face of Buddhism today is commonly referred to as “samādhi.” However, the original Pāli term doesn't only come in the tranquil version. Samādhi translates to concentration or unification of the mind. Calm, serene meditation is only one of many incarnations of concentration. In this text, “meditation” will primarily be used to refer to the contemporary connotation of samādhi (sitting

or tranquil meditation) and not the denotation of the word (contemplation or deep reflection).

Buddhist teachers and texts, including this one, frequently mention kilesa and taṇhā. But what exactly are they? Taṇhā is desire. Kilesa literally translates as torment of the mind but is more commonly translated as defilement or mental impurity. Defilements are the things, the representations, or the embodiments of desire. For instance, expensive cars, the latest and greatest gadgets, brand-name clothing, or a large house in an affluent neighborhood are all defilements associated with the desire to be rich. Like desires, defilements are limitless. Luang Por Thoon often refers to defilements and desires as deceiving us and leading us to be reborn within this world.

Ñāṇa and dassana are important concepts in Luang Por Thoon's teachings. Ñāṇa is knowing or understanding. Dassana is seeing or realizing. For instance, the Buddha taught that birth, aging, sickness, and death are normal. So, we know that aging is normal. Every day, we see actual evidence of how we have aged—wrinkles, white hairs, loss of strength and flexibility—and how things around us age—toothbrushes fraying, clothes wearing thin, vegetables wilting, food going stale. However, if you don't fuse the theory that you know with the reality that you see, you won't be able to profoundly penetrate the truth about aging. Once you do connect them, you will both understand and realize the indisputable truth about aging—it is impermanent, it causes

suffering, it isn't who we are and it doesn't belong to us, and it is normal. This is the "knowing and seeing" that Luang Por Thoon frequently refers to throughout this text.

In Thai, ārammaṇa denotes mood, emotion, or temper. In Pāli, ārammaṇa denotes an object, sense-object, preoccupation, or focus of the mind at a given moment. Ārammaṇa is basically the sense-object, or what happens when the internal sense-bases (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body) interact with the external sense-bases (form, sound, scent, taste, touch). Once the interaction occurs, there are three types of preoccupations: 1. pleasing (iṭṭhārammaṇa), 2. displeasing (aniṭṭhārammaṇa), and 3. indifferent, neither pleasing nor displeasing (upekkhā-ārammaṇa). When the pleasing ārammaṇa occurs, you repeat it in order to hold onto it. When the displeasing ārammaṇa occurs, you try to push it away to get rid of it. When you don't feel completely fulfilled about something because it isn't clearly pleasing or clearly displeasing, it becomes a lingering, unresolved ārammaṇa (this is referred to elsewhere as a neutral ārammaṇa). The residue of these three types of preoccupations or objects (ārammaṇa) that you hold onto are called mind-objects (dhammārammaṇa). Pleasing ārammaṇas (iṭṭhārammaṇa) lead to desire for existence (bhava-taṇhā), displeasing ārammaṇas (aniṭṭhārammaṇa) lead to desire for non-existence (vibhava-taṇhā), and indifferent ārammaṇas (upekkhā-ārammaṇa) lead to ignorance (avijjā).

Sammuti is a term found in both Pāli and Thai. In Thai, sammuti means pretend, assume, suppose, or not real. It is translated from Pāli into English as general opinion, consent, construct, convention, supposition, or anything that is conjured into being by the mind. It is labeling things so that they can be referred to and then coming to perceive those things in terms of those labels. For instance, “mother,” in a technical and objective sense, is the physical being that provides an egg. But “mother” has been expanded to include common cultural norms: one who loves, nurtures, and raises you; one who stays at home, cooks, and cleans; one who sacrifices her life for her child. And once you buy into these conventional characterizations and begin to expect “mother” to be a certain way, suffering arises when a mother doesn’t raise her own child, a mother is abusive and neglectful, a mother doesn’t fit into the homemaker mold, or when it is the child who sacrifices for the mother. These labels, constructs, and conventional realities are the sammuti that make up the world as we know it. That is why Luang Por Thoon refers to this world as the “mahā-sammuti,” or great sammuti.

Puñña is translated as merit or meritorious action, but for those who didn’t grow up in a Buddhist culture, what does that even mean? Making merit can be a virtuous deed that is tangible, like donating goods to a respectable temple or building a pagoda to honor the Buddha. It can also be intangible, like observing the

precepts or dedicatedly practicing the Dhamma. Its cousin, kusala, is translated as wholesome, skillful, or clever. Luang Por Thoon has explained in Q&A sessions that kusala is wisdom (paññā), and kusala comes before puñña. Kusala is the wisdom to seek and recognize opportunities to make merit in a way that leads to heaven or enlightenment. Commonly referred to together, “puñña-kusala” basically represents something good, or good kamma. Their counterpart, pāpa, is translated as demerit or evil. Like puñña, pāpa can be tangible, like stealing something, or intangible, like disrespecting a teacher. In other words, it refers to something bad, or bad kamma. Buddhists are encouraged to cultivate puñña and abstain from pāpa, as we will have to account for all of our actions—both good and bad.

## Preface

THIS BOOK YOU are about to read, *Paradigm Shift*, was given this title because Buddhism was born from the 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 foundation of wrong views (micchā-diṭṭhi). The Buddha used wisdom (paññā) to contemplate indisputable truths (sacca-dhamma) and developed a paradigm of right views (sammā-diṭṭhi). He realized that everything in this world falls under the Three Common Characteristics (tilakkhaṇa) of impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and not-self (anattā)—there is nothing in this world that is truly “me” or “mine.” That which we understand to be who we are is not truly us. In the same vein, possessions do not actually belong to us.

In order to know and see this righteous truth, there must be knowing and seeing with mindful wisdom (sati-paññā) and knowing and seeing with reason that corresponds to the truth. This is so that you can distinguish which views are wrong and which views are right. This must be discerned with rationality that corresponds to the supremacy of the rule of dhamma (dhammā-dhipateyya). Therefore, the foundation of sammā-diṭṭhi is the path of Dhamma practice.

In this era, there are many people who are interested in and actively practice the Dhamma. However, the methods that are

taught are misaligned with the principles of teachings from the Buddha's era. It is taught that tranquil meditation (samādhi) will generate paññā. Consequently, practitioners believe the teachings from manuals, textbooks, or instructors and practice accordingly. They are afflicted with the Ten Defilements of Insight (vipassanūpakilesa), which is a path misaligned with the path and fruit of enlightenment and counter to the methods of the holy ones (ariya-puggala).

Practitioners should observe their intrinsic nature in order to determine whether or not it corresponds to deliverance through wisdom (paññā-vimutti) or deliverance of mind (ceto-vimutti). Both are detailed in this book. If one uses the mode of practice that is suitable to one's character, then one's practice will be simple and will yield actual results. Consequently, those results will confirm that one's beliefs are founded in reason and causality, unlike the Kālāmas, who blindly follow manuals, textbooks, or their instructor.

May you all contemplate the material in this book often and use it as a model for solving and eradicating your own problems. May you all forever flourish in the Dhamma, so as to cease rebirth in the Three Realms of Existence.

Phra Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño  
(Phra Paññāvisālathera)

# PARADIGM SHIFT

*“The Buddha necessitated that people first identify their faults. Upon recognition of your faults, it is possible to change wrong views into right views.”*



## Paradigm Shift

**B** UDDHISM 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 prophecy from the Buddha Dīpaṅkara. He cultivated the Ten Perfections of Character (pāramī)<sup>1</sup> over a prolonged period of twenty aeons. In his final rebirth, Prince Siddhattha was born to the Sakya clan in Kapilavattu. He was the son of King Suddhodana and Queen Māyādevī. Prince Siddhattha's cultivation of the perfections was replete and fully primed. This would be his final birth in the eternal cycle of rebirth in the Three Realms of Existence.<sup>2</sup>

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1 There are ten perfections of character (pāramī): generosity (dāna), morality (sīla), renunciation (nekkhamma), wisdom (paññā), effort or diligence (virīya), patience or forbearance (khanti), truthfulness or commitment (sacca), resolve or determination (adhiṭṭhāna), benevolence or loving-kindness (mettā), and equanimity (upekkhā).

2 The Three Realms of Existence are: Kāma-loka, or the world of sense desire; Rūpa-loka, or the world of form; and Arūpa-loka, or the formless world.

Many people have read the Buddha's history where Prince Siddhattha sees four divine messengers: an old person, a sick person, a dead person, and an ascetic. Following the experience, Prince Siddhattha used his individual wisdom (pañña) to contemplate how after being born, humans cannot maintain their lives at any single stage. Every component of the body must naturally age, become sick, and die. A person's impoverished or wealthy status doesn't matter, as 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. 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 be this way.

Prince Siddhattha realized and subsequently internalized this paradigm. He used wisdom to contemplate and analyze the lives of others as well as his own. Prince Siddhattha clearly knew and saw how all lives must transpire in this manner. His colossal wealth and separate palaces for each of the three seasons could not halt the process of aging, sickness, and death.

The frequent use of wisdom to contemplate in this way generated a change in Prince Siddhattha's perception. Upon employing wisdom in his analysis of aging, sickness, and death, Prince Siddhattha understood that all these afflictions were the products of birth. Without birth, there would be no aging, sickness,

or death. Thus, Prince Siddhattha concluded that aging, sickness, and death were consequences of birth.

Prince Siddhattha continued to examine what the causes and factors of birth were, as well as what it was that led people to be born. He used wisdom to diligently analyze this while standing, walking, sitting, and lying down. He constantly contemplated the cause of birth. 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 meditation and had appeared peaceful. He thought that if only he could ordain as an ascetic, he would have a better opportunity to use wisdom to examine the cause of birth. This is how wisdom changes perception.

Thereafter, Prince Siddhattha used wisdom to plan how he could 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 his 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. Their elemental bodies and his elemental body were the same. Whatever those people ate, that was what he would eat. The prince was aware that life outside the palace walls would be starkly different. That was unimportant. What was of paramount importance was finding the cause and factors 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. Thus, a change in view requires wisdom to discern which views are incorrect and which views are correct. This must be discerned through wisdom based on the supremacy of the rule of dhamma (dhammā-dhipateyya) in order to be righteous.



## Wisdom Does Not Arise from Tranquil Meditation

THE ASCETIC SIDDHATTHA studied under two ascetics (tāpasa). He believed their methods would lead him to know and see the cause of birth. The two ascetics taught methods of serene meditation for the attainment of various absorptions (jhāna). Ultimately, he attained fine-material absorptions (rūpa-jhāna) and the pinnacle of serene meditation, immaterial absorptions (arūpa-jhāna). While he sat in meditative tranquility, his mind (citta) experienced incredible happiness. Upon release from the serene meditative state, that happiness faded. This repeatedly occurred and persisted. The original understanding that tranquil meditation would help solve the enigma of birth proved to be quite contrary. It did not make known the cause of birth in any way.

The ascetic Siddhattha consequently experienced a paradigm shift. This kind of practice did not engender clear knowing or true seeing, nor did it eliminate suffering. It did not lead to release (vimutti) or the path and fruit of enlightenment

(magga-phala-nibbāna).<sup>3</sup> It did not generate wisdom that could be employed to solve and eliminate problems from the mind. The ascetic Siddhattha decided that this kind of practice was not the correct path. Consequently, he departed from the two ascetics.

At this point, people will argue that they have heard their masters teach that when you meditate and your mind (citta) becomes calm, wisdom (pañña) will arise. Doesn't this paradigm conflict with the results from the ascetic Siddhattha's practice?

You all should study well and read the Buddha's history so that you won't be so credulous and practice like those teachers. Change this paradigm. The belief that wisdom will arise after the mind attains meditative calm is false. Even the two ascetics who meditated to the pinnacle of serenity did not experience any wisdom arising even up until the day they died. What kind of meditation are you all practicing that is superior to that of the Buddha's? These methods that are being taught and practiced are unconvincing.

In the past, when the ascetic Siddhattha meditated and his mind attained the utmost calm, no wisdom arose whatsoever.

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3 The four transcendent paths (magga) of enlightenment are the path to stream-entry (sotāpatti-magga), the path to once-returning (sakadāgāmi-magga), the path to non-returning (anāgāmi-magga), and the path to ultimate enlightenment (arahatta-magga). The four transcendent fruits (phala) of enlightenment are the fruit of stream-entry (sotāpatti-phala), the fruit of once-returning (sakadāgāmi-phala), the fruit of non-returning (anāgāmi-phala), the fruit of ultimate enlightenment (arahatta-phala).

The belief and understanding that wisdom will emerge once the mind is in a meditative state of serenity must be changed. Teachers who promote and teach this wrong belief should revisit the Buddha's history. They should reinterpret his teachings in order to understand them, instead of solely teaching according to their personal interpretations. They should consider the rationale from when the ascetic Siddhattha trained 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 teachers. If the master teaches incorrectly, the student's views and understandings will be incorrect accordingly.



## Wisdom Arises from Contemplating Dhamma Metaphors

A POINT OF GREAT significance is the ascetic Siddhattha's wager with the golden tray. May you go back and study his extensive history of training over the five years. He had practiced and experimented with various methods, yet he still remained a commoner (puthujjana).<sup>4</sup> He continued to search for the right path of practice. He tried every approach to eliminate defilements (kilesa), desires (taṇhā), and mental intoxications (āsava) from his mind, but it was fruitless. Then, he arrived at the incident with the golden tray at the Nerañjarā River. This was the site of the ascetic Siddhattha's final change in perception. According to texts, before releasing the golden tray, he made an aspiration (adhiṭṭhāna), *"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. This gave the ascetic Siddhattha confidence that he

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<sup>4</sup> "Commoner" in this context refers to attainment. A puthujjana is a common, non-holy worldlying who has not attained any level of enlightenment.

would become the Enlightened One in that very lifetime. Pay close attention to the method that brought him to final enlightenment, because it is a critical transition. The ascetic Siddhattha would change his perception one final time. He would change his perception from being incorrect to correct upon wagering with the golden tray.

The ascetic 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. Readers, through careful consideration, it will become clear that this path was not the tranquil meditation that is frequently taught by masters. The prominent method was the use of wisdom to develop *sammā-diṭṭhi*, or the correct perception of the truth. It was during this very period that the ascetic Siddhattha was on the verge of knowing and seeing with clear wisdom in accordance with the indisputable truth (*sacca-dhamma*) what it was that caused humans to be born.

Once the ascetic Siddhattha saw the golden tray float upstream against the current, he employed wisdom for consideration of this metaphor. 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 he used wisdom to contemplate by internalizing something and comparing it to his mind (*citta*). 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 had already been liberated from defilements and desires and would no longer be reborn in the Three Realms. The focal point here is that the ascetic Siddhattha utilized 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 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 obscured by defilements and desires will obviously transpire according to the ways of defilements and desires.

The mind is frequently reborn within the Three Realms because it is obscured by delusion (moha) and ignorance (avijjā). Before he became an ascetic, Prince Siddhattha had used wisdom to contemplate the cause of human birth. But no matter how he contemplated, he could not uncover the cause. Now, the ascetic 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,"<sup>5</sup> the path of practice was realized and understood by his own individual insight (ñāṇa). No one was

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5 This is also translated as purity of knowledge and vision of what is and is not the path.

his master. He knew what the wrong path of practice was and he knew what the right path of practice was. He no longer wondered or possessed any doubts whatsoever about modes of practice. The ascetic Siddhattha had already spent five years wandering and searching for the true path, continually practicing tranquil meditation and never attempting to use wisdom to contemplate any issues. Ignorance and desire had obscured the truth in his mind, thus necessitating rebirth.

Understanding and realization of the truth (ñāṇa-dassana) had arisen in the ascetic Siddhattha and he was thus lokavidū, or one who clearly knows the Three Realms. The ignorance and desires 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 desires. The more he used wisdom to consider the principles of the ultimate truth, the more he understood the ultimate truth and knew and saw the truth for what it was. Once the mind knows and sees in accordance with ultimate truths, the mind will no longer cling to anything. This is how the mind sheds its ignorance and delusions. The ascetic Siddhattha discovered the path of practice, or the principles of right view (sammā-diṭṭhi), on his own. Wisdom is deemed to have arisen once this right view occurs. It is then followed by right thought or right intention (sammā-saṅkappa). The ascetic Siddhattha used both of these principles to facilitate

his practice. Therefore, take note—it is not true that sitting in tranquil meditation will cause the emergence of wisdom, as is commonly understood.



## Āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa

AFTER CROSSING THE Nerañjarā River, the ascetic Siddhattha encountered a Brahmin who offered him the bundle of hay that he was carrying. The ascetic Siddhattha laid the hay down underneath the thirty-five-year-old Bodhi tree. As he sat down, his mind was bold and brave. In that instant, āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa arose. That is, he knew that mental intoxications and defilements (āsava) would be extinguished within a carimaka-citta.<sup>6</sup> He daringly resolved, *“I will sit in this place until I become enlightened as a Buddha. If I do not become enlightened, I will forever sit in this place. Even if my skin, flesh, and tendons deteriorate, if I do not become enlightened, I will forever sit in this place.”*

The ascetic Siddhattha made this bold and audacious resolution because āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa had already arisen within him. The daring reconfirmation was not a method of enlightenment

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6 Carimaka-citta literally translates to “the last citta.” It is a last thought moment, last conscious state, or an acute mental moment immediately preceding the attainment of enlightenment.

in any way. Āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa itself would not help him reach enlightenment, either. Āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa is merely knowledge or insight (ñāṇa) that mental intoxications and defilements will be extinguished. Buddhists typically interpret āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa as knowledge that arises for the purpose of eliminating mental intoxications (āsava), defilements (kilesa), and desires (taṇhā) from the mind. I wish to reemphasize that this is not the case.

This is likened to someone on a path to a final destination. They have never taken that path and don't know what the final destination will be like. Yet, they are confident that the path they are on will definitely lead to the final destination. From the commencement of the trip, to the journey itself, to the last stride that crosses over the finish line, they know they have reached the final destination. It is not necessary to speak of the path traversed any longer. Likewise, the āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa that arises is the same way. The topics of Dhamma that are suitable to one's character have already been practiced. Starting from the beginning stage of practice (paṭhama-paṭipatti), to the intermediate stage of practice (majjhima-paṭipatti), up to the final stage of practice (pacchima-paṭipatti), the practice has reached its end. There is consciousness of having wholly completed that practice. Āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa is the same way. This knowledge (ñāṇa) merely signals the fact that the practitioner will extinguish mental intoxications. It does not eliminate defilements, desires, or mental intoxications from the mind in any way. Manuals define āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa as knowing how to 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 (paṭivedha) within a carimaka-citta.

This can also be compared to eating a meal in order to achieve satiety. Before achieving satiety, there must be procedures from the very start. That is, the search for raw materials that will be suitable for your elemental body (dhātu-khandha) and preparing the food according to your desired recipe in order to be delicious. After you have finished eating the food that you cooked, you don't even know what the food tasted like during the meal. You simply kept eating in order to satisfy your body's needs. Ultimately, you became conscious of being full. Just so, the knowledge that mental intoxications will be extinguished (āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa) is simply knowing that mental intoxications will be extinguished. In a few minutes, the mental intoxications are completely extinguished and you know that the mental intoxications have been extinguished. It is paccattaṃ, or 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 from the first watch (paṭhama-yāma) to the middle watch (majjhima-yāma) and on through the last watch (pacchima-yāma)<sup>7</sup> as these ñāṇa arose in the following sequence:

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7 The first watch is 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., the middle watch is 10:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m., and the last watch is 2:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m.

1. Pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa, or the knowledge (ñāṇa) or recollection of past existences.
2. Cutūpapāta-ñāṇa, or the knowledge (ñāṇa) of the kind of consequences faced after the mind (citta) has left the body, and whether those consequences are good or bad according to the good kamma or bad kamma that had been cultivated, and after being finished with that kamma, whether one is to go on to receive the results of other kamma or go on to be reborn as a human.
3. Āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa, or the knowledge (ñāṇa) that mental intoxications (āsava) will be extinguished.

Both pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa and cutūpapāta-ñāṇa should not be included in the important night of the Buddha's enlightenment. The ascetic Siddhattha had realized and understood both of these mundane, worldly insights (lokiya-ñāṇa) prior to that night. The night of the full moon in June was the final, decisive night that would resolutely sever the ascetic Siddhattha from the conventions (sammuti) of the world. In that night, there could only be āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa because it is the knowledge that all mental intoxications will be completely eliminated from the mind. The term nibbāna indicates that defilements, desires, and mental intoxications of all magnitudes will absolutely be extinguished from the mind. It is thus referred to as, "nibbānaṃ paramaṃ suññaṃ," defilements and mental intoxications have been extinguished from the mind. Nibbāna

indicates the complete extinguishment of the fuel that causes birth within various existences (bhava). This is likened to immersing glowing, red coals in water. The fuel for fire is extinguished just as defilements, desires, and mental intoxications are extinguished from the mind. This is clearly evidenced by the ascetic Siddhattha's daring aspiration, *"I will sit in this place until I become a Buddha."* He already knew that mental intoxications would completely cease within a carimaka-citta. This is why it is not fitting to include these two insights (ñāṇa) into that night of supreme importance.

After the point at which āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa emerged within the ascetic Siddhattha, texts should not refer to any other insights (ñāṇa) because there shouldn't have been any further use of worldly insights. He didn't employ any other methods of practice in order to attain release from rebirth within this world. Textbooks define āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa as the knowledge (ñāṇa) that terminated all mental intoxications. The truth is that the ascetic Siddhattha did not have to do anything or practice any Dhamma methods whatsoever. Those who have attained ultimate enlightenment (arahant) will know the characteristics of attaining ultimate enlightenment better than anything. Āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa will only arise in three types of individuals:

1. Those who will be enlightened as a Buddha
2. Those who will be enlightened as a paccekabuddha<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> A paccekabuddha is one who attains enlightenment on his own and does not teach the dispensation.

### 3. Those who will attain arahantship as a disciple (sāvaka) of the Buddha

The noble ones (ariya-puggala) of more junior stages of holiness like the anāgāmī, sakadāgāmī, and sotāpanna<sup>9</sup> will not experience āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa. Upon cremation, their remains will not transform into relics of various sizes like the remains of those who have achieved arahantship.

Many people say that human bones may turn into relics because of aspirations (adhiṭṭhāna). I would like to refute this claim because it is untrue. Only the remains of those who experience āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa and achieve arahantship will transform into relics. This is a defining characteristic of those who are free from mental intoxications, defilements, and rebirth. Everyone is entitled to their interpretation. However, reason and causality must be employed to determine which interpretation is more accurate. If you study the rationale, you will come to understand this matter well.

Those disciples who will become arahant disciples will all experience āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa. They may reach enlightenment while in any posture. Whether it is while standing, walking, sitting,

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<sup>9</sup> An anāgāmī is one who has achieved the third stage of holiness, a non-returner. A sakadāgāmī is one who has attained the second stage of holiness and will be reborn only once. A sotāpanna is one who has achieved the first stage of holiness or stream-entry and will achieve final enlightenment after one, three, or seven rebirths.

lying down, or half-sitting half-lying down like Venerable Ananda, āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa may arise. There are four types of arahants: sukkha-vipassako, tevijjo, chaḷabhiñño, and paṭisambhidappatto.<sup>10</sup> These titles are based on the abilities stemming from each individual's nature and behavioral tendencies. The important point is that they all experience the knowledge that mental intoxications will be extinguished (āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa).

Upon knowing that mental intoxications will be extinguished, it is possible but unnecessary to make a bold resolution as the Buddha did because the awakening to the Dhamma as an arahant will occur shortly anyway. 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.

Attaining arahantship in the Buddha's era is the same as attaining arahantship in the present era. That is, the purity that is called pārisuddhi-dhamma is the same. The minds (citta) of

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10 A sukkha-vipassako arahant is a fully enlightened one who does not possess any supernormal powers. A tevijjo arahant is a fully enlightened one who possesses the ability to recollect former lives (pubbenivāsānussati-ñāṇa) and the ability to understand the vanishing and reappearing of beings (cutūpapāta-ñāṇa). A chaḷabhiñño arahant is a fully enlightened one who possesses the six supernormal powers (abhiññā): the divine eye, the divine ear, the penetration of the minds of others, the power to dive or soar above earth, ability to recollect former lives, and āsavakkhaya-ñāṇa. A paṭisambhidappatto arahant is a fully enlightened one who has mastered the four forms of analytical knowledge or discrimination: analytical knowledge of the true meaning (attha-paṭisambhidā), analytical knowledge of the law (dhamma-paṭisambhidā), analytical knowledge of language (nirutti-paṭisambhidā), analytical knowledge of ready wit (patibhāna-paṭisambhidā).

all Buddhas, paccekabuddhas, and arahant disciples are equally pure and they have attained enlightenment (nibbāna) by the same purification. In this era, many claim to have reached these heights because they have meditated until their minds (citta) have become empty voids and they no longer experience any preoccupations (ārammaṇa) of love or anger. They interpret meditative emptiness to be a mind (citta) that has attained nibbāna. Consequently, they believe they have actually attained nibbāna. That is why numerous fake arahants have arisen in our present era.



## The Dispensation of Buddhism

**A**FTER THE BUDDHA was enlightened, he enjoyed the bliss of enlightenment (vimutti-sukha) at seven locations for seven days each, for a total of forty-nine days. 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 to himself, *“If the two teachers had the opportunity to listen to the Dhamma, they would have reached ultimate enlightenment in this lifetime. What a shame that the two teachers were so trapped in the misconceptions of tranquil meditation and mental absorptions of the Immaterial Realm (arūpa-jhāna) that they could not find a way out. They have now been reborn to eternally long lives in the Immaterial Realm (arūpa-brahma). Even when the Buddha Metteyya arises in the world, they still would not have come to be reborn in the human world.”*

Then, the Buddha thought of the Five Ascetics (pañcavaggiya) who had ministered to him at Dugeswari Mountain. At that moment they were at Isipatana Migadāya in Rājagaha city. The Buddha delivered his first sermon there and all five ascetics

attained ultimate enlightenment. The Three Jewels (ratanattaya)—the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha—had fully arisen in the world.

The Buddha subsequently spent that year's rains retreat (vassa) in that location.<sup>11</sup> During that rains retreat, the Buddha expounded the Dhamma to Yasa and his peers until they all achieved arahantship. He also expounded the Dhamma to Yasa's mother and father until they attained the first level of holiness (sotāpanna); they were the first laypeople to become ariya-puggalas, or holy ones, in the Buddha's era. You should study the historical accounts related to Yasa's parents in order to understand their methods of practice and apply them to yourself.

After the rains retreat, the Buddha preached to the group of thirty men (bhaddavaggīya) until they all attained arahantship. Thereafter, he taught the Three Jaṭilas and their one thousand followers.<sup>12</sup> They all reached arahantship as well. Changing wrong perception to right perception is an important starting point for the dispensation of Buddhism. If the mind still has wrong views, it will not be aligned with the path and fruit of enlightenment (magga-phala-nibbāna) at all.

The Buddha emphasized the importance of correct perception of the truth (sammā-diṭṭhi) as the inaugural step because everyone

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11 Present day Sarnath

12 The Three Jaṭilas are the brothers Uruvelā Kassapa, Gayā Kassapa, and Nadi Kassapa. Jaṭilas are matted hair ascetics.

has long held wrong perceptions of the truth (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). Further, the attainment of various levels of tranquil meditation (*samādhi*) cannot eradicate these wrong perceptions from the mind. Moreover, the encouragement gained from meditation will enhance and intensify these wrong perceptions. Practitioners will believe that they are practicing on the right path. If a master the practitioners hold in high esteem guarantees this, they will be even more reassured. That is why in this present era, it is difficult to rectify this and establish right views (*sammā-diṭṭhi*).

During the Buddha's era, there were many people who became *ariya-puggalas* because the Buddha was able to provide methods of practice to change wrong perception to right perception. This was then followed with other Dhamma topics. This is likened to a container with toxins in it. The toxins must be thoroughly washed until the container is clean, and then food can be placed into it afterward. If a mind holds right views, then Dhamma practice will be unproblematic, simple, and unhindered by doubt.

Although the Buddha's teachings were correct and righteous, people in present times have misinterpreted them. They have incorporated their personal viewpoints into these teachings and claim that they are the Dhamma, or the Buddha's teachings. Contemporary generations will read these accounts, believe accordingly, and spread those teachings to others. Many teachers interpret the Dhamma differently. Each teacher writes according to their own perspective. Contemporary generations read them and become confused and are unable to discern which master's

teachings are wrong and which master's teachings are right. A faithful practitioner who already holds the master in high esteem will wholly believe in and adopt those teachings.

If a master has written correct Dhamma teachings but is not revered, that correct Dhamma may not be of any benefit to anyone. Both monastics and laypersons who lack education and comprehensive wisdom and rationality will be unable to discern the meaning of the Dhamma. If they possess knowledge memorized from texts and those texts are right, then their knowledge and views will be right. But if those texts are wrong, their knowledge and views will be wrong as well. If these wrong texts are used to instruct others, the practitioners will develop wrong understandings and wrong views. Once these wrong views of theoretical knowledge (pariyatti) are applied in actual practice, the results will also be wrong. Practitioners are unaware that the methods are incorrect and believe that they are practicing correctly.

In present times, it is impossible for all practitioners to have correct views because each person has studied different Dhamma topics. Each teacher purports their teachings to be the Buddha's teachings and each teacher has good intentions. The goal is for practitioners to penetrate the Dhamma and attain the path and fruit of enlightenment.

If you were to go back and read the accounts of both the ordained ariya-puggalas and lay ariya-puggalas during the Buddha's era, how did each person practice in order to successfully

become an ariya-puggala? How are people in contemporary times practicing that makes it so difficult to know and see the Dhamma? If you compare them, you will be able to clearly discern the differences. You have studied the Buddha's teachings. I have studied them as well. Each person interprets the Dhamma, goes on to teach those views to others, and writes those teachings for others to study. No one says that their teachings are wrong or that their Dhamma books are wrong. What is worse, they intimidate others by claiming that others' Dhamma teachings and writings are erroneous. They each believe that they are the only one who teaches correctly and their books are the only correct ones. That is why so many factions and denominations have arisen in our times. During the Buddha's era, the Buddhist company<sup>13</sup> listened to Dhamma sermons from the Buddha or from many ariya-puggalas without any problems. This was because those who exhorted the Dhamma did so in the same manner so the listeners received Dhamma of the same rationale.

In those times, people listened to the Dhamma with mindfulness (sati), concentration (samādhi), and wisdom (paññā). They analyzed the rationale until they understood it. That Dhamma was then applied, as suitable, to each person's character. Consequently, they became ariya-puggalas of a level corresponding

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13 The Buddhist company refers to the fourfold Buddhist community (saṅgha) of monks (bhikkhu), nuns (bhikkhunī), male devotees (upāsaka), and female devotees (upāsikā).

to the merits (puñña) and perfections of character (pāramī) they had each cultivated. Whether they would awaken to the Dhamma as a stream-enterer (sotāpanna), once-returner (sakadāgāmī), non-returner (anāgāmī), or attain full enlightenment (arahant) was subject to the behavioral tendencies (vāsana) and perfections of character each person had cultivated in varying degrees. Becoming an ariya-puggala in those times was effortless because they received Dhamma methods from the Buddha that directly corresponded to their nature and the perfections of character they had cultivated. Thus, they practiced Dhamma that was appropriate and many people achieved levels of enlightenment. The models of Dhamma that the Buddha taught were not the same. If someone cultivated perfections a certain way, the Buddha would provide Dhamma metaphors that corresponded to those perfections. Only when people had cultivated perfections in the same manner did they receive the same Dhamma models.

Therefore, study this well. It is not that any model of the Dhamma will help you attain a level of enlightenment. If the model is aligned with your intrinsic nature, then you will become an ariya-puggala. However, if the model is not suitable to your character, then no matter how diligently you practice, you will not be able to attain the path and fruit of enlightenment and become an ariya-puggala. 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 Using Wisdom to Contemplate a Metaphor

WILL RELATE THE story of someone who exemplifies using wisdom to contemplate a metaphor so that you can better picture it. The Buddha provided many examples in the discourses, but to write about all of them would make this book too thick. I will only highlight a few stories to demonstrate this concept.

During the era of the Buddha Kassapa, there was a girl whose foundational nature was one of cultivating the wisdom perfection (paññā-pāramī). She habitually used wisdom to reflect on death. She contemplated how death would occur to her, she contemplated how death would occur to other people and animals, she contemplated how death had already occurred to other people and animals, and she contemplated how humans and animals that were alive would die in the future. It was her nature to contemplate in this way and she did it in all of the four postures. Whether she was standing, walking, sitting, reclining, or working, she would use mindful wisdom to constantly reflect, *“Once people are born, they exist momentarily, and then die and separate from one another. Upon death, none of the money, gold,*

*riches, and worldly possessions can help in any way. These treasures cannot be taken along with them at all. All of those belongings will be inherited by their children and grandchildren. And once those children and grandchildren die, the possessions will continue to fall into the hands of subsequent generations. No one can claim ownership of the world's material objects (vatthu-dhātu) because they are merely possessions to be temporarily relied on while alive."*

The girl used wisdom to train her mind every day and night. Her mind experienced a disillusioning awakening about how tedious and repetitive birth and death were not worth the daily suffering. The more she used wisdom to reflect on death, the more she understood and realized the insignificance of the physical form. Her mind did not cling or bind to anything. After she died, she savored bliss in a heavenly realm. When her accumulated merit (puñña) and wholesomeness (kusala) had been depleted, she was reborn as a human.

In that human rebirth, she was born to a family of weavers during the era in which our current Buddha was still alive. One day, the Buddha descended to the Hall of Truth to preach the Dhamma. Ordinarily, once he was seated at the pulpit (dhammāsana) he would begin his sermon. That time, however, he remained silent because the girl was not finished 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 great mass of people sitting in silence and sat down to see why they were doing so.

She did not have any intention of listening to the Dhamma, but only listened to the Dhamma by chance.

Once she was seated, the Buddha immediately began his discourse. The topic he selected to serve as a model of the Dhamma was that of the end of life. “Nothing can be maintained in a particular state forever. Following birth, there is temporary existence and then ultimately, death.” The Buddha drew 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 arise, momentarily exist, and eventually end. The four elements of earth, water, wind, and fire will all disintegrate back into their original elements.”

Upon hearing the Buddha’s Dhamma sermon on the spool of thread as an analogy for the end of life, she understood and employed wisdom to contemplate the spool of thread. She internalized (*opanayiko*) the spool of thread and drew parallels to her own life in order to see how they were subject to common characteristics. They were unsustainable states. Every part of the body that is supposed to be the “self” can only be so momentarily. Ultimately, it will cease to be and disintegrate, as nothing can exist forever. Once she understood this truth about reality, wisdom had arisen.

Her foundational nature of using wisdom to contemplate death from past lives was triggered and linked up with her newfound wisdom; the wisdom she had previously cultivated fused with the

new. She then awakened to the truth of reality that everything that arises must ultimately die—nothing can exist forever. Upon knowing and seeing this with wisdom, she awakened to the Dhamma as an ariya-puggala of the sotāpanna level.

May you all understand the methods of Dhamma practice during the Buddha's era in order to discern whether or not your current individual techniques correspond. Change your views so that they are sammā-diṭṭhi, or views that are correct and righteous, and correspond to the Three Common Characteristics of impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and not-self (anattā). With sammā-diṭṭhi, views are correct and aligned with the truth of reality. This is precisely when wisdom has arisen within you. It is not that wisdom will arise once the mind (citta) achieves meditative calm. This kind of view or notion 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 human testament from the Buddha's era? I have extensively studied the historical accounts of ariya-puggalas and there does not exist a single person who sat in meditative serenity and experienced wisdom arising. The accounts of ariya-puggalas from the Buddha's era should be studied. That way, you will understand and change your wrong views to right views.

I dare state this and write this because I have researched the history of ariya-puggalas 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, draw from the historical accounts of ariya-puggalas in the Buddha's era and discuss them with me. Show me the human testaments. I have stated and written this because I already have human testaments. That is why I dare to say it and inscribe it into a book for people to read. I do not have the audacity to change the Pāli Canon (tipiṭaka). I only want people to correctly understand the meaning of the Pāli Canon. The Pāli Canon is already perfect, but those who have interpreted, explained, and expanded upon many parts of it lack rationality. This is embodied in the statement, "Once you sit in meditation and the mind (citta) becomes calm, wisdom will arise." What is this? Why is it being taught and practiced? During the Buddha's time, he never taught this to the Buddhist company. Why have people in this era written about these methods and taught them to the masses? These misconceptions have infected so many people.

According to the Noble Eightfold Path, wisdom does not result from serene meditation in any way. Serene meditation is a path that leads to supernormal powers (abhiññā) as well as the four fine-material absorptions (rūpa-jhāna) and the four immaterial absorptions (arūpa-jhāna) which combine to form the eight levels of meditative attainment (samāpatti). Sages and ascetics practiced these methods prior to the advent of Buddhism. None of those sages or ascetics experienced wisdom arising from tranquil meditation in any way. Even the Buddha had once trained in this way. But he discerned that it was not the method that would

lead to release from suffering. That is precisely why he departed from the two ascetics. The Buddha explicitly stated that serene meditation was not aligned with deliverance from defilements (kilesa) and desires (taṇhā), nor did it lead to the path and fruit of enlightenment. It was merely a way to temporarily suppress defilements and desires.



## Paññā-vimutti and Ceto-vimutti

WILL DESCRIBE TWO forms of concentration (samādhi) so that you practitioners can study and understand them:

1. Calm concentration
2. Steadfastly focused concentration

I will first explain about calm concentration, then steadfastly focused concentration. The reader will be able to discern the differences and connection between the two forms of concentration from this book.

The group of people who can achieve calm concentration are those of the ceto-vimutti nature. In past rebirths, they lived as ascetics, hermits, and sages who practiced by intensely staring at meditative objects (kasiṇa). They were skilled in tranquil meditation and proficient in higher levels of meditative attainments (jhāna-samāpatti). Once reborn in this lifetime and ordained in the Buddhist religion, they were content with the form of meditation familiar to their nature that had been developed in past lives. They listened to the Buddha's sermons on how to

cultivate concentration (samādhi) and how to cultivate insight-wisdom (vipassanā-paññā) but were more deeply pleased with the cultivation of concentration. They set out on dhutaṅga<sup>14</sup> at various forest destinations far from society and continuously and steadily practiced meditation. Because they had previously trained in meditation, achieving tranquility was effortless. They were able to attain serenity in the four fine-material absorptions (rūpa-jhāna) and the four immaterial absorptions (arūpa-jhāna) such that an empty void existed within their minds. There were no sense-objects or preoccupations (ārammaṇa) that could agitate their minds.

As an example, in the times of the Buddha Gotama, thirty monks had attained 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 preoccupations, nor did he possess any defilements, desires, or mental intoxications. The leader proclaimed that, "Now, we have all reached the same state. We have all attained release from all defilements and desires. We have eradicated all mental intoxications and have all attained arahantship. Let us all prepare to go and pay our respects to the Buddha in order to receive a declaration of our attainment as arahants."

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<sup>14</sup> Dhutaṅga literally means "shaking off," and refers to a group of thirteen ascetic practices.

Once the thirty monks neared the temple, the Buddha knew through his insight that all thirty monks had mistakenly self-diagnosed their arahant attainments. They had merely meditated to calm states and meditative attainments (jhāna-samāpatti), which would not lead to shedding defilements and desires in any way. Calm meditation and meditative attainments are merely techniques used to suppress defilements and desires.

The Buddha sent Ānanda 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. At the same time, the Buddha conjured 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 and saw this and called the other monks over. All thirty monks were skilled in serene meditation and meditative attainments. Upon seeing this vision, the feelings of lust that had been stifled by tranquil meditation and meditative attainments 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 the Buddha on the methods of cultivating insight (vipassanā). Let us all cultivate insight tonight. Use wisdom to contemplate loathsomeness (asubha) and unattractiveness of that teenage

girl's form. Separate each of the body parts to see how the entire body is foul. Opanayiko, or internalize and reflect on your own body. Use wisdom to contemplate your own body such that you know and see that it is similarly loathsome. Contemplate the external filthiness and contemplate the internal filthiness within your own body in order to know and see the filthiness of both."

That night, all thirty monks achieved arahantship. Practicing calm meditation and being proficient in meditative attainments and then switching gears to practice steadfastly focused concentration coupled with wisdom like these thirty monks did is characteristic of the noble ones (ariya-puggala) of the deliverance of mind (ceto-vimutti) type. Understand this accordingly.

Those of the ceto-vimutti nature are gifted at tranquil meditation and proficient at entering meditative attainments. However, in the final stages, they must still use steadfastly focused concentration that is supported by wisdom. There is no instance of the Buddha's teaching, "Once the mind (citta) enters a calm state in meditation, contemplate with wisdom." This type of teaching greatly deviates from that of the Buddha's.

The Buddha originally taught that once the mind (citta) enters a serene meditative state, allow it to remain there until it is satiated. Do not force it to withdraw and do not compel it in any way. Once it has gotten its fill of that calmness, the mind will gradually withdraw on its own. Be mindful (sati) of the withdrawal from meditation and be mindful to restrain it at the

upacāra-samādhi stage, or steadfastly focused concentration.<sup>15</sup> Thereafter, apply that concentration to wisdom or insight development (vipassanā). These are the original principles that the Buddha laid forth. May all of you who are interested in meditation understand this accordingly.

There were few of the ceto-vimutti character during the Buddha's era, and they were fortunate enough to have been ordained while the Buddha was still alive. The Buddha was able to help them convert their wrong views into right views. This is illustrated by the aforementioned account of the thirty monks. If today's meditators are like those thirty monks, in this current era, there will be no way to rectify their wrong views and misled self-importance. They will be left to the product of volitional action (kamma). They will die and be reborn as Brahmas and live very long lives. They will completely miss out on the opportunity to achieve arahantship despite possessing the replete and primed merit (puñña) and perfections of character (pāramī) to do so. There is no one who can change their wrong views into right views, because those who meditate and attain tranquility or develop some type of supernormal powers (abhiññā) also develop conceit (māna) and pride (attā) along with it. They will be too conceited, egotistic, and smug to bow down to anyone. They

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15 This steadfastly focused state of concentration is similar to the state of consciousness in which your mind is especially clear and sharp right before you wake up and open your eyes.

believe that others are incapable of practicing mental cultivation as skillfully as they can. Not even the Buddha's arahant disciples are able to turn their wrong perceptions into correct perceptions. The only exceptions are those who had been past associates or tormenting mates.

There are some people of the *ceto-vimutti* type in contemporary times. This can be discerned by their effortless achievement of meditative tranquility and ability to remain sitting for prolonged periods. However, they do not possess the wisdom to effectively solve their own problems. They do not possess the comprehensive wisdom to discern what the characteristics of the mind (*citta*) are. So, they go and ask various teachers about the symptoms of the mind that have arisen. If the master does not understand, then he will merely issue a brief reply, "Those symptoms are correct. Carry on."

The *ceto-vimutti* can surely practice tranquil meditation in this current era, but they will encounter problems because they lead off with desire. Meditating with desires—such as the desire to have wisdom arise in the mind (*citta*), the desire to have the mind to become pure, the desire to shed defilements and desires, the desire to see heaven, the desire to see hell, the desire to see previous births, or the desire to awaken to the Dhamma as an *ariya-puggala* of such and such level—falls right into the path of defilements and desires. The conditioned mind (*saṅkhāra-citta*) that is a tempter of defilements (*kilesa-mara*) will deceive the mind into unknowingly losing its way. Those who meditate with

desires, as explained above, will encounter troubles as the Ten Defilements of Insight (*vipassanūpakilesa*) infiltrate the mind. Meditative visions (*nimitta*) of various types and forms will arise and they will become deluded by them.

During the Buddha's time, there were people who were afflicted with defilements of insight, and he helped turn their incorrect perceptions into correct perceptions and they were able to achieve levels of holiness as *ariya-puggalas*. If someone becomes afflicted during this present era, however, correcting their perceptions will be a daunting task. This is because they will be extremely self-confident and will not believe others who warn them that they are practicing wrongly. If those who are similarly afflicted with defilements of insight come together and discuss the results of their practice, they will harmonize like drums and cymbals. They will be able to converse about things they have known and seen all day and all night, without any end in sight. Discussions about the different visions (*nimitta*) that have arisen and discussions about the Dhamma seem to be sensible, clear, and credible. Those who are oblivious will assume that Dhamma to be genuine and believe accordingly. In reality, it is fake Dhamma.



## The Ten Vipassanūpakilesas

**W**HAT ARE THE Ten Vipassanūpakilesas, or defilements of insight? Study them well. I will explain each one just enough to provide a general idea. The Ten Defilements of Insight obstruct and close off the road to the path and fruit of enlightenment (magga-phala-nibbāna). May you constantly observe whether your symptoms match one of the imperfections, so that you can be careful. Once one of the defilements of insight has arisen, it can cause the mind to become confused and develop wrong views that are taken to be right views, making it difficult to fix the mind (citta) and return it to a normal state. What causes these defilements of insight is practicing meditation without comprehensive wisdom.

This is likened to a bottle with an invisible coat of poison on the interior. After the bottle is filled with high-quality medicine, the toxins will soak into the medicine. When the medicine is consumed, all of the high-quality medicine will become a harmful, poisonous concoction. Similarly, once those with micchā-diṭṭhi, or wrong views that are deeply ingrained in the mind and that

haven't been fixed, practice meditation and start to experience tranquility, those wrong views will be intensified by meditation. The mind (citta) will become deranged (vipallāsa), cultivate wrong concentration (micchā-samādhi), and unknowingly become afflicted with defilements of insight (vipassanūpakilesa). When various meditative visions (nimitta) arise, the mind will cling to them. While sitting in meditation, the mind will be joyful and able to sit for a long period of time. It will seem as if the body is light and the mind is light, and there is a desire to remain sitting in that manner. At another stage, the various visions will fade and disappear. The mind will be shaken and anxious and unable to continue meditating. The irritation will eventually become so great that the meditator can no longer continue to sit still. Those who meditate with the desire to know and see various things will be led astray by defilements (kilesa-māra). Wrong views will arise and develop into defilements of insight (vipassanūpakilesa), which will be explained hereafter.

### **1. Obhāsa**

Practitioners who attain a modest degree of meditative serenity may experience various types of illumination. The mind (citta) will rush outward to cling to the illumination. The brightness comes in various intensities and different colors. There is pleasure and enjoyment of these luminous auras. Once the intensity of the illumination fades, the practitioner will be unable to continue sitting in meditation. The mind will become irritated

and immediately withdraw from meditation. The mind will pine for the luminous auras, not wanting for the illumination to fade.

## **2. Pīti**

When the mind attains a modest degree of meditative serenity, it will be filled with contentment expressed in tears and goosebumps. While sitting there, the body is light and the mind is light and there is constant contentment. There is a desire for this feeling to persist for a long time. These symptoms occur because there is no comprehensive wisdom of one's wrong views. As a result, one mistakenly believes that Dhamma virtues have already arisen within oneself. Once the contentment fades, the mind will long for it. There is a longing for the contentment to occur frequently so that the mind will be happy. Those whose meditation is led by desire will experience these symptoms. Thus, meditators must be cautious and exercise comprehensive wisdom at all times.

## **3. Passaddhi**

When the mind (citta) attains a modest degree of meditative serenity, there will be tranquility of the body and tranquility of the mind. Tranquility refers to silence and solitude. It is as if one doesn't even know where one is sitting. Whichever direction one turns to face, there is no discernment of one's location. This tranquility of the mind is like being disconnected from the external world. The tranquil silence is like sitting all alone in the world. No sense-objects or preoccupations (ārammaṇa) can disturb or

affect the mind in any way. There is a feeling of steadfastness in meditation. One could sit in meditation for prolonged periods. There are no concerns about anything. These symptoms will exist momentarily and then fade away. The mind will long for them and wish for them to persist forever.

#### **4. Sukha**

When the mind enters a calm state of meditation, a significant degree of bliss and pleasure will arise within the mind. With every inhalation or exhalation, there is constant bliss. It is bliss that arises from meditation. There is a great sense of contentment and pleasure as well as a desire for that bliss to remain in the mind perpetually. Soon thereafter, the meditative bliss will fade and disappear. Meditators will mourn the loss and long for constant, unremitting bliss. They will meditate in order to generate that bliss. Little do they know that meditative bliss is the cause of delusion. It is delusional meditation (*moha-samādhī*), or obsession with pleasure. There is no comprehensive wisdom whatsoever.

#### **5. Ñāṇa**

When the mind frequently achieves calmness through meditation, insight or knowledge (*ñāṇa*) will arise. These whispers of knowledge within the mind pertain to various matters—sometimes worldly-related and sometimes Dhamma-related. Sometimes, if one focuses on knowing something, that knowledge will arise. For the most part, the first time the knowledge emerges, it is the truth. Consequently, one is misled

into believing that knowledge (ñāṇa) has actually arisen. There is a wrong understanding and wrong perception that wisdom-knowledge (paññā-ñāṇa) has arisen within oneself. One will want to tell others about the knowledge that has arisen and will often boast of being a skilled, daring, and accomplished practitioner who possesses all-encompassing knowledge of various topics. In reality, the defilements of insight have unwittingly arisen. After a while, the knowledge will become distorted and will not be true as it was in the past.

If this occurs, there will be boasting and the belittlement and criticism of others, “Your practice is inferior to mine”—in order to garner praise and admiration. One believes that one possesses virtue and is a knower of the world (lokavidū). In actuality, one possesses defilements of insight. This kind of person will be highly conceited (māna) and prideful (attā) and unwilling to listen to warnings from others about straying from the path. These wrong perceptions will be irreparable in this lifetime. This is due to saṅkhāra-citta, or the conditional mind tricking one into believing in one’s attainment of enlightenment at the sotāpanna, sakadāgāmī, anāgāmī, or even arahant level. One is confident in one’s achievement as a noble one (ariya-puggala).

If someone asks them what level of enlightenment they have attained, if they like that person, they will reply that the person has attained such and such level. If they do not like that person, they will reply that the person hasn’t attained any level of enlightenment. If they are pleased with an individual within the

same faction, they will implicitly inform others within the faction of that person's status by referring to them as "a diamond of the first water." For this reason, if knowledge (ñāṇa) arises in someone, it will be impossible to fix in contemporary times. There will be micchā-diṭṭhi, or wrong views and wrong understandings that persist until death. This knowledge (ñāṇa) arises from meditating without wisdom to comprehensively discern the symptoms of the mind. This, in turn, unwittingly gives rise to knowledge (ñāṇa) from meditative visions (nimitta).

## 6. Adhimokkha

Adhimokkha refers to the belief that all that has occurred—such as illumination (obhāsa), contentment (pīti), tranquility (passaddhi), bliss (sukha), and knowledge (ñāṇa)—are all real. There is a firm belief that all of those things lead to the path and fruit of enlightenment (magga-phala-nibbāna). Due to this passionate conviction, these wrong views are difficult to remedy. Even if others explain how these symptoms are wrong, one will continue to be confident in the accuracy of the path. If someone says that those views are wrong (micchā-diṭṭhi), one will continue to maintain that it is the correct path. Thus, it is difficult to turn these wrong views into right views.

Practitioners should examine their beliefs. Otherwise, those beliefs will be senseless beliefs that lack reason (saddhā-ñāṇa-vippayutta). They want others to praise them for being good practitioners of mental development with high virtue. If there are

other practitioners of mental development who experience similar things, 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 (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). They speak of the Dhamma in such a refined, comprehensive manner that those who hear the conversation and do not know better will assume that enlightened individuals are conversing about the Dhamma. In actuality, it is merely a conversation between people afflicted with defilements of insight.

## 7. Paggaha

Paggaha is well-exerted energy in diligence. Regardless of whether it is walking meditation (*caṅkama*) or sitting meditation, it is done with intense exertion. Meditation is used as the core method of mental development (*bhāvanā*). When standing, the mind (*citta*) is in a state of meditation; when walking, the mind is in a state of meditation; when sitting, the mind is in a state of meditation; when lying down, the mind is in a state of meditation. However, there are no methods of developing mindfulness or wisdom. Each day and each night, there is intense exertion. There is composure and vigilance for external stimuli by way of the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. If false perceptions (*micchā-diṭṭhi*) have already been embedded in the mind, though the practice of mental development and meditation is intense, the motivation gained from meditation will only augment those false perceptions. Wrong concentration (*micchā-samādhi*)

will unwittingly arise, and the opportunity to attain a level of enlightenment in this lifetime will instantly be nullified.

### **8. Upaṭṭhāna**

Upaṭṭhāna is established mindfulness (sati). There is mindful awareness of every movement of every part of the body. The body's outward actions will be sluggish and unhurried. The act of extending or contracting a leg or arm will be sluggish and slow. There will be mindful awareness during every posture at all times. There is mindful awareness of whatever occurs, but there is no wisdom to apply toward contemplating Dhamma metaphors in order to know and see in accordance with the truth of reality at all. The principles of impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and not-self (anattā) are parroted from texts. There is no personal wisdom and there is no interest in employing wisdom to contemplate whatsoever. There is merely mindful awareness of the mind's preoccupations (ārammaṇa) during each day. When preoccupations from defilements (kilesa) and volitional thoughts (saṅkhāra) arise, there is momentary awareness of them and then the defilements and desires hide and lie latent in the mind. Let's just say that mindful meditation is used to suppress the operations of defilements and desires.

### **9. Upekkhā**

Upekkhā is the mind's absolute indifference. Whatever occurs, the mind is made not to worry about any of it because it constantly feels indifferent. Past matters are not thought of or considered.

Future matters are not thought of or considered. The mind dwells in the present and is steadfastly indifferent. The mind is not affected by anything. It does not feel love, hatred, or anger toward anything. The mind is not swayed by worldly currents or trends. There are no preoccupations (ārammaṇa) of clinging or attachment to anything at all. There are no concerns about this or doubts about that. The mind is steadfastly indifferent and firmly established in the present at all times. There is no wisdom (paññā) to contemplate in order to truly know and truly see that which is true at all.

### **10. Nikanti**

Nikanti is delight and contentment in everything that has occurred. All combined, the mind's symptoms—from the first to ninth defilement of insight—are taken as affirmation of the path of practice being correct. Whatever results from practice, there is unwavering contentment in that. By merely carrying on day-to-day, there is confidence that higher virtues have already arisen within. It seems as if there are no more duties that need to be fulfilled. These are the views of those afflicted with this last defilement of insight. They are profoundly content in the results of their practice. Those afflicted with these symptoms will be beyond help. Even masters who possess high virtue will be unable to help in any way. When there are false views (micchā-diṭṭhi) in the beginning stages and they continue to persist, there is no way to fix it.

I have provided thinking points for you practitioners. Few people will study and understand how the Ten Defilements of Insight are perils that close off the road to the path and fruit of enlightenment. The defilements of insight are caused by wrong views. Those who meditate without recognizing these defilements of insight, or tempters of defilements (*kilesa-māra*), will encounter a multitude of problems. Practitioners whose meditation is sustained by desires will be particularly susceptible to being deceived by these temptations (*māra*). If meditation is practiced in an ordinary and normal manner, everything will be fine; it will merely provide the mind with a brief respite. This is because the mind exerts itself thinking along the stream of the world throughout each and every day. It thinks about this and thinks about that, and the mind does not get to rest at all.

If the meditation is solely conducted for the purpose of mental relaxation, defilements of insight or tempters of defilements will not arise at all. Letting the mind rest, or meditating, is necessary. It is the same as with worldly tasks. There are many types of work—government work, commerce work, and manual labor work. People cannot work throughout the entire day. Once tired, they must rest and recharge in order to carry on with work. This is analogous to meditating in order for the mind to rest. By doing this, the Ten Defilements of Insight will not arise. Therefore, those who practice meditation should not do so with desires that pressure the mind to develop desires, as already described.

Practicing mental development (bhāvanā-paṭipatti) is the way to fix and repair the mind's issues. Practitioners must establish a foundation at the very start that is aligned in the right direction. That is, aligned with the principles of sammā-diṭṭhi in order to train the mind to perceive in a manner that is true and righteous. In this way, their subsequent practice will not encounter problems. Practitioners must know how to strike a balance by knowing when to move forward and when to fall back.

This is comparable to driving along an unfamiliar road. The driver must exercise special caution. During curves or hairpin turns, they should judge which speed will ensure safety. If the driver drives so fast that they lose control of the car, the approaching curve can lead to fatal repercussions. If the driver is skilled, the car is in good condition, the road is level, and the road is familiar, then the desired destination will surely be reached. Alternatively, if the driver is not skilled, the car is not in good condition, the road is bumpy and riddled with potholes, and the road is unfamiliar, they surely will not get anywhere. Just so, in Dhamma practice, if the practitioner trains for the ultimate destination of the path and fruit of enlightenment (magga-phala-nibbāna) and possesses correct methods of practice from the very beginning, then the destination will undoubtedly be reached.

The reason that I have explained about the deliverance through concentration (ceto-vimutti) type is in order for you to discern whether you actually possess a deliverance through concentration

(ceto-vimutti) or deliverance through wisdom (paññā-vimutti) intrinsic nature. If you do not know your own character, it will be difficult to find a Dhamma topic that corresponds to your character. This is like taking medicine that does not correspond to the ailment. The medicine is consumed every day, but the sickness will not be cured. The same applies to practicing Dhamma.



## Paññā-vimutti

**B**OTH THE DELIVERANCE through wisdom (paññā-vimutti) character and deliverance through concentration (ceto-vimutti) character exist within the same person. The difference between the two characters stems from the manner of cultivation. The ceto-vimutti character corresponds to those who have cultivated perfections of character (pāramī) in the manner of ascetics and sages who developed tranquil meditation and higher meditative attainments (jhāna) to perfection. Upon being reborn in this lifetime, their training must begin with the cultivation of jhāna and tranquil meditation. Once the mind has reached a tranquil state, it will withdraw into the state of upacāra-samādhi, or that which is steadfastly focused concentration (samādhi). Thereafter, it will turn toward wisdom in order to contemplate universal truths (sacca-dhamma). Once clear understanding and true realization in accordance with the truth has arisen, a level of holiness as an ariya-puggala will be attained that corresponds to the cultivated perfections. These are the characteristics of those of the ceto-vimutti nature.

Those with the paññā-vimutti character cultivated the perfection of wisdom (paññā-pāramī) in past lives. When they practice mental cultivation in their new rebirth, they will only be able to achieve steadfastly focused concentration. However, they will be particularly outstanding when it comes to wisdom. When steadfastly focused concentration pairs up with wisdom that is primed and ready, whatever universal truths are contemplated, there will be clear understanding and true realization in accordance with the reality of those universal truths. Consequently, a level of holiness as an ariya-puggala will be attained that corresponds to the cultivated perfections. These are the characteristics of those of the paññā-vimutti nature. May you all understand this accordingly. If someone interprets this differently, consider that it is each man for himself. Or, if you still have questions or doubts, ask me directly. I am ready to explain this so that you understand. In this era, people interpret the Buddha's teachings differently. Which interpretation is the most accurate is a matter of personal discernment.

Once those with the paññā-vimutti character study and understand the methods and put them into practice, it will be easy for them. The practice methods will not be intricately complex or confusing. During the Buddha's era, there were many individuals of the paññā-vimutti character who listened to the Dhamma from the Buddha or listened to the Dhamma from the many ariya-puggalas and were able to become an ariya-puggala

of some level at that very instant. If they were not able to become an ariya-puggala at that very instant, they were able to apply the Dhamma metaphor that they already knew to their practice and eventually become an ariya-puggala as well. If they were asked, “What is calm meditation like? What is this jhāna like? What is that jhāna like?” they would not know because they are of the paññā-vimutti character. They simply conducted steadfastly focused concentration and used wisdom to contemplate universal truths and were able to clearly know and truly see those universal truths and become ariya-puggalas.

During the Buddha’s era, those of the paññā-vimutti character totaled as much as seventy percent. The practice methods of the paññā-vimutti do not involve complicated procedures, rituals, or fixed formats. Wisdom can be used to contemplate universal truths wherever one may 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. The Dhamma models that can be used to support the development of wisdom are plentiful. If one understands the principles of the Three Common Characteristics—namely, impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and not-self (anattā)—every place is saturated in universal truths—whether underwater, on land, or anywhere in this world. Stick the tip of a needle anywhere and there will be universal truths there.

Practitioners have two duties (dhura):

1. Gantha-dhura, or the duty of study
2. Vipassanā-dhura, or the duty of contemplation (paññā)

Practitioners must study and comprehend these two duties and employ wisdom to contemplate in order to clearly understand and truly realize according to the truth of the 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 world and the Dhamma are grouped together. If the Dhamma is not known, everything will appear to be worldly. Those who recognize the Dhamma will be able to use wisdom to contemplate the worldly issues in terms of the Dhamma, and they will be able to clearly separate the Dhamma from the worldly issues.

This is analogous to rain, which is water that is naturally clear, pure, and utterly flavorless. If rain falls into the ocean and mixes with that 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 discern the rain water from the salty water. To separate salt water and fresh water, one must utilize advanced technology to filter it in order to extract the fresh water from the salt water. Dhamma practice is the same way. In order to separate a pure mind (citta) from defilements (kilesa), desires (taṇhā), and ignorance (avijjā), you cannot just sit in tranquil meditation or dwell in some meditative absorption (jhāna). Defilements, desires,

and ignorance will not shrivel up and dry through this process. Thus, the Pāli adage, “Paññāya parisujjhati,” the mind is purified by wisdom (paññā). Absolutely no one has attained a stage of Dhamma as a holy one (ariya-puggala) by way of tranquility in meditative absorptions (jhāna). May you change this perception. Otherwise, there will be eternal delusion of serene meditation and meditative absorptions.



## Practice According to Your Character

THOSE WITH THE deliverance through wisdom (paññā-vimutti) character will find it easy to practice the Dhamma. This is because they are ugghaṭitaññu, or those who realize and understand the Dhamma easily. If they follow those with the deliverance through concentration (ceto-vimutti) character, it will not suit their innate character and they will find that practice difficult. Despite already inherently possessing mindfulness (sati), concentration (samādhi), and wisdom (paññā), they will be misguided and unable to discern the principles that correspond to their own character. That is why there is confusion and running in circles. It is like hiding money in your pocket and forgetting about it. You think that you don't have any money. Once you are hungry, you don't have any money to buy something to eat, so you starve. Check your pockets, and you will know and see the money in there.

The misconception that you do not possess mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom will pose a great problem in Dhamma practice. This is because those with the paññā-vimutti character

have different methods of practice from those of the ceto-vimutti character. The majority of people during the Buddha's time and in modern times correspond to the paññā-vimutti character. When they train in the ceto-vimutti manner, it will be incompatible because it isn't their nature. It is like "keeping up with the Joneses." You wish to imitate others. Once you recognize that you possess the paññā-vimutti character, you should practice accordingly. That way, you will realize the path (magga) and fruit (phala) in this lifetime.

As for the question, "How can I discern what character I have?" It is not difficult to discern your character. Observe yourself during meditation. You can use any preparatory phrase (parikamma) or not use one at all. Simply be mindful of inhaling and mindful of exhaling. Let the mind be as it usually is. Do not pressure or compel your mind. Sit in a comfortable posture and breathe regularly. Simply be mindful of breath. You will realize on your own whether you can do this for a long time or a short time.

There is a simple way to test for your intrinsic nature. Once the mind (citta) has converged into a single point, or that which is called steadfastly focused concentration, it will gradually fall into tranquility. This state is called appanā-samādhi, or full meditative concentration. If these symptoms occur, understand that you are one of the ceto-vimutti. When the paññā-vimutti recite meditative mantras and meditate, their minds can converge into a single point, or steadfastly focused concentration, but the mind will not be able to dive deeper into serenity. The paññā-vimutti are only

able to attain steadfastly focused concentration. Thereafter, the mind will want to think about this matter or that matter. Even if the mind is pulled back into reciting mantras and meditation, it will only be able to do it for a couple minutes before reverting back to thinking. If these symptoms occur, understand that you are one of the paññā-vimutti. Once the mind has achieved steadfastly focused concentration and it wants to contemplate, then go ahead and use wisdom to contemplate. When this is your character, this is the method you must use. Understand this accordingly.

You must practice in a way that matches your innate character. It is not necessary to aim for tranquility again because no matter what you do, it will not become tranquil meditation. It is a waste of time and energy. It is pointless, because those who are paññā-vimutti can only achieve steadfastly focused concentration. When steadfastly focused concentration and wisdom come together, a prominent strong force will arise. All stimuli will be put to good use as models for contemplation of the truth. Any object that changes must be drawn inward and compared to your own changes. Any object that deteriorates and ceases to exist in its supposed form must be contemplated in terms of not-self (anattā). Always internalize the parallel (opanayiko) and consider how every part of your body will undoubtedly deteriorate and cease to exist just like those objects. There is nothing that can exist in this world forever.

There were many of those who had attained a level of enlightenment (ariya-puggala) with the paññā-vimutti character

during the Buddha's time. In modern times, if a Buddha were to emerge in the world, many people would become ariya-puggalas. There are many people in various locations that are serious about Dhamma practice. The method commonly stressed is tranquil meditation. If the paññā-vimutti try to practice in this manner, they will be unsuccessful. The teacher will tell them to refrain from thinking because it distracts the mind.

It is this kind of instruction that prevents the practitioner from using wisdom to contemplate indisputable truths (sacca-dhamma). The pervasive teaching is to keep the mind (citta) in the present at all times. Whether standing, walking, sitting, or reclining, the mind must remain in the present. In that case, there is nothing to do. How can doing nothing lead to prosperity? There are impending floods or fires and you leave them to naturally occur. You don't think of ways to prevent these disasters. You are sick and don't think of a way to cure it. When defilements and desires rise up, you don't have the wisdom to fix them. The minds of commoners (puthujjana) are filled with defilements and desires. When they die in this lifetime, those defilements and desires will compel the mind to take rebirth in the future. Keeping the mind in the present and having a calm mind doesn't mean that defilements and desires will cease to exist.



## Sati, Samādhi, Paññā

**M**INDFULNESS (SATI), CONCENTRATION (samādhi), and wisdom (paññā) are all treasures inherent in every human. Regardless of the era, every person is born into this world with innate mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. During infancy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom exist but do not function or manifest. At two to three years of age, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom begin to function. This is comparable to the mango tree that exists within a mango seed. If the seed is sliced open, the mango tree cannot be seen. Once the seed is planted in soil, the mango tree will sprout from the mango seed on its own. This is analogous to mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom during baby years. At two to three years of age, the child possesses mindful awareness of various things. Focused concentration in action and speech is apparent. The wisdom to consider before acting or speaking is in line with the wisdom of those childhood years. The baby doesn't yet know the difference between what is wrong action, wrong speech, and wrong thought and what is right action, right speech, and right thought, but once

the child grows up, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom will be fully operational.

Without righteousness, moral shame (*hiri*), and moral fear (*ottappa*), the mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom they possess can all become tools used to commit evil actions, evil speech, and evil thoughts. This will lead to wrong mindfulness (*micchā-sati*) and wrong concentration (*micchā-samādhi*). Wisdom will be applied toward thinking about various things in the wrong way, like thinking selfishly and putting personal interests or the welfare of one's own faction first. These are malevolent fools who are unafraid of wrongdoing and solely think of personal benefit. They are self-interested and find pleasure at the cost of the suffering of others. These selfish people are not lauded by the wise; they are detested by society. This is how mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom are used in unrighteous ways and unknowingly develop into wrong mindfulness, wrong concentration, and wrong wisdom. This is likened to 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 situation. But if the weapon falls into the hands of your enemy, you will always be defeated. Therefore, practitioners must possess correct perceptions of the truth (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) as the foundation for mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom.

The Buddha proclaimed the religion and disseminated the Dhamma to the Buddhist company. He explained and clarified

what was wrong and what was right to the Buddhist company so that they would understand. He provided reason to clearly support how wrong action leads to wrong results and how wrong speech leads to wrong results. Most importantly, if someone possesses wrong views, their actions and speech will consequently be wrong. This is because everyone inherently possesses wrong views, only they do not realize that they are wrong views. As such, they habitually act wrongly and speak wrongly.

Accordingly, the Buddha used examples and drew comparisons based on principles of reasoning in order to help Dhamma listeners accept the truth. That which the Buddha taught people was *sacca-dhamma*, or the indisputable truths that exist in every person born into this world. These indisputable truths are old. The Buddha drew on old stories that exemplified typical human behaviors as a teaching method. In other words, he used stories about people to teach people. Beforehand, certain viewpoints were perceived as true and accurate. After the Buddha stated that those viewpoints were in fact false, those who listened with rational wisdom were able to accept the truth.

The Buddha necessitated that people first identify their faults. Upon knowing your faults, it is possible to change wrong views into right views, or that which is called *sammā-ditṭhi*, views that are correct and righteous. Once right views arise in the mind in this way, this is when an individual's wisdom has arisen. Wrong is viewed as wrong. Right is viewed as right. The difference between wrong action and right action, wrong speech and right

speech, and wrong thought and right thought can be immediately discerned. That which is wrong is detested by all, thus it must be shed. That which is righteous is praised by the wise.

As the mind trains in cultivating correct views in this fashion, understand that wisdom has arisen within you. Although it is wisdom at a worldly level, at least it is Dhamma at a worldly level. In other words, it is clearly knowing the Dhamma and seeing the Dhamma that are the world's indisputable truths.

Doesn't all Dhamma exist in this world? With clear knowledge and true realization of the reality of the world, why continue to be infatuated with it? Those who frequently cycle through birth and death in this world are infatuated with the world. That is why they cling to the world and have been continuously reborn in the world up until the present time and will continue to be infatuated with the world in endless future rebirths. This is the wrong perception that the world is pleasant and fitting to live in.

Mindfulness (sati), concentration (samādhi), and comprehensive insight according to the truth (paññā) are all primary weapons for those with the paññā-vimutti character. Other topics of Dhamma practice are only secondary or supporting weapons used in appropriate tasks. Each individual's character is not the same. This is likened to people afflicted with various ailments. The doctor must prescribe different medications and the patients must rely on the doctor 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 whether to prescribe medicine or if surgery is necessary. If the doctor uses the proper method of treatment, the patient will be able to recover from the ailment. Dhamma practice is identical in that respect.

Mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) must be developed in order to serve as an x-ray machine that illuminates the images of defilements and desires that exist within the mind. You must find a way to surgically remove defilements and desires from the mind. At this point, are you qualified to be a surgeon? Do you possess comprehensive knowledge of defilements and desires yet? If you do not know and see these defilements and desires, how will you destroy them? Those who are capable of shedding defilements, desires, and mental intoxications (*āsava*) must be replete and primed with mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom in order to eradicate various defilements and desires from the mind. Another analogy can be made to a military general going out to battle its enemy. The general must be ready with the following three things:

1. Supplies
2. Weapons
3. 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 first thing to seize is the enemy's food supplies because once the food supplies have been

cut off, there will be a greater chance of victory. The same applies to those who practice Dhamma for the purpose of extinguishing defilements and desires. Practitioners must know how to cut off the supplies that fuel defilements and desires. Namely, forms, sounds, scents, tastes, and touch, or in other words, the five sensual pleasures (kāma-guṇa). The defilements and desires that arise in the mind in the form of greed (lobha), anger (dosa), delusion (moha), and ignorance (avijjā) do so because the mind is pleased by and lusts for forms, sounds, scents, tastes, and touch. It is deluded by these five sense pleasures.

Cutting off supplies refers to being cautious such that the mind is neither pleased nor displeased by the five sense pleasures. On the surface, these five sense pleasures seem coarse and of a basic level. After proper consideration, it is clear that they are relevant to the preliminary, intermediate, as well as the most advanced and refined level of practice. If an individual sheds the five sense pleasures in their entirety, they will attain enlightenment at the non-returner (anāgāmī) or arahant level. Very few are able to practice Dhamma at this advanced level. I have only explained it for your knowledge. As for the Dhamma stage of the stream enterers (sotāpanna) and the Dhamma stage of the once-returners (sakadāgāmī), the five sense pleasures have not yet been extinguished. A prime example of this is Visākhā. According to historical accounts, she achieved stream-entry at the age of seven. During her teenage years, she was delighted by

and lusted for the five sense pleasures, consequently married, and had twenty children.

Studying and understanding the history of each ariya-puggala or each group of ariya-puggalas will make it easier to practice Dhamma and select Dhamma topics to use to develop wisdom. This is because the Buddha clearly set forth the steps within each Dhamma topic. These steps and Dhamma topics are specific to each Dhamma stage. The Dhamma for the sotāpanna, sakadāgāmī, anāgāmī, and arahant stages are clearly and thoroughly detailed in the manuals.

Whether practicing the Dhamma that will lead to the ultimate attainment of final enlightenment will be easy or difficult depends on each practitioner's degree of individual mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom as well as how coarse or 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 the Dhamma and the world. Yet, how do they have the mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom to teach their children and grandchildren to be virtuous individuals? Likewise, during the Buddha's era, those who didn't know any Dhamma topics were still able to achieve a level of holiness.

During the Buddha's era, Dhamma books were not yet available for people to read. Those who were to understand the Dhamma had to listen to the Buddha and other ariya-puggalas, live and

in person. In order for listeners of the Dhamma to understand the principles of the truth, they would have to have mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom while listening, as well as individual rationality in discernment. Many groups of people who listened to the Buddha's sermons subsequently awakened to the Dhamma. For instance, King Bimbisara and his court of one hundred and twenty thousand had not previously known the Buddha. They had no knowledge of Dhamma principles and no understanding of what the Dhamma was. They had not yet understood the concepts of mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom despite the fact that they already completely possessed and were primed with mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. Once they listened to the Buddha preach the Dhamma, they had the mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom to absorb the truth from him and one hundred and ten thousand of them attained the first level of enlightenment as sotāpannas. The remaining ten thousand dedicatedly took refuge in the Triple Gem. So, carefully consider this. When did they meditate until their minds (citta) became calm and wisdom emerged? People are replete and primed with mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. However, thus far, it has only been used in worldly tasks. Now, all that you must do is apply that mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom toward the Dhamma. It is not complicated or confusing at all.



## Using Wisdom to Contemplate the Present

- T**HE 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, the present in terms of meditation refers to mindfulness of the present. 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. For the most part, this is all that is taught and understood.

As for the present in terms of developing insight (*vipassanā*), life in the present is used as a pivot or center. Look back into the past and analyze the physical and mental suffering endured. Having evaded the clutches of death on numerous occasions, you are lucky to have survived up until this point in the present. Many have already passed away and you will follow in the exact same fashion. Some reached old age while others did not. Use wisdom

to contemplate aging, contemplate sickness, and contemplate death which is the ultimate outcome. It is as in the verse that is frequently chanted, “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 you. You will age, you will become sick, and you will ultimately die. From this model, you can enhance your wisdom through contemplation of your own examples.

The present rebirth indicates the current life as you know it. If there is happiness and comfort, use wisdom to consider how in past lives, you cultivated good deeds (kamma), and in the present life, those good deeds have borne fruit in the form of happiness and comfort. Good kamma refers to the many good deeds that people have cultivated in past lives, including giving charitably, observing the precepts, developing loving kindness, practicing mental cultivation, paying homage and chanting, building temples, pavilions, and pagodas, being good to parents, being good to society in general, and many other good deeds. All of these virtues have resulted in happiness and comfort in the present life. This is how to practice the present in terms of wisdom. You can contemplate the past. This is called *atītaṃ-paññā*, or using wisdom to reflect on past lives in order to motivate and console yourself. *Anāgataṃ-paññā* is using wisdom to contemplate future births in order to console yourself that you will be able to maintain your human existence in upcoming lifetimes. In those rebirths, you will only cultivate good kamma, just as you did in

past lives. As for this life, you will cultivate as many good deeds as possible. While mental intoxications and defilements 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 good lineage that has right views (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and is honest and righteous, all of which are virtues that will lead to prosperity in that rebirth. The merits and perfections of character cultivated in the present life will surely be a ladder that leads to the attainment of the path and fruit of enlightenment in a future rebirth. This is a model for using wisdom to contemplate the present in terms of how it shapes the future.

Contemplate these principles of the present rationally. The present is not only limited to tranquil meditation (*samatha*). You must study the principles of the present in terms of insight development (*vipassanā*) in order to develop the meditative methods and develop the insight methods. This is because developing tranquility (*samatha*) and developing insight (*vipassanā*) are a pair. When is it appropriate to use the meditative techniques of the present? When is it appropriate to use the insight development techniques of the present? It is not that developing tranquility will spontaneously give rise to insight, as is believed. Change this perception. Interpret insight development (*vipassanā*) more accurately. *Vipassanā* means wisdom. Wisdom means thought or contemplation. Thought comes from perception. Whatever the perception is, that is what the thought corresponds to. If the perception is wrong, the corresponding thought will

be wrong. If the perception is right, the corresponding thought will be right. What are wrong perceptions like? What are right perceptions like? Once you understand this, you will be able to select the right perception in accordance with righteousness (dhammā-dhipateyya). This is the first step that the Buddha laid forth during the Buddha's era. The Buddha stated, "O, Bhikkhus. The footprints of all legged animals are encompassed by the footprint of the elephant. Likewise, all indisputable truths (sacca-dhamma) are encompassed by right perception (sammā-diṭṭhi)."

Thus, right perception (sammā-diṭṭhi) is the taproot of Buddhism. It is the Dhamma topic that, when practiced, will lead to the path and fruit of enlightenment. Therefore, it is clear that right perception (sammā-diṭṭhi) is the taproot from which all other Dhamma topics stem. Practitioners must start from these right perceptions. Understand the principles of the Three Common Characteristics—impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and not-self (anattā)—because all things that arise in this world are subject to the Three Common Characteristics. Consequently, practitioners must understand this truth.



## Paññā Precedes Sīla and Samādhi

SCHOLARLY KNOWLEDGE (PARIYATTI) is merely a map of the path. The original map that the Buddha laid forth is correct and aligned with the destination. After the fifth saṅgīti,<sup>16</sup> the interpretations of the Buddha's teachings (dhamma) began to deviate. They were no longer aligned with the Buddha's original teachings. During the era of authoritative commentaries (atthakathā) and the era of sub-commentators (ṭīkā), alterations and additions were made that corresponded to conventions of that time. There were modifications and repositioning of various Dhamma topics or words such that 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 which is commonly studied

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16 Saṅgīti (or saṅghāyanā) denotes a general convocation of the Buddhist clergy (saṅgha) in order to settle questions of doctrine and fix the text of the Pāli Canon.

and known is: moral conduct (sīla), concentration (samādhi), and wisdom (paññā). When used solely for the sake of studying, this sequence will not yield any problems. However, if applied in practice, this will obviously conflict with the Noble Eightfold Path. The Noble Eightfold Path are rules of practice that the Buddha well arranged. It is an interrelated path of practice and is a way to practice that is easy and not disharmonious.

It starts with sammā-diṭṭhi, or right view, and sammā-saṅkappa, or right thought. These first two form the wisdom (paññā) grouping.

Then, there is sammā-vācā, or right speech; sammā-kammanta, or right action; and sammā-ājīva, or right livelihood. These three in the middle form the morality (sīla) grouping.

Finally, there is sammā-vāyāma, or right effort; sammā-sati, or right mindfulness; and sammā-samādhi, or right concentration. These three at the end form the concentration (samādhi) grouping.

If the sequence of the Noble Eightfold Path is followed, the ordering of the Dhamma grouping that corresponds to the original sequence is: wisdom (paññā), moral conduct (sīla), concentration (samādhi). Rationally, this is what it should be. If the Threefold Discipline is arranged such that it follows the Noble Eightfold Path that the Buddha 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. Suta-maya-paññā, or wisdom acquired by studying
2. Cintā-maya-paññā, or wisdom through reasoning
3. Bhāvanā-maya-paññā, or wisdom through practice

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

### **1. Suta-maya-paññā**

Suta-maya-paññā is wisdom acquired by studying. For example, take the topic of moral conduct (sīla)—the Five Precepts, Eight Precepts, Ten Precepts, and Two Hundred Twenty-Seven Precepts—and study and understand them. How should each category or each precept be adhered to in order to achieve purity? All of the moral precepts (sīla) are theoretical knowledge that must be studied. Once all of the precepts are known, cintā-maya-paññā can be used to analyze, examine, and discern for each precept how to adhere to it and what its exceptions are. Each precept has its exceptions.

Exceptions are a matter of intention, or the mind. Make the mind refrain from that which is prohibited. If the mind cannot refrain from it, then refrain from the action or speech. This is being composed in action and speech.

There are three principles in regard to precept observance. Certain precepts are observed physically, certain precepts are

observed verbally, and certain precepts are observed mentally, or by intention. Intention is the basis for precept observance:

1. Physical and mental observance
2. Verbal and mental observance
3. Physical, verbal, and mental observance

May you, the reader, understand this accordingly.

Precepts and moral conduct (sīla) are theoretical (pariyatti) principles. They were rules established later on. They are guidelines for how to conduct yourself courteously and live together without mistrust, in peace and harmony. They function similar to laws of governance. If someone acts in a manner that is unjust and a nuisance to society, rules are established in order to force behavior to remain within a particular frame of proper conduct. Likewise, the moral precepts are regulations that keep behavior within certain boundaries. That is why the Buddha established them.

Those who observe the precepts must use wisdom to study and understand the differing categories clearly. Doesn't this imply that wisdom is the precursor? Everyone innately possesses wisdom. You should use this wisdom to generate personal as well as societal benefit. This wisdom of the worldly level is pervasively employed in the world. When used to study the Dhamma, it is called suta-maya-paññā, or wisdom related to learning or studying. It is how we discern wrong from right. The Buddha clearly stated that if one does not first study and understand an

issue, problems will subsequently follow. Thus the Pali adage, “Nisamma karaṇaṃ seyyo,” before acting or speaking, one must contemplate with wisdom every time.

Consider whether an action is wrong or right, or whether some 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 righteous, 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). This explanation of suta-maya-paññā is provided for the studying of the precept grouping. I take it you understand this accordingly.

Concentration (samādhi) is one topic that many people teach and practice. There is the misconception that once tranquility 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, wisdom (paññā) must be used to study and comprehend the classifications of concentration (samādhi) before actually practicing it. What are the steps and techniques involved in

concentration? There is momentary concentration (khaṇika-samādhī), access concentration (upacāra-samādhī), attainment concentration (appanā-samādhī), right concentration (sammā-samādhī), wrong concentration (micchā-samādhī), delusional concentration (moha-samādhī), techniques for entering mental absorptions of the fine-material sphere (rūpa-jhāna) and the immaterial sphere (arūpa-jhāna), steadfastly focused concentration, and tranquil meditation. All of these classifications of concentration must be researched and understood with wisdom in terms of each of the corresponding principles and methods of practice. This is called comprehensive wisdom related to developing concentration. There are manuals on this because concentration is an academic topic. Suta-maya-pañña must be employed in order to know the correct procedures and methods of practice. Do not merely sit with your eyes shut, repeating a preparatory (parikamma) 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 (abhiñña) is attained, they proceed to fall deeper into the depths of self-delusion. If their meditation reaches the heights of mental absorptions of the fine-material sphere (rūpa-jhāna) and the immaterial sphere (arūpa-jhāna), they will mistakenly believe that they have attained arahantship, 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, and so on. Eventually, they asked if their 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 is a question that should be posed to their 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 reported 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, comprehensive wisdom. This facilitates the realization and understanding of ultimate truths (sacca-dhamma). Therefore,

meditation is not solely restricted to Buddhist practitioners. Those of other religions or those who don't subscribe to any religion can meditate and achieve tranquility. Likewise, with or without moral conduct, tranquil meditation can be practiced as well.

After suta-maya-paññā 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 nature. That form of meditation should then be practiced. One can perform meditation in order to test one's nature. Once a preparatory phrase is repeated while sitting in meditation for around ten minutes, one will have an idea of whether one corresponds to the paññā-vimutti or ceto-vimutti character. Mostly, it will be paññā-vimutti, if after the mind attains steadfastly focused concentration, there is an inclination to contemplate various issues. If this is the case, then practice steadfastly focused meditation in order to supplement wisdom in thinking about 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 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 (paṭivedha) 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 at the level of the two wisdoms to the point of proficiency. 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 duties (dhura):

1. Gantha-dhura, or the duty of study
2. Vipassanā-dhura, or the duty of using wisdom for discernment

This principle is evident in texts. Samādhi-dhura, or the duty of meditation or concentration, does not exist because concentration is an academic principle already incorporated into other Dhamma groupings. Suta-maya-paññā is wisdom related to learning about moral conduct and concentration. Cintā-maya-paññā is wisdom to analyze and select models of concentration 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 primary, secondary, and advanced levels of Dhamma studies, as well as Pali Scholar Levels 3-9.

## 2. **Cintā-maya-paññā**

After studying and understanding, use wisdom to discern 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. 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 one's ailment should be chosen. The same concept applies when selecting Dhamma topics to practice. 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. People who hold this viewpoint have not studied sufficiently and have not read the history of ariya-puggalas during the Buddha's era. Why did the Buddha lay forth many categories and topics of Dhamma? The character and cultivated perfections of those who were to become ariya-puggalas 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 that particular model of Dhamma.

In the present, many resolutely assert that if practice does not correspond to the 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 books of the Higher Doctrine (abhidhamma), then it will be impossible to become an ariya-puggala 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, “O bhikkhus. The footprints of all legged animals are encompassed by the footprint of the elephant. Bhikkhus, the categories of Dhamma that I, the Tathagata, have laid forth with righteousness are all encompassed by wisdom of right views (sammā-diṭṭhi).”

Those who have encountered this declaration would not dare issue absolute claims that only particular categories of Dhamma would enable one to reach holiness as an ariya-puggala. Because manuals have been erroneously written from the past, people in contemporary times have correspondingly read and understood according to those misconceptions.

The seven books of the abhidhamma are suitable topics only for beings in heaven. In his seventh rains retreat, the Buddha visited his mother in the Tāvātimsā level of heaven and preached the 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 ariya-puggalas. During the six years after the Buddha had attained enlightenment, the abhidhamma had

not arisen. The Buddha had given discourses on other topics of Dhamma and many people attained various levels of enlightenment as ariya-puggalas. Why isn't this studied and understood? That way, the Buddha's teachings would be understood correctly and there would not be the absolute assertion that one topic of Dhamma is more important than all of the others. Read the historical accounts of the ariya-puggalas. What Dhamma topics did they listen to back then that enabled them to become ariya-puggalas? How did those methods and models differ? That way, one will not argue that others are wrong and that one's own viewpoint is superior and correct.

### **3. Bhāvanā-maya-paññā**

Bhāvanā-maya-paññā is also known as vipassanā-ñāṇa. It is a form of wisdom of an advanced and refined level. It continues from suta-maya-paññā and cintā-maya-paññā. Once one forms a foundation of knowing and seeing in accordance with these two forms of wisdom, one's understandings and realizations will become clearer. This is called vipassanā, or insight that enables one to know and see universal truths (sacca-dhamma) in a clear manner. In other words, yonisomanasikāra. Whatever universal truths are contemplated, there is comprehensive clarity and dissolution of doubts related to those universal truths. Whatever attachments the mind used to cling to, the mind will release those attachments. When this occurs, it is called bhāvanā-maya-paññā, or true understanding and true realization.

This is like a man who fishes in a pond. In order to catch a fish for a meal, he grabs randomly with his hands. Suddenly, he grabs hold of a rattlesnake and tightens his grip. At that moment, he feels that it is really a fish. He proceeds to imagine how the fish should be prepared in order to be savory. Experience solely through touch is likely to lead to the wrong conclusion. Once the snake is pulled above water and he sees that it is, in fact, a snake, the feeling that he had caught a fish completely vanishes. Likewise, if you extract the wrong assumptions that “this belongs to me” and “this is my self-identity” and examine them with wisdom in order to know and see them according to the truth, the mind will clearly know and see according to the truth of reality that the four elements of earth, water, wind, and fire that have congregated in this form dubbed “self” is merely a clump of elements. In a short time, this clump of elements will disintegrate back into the elements whence they came. This clump of elements was created by the delusional volitional mind (saṅkhāra-citta) for temporary habitation. In a few days, it will all disband.



## Training the Mind in Ñāṇa-dassana

THERE ARE TWO methods of training the mind in ñāṇa-dassana, or the knowing and seeing in accordance with the truth of reality. The most important aspect is to know the type of nature one possesses. Those with the ceto-vimutti nature should train as previously described. Those with the paññā-vimutti nature should steadily practice sati-sampajañña, or clear comprehension and circumspective mindfulness. They should develop steadfastly focused concentration such that it steadfastly exists within their mind at all times. They should train their wisdom to constantly contemplate in a comprehensive manner in accordance with the truth. The truth is ubiquitous in this world. Internally, it is in the form of our bodies. Externally, the truth resides in things that exist everywhere, in things that are created by humans and things that arise naturally. Once they have arisen, all of these things exist only momentarily and eventually dissolve. Nothing can persist eternally. Everything is subject to impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and not-self (anattā).

Impermanence is an effect we experience in the present. Everyone is unhappy with change. We want our belongings to remain with us forever. This is impossible, yet we desire for it to be that way. Thus, in order to contemplate impermanence, we must first understand the concept of permanence in the present. How long can an object exist? What causes it to change? The cause and factors that contribute to the change must be known and seen with wisdom. It will be evidently known and seen that we cannot force things to be according to our desires. The mind must accept the reality of these 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 sutamaya-paññā and cintā-maya-paññā. Once the two wisdoms turn the compass of perception toward right views (sammā-diṭṭhi), that is referred to as “wisdom arising” at a preliminary level. Wisdom is then used to contemplate other Dhamma topics to the point of increased comprehension. This is referred to as wisdom at the vipassanā, or insight development level. After developing insight until one possesses the insight to know and see more clearly, one has reached the stage of yonisomanasikāra. That is, upon contemplating any indisputable truths (sacca-dhamma), comprehensive clarity will arise along with the dissolution of doubt and release of attachments. These characteristics describe bhāvanā-maya-paññā. It is a form of wisdom that integrates into

attainment (paṭivedha), which is the path and fruit (magga-phala) of practice. This is the path to attainment as an ariya-puggala 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 their own sense of 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 and methods of Dhamma practice differ as well. It is up to each individual whether they will be able to attain the path and fruit of enlightenment, because we are all Buddhists. Anything can happen during the tail end of the Buddhist dispensation. Everyone shares the viewpoint that the final goal of practice is the attainment of enlightenment. However people interpret the Buddha's Dhamma models, that is how they practice. In present times, there is no one who can change peoples' beliefs and perceptions so that they are all the same. It is quite impossible because each sect is firm in its individual convictions and viewpoints.

Thus, in practice, there must be knowing (ñāṇa) and seeing (dassana) as the ultimate deciding factor. If both knowing and seeing exist simultaneously, it will be possible for that Dhamma practice to be fruitful. Ñāṇa refers to knowledge or understanding, while dassana refers to seeing or realization. Both of these must be developed in the mind. If there is knowing but no seeing with wisdom (dassana-paññā), that knowing is apt to be incorrect. If

there is only seeing with wisdom (dassana-paññā) but no knowing, wrong perception is similarly bound to occur.

This is akin 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 bound to arise. If the tiger is feared, it will be quite easy to find a way to get far from its jaws. It is unnecessary to ask others which way to flee, as you will be able to be decisive in that moment. The forest or thorns are no longer a matter of contention. Your feet will take you far away from the tiger's ferocious bite. This is also true when it comes to practicing the Dhamma. The important factor is developing ñāṇa-dassana within the mind, in order to know and see according to indisputable truths (sacca-dhamma). Our countless past lives were destroyed by death. May this life be the final one in the cycle of rebirth. This world is laden with suffering, adverse consequences, and perils. There is nothing of enough significance or relevance in this world to provide comfort or safety.



## The Ten Beliefs of the Kālāma Sutta

THE KĀLĀMA SUTTA is another topic that will be explained for the reader's information. While the Buddha was still alive, he had the insight to know that toward the end of the age of Buddhism, people would change, modify, and embellish the Buddha's teachings. Buddhists will misunderstand that the teachings are attributed to the Buddha. The Kālāma Sutta is rational and believable. It is what the Buddha said about the ten beliefs.

I have authored a book about the Kālāma Sutta in which all ten beliefs are detailed. In this text, only one belief will be expounded for the reader to study and understand. Namely, 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 should be? Each individual must use reason to analyze and decide on their own. The Buddha's teaching is true and accurate. He foretold that in the future—that is, our current era—everyone will read texts written by their masters. Each book claims to be the Buddha's teachings, does it not? Upon reading

the texts, it is clearly evident that the teachings are not cohesive. For a single topic of Dhamma, different connotations abound. For instance, it is plainly obvious that each master construes insight development (*vipassanā*) differently. Further, there are many more Dhamma topics that are interpreted in various ways.

To illustrate, if the Threefold Discipline is arranged according to the Noble Eightfold Path, the original sequence will be: wisdom (*paññā*), moral conduct (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*). The three types of wisdom (*paññā*) are *suta-maya-paññā*, *cintā-maya-paññā*, and *bhāvanā-maya-paññā*. *Suta-maya-paññā* is wisdom related to studying and *cintā-maya-paññā* is wisdom in selecting a model of Dhamma that corresponds to one's intrinsic nature for practice. Once practice reaches the point of increased comprehensive understanding and realization, one will be *yonisomanasikāra*, one who knows and sees in accordance with the truth such that comprehensive clarity arises and all doubts are extinguished. This is called *bhāvanā-maya-paññā*, the wisdom that connects to attainment (*paṭivedha*), which is the path and fruit of enlightenment (*magga-phala-nibbāna*). The three forms of wisdom are the starting point for developing right views (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and right thoughts (*sammā-saṅkappa*) related to a particular Dhamma topic, and are practiced in accordance with universal truths (*sacca-dhamma*). Examples of this may include practicing moral conduct (*sīla*), practicing concentration (*samādhi*), or practicing any other Dhamma topic, as previously explained. If this sequence of practice is understood, Dhamma

practice will be straightforward and simple. It will not be confusing or roundabout.

The Dhamma that people read in manuals is merely the name of the Dhamma. It must be internalized and reflected upon (opānāyiko) in order to become the true Dhamma. Greed, anger, delusion, desire, and defilements of various magnitudes all exist within our minds. That is why practice is directed inward toward the mind. “Manopubbāṅgamā dhammā, mano setṭhā manomaya,” all phenomena have the mind as their forerunner; they have mind as their chief; they are mind-made. Practicing Dhamma in terms of physical actions is merely a method of preventing inappropriate behavior from getting out to society. No one desires improper speech. You must resist expressing it because no one likes that which is unwholesome.



## Using Wisdom to Contemplate Suffering

WHEN IT COMES to using wisdom (paññā) to contemplate suffering (dukkha), this suffering mainly manifests in the mind, as that is where all suffering is received and congregates. When any part of the body experiences pain or is afflicted with various ailments, all corresponding suffering converges in the mind. The mind and body are connected (sampayutta) and affect one another.

This can be compared to how when two hands are clapped together, sound is bound to arise. Likewise, while the body and mind are still interdependent, suffering is bound to arise. Once the mind separates from the body—a phenomenon referred to as death—the mind will no longer be affected by the body's suffering. The body that is not sustained by consciousness (viññāṇa) will rot, deteriorate, and revert back to the elements. It has ceased to exist as a human; it has become anattā, or not-self.

Thus, in using wisdom to contemplate not-self (anattā), self (attā) must first be understood. The meaning of self must be

comprehended. What part of the body do you believe to be the self? Use wisdom to consider each and every component of the body in order to know and see how they are all just the elements. It is this clump of elements that people are infatuated with and love, isn't it? While alive, people like and love one another according to each person's delusion. While the person we love is still alive, we can hug and kiss them. But once they die, even if you were to shower the body in perfume and powder it, it would not be embraceable at all. The human body is not inherently fragrant and must be washed regularly in order to rinse off its filth. If everyone refrained from showering for a couple of days, a foul odor would arise. Those accustomed to pleasant fragrances will be instantly repulsed by the stench. When stinky people become accustomed to living together, they will be able to live together.

For practitioners who heavily emphasize asubha, the loathsomeness and filthiness of the body, every part of the body is filthy. While alive, it is already this filthy and disgusting. Upon death, the magnitude of that filthiness is further amplified. The foul stench of a human corpse is many times more repugnant than that of an animal. This is a technique to train the mind not to be infatuated with others. As the proverb says, "Bees hunt for pollen; flies seek out the putrid; scholars strive for virtue." Precisely which one are you? If you are one of the flies, you are a terrible practitioner. You have long been carried away by your enjoyment of pleasurable things and carried away by your own attā. Thus, in order to know and see anattā, it is crucial to know

and see attā. Recalibrate the mind's paradigm. Consider the mind's past wrong views and wrong understandings to be past dreams. Use your individual wisdom and insight to know and see the truth, and all doubts related to those wrong views will cease. Then, you will be one with the right views of the truth. This is evident in the Pāli phrase, "Yo dhammaṃ passati so maṃ passati," one who sees the Dhamma sees the Buddha.

Therefore, use your 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 you were able to tie yourself down, you must also be able to untie yourself. In doing so, you would be your own refuge. Others only point out the way to practice. You must train your mindfulness (sati), concentration (samādhi), wisdom (paññā), and personal ability.

The Dhamma that the Buddha delineated is only a map detailing the path. As a traveler, you must carefully examine and understand the map because you 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 (apāya-bhūmi), heaven, or nibbāna. If all of this is understood, there will be no difficulties in your travels. Dhamma practice is the same way. The Buddha laid forth a map for practice that was clear and obvious. You must employ wisdom to contemplate and understand in terms of cause and effect. In this way, doubts related to your practice will

not exist and time will not be squandered. You don't have many days left to live. Who knows when you will die? Do not take life for granted and miss out on your opportunity. Many people have died before you, including those who were younger, your peers, older colleagues, as well as your parents' contemporaries. You can see that they have all passed on, one after the other. You too will die, and the exact date will be death's final mandate. On that day, you will die just like those who died before you.

Being dead can denote two things:

1. Being dead because you do not possess any virtue and you are heedless
2. Being dead because you have ceased breathing and no longer have the ability to cultivate any virtue

You must perform as many good deeds as you can before your final breath. This is the advantage of being born, making your life worth something. Do not behave like an animal. We humans are superior because we are the foremost in wisdom. Accordingly, we must utilize mindfulness and wisdom in positive ways and train the mind to be virtuous.

In present times, many masters misinterpret 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 teaching wrongly. Each master proclaims that he is also one who teaches the true

path. If you have mindful wisdom, you will be able to discern whether the teachings are correct or incorrect.

Practitioners these days are like a herd of oxen searching for a leader to bring them across the river to the shore, where it is safe. There are many leaders who appear to share similar physical characteristics. There may be an ox within the group of leaders that has crossed the river before. It is likely that the herd does not know which ox this is, and each ox must make their own decision. If they select an experienced ox who has crossed the river before, then they will be fortunate. The ox will lead the herd on a path that is safe and free of obstacles that waste time directly to the other shore, safe and sound. Alternatively, 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, deliver themselves to a pack of crocodiles, or get caught up in a whirlpool. Eventually, the leader and the herd will drown in the whirlpool or get swept into the ocean and float around aimlessly for eternity. 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, theoretical 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 and written many books on how to apply the Dhamma in actual practice. Each book emphasizes the

importance of mindfulness and wisdom (*sati-paññā*) first and foremost, followed by mindfulness and concentration (*sati-samādhi*). In terms of concentration (*samādhi*), steadfastly focused concentration is the most heavily emphasized because most people possess the *paññā-vimutti* nature. Those with the *paññā-vimutti* nature will not be fruitful when practicing tranquil meditation. After a couple minutes of sitting and repeating a meditative phrase, the *paññā-vimutti* will begin thinking about different things. Even after pulling the mind back into the recitations, the mind will only repeat the phrase momentarily before going off on another tangent. Mostly, the practitioner will be consumed with the worldly issues they are accustomed to thinking about. The practitioner's mind will scatter and they will feel annoyed and frustrated by their own thoughts. For the most part, these thoughts will concern worldly matters. Although the reflections are Dhamma-related at times, they still are not enough to change any of the mind's wrong views.

Practitioners contemplate Dhamma topics without knowing what level to which they apply. Sometimes, they attempt to contemplate arahant-level Dhamma in hopes of casting off defilements and desires in the same way as the arahants. However, it is beyond their capability. They have overestimated themselves. After contemplating in that way, their defilements and desires are just as alive and robust as before; they haven't lessened or been cast off at all. The practitioner then concludes that their

perfections of character are insufficient to attain arahantship and so they stop trying.

This is one reason why I have studied the histories of those in the Buddha's era who were to realize the Dhamma and become ariya-puggalas—to understand why people were able to become ariya-puggalas back then. I have provided examples of ariya-puggalas of the paññā-vimutti nature as well as those of the ceto-vimutti nature for you to read so that you will be able to change your paradigms to match your intrinsic nature and make Dhamma practice easier. You don't need to force yourself to attain a specific level of Dhamma. Aspiring to achieve such and such insights or become an ariya-puggala of such and such level is practicing with desires as the forerunner. It will give rise to problems. That is, it will become easy for defilements to deceive the mind. After practicing more and more tranquil meditation, defilements will trick your mind without your realizing it.

As previously detailed in the “The Ten Vipassanūpakilesas,” it is not that practicing any Dhamma topic will enable you to attain enlightenment. That is not how it works. You should read the accounts of ariya-puggalas during the Buddha's era. There were numerous ariya-puggalas during those times, both monastics and laypeople. Try adjusting your practice methods to correspond to theirs, and results may emerge in this lifetime. You should keep changing your Dhamma practice method until you find one that is suitable to your intrinsic nature. In this era, no one can help

you; you must help yourself. Thus, you should learn to understand that, “one is one’s own refuge.”

Dhamma principles are ubiquitous and easy to find and read. It is not impossible to find Dhamma methods to practice that are suitable to your nature. If someone knows the way and does not get lost, it will be easy to reach their desired destination. Similarly, if you practice Dhamma methods that are in accordance with the path and fruit of enlightenment, it will not be difficult to know and see the Dhamma on your own. Sometimes you practice Dhamma methods that match your nature, but there is no continuity in your practice so the results won’t manifest yet.

If you practice in accordance with the Noble Eightfold Path laid forth by the Buddha, your practice will be easy because the methods are sequential. The Noble Eightfold Path can be employed in both worldly (lokiya) applications as well as transcendental (lokuttara) practice. Normally, practitioners aim for transcendental Dhamma in order to eliminate defilements, desires, and mental intoxications in order to ultimately attain enlightenment. If you practice the Dhamma from the Noble Eightfold Path in a worldly manner, it will have a positive effect on society.

In this world, we live in societies. Within those societies, there are similar views and there are different views. You must make yourself fair and neutral. Listen to the views of each person and each group. If they have such and such views, then what are their intentions? Their thoughts will correspond to their views and perspectives. Do their actions and words benefit them or

benefit others? You must study and discern the reason behind their actions. If it is good, then you should model yourself after it. If it is bad, then you should not follow their example. You should internalize their actions and ask yourself what group your actions correspond to. You must recognize your own wrong views and right views. In this way, you will be able to change your views for the better.

This is how you study the Dhamma from people. It is easy to observe and understand. You can discern someone's character from their normal, natural behavior. People who tend to be greedy act a certain way. People who tend to be angry act a certain way. After observing others, you must reflect on yourself and see if you are the same as them. If you are, then you must change your views.

Everyone wants to be praised by others. They want to be understood by others while refusing to reciprocate. Even if they act wrongly or speak wrongly, they attempt to say something to cover it up and pretend that the wrongdoing never happened. They do not want others to know what they have done wrong. This is what most people are like. Gossiping and maligning others is typical human behavior. You must examine yourself and determine whether or not you also possess this character. If you do, then you must change. Train yourself to understand others. In doing so, your pride and arrogance will lessen.

We are flawed, and others can see our weaknesses. Everyone serves as a mirror of reflection for others. The first point of interest is behavior and manners which manifest both physically

and verbally. Actions and speech are the gateway to society. You must review them every day. If you think in a negative manner, you should keep it to yourself and refrain from expressing it physically or verbally in front of others. Even if there is anger or hatred in your mind, you must hold back, because expressing those emotions is a fool's modus operandi. Fools tend to gossip and malign others, they create a mountain out of an anthill, they embellish and try to pass it off as true, and they lack mindfulness and are unable to restrain their thoughts or speech. This gives rise to vyāpāda, ill-will and malevolence. As a practitioner, you should not allow these situations to arise. You must be conscious of yourself at all times. Thus, the Thai adage, "Speech is worth a few dimes, silence is golden." You should revisit and review your words.

As for sammā-diṭṭhi in terms of worldly Dhamma, you should cultivate righteousness within your mind. Once the mind is righteous, thoughts, actions, and speech will be righteous toward both yourself and others. Your family unit will be happy. Your relatives, friends, and community will also be happy. Those who are righteous garner respect and trust. Righteous people prefer to keep company with similarly righteous individuals. It is easy to identify righteous people because their actions and speech are clear indicators. Those we call "good people" are people who are righteous and just. Therefore, endeavor to develop righteousness within yourself because it is an indicator of a good person.

“Wherever determination exists, therein lies success.” Moral goodness is not impossible. “Those who desire goodness find it easy to commit moral deeds and difficult to commit immoral deeds. Fools who desire to commit immoral deeds find it easy to commit immoral deeds and difficult to commit moral deeds.” In human society, both the moral and immoral coexist. This is reinforced by King Bhumibol 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.” His Majesty’s words clearly indicate that if a moral person governs the country, there will be prosperity. If an immoral person governs the country, there will be destruction and chaos. In every society and every occupation, if a moral person is in charge, tasks will be completed successfully.



## The Four Nimitta

THERE ARE THREE types of nimittas<sup>17</sup> referenced in the Scriptures:

### 1. **Supina-nimitta**

Supina-nimitta refers to dreams. Those who are sleeping will experience dreams. At times, those dreams are frightening, at times they are pleasant. Sometimes these dreams are about the body in an abnormal state, sometimes they are about the past, sometimes they are about the future, sometimes they are about old memories, and sometimes they are about sensory experiences. Some people dream while asleep, while others do not. The subject matter in dreams is sometimes false and sometimes true.

To illustrate, King Pasenadi of Kosala dreamed of sixteen things. He related his dreams to the Buddha and the Buddha explained the significance of the dreams in what is known as

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<sup>17</sup> Nimitta literally means sign, but can also denote vision, omen, meaning, symbol, or mental image.

the “Mahā-supina Jātaka.” I have explained these in depth in my book entitled, “The Buddha’s Sixteen Prophecies.” A few of them will be discussed henceforth.

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 prophesied 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 birth, some children will not have parents or shelter. It will be quite pitiful. These occurrences will occur in the future. Other prophecies can be found in the book I have written.

If practitioners who possess wisdom apply their dreams in terms of the Dhamma, the dreams will serve as great resources for the cultivation of wisdom. Visions are wasted if wisdom is not used to interpret them. I, for one, believe 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 not-self (*anattā*) in order to aid in the cultivation of wisdom. This is called *paṭibhāga-nimitta*, the use of insight-wisdom to contemplate

and elaborate. Nimitta denotes meaning. Interpret the visions according to that which they relate.

## **2. Uggaha-nimitta**

Uggaha-nimitta is a vision or sign that arises while sitting in meditation. Once the mind converges into concentration, various visions will arise. They can be scary, pleasant, or even disgusting and repulsive. Every time visions arise, employ wisdom (paṭibhāga-nimitta) to contemplate and interpret them. If you don't possess the wisdom to contemplate the uggaha-nimittas, the visions will be useless. Therefore, you must find a way to derive benefit from the visions, because they are an excellent support for wisdom development.

## **3. Phassa-nimitta**

Phassa-nimitta is a vision that arises while you are fully awake. It occurs while the person is neither sleeping nor performing tranquil meditation. This type of vision results from the five sense bases (āyatana):

### **3.1 Cakkhu-nimitta**

Cakkhu-nimitta is a sign that arises when the eyes sense form and meaning related to that form arises in the mind. It may be that the form is pleasant, thus giving rise to preoccupations (ārammaṇa) of love, pleasure, and happiness. This is called sukha-vedanā, and mind's taking in the preoccupation of happiness.

When the eyes take in a form that is displeasing it is called dukkha-vedanā, the mind's taking in the preoccupation of suffering. If the internal sense organs come into contact with the external sense objects and there is a feeling of indifference and neither love nor hate, it is referred to as upekkhā-vedanā. Phassa-nimitta is when the eyes sense a form, lust arises within the mind, and that form serves as the mind's preoccupation. Saṅkhāra, volitional thought or mental formations, related to that form are then bound to arise. Once saṅkhāra goes down a lustful path, it will suppose things about that form and use them as the basis for volitional thoughts. This is how volitional thoughts (saṅkhāra) and supposition (sammuti) are intimately related.

This is similar to how once a pen and paper are ready, anything can be written according to the mind's desires. Likewise, if the mind is partial to lustful desire, volitional thought will use the form to fantasize in a lustful fashion. The mind uses that form to create and suppose hypothetical situations (sammuti) that fulfill those lustful desires. Phassa-nimitta gives meaning to form. This is how preoccupations that correspond to worldly trends arise. Both humans and animals that are deluded by the world are deluded by this very same thing. That is why they have consequently continued to be reborn in this world and will continue to be deluded by it. The mind's infatuation with sensual pleasures (kāma-guṇa) will intensify 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 a form, defilements and volitional thoughts infiltrate and derive meaning from what is supposed about that form. Volitional thoughts of beauty, love and pleasure, and fragrant aromas are then triggered and woven into full-fledged situations. Why don't you think about thoughts of the opposite spectrum—of how the human physical form is dirty and foul, or how there is not a single component of the human body that is pleasantly fragrant? You can think about love all day and night, while standing, walking, sitting, or lying down. Even if a person is no longer physically with you or has died many years ago, old preoccupations of love can be dug up and delightfully reflected upon, as if the person were still alive and by your side. Fantasies of adorable conversations, endearing smiles as sweet as sugar, and the sensation of physical contact form in the mind. This is what is called building castles in the sky and painting dreams. You believe in the promises made in this lifetime that your love will persist until the destruction of the skies and the obliteration of the Earth. Why are people capable of thinking up dramatic screenplays 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 just like a worm eating a pile of feces. The worm believes it is consuming its favorite dish and would be absolutely uninterested in an offering of the finest, first-rate cuisine. The

mind that is infatuated and deluded by physical form is just the same. As a practitioner, you must reset this paradigm and change your views. Practice thinking in the opposite direction, as the Buddha instructed. Thoughts of attractiveness (subha) have been deeply ingrained in the mind for such a long time that the mind has become delusional. You must train your wisdom and try to contemplate loathsomeness and impurity (asubha), as previously explained, in order to liberate the mind from the cavernous abyss.

### **3.2 Sota-nimitta**

Sota-nimitta is a sign that arises when the ears sense sound. This sound becomes a sense-object that makes a deep impression on the mind and can engender preoccupations of love. When the sound is charming and enchanting, it is difficult to forget. You wish to hear it constantly. You seek out sounds that are pleasing to you in order to enjoy them. You yearn for those sounds and wish to listen to them around the clock. The sounds that express love are especially enchanting. Teenagers and even the elderly who are steps away from the coffin use music as an instrument to express their love for one another. The mind's love and attachment are reflected in music. In other words, both young men and women use sound to bind each other's hearts.

It is like 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, an enraptured mind will use sound to bind itself. Those who frequently traverse the cycle

of birth and death in this world are infatuated with sound, aren't they? Practitioners must constantly observe and reflect on their minds. If your mind is pleased with sound, immediately reverse the inclination and train your mind to no longer be attached to it. Constantly use wisdom to train yourself to understand how sound is used to bind the mind. In this way, the mind will realize and understand the resulting suffering, harmful consequences, and future perils 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, you will be swept up in the stream of the world for eternity.

### **3.3 Ghāṇa-nimitta**

Ghāṇa-nimitta is a sign that arises from the sensing of scent. Fragrant aromas also correspond to the aforementioned concept. The fragrant aroma of flowers or aromatic woods like sandalwood is not nearly as potent as that of our fellow humans. While alive, humans sniff and smell one another according to their respective obsessions. Each person puts on an aromatic façade by showering in powder or perfumes in order to conceal and restrict their organic human stench from proliferating outward, as well as to deceive others into believing that they are 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; scholars strive for virtue.” Which type of insect are you? You must observe yourself. If you are a fly,

how will you change your perception to correspond to that of a bee? You, the reader, are probably a bee searching for pollen or a scholar seeking virtue. Virtuous individuals have a non-diluting, fragrant aroma that emanates in all directions. This is strikingly different from the stench of corrupt, immoral people. Therefore, practitioners should not be infatuated with only fragrant scents, but should also strive to familiarize themselves with foul odors. Aromatic and foul odors are a pair, and exist in concert within each one of us. How can you best maintain the fragrant aroma within yourself for eternity? “*Sīlagandho anuttaro,*” those who are innately virtuous will possess aromatic scents that stand out wherever they go. Those lacking mindfulness and wisdom (*sati-paññā*) delusionally believe that human scents and various floral aromas are pleasing, and consequently cycle through this world incessantly.

### **3.4 Rasa-nimitta**

Rasa-nimitta is a sign that arises from the sensing of taste. The term *rasa*—taste, flavor, or essence—is commonly taken to mean the flavor of food. This connotation is partially accurate as each individual’s elemental body has been trained differently. For instance, one person’s body is accustomed to jasmine rice and Thai food, while another has trained their body to be accustomed to cheeseburgers and french fries. Practitioners must train their elemental 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 to the consumption of foods that do not aggravate those ailments. Namely, foods that are sappāya, or suitable to that person's physical elements and facilitate relief and comfort.

Unfruitful practice cannot be blamed on food. Monks in the Buddha's era or even in contemporary times who were attached to familiar flavors were afraid to venture out to different locations because they were afraid that the food out there would be incompatible with their elemental body. They were afraid that they wouldn't be able to stomach the food and that they would become emaciated and sick. This type of situation transpired during the Buddha's era.

The term *rasa* can be interpreted in numerous ways, such as, "Such and such action or speech is completely devoid of flavor." After someone receives compliments or accolades, they might say, "You have great taste!" There is the adage, "The flavor of the Dhamma surpasses all other flavors." Thus, *rasa* can be taken to mean many things. Practitioners should shed inferior, worldly flavors and consume the superior flavors of the Dhamma in order to experience positive results.

### **3.5 Phoṭṭhabba-nimitta**

Phoṭṭhabba-nimitta is a sign that arises from the sensing of touch. It refers to the human skin perceiving hot, cool, or cold temperatures. If the temperature is seasonal or moderate, the

human body will receive it well. That is, it will provide relief or comfort. On the other hand, if the temperature is extreme, it will affect both the body and mind. Those accustomed to living in hot climates will be able to do so comfortably. Those accustomed to living in cold climates will be able to do so comfortably. Therefore, find a location that is comfortable for your elemental body. That is, a location that is *utu-sappāya*, an agreeable season or climate. If you are able to select a location with weather that is agreeable to your elemental body, your practice will transpire smoothly and be free of obstacles.

Regarding the subject of males and females, if there is sensation from skin contact and you lack comprehensive wisdom, it is more than likely that lustful emotions will arise and you will want to immerse yourself in them. If you are inclined toward lust for sensual pleasures (*kāma-rāga*) and you experience a soft cushion or bed, lustful sensations may arise as well. Preoccupations of volitional thoughts about the opposite sex may arise. Thus, practitioners—especially novice monks—should take special care to study and understand both the internal sense organs and external sense objects. Lay practitioners will find it difficult to practice because of the frequent proximity to and intermingling with the opposite sex. For instance, *Visākhā* attained *sotāpanna* as an adolescent. When she reached her teens, she married because she was still pleased by fine sense pleasures (*kāma-guṇa*).

The aforementioned five sense pleasures will be completely known only by those who have the corresponding character and

potential primed to attain anāgāmī or arahantship. This is because only they are capable of keeping their sense bases (āyatana) composed; the sotāpanna are not yet capable. Even for the sakadāgāmī, subtle forms of lust (rāga) and repulsion (paṭigha) still lie latent in their minds. How can those who have not realized any of the four stages of attainment (puthujjana) boast that they have shed their sense bases (āyatana)? Their minds definitely seek out sensory experiences and those resulting preoccupations are deeply impressed on the mind. Such preoccupations arise from perception and sensation through the sense bases and are linked to the mental aggregate (nāma-khandha) called vedanā.

Vedanā is defined as preoccupations 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, preoccupations 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 a resource for Dhamma practice. The effectiveness of the application of these resources is dependent on each individual's own ability. This is because in order to keep the sense bases composed, one must have mindfulness (sati), concentration (samādhi), and wisdom (paññā). May you understand this accordingly.

The three nimittas that have been discussed here include supina-nimitta, uggaha-nimitta, and phassa-nimitta.

Supina-nimitta refers to dreams while sleeping. Uggaha-nimitta refers to meditating to the point of calm and various images arise. These images can be adorable, frightening, or repulsive. Phassa-nimitta denotes perception through the sense bases, as previously explained.

#### **4. Paṭibhāga-nimitta**

Paṭibhāga-nimitta is a conceptualized image or counter image. As there are many who do not understand this concept, I will break it down into simpler terms. Paṭi means to practice or train. Bhāga means to elaborate, analyze, explain, and hypothesize. Nimitta refers to meaning. For instance, if the eyes perceive a tangible form, the form will become a sense-object. If the ears perceive sound, that sound will become a sense-object. Taken altogether, paṭibhāga-nimitta refers to how wisdom must be used in practice in order to contemplate meanings, as previously explained. From here on out, train your mind to go against the stream. When the eyes perceive an eighty-year-old person, wisdom can be used to contemplate this sign or image straight away. Take the discomforts and inconveniences of the elderly and internalize them. If you were similarly eighty years old, you would also experience discomforts and inconveniences. Similarly, upon seeing an afflicted or sick individual, use wisdom to contemplate and internalize the parallel in the same way.

In terms of death, you have attended many funerals. Upon seeing a coffin, you must use wisdom and apply the coffin as a

meaningful nimitta. Right now, someone else is lying in the coffin. Internalize that. One day in the future, you will also be lying in a coffin. Everyone must inevitably encounter this. Everyone is subject to this inescapable truth. You must derive benefit from attending the funeral. It is as if you are there to realize the pitiful truth that both their life and your life must transpire in the same way. Right now, it's their turn to leave you. In the days ahead, it will be your turn to leave your friends and relatives and separate from the things that you love.

In Dhamma practice, you must use wisdom to contemplate, discern, clarify, and elaborate various issues and internalize them. If the nimitta is related to something physical or elemental (dhātu), internalize it in terms of the four elements of earth, water, wind, and fire. Make sure it relates to the principles of the Three Common Characteristics. That is, impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha) and the cause of suffering, and not-self (anattā). If the nimitta is related to something that has ceased to exist, then use wisdom 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 evil defilements (kilesa-māra) that incite feelings of love and pleasure within the mind. In every situation, use paṭibhāga-nimitta—that is, wisdom—to contemplate the meaning of the nimitta.

If you use wisdom to contemplate death so frequently that it becomes habitual, that is called training in paññā-vimutti.

Using wisdom to contemplate impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha), and not-self (anattā), or other issues is also considered training in paññā-vimutti. Thus, may the reader understand the meaning of the various nimittas as well as the causal relationships as explained above. May you use paṭibhāga-nimitta—that is, wisdom—to analyze every single issue that the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body sense. You must use wisdom to contemplate every situation because the external sense objects are material for wisdom contemplations. Therefore, you must continue to put forth effort in applying wisdom to contemplate indisputable truths (sacca-dhamma).



## The Five Khandha

AS YOU MAY already know, 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 from clinging to the notion of a self, from expecting the five aggregates to exist according to your preferences, and from the wrong view that the five aggregates are actually the self. These wrong views (micchā-diṭṭhi) have persisted until the present. Those who do not understand this will continue to cling to the self. This wrong view will consequently give rise to distress and suffering.

The five aggregates are separated into two categories, namely the tangible form aggregate (rūpa-khandha) and the intangible aggregate (nāma-khandha). The tangible form aggregate is comprised of the earth, water, wind, and fire elements. The intangible form aggregate is comprised of vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra, and viññāṇa. In order for the intangible aggregates to operate, there must be the tangible form aggregate. Without the intangible aggregates, the tangible aggregate would not exist.

Thus, the tangible form aggregate and intangible aggregates are mutually dependent upon each other. Once the tangible form aggregate senses something, the intangible aggregate will collect information. If the intangible aggregate is operating, the tangible form aggregate is the object for that work. While you are still alive and breathing, both rūpa and nāma must work together. Whenever the pair separates, that is referred to as 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 from each other.

Guidelines for Dhamma practice at the rūpa-khandha and nāma-khandha level are taught by many instructors. For the most part, they teach sitting meditation (samādhi). They do not teach techniques for insight development (vipassanā). If you practice the Dhamma without knowledge of the various stages, it makes it difficult to produce results. The steps related to Dhamma practice in order to attain levels of enlightenment as sotāpanna, sakadāgāmi, anāgāmi, and arahant differ in depth and detail. Defilements and desires are eradicated in both coarse and refined levels corresponding to the stage of practice. This is similar to how someone who has completed the primary level of Dhamma studies is unable to answer a question of the advanced level of Dhamma studies, or how someone who has only been educated up to the advanced level of Dhamma studies is unable to answer questions at the Pali Scholar level. Likewise, training in the Dhamma will be simpler and less complicated if it follows the delineated processes. However, most Dhamma practitioners

follow random guidelines that do not match up and consequently do not understand the Dhamma. The majority of Dhamma that is practiced nowadays is derived from the level of the arahant. Who knows whether or not you have sufficient perfections of character (pāramī) to achieve arahantship in this lifetime? If your pāramī is lacking, then your practice will not yield any results.

If you have cultivated enough pāramī to attain enlightenment as a sotāpanna and your methods of practice correspond to that level of attainment, then you will have a high chance of attaining sotāpanna. Once you have attained sotāpanna, the subsequent stages of Dhamma attainment will not be difficult. This is because you have already opened the door with your sotāpanna attainment; you have entered the stream of enlightenment (nibbāna).

As for the question of whether or not those who become holy ones (ariya-puggala) will know what Dhamma level they have attained, the answer is that they will know for themselves. There is no need to seek confirmation from others. Even if the Buddha were sitting right there in front of them, they would not ask because they already know. Those who became ariya-puggalas in the Buddha's era as well as in the present era know themselves well. They do not doubt themselves any longer. Anyone who achieves a Dhamma stage dispels doubts about that Dhamma stage. It is unnecessary to check against texts and scriptures for confirmation of right or wrong. It is paccattaṃ, individually known. There is no need to obtain a declaration (vyākaraṇa) from anyone else. Further, there is no need to boast or inform others of it. They will live normally, just like others. However

they used to be, that is how they will continue to be; their nature or personality doesn't change.

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. If you ask others, their answer might not be aligned with my meaning. However, you may find your own answers from reading this book.

May you all have strong mindfulness and wisdom, and may you clearly understand and truly realize the sacca-dhamma in accordance with the pāramī that you have cultivated.

Phra Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño

## About the Author



Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño (Thoon Nonruecha) was born May 20, 1935 at Nong Kho village, Bua Kho Sub-district, Mueang District, Maha Sarakham Province, Thailand. He was the fifth of Uddha and Chan Nonruecha's ten children.

At the age of twenty-seven, he left his family to ordain as a monk in the Dhammayut Order. On July 27, 1961, he took ordination at Wat Photisomporn in Udon Thani, with Phra Dhammachedi (Joom Bandhulo) serving as his preceptor.

In his early years, Venerable Ācariya Thoon set out on dhutaṅga at various forest destinations and practiced the Dhamma until he profoundly realized and understood according to the truth. He studied under Venerable Ācariya Khao Anālayo of Wat Tham

Klong Phen in what is now Nong Bua Lam Phu Province. After having been ordained for eight vassas, Venerable Ācariya Thoon attained arahantship in Pa Lun Village, Doi Luang District, Chiang Rai Province.

Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño dedicated his life to the proliferation of the Buddha's original teachings both in Thailand and abroad. Venerable Ācariya Thoon's teachings are distinctive in that he emphasizes the importance of starting Dhamma practice with right view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) and wisdom (*paññā*). His style of Dhamma practice is unique in that it enables laypeople to effectively practice in everyday settings and achieve a level of enlightenment, as he himself had attained the first level (*sotāpanna*) as a layperson. Venerable Ācariya Thoon also stressed the importance of developing both a comprehensive understanding and a true realization of the suffering, harmful consequences, and perils associated with each issue.

In 1975, Venerable Ācariya Thoon established Wat Pa Ban Koh in Ban Phue District, Udon Thani Province. Today, the temple serves as a Buddhist landmark for devotees to honor and venerate the Buddha's teachings and holy relics housed in the majestic pagoda. The temples founded in Venerable Ācariya Thoon's name in the metropolitan cities of San Francisco, New York, and Hong Kong, as well as the Dhamma retreat centers in America and throughout Thailand that train in Venerable Ācariya Thoon's style of cultivating wisdom continue to grow, to this day.

Over the course of his lifetime, Venerable Ācariya Thoon authored over twenty books, including his own autobiography, and produced various forms of media so that Dhamma practitioners from any walk of life could easily access the Dhamma. In 1990, Thai Royal Princess Phra Thep Ratanarachasuda honored Venerable Ācariya Thoon with the Sao Sema Dhammacakka award for his outstanding literary contributions to the Buddhist religion. In 2006, King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand conferred upon Venerable Ācariya Thoon the clerical title of Venerable Paññāvisālathera.

On November 11, 2008, Venerable Ācariya Thoon passed away at the age of seventy-three due to pneumonia and lung tumor complications. As only happens with arahants, Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño's relics formed on the day of his cremation ceremony.

## About the Translator

Born and raised in San Francisco, California, Neecha Thian-Ngern has been a devoted student of Venerable Ācariya Thoon Khippapañño since the age of sixteen. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from University of California San Diego and a Master of Science in Business Administration from San Francisco State University. Neecha was ordained as a Buddhist nun at San Fran Dhammaram Temple in 2017.

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