



**The Bojjhaṅgas:  
Medicine that Makes  
All Diseases Disappear**

Chanmyay Myaing Sayadaw

Translated from Burmese by  
Ven. Ariya Ñāṇī

*Published for free distribution*

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*Sabbadānaṃ dhammadānaṃ jināti.*

The gift of Dhamma excels all gifts.

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## Introduction

Most people would agree with the statement that food, shelter, and clothing are necessities in human life. In the teachings of the Buddha too, these three things are regarded as essential supports to life. Therefore, from the time of ordination as novices and later as fully-ordained monks, novices and bhikkhus carrying out duties connected to the Buddha's teachings need to reflect before using these requisites. Their robes or shelter have the sole purpose of maintaining their health, preventing the body from getting sick and protecting it from any unpredictable changes in the weather. Food and medicine should also be used with wise reflection; their purpose being to prevent unpleasant feelings which have arisen from becoming stronger or to prevent unpleasant feelings from arising in the first place. In this way, the mind is not overcome with greed or aversion, and the monk or novice is able to carry out his *sāsana* duties faultlessly.

In the Buddha's teachings, these four requisites are the same as the three essential things used by lay people, namely food, shelter, and clothing.

In short, whether a monk or novice is eating food, using a shelter, wearing robes, or taking medicine, these actions are based on wise reflection for the benefit of others, so that he is free from affliction and is uninterruptedly mindful while carrying out his duties. The purpose is to reduce attachment, liking, and conceit until he attains the final liberation of the mind.

With wise reflection and reliance on these three things, food, shelter, and clothes, one's health is good, and one is able to work effectively for the benefit of both the *sāsana* and others. Initially, the defilements are abandoned and purified by wise reflection, and later they are purified through the practice of meditation. Then a person personally experiences happiness and peace. In this way, one experiences the benefits of the Buddha's teaching and becomes one's own saviour.

Why are food, shelter, and clothes so important? All living beings have bodies which are always afflicted by one kind of disease or



another. To give the body the opportunity to get at least some relief from these afflictions, these requisites are usually sufficient.

Every human being because he/she has a body can be regarded as a patient or sick person. When a person realizes he is sick, he has a strong desire for good medicine to make his disease disappear. At this time, the most precious gift is the disappearance of the disease and the reappearance of good health. In the Dhammapada (verse 204), the Buddha said, „Health is the highest gain.” He stressed the value of being free from affliction. In the Vinaya (Mahāvagga), the Buddha said that the merit that comes from taking care of a sick person is the same as the merit gained by taking care of the Buddha.

Sometimes a person cannot get any relief from the painful feelings caused by disease. As a result, people may talk about their afflictions and compare their painful feelings, claiming that their pain is stronger or more unpleasant than another person’s pain. However, this kind of talk is really a waste of time because when a person’s illness and the resulting painful feelings disappear, each person experiences the same feelings of relief and gladness.

Instead of wasting time with useless evaluations or complaints about painful feelings, it is better to implement the advice given in this book and become completely free from painful feelings. In this introduction, I have the opportunity of letting you know that this is actually possible. The author of this book, Chanmyay Myaing Sayadaw, has personally experienced these benefits because of the teachings of his teachers and his personal experiences. In this book, he hopes to share his understanding and personal experiences, and thus he offers this book as a Dhamma gift to all those who wish to become free from affliction.

Chanmyay Myaing Sayadaw describes the potency of the *bojjhaṅga* medicine by sharing his personal experiences and the experiences from his teachers and friends. For those who are eager to become free from disease and affliction, this book is a book to rejoice in. In the Māgandiya Sutta (MN 75), the Buddha said that the body is a disease. People need to understand that all human beings are essentially patients. There is no need to undergo costly tests in order

to know that one is sick. In the realm of *dukkha*, all beings who are actually patients need to rightly understand this point so that they do not succumb to a distorted view. This book provides a great opportunity to understand these important points.

Although I have followed the instructions for the application of the *bojjhaṅga* medicine for more than twenty years, I can say that after reading this book my understanding has become deeper. I hope that others will also derive benefit from this book and increase their understanding. I greatly appreciate Chanmyay Myaing Sayadaw's good intention to spread the Dhamma inheritance with this book. I rejoice in this meritorious deed by saying '*sadhu*.'

May this book „The *Bojjhaṅgas* – Medicine that Makes All Diseases Disappear“ fall into the hands of many people at the right time, and may they be able to quickly understand its essence.

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## Foreword

For a number of years, whenever I could spare a few hours or a day or two, I worked simultaneously on the English and German translations of Chanmyay Myaing Sayadaw's book „The *Bojjhaṅgas* – Medicine that Makes All Diseases Disappear.“ The *bojjhaṅgas* are a set of seven mental factors that meditators need to develop and strengthen in order to become fully liberated. These factors, when fully developed, have the potential to fully cure a person from the painful afflictions caused by the defilements. In this way, the *bojjhaṅgas*, the enlightenment factors, are the best medicine for perfect health.

Whenever I was immersed in the work of translating this text, I found myself in a state similar to that of the dedicated meditator. By applying patient persevering effort, the meditator tries to be mindful of all phenomena arising in both the body and mind. Based on the two factors of mindfulness and effort, other mental qualities will naturally arise. And as the mind becomes focussed on each successive object, concentration will be established. A concentrated and alert mind is able to see things as they really are. In addition, the mind becomes filled with interest and rapture as well as calm and tranquillity. The qualities of rapture and tranquillity are especially appealing and add a unique flavour to the practice. However, as practice matures, they recede into the background, and equanimity becomes more prominent.

Translating a text requires not only exertion but the ability to be fully present with the text. Whenever I sat down to work on this translation, I often found myself deeply absorbed in the text within a short time. Time seemed to disappear during these periods of full immersion in the book's contents. The essential challenge was to find the most appropriate words to convey the meaning of Sayadaw's explanations, stories, instructions, and advice. While engaged in this task, I noticed that my mind became filled with pleasurable interest as well as tranquillity and calm. When these mental qualities were present, I felt a great sense of ease and comfort in the body. Even after sitting at my desk for hours on end, I didn't feel mentally tired nor did my body ache or feel stiff.

The qualities of mindfulness, investigation, energy, rapture, tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity are the set of mental factors called 'enlightenment factors'. They can be developed and cultivated in either worldly or spiritual frames of reference. Whenever they are well developed, a person will feel happy and joyful and be at ease physically and mentally. When cultivated as factors of enlightenment, they will naturally lead to a fully liberated mind. In other words, they lead to enlightenment, a state in which the mind is completely liberated from all defilements.

Although I have completed the main task of translating the text from Burmese into English, this book could not have come into existence without the generous help and support of many other people. My Burmese friend Mimmi has patiently answered all my questions regarding parts of the text that were not very clear. Judy Witheford, Marjo Oosterhoff, and Daw Virāṇāṇī have also offered their skills and expertise editing the text. Knowing that I could count on their valuable help, I decided to translate this book on the *bojjhaṅgas*. And last but not least, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all those helpers and volunteers who very generously offer their work and time in the meditation centres or monasteries where I stayed while working on this translation.

For this English translation, the passage „Inge's Tumour“ was revised by Inge herself and as a result, it differs slightly from the Burmese original.

May the readers of this book derive as much inspiration and interest in developing the enlightenment factors as I did while working on this translation. May all of our combined efforts be for the welfare, happiness, and well-being of all living beings.

Ven. Ariya Ñāṇī  
 Chanmyay Myaing Meditation Centre  
 Mingaladon Township  
 Yangon, Myanmar  
 March 2008

## **About the References**

The references to the texts in the Pāḷi canon, the commentaries, and the subcommentaries in this English translation have been correlated to the texts in Roman script. In the original Burmese book, the references correlated to the Pāḷi canon, the commentaries, and the subcommentaries in Burmese script. However, most of the English readers are not familiar with Burmese script and as a result, the references to the texts in Burmese script would be useless.

Therefore, I have looked for these texts in Roman script. For the Pāḷi passages I have relied on the work by the Vipassana Research Institute (VRI) in Igatpuri, India. On their website, one can access the whole Pāḷi canon together with the commentaries and subcommentaries as revised by the sixth Buddhist Council in Yangon held between 1954 to 1956.

For the English passages, I have used existing English translations of the Pāḷi texts. However, most of the commentaries and subcommentaries are not available in English translations.

# FIRST DAY

## Introduction

Today's Dhamma talk is entitled "The *Bojjhaṅgas* – Medicine that Makes All Diseases Disappear." Virtuous Buddhist people are very familiar with the word *bojjhaṅga*. They often chant the *Bojjhaṅga Sutta* when they are sick or when somebody who is dear is sick. If they are not able to recite it themselves, they listen to it when it is chanted by monks or other virtuous persons. This is why we can say that the *Bojjhaṅga Sutta* is something that virtuous Buddhists are well acquainted with. However, they have often just heard the word *bojjhaṅgas*, neither understanding their nature and power, nor knowing how to develop them.

People may have heard the names of renowned Sayadaws or the names of famous actors and actresses, but they may never have actually met them. This Dhamma talk about the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas* is for virtuous people who are familiar with the word but do not yet understand it.

Before I start with the actual Dhamma talk, I want to use a metaphor and explain a few basic ideas, so that you will easily understand my meaning.

1. The Buddha's *sāsana* is like a hospital.
2. The Buddha is like a skilled physician.
3. The *bojjhaṅgas* or the factors of enlightenment are like medicine.
4. The meditators are like the patients.
5. The practice of vipassanā meditation is similar to undergoing treatment.
6. When one engages in the practice of vipassanā meditation and is taking the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*, one becomes free from sorrow and worry and feels both physically and mentally happy. As a result of the practice, one is released

from physical pain and lives in peace and happiness. One can experience the happiness of *devas* as well as the happiness resulting from the attainment of *magga*, *phala*, and Nibbāna. Experiencing these benefits is like the disappearance of the disease that results from taking the medicine.

In this way, virtuous meditators who are engaged in the practice of meditation for the eradication of disease find themselves in the hospital of the Buddha's *sāsana*. By applying the medicine they undergo the treatment of the Buddha, who is the great physician.

In the most ordinary sense, a patient is a person who is afflicted with a disease or pain. Usually, a sick person goes either to a doctor or a hospital and explains what is wrong. Then the doctor examines the patient, prescribes the appropriate medicine or treatment, and then the sick person undergoes the treatment outlined by the doctor.

It is essential that the patient takes the medicine given by the doctor, so that the disease disappears. Therefore, the patient has to take the medicine whether she or he wants to swallow it or not, whether she or he is busy or not, or whether she or he is uninterested or enthusiastic about it. The patient has to swallow the medicine whether it is sweet or bitter. Obviously, the sick person has to take the medicine prescribed by the doctor every day on a regular basis. Only in this way will the disease disappear, and it is only with the disappearance of the disease that one will feel happy and peaceful mentally and physically.

Let me ask you, "Why does a sick person want the disease to disappear?" Isn't it because sickness makes one feel miserable and causes suffering? When a certain sickness arises, one feels pain, aching, or unpleasant feelings. One feels tortured to the extent that one wants to call out or cry. This is real suffering.

There are two different kinds of diseases:

- **Physical disease:** this refers to the ninety-six diseases that can afflict the body.
- **Mental disease:** this refers to the one thousand five hundred defilements (*kilesas*) that can afflict the mind.

Overcome by one of these ninety-six diseases, a person may be unable to eat food or drink any more; one may desperately call one's mother or father because one cannot sleep from rolling and tossing in one's bed. This is extremely difficult to bear because it is so painful and exhausting. When the body is overcome with suffering, the mind can no longer be happy or at ease. Likewise, the mind becomes agitated when it is afflicted by one of the one thousand five hundred defilements. The result is sorrow, worry, mental exhaustion, grief, or lamentation. "Pounding the mind, the body gets crushed," - this traditional Burmese saying points to how strong mental suffering also leads to physical suffering.

Due to diseases of the mind, uncountable living beings have lost their lives. Feeling unbearably tortured by disease, the sick person experiences a great deal of suffering and exhaustion. Wishing to make this dreadful sickness disappear and become free from it, the sick person willingly undergoes the treatment by either swallowing the medicine, getting injections, or undergoing surgery. Because the patient is afraid of immense suffering, he or she bears the lesser suffering caused by the treatment. In other words, because we are afraid of the suffering connected to the death process, we patiently bear the less severe suffering caused by the treatment.

## **Diseases of the Mind**

When people are afflicted with a disease, they get it cured as fast as possible. Most people only go and see a doctor when their body gets sick. Then they take some ordinary medicine to cure it. However, most people do not realize that diseases of the mind, the defilements (*kilesas*), can actually be cured; they do not even consider these to be illnesses. As a matter of fact, the diseases of the mind should be feared much more than the diseases of the body.

You might wonder why this is so. If patients are thoroughly examined, people with a mental disease far outnumber those with a bodily illness. And if patients with physical diseases are examined, in almost eighty percent of the patients the physical affliction is



caused by the mind. If a person dies from a physical disease, the effect is limited to a single lifetime when the patient dies from the illness. However, if death is caused by a mental disease, a person will continue to die innumerable times in the round of rebirths (*samsāra*). If one dies due to a physical sickness, one cannot fall into the four lower realms. However, if one dies due to a disease of the mind, one can fall into the four lower realms.

Therefore, diseases of the mind are to be feared much more than diseases of the body. We should try to prevent diseases of the mind from arising, and if they arise, then we should try to cure them as quickly as possible with the most effective and helpful methods available.

All of you are here as meditators trying to cure the disease of the mind, isn't that so? The practice of vipassanā meditation is essentially a very effective cure for diseases of the mind. Now you might ask what kind of medicine cures mental diseases. The cure is the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*. The *bojjhaṅgas* are the best medicine for healing diseases of the mind.

## Two Kinds of Medicine

In worldly usage, something is called 'medicine' when it has the power to prevent a disease from arising or to cure an illness. Therefore, we have these two kinds of medicine:

- **Preventive medicine:** in order to prevent a disease from arising one takes the medicine in advance.
- **Curative medicine:** when one is afflicted by a disease, one takes the medicine in order to make it disappear, to become free from it, or to uproot the causes.

The application of the medicine can take different forms. Some people treat disease by applying a cream. Other people cure their sickness by drinking some liquid medicine every day. Some people

get injections as a treatment, while still other people have to undergo surgery to be cured.

When using the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*, some virtuous people recite the *Bojjhaṅga Sutta*; others ask either monks, nuns, or virtuous persons to recite it as a cure. This is like treating an infection by applying a cream. There are virtuous people who practise samatha meditation in one form or another as a means of treatment. This is like treating a sickness by drinking some liquid medicine. Other wise people practise vipassanā meditation as a cure, which is like treating an illness by getting injections or undergoing surgery.

## The Medicine of the *Bojjhaṅgas*

When we say that the factors of enlightenment, *bojjhaṅgas*, are like medicine, we mean that by developing these factors the disease will disappear just as a sickness disappears by taking ordinary medicine. Just as we increase our bodily strength by taking some vitamins, in the same way we increase and replenish our mental as well as bodily strength by developing the factors of enlightenment. When we take something for a headache, the headache disappears; when we take something for fever, the fever disappears. Likewise, when we apply the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas* by practising meditation, all diseases will disappear.

In the scriptures, it is said, “*Cittena nīyati loko.*”<sup>1</sup> This means, “The world [i.e., a living being] is led around by consciousness.”<sup>2</sup> My body as well as the body of all living beings consists of the combination of these four kinds of matter or materiality (*rūpa*):<sup>3</sup>

- |                          |                                    |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. <i>kammaja rūpa</i> : | <i>kamma</i> -produced materiality |
| 2. <i>cittaja rūpa</i> : | mind-produced materiality          |
| 3. <i>utuja rūpa</i> :   | temperature-produced materiality   |
| 4. <i>āhāraja rūpa</i> : | nutriment-produced materiality     |

Among these four kinds of materiality, our body consists mostly of materiality produced by the mind, *cittaja rūpa*. When we take the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*, powerful *cittaja rūpa* arise, which are clear and radiant. Thus, we feel well and healthy. Then the other

kinds of materiality which only form a small part of the body, will also become clear and radiant making us feel well and healthy. It is in this state that we can say that the disease has disappeared and we are cured.

The medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas* is easy to take and is of extremely good quality. We do not need to spend any money, and we can fully trust it. It is medicine that can be taken by men and women alike as well as by any person from any ethnical or social group. Not only are people from this country using it, but also people from foreign countries are applying it with confidence.

*Sāsana*-hospitals have been established and opened all over the world. In these hospitals, skillful Burmese physicians are invited to come and treat patients. In some hospitals, they have their own native doctors who give the treatments.

The Buddha once was asked by one of the monks, “Venerable sir, it is said, ‘factors of enlightenment, factors of enlightenment.’ In what sense are they called factors of enlightenment?” The Buddha answered, “They lead to enlightenment, therefore, they are called factors of enlightenment.”<sup>4</sup>

The factors leading to enlightenment, the *bojjhaṅgas*, need to be practised and developed repeatedly. Then we can attain insight knowledge, path knowledge, fruition knowledge, and Nibbāna or full enlightenment as taught by the Buddha. With the attainment of Nibbāna, we do not suffer from any sickness, and we are free from all kinds of diseases. Because the Buddha took the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas* he attained Buddhahood.

Other people who attained arahantship were able to do so only because they, too, took the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*. And those who became *anāgāmīs*, *sakadāgāmīs*, or *soṭāpannas* did so because they, too, took the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*.

By taking the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas* defilements like greed (*lobha*), anger (*dosa*), etc. disappear. Worry, anxiety, and lamentation do not arise, and we are not threatened by any danger. As we do not experience any physical and mental suffering, our bodies are healthy, and our minds are happy and peaceful.

## Benefits on the Mundane Level

Actually, the benefits just mentioned are not the only benefits of the factors of enlightenment. In the field of mundane matters such as education, business, trade, health, social obligations, politics, religion, or handicraft, they are also very useful and yield many benefits. All these different activities should be founded in the factors of enlightenment. By doing so, we are growing the fruits of success. However, the factors of enlightenment applied to these activities are not authentic but only shallow imitations of the real factors of enlightenment. These genuine factors of enlightenment only arise at the stage of the insight knowledge of the arising and passing away of phenomena (*udayabbaya ñāṇa*).

So, how can these factors of enlightenment be beneficial in matters related to mundane knowledge, business, politics, etc.? In order to be successful in all these mundane matters or activities, we have to do them thoughtfully and without being forgetful. Only then can we carry out the work which leads to progress, prosperity, and wealth. If we are forgetful in carrying out our business or duty, what are the results? And if we are not doing anything, there will not be any success, progress, prosperity, or wealth. When we are not forgetful in carrying out our duties but remember them and remain attentive, this is called *sati-sambojjhaṅga* (the enlightenment factor of mindfulness). This attentiveness or mindfulness is needed in many different matters.

We need investigation and discernment to be successful and prosper. We should be able to discern whether or not our efforts are for prosperity and wealth when we are engaging in a certain kind of work, business, or studying a certain matter. Is it for our improvement or not? How much will our prosperity increase? How wealthy can we become? For this business to be successful and flourish, whom do we need to associate with, where and when should we establish it? If there is no investigation and discernment when undertaking something, failure and loss will follow. The ability to

investigate and discern is called *dhammavicaya-sambojjhaṅga* (the enlightenment factor of investigation of states).

When we understand that this investigation as an enlightenment factor is the cause for prosperity, progress, and wealth to arise, then we should apply ourselves diligently to the task and carry it out in this way. We need to actually implement it. Please understand the causes of prosperity and improvement. Obviously, if we do not make an effort to implement our understanding, we cannot prosper. Therefore, when we find an effective method, we have to strive according to this method and actually implement it. This effort is called *viriya-sambojjhaṅga* (the enlightenment factor of effort).

When we are carrying out our business or our duties in the field of education, trade, or any other worldly matter, we should be fully immersed in that matter or task. When we are not absorbed in our work, we do not want to carry it out successfully to the very end. As a result, we will not prosper. This absorption in our work is called *samādhi-sambojjhaṅga* (the enlightenment factor of concentration).

Whenever we experience some benefit or profit from that work, we will experience joy and delight (*pīti*) and feel calm and tranquil (*passaddhi*). As a result, we want to carry out this work or matter. If there is no joy and no calm, then we do not want to put effort into our work. When there is joy and delight, we sometimes even see workers singing while they are doing heavy tasks. This delight and calm are called *pīti-sambojjhaṅga* and *passaddhi-sambojjhaṅga* (the enlightenment factor of rapture and the enlightenment factor of tranquillity).

*Upekkhā-sambojjhaṅga* is the enlightenment factor of equanimity. Equanimity or composure does not imply sitting around or sleeping without doing anything. Rather, it means we are skilled and competent in our work, so that task can be carried out with composure. When we are very skilled in the work we do, then activity seems to happen by itself without a lot of exertion.

Some workers can easily carry out their jobs while talking or singing. This is quite amazing! This quality of being skilled, competent, and equanimous while working is *upekkhā-sambojjhaṅga*. Then there is

no need for extra exertion. When we are proficient in our work, we naturally become more prosperous and wealthy.

Therefore, a person who wants to increase his or her material wealth, and who wants to prosper, needs to embrace the enlightenment factors and practise them accordingly. This is true for all worldly matters such as education, trade, social obligations, religion, local matters, or politics. Do not forget these enlightenment factors!

## **Disappearance of Bodily Diseases**

Many people who are afflicted by one of the ninety-six diseases either recite these enlightenment factors themselves or they invite monks, nuns, or other virtuous persons to recite them. This medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas* actually has the ability to make diseases disappear. The Buddha used the ill-health of Venerable Mahākassapa and Venerable Moggallāna as an opportunity to teach the *Bojjhaṅga Sutta*.

At a time when the Buddha was staying in the Veḷuvana monastery in Rājagaha, the Venerable Mahākassapa was staying in the Pippali cave not far away from Rājagaha. When the Venerable Mahākassapa fell sick, the Buddha himself went to the Pippali cave and recited the *Bojjhaṅga Sutta*, thereby treating him with the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*. The Venerable Mahākassapa applied the medicine by listening to the Buddha's recitation. After listening to the sutta, the sickness had disappeared.<sup>5</sup>

## **How Sickness Disappears**

The disappearance of sickness happens in the following way. When Venerable Mahākassapa was taking the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas* offered by the Buddha, he thought, "Seven days after I became a monk, I clearly understood the Four Noble Truths. At that time the enlightenment factors were present in me. As a matter of fact, the teaching of the Buddha is the teaching which overcomes suffering!" Reflecting in this way, he felt joyful and delighted (*pīti*) as well as

calm and tranquil (*passaddhi*). These thoughts also caused energy to arise in him. Mental processes distinguished by the factors of delight and calm have their base in the heart. Since delight and calm are present in the mind, the mind becomes clear and radiant, and the heart and the blood in the heart also become clear and radiant. As the heart contracts about seventy to eighty times per minute, this clear and radiant blood is pumped and spreads throughout the whole body, so the entire body becomes clear and radiant. Those physical parts of the body that caused the sickness - the old, decaying, and infected physical matter - disappear. In the places where old decaying physical matter previously existed, new physical matter based on these new mental states takes root. This physical matter is clear and radiant because of the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*.

This means that when we apply the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas* consistently, only new mental states and new physical matter arise all over the body, and the physical matter that is afflicted by a disease vanishes and disappears. This state correlates to the disappearance of the sickness, and this kind of cure is a cure by replacement.

Nowadays doctors also make use of this kind of cure by replacement. For example, they replace blood, skin, kidneys, or eyes by removing the old ones and replacing them with new ones.

What is amazing is that by taking the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*, every part of the body and mind is replaced through this treatment, not only the physical matter that is changed during ordinary treatment. This is the most assuring and most trustworthy treatment of all. We have to assume that the disappearance of Venerable Mahākassapa's and Venerable Moggallāna's sicknesses happened in this very way.

When taking the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*, it is essential to take the medicine for a long time until the factors of delight and calm become very powerful and strong.

## **Sayadaw U Sobhitābhivaṃsa and the Medicine of the *Bojjhaṅgas***

Sayadaw U Sobhitābhivaṃsa belongs to the Kayin ethnic group. As the saying goes, "Little streams disappear, but ethnic groups never

disappear.” As is traditional to the Kayins, his perseverance and diligence are very strong. In addition, he is endowed with courage, and once he starts some work, he does not back away without completing it. As another saying goes, “Only the hull [of a sailing ship] remains - but no surrender.”

With this perseverance and diligence he put a lot of effort into studying and learning the scriptures (*pariyatti*). As a result, he was successful in almost all his exams. In 1981, he passed the government exams due to his perseverance and diligence. After passing the government Dhammacariya exam, he strived to complete the Cetiyaṅgaṇa exam. At the same time, the Gaṇavācaga committee of his monastery gave him the duty of teaching the scriptures. During that time, he began to get sick, his legs and belly started to swell.

Therefore, he had to go to the People’s Hospital in Yangon and undergo treatment for kidney diseases because they assumed that his ailment was a kidney-related disease. However, they discovered that he was suffering from cirrhosis of the liver. Considering his condition, he had to stay in the hospital and undergo treatment for six months. The doctors checked him every day; x-rays were taken, injections were given, and tablets had to be swallowed. Although the doctors treated him using a variety of methods, nothing seemed to be working. His was not an easy case. After about six months, the doctors became really concerned about him and thought that he probably had only six more months to live. Nevertheless, Sayadaw U Sobhitābhivamsa felt well; he had a good appetite and slept very well. He never thought that he would die. He decided, “They are treating me with ordinary medicine. I will also treat myself by taking the Buddha’s medicine.”

So he started to recite the *Bojjhaṅga Sutta* and the *Mettā Sutta* during all his waking hours. As he recited these suttas with unwavering confidence, unremitting perseverance, strong determination, and great effort, the disease disappeared in a way that was completely contrary to what the doctors had expected. Now at the age of fifty-five, Sayadaw is healthy and well. He resides at Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre in Yangon where he gives Dhamma talks and meditation instructions to both local and foreign meditators.

After leaving the hospital, he started to practise vipassanā meditation. In 1983, he practised vipassanā meditation for three months at the Mahāsi Meditation Centre. In 1995, when he was



staying in England, he had his health checked. The doctors were amazed to find that he was completely healthy and well.

Even now Sayadaw U Sobhitābhivaṃsa regularly develops the *bojjhaṅgas* and recites the *Bojjhaṅga Sutta* and the *Mettā Sutta* repeatedly. When he has to give a Dhamma talk, meditation instructions, or interviews for meditators, he carries out these duties. But when he is free, he recites the *Bojjhaṅga Sutta* and the *Mettā Sutta*. One can also see him sweeping, washing his face or hands, brushing his teeth, or doing other chores while developing and reciting the *bojjhaṅgas*. Sayadaw's determination is very firm and consistent; his confidence is extremely strong and deep, and his perseverance and diligence are incredibly powerful.

Also for all the meditators who are here, it is essential that you take the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas* and that you recite or listen to the protective suttas (*parittas*). Doing so, make sure that you do it consistently every day. "Only when getting hurt, one remembers the mother." If you only recite or listen to the suttas, when some large or small trouble arises, then the beneficial effects will be very small. However, if you recite or listen to them consistently like Sayadaw U Sobhitābhivaṃsa, then the beneficial results will be extremely far-reaching because even severe and chronic diseases can disappear.

## Confidence

Another point that is important is to have strong and firm confidence or faith (*saddhā*). When one's faith or confidence is strong and firm, then the mind becomes clear. And when the mind is clear, the disease disappears.

In the same way as the diseases of Venerable Mahākassapa, Venerable Moggallāna, and the Buddha disappeared by taking the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*, you should have confidence and trust and think to yourself, "This also applies to me. When I take the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas* by reciting it, the recently arisen disease will definitely disappear." When there is confidence and trust, then the mind will become pure and radiant, and as a result the body, too, will become pure and radiant. When the body is pure and radiant,

then the unhealthy, decaying physical tissues will vanish and disappear. This is what we call the disappearance of disease or healing.

This is like the water-purifying gem of the universal monarch that has the power to purify murky and muddy water. In the commentary, confidence or faith is compared to a water-purifying gem.<sup>6</sup> When the water-purifying gem of the universal monarch is put into the murky water, it becomes clear within a short time.

Likewise, with the arising of confidence, a person's mind becomes clear and radiant. When faith or confidence becomes strong and firm, the disease will definitely disappear. On the other hand, if one has no trust, the mind does not become clear, and the disease will not disappear. If one recites or listens to the *bojjhaṅgas* with hope or expectations, the beneficial results will be minimal.

There is another point to be aware of. In order to increase the effectiveness of the practice, it is essential that you understand the meaning of the suttas you recite, and that you do not omit any of the words. If the recitation is not done in this way, then its potency will not be as strong as otherwise would be.

Having said this, whenever you take the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas* or whenever you recite the *Bojjhaṅga Sutta*, please do it with strong and firm faith and consistent perseverance. Do it while being fully aware of the meaning of the words, omitting none, and using the correct stress and intonation.

## **Nowadays Too, Diseases Disappear**

In Chanmyay Sayadaw's book entitled "Dhamma Talks at the Yangon University" (only available in Burmese), we find reports of how certain diseases have disappeared by taking the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*. The passage says:

"In this present age, there are many people who by observing painful sensations due to a certain sickness have not only made progress in their meditation but also have completely overcome their pain and sickness. There are people whose

urinary diseases or gastritis have disappeared by observing the pain caused through these sicknesses. One person had an open wound that had not healed for months; but once the person started to focus on this wound, it burst and then slowly dried up and finally healed completely. Another person had a cartilage in the heel that was very painful each time he took a step. The doctors told him that surgery was the only way to cure it. When he very patiently and without complaining observed it for about one month, the pain completely disappeared.”

There is another thing that is important to understand: when pain is observed, you should not observe pain in order to make it go away but to know and understand its nature.

## **Dr. Khin Myint Yee’s Gynaecological Illness**

In a letter, Dr. Khin Myint Yee described how she cured her illness by practising vipassanā meditation, which was actually the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*. Here is her letter:

To

Chanmyay Ashin Indaka (Chanmyay Myaing Sayadaw)

Venerable Sayadaw

I am Khin Myint Yee, and I practised *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation under your guidance from November 19, 2002 until January 2, 2003. During this time at the meditation centre, I had daily interviews with you, except on *uposatha* days (observance days). When I returned home I continued for one or two months to be mindful of the changing phenomena in my body and mind, which were quite astounding. I was also wondering if I should write about these amazing changes. However, as I did not yet have sufficient evidence, I took my time to observe more.

From the age of about twenty-five until the present, for about twenty years, I have suffered from premenstrual dysmenorrhoea (psychotic depression). As this condition is connected with the monthly

menstrual cycle, I have suffered every month for at least seven days and sometimes for up to fifteen days. Most women suffer during their period although the pain or discomfort varies greatly. Some experience only minor discomfort while others suffer greatly. When this happens, all of a sudden the mind is no longer clear, and one feels depressed and disheartened. The mind becomes so dazed that one can often not discern between right and wrong. The mind becomes irritable and short-tempered. Sometimes anger is so strong that one commits an illegal action. The original nature of the mind bursts and is lost. If this condition is not systematically treated, one can become extremely depressed; some women even think of committing suicide. In places where people are not educated, such a woman is considered bewitched or cursed. These women sometimes meet with a tragic fate from this relatively trivial cause.

I only suffer moderately from the physical pain but suffer very much from the mental anguish. I experience a clear mind that suddenly becomes overcast by a shadow of darkness and gloom. During this time, I have to be extremely careful that I don't do anything wrong at my work. This is a very heavy burden; it is like shouldering a heavy load.

There are several reasons why my life was not destroyed and why I could overcome this depression. I am a doctor myself; I am interested in Buddhist books and have read many of them. I also have practised meditation myself, and my parents and siblings were understanding and compassionate to me. These were the reasons why my life went on as usual between the periods of the most intense suffering. Although there was nothing to worry about in my life and I could make a living without struggling, my mind was not clear or peaceful. The dark and gloomy shadow hanging over my mind made it exhausting and uncomfortable to go through life.

Because of the imbalance in my body and the resulting discomfort, I often became short-tempered. With this mental confusion, I strove in an all-out effort to restrain myself. However, my body suffered a serious setback because the healthy and the unhealthy mind seemed to be fighting constantly, like warring sides on a battlefield. In 1966, I started to suffer from high blood pressure. Nobody in my family has ever suffered from high blood pressure, and I did not eat salty

foods; however, it was the mental stress that caused this high blood pressure.

As a result, I became dependent on some prescription drugs that were not free from side effects; they made me sleepy and forgetful. Throughout my entire life, I have faced this depression without being able to completely cure it. It was only because of mindfulness practice that I managed to get through life, sometimes managing reasonably well and sometimes managing poorly.

Before I met you in 1999, I took a trip abroad. For two months, I was freed from all the duties and responsibilities of my job and my family. I was alone, and as I had plenty of time to rest, I started to practise meditation whenever I had the opportunity. At that time the high blood pressure completely disappeared, so that I no longer had to take the medicine for high blood pressure. However, the depression and sadness did not lessen or disappear but still continued to torture me. When the depression ceased and I had more strength and power, I practised meditation.

Even though I did not practise systematically or uninterruptedly for several days, I experienced many beneficial results. How much more beneficial would it be, if I were able to practise intensively for a longer period of time? With this in mind, I went to the meditation centre and practised meditation for seven days in the year 2000 and ten days in 2001. After that I had the strong desire to practise more effectively, and so in November of 2002, I came to you to practise for a long period of time.

On the tenth day of my retreat (November 28, 2002), I had the opportunity to listen to your Dhamma talk with the title “The *Bojjhaṅgas* – Medicine that Makes All Diseases Disappear.” During this talk, you said, “Whatever arises in this body and mind has to be mindfully and diligently observed as it really is. When you observe these physical and mental phenomena, your mind will become focused on the presently arisen physical and mental objects. When the mind becomes concentrated, rapture and calm will arise. Then the true nature of the object observed will be understood. Without making a large effort, objects can be easily and comfortably observed as they arise moment by moment.”

As you were giving these explanations I listened attentively and carefully without having any wandering thoughts. Because you were describing the ingredients of the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*, namely

*sati, dhammavicaya, viriya, pīti, passaddhi, samādhi, and upekkhā* (mindfulness, investigation, effort, rapture, tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity), I had the opportunity to drink this medicine one cup at a time. As a result, I came to clearly and fully understand their nature, and I felt encouraged.

Being very interested I paid attention and noticed that after my mind had become extremely clear, calm, peaceful, and cheerful, my body also felt very light!

Even on days when I usually suffered from mental anguish and physical pain, I was free from all of these afflictions. I was greatly amazed to see that I was liberated from them!

For a period of over twenty years, I have constantly carried this heavy burden [the consequences of misdeeds] – now I can drop all this mental and physical suffering at your feet. From the time that I started practising in November until now, this suffering has not returned again, not even for a moment. In the same way as a drop of water does not stay on the leaf of a lotus flower, I have also been completely free from anguish.

During the forty-five days that I practised meditation, only an old pain in the hip arose because I was sitting for many hours. I also started to notice the first signs of diabetes. Because of these conditions, I asked you for permission to go home and get a medical check-up. Before actually leaving I listened to three tapes by Mahāsi Sayadaw about the “*Dhammadāsa*,” which you encouraged me to listen to. In between the periods of pain, I sat down and listened to the talks while at the same time I gathered all my strength to observe the seven factors of enlightenment.

While attentively listening to the second side of the first tape, I observed how all the painful sensations vanished and disintegrated as if the impurities had been washed and cleansed with pure water. This was amazing! Within two or three minutes, I felt invigorated and calm, feeling incredibly light from head to toe. It was as if I had received a new body! From that time until now, I have not experienced any pain in my body. I have a new life and a new body that are free from painful sensations. I did not go home after forty-five days, but I stayed as you encouraged me to continue until the full moon in January, which means until I had completed two months. I could meditate with great ease both in body and mind.

I am very grateful to you, venerable sir. During the time I practised *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation, I experienced your *mettā* (loving-kindness) and *karuṇā* (compassion) as well as the generously offered bottle of the *sati-sambojjhaṅga* medicine. For this gift, I offer my deepest respect to you, venerable sir, not only in this present life but also in all the lives to come.

When I returned to my daily life, I constantly remembered your peaceful, clear, and calm voice whenever I was engaged in some work; it asked, “Eh, at this time, what are you observing?” Being mindful in this way and having *sati-sambojjhaṅga* present, the periods of losing mindfulness have decreased and the periods of mindful awareness have increased. Whenever I have time to practise sitting meditation, I have the opportunity to drink from the remaining six bottles of the *bojjhaṅga* medicine. In this way, I am practising these teachings almost all the time, and this makes me happy and peaceful.

Whenever painful sensations arise, without avoiding them, I remember Chanmyay Sayadaw’s words in his instruction tape, he says, “When you have pain, you have the key to the door of Nibbāna.” Remembering these words, I would like to let you know that I will observe these sensations without any gaps when they will arise.

May you be healthy, happy and peaceful.

Respectfully

Your disciple, Khin Myint Yee (Monywa)

## **The Stomach Ache and Nausea of the Swiss Nun**

At the Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre in Hmawbi, there was a Swiss nun by the name of Ma Ariya Ñāṇī. She had a degree from the conservatory in Zürich and was an expert at playing the piano, singing, and dancing. She had a natural bent for music and dancing. The piano was her friend, and her joys were song and dance. Music and dance were all she lived for, they were the essence of her world and had the most exquisite taste. She thought that it was through

music and dance that she could experience happiness and joy. She was very successful in her career.

In December of 1991, Chanmyay Sayadaw was teaching a ten-day meditation retreat just outside of Sydney, Australia. Ma Ariya Nāṇī participated in that meditation retreat. Although she had practised meditation before, this was her first vipassanā meditation retreat. This ten-day retreat was her first taste of Dhamma, and through it she came to understand the nature of vipassanā meditation. She realized that vipassanā had an extremely fine and delicious taste.

In January of 1992, she participated in another one-month meditation retreat with Chanmyay Sayadaw in Canberra, Australia. Again she experienced the exquisite and delicious taste of vipassanā. However, as she could not get enough of this lovely exquisite taste, in September of that year she went to the Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre in Yangon (Myanmar). On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September, she ordained as a nun and started to practise meditation.

At that time, she was thirty-one. Originally, she thought that she would stay and practise meditation as a nun for three months. After that, she planned to disrobe and go back to Switzerland to continue singing, dancing, and playing the piano. With this in mind, she followed the instructions respectfully and practised diligently. After three months, she realized that the time had passed very quickly; in fact, it did not feel as if three months had passed at all. Since the meditation was progressing very well, she continued to practise for another two years.

By that time it was as if she had embraced a new life because everything had changed. Although previously her closest friend had been the piano, her best friend was now the 'Dhamma.' In the past, her interest had been singing and dancing, now it was practising meditation. She could not imagine a life without meditation practice. All she wanted to do was meditate. In this way, her purpose changed too. Previously she thought that she had wanted to bring happiness and joy to people through the medium of music and dance, but now she decided that she wanted people to experience joy and happiness through the Dhamma.

In 1996, she moved from the Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre in Yangon to its branch centre in Hmawbi. The centre in Hmawbi has many big shady trees and bamboo groves. Without the hustle and bustle of the city, it is very quiet and still. The many flowers and



numerous varieties of subtropical fruit bring delight to the heart and mind. In addition, the weather is more agreeable than in Yangon. For all of these reasons, she lived happily at the Chanmyay Yeiktha Meditation Centre in Hmawbi where she translated for foreign meditators and took care of all of their needs. When she was not engaged in these duties, she read and studied Dhamma books or practised meditation. When there were many foreigners at the centre, she helped Sayadaw by giving meditation instructions and interviews herself.

Since 2000, she has travelled abroad every year to teach meditation retreats in many countries, including Australia, Switzerland, Germany, France, Czech Republic, Ireland, USA, Thailand, Malaysia, and India.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of August in 2002, I gave a Dhamma talk to all the foreign meditators, it was the talk about “The *Bojjhaṅgas* – Medicine that Makes All Diseases Disappear,” and Ma Ariya Ñāṇī translated the talk from Burmese into English. Because it accords with the nature of things all the foreign yogis understood and accepted the potency of the *bojjhaṅgas*. After the Dhamma talk, some of them recounted how their illnesses had disappeared.

Ma Ariya Ñāṇī also came to me after the talk and said, “Venerable sir, this is very true, the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas* makes all diseases disappear! This morning I felt terribly sick; my stomach ached and I felt nauseous; I did not know if I had eaten some bad food or if it had been caused by something else. I was worried that I would not be able to translate the Dhamma talk. As the time for the talk approached, I got up and tried my best even though I still felt very sick. However, by listening to your Dhamma talk and translating it, my stomach ache and the nausea have completely disappeared. I am amazed; this is very potent and powerful medicine. It is like swallowing ‘Digene’ tablets to make a stomach ache disappear.”

## Inge’s Tumour

Inge is a fifty-year old German woman with a noble and refined appearance. Her body looks well-proportioned, and her skin glows. She is a nurse, and her demeanour is serene. Inge has two sisters and

one brother. Before her return to Germany, she came to pay her respects before leaving. She told me that after having listened to the Dhamma talk “The *Bojjhaṅgas* - Medicine that Makes All Diseases Disappear,” she wanted to tell me a true and inspiring story. And so she related her circumstances.

“This is my personal experience. At the age of thirteen, I got a tumour on my thigh right next to the hip-joint. My two younger sisters also have this kind of tumour. Sometimes this tumour was very painful. The doctors said that surgery was inevitable; they would have to remove that part of the bone and then replace it with an artificial joint. However, they also said they would have to replace the artificial joint every twelve years.

I was only thirteen years at that time, so I felt it was out of question to undergo surgery repeatedly every twelve years for the rest of my life. This filled me with great anxiety and enormous worries. As a result, I wanted to kill this body in order to die, so I very often had thoughts of committing suicide. I was depressed and miserable. There was no happiness whatsoever.

When I was a bit older, I started training to become a nurse. My aim was to help others as long as I was able to help. I realized that when I was no longer healthy, other people would have to take care of me. Therefore, before other people had to take care of me, I wanted to take care of them. After I finished the training course, I started to work as a nurse. I was twenty-six at that time.

Later I went to India where I taught children from very poor families at the ‘Gandhi Ashram,’ a Hindu temple and school in Bodhgaya. I also treated and took care of those children who were sick. The people were incredibly poor, and many of them were not healthy and had no opportunities to go to school.

One day while I was drinking a cup of tea in a teashop, I met a Buddhist monk. He turned to me and said, “The work you do here is very noble, but don’t you want to practise meditation yourself?” I replied that I had considered doing something new and unusual.

Then he said, “In Igatpuri, there is a meditation centre where they run ten-day courses with S.N. Goenka.” Then he urged me to go there and do the course. So, I decided to attend my first meditation retreat.

For the first three days of the course, meditators have to do *ānāpānasati*, and then for the remaining seven days, bodily

sensations from head to toe have to be observed. So, I had to observe many unpleasant sensations, which were difficult to bear.

After some days of practice whenever I observed these sensations, I saw them disappearing one after another. That was amazing! When the retreat was over, I noticed that not only was my mind quite peaceful and happy, but the pain from the tumour was also much less intense. Then I returned to Germany and continued working as a nurse.

Many patients who came to the hospital were filled with worries and fear regarding their sickness, so I tried to uplift their minds and encourage them. I also pointed out 'a way to live peacefully and happily.' Many of the patients told me that they felt relieved.

This 'way to live peacefully and happily' was nothing other than the practice of vipassanā meditation. But I did not tell the patients to practise vipassanā meditation. I simply said that they should not let the mind go to the painful sensations, but to keep their attention at the nostrils and attentively observe the sensations of the air going in and out. They should be fully aware of the air whenever it touched the nostrils while breathing in and breathing out. Later I instructed them to focus on the abdomen and be aware of the rising and falling movements.

Sometimes I touched a patient's body with my hands and softly massaged a certain part of the body, while telling the patient to focus on that spot and be aware of the sensations of touch. For many patients this led to feelings of great relief; this increased their confidence, and they became calmer.

One day I was at a party where I danced the whole evening. On the way back home, I went swimming in the nearby lake although the water was quite cold. While I was swimming a piece of the tumour became dislocated and got stuck in the joint. This was so incredibly painful that I could not go to work anymore. I had to stay home, and my partner who is a doctor had to take care of me. Whenever I lay on my bed or sat in a chair, the pain got worse. However, when I walked around, it was not so bad. Therefore, I decided to go hiking in the 'Tessin,' the southern part of Switzerland. For three weeks, I hiked in the mountains, and during that time the pain decreased a great deal.

On my return to Germany, the pain became much more severe. I thought that something needed to be done, so I went to Thailand. On the plane, it was impossible to sit because of the pain, and so for

twelve hours I walked up and down in the plane. In Thailand, I went to a monastery in the North-east to practise meditation. That day, I remember, was a full moon day. Outside a white marble temple, which shone in the full moon light, I started to practise walking meditation. The white cool marble floor below my feet and the white shining marble wall caused a feeling of joy and delight to arise. After some time my mind became calm and clear, and I wanted to sit down. To my surprise, when I sat down, there was no more pain at all! I sat there and meditated for the whole night. I just continued to note and observe my delight and joy. It was very bright inside my mind, so I could note it for a long time without getting tired. Then I came to realize that meditation was the best cure for my disease and that the Dhamma was the medicine. However, at that time I did not completely understand how to meditate.

Later in Sri Lanka, I met with the German monk Venerable Nyanaponika. During that time, I still had thoughts of committing suicide whenever I thought that I was going to have this pain for the rest of my life, so these thoughts had obviously not yet disappeared. When I asked the monk what would happen to a person who commits suicide, he said that he/she would fall into the lower realms. He advised me to take up intensive meditation.

An English monk I met told me that I should strive to become a *sotāpanna* (a person who has attained the first stage of enlightenment). He said that he had read in the scriptures that if a *sotāpanna* commits suicide, it is not considered an unwholesome act.<sup>7</sup> On hearing this, I thought that I needed to become a *sotāpanna* as quickly as possible.

Venerable Nyanaponika, the German monk, advised me to go to the Mahāsi Meditation Centre in Myanmar, if I wanted to practise meditation and understand the Dhamma deeply. Two years later, I received an invitation from the Mahāsi Meditation Centre in Yangon (Myanmar). When I arrived there, I told them that I wanted to become a *sotāpanna* and also added that I wanted my pain to disappear. With a smile on his face, Sayadaw U Jaṭṭila told me that I should first practise meditation. For ten months, I practised meditation at the Mahāsi Meditation Centre. When I left, I had no more thoughts of committing suicide and the pain had also decreased greatly; in fact, it had almost disappeared.

When I got back to Germany, I again worked as a nurse. During the winter when it is rather cold, I felt some tension where the tumour was located. Previously, I had been very afraid of the pain, but after having practised meditation for ten months, I did not fear the pain anymore. There was no more fear in my mind. Previously, when there was pain, I had to practise *vedanānupassanā* (mindfulness of feelings). Now I have to practise *cittānupassanā* (mindfulness of the mind). When I observe the mind, there is no more pain in the body.

I am very careful to establish a mind that is delighted and glad. Whenever there is a wholesome mental state like *mettā* (loving-kindness), *karuṇā* (compassion), gladness, etc., there is absolutely no pain. Also during work, I am especially careful to cultivate wholesome mental states like *mettā* and *karuṇā*.

To deepen my knowledge, I studied Buddhism and a bit of Pāḷi at a university. I also started to do a meditation retreat every year during the (Asian) rainy season. In addition, I studied the Buddhist scriptures.

From 1981 when I did my first meditation retreat with Mr. Goenka until now (2003), I have practised vipassanā meditation for twenty-two years. However, during the past ten years, I have not done an intensive meditation retreat. However, I am always mindful and never waste my time. When I stand in a queue at the super market, I am mindful of my breath and immediately get very concentrated. All the chores at home are done with mindfulness.

While staying at a monastery in Thailand, I practised meditation for the whole night every *uposatha* day (observance day). At one time, I practised meditation for three months completely by myself in a cave in Thailand. I lived on peanuts and chocolate drink that I bought in the village below. After that I ordained as a nun. I did not handle any money and so I went on alms round. But this did not work out very well. So after nine months, I disrobed and went back to Germany where I again worked as a nurse. Actually, I have worked as a nurse until now.

Now that I have practised meditation for one month with you, venerable sir, the pain has disappeared. In my life, I have nothing else to rely on other than the Dhamma. With the Dhamma always at my side, I can continue to live my life happily.”

After telling her story, she left Hmawbi and went to the airport to return to Germany.

## The *Satipaṭṭhāna* Hospital

About five miles south from the town of Mudon in Mon state, there is a small village called Toku. Not far from that village is a *satipaṭṭhāna* vipassanā meditation centre that is commonly known as the ‘Toku Meditation Centre.’ The residing Sayadaw is endowed with strong and firm confidence as well as great perseverance and diligence.

When he was meditating, he was afflicted with herpes, testicular hydrocoele, sciatic nerve pain, dizziness, eczema, fever, and other serious diseases. The doctors said that Sayadaw’s diseases had to be treated medically. The Sayadaw however, treated all these diseases with the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas* – and they all disappeared.

After the Sayadaw had established his *satipaṭṭhāna* vipassanā meditation centre, he gave meditation instructions to a great number of meditators, many of whom were afflicted with one disease or another. He gave all of the meditators the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*, and all the diseases that the meditators suffered from completely disappeared.

As a result, the meditation centre eventually became known as ‘The *Satipaṭṭhāna* Hospital.’ By taking the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*, not only a great number of illnesses and painful sensations disappear, but many meditators also gained some understanding of the Dhamma. One can read about these incredible stories in a booklet called “The Virtue of Vipassanā” written by Dr. Min Tin Mon.

All the examples that I have talked about so far were incidents in which physical diseases disappeared by taking the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*. Tomorrow I will mention examples in which mental diseases disappeared by taking the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*.

May all beings realize the Dhamma and live in peace and happiness.

## SECOND DAY

### Diseases of the Mind Disappear Too

Today I am going to talk about how the diseases of the mind, which are composed of nothing other than the defilements (*kilesas*), can be lessened or even completely uprooted by developing the enlightenment factors. I am going to give you some examples that will illustrate how the defilements are cured by taking the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*. Yesterday in my talk, I distinguished two kinds of diseases, namely the diseases of the body and the diseases of the mind. I mentioned that one should be much more afraid of the diseases of the mind and so give priority to curing them.

By taking the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*, many virtuous beings have been able to lessen or destroy some of the defilements. Some have even been able to completely uproot all of the defilements and thereby fully cure the diseases of the mind. Now I will relate the story of a *deva* called Subrahmā.

### Subrahmā's Disease of the Mind

Subrahmā lived in the *deva* realm of Tāvatiṃsa.<sup>8</sup> He was very handsome and his complexion was radiant. He lived in a big mansion that was adorned with many brightly shining precious stones. There were gardens with lovely ponds. He also had one thousand female *devas* who took care of him. He lived in great luxury.

One night during the middle watch of the night, Subrahmā stood in front of the Buddha at the Jetavana monastery. His face was red, and there were tears in his eyes. His arms and legs were shaking from fear. His worries and fear made his heart pound wildly; one could even hear his heart pounding. Seeing him in this state, the Buddha asked, "Subrahmā, what has happened to you?"

Subrahmā answered, "Venerable sir, today I went to the Nandana Grove for amusement with my one thousand female *devas*. When I arrived at the garden, I sat down on a flat rock under a big tree with

the female *devas* around me. After a short while, five hundred of the female *devas* climbed up the trees and while singing and being merry picked flowers. The other five hundred female *devas* took the flowers and made garlands and adorned my body. After a short while the songs stopped, and I did not see the *devas* throw any more flowers from the trees.

When I noticed this fact, I realized that the five hundred female *devas* who had been picking flowers from the trees were experiencing the effects of a previous unwholesome deed. As a result, they all died and fell into Avīci hell where even now they are experiencing terrible suffering.

With this realization, I could no longer control my mind and was overcome with worry and grief. And when I reflected on what would happen to me, I realized that in seven days the remaining five hundred female *devas* and I would also die and fall into that Avīci hell. Knowing this, I no longer knew what to do or where to stay. I had no more desire for amusements, food, or drink. I felt really terrified as my life seemed to hang in the balance.”

Although Subrahmā lived in great luxury and was surrounded by female *devas*, he could no longer be happy. Even sitting on a large pile of jewels could not lighten his heart. Sense pleasures and entertainment can only be enjoyed when one does not reflect on the dangers of ageing, disease, and death, as well as the dangers inherent in the lower realms and in *samsāra*.

We can live negligently, without thinking of performing wholesome deeds, only because we do not know the day of our death. However, if we reflect on these dangers or if we know the day of our death, we can no longer indulge in sense pleasures or amusements as we start to understand the importance of doing wholesome deeds. Therefore, it is essential that we contemplate these dangers in advance.

## **Mahāgandhayon Sayadaw’s Advice**

Our benefactor, the late Mahāgandhayon Sayadaw of Amarapura, was a great scholar and often told everyone to reflect on these dangers. We should reflect on the fact that these dangers actually



exist, and by repeatedly reflecting on them motivate ourselves to perform wholesome deeds to escape from these dangers. When I was a novice living in his monastery, the bell was rung three times every morning after breakfast. This was the signal for all the monks, novices, and the white-robed lay trainees to go to the dining hall for an exhortation. Everybody rushed to be first. Sayadaw did not like it when anyone delayed in doing wholesome deeds. He wanted us to be the first to undertake any wholesome deeds, “*Ahaṃ pathamaṃ, ahaṃ pathamaṃ!*” He wanted us to be able to exclaim, “I am first, I am first!”

When we arrived, we saw Sayadaw sitting on one of the deck chairs at the front of the dining hall with his senior monks sitting on the chairs to his left. The remaining monks and novices would sit in front of Sayadaw while the white-robed lay trainees and the lay people sat behind the monks and novices in the last row. Everyone had to sit in a straight line. When most of the monks and novices had gathered, the recitations started. These chantings included the virtues of the Triple Gem, different verses about attention, spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*), arousing confidence, strengthening the *sāsana*, and developing *mettā*. Then the Sayadaw gave his exhortation which lasted about half an hour, and this was then followed by fifteen minutes of teachings. Being present at these gatherings was an important duty of the monks and novices staying at the Mahāgandhayon monastery.

In one of the verses that we chanted every day, we were reminded, “Hell exists, animals exist, *petas* (hungry ghosts) exist, destitute and dull-witted humans exist. Be careful, you are going to die.” This is very complete and extremely profound advice. With this verse, every day we reflected on and reminded ourselves of the fact that we cannot escape the danger of death, that we are sure to die one day, and that there are hell beings, animals, *petas*, as well as destitute and dull-witted humans.

The Buddha said, “*Handa dāni bhikkhave āmantayāmi vo, vayadhammā saṅkhārā, appamādena sampādettha.*”<sup>9</sup> In English, “Now monks, I declare to you: all conditioned things are of a nature to decay – strive on unflinchingly.”<sup>10</sup> Just as the Buddha daily reminded his monks with these words, so too Mahāgandhayon Sayadaw gave us this exhortation every day on behalf of the Buddha. In the whole world, there is absolutely no living being or inanimate thing

anywhere that is permanent or stable. It is a natural law that everything will vanish and disappear. Most people can neither grasp or understand this, nor are they aware of it.

As a result, the majority of people hold this world, this life, and material things in high esteem. People are fond of all these things and have a real passion for them. Day and night, in spite of the sun or rain, they work very hard to acquire these things, and once they have gotten these things, they have to be safely stored.

Previously completely unconcerned, Subrahmā now felt very ill at ease when he encountered such a terrible situation. He had a hollow feeling in his breast owing to his imminent death, and he suffered greatly in body and mind.

According to the saying, “Face the coming danger,” it is very important that we reflect in advance on what we are sure to encounter. This is a danger that we have not yet escaped for good, so we can predict that it will certainly arise.

We might be lulled into thinking that this existence is meaningful if we have a luxurious life and are wealthy. However, having a beautiful and attractive body does not really make life complete. Then isn’t it enough to feel proud by having a large circle of friends? Again, being popular or having position or status does not mean that that life is superior. Reflecting in advance on how to escape from the dangers of the lower realms, old age, sickness, and death is much more urgent. Only by escaping from these dangers will life become perfectly satisfactory. Therefore, we have to make a concentrated effort to perform the wholesome deeds of *dāna*, *sīla*, and *bhāvanā* (generosity, morality, and meditation). Only by performing these wholesome deeds, can we become free from these dangers.

Consequently, as virtuous people we have to constantly reflect on these dangers.

Because Subrahmā did not reflect on these dangers beforehand, he did not know what was going to happen and became incredibly frightened and worried. He had no understanding of the Dhamma at all. Realizing that only the Buddha could extinguish the burning fires in his mind, he went to him for refuge. He requested the Buddha, “Please teach me how to overcome the burning fires of my suffering.” The Buddha told him to take the medicine of the

*bojjhaṅgas*, to live a frugal life, to restrain his senses, and to realize Nibbāna.<sup>11</sup>

To clarify the meaning of these words, I will explain them in more detail. “Oh *deva*, if you want to overcome your suffering and live happily in both body and mind, you should develop the enlightenment factors. Your morality should be pure and faultless. Be frugal when you eat, dress, or do anything in your life. Be moderate in your use of recourses, and do not follow your every desire. Then you may attain the happiness of Nibbāna. Practise only these Dhammas, then your suffering will definitely disappear, and you will live happily and peacefully with no more mental or physical suffering.”

In his advice, the Buddha gave precedence to the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas* by developing the factors of enlightenment. To cure the *deva*'s mental suffering, the Buddha advised taking the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas* first because this medicine is the most effective way to cure any disease of the mind. Therefore, at the end of the Buddha's talk, Subrahmā and the five hundred female *devas* had all become *sotāpannas*, and as a result, they experienced happiness and peace in both body and mind. This is the power of the *bojjhaṅga* medicine!

## **A Personal Experience**

As we have some more time, I will relate a personal experience that happened at midnight on May 26, 2004. The world outside was covered in night's darkness, and the whole meditation centre comprising twenty acres was asleep. All the Burmese and foreign meditators were sound asleep because at three thirty in the morning they had to get up and start practising meditation all day long without a break. I had also been sleeping, but then I suddenly woke up. On waking up, as I turned from my left side onto my belly, I felt excruciating pain. From my navel to my chest I felt a pain as if I were being stabbed with a very sharp dagger. I was suffering from colic pains. Sometimes this stabbing pain occurred at short intervals; sometimes it seemed as if the dagger had been left inside my chest

and remained there for a rather long time. I was used to this kind of pain since it occurred quite frequently, but it had not been so strong before. Previously the pain was much weaker and lasted for only a short time after a few sharp pains. As soon as I took some Burmese herbal medicine, it usually disappeared.

During that night I observed the pain in different postures, while lying on my stomach, my back, or my side, but it did not decrease in intensity. I also tried to develop *mettā*, but the pain did not disappear, I assumed because it was so strong. So I took my upper robe, rolled it and put it under my stomach while lying on my belly. Still, the pain did not decrease. Then the sternum became very hot; it burned and ached. So, then I took three or four tablets made of moonseed vine, a traditional medicine for digestive problems as well as some the lemon-orange powder. As these remedies did not seem to make any difference, I started walking up and down the room.

Previously, when I had taken these traditional herbs for digestive problems, they had been effective and the pain disappeared. However, now the pain did not disappear, but only diminished slightly. Then I tried to sleep again, but as soon as I lay down the sharp dagger-like pains started all over again. Suddenly, I realized that I needed to deal with the pain by practising vipassanā meditation. I focussed my mind on the pain and tried to penetrate it, and I tried to observe it with an all-out effort. After about five minutes of observing the pain, it started to decrease with a noise as if a hand were taking it away. Within a few minutes, it had completely disappeared. The power of vipassanā is truly amazing! Since that time, that kind of pain has never reappeared.

Previously even after taking the herbal tablets or powder, the pain caused from indigestion used to recur quite often. But after treating it with the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*, it has completely disappeared and has not recurred. The qualities of this medicine are indeed praiseworthy.

From that point onwards, whenever I get sick, I take the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*. Whenever I take this medicine, the body also feels refreshed and invigorated. When there are many meditators at the centre and I feel tired or dizzy because I have many duties to perform, I only take this medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*. Then the dizziness, the tiredness, or the headache disappears. This is an

excellent medicine to rely on! Try your best to always and constantly apply it!

## **Used in the West As Well**

Nowadays in the West, the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas* is also beginning to be used to treat people. I read a magazine article in which it said that in the USA, there are about 1.5 million people who practise meditation. To reduce the daily stress that they experience during their work, they use this ancient method of meditation. Among the people who practise meditation are plumbers, fire brigade workers, mechanics, nurses, and mothers.

Meditation is also practised to reduce physical or mental pain when people are afflicted with dizziness, nausea, migraine, high blood pressure, chronic diseases, or cancer. When Dr. Herbert Benson, a heart specialist, told his patients to practise meditation, he found that their symptoms improved. In other cases, when patients suffering from high blood pressure or stress were tested before they started to meditate and after they had been meditating for a certain time, their blood pressure had been reduced or the symptoms of stress were less severe. Based on these research findings, he opened a clinic in Boston where the patients are not only given medicine but are also taught how to meditate.

Dr. Benson found that between sixty and eighty percent of the patients were sick because of mental stress which compromises the immune system. He also found that muscular tension was greatly reduced whenever the patients practised meditation. They were much less worried, and there was a significant reduction in a stress-producing hormone. Dr. Benson and other doctors and scientists have also started to test the effects of meditation on patients with other diseases. Over the course of several years, they have gathered substantial evidence about the beneficial effects of meditation in the healing process.

With patients suffering from severe migraines, they also found that thirty-two percent suffered less often and that the subjective experience of pain was also reduced by thirty-two percent. When patients with a chronic disease practised meditation, their pain was

reduced. In addition, patients undergoing chemotherapy due to cancer could lessen their pain with the help of meditation. But of course, they were not practising meditation systematically like all of you are.

Dr. Alice Dolma, who does research in the field of mental stress, instructs patients to do two minutes of *ānāpānasati* (mindfulness of breathing) before surgery. She discovered that patients' blood pressure did not increase and that there was less bleeding during the operation. As a result, it usually took a shorter time to perform the operation. Later, I will come back to this topic and speak more about it.

## The Hunter's Unusual Experience

As we still have about fifteen minutes left, I will talk a little about the unusual experience of a hunter. At one time, there was a hunter who made his living by hunting for deer, brown-antlered ruses, rabbits, and other wild animals. After killing these animals, he sold them to earn his livelihood. One day when he was hunting in the forest, he chased a deer. The deer ran very fast, so the hunter finally found himself deep into the forest. Because he had been running and jumping over little obstacles while chasing the deer, he was thirsty. In his search for water, he came across a monastery. He immediately went into the monastery and hurriedly went to the water pot with drinking water. He lifted the lid and looked inside. However, there was not a single drop of water in the water pot. He thought, "Ha, the monks in this monastery are very lazy; they did not even fill the water pot with drinking water!"

Because one of the monks heard the hunter's accusation, he came out of his room and lifted the lid to look inside the pot. Now the pot was full of water. He said to the hunter, "Layman, the pot is full of water. Why did you say that there was no water?" "You are right; I did not see the water, venerable. Please help me as I am very thirsty." As soon as the hunter said these words, the monk took a shell, scooped some water and offered it to the hunter. As the hunter was very thirsty, he drank two or three cups. When he had quenched his thirst, he started to reflect, "I have a lot of unwholesome *kamma*, it must be

really bad. Although I am a human being, I am like a *peta* because I cannot even see the water in the water pot anymore. Starting this moment, I will stop performing any unwholesome deeds. If I continue to do unwholesome deeds, I will surely fall into the lower realms or hell.” Filled with a feeling of spiritual urgency, he ordained as a monk.

At his ordination, the Sayadaw gave him the name Mālagatissa. After ordaining he strived very hard in his meditation practice, but he could not attain any concentration. His mind was not calm and peaceful. Whatever he had done during his fifty years of hunting came into his mind. There were long trains of thoughts and images, and so his mind remained restless and scattered. Although he practised diligently, he did not develop any insight; therefore, he was not happy living as a monk. He went to the Sayadaw and told him that he wanted to disrobe. The Sayadaw did not attempt to dissuade Mālagatissa from disrobing, saying that if he was unhappy, he could do so. But, Sayadaw added, before disrobing the monk should go and gather the twigs from a certain fig tree. Mālagatissa carried out the Sayadaw’s order and walked around gathering the twigs. As he collected all the twigs that he found, he piled them into a big heap.

Then he went to the Sayadaw and told him that he had completed his task. “Good, and now burn this pile of twigs!” Sayadaw ordered. Mālagatissa did as he was told and tried to burn the twigs. However, every time he tried to start the fire, he could not get it started. This, of course, was only natural because the wood from this tree was filled with a lot of sap. If you take an axe and cut off a branch from this tree, the sap trickles out of the wood. It is definitely not very easy to dry it out, so how could it be easy to light a fire? As a result, Mālagatissa gave up in despair because it was too difficult.

At this point, the Sayadaw asked him, “Mālagatissa, is it impossible to make a fire?” “Yes, venerable sir, as much as I try I cannot light the fire.” “Well, then let it be. I will try it.” With these words, the Sayadaw – using his supernatural powers – took a spark the size of a firefly from Avīci hell and lit the pile of wood. As if it were made of dry wood, the big pile of fig tree wood started to burn rapidly, and in no time only ashes were left.

After this, Sayadaw said, “Mālagatissa, did you see this? Understand that this is the incredible heat of Avīci hell. If you disrobe, you will definitely fall into this Avīci hell at the time of your death and be

consumed by this incredible heat. Your unwholesome *kamma* is abundant! Only when you continue to take the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas* by practising vipassanā meditation will your unwholesome deeds become ineffective. Only then will you escape from Avīci hell.”

Mālagatissa was extremely frightened and, therefore, did not disrobe. Instead he continued to practise vipassanā meditation ardently and with intense effort. After practising for about ten years, he had become an *anāgāmī* (non-returner), thereby escaping from the prospect of falling into Avīci hell. He attained almost complete peace.

In this example, it is obvious that by taking the Buddha’s medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*, he not only escaped the danger of the lower realms, but he also overcame his mental affliction and physical suffering. I urge each of you to not forget to take this medicine regularly every day!

May all of you, by taking the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas* every day, be freed from all kinds of suffering and attain Nibbāna within a short time.

May all beings realize the Dhamma and live in peace and happiness.



## THIRD DAY

### The *Bojjhaṅgas*

Today in my Dhamma talk, I will do my utmost to explain the *bojjhaṅgas* as well as I understand their meaning. It is these enlightenment factors that need to be developed in the practice, so some knowledge of them is necessary.

These seven enlightenment factors are:

1. *sati-sambojjhaṅga*  
the enlightenment factor of mindfulness
2. *dhammavicaya-sambojjhaṅga*  
the enlightenment factor of investigation of states
3. *virīya-sambojjhaṅga*  
the enlightenment factor of effort
4. *pīti-sambojjhaṅga*  
the enlightenment factor of rapture
5. *passaddhi-sambojjhaṅga*  
the enlightenment factor of tranquillity
6. *samādhi-sambojjhaṅga*  
the enlightenment factor of concentration
7. *upekkhā-sambojjhaṅga*  
the enlightenment factor of equanimity

### ***Sati-sambojjhaṅga*: The Enlightenment Factor of Mindfulness**

*Sati-sambojjhaṅga* means to be mindful day and night and remember to perform wholesome deeds like *dāna*, *sīla*, and *bhāvanā* (generosity, morality, and meditation). *Sati-sambojjhaṅga* is very

important; it is of vital importance. Without *sati* (mindfulness, awareness), you are like a corpse. You do not know that it is wise to practise generosity, to keep the precepts, or to practise meditation. You do not understand that it would be good to be a volunteer at a meditation centre or monastery, or you are not interested in listening to a Dhamma talk. Not understanding why it is wise to perform wholesome deeds, you perform only unwholesome deeds. When you forget to carry out wholesome deeds and cultivate unwholesome deeds, you only experience bad and unwholesome effects, resulting in suffering and unhappiness. Then the way to happiness is lost.

In all matters concerning wholesomeness, mindfulness is very important. Also in worldly matters, mindfulness is crucial. If there is no mindfulness in such areas and activities such as education, business, health, or politics, then you will not carry out your work satisfactorily or even neglect to do work. If you do not apply yourself to your work, you cannot be successful. Then there is neither prosperity nor happiness.

Therefore, this mindfulness is a very important factor among the enlightenment factors, be it in worldly matters or in spiritual matters.

For a meditator, *sati-sambojjhaṅga* means observing and being mindful of all the different objects that arise in the body and mind. These objects include all physical phenomena, feelings, mental states, and mind-objects. Stated simply, mindfulness can be defined as “All phenomena arising in the body or mind must be observed as they really are at the moment of their arising.”

*Sati-sambojjhaṅga* is the most important of all the seven enlightenment factors because insight cannot arise without it. It is the fundamental basis, and the main and most essential factor for awakening. If this *sati-sambojjhaṅga* is not present, then all the other enlightenment factors will not arise.

Reflect for a moment: isn't the whole world teaching the Dhamma? We can describe conventional reality by means of two categories:

- **the animate world:** it includes all living beings such as human beings, *devas*, *brahmas*, etc.
- **the inanimate world:** it includes all inanimate things such as trees, mountains, water, earth, forests, etc.

In our present age, human beings, *devas*, *brahmas*, and other living beings which constitute the so-called animate world are dying all the time before our very eyes, regardless of their age or social rank. The fact that we can die at any time or at any age is a Dhamma teaching for all of us. After they have been born, human beings too, will die sooner or later. It is the same for *devas* and *brahmas* - after they have come into existence, they will pass away. Animals and other beings in the lower realms also die once they have come into existence. No living being is eternal or permanent; each being has to die. It is as if these human beings, *devas*, *brahmas*, and other beings are saying, "Look, just as we are dying, one day you will also die." In this way, the animate world is teaching us the Dhamma.

The inanimate world with its trees, mountains, water, earth, forests, sun, moon, stars, etc. is also constantly teaching us the Dhamma. For example, when the leaves of a tree fall down to the earth, or the petals of a flower fall onto the soil, it is as if these things are saying, "Look, we fall down; we disappear, and we die, and you also are going to fall down, disappear, and die. Nobody can escape death." They show us our impermanent nature, our arising and passing away. In this way, the inanimate world too is teaching us the Dhamma.

But living beings are not aware of this point; they do not understand it because they lack mindfulness. The day when they become mindful, they will see and understand the Dhamma teachings of the world around them.

In those virtuous people who are endowed with mindfulness, a feeling of spiritual urgency develops when they see flowers wither or fall to the ground, a forest fire, water flowing in a creek, or leaves falling from a tree. As a result, they can gain insight or even become a noble person who has attained one of the stages of enlightenment.

## The Characteristic of Mindfulness

*"Apilāpanalakkhaṇā [satisambojjhaṅgo]"*<sup>12</sup>

The enlightenment factor of mindfulness has the characteristic of not wobbling (or not floating away from the object) or of sinking into the object.

To make the meaning clearer, I will elaborate on this a little more. When a stone is thrown into the water, it immediately sinks to the bottom. Likewise, mindfulness sinks or penetrates into the object. When a dried gourd or a football is thrown into the water, it stays on the surface of the water and is blown here and there by the wind. In the same way, a mind devoid of mindfulness does not stay on the object.

I suppose that all of you have seen a dried gourd or a ball that has been thrown into the water. It always stays on the surface of the water and never sinks to the bottom, doesn't it? However, a stone that is thrown into the water immediately sinks to the bottom; it is not possible for it to stay on the surface of the water, is it? When mindfulness is present in the mind, it sinks into the object just as the stone sinks into the water. Mindfulness means remembering to stay present, to be aware, or not to be forgetful. If one is not forgetful, one can carry out any task.

For a meditator, mindfulness means that all arising objects can be observed continuously without missing a single one. This is like a heron that catches every fish jumping out of the water. All of you have probably seen a heron standing at the shore, in the middle of a field, or in a shallow canal waiting for some fish to jump out of the water. As soon as a fish jumps, the heron – without missing it – catches and swallows it. The characteristic of mindfulness is similar in that it catches each object without missing one.

## The Function of Mindfulness

*“Asammosanarasā [satisambojjhaṅgo]”<sup>13</sup>*

The enlightenment factor of mindfulness has the function of non-forgetfulness or non-superficiality, or absence of confusion.

The function of mindfulness is not to be forgetful. Whatever work needs to be done or whatever duty needs to be carried out, mindfulness does not forget to do it. This includes matters such as education, business, family, work, politics, or religion. While attending to any of these different matters or duties, it is the function or the work of mindfulness not to forget anything. It is also the

function of mindfulness to remember parents, relatives, friends, and other persons whom we need to deal with. But this form of mindfulness is neither mindfulness as an enlightenment factor nor is it wholesome. It is merely an imitation of mindfulness; it is called *satipaṭirūpaka*.

Only the non-forgetfulness involved in performing meritorious deeds such as generosity, morality, meditation, voluntary work, or to listening to a Dhamma talk is a wholesome form of mindfulness. But also this form of mindfulness is not yet mindfulness as an enlightenment factor. Only mindfulness that is aware of the arising and passing away of mental and physical phenomena is mindfulness as an enlightenment factor; only this kind of mindfulness is true *sati-sambojjhaṅga*.

A meditator must be endowed with the kind of mindfulness that is an enlightenment factor. When this kind of mindfulness becomes strong and penetrating, a meditator can be mindful of each mental and physical phenomenon that is arising. Then it is no longer possible to be unaware of objects that are arising, and it becomes easy to note whatever is occurring.

Some Burmese sugarcane-ball players are very skilled. (The ball is woven from the fibres of sugarcane, and so it is extremely light.) They can hit the ball wherever it comes from, before it falls on the ground. If they hit it with the left foot, they again kick it with that foot, and when they hit it with the right foot, they kick it with the right foot. Sometimes they even bounce it off their shoulders. Watching the cane-ball going around in a circle of sugarcane-ball players is quite amazing and great fun!

Likewise, when a meditator's mindfulness becomes sharp and precise, there is awareness of every arising object. If itchiness, heat, or cold arise while observing the rising and falling movement of the abdomen, mindfulness is immediately aware of it and observes this object without missing a single moment. Even the blinking of an eye or the swallowing of saliva is not missed but clearly observed. Nothing whatsoever is missed; mindfulness is constant and uninterrupted.

However, this kind of mindfulness is only possible for meditators who have been meditating for an extended period of time. This degree of mindfulness is not yet possible for beginners because the

mindfulness is not strong and there are still many gaps. Periods when mindfulness is not present alternate with periods of awareness. With continued practice, perseverance, and effort over a certain number of days, mindfulness becomes stronger and more continuous. Later in the practice, everything can be observed but perseverance is needed to be able to do so.

## The Manifestation of Mindfulness

*“Ārakkhapaccupaṭṭhānā [satisambojjhaṅgo]”<sup>14</sup>*

Mindfulness has the manifestation of protection.

The manifestation of protection can be compared with the nanny’s role. A nanny has to guard a toddler in her care from any possible danger. If the toddler walks around in the garden, she might fall down. Or she might eat a twig or a pebble that she picks up from the ground. If it gets stuck in her throat, she might experience difficulties breathing. Therefore, the nanny must not lose sight of the little girl. If the little girl goes to a place where she might fall down, the nanny has to take her by the hand or prevent her from going there. Or if the girl wants to eat something that could cause trouble, the nanny has to take it away. The nanny also has to guard and protect the toddler from bites of mosquitoes, horse flies, or bedbugs.

Likewise, mindfulness has to always guard or protect the mind from unwholesome mental states or defilements. Mindfulness has to protect the mind from any defilements or unwholesome mental states that could arise from a visible object. And the same applies to other objects such as hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking.

For meditators who are experienced and have settled into their practice, this is very obvious. If greed or anger arises when seeing an object, they are immediately aware that greed or anger has arisen. When they are mindful of this greed or anger, it dissolves or disappears. In this way, mindfulness is extremely precious.

If mindfulness is lost, we act or speak thoughtlessly, thereby harming others. If we do not lose our mindfulness, we are free from worldly faults and blame. Mindfulness is incredibly beneficial. Whether or

not we are able to attain any stage of enlightenment is not relevant at the moment; let's look at that later.

In the previous example, the greed or anger that arose due to particular causes disappears when mindfully observed. Or if an object that is capable of causing greed or anger to arise is mindfully observed, then greed or anger does not even have a chance to arise. If each object is observed in this way, then defilements are prevented from arising; therefore, the mind is free from defilements or unwholesome mental states. Having no more defilements means that no more harmful or detrimental effects will arise. This is the priceless and immediate benefit of mindfulness gained through the practice of vipassanā meditation.

Those who have never practised vipassanā meditation thoroughly and systematically do not really know their minds. They do whatever they want without knowing whether it is wholesome or unwholesome. They often do not know what they are doing or what they are saying. Devoid of mindfulness, they can easily harm another being. These actions are blameworthy not only in regards to worldly matters but also in regards to matters concerning the cycle of life and death (*saṃsarā*). Among the unwholesome and detrimental effects are the separation from wife and children, the loss of money, worries and lamentation, shame, and falling into the lower realms after death. However, virtuous persons who are endowed with the enlightenment factor of mindfulness are no longer subject to these harmful effects, and experience a great deal of happiness and peace.

*“Visayābhimukhībhāvapaccupaṭṭhānā”*<sup>15</sup>

Mindfulness has the manifestation of coming face to face with the object (confrontation).

As soon as an object arises, the meditator's mind is confronted with the object. It is as if the mind turns towards the object. This is similar to little birds that always turn their heads in the direction where they pick up the food. Likewise, mindfulness always faces the object, catches and observes it.

## The Proximate Cause of Mindfulness

In the Pāḷi canon, only one proximate cause is mentioned. However, in the commentary four proximate causes are enumerated. According to the Pāḷi canon, it is, “*Yonisomanasikāra bahulīkāro.*”<sup>16</sup> The proximate cause or nutriment for the arising of the enlightenment factor of mindfulness is “frequently give careful attention.”<sup>17</sup>

With wise attention, we remember to constantly be mindful without missing any object, and it is our intention to be aware of every object during walking, standing, or sitting as well as eating, drinking, or bending and stretching our arms and legs. Actually, without wise attention, mindfulness as an enlightenment factor could not arise. For meditators who practise superficially and unconscientiously, this *sati-sambojjhaṅga* does not arise. Therefore, it is essential that wise attention is paired with diligent effort.

According to the commentary the four proximate causes of mindfulness are:<sup>18</sup>

1. mindfulness and clear comprehension
2. avoid unmindful persons
3. associate with mindful persons
4. incline the mind to arouse the enlightenment factor of mindfulness

Only when we are careful will mindfulness arise; if we are not careful, it will not arise. We should not associate with meditators whose practice is superficial and who lack mindfulness. Stay far away from them! Staying in close contact with this kind of meditators makes our mindfulness disappear and our practice become shallow. Practising near meditators who are mindful and meditate well helps us make progress, so that mindfulness as an enlightenment factor develops.



## ***Dhammavicaya-sambojjhaṅga*: The Enlightenment Factor of Investigation of States**

*Dhammavicaya-sambojjhaṅga* is a designation for insight and wisdom (*paññā*). If we translate it as understanding or insight, it becomes easier to remember.

This enlightenment factor is indispensable to the practice. The enlightenment factor of mindfulness is very important, but if there is no understanding or insight, the goal cannot be attained. Only with wisdom and understanding is it possible to finish any work or project. When an endeavour is undertaken with wisdom and understanding, the way to the goal is smooth, straight, and clear.

You should make use of the enlightenment factor of investigation in both worldly and spiritual matters. In order to be endowed with this enlightenment factor, people attend classes to increase their knowledge in their worldly fields. Endowed with relevant knowledge and understanding, they can be successful and according to the extent of their knowledge can complete their task within a short time. Also in business, knowledge and understanding are needed. Only with the relevant knowledge can you prosper and reap the profits of your labour. Without knowledge or understanding, other people can lie to you or be dishonest, so you will never gain any profit from your work. Actually, you will all the time be losing. When trading in gems, it is especially important that you have knowledge and understanding. Without the necessary skills, you will suffer terrible losses, even if you have only done something wrong once or if somebody has only been dishonest once. This state of affairs might even destroy your life.

Farmers also need knowledge and understanding to do their work in the fields. They must know when and how to plant seeds, plough the fields, and reap the harvest. The work of dull or lazy people will never be satisfactory, and they might even end up doing what they should not have done. Whatever they undertake becomes fruitless.

Knowledge and understanding are further needed regarding health. As a Burmese proverb says, “Wisdom or understanding protects your life.” We should use this understanding and consider what kind of food is suitable for us to eat and what style of living is beneficial for

our health. Then our health will be good, and we will have long lives. However, if we just eat and drink whatever we encounter and do whatever we want to do without considering the consequences, our health will deteriorate and our lives will be shortened.

Nowadays we live in a scientific age. In any scientific field, new inventions or new findings would not be possible without knowledge or general understanding. Scientists would not even be able to use modern instruments for their research. Only with knowledge can there be progress in the world.

Understanding and knowledge are needed even more urgently in politics. When educated and accomplished leaders are in charge of the ruling government, the lives of the citizens are easy and unproblematic; they make progress and prosper. If this country can catch up to other nations, the standard of living would be very high. However, if uneducated and incompetent leaders rule the country, then the standard of living can never match that of more developed countries. This factor of knowledge and understanding is an aspect that needs to be present in every living being and in all situations. So, let's try our best to acquire knowledge!

According to the commentary,<sup>19</sup> acquiring *vicaya* or wisdom involves understanding the difference between wholesome and unwholesome phenomena. Actually, according to the Dhamma, there are wholesome (*kusala*), unwholesome (*akusala*), and (kammically) indeterminate (*abyākata*) phenomena. Only when we take all Dhammas (all mental and physical phenomena) into consideration is the understanding all-encompassing. Therefore, the enlightenment factor of investigation of states includes the investigation and understanding of all wholesome, unwholesome, and (kammically) indeterminate phenomena, or the investigation and understanding of all mental and physical phenomena. For your better understanding, I will explain this factor with regard to its characteristic, function, manifestation, and proximate cause.

## The Characteristic of Investigation of States

*“Pavicayalakkhaṇo [dhammavicayasambojjhaṅgo]”<sup>20</sup>*

The enlightenment factor of investigation of states has the characteristic of investigation.

When things are investigated and examined, understanding and knowledge arises. This understanding or insight knowledge refers to three general kinds of discernment: the difference between mental and physical phenomena, the three characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and non-self, and the Four Noble Truths. These are the truths of suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the way leading to its cessation. To put it simply: this enlightenment factor has the characteristic of seeing whatever arises in body and mind as it really is.

For example, this means seeing and understanding the rising and falling movement of the abdomen at the moment of its occurrence as ‘rising’ and ‘falling;’ likewise seeing and understanding cold as ‘cold,’ heat as ‘heat,’ heaviness as ‘heaviness,’ lightness as ‘lightness,’ roughness as ‘roughness,’ softness as ‘softness,’ stiffness as ‘stiffness,’ or flowing as ‘flowing.’

Regarding mental phenomena, this means seeing and understanding greed as ‘greed,’ hatred as ‘hatred,’ laziness as ‘laziness,’ gladness as ‘gladness,’ the desire to laugh as the ‘desire to laugh,’ the desire to cry as the ‘desire to cry,’ or thinking as ‘thinking.’ All mental states that arise - whether good or bad - must be seen and understood as they really are. This is called the enlightenment factor of investigation of states. Please remember it as such.

During walking meditation, we see and understand the lifting movement of the foot as ‘lifting,’ or we see and understand it as tiny little broken movements. Likewise, we should understand this factor when pushing or dropping the foot. Further, the intention to lift, push, or drop the foot should also be understood as ‘intention.’ These kinds of understanding also belong to the enlightenment factor of investigation of states.

During the mindfulness of daily activities, we see and understand the different actions and movements of the arms, legs, or other parts of the body, seeing and understanding bending as ‘bending,’ stretching as ‘stretching,’ lifting as ‘lifting,’ or lowering as ‘lowering,’ sitting down as ‘sitting down,’ standing up as ‘standing up,’ eating as ‘eating,’ drinking as ‘drinking,’ showering as ‘showering,’ or washing one’s face as ‘washing.’ All these kinds of understanding belong to the enlightenment factor of investigation of states.

## **The Function of Investigation of States**

*“Visayobhāsanaraso [dhammavicayasambojjhaṅgo]”<sup>21</sup>*

The enlightenment factor of investigation of states has the function of illuminating the object. It is like a lamp. When darkness disappears because of the lamp’s illumination, all the objects within the reach of the light can be seen clearly. Then we know and see everything clearly and unambiguously as it really is: the door, the wall, the pillar, the pots, pans and cups. The light of the lamp reveals the existence of all these things. In the same way, the enlightenment factor of investigation of states reveals and illuminates the nature of all mental and physical phenomena. Because the function of this factor is to illuminate the nature of the objects, it is compared with a lamp.

## **The Manifestation of Investigation of States**

*“Asammohapaccupaṭṭhāno [dhammavicayasambojjhaṅgo]”<sup>22</sup>*

The enlightenment factor of investigation of states has the manifestation of non-bewilderment.

It is like a skilled and knowledgeable guide who can take visitors from all corners of the world to any place they want to see. The guide’s skills are not limited to showing the way; he/she also illuminates different places of interest along the way. Without a guide we can easily get lost because it is rather difficult to stay on the right path. With a guide, we stay on the right road and get the correct

information, so we can reach the desired destination quickly and safely.

Like a skilled guide, insight knowledge (the enlightenment factor of investigation of states) can guide and direct the mind to clearly see and understand mental and physical phenomena as they really are. Then there is no longer any bewilderment.

When the meditator reaches the fourth stage of insight knowledge (seeing the arising and passing away of phenomena), the enlightenment factor of investigation of states is well developed. As a result, the true nature of mental and physical phenomena is clearly and unmistakably seen. Then the enlightenment factor of investigation of states knows or points out, “This is impermanence, this is unsatisfactoriness, and this is non-self.” Or it discerns, “These are physical phenomena, and these are mental phenomena.”

As a result, the meditator realizes that before practising meditation, he or she held wrong views by taking these mental and physical phenomena to be ‘I’ or ‘you,’ as a ‘human being’ or a ‘*deva*,’ or a ‘man’ or a ‘woman.’ Phenomena that were impermanent were mistakenly thought to be permanent and eternal, those that were unsatisfactory were understood to be pleasing and enjoyable. However, after practising meditation, the meditator begins to understand that there is no such thing as a ‘person,’ a ‘being,’ an ‘I,’ a ‘you,’ a ‘man,’ a ‘woman,’ a ‘self,’ or a ‘soul’ but only mental and physical processes. He or she understands that there is no permanent or eternal mental or physical phenomenon but knows that everything is constantly arising and passing away. In addition, he or she knows that all these phenomena are not satisfactory or pleasant but stressful and unsatisfactory. In this way, the enlightenment factor of investigation of states clearly points out the true nature of things.

## **The Proximate Cause of Investigation of States**

To reiterate, the enlightenment factor of investigation of states, which refers to knowledge and understanding, is extremely important in worldly matters as well as in meditation. In spiritual matters, this factor actually refers to insight knowledge. When meditators are able

to be continuously aware of objects without any gaps between one noting and the next, then the defilements have no chance of entering the mind, so that concentration becomes stronger. As a result, the various levels of insight knowledge are swiftly attained as well as path and fruition knowledge.

Wise attention is needed during all waking hours to be always fully aware and to know the nature of things. When wise attention is present, the enlightenment factor of investigation of states will arise. Wise attention is the English translation of the Pāḷi expression *yonisomanasikāra*. It can also be defined as being constantly mindful without any gaps. The Buddha only mentioned “frequently giving careful attention”<sup>23</sup> or “*yonisomanasikāra bahulīkāro*”<sup>24</sup> as the proximate cause or nutriment of the enlightenment factor of investigation of states. However, the commentary mentions seven causes for the enlightenment factor of investigation of states.<sup>25</sup> To arouse the enlightenment factor of investigation of states, we need to:

1. ask questions
2. keep things clean and pure
3. balance the mental faculties
4. avoid unwise persons
5. associate with wise persons
6. reflect on profound dhammas
7. incline the mind to arouse the enlightenment factor of investigation of states

### ***1. Ask Questions***

First of all, you should ask questions about everything that you do not understand or that is not clear. For example, “How many aggregates are there?” “What are the characteristics of the aggregates?” “How many sense-bases are there?” “What are the characteristics of the sense-bases?” “How many elements are there?” “What are the characteristics of the elements?” “How many truths are there?” “What are the characteristics of the truths?” “What are the characteristics of mental and physical phenomena?” If you do not know the answers to these questions and your mind is not clear about these things, then you should ask somebody who has some general

knowledge about these matters or ask your teacher. But when you are practising meditation with a teacher, then there is no need to ask these questions because while listening to the daily Dhamma talk or during the daily interview, you will understand the answers to these questions. The topics of the talks usually touch on these questions. During the interview, you will get advice and encouragement on how to stay on the right path. Therefore, it is enough to follow the knowledgeable advice of your teacher. Often people who have acquired general knowledge by themselves do not have questions and, therefore, do not need to ask questions.

However, meditators who have only a little general knowledge should ask questions. If you compare your meditation experience with the limited knowledge gained from books, your understanding remains vague and uncertain, so you cannot develop any concentration and insight knowledge. When you rightly understand the meaning of the Dhamma, your mind becomes clear and bright. Only then will the mind calm down and insight knowledge arise. The path and fruition knowledge may arise too.

Therefore, for this kind of meditator it is good to ask questions. Then the meditation teacher can adjust his or her Dhamma talks to the meditator's level of knowledge and explain any subjects that are not clear: the aggregates, the sense-bases, the elements, the truths, mental phenomena, physical phenomena, or impermanence.

Let's imagine you are observing the rising and falling movement of the abdomen. To speak in terms of mental and physical phenomena, this is mindfulness of the wind-element (*vāyo dhātu*). In terms of the aggregates, this is mindfulness of the aggregate of materiality (*rūpakkhandhā*). In terms of the sense-bases, it is mindfulness of the tangible sense-base (*phoṭṭhabbāyatana*). In terms of the elements, this is mindfulness of the tangible element (*phoṭṭhabbadhātu*). That which is aware is called the mind (*nāma*). In terms of the truths, this is mindfulness of the truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering (*magga sacca*). Explained in this way, meditators can expand and increase their understanding.

## ***2. Keep Things Clean and Pure***

To keep things clean and pure refers to keeping internal and external things clean and pure. Internal things actually refer to our body, and external things are the things we use in our daily lives. If the body becomes soiled with sweat, internal parasites, or dirt, then these impurities are like a shadow cast over the mind and body. As a result, insights no longer arise easily. If you become constipated or have difficulty urinating, this is even worse as these bodily functions are vital. When you suffer from ill health, you might experience headaches, stiff shoulders, dizziness, or nausea. As a result, your mind is no longer peaceful. With discomfort in the mind and body, it becomes difficult to concentrate, and without concentration, insight doesn't arise. Therefore, take care of your body and keep it clean! Make sure that your digestion works well and that you can go to the toilet regularly. Consequently your body will feel light and the mind will become clear, alert, and calm. Then insight will arise.

Besides your body, it is important to keep external things tidy and clean. This means keeping your clothes clean and neat. Don't wear dirty or smelly clothes; doing so is not conducive for insights to arise. In your room, keep everything tidy and clean, your bed, furniture, and everything you use. If you are messy and the things get dirty, insight will not arise. Therefore, make sure that you keep everything spotlessly clean.

## ***3. Balance the Mental Faculties***

The mental faculties must be balanced. In total, there are twenty-two mental faculties. But here, we will only take five mental faculties into consideration: faith (*saddhindriya*), effort (*viriyindriya*), mindfulness (*satindriya*), concentration (*samādhindriya*), and wisdom or insight (*paññindriya*). Having these five mental faculties in balance is very important. For those meditators who merely practise meditation as a way of doing something wholesome or of developing the perfections (*pāramīs*), it is not so important to balance these mental faculties. However, for those meditators who practise meditation with the aim of attaining path knowledge, fruition knowledge, and Nibbāna, it is extremely important to balance these



faculties. Faith needs to be balanced with wisdom, and effort needs to be balanced with concentration.

When the insight knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbaya ñāṇa*) becomes well developed, faith may become excessive. Having lost his or her mindfulness, the meditator then thinks about things he or she wants to do such as performing various meritorious deeds, explaining the Dhamma, giving meditation instructions to other people, or offering things. In this way, he or she cannot make any further progress. At this time, the meditation teacher needs to advise the meditator to be careful to note this faith. For those meditators who practise with the aim of attaining path and fruition knowledge, it is essential that this mental state be noted.

If faith is excessive and wisdom or insight weak, then there is a tendency to not analyse or consider whether something is good or bad, wholesome or unwholesome. As the (Burmese) saying goes, “With excessive faith, a person becomes naive.” In such cases, a person easily believes what she or he is told even if it is not true. In such circumstances, insight will not arise and the way to path and fruition knowledge becomes blocked. Instead of experiencing beneficial results, the meditator only experiences misery and suffering.

Such uncritical or naive people can also be found outside the meditation centre. They often believe whatever a pretentious or proud person says and may even respect or venerate such a person. But in the end, such gullible people will meet with worries and sorrows, with misery and suffering.

If wisdom or insight is excessive and faith is weak, then you think about your meditation experiences. As the (Burmese) saying goes, “With excessive wisdom, a person overshoots the target.” Some people even assume that merit can be gained by merely thinking about meritorious deeds, and so then they imagine offering monks some requisites. Having performed these deeds in their minds, they assume that they have acquired great merit – and that this merit can be gained without exerting a lot of effort. During meditation practice, they use the same approach. Without exerting any effort, they just think about what others have said or what they have read in books. However, they do not experience any personal and direct insight; their knowledge is only imaginary.

There are even people who do not have any book knowledge but only conjure up things in their minds. This situation is compared to a person who takes the wrong medicine and as a result gets even sicker. The original sickness might have been easy to cure but by taking the wrong medicine, the resulting disease is no longer so easy to cure.

If a person's wisdom is excessive, it is very difficult for another person to teach or instruct that person. Therefore, do not believe everything that you are told, and do not get caught up in reflections without having any personal and direct experience. Only believe what you have experienced in your meditation practice and what is based on your own personal insight knowledge.

Effort and concentration also need to be balanced. At the time of the Buddha, the Venerable Sona overexerted himself. As a result, he could not become concentrated, and therefore he did not make any progress. When effort is too strong, concentration gets weak, and consequently, the mind very often drifts into thought. However, this kind of meditator is very rare [in Burma; trans.]. Most of the time, meditators' efforts are too weak.

On the other hand, if concentration is too strong, effort becomes weaker and the meditator becomes lazy and does not make any further progress. When meditators reach the higher stages of insight knowledge after having made the appropriate effort, mindfulness becomes effortless, and the mind becomes concentrated on a single object.

For example, when you repeatedly observe the rising and falling movement of the abdomen, the mind becomes very concentrated. Without exerting too much effort or very little effort at all, mindfulness and concentration become well-established. However, in these circumstances concentration also gets weaker without your noticing it, so that effort and concentration are no longer balanced. During such moments, the meditator might have lapses of mindfulness in which objects disappear. It seems as if you have fallen asleep, and sometimes you may actually fall asleep. Or your desire to practise meditation weakens, so you feel lazy. When this occurs, you no longer make progress and new insights do not arise. Whenever this happens, you need to increase your noting of objects and observe more attentively. For example, when observing the

rising and falling movement, you should increase your noting to include four parts, 'rising, falling, sitting, and touching.' Doing this makes effort stronger, so it becomes balanced with concentration, which in turn leads to more insight and progress in meditation. Mindfulness can never be excessive; it needs to be present at all times and in every situation. It is with mindfulness that the other mental faculties are kept in balance or are adjusted accordingly.

#### ***4. Avoid Unwise Persons***

You should avoid unwise persons. Unwise persons or *dummedha* are described as people without insight and wisdom. This means that they do not have any personal and direct understanding of the true nature of the aggregates, the sense-bases, the elements, or the truths. So, this term refers only to the absence of experiential knowledge but not to the absence of scriptural knowledge. In the commentary, experiential knowledge means understanding and seeing the arising and passing away of phenomena as they are experienced in the fourth stage of insight knowledge.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, the term *dummedha* or 'unwise person' refers to people who have not experienced the insight knowledge of arising and passing away. This means that you should not rely on such a person as a teacher because he or she cannot talk about or explain the arising and passing away of phenomena if he or she has not had any personal experience of this. Such a teacher may even say that this kind of experience could not possibly happen, or that the experience is wrong. If this is the case, how can a meditator gain insight or make progress? Be especially careful about this point.

#### ***5. Associate with Wise Persons***

You should associate with wise persons and rely on them as teachers. A wise person is a person who has personal and direct understanding of the true nature of the aggregates, the sense-bases, the elements, or the truths. He or she has personally experienced the arising and passing away of all mental and physical processes, which means that he or she has attained the understanding of the fourth stage of insight

knowledge. In this case, the term ‘wise person’ neither refers to a person who has scriptural knowledge nor to someone who gives inspiring Dhamma talks nor to a person who has a great deal of worldly knowledge. Only a ‘wise person’ can satisfactorily answer a meditator’s questions and explain what is meant by the arising and passing away of phenomena or what mental and physical phenomena are.

At one time, a man wanted to know a few things about vipassanā meditation, so he approached a Sayadaw and asked him these questions. This Sayadaw was not only well-versed in the scriptures, but his morality was also impeccable, and he was known for his honesty and straightforwardness. Although he had practised concentration meditation for quite some time, when he was questioned by this man, the Sayadaw advised the man to go to another monk who had really practised vipassanā meditation. This honest and straight Sayadaw did not give him any vague answers, but advised him to go to an accomplished teacher. His response was entirely appropriate. A teacher should admit that he or she has no direct personal experience and openly say that he or she does not know. May you find a truly wise teacher and be able to rely on him or her.

## ***6. Reflect on Profound Dhammas***

You should reflect on profound dhammas. Profound dhammas are such things as the aggregates, the sense-bases, the elements, the truths, the mental faculties, as well as mental and physical phenomena. Think about these dhammas reflecting on what you know based on your personal experience; otherwise ask persons who have experiential knowledge of these matters and remember their words. In this way, your understanding will increase.

## ***7. Incline the Mind to Arouse the Enlightenment Factor of Investigation of States***

The practice should be done with the mind carefully attuned to the

arising of each mental and physical phenomenon, seeing the characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and non-self, or being aware of every mental and physical process as it really is. You should incline the mind towards being aware continuously, without any gaps. With this attitude, insights will naturally arise, and progress will be made.

## ***Viriya-sambojjhaṅga*: The Enlightenment Factor of Effort**

*Viriya-sambojjhaṅga* is the enlightenment factor of effort, energy, or diligence. Effort or energy is also very much needed because without it your work will not be brought to its ultimate conclusion, even if you are mindful and intelligent. Without effort and energy you will not prosper or progress; it is needed in education, in business, and in politics. The higher your position is, the more you have to strive. In meditation, effort and energy are even more crucial.

In ninety percent of all cases, the lack of effort prevents people from reaching their goals, so that they are not successful in their business. Lacking effort, they also cannot finish a higher degree in education. Besides this, the lack of meritorious deeds and the lack of wisdom may also account for a person's lack of success. This probably applies to about ten percent of all cases. In most cases, people are not successful and do not prosper because they are lazy and do not put enough effort into their endeavours.

In the present time, which is characterized by many incredible technological developments, we are constantly confronted by new and special things. This is the result of the combined efforts of numerous people – one comes to this conclusion when analysing the circumstances. However, if the many technicians responsible for these developments stopped short by making plans but not implementing them, there would not have been so much progress. Nowadays there is so much progress because people and nations compete and strive very hard to outdo other nations.

In connection to effort, the erudite Mahāgandhayon Sayadaw from the Mahāgandhayon monastery in Amarapura said, “You all think

that I am powerful and that I have very good *kamma*. Actually, it is not only due to power and good *kamma* but also to a lot of effort. Whenever I talk about effort, I realize that I have spoken about it enthusiastically since my childhood.”

Those who have reached a higher social position or who have become wealthy have been able to do so because of their efforts. May all who wish to prosper, to be successful, or to be happy, also be endowed with energy and effort. Try to arouse effort and increase whatever effort already exists. Effort or energy is highly praised in many regards; it is expressed well in this saying, “If you are able to climb, you will reach the top. Then the mountain will be below the soles of your feet. If you strive hard, you can become a Buddha.”

## The Characteristic of Effort

“*Ussāhalakkhaṇaṃ viriyaṃ*”<sup>27</sup>

Effort has the characteristic of strength, exertion, or endurance. Striving and putting energy into what one is doing means that one is applying effort.

Meditators will come to realize the factor of effort during their meditation practice. In order to be mindful, they have to make an effort; they have to try hard, and they have to exert themselves. This endurance and exertion is the characteristic of effort.

## The Function of Effort

“*Sahajātānaṃ upatthambanarasam [viriyaṃ]*”<sup>28</sup>

Effort has the function of supporting its associated states. This means the factor of effort supports, urges, forces, and encourages. For meditators whose energy has become strong due to effort, the three factors of mindfulness, concentration and insight tend to develop in a short time. Some of these meditators even attain path and fruition knowledge.

For example, imagine that two people are climbing up a very high

steep mountain. After climbing for quite some time, one of them becomes tired and wants to go down again. However, the other person says that they have almost made it to the top and encourages the tired person to continue after a short rest. Although it is difficult to climb all the way to the top, sometimes the summit can be reached, but encouragement is often needed. So, one sometimes has to take the other person by the hand. Even if the mountain is very high, it is worth remembering that it is possible to set one's foot on the summit.

In the same way, the mental factor of effort has the function of supporting and encouraging the other mental factors whenever they have weakened.

When a meditator feels downhearted or lazy, the meditation teacher should explain to him or her the benefits of effort and offer encouragement, so that he or she will increase his or her effort. It is true that some meditators come with the wish to strive in their practice. However, when they meet with difficulties or when their experience doesn't meet their expectations, they can become too relaxed and so their efforts weaken. In their interviews, some meditators report, "This is so boring, just this constant 'rising, falling, rising, falling.' I don't want to continue with this meditation practice, so I would like to leave, Sayadaw." In these circumstances, meditators need to be encouraged and urged to stay on. With encouragement, effort becomes stronger and sustained, so that meditators are not only able to stay for the intended period of time, but also to attain insight. Almost anything can be accomplished with effort.

## The Manifestation of Effort

*"Asaṃsīdanabhāvapaccupaṭṭhānam"*<sup>29</sup>

This means that effort has the manifestation of not stepping back, not shrinking, or not flagging. When a person's effort becomes strong, be it through his or her own original effort or through the encouragement of other people, then the person does not step back or lose ground no matter what he or she does but carries out that work

without wavering. No matter what difficulties are encountered, the person does not show the slightest reaction of discouragement. He or she does not stop short and draw back but keeps on going. “Even if only the hull (of a boat) remains, the flag is still up.” This Burmese saying illustrates this manifestation of effort. This factor of effort is the most important factor for many meditators. Let this effort always be present and alert; don’t allow it to slacken or disappear.

## The Proximate Cause of Effort

The Buddha mentioned only “frequently giving careful attention”<sup>30</sup> or “*yonisomanasikāra bahulīkāro*”<sup>31</sup> as the proximate cause or nutriment of the enlightenment factor of effort.

However, according to the commentary, there are eleven proximate causes for the arising of effort.<sup>32</sup> If the effort becomes weak or inadequate, you should resort to one of the following antidotes:

1. reflect on the dangers of the lower realms
2. reflect on the benefits of effort (or the benefits of vipassanā meditation)
3. reflect on the right path
4. respect and appreciation for food and other requisites you have received
5. reflect on the nobility of the inheritance
6. reflect on the nobility of the Buddha
7. reflect on the nobility of the lineage
8. reflect on the nobility of the companions in the holy life
9. avoid the company of lazy persons
10. associate with energetic persons
11. incline the mind to strive continuously

If you reflect on one or several of these eleven antidotes, effort will become strong and continuous.



### ***1. Reflect on the Dangers of the Lower Realms***

Although you may be carrying out good and wholesome deeds which are praised by the virtuous, you might become lazy at times. The laziness that has accompanied you throughout *samsāra* has indeed become very solid. If complacency arises in connection with performing wholesome deeds such as generosity (*dāna*), morality (*sīla*), or meditation (*bhāvanā*), you should reflect on the dangers of the lower realms in this way, “If I am lazy and do not make any effort in regard to the practices of generosity, morality, or meditation, I am not performing any meritorious deeds. Because of this, I may fall into hell or be reborn as an animal or as a hungry ghost. All the beings who have been reborn in these lower realms suffer terribly.” While reflecting on these sufferings and dangers, the complacency or resistance will disappear and the effort to perform meritorious deeds of generosity, morality, or meditation will arise.

If you fall into Avīci hell, you will experience incredible suffering such as being devoured by the fires of hell, being bitten by dogs, being tortured by the wardens of hell, or being fried in hot oil. When this happens, it will be absolutely impossible to ask the wardens for permission to practise meditation.

There is a story of four wealthy young men called Du, Sa, Na, and So who fell into the hell realm. Since they deeply regretted their unwholesome deeds, they made up their minds to never perform any unwholesome deeds if they escaped from the hell realm and came back to the human realm. They would only carry out wholesome deeds of generosity, morality, and meditation and never be forgetful, lazy, or negligent again. If one is reborn in hell, the opportunity to do good deeds disappears; it is too late. If you reflect in this way, the effort that has been dormant will awaken.

Since the suffering of hell cannot be seen, let’s look at the life of animals because we can see this with our eyes. Look at the suffering that they are experiencing. They have to pull heavily loaded carts and are controlled by the farmer with ropes fixed in holes bored through the septum of their noses. They have to work in the hot sun or in heavy rain. Even if they do not feel well or are weak, they have to

pull fully-loaded carts. These animals cannot speak, and humans have no idea of how they feel, but this does not stop them from beating the animals or making them suffer from blows with cane sticks, sharp iron rods, or even knives.

One time, I witnessed how a cow that could not pull a cart was beaten with a cane-stick. The man repeatedly hit the cow, and the longer he beat the cow the angrier he got. Because of these repeated beatings, I assumed that the cow was no longer able to pull the cart. It looked like the cow would rather have died than move a little bit. To me, it seemed that the cow was so weak that it was impossible for her to pull the cart because she was so malnourished and thin. However, the man did not realize this, so he forced the cow to move, but she did not move at all and after a short while lay down on the ground. This made the man even more furious, so he picked up some straw that was piled up not far away. Then he set the straw on fire next to the cow. His cruelty was indescribable! The poor cow had to suffer so much! This is just one form of suffering that animals commonly experience; therefore, reflect on this.

If you do not perform meritorious deeds or procrastinate about engaging in wholesome actions now in this lifetime, then how can you expect to perform meritorious deeds if you are reborn in such an unfortunate existence? Now that you are a human being, having escaped the lower realms and encountered the Buddha's teaching, you should reflect on the value of performing meritorious deeds as a means of escaping from rebirth in the lower realms. Then your energy will be aroused or existing energy will be increased and become more powerful.

## ***2. Reflect on the Benefits of Effort***

When you become too lazy to perform wholesome deeds or when you become weary during meditation practice, you should reflect on the beneficial effects of effort. Whether you practise for one week, two weeks, or one month, in the whole of *saṃsāra* there is only this Dhamma that can bring you peace and happiness. This Dhamma alone can free you from rebirth in the lower realms. If only the Dhamma can free you from dangers of ageing, disease, and death,

what is preventing you from practising meditation?

In regard to worldly matters, if you work really hard for one day, you can attain happiness that may last for one day, one month, one year, or even a whole lifetime. Even in worldly matters, such effort can bring beneficial results. You should further reflect that it is through people's efforts that they prosper and feel happy. Because of their efforts, everything is accomplished easily.

It is worth reflecting on the fact that through the practice of generosity, morality, and meditation one can escape the dangers of the lower realms. Also, consider how the Buddha and all fully enlightened persons have been completely liberated from the dangers of ageing, disease, and death. With these reflections, laziness will disappear, and the energy to practise meditation will be aroused.

### ***3. Reflect on the Right Path***

You should respect the right path. The 'path' includes the path of *satipaṭṭhāna*-vipassanā meditation and the Noble Eightfold Path. The Noble Eightfold Path is the path that leads to Nibbāna, and it is the path that noble and virtuous persons follow. By following this path, the Buddha and all noble persons have become free from the lower realms as well as the dangers of ageing, disease, and death. This is a very noble and dignified path to pursue. Remember that it is due to your previous wholesome deeds and your perfections that you have the opportunity to walk this path; acknowledge how exalted and noble this practice is. With these reflections, effort will be aroused again, if it has become weak.

### ***4. Respect and Appreciation for Food and Other Requisites You Have Received***

Consider the kindness of the people who offer meals and other requisites. Although the donors are not related to you in any way, they offer food, clothes or robes, or the buildings for your use. For example, today's breakfast and lunch donors are from the United States, a country far away. These donors are not your father, mother,

aunts, or uncles, nor are they your brothers, sisters, or relatives. It is praiseworthy, indeed, when they make this offering.

Some of these donors have put a lot of effort into getting the things to be offered. In order to acquire these offerings, they may have had to put up with worry or anxiety, hardships and craving. They may have worked day and night, having to go out in the hot sun or pouring rain to accumulate wealth. They may not even have had the time to reflect on the possible dangers involved in their work. They may have had to deal with all sorts of people as well as frustration and hardship. While attempting to acquire the offerings, some people may even have died. These are some of the hardships and sufferings that people have had to go through.

After the donors have finally acquired these things, they do not use them for themselves but offer them to monks, nuns, and other virtuous people. Aren't these all reasons to be grateful?

The donors offer these things because they respect and admire the monks, nuns, and those who are virtuous for their commitment to the precepts and the practice of meditation. Therefore, you should not practise superficially, but put forth your best effort to repay their kindness.

It is quite possible that some donors hope to receive the fruits of their generosity on three levels, namely the benefits regarding the human realm, the *deva* realm, and Nibbāna. If you sincerely wish for the donors to reap the fruits of their generous gifts, then you should strive even more ardently.

By reflecting in this way, your slack efforts will become stronger, and with this determined effort, you can pass through the stages of insight knowledge and also attain path and fruition knowledge, thereby realizing Nibbāna. There are actually many people who have attained enlightenment.

When Buddhism was flourishing on the island of Ceylon (Sri Lanka), there was a couple who made their living by selling wood. They lived in a village called Mahāgāma. One day Dārubhaṇḍamahātissa said to his wife, "My dear, although we are human beings we do not derive much benefit from our efforts." "Why is this so, darling?" "Because we cannot practise generosity, this human life is a waste. The Buddha also praised the generosity of poor people. Therefore, let's strive very hard to practise generosity!"

As a result, the couple made a great effort to offer food twice a month. Every fifteenth day they offered a meal even though they could not offer good quality rice or delicious curries.

At this time, the Buddha's teaching flourished in Sri Lanka, so many people made offerings. For the young novices, the food offered by the couple was so disgusting that they threw it away, when they were out of sight. Although the couple saw this, their faith did not diminish. They had a good heart and were very understanding, "Since we cannot offer good rice or delicious curries, it is only natural that the young novices do not want to eat this meal. In the future, we will do our utmost so that we are able to offer exquisite food. We have a daughter, and if she works as a servant, we will get twelve pieces of money. With this money, we can buy a cow, and with the milk we can make butter. Then we will buy high quality rice and cook it with butter. When we offer this food to the monks and novices, they will enjoy it." After they had discussed this matter, they carried out their plan and were able to offer butter rice to the Saṅgha.

When the monks and novices relished the exquisite meal, the couple was very happy. However, after some months had passed the husband thought, "We are able to do meritorious deeds and practise generosity. Yes, indeed, we are happy and full of joy, but our daughter is a servant in a rich man's house and has to work all day. She cannot even live with her mother and father; instead, she is at the mercy of a rich man and probably suffers quite a bit."

In order to free his daughter, the man went to another village and started working in a sugarcane mill. After six months, he had saved twelve pieces of money, which made him very happy because he could now free his daughter from misery and servitude. With twelve pieces of money in his bag, he started walking back to his village.

On his way, he saw the Venerable Paṇḍipātikatissa who was on his way to pay homage at the pagoda. He seemed to be unaware that it was almost noon and that he should be eating his last meal. While the man was walking behind the monk, he thought, "It does not look like this monk has eaten his meal, and it is almost noon. It would be helpful if I could offer him some food; however, I do not have any food with me, only a little money. Unfortunately, there aren't any restaurants nearby. If someone would sell me some food, this would be very helpful, indeed."

Just at that moment, a woman carrying a rice packet on her head came along. With the twelve pieces of money that he had saved for the past six months to free his daughter, he bought the rice and offered it to the monk. The monk said that he would only accept half of the rice and offered the other half to the man. However, the man assured him that there was only enough rice for one person and told the monk that he was not worthy enough to eat the food that he had acquired under great hardship. He said, “Venerable sir, please eat this food.”

When asked how he had gotten this rice, the man told the monk his entire story. On hearing this story, the monk was overcome and trembled with a feeling of spiritual urgency. “This man has indeed strong and firm faith to offer me this rice, which has been acquired with incredible difficulty. After having eaten this meal I will no longer live negligently.” So he made up his mind to strive very hard. When he arrived at the pagoda, he paid his respects and then immediately started to practise meditation. He was determined to become an arahant. After seven days, he became fully enlightened, he had become an arahant.

His purpose for striving was to repay the kindness of the man who offered him the rice. However, the benefit of this effort goes to the person who strives, and his striving resulted in his full awakening as an arahant. This is noble effort. Dārubhaṅḍamahātissa too reaped many benefits; however, they are not mentioned in this particular story.

The erudite Mahāgandhayon Sayadaw used to say, “When I was studying the scriptures in Pakhokku, I strove very hard. On the days donors came to offer a meal at the monastery, I studied even harder because I wanted to repay their kindness. I wanted them to receive as many benefits as possible.”

Actually, every meditator should strive in this way. If you reflect on these examples, effort will increase. Laziness will disappear, and the wish to make an all-out effort will arise.

### ***5. Reflect on the Nobility of the Inheritance***

You should reflect on the noble inheritance. The Buddha’s

inheritance consists of path knowledge, fruition knowledge, and Nibbāna. These are the most excellent inheritance. The persons who are worthy of this inheritance are those who strive to practise the Buddha's teaching by putting effort into the practice. Those who do not exert themselves cannot get it. Therefore, you should make up your mind to do your utmost, so the enlightenment factor of effort will develop and become strong.

### ***6. Reflect on the Nobility of the Buddha***

Our teacher, the Buddha, was an extraordinarily noble individual who was honoured by ten thousand universes which shook and trembled at the Buddha's conception, great renunciation, enlightenment, first sermon, his miracle of radiating fire and water simultaneously, his return to the human world after teaching Abhidhamma in the Tāvatiṃsa *deva* realm, his relinquishment of the will to live, and attainment of Parinibbāna. You should consider it improper to be negligent and lazy while practising the teaching of the Buddha who was such an outstanding and noble individual. It is appropriate that your efforts to practise his teachings should be as ardent as possible. With these reflections, the enlightenment factor of effort will be aroused and become strong.

### ***7. Reflect on the Nobility of the Lineage***

You should reflect on the nobility of this lineage. When men ordain as monks, they enter the domain of the *sāsana* and become the sons of the Buddha, *sakyaputta*. When women ordain as nuns, they become the daughters of the Buddha, *sakyadhītā*. All virtuous meditators and true Buddhists should also be considered the sons and daughters of the Buddha. Therefore, you should understand that it is not appropriate to be lazy and to practise negligently when you belong to such a noble lineage. Only with an all-out effort are you worthy to such a noble lineage. With these reflections, the enlightenment factor of effort will be aroused and become strong.

### ***8. Reflect on the Nobility of the Companions in the Holy Life***

You should reflect on the nobility of your companions in the holy life. This point concerns especially monks and nuns but is also relevant for meditators. You should understand that your companions in this practice are noble and outstanding individuals such as the Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Moggallāna who practised for many world cycles to develop their perfections (*pāramīs*). Due to their efforts, they became fully enlightened and were endowed with the supernormal powers. They were the main disciples of the Buddha.

Therefore, having such noble companions how can you allow yourself to be lazy or indolent? There is no other way than striving to do your best. With this reflection on the nobility of your companions, energy will be aroused and get stronger.

### ***9./10. Avoid the Company of Lazy Persons and Associate with Energetic Persons***

You should avoid persons who are lazy and do not want to practise meditation. You should neither stay together with such people nor should you depend on them. Instead you should associate with energetic persons because this will help strengthen the enlightenment factor of effort. Persons who are energetic not only strive themselves but they also encourage others to strive. Their example points to the way and method. Associating with energetic persons is like taking a capsule of multivitamins to increase your energy.

If you happen to be staying with a lazy person, you might catch the laziness-bug and as a result also become lazy. Just like a python that has devoured its prey, you only want to curl up and sleep. I am sure that you have experienced this for yourself.

Some meditators strive hard in their practice for the first two or three days or even for the first week. However, when they associate with lazy, uninterested, and talkative meditators, their effort slackens and their practice has many interruptions. Depressed by their difficulties, some meditators even leave the meditation centre and go home.



Some meditators do not really put effort into their practice when they start meditation; however, when they practise with meditators who really strive and put effort into their practice, they also start to become more energetic and may even stay longer than they originally intended to. Within a short span of time their mindfulness, concentration, and insight develop to a degree that is indeed amazing. Of course, this is the result of associating with energetic meditators. Avoiding lazy and indolent persons and associating with energetic persons are the causes for the arising of the enlightenment factor of effort.

### ***11. Incline the Mind to Strive Continuously***

You should incline the mind to strive continuously, so that the enlightenment factor of effort is always present. Whenever you are walking, sitting, eating, or drinking, your diligence and effort should be firm and resolute. Never let this effort weaken. It is like carrying heavy or fragile things; you have to be very careful, so you never slacken your effort. You have to strive and be energetic. You should have the intention to strive in such a way that you are able to be mindful of everything that is occurring in the present moment. Incline the mind to be diligent and practise without any breaks, no matter what arises. Reflecting like this arouses and strengthens the enlightenment factor of effort.

These are the eleven proximate causes for the enlightenment factor of effort to arise.

### ***Pīti-sambojjhaṅga: The Enlightenment Factor of Rapture***

*Pīti-sambojjhaṅga* is translated as the enlightenment factor of rapture. Other translations for *pīti* are: interest, satisfaction, or joy. Rapture is like the joy and delight of children when they are given some sweets or money. Likewise, when people get what they want or when things happen according to their wishes, they are usually very

pleased and feel rapture. However, this kind of rapture is not the rapture which is an enlightenment factor but only a mental state similar to it. As this kind of rapture is accompanied by greed (*lobha*), it is not a wholesome mental state, but an unwholesome state.

## The Characteristic of Rapture

“*Sampiyāyanalakkhaṇā*”<sup>33</sup>

Rapture has the characteristic of endearing. The gladness and delight that arises when performing wholesome deeds is a wholesome form of rapture (*pīti*). A person who performs a meritorious deed is happy and delighted, and performs it with a smiling face.

Examples for this kind of delight and gladness are: paying respect to a monk or nun, paying homage to the Buddha, listening to a Dhamma talk, or reflecting on one’s own meritorious deeds. Although this kind of delight and gladness is wholesome, it is not rapture as an enlightenment factor.

Only the delight, rapture, and gladness that arise when a meditator sees the arising and passing away of mental and physical phenomena during the practice of vipassanā meditation is what is meant by rapture as an enlightenment factor.

## The Function of Rapture

“*Pharaṇarasā*”<sup>34</sup>

Rapture has the function of pervading. Its function is to pervade the body and mind with rapture; in other words, its work is to refresh the body and mind. As a result, the meditator feels goosebumps or chills all through his or her body.

There are five kinds of rapture as explained in the commentary:<sup>35</sup>

- |                                  |                           |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. minor rapture                 | ( <i>khuddaka pīti</i> )  |
| 2. momentary rapture             | ( <i>khaṇika pīti</i> )   |
| 3. showering or flood of rapture | ( <i>okkantika pīti</i> ) |
| 4. uplifting rapture             | ( <i>ubbega pīti</i> )    |
| 5. pervading rapture             | ( <i>pharaṇa pīti</i> )   |

### ***Minor Rapture***

This kind of rapture is not strong and happens only for a short moment. A moment of joy arises, but it immediately disappears again; it does not last. It is like a flash of lightning which appears only for a very brief moment in the sky.

### ***Momentary Rapture***

Momentary rapture happens repeatedly. Moments of rapture may arise repeatedly two, three, four, or five times in certain parts of the body. However, this momentary rapture does not last for a long time; after a short time, it disappears again.

### ***Showering or Flood of Rapture***

This kind of rapture starts either in the lower or the upper part of the body and then pervades the whole body with rapture. It lasts a bit longer than the two previous kinds of rapture and the whole body is suffused with rapture. When this kind of rapture arises, the body feels refreshed and light. The meditator feels happy, and mindfulness becomes very good.

### ***Uplifting Rapture***

When this kind of rapture arises, the body or parts of it may be lifted up. The meditator experiences jerking movements of the arms or legs, or trembling of the hands or feet. Some parts of the body may shake or vibrate. Hands resting in the lap may be jolted out of the lap. When the upper part of the body or the head is bent forward, it may be straightened. In some cases, the whole body is uplifted and the meditator thinks he or she is flying.

This experience is like the waves rolling towards the shore and then breaking on the shore. In the same way, the rapturous sensations in the body come and go like waves breaking on the shore. In some cases, the body of the meditator is lifted up one or two inches from the ground, in some cases as much as eight inches.

### ***Pervading Rapture***

This kind of rapture pervades the whole body, and the meditator feels incredibly good. He or she does not want to finish his or her sitting meditation and has no desire to talk to others. He or she may not even want to go for the meals. The experience is pleasurable beyond description, so that the meditator may cease to be mindful. This pervading rapture is compared to a drop of oil that sinks into a ball of cotton and pervades the whole cotton ball with oil. Likewise, this kind of rapture pervades the whole body.

## **The Manifestation of Rapture**

*“Odagyapaccupatthānā”*<sup>36</sup>

Rapture manifests as elation. When rapture arises, the mind and body feel light. Rapture refreshes a withered mind and makes a heavy dull body feel light and agile. When meditating in the sitting or lying posture, the body feels as if it is not touching the floor or the bed at all. The body feels incredibly light. This is why the Buddha said that rapture is like Nibbāna or the deathless to a vipassanā meditator or to ‘those who know’.<sup>37</sup>

When rapture becomes really strong, the meditator feels refreshed in body and mind. There is no more laziness but only delight and happiness. In the body, all the unpleasant sensations like pain, numbness, aching, or stiff joints disappear. Some meditators even get rid of chronic diseases that they were suffering from before they took up meditation.

Through the amazing and incredible power of the enlightenment factor of rapture many illnesses are completely cured. Among the diseases that may completely disappear are: heart diseases, high

blood pressure, gastritis, dizziness, hip pain, and chronic fatigue. It is with reference to this fact that I gave this Dhamma talk the title “The *Bojjhaṅgas* – Medicine that Makes All Diseases Disappear.”

## The Proximate Cause of Rapture

The proximate cause or nutriment of rapture is “frequently giving careful attention”<sup>38</sup> or “*yonisomanasikāra bahulīkāro*”<sup>39</sup> as explained in the Pāḷi scriptures. In the commentary, eleven causes are mentioned:<sup>40</sup>

1. recollection of the attributes of the Buddha
2. recollection of the attributes of the Dhamma (the Buddha’s teaching)
3. recollection of the attributes of the Saṅgha
4. recollection of one’s own moral purity
5. recollection of one’s own generosity
6. recollection of the virtues of the *devas*
7. reflection on the peace of Nibbāna
8. avoid coarse, rough, and angry persons
9. associate with refined and loving persons
10. reflect on inspirational suttas
11. incline the mind to arouse the enlightenment factor of rapture

### *1. Recollection of the Attributes of the Buddha*

The recollection of the attributes of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*) refers to the repeated recollection of the Buddha’s virtuous attributes. When you focus your mind on the Buddha, you should reflect on the following attributes:

1. The Buddha’s virtuous conduct (*cariyaḡuṇa*)
2. The virtues of the Buddha’s body (*rūpakāyagūṇa*)
3. The virtues of the Buddha’s mind (*nāmakāyagūṇa*)

### ***The Buddha's Virtuous Conduct***

There are three kinds of virtuous conduct:

1. *lokatthacariya*: conduct for the welfare of the world
2. *ñātattthacariya*: conduct for the welfare of one's relatives
3. *buddhatthacariya*: conduct to realize the Four Noble Truths

The Bodhisatta developed this kind of virtuous and beneficial conduct in each lifetime because the way he practised was not at all ordinary. In some of his lives, he gave away his possessions, limbs, eyes, ears, or nose for the welfare of others in the world. He patiently bore both suffering and loss. Suffering greatly, he sometimes even gave away his life. In some of his lives, he gave away his possessions, parts of his body, and even his life for the welfare and happiness of his family, relatives, or friends. In other lives, he gave away his possessions, parts of his body, and his life in order to realize the Four Noble Truths and to become a Buddha.

A long time ago, four incalculable aeons and a hundred thousand worlds ago, the Bodhisatta was the son of a rich man in the town of Amaravatī. His name was Sumedhā. As his parents passed away when he was still young, an accountant looked after the immense fortune that his parents had left him. When he was old enough, he went away to study but later returned to his home after completing his studies. At that time, the accountant handed his immense inheritance over to him, saying that this fortune had been accumulated by his parents, by his grandparents, by his great-grandparents and so forth, going back seven generations. After Sumedhā received his inheritance, he went to a quiet place in the upper storey of his house and reflected deeply on the fact that his parents, grandparents, and his family members had all died, leaving only their accumulated things behind.

“Oh, living beings become wizened and old; they get sick, and some of them die absent-mindedly. After death they are reborn, and if they fall into one of the lower realms, they suffer greatly. I, myself, am also not yet free from these kinds of sufferings. There must definitely be a state of happiness and peace free from this suffering. Just as there is heat, there is cold. As there is white, there is black. As there

is low, there is high. As there is good, there is bad. As there is suffering, there is happiness. So too, as there is ageing, sickness, and death, there must be a state that is free from ageing, sickness, and death. I will go and search for this state that is free from ageing, sickness, and death until I have found it.

If something that is obvious cannot be seen, the thing should not be blamed. The person who is unable to see it should be blamed. My parents, grandparents, and relatives were able to accumulate a fortune, but they could not take it with them. Not even one cent of this fortune stayed with its owners. However, I will take everything with me.” As a result, he decided to give away all his possessions.

You have probably noticed that Sumedhā said that he was going to take everything with him. This actually means he intended to practise generosity. When you offer things, then you acquire merit by offering these things. This merit dwells within the body-mind continuum of our repeated existences and results in our being endowed with many possessions in every rebirth. It was referring to this that Sumedhā said that he was going to take everything with him.

His wish to search for that state that was free from ageing, sickness, and death was so strong that he gave away all his wealth. He had his boxes of gold, silver, and money opened and announced that everyone could come and take whatever he or she needed. After he had given away all his possessions, he left for the Himalayas and became a hermit.

Within seven days of practising meditation, he had attained the absorptions (*jhānas*) together with the supernormal powers.

Although he enjoyed these achievements, he had not yet accomplished his goal of finding the end of ageing, disease, and death. However, the fact that his perfections were highly developed and that he was endowed with supernormal powers meant that he only needed a small clue in order to attain Nibbāna; Nibbāna was within reach of the Bodhisatta.

For many years, he enjoyed these supernormal powers. Sometimes he used them to fly to another place. After many years had passed, a Buddha called Dīpaṅkarā Buddha arose in the world. The people of the town of Rammā had invited the Buddha for a visit. After he

accepted their invitation, they started to repair the road on which the Buddha would travel on. The Bodhisatta saw this as he flew through the air. To discover what they were doing, he descended to earth and found out that the Buddha would be travelling along this road.

When he heard the word 'Buddha,' his rapture and happiness were so intense that he fainted. When he regained consciousness, he asked the workers for permission to help repair the road.

After the people assigned him a part of the road, the Bodhisatta immediately began to work. Although he could have used his supernormal powers to finish the work immediately and without the slightest effort, he did not do so. To benefit more from the work, he undertook this heavy work himself, just like everybody else. With a spade, he dug the earth and carried it to other places to fill up the muddy holes. Although he worked very hard and sweat ran down his body, he could not finish his assigned part. When the Buddha Dīpankarā and his entourage of four hundred thousand arahants arrived, there was still one muddy part of the road that the Bodhisatta had not yet finished.

When the Bodhisatta saw the Buddha's radiant appearance, he was filled with awe and was incredibly happy. To cover the muddy part of the road, he lay down on the earth and offered his body as a bridge for the Buddha and the arahants.

When the Buddha was very close and stood close to his head, the Bodhisatta reflected, "I have no family and live completely on my own. If I really wanted to attain Nibbāna, I could become an arahant and be free from all defilements. However, I have the power and ability to rescue other sentient beings. Therefore, it is not right for me to ignore these other sentient beings who are overwhelmed with suffering and only liberate myself."

This wish to only liberate oneself can be compared to a person who is travelling alone on a big ship. Seeing another ship that is damaged and actually sinking, this person does not rescue even one of the many persons on the sinking ship.

Sumadhā's respect for Buddha Dīpankarā was boundless, so he offered the Buddha the five lotus flowers that he had received from a young lady named Sumittā. Renouncing the attainment of arahantship in this life, he made a wish to become a Buddha in the future.



Suddenly, Buddha Dīpankarā stood still just before he reached the head of Sumedhā and reflected on the future. In that moment, he realized that the hermit would become a Bodhisatta, the Buddha-to-be, and said, “Look at this hermit who is making this bridge with his body, thereby manifesting his noble conduct. After four incalculable aeons and a hundred thousand worlds, this hermit will become a Buddha by the name of Gotama.”

In the many lifetimes after hearing this prophesy, the Bodhisatta developed all the qualities necessary to become a Buddha. He perfected the ten perfections and the five great renunciations [*pañca mahāpariccāga*: renouncing one’s material possessions, one’s children, one’s wife, one’s limbs and organs, and one’s life] whenever he encountered a situation conducive to the fulfilment of that particular quality.

You might have heard the following stories. In the Sasapaṇḍita Jātaka,<sup>41</sup> we are told that he gave away his life when he was a rabbit. In other Jātaka stories, we can read that in his life as King Sivi,<sup>42</sup> he gave away his eyes. In his life as King Vessantarā,<sup>43</sup> every day he gave away great sums of his wealth and possessions and still was not yet satisfied with his generosity. So he gave away his royal white elephant. At that time, a white elephant possessed great power. Other kings from the neighbouring kingdoms did not dare to attack a country that possessed a royal white elephant. Its presence ensured that the people in that particular country were healthy and well. They did not have to fear any dangers, and even the weather took its regular course. The farmers had abundant crops and people’s businesses flourished.

After the king had given away the royal white elephant, which was the source of the country’s welfare and prosperity, the people were upset and chased the king away. The king left the country on a horse cart accompanied by his wife Maddī, his son Jālī, and his daughter Kaṇhājina. As the four of them were leaving the country on their horse cart, they were asked for the horse and the cart. After the king generously gave them away, they had to continue their journey on foot.

While they were walking through a forest, they came across a Brahmin called Jūjakā who asked for the king’s son and daughter. The king did not hesitate to offer his children. Soon after that, King Sakka (the king of the *devas*) came to ask for the king’s wife, the

queen. The king offered her without hesitation. The Bodhisatta's conduct was indeed amazing and astonishing. The Buddha whom we take refuge in was not only worthy of respect as the Buddha, but also as the Bodhisatta because his conduct and practice to become a Buddha were really virtuous and exceptional.

When you reflect on the Buddha's virtuous conduct in this way, the enlightenment factor of rapture will arise.

### ***The Virtues of the Buddha's Body***

In his final existence, the Bodhisatta became a Buddha. In this last life, he reaped the benefits of developing the perfections during four incalculable aeons and a hundred thousand worlds. If he had not experienced the benefits in this last existence, everything would have been in vain. His practice would not have made any sense. However, now all the benefits had manifested. In addition, in his final existence as the prince Siddhatta, he was very handsome. Although his appearance surpassed the appearance of other humans, he did not match the appearance of *devas*.

He was endowed with the thirty-two major and the eighty minor marks of a Great Man and all the marks of a noble person.<sup>44</sup> The colour of his skin had a golden hue, and his lips had a natural red. The Buddha's jet-black pupils were embedded in clear white eyeballs. His teeth were unstained and neatly arranged in an even line. His fingers, toes, arms, and legs were straight, slender, supple, and well-proportioned. After he had become a Buddha and was free from all the defilements, he became even more gracious. On account of these qualities, the minds of beings who respected and worshipped the Buddha became filled with rapture so that the fires of all the defilements were extinguished.

When Ceylonese culture flourished, there lived an elder by the name of Phussadeva who worshipped a Buddha statue that had been created by Māra. Whenever the monk worshipped the statue, strong rapture arose. He observed that rapture and realized the characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*), thereby becoming an arahant. This

may seem odd, so to help you understand, I will elaborate on this point.

Venerable Phussadeva used to go and sweep the ground around the big pagoda that was near his monastery every morning before going on almsround. When he had finished sweeping, he sat down on the platform and practised *buddhānussati*, the recollection of the Buddha's attributes.

One day when he had finished sweeping and was sitting on the platform of the pagoda practising *buddhānussati*, an old cow stepped onto the platform. The cow wandered around the platform leaving its smelly marks of droppings and urine on the platform. Venerable Phussadeva cleaned the platform again, but as it was time to go on alms round, he had no further time to practise *buddhānussati*. On the following day the same thing happened when a big monkey came up to the platform and soiled it with droppings and urine. Once again Venerable Phussadeva had to clean the platform, and therefore, had less time to practise *buddhānussati*. On the third day, a very ugly man came up to the platform. Although Venerable Phussadeva had been living there for a long time, he had never seen such an ugly man, so the thought arose in his mind that this ugly man might be Māra in disguise. He asked him straight to his face, "Are you Māra?" Unable to lie, Māra said, "Yes, I am Māra."

"I am very happy to meet you, Māra," replied the monk. He was neither upset about Māra's appearance nor was he afraid. Actually, Venerable Phussadeva was really pleased to meet Māra, so he said, "In the scriptures, I have read that you have met the Buddha several times and that you are quite powerful. Therefore, I ask you, Māra, to create an image of the Buddha for me." Māra replied, "I will try my best to create this image, but it will not be an exact likeness." When Māra had created the image of the Buddha, Venerable Phussadeva was filled with great joy. He sat down and paid respect to the image of the Buddha created by Māra.

He reflected on this image and on the attributes of the Buddha, "Even though Māra is full of defilements, he created this wonderful image of the Buddha who is completely free of defilements. The Buddha is omniscient and knows everything as it really is. How much more wonderful must the real Buddha be!" As he reflected in this way, he became filled with rapture. Then as he mindfully observed this rapture, right there on the spot he became an arahant.

What I want to stress here is the fact that the body of the Buddha is so incredibly gracious that even Māra with his mighty power was unable to create an exact image of it. Reflecting on the graciousness of the Buddha's body amounts to practising *buddhānussati*. When you are filled with respect and reverence for the Buddha's gracious body, rapture will arise.

### ***The Virtues of the Buddha's Mind***

To respect the Buddha's mind (*nāmakāya*) means that you respect his consciousness (*citta*) and the accompanying mental factors (*cetasika*). Therefore, you have to reflect about the Buddha's mind that dwells in the incredibly gracious body of the Buddha. Reflect about the omniscience and great compassion that the Buddha's mind is endowed with.

The Buddha's mind is completely free from the one thousand five hundred defilements. With the path knowledge of arahantship he cut through the defilements. His mind is extremely pure and clear. As we still have some time, I will elaborate on this point.

In the town of Bārāṇasī, there lived a rich Brahmin by the name of Māgaṇḍiya who had a beautiful daughter. Her name was also Māgaṇḍiya. And, the name of the Brahmin's wife was also Māgaṇḍiya. Because of his daughter's beauty everybody was very friendly with him. Every day many men from all walks of life came and asked for his daughter's hand. To show their sincerity, they all came with a present but the Brahmin rejected all of them saying that they were not good enough for his daughter.

One day the Brahmin and his wife were on their way to the forest to perform a fire offering. As they were about to enter the forest, they came across the Buddha. Because the Brahmin had never seen such a gracious man during his whole life, he carefully looked at him from head to toe. He had to admit that this man was extraordinarily handsome and his demeanour extremely gracious. However, he did not know that he was the Buddha.

The Brahmin asked this man to wait for a short moment and then murmured to his wife, "My dear, go and call our beautiful daughter. Tell her to adorn herself with jewellery and flowers and put on some

nice clothes because here we have met a man who is worthy of our daughter. Go quickly and bring her here!”

The wife did as she was told but when she came back with her daughter the Buddha was not at that place anymore. They only saw the Buddha’s footprints. Seeing these footprints on the ground the wife said to her husband, “The person who left these footprints is a very noble and extraordinary person, this person has become free from all the defilements and is actually a Buddha. So, let it be! This kind of person has no more interest in such affairs, neither in regard to women nor to female *devas*.”

But the Brahmin did not yet give up. He looked around in all the directions and finally saw the Buddha sitting under a tree not far from where they were. He called his wife and daughter and quickly went up to the Buddha. The Brahmin gave his daughter to the Buddha saying that she would be his servant.

The Buddha replied, “Brahmin, after I had become a Buddha I was sitting under the Bodhitree. At that time the three beautiful bewitching daughters of Māra, Taṇhā, Rati, and Rāga, came and tried to seduce me. Even when they displayed all their charm, there was not even a trace of lust in my mind. And now that you present me your daughter who is actually nothing more than a heap of filth and dirt, I would not even touch her with my toe.”

The Brahmin and his wife understood the Buddha’s profound words and delighted in his reply. As they listened further, they became *anāgāmīs*. However, their daughter Māgaṇḍiya was very conceited about her beauty, and so these words were like a lance piercing her chest. She felt deeply hurt by the Buddha.

What I want to highlight here is the fact that the Buddha’s mind was completely free from lust, craving, or any other defilements. This state was not a pretence, but was genuine and pure.

When you reflect on the attributes of the Buddha in this way, it is sure that rapture will arise. For this reason it is said that *buddhānussati* is a cause for the enlightenment factor of rapture to arise.

Next, I will explain how the Buddha’s mind was completely free from hatred (*dosa*). After hearing the Buddha’s words, the Brahmin’s daughter Māgaṇḍiya developed a grudge against the Buddha and

imagined doing various evil deeds to him. Later she became one of the chief queens of King Udena. She gathered a group of evil-minded people around her and told them to abuse the Buddha and speak ill of him while on his alms round in the city.

Venerable Ānanda who was walking behind the Buddha could not stand it anymore and said to the Buddha, “These people are devoid of any common sense. Although there is no reason to do so, they abuse and accuse the Buddha. Please do not continue the alms round.” The Buddha was not upset or angry at all and he said to Ānanda, “Ānanda, if I should not continue with the alms round on this road, which road should I take?” “Take the road over there.” As they were walking down the other road the Buddha was still abused, and so asked again what he should do. Venerable Ānanda said that he should take yet another road.

However, this time the Buddha said to Venerable Ānanda, “Ānanda, that’s not the way to do it. Wise persons must forbear everything. These people use abusive words and speak ill because they do not understand. Let them abuse me! Ānanda, wise and virtuous persons solve the problems right there where they arise.” The Buddha did not get upset or angry at all.

Although Venerable Devadatta tried several times to kill the Buddha, he did not get angry at Devadatta nor did his *mettā* diminish in any way. And when the murderer Angulimāla ran after him with a big knife, the Buddha showed no signs of anger, but was full of *mettā*. Even in that difficult and dangerous situation the Buddha was not the least bit afraid and his mind was not shaken.

At another time, the killer elephant Nālāgīri was charging the Buddha in order to trample him to death. The Buddha was not afraid and did not get angry at the elephant. His *mettā* was as strong for the elephant as it was for his son Rāhula.

At one time a group of sectarians hired a beautiful attractive young woman called Ciñcamāna who spread all different kinds of rumours about the Buddha’s immoral behaviour. However, the Buddha was not affected or demoralized by all the accusations, blame, or wrongs that he had to put up with and his *mettā* remained firm and strong as always.

Although the Buddha had to face these many adverse situations, there was no fear or anger in him, nor was his mind shaken at all. This means that he was completely free from all kinds of *dosa* (anger, hatred, ill will, resentment, or fear).

The fact that the Buddha's mind is entirely free from *dosa* is one of his noble attributes, and makes him worthy of respect. Reflecting on this aspect of the Buddha's mind is also part of reflecting on *nāmakāya*, and it causes joy and gladness to arise - which arouses the enlightenment factor of rapture.

As this Dhamma talk will need to end soon, there is no more time to explain all the other causes for the enlightenment factor of rapture. So I will just mention the second to the last cause, the reflection on inspiring suttas (*pasādaniyasuttanta paccavekkhanā*). This kind of reflection includes contemplating certain suttas, reading them, or chanting them. It makes your mind highly pleased, joyful, fresh, and cheerful. It is especially helpful during your meditation practice at times when you are bored, feel weary, have a lot of worries, or want to go home.

The following suttas or books are suitable to reflect on: Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Dhamma,<sup>45</sup> The Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness,<sup>46</sup> Paṭṭhāna (7<sup>th</sup> book of the Abhidhamma), or the *Parittas* (protective suttas).<sup>47</sup> Otherwise you might reflect on passages that you have read in books about the Buddha's teaching. When you are in a secluded place where you will not disturb other meditators, read or chant these passages aloud. With this, the enlightenment factor of rapture will arise.

Let this be enough as regards to the causes of the enlightenment factor of rapture. The time is up now. If rapture will arise by reflecting on their causes, then you should mindfully observe the rapture.

May all of you be able to practise meditation and attain Nibbāna by realizing path knowledge and fruition knowledge.

May all beings realize the Dhamma and live in peace and happiness.

## FOURTH DAY

### ***Passaddhi-sambojjhaṅga*: The Enlightenment Factor of Tranquillity**

#### **The Characteristic of Tranquillity**

“*Upasamalakkhaṇo*”<sup>48</sup>

*Passaddhi* has the characteristic of tranquillity. Its nature is tranquillity and calmness. Tranquillity is divided into two groups:

1. *kāyapassaddhi* tranquillity of mental factors (*cetasikas*)
2. *cittapassaddhi* tranquillity of consciousness or mind (*citta*)

When the mental factors and consciousness are tranquil, then the body also becomes tranquil. Each time you perform a meritorious deed, this factor of tranquillity arises. It arises whenever you perform a generous deed, keep the precepts, or help in a meditation centre or monastery. However, in these cases, it is not very clear. It becomes obvious for meditators when they reach the insight knowledge of arising and disappearing, knowing the arising and passing away of all the mental and physical phenomena. At that time, the noting is easy and effortless, and meditators do not get tired. Both the body and mind are calm and tranquil. The previous misery and pain that one has experienced disappears, so the body and mind are tranquil. This is the enlightenment factor of tranquillity.

For example, suppose you are walking up a mountain path in order to



get to the top. As you walk quite quickly, after some time the body gets tired and starts aching. As a result of this, the mind starts suffering too. All you want to do is to put down the heavy pack that you are carrying. If you could take rest in the cool shade of a tree and enjoy the beautiful scenery, all the tiredness and aches would disappear and your body and mind would feel calm and refreshed. Then your energy would be restored and you could continue to walk up the mountain.

It is the same when you practise meditation. People who have just started to meditate and are not yet very familiar with the practice get easily tired because their mindfulness and concentration have not yet developed. They may experience pain, aches, stiffness, or numbness and so they do not want to continue with their practice. All they want to do is to leave the centre and go home. If they persevere with the practice, after four or five days they will be able to see the arising and passing away of mental and physical phenomena. With the mindful observation of the arising and passing away of phenomena, the enlightenment factor of tranquillity will arise.

Because of tranquillity both the body and mind become tranquil and calm. The meditators feel very happy and they experience strong joy and elation. All the tiredness and physical suffering as well as the unhappiness, boredom, and weariness of the beginning have now completely disappeared. With the absence of worry and exhaustion, both the body and mind are tranquil.

Meditators who do not have much theoretical knowledge may even think that they have attained Nibbāna. Actually, it is just tranquillity. Meditators who have experienced this state of tranquillity due to their effort know and understand that it is just tranquillity. With appropriate effort, meditators can experience this state of tranquillity after about four or five days. Without proper effort, meditators cannot experience this state even if they practise for one month.

When the enlightenment factors of rapture and tranquillity become strong and powerful, chronic diseases that the meditators have suffered for a long time become less severe, and in some cases even completely disappear. Many times meditators have told me that their heart disease, high blood pressure, or diabetes have become less severe or vanished entirely. The title of this series of Dhamma talks refers to this fact.

## The Function of Tranquillity

*“Kāyacittadarathanimmaddanarasā”<sup>49</sup>*

The function of tranquillity is to suppress the heat both in the mental factors and consciousness.

In other words, its function is to relieve or crush the disturbances and agitation of body and mind. Just as a big elephant crushes everything that it steps on so does tranquillity crush and suppress the heat in body and mind. A person who steps in the cool shade after having been out in the hot sun experiences coolness and calmness. The heat has been dissolved and does not exist anymore. Likewise all mental heat disappears when tranquillity arises. The mind and body become cool and calm. This is the function or work of the enlightenment factor of tranquillity.

## The Manifestation of Tranquillity

*“Kāyacittānaṃ aparipphandanabhūtasītibhāvapaccupaṭṭhānā”<sup>50</sup>*

The manifestation of tranquillity is non-agitation of body and mind or calm and peacefulness.

Meditators experience this state as stillness and peacefulness; mind and body are not agitated – so they think that this tranquillity is Nibbāna. Actually, this is not so far off. Tranquillity as a factor of enlightenment can really be very calm and peaceful. It is a happiness that has no equal to ordinary worldly happiness.

For meditators it is important that they practise until they experience at least the enlightenment factors of rapture and tranquillity. They are important because it is only with the arising of rapture and tranquillity that the mind gets well concentrated. And only with a concentrated mind can insight knowledge, path knowledge, and fruition knowledge arise. So it is important to make an effort in your practice in order for these factors of rapture and tranquillity to arise.

Just as these factors of rapture and tranquillity are essential to attain

the supramundane states (*lokuttara*), they are also greatly needed to complete any worldly affairs. Only when the factors of joy or gladness and tranquillity are present to a greater or lesser degree is there the wish to carry out these matters, allowing you to put effort into your endeavours. This applies to your studies, your business, your work, or your household chores. With effort, you will be able to be successful in everything you do.

Even though you might earn one thousand dollars every day, if there is no joy and tranquillity regarding your work, you do not really want to carry it out or you might neglect it altogether. When there is joy and tranquillity, you carry out your work, even if it is tiring and demanding. Some workers have to work so hard that by only looking at them, one feels pity for them. In spite of their heavy work they sing all day long. They do not feel their tiredness. They are able to sing in the midst of their heavy work because of the happiness that pervades and infuses the mind and body. This happiness is based on the factors of rapture and tranquillity.

What I want to stress here is the fact that the factors of rapture and tranquillity are needed in everything we do. Therefore, you need to arouse these factors when they are not present. Reflect about the causes for the arising of tranquillity.

## The Proximate Cause of Tranquillity

The proximate cause or nutriment of tranquillity is "frequently giving careful attention"<sup>51</sup> or "*yonisomanasikāra bahulīkāro*"<sup>52</sup> as explained in the Pāli scriptures. Wise attention here means that you should reflect on topics that favour the arising of tranquillity.

In the commentary, seven causes are mentioned:<sup>53</sup>

1. suitable food
2. suitable weather
3. suitable posture and living conditions
4. a balanced effort in practice
5. avoid persons whose actions and speech are harsh and rude
6. associate with calm and gentle persons

7. incline the mind to arouse the enlightenment factor of tranquillity

Take notice of these seven causes and apply them as necessary.

## ***Samādhi-sambojjhaṅga*: The Enlightenment Factor of Concentration**

*Samādhi-sambojjhaṅga* commonly refers to a concentrated state of mind.

### **The Characteristic of Concentration**

“*Avikkhepalakkhaṇo*”<sup>54</sup>

Concentration has the characteristic of non-distraction.

When concentration arises, the mind does not go here and there anymore. The mind is not restlessly wandering from one object to another, but firmly stays on a single object. The concentrated mind is of the nature to stick to the object in the same way that something tacky will remain on a wall once it is thrown there. Or like a heavy rice bag firmly rests on the ground without wobbling once it has been dropped. The characteristic of concentration is to be focussed on whatever object you are mindful of; it is not distracted from the object that you are observing.

### **The Function of Concentration**

“*Cittacetāsikānaṃ sampiṇḍanaraso*”<sup>55</sup>

The function of concentration is to unite the associated states.

To unite the mind is the work of concentration. Those meditators who have not yet developed concentration (or who are devoid of concentration) have minds that are like dust or rice flour. When the wind blows, the dust or rice flour gets dispersed in all directions. Likewise, the unconcentrated mind wanders from one object to another. Therefore, the mind is agitated and restless; there is no

stillness at all.

The mind of a person who has developed concentration is collected and stays on one object. The mind is completely focussed on the object or entirely absorbed in it without going out to other objects. It stays on or sticks to the object in the same way that dust or rice flour sticks together when mixed with water. When concentration is developed, the mind along with its mental factors is united and firmly stays on the object.

## The Manifestation of Concentration

*“Upasamapaccupaṭṭhāno”*<sup>56</sup>

The manifestation of concentration is stillness.

The mind is completely still and rests motionless on the object just like the flame of a candle that is lit in a place where there is no wind blowing.

The enlightenment factor of concentration is another factor that is needed everywhere. Only when the mind is still and calm can you be interested in and devoted to your work or duty such as your business, politics, or other matters. Only with interest will you give yourself fully to these things. This complete devotion is needed to carry out a task to its very end or completion. Then you will be successful and thrive. If you lack a concentrated mind, and so are not interested in and devoted to your work or duty, you might not finish your job and, therefore, you will not be successful.

In regard to meritorious deeds such as practising generosity, keeping the precepts, or doing volunteer work you also need a unified mind in order to successfully complete your work.

For meditators the factor of concentration plays an even more important role because in order to clearly know things as they are, the mind needs to stay on whatever object it observes. When the rising movement of the abdomen arises, you have to observe it as ‘rising,’ and to be able to do so the mind needs to be focussed on the rising movement. When the abdomen is falling, you have to be mindful of the falling movement. You can only do it if the mind is

concentrated on this falling movement. When you observe the lifting, pushing, and dropping movement of the foot during the walking meditation, you have to observe it as ‘lifting, pushing, dropping.’ Only when the mind stays on these movements, can you be mindful of them. And likewise you have to observe the movements of the arm or the whole body as ‘stretching,’ ‘bending,’ ‘standing up,’ or ‘sitting down.’ To mindfully observe these movements the mind needs to stay firmly on the respective movements. When feelings arise, you must be mindful of these feelings. This is only possible when the mind is focussed on them.

The ability to firmly stay on the arisen object is the nature of concentration. Only with concentration is it possible to truly understand the object, that is mental and physical phenomena.

That is why the Buddha urged the monks to develop concentration: only with a concentrated mind can the impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*) of all mental and physical phenomena be clearly understood as they really are. As the Buddha said, “It is a natural law for one with a concentrated mind to know and see things as they really are.”<sup>57</sup> It is absolutely impossible to understand and realize the characteristics of these mental and physical phenomena with a scattered mind. It is only with the right understanding of mental and physical phenomena that the defilements can be extinguished. Without proper understanding, it is impossible to overcome the defilements; and only with the extinction of the defilements will suffering cease. With the cessation of suffering, there is happiness and peace.

When the defilements are not extinguished, suffering does not cease. Without the cessation of suffering, you cannot get happiness and peace even if you hope for it or make a wish to attain it. For this reason it is said in the *Milindapañha* that concentration is the main point of all meritorious deeds.<sup>58</sup>

For example: the chief or the leader of all the soldiers, horses, elephants, and chariots that are fighting on the battlefield is the king. All the soldiers have to carry out the orders of the king. In the same way, concentration is the main factor when performing any meritorious deed. The mind needs to be inclined towards concentration; only when concentration is present, does wholesomeness arise so that one will be successful. Therefore, you

need to make an effort to arouse concentration.

## The Proximate Cause of Concentration

As mentioned by the Buddha, the proximate cause or nutriment of concentration is “frequently giving careful attention”<sup>59</sup> or “*yonisomanasikāra bahulīkāro*.”<sup>60</sup> In the commentary, eleven causes are mentioned:<sup>61</sup>

1. cleanliness of possessions
2. balancing the mental faculties
3. skillfulness in working with the object of concentration meditation (applicable to *jhāna* practice)
4. uplifting the mind when it is depressed
5. calming the mind when it is excited
6. making the mind fresh and cheerful when it is withered
7. when the mental faculties are balanced, observing the object carefully
8. avoiding distracted persons
9. associating with concentrated persons
10. reflecting on the absorptions (*jhānas*) and liberation (*vimokkha*)
11. inclining the mind to arouse the enlightenment factor of concentration

It is very important that the meditators precisely understand the causes for concentration to arise. However, the explanations I have offered just now are enough for you to understand the general nature of the enlightenment factor of concentration.

## ***Upekkhā-sambhojjhaṅga*: The Enlightenment Factor of Equanimity**

*Upekkhā-sambhojjhaṅga* is commonly translated as the

enlightenment factor of equanimity. When equanimity is this strong, the meditator does not need to make a special effort to be mindful: the noting is balanced and goes easily. This is a state of exquisitely balanced ease where lack is filled in and excess is reduced. When expressed in Dhamma terms, it is the mental factor of *tatramajjhataṭṭā*, neutrality of mind or ‘there in the middle.’

## The Characteristic of Equanimity

“*Samavāhitalakkhaṇā*”<sup>62</sup>

Equanimity has the characteristic of balancing.

Equanimity balances consciousness and the mental factors, preventing the mind from falling to one side or the other. Equanimity keeps the mind in the middle, in a balanced state.

To give you an example: it is like a farmer who easily drives a good ox-cart on a smooth road. The two oxen pull evenly. The load on the cart is evenly distributed so that the farmer does not need to put in a lot of effort in order to prevent one ox from pulling too strongly or the other ox from not pulling enough: he can hold the reins lightly and drive the cart easily. In the same way, the meditator’s noting goes easily and the mind rests in a balanced and equanimous state.

In the example just mentioned, because of the skill of the farmer, the two oxen pull the cart evenly. No extra effort on the part of the farmer must be made. Likewise for meditators, it is due to the power of equanimity that the mental factors and consciousness are balanced, neither lacking nor being excessive.

## The Function of Equanimity

“*Pakkhapātupacchedanarasā*”<sup>63</sup>

Equanimity has the function to prevent deficiency and excess, or to prevent partiality.

Equanimity is impartial; it does not lean to one side or the other. If any one mental factor is excessive, *upekkhā* will reduce it. If a mental factor becomes diminished, then *upekkhā* will raise it. The enlightenment factor of equanimity stays in the middle and balances



consciousness and the mental factors, so that none of them are either excessive or lacking. Although equanimity acts to balance consciousness and the mental factors, there is no excessive effort needed to do this. The mind is in a state of ease and comfort.

## The Manifestation of Equanimity

“*Majjhatabhāvapaccupaṭṭhānā*”<sup>64</sup>

The manifestation of equanimity is a state of neutrality or balance. This state of neutrality and mental balance is obvious to the meditators. It can be compared to the beam of a pair of scales. If nothing is placed on either pan, the beam rests horizontally. Likewise, equanimity rests balanced in the middle.

The nature of equanimity becomes very clear to meditators who practise vipassanā meditation. When the meditation practice goes well, the noting goes as if by itself without any effort, and the mind is well balanced. It becomes especially obvious for those meditators who have attained the insight knowledge of equanimity (*saṅkhārupekkhā ñāṇa*). At this stage, mindfulness, concentration, and insight are very strong, and the meditators do not need to make any effort to observe objects: they seem to arise automatically by themselves. They are able to observe them easily without making any effort, and the noting mind is concurrent with each arising object. Meditators feel as if they are just sitting there, not doing anything.

For some meditators, the momentum of their equanimous noting lasts for ten or fifteen minutes, for others it can last for even half an hour or one hour. Their meditation goes very well, and they feel happy and comfortable. This is the nature of the enlightenment factor of equanimity.

In the commentary<sup>65</sup> and in the Visuddhimagga,<sup>66</sup> ten kinds of equanimity are mentioned:

1. *chaḷaṅgupekkhā*                      six-fold equanimity
2. *brahmavihārupekkhā*              equanimity as a Divine Abode

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 3. <i>bojjhaṅgupekkhā</i>     | equanimity as an enlightenment factor               |
| 4. <i>tatramajjhātupekkhā</i> | equanimity as specific neutrality                   |
| 5. <i>jhānupekkhā</i>         | equanimity of <i>jhāna</i>                          |
| 6. <i>pārisuddhupekkhā</i>    | equanimity of purification                          |
| 7. <i>vipassanūpekkhā</i>     | equanimity about insight                            |
| 8. <i>saṅkhārupekkhā</i>      | equanimity about formations                         |
| 9. <i>viriyupekkhā</i>        | equanimity of energy                                |
| 10. <i>vedanupekkhā</i>       | equanimity as a feeling (neither pleasure nor pain) |

### ***Chalāṅgupekkhā***

*Chalāṅgupekkhā* refers to the equanimity with regard to forms seen by the eye, sounds heard by the ear, odours smelled by the nose, tastes tasted by the tongue, touching sensations experienced by the body, and thoughts experienced by the mind. Constant awareness prevents the mind from developing desire or aversion and so the mind remains neutral and impartial. This is called *chalāṅgupekkhā*, the equanimity with regard to the six sense-doors.

You might object that it is impossible to experience any form, sound, smell, taste, touching sensation, or thought without reacting with either liking and joy or anger and ill will. This objection is natural. For those people who are not mindful of the objects arising at the six sense-doors, or those who have not yet reached this stage of sharp and penetrating mindfulness, it is something that they have only imagined or read about in books. So they might conclude that such a state is not actually possible. For people with such an attitude practice is not easy.

But for those meditators whose mindfulness is very sharp and continuous, it is possible to observe any form, sound, smell, taste, touching sensation, or thought without reacting with greed or anger. This happens especially at the stage of the insight knowledge of equanimity. Almost every diligent meditator can experience this state when he or she has developed equanimity.

So you need to practise the right way or method in order to attain this stage. Try it out for yourself! When you reach that stage, you will

experience for yourself that there is just seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking. This experience is not accompanied by any greed or anger. You are just aware of the objects that arise at the six sense-doors.

Once you have attained arahantship, the experience is very clear and distinct. Those who have become arahants through correct and systematic practice do not experience any greed, anger, or other defilements when they see a form, hear a sound, smell an odour, taste a taste, touch a tangible object, or experience a thought.

A big mountain does not shake or tremble the least bit even if a heavy storm is blowing from all directions. Likewise, the mind of an arahant is completely free from any storms caused by greed, anger, or any other defilements. Whatever objects arise, or with whatever worldly conditions he or she is confronted, the arahant's mind stays equanimous and neutral. The mind rests in a state of calm and peace. Diligent meditators who have attained the insight knowledge of equanimity toward all formations experience a peaceful and happy state of mind that is close to the peace and happiness experienced by an arahant. These meditators are able to just rest in the knowing of the seeing, hearing, etc. without any joy or aversion arising. The mind is perfectly balanced and equanimous. These virtuous meditators have reached a very good stage! At a time like the present, when the Buddha's teaching is available, you should make an effort to at least attain this stage of insight knowledge.

### ***Brahmavihārupekkhā***

*Brahmavihārupekkhā* refers to equanimity (*upekkhā*) as one of the four Divine Abidings: loving-kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekkhā*). The practice of loving-kindness (*mettā*) is the cultivation of these four wishes:

*Sabbe sattā averā hontu*

May all living beings be free from danger and enmity.

*Abyāpajjā hontu*

May they be free from mental suffering.

*Anīghā hontu*

May they be free from  
physical suffering.

*Sukhīattānaṃ pariharantu*

May they joyfully take care  
of themselves.

When you cultivate loving-kindness, you can do it for all living beings or for any specific person. It can be developed in any posture, be it while sitting, standing, walking, or lying down. It can also be cultivated while doing work or general activities.

For example, you can cultivate loving-kindness while taking your meal by mentally reciting, “May all living beings be free from danger and enmity. May they be free from mental suffering. May they be free from physical suffering. May they joyfully take care of themselves.”

The practice of compassion (*karuṇā*) is the cultivation of the wish:

*Dukkhā muccantu*

May they be free from suffering and  
misery.

When we see living beings overcome with suffering or feeling miserable, we feel compassion for them and we want them to be free from that suffering as quickly as possible. Repeatedly cultivating this wish amounts to developing compassion (*karuṇā*).

The practice of sympathetic joy (*muditā*) is the cultivation of the wish:

*Yathāladdhasampattito māvigacchantu*

May they not be separated from their acquired wealth.

When we see living beings who are wealthy and affluent, we wish them not to be deprived of their wealth and luxury and that it may not be reduced. We wish that they will continue to be wealthy and prosperous. We develop the wish that their wealth may increase and multiply. Repeatedly cultivating this wish amounts to developing sympathetic joy (*muditā*).

This is indeed an exquisite mental state! Without spending any money, you acquire a lot of merit. It makes both you and the other person happy. It contributes to success and prosperity - not only in this world, but also throughout the *samsāric* cycle of repeated births and deaths. Those who frequently develop sympathetic joy are completely free from dangers and obstacles and loved by both humans and *devas*.

But most people cannot rejoice in other's wealth and prosperity. Instead, they get jealous. As a result, they experience mental and physical suffering, are bound to encounter many dangers, after death fall into the lower realms, or else will be reborn as a poor and destitute human being.

The practice of equanimity (*upekkhā*) is the contemplation:

<i>Sabbe sattā kammaṣakā</i>	All living beings are the heirs of their deeds ( <i>kamma</i> ).
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All living beings fare according to their deeds (*kamma*); their deeds follow them. Causes produce their respective effects. Repeatedly contemplating this fact amounts to develop equanimity.

When you meet a living being, you should associate with and help this being with a heart full of loving-kindness (*mettā*). Support and assist this living being with compassion (*karuṇā*). With a heart full of sympathetic joy (*muditā*) help somebody along and be an ally. If one's association with others cannot be rooted in these three qualities (*mettā*, *karuṇā*, and *muditā*), then it becomes necessary to develop equanimity by reflecting on the fact that all living beings are the heirs of their *kamma*. This leads to a greater degree of calmness, stillness, and stability in the mind.

The qualities of loving-kindness, compassion, and sympathetic joy are good qualities indeed. But as there is still sympathy and concern, the mind does not get completely calm, still, and stable.

In cultivating loving-kindness, exertion is necessary in order to wish for the welfare of living beings. In the case of compassion, whenever we see those who are suffering, we feel compassion, wishing them to be free from their pain; this also requires some exertion. Likewise for

sympathetic joy, one needs to make effort if one is to cultivate the wish that the good fortune of others may continue or increase. That is why a complete stillness or stability of the mind cannot be attained.

Some people might take care of a sick person with loving-kindness and compassion, but when the outcome is not what they imagined it to be, they get upset and angry. And if the care-givers verbally or physically act out that anger, the two parties might not want to see or speak to each other anymore.

It sometimes happens that people end up in custody or prison because their speech or action is based on heedlessness. These are indeed unpleasant experiences, but they can only arise when the practice of loving kindness is not stabilized with equanimity.

When you help and assist other beings within the framework of loving kindness and compassion, you may reach your limit and become attached to the idea that *mettā* and *karuṇā* should solve the problem. Then the practice of equanimity needs to be cultivated. You should reflect about *kamma* and that all beings fare according to their *kamma*. With the development of equanimity, the mind settles down, becoming still and stable.

Of course, you should aid other living beings as much as you can. You should help them lead a happy and peaceful life. Only when you are absolutely unable to help and assist anymore should you try to develop equanimity. Not being able to help and assist anymore refers to circumstances where either you or the other person have crossed over a certain threshold so that *mettā* and *karuṇā* are impossible to cultivate.

You may also need to use equanimity as a last resort, if you become too tired from trying to cultivate loving-kindness when the mind is not completely free of defilements. You are only able to adequately develop loving-kindness and compassion if they are not clouded by greed or hatred. For example, you have to be careful that compassion is not accompanied by anger. Some people cultivate loving-kindness that is accompanied by lust. At first their loving-kindness is pure and genuine. Later, their *mettā* becomes infected by craving and lust, and so people end up experiencing many ill effects. Be careful that this does not happen. All these ill effects happen because equanimity has not been developed: you should develop equanimity!

### ***Jhānupekkhā***

*Jhānupekkhā* means the fifth *jhāna* (using the Abhidhamma system of categorization), which is devoid of rapture (*pīti*) and happiness (*sukha*). A person who develops loving kindness, compassion, or sympathetic joy can attain the first, second, and third *jhāna* that are accompanied by rapture or joy (*pīti*) and happiness (*sukha*) or the fourth *jhāna* that is accompanied by happiness (*sukha*). When rapture and happiness are present, the mind is not completely still and calm. There is still some flickering in the mind. The person then reflects that it would be good to attain a deeper state of stillness and so develops equanimity, “*Sabbe sattā kammaṣakā.*” With this, rapture and happiness can be overcome and the fifth *jhāna*, *upekkhā-jhāna*, can be attained. Then the mind is very still and stable. This kind of equanimity is called *jhānupekkhā*, the *jhāna* that is accompanied by equanimity.

When the mindfulness of a vipassanā meditator becomes penetrating and sharp, rapture and happiness arise. At this point in the practice meditators report, “Today my meditation was very good in both sitting and walking. Mindfulness was also very good during the daily activities. In my whole life, I have never experienced such an exquisite happiness, it is beyond words and description.”

This happiness must be observed and noted as ‘happy, happy, happy’. If it is not mindfully observed, the meditation will not progress. But once it is noted with mindfulness, the happiness is no longer a source of either enjoyment or distress. Then one can simply be aware of the objects that are arising without feeling happy or angry. Sometimes the mind may get so still and calm that you are wondering if you are still being mindful. This still, calm, and subtle state of mind is the equanimity experienced by vipassanā meditators. Although it is not called *jhāna*, its nature is very much the same.

### ***Tatramajjhattupekkhā***

*Tatramajjhattupekkhā* is a form of equanimity that only occurs in the mental continuum of a vipassanā meditator as opposed to a samatha meditator. With a continuous and unbroken mindfulness, meditators are able to observe all mental and physical phenomena as they really are – whether they arise in sitting meditation, walking meditation, or during daily activities. Then the meditators realize the true nature of these mental and physical phenomena.

With the rising of the abdomen, this rising movement is observed as ‘rising.’ Meditators realize many broken movements of rising (a physical phenomena), and the mind (a mental phenomena) that observes these movements. Likewise, other objects are understood in the same way: the falling movement, heat, cold, stiffness, pain, tingling, etc. There are just these two processes: the object and the mind that is aware of this object. Heat, cold, stiffness, pain, and tingling are physical phenomena (*rūpa*); the mind that is aware of these objects is a mental phenomenon (*nāma*). The insight into this dual process is called the insight knowledge discerning mental and physical phenomena, *nāmarūpapariccheda ñāṇa*.

When meditators continue with their practice, they realize that the appearance of the rising movement causes the noting mind to arise. The rising movement is the cause, and the awareness of it is the effect. When the falling movement occurs, the awareness of it arises. The falling movement (*rūpa*) is the cause, and the awareness (*nāma*) of it is the effect. This is the insight knowledge of cause and effect, *paccayapariggaha ñāṇa*.

During these two stages of insight knowledge, because one must exert some effort to observe objects, the mind is not yet very still and calm. Sometimes the meditation goes well and the mind becomes still. However, this happens only for a short period of time and does not last. The nature of this form of still and equanimous mind is called *tatramajjhattupekkhā*.

### ***Vipassanūpekkhā and Bojjhaṅgupekkhā***

When meditators continue to be mindful of all the objects as they really are, continuously and without gaps, they will begin to see the



disappearance of these objects. Meditators realize that the rising movement for example comes to an end and disappears. In the same way, they see the disappearance of the mind that is aware of it. Other objects such as the falling movement, seeing, or hearing are experienced and understood in this way as well. With this, the insight knowledge of clear comprehension, *sammasana ñāṇa*, arises. However, in order to see the arising and disappearing of the objects, the meditators must observe very carefully and attentively, which requires some effort. Despite this effort, the arising and disappearance cannot yet be distinguished perfectly. That is why at this stage, meditators have many thoughts regarding experiences of impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness or suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*), and wonder whether or not their experiences are correct and true. The meditator's mind is still considering, so at this point there is no equanimity yet.

With further diligent practice and uninterrupted mindfulness, meditators attain the insight knowledge of arising and passing away, *udayabbaya ñāṇa*. When this insight is mature, they can comfortably observe the arising and passing away of mental and physical phenomena without making any effort. The wandering thoughts and reflections that were so common in the previous stage become less so, and as a result there is just the noting of objects which seems to happen by itself. The mind has become much more equanimous, no longer as partial as it once was. This is called equanimity as insight, *vipassanūpekkhā*. The nature of equanimity as an enlightenment factor, *bojjhaṅgupekkhā*, is the same.

### ***Saṅkhārupekkhā***

Those who diligently continue with their practice will go through a series of insight knowledges and finally attain the insight knowledge of equanimity toward formations, *saṅkhārupekkhā ñāṇa*. Meditators who reach this stage can observe all conditioned mental and physical phenomena or formations (*saṅkhāras*) with equanimity. To be equanimous in this way means that the mind is completely balanced and non-reactive: neither liking pleasant objects nor disliking unpleasant objects. The mind is balanced and unmoving whether the

sense-object is a form, sound, smell, taste, tangible object, or thought.

When experiencing a good object, you do not regard it as an incredibly good object. When experiencing a bad object, you do not regard it as a terribly bad object. The mind rests in the middle, neither happy nor unhappy. Meditators neither think that the meditation is going very well, nor do they think that the meditation is bad. But because they are continuously mindful of all the objects that are arising for half an hour or one hour, their meditation can be said to be very good. This stage is called the insight knowledge of equanimity toward formations, *saṅkhārupekkhā ñāṇa*.

At this stage, meditators do not need to make any effort to be mindful of the objects as they had to in the lower stages of insight knowledge. On the contrary, the objects seem to appear automatically and the mind is effortlessly aware of these arising objects. Meditators feel great ease in their practice. It seems as if they are just sitting there without making any effort.

Some meditators who reach this stage report in their interviews, “Sayadaw, when I meditate, it seems as if I am asleep. However, the mind is aware and observing. I do not know how to explain it. The meditation is neither good nor bad, there is just awareness.” This state of just being aware of the objects without having to make any effort is the nature of the insight knowledge of equanimity toward formations.

### ***Viriyupekkhā***

*Viriyupekkhā* means a balanced effort, neither too tight nor too lax. It is possible for the effort to be too tight, as in the case of the Venerables Soṇa and Ānanda. In other cases, the effort can be too lax. Effort that is too tight needs to be reduced, and effort that is too lax needs to be increased. After adjusting the effort, it becomes balanced - neither too tight, nor too slack. This is *viriyupekkhā*, a balanced effort. In each stage of insight knowledge, meditators can experience it.

## ***Vedanupekkhā***

*Vedanā*, or feeling, is of three types:

- pleasant feeling (*sukhavedanā*)
- unpleasant feeling (*dukkhavedanā*)
- neither-pleasant-nor-unpleasant feeling (*upekkhāvedanā*)

*Vedanupekkhā* refers specifically to the last of these three types of feeling. When a pleasant object is experienced, there is no liking or enjoyment; and when an unpleasant object is experienced, there is no aversion or anger. The mind is not affected by the object and rests in equanimity. It is like a temperate climate which is neither too hot nor too cold. This is called *vedanupekkhā* (*upekkhāvedanā*).

## **The Proximate Cause of Equanimity**

The proximate cause or nutriment of equanimity is “frequently giving careful attention”<sup>67</sup> or “*yonisomanasikāra bahulīkāro*”<sup>68</sup> as mentioned by the Buddha. In the commentary, five causes are mentioned:<sup>69</sup>

1. an equanimous attitude toward all living beings, so that one is not too attached to others
2. a balanced attitude towards inanimate objects (such as property)
3. avoiding people who are deeply possessive or who otherwise lack equanimity
4. associating with those who are not too strongly attached to beings or possessions and who otherwise demonstrate equanimity
5. inclining the mind to arouse the enlightenment factor of equanimity

With this, we have dealt with all seven enlightenment factors. Now you need to practise and develop these factors. Put effort into your practice. May all of you by developing the seven enlightenment

factors be freed from all kinds of suffering and swiftly attain Nibbāna, the cessation of suffering.

May all beings realize the Dhamma and live in peace and happiness.

## FIFTH DAY

### How to Apply the Medicine of the *Bojjhaṅgas*

Today I will explain how the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas* is best applied. Meditators and virtuous people who need to apply the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas* must keep the eight precepts as a first step. (To purify their morality, lay people should keep the five precepts, monks and nuns should keep their monastic rules.) Keeping the precepts leads to purified moral conduct. When morality is pure, verbal and physical actions are blameless.

On the base of this purified morality, you should practise mindfulness meditation in order to purify your mind. This is what it means to apply the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*.

### Homage to the Five Kinds of Objects of Infinite Gratitude

Before applying the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*, you should pay homage to the five kinds of objects of infinite (*ananta*) gratitude. Please hold your hands folded in front of your chest and repeat after me:

*With folded hands I pay homage to the Buddha who is perfectly endowed with nine attributes.*

Bowing down.

(Before you actually bow down, you should focus your mind on the Buddha's nine attributes, starting with *arahaṃ*. When you start the

movement of bowing down, you should mindfully observe the movement of bowing down. Shortly before the hands touch the ground, move them a little bit apart so that the front of the head can touch the ground. When your hands and the front of the head touch the floor, observe the touching sensation. When you move your body up, be mindful of that movement.)

*With folded hands I pay homage to the Dhamma, which is perfectly endowed with six attributes.*

Bowing down.

*With folded hands I pay homage to the Saṅgha who is perfectly endowed with nine attributes.*

Bowing down.

(The Saṅgha is comprised of the eight noble individuals who have attained one or several of the path and fruition knowledges and the ordinary individuals striving to attain any of the path and fruition knowledges.)

*With folded hands I pay homage to my parents to whom my gratitude is bigger than Mount Meru.*

Bowing down.

(Monks do not need to bow down to their parents.)

*With folded hands I pay homage to my teachers to whom my gratitude is as big as Mount Meru.*

Bowing down.

## **Asking for Forgiveness**

After paying homage to the five kinds of objects of infinite gratitude you should ask for forgiveness. If you have done any wrong towards a person with purified morality, you should ask for the person's forgiveness:

*"In this beginningless saṃsāra, if I have wronged persons I should not wrong through my actions of body, speech, or mind, may I be*

*cleared of this wrong. I humbly and respectfully ask for forgiveness. Venerable sir, out of compassion please forgive me.”*

(If the person you have wronged is not present, you should ask for forgiveness through your meditation teacher. If the person you have done wrong to happens to be a noble person (*ariya*) and you do not ask for forgiveness, it can become an obstacle for the attainment of path and fruition knowledge (*magga* and *phala ñāṇa*) as mentioned in the commentary.<sup>70</sup> For this reason it is absolutely necessary to ask for forgiveness.)

## Entrusting

The next step is to entrust yourself to the Buddha and to your meditation teacher:

*“I entrust and offer my five aggregates (my mental and physical phenomena) to the Buddha and to my teacher.”*

These are the benefits of entrusting yourself to a teacher:

- When you see or hear a frightening object during your meditation practice, you are not terrified and do not get afraid but you are able to continue to be mindful.
- The teacher can give you specific advice and guidance for your practice.
- You can follow the teacher’s instructions happily, and the smile on your face is not lost even if the teacher is intimidating or shouting at you.

## The Sitting Posture

You may sit either cross-legged or the legs folded to one side (as Burmese women sometimes do). Sit in a way that is comfortable for you. Make sure that your body is upright and straight; keeping the head in line with the back. Put the hands in your lap, with the left

hand below the right hand and the palms facing up. Once you have settled in your sitting posture, keep your body still like a rock, do not move your hands, feet, or head.

Then gently close your eyes and keep them closed for the whole sitting meditation. Only open them when you get up.

## **The Recollection of the Buddha's Attributes**

After you have settled in your sitting posture, you should reflect on the Buddha's attributes (*buddhānussati*) for one or two minutes. The Buddha eradicated all the defilements by himself and put an end to his suffering. He also showed the way for the eradication of the defilements to all living beings. Being free from all kinds of suffering the Buddha lived in complete peace. Bearing these qualities in mind, recite "*buddho, buddho, buddho*" for one or two minutes.

The purpose of doing the recollection of the Buddha's attributes is to strengthen and increase your faith or confidence. Only with confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha will you have the courage not to shrink back during the practice of vipassanā meditation, even if your bones are crushed and your skin dries up. The stronger and firmer your confidence, the bigger your effort in the practice. Only with effort will the flowers of wisdom start blooming. Only then will the different insight knowledges and path and fruition knowledges arise. With no confidence at all, you would not even think of practising vipassanā meditation.

## **The Cultivation of Loving-Kindness**

Secondly, you should develop loving-kindness (*mettā bhāvanā*) for about one or two minutes. You can use the following sentences for this:

*May all living beings be well, happy and peaceful.*

*May they be free from physical suffering.*

*May they be free from mental suffering.*

*May all aspects of their lives be well accomplished.*

The purpose of developing loving-kindness is to prevent any dangers or obstacles from arising during your vipassanā meditation practice thus allowing your meditation practice to proceed peacefully, smoothly, and with ease. You can also cultivate *mettā* for a longer period of time, if you think it necessary. Examples of this would be times when the mind is overcome with many thoughts, worries, or anxieties. When this happens, develop loving-kindness until these coarse and wild mental states have completely disappeared.

## **The Recollection on the Loathsomeness of the Body**

Thirdly, you should reflect on the loathsomeness of the body (*asubha bhāvanā*). You should reflect that there is nothing in this body that is fragrant, solid, or eternal. There are: hair of the head, hair of the body, fingernails, toenails, teeth, and skin; all of them are disgusting. (The complete reflection is done with thirty-two parts of the body; see glossary.)

The purpose of this reflection is to prevent lust and craving from arising towards one's own body or towards the bodies of others. Then your vipassanā meditation practice can flow smoothly and well.

## **The Recollection on Death**

Fourthly, you should reflect on death (*marañassati*) for one or two minutes. Consider the fact that while some people who die will be older than you, others will be your age or younger. Each moment you are alive is a moment of getting older and getting closer to death. You should reflect on this fact now rather than right before you are about to die.

The purpose of reflecting on death is to arouse a strong wish to diligently practise meditation right now. The mind can come up with all sorts of thoughts and reasons to postpone the practice. You need to understand that you should give priority to the meditation practice before death strikes.



These four meditations that I just mentioned (namely *buddhānussati*, *mettā bhāvanā*, *asubha bhāvanā*, and *marañassati*) are all forms of concentration meditation (*samatha bhāvanā*). In the commentary, they are explained as the four guardian meditations or the four protective meditations.<sup>71</sup> Although these practices are types of concentration meditation, they should be done by all meditators. There is no need to practise them for long periods of time - a few minutes before you start your vipassanā meditation is enough. You also can practise them while doing vipassanā if you think that there is a need for it. This may be the case if there are so many thoughts or worries that you cannot be mindful of them anymore, or when you feel bored and weary. Then you should practise these four kinds of meditations as you think appropriate.

## The Enlightenment Factors: Cause and Effect

After completing these four protective meditations, you should practise mindfulness meditation, or in other words: the four foundations of mindfulness. This is what it means to apply the medicine of the *bojjhaṅgas*.

Among the enlightenment factors, some are causes and some are effects. When you develop the factors that are causes, then the factors that are effects will naturally arise. In this way, the development of the causal factors includes within it the development of the rest.

The enlightenment factors that are causes:

1. the enlightenment factor of mindfulness  
(*sati-sambojjhaṅga*)
2. the enlightenment factor of effort  
(*viriya-sambojjhaṅga*)

The enlightenment factors that are effects:

1. the enlightenment factor of investigation of states  
(*dhammavicaya-sambojjhaṅga*)
2. the enlightenment factor of rapture  
(*pīti-sambojjhaṅga*)
3. the enlightenment factor of tranquillity  
(*passaddhi-sambojjhaṅga*)
4. the enlightenment factor of concentration  
(*samādhi-sambojjhaṅga*)
5. the enlightenment factor of equanimity  
(*upekkhā-sambojjhaṅga*)

Among these seven enlightenment factors, the most basic and principal factor is the enlightenment factor of mindfulness. When the Buddha explained these seven enlightenment factors, he assigned the pre-eminent place to mindfulness. There are several reasons for this. One of these is the fact that the enlightenment factor of mindfulness is the cause for the other six factors to arise. Secondly, the enlightenment factor of mindfulness has the nature to direct the mind to the object or to make it sink into the object. The third reason relies on the second in that all the other enlightenment factors can only exercise their respective functions when mindfulness directs the mind to the object. If this were not the case, the other enlightenment factors could not perform their work. It is for these reasons that the enlightenment factor of mindfulness is the most basic and most fundamental one.

## **Mindfulness: the Great Physician**

I will use an example so that you can understand it more easily. A great physician makes an appointment with a patient who needs to undergo surgery. He also informs a team of doctors and nurses who are to assist him. On the day of the appointment, all the doctors, nurses, and the patient are in their required places. But the great physician forgets the day and place of the surgery, and it cannot be performed – regardless of the presence of everyone else.

After a short while the great physician remembers his appointment, and hastily goes to the operation theatre. At last, all the people involved can perform their respective tasks. After the successful surgery, the patient is cured and happiness arises because he has escaped the immediate threat of death. Luckily, the great physician remembered in time! If he had forgotten, nobody would like to think about what would have happened to the patient.

In this example, although all the doctors and nurses were present and would have been able to perform their tasks, they could not do anything because the great physician did not remember his appointment. The other people involved could only work once the great physician remembered and got to the operation theatre. This saved the patient's life.

It is the same when you endeavour to attain Nibbāna, which is free from the dangers of ageing, sickness, and death. When the enlightenment factor of mindfulness is absent, the remaining six cannot perform their task. Mindfulness is compared to the great physician, and the remaining six factors of enlightenment are compared to the assisting doctors and nurses. If the enlightenment factors do not have the chance to do their work, liberation from ageing, disease, and death is not possible. Only when mindfulness appears on the scene and does its job can the other enlightenment factors perform their assigned functions. This liberates living beings from the dangers of ageing, disease, and death. Please understand this point!

Just as the great physician is the vital factor for the patient's survival, so is mindfulness the main factor for the other enlightenment factors to perform their work and allow the attainment of Nibbāna. Mindfulness is the most basic factor.

There is a Burmese saying, "Without mindfulness you do not even see the cave. With mindfulness you see the dust."

## **Only Develop the Enlightenment Factors that Are a Cause**

With the development of the basic and principal enlightenment factor

of mindfulness, the other enlightenment factors that are effects can arise and be developed, too. In order to develop the enlightenment factor of mindfulness you have to be aware of every physical phenomenon that arises. You have to be mindful of every feeling that arises. You must observe every state of mind that arises. You have to be mindful of every mental object that arises.

When you see, observe it as 'seeing;' hearing must be observed as 'hearing,' smelling as 'smelling,' tasting as 'tasting,' touching as 'touching,' and thinking as 'thinking.' To put it simply: whatever arises in the body and mind must be observed as it really is at the time of its arising. This is how to develop the enlightenment factor of mindfulness.

In order to do this, you have to exert some effort in body and mind. This effort is the enlightenment factor of effort. Without effort, mindfulness cannot observe the object well. Only when effort is present, can mindfulness be aware of the object.

With the help of effort, mindfulness can observe everything that is arising continuously and uninterruptedly. Then the mind calms down and stays on whatever mental or physical objects are being observed. This concentration is called the enlightenment factor of concentration. Because you have developed the enlightenment factor of mindfulness, the enlightenment factor of concentration becomes developed. When concentration deepens, rapture and tranquillity arise. Later, you will be able to be mindful without anxiety and excessive effort: this is the enlightenment factor of equanimity. Then you will understand the nature of every mental or physical object that is observed. This understanding is the enlightenment factor of investigation of states.

In the sitting meditation, when you are mindful of the rising and falling movement of the abdomen, you then understand its nature. When you observe the sitting posture and the touching points, you come to understand the nature of these objects. Being aware of heat or cold, you understand the nature of heat and cold. When you are mindful of painful sensations like aching or stiffening, you understand the nature of these sensations. Whatever state of mind arises, good or bad, you understand it as it really is.

In the walking meditation too, you come to understand the nature of the lifting, pushing, and dropping movement. Likewise, you understand all actions and movements in their true nature. This kind

of understanding, to see all objects as they really are, belongs to the enlightenment factor of investigation of states.

You also begin to understand the characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness or suffering, and non-self in an ever deepening way. When vipassanā insight knowledge becomes mature, it understands the arising and passing away of mental and physical phenomena as well as the complete cessation of these phenomena, Nibbāna. This understanding also belongs to the enlightenment factor of investigation of states.

Because you have developed the enlightenment factor of mindfulness (the cause), these other enlightenment factors have also been developed (the effects).

## **The Development of the Enlightenment Factors According to the Pāli Text**

*“Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu santam vā ajjhataṃ satisambojjhaṅgam ‘atthi me ajjhataṃ satisambojjhaṅgo’ ti pajānāti. Asantam vā ajjhataṃ satisambojjhaṅgam ‘natthi me ajjhataṃ satisambojjhaṅgo’ ti pajānāti.”<sup>72</sup>*

“Here, there being the mindfulness enlightenment factor in him, a bhikkhu understands: ‘There is the mindfulness enlightenment factor in me’; or there being no mindfulness enlightenment factor in him, he understands: ‘There is no mindfulness enlightenment factor in me’.”<sup>73</sup>

So the meditator knows if the enlightenment factor of mindfulness is present or not in his or her mind. The other factors of enlightenment have to be developed in the same way. The meditator knows if the enlightenment factor of investigation of states is present or not. The meditator knows if the enlightenment factor of effort is present or not. The meditator knows if the enlightenment factor of rapture is present or not. The meditator knows if the enlightenment factor of tranquillity is present or not. The meditator knows if the enlightenment factor of concentration is present or not. The meditator knows if the enlightenment factor of equanimity is present

or not.

Actually, as discussed above, when you are developing the enlightenment factor of mindfulness and it becomes strong and powerful, the other six factors of enlightenment also arise at the same time. Or when you develop another of these factors, you get the same result. However, the enlightenment factors of rapture and equanimity do not always arise simultaneously. If during vipassanā meditation equanimity is present, rapture is not obvious; and if during vipassanā meditation rapture is present, equanimity is not obvious. This can happen; but even if they are not obvious, they are present all the same. As a result, it is very important that always one of the factors of enlightenment is developed. It is indispensable that you thoroughly cultivate these factors of enlightenment, *bojjhaṅgas*.

To finish these Dhamma talks entitled “The *Bojjhaṅgas* – Medicine that Makes All Diseases Disappear” I will recite the *bojjhaṅgas* and the *Bojjhaṅga Sutta* in Pāli.

## The *Bojjhaṅgas* (Pāli Version)

*[Ekaṃ samayaṃ bhagavā rājagahe viharati veḷuvane kalandakanivāpe. tena kho pana samayena bhagavā ābādhiko hoti dukkhito bāḷhagilāno. atha kho āyasmā mahācundo yena bhagavā tenupasaṅkami; upasaṅkamitvā bhagavantaṃ abhivādetvā eka mantāṃ nisīdi. ekamantaṃ nisinnaṃ kho āyasmantaṃ mahācundaṃ bhagavā etadavoca– “paṭibhantu taṃ, cunda, bojjhaṅgā”ti.]*

*Sattime, bhante, bojjhaṅgā bhagavatā sammadakkhātā bhāvitā bahulīkatā abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya saṃvattanti. Katame satta?*

*Satisaṃbojjhaṅgo kho, bhante, bhagavatā sammadakkhāto bhāvito bahulīkato abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya saṃvattati.*

*Dhammavicayasambojjhaṅgo kho bhante bhagavatā sammadakkhāto bhāvito bahulīkato abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya saṃvattati.*

*Viriyasaṃbojjhaṅgo kho bhante bhagavatā sammadakkhāto bhāvito bahulīkato abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya saṃvattati.*

*Pītisaṃbojjhaṅgo kho bhante bhagavatā sammadakkhāto bhāvito bahulīkato abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya saṃvattati.*

*Passaddhisāṃbojjhaṅgo kho bhante bhagavatā sammadakkhāto bhāvito bahulīkato abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya saṃvattati.*

*Samādhisaṃbojjhaṅgo kho bhante bhagavatā sammadakkhāto bhāvito bahulīkato abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya saṃvattati.*

*Upekkhāsaṃbojjhaṅgo kho bhante bhagavatā sammadakkhāto bhāvito bahulīkato abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya saṃvattati.*

*Ime kho, bhante, satta bojjhaṅgā bhagavatā sammadakkhātā bhāvita bahulīkatā abhiññāya sambodhāya nibbānāya saṃvattanti”ti.*

*[“Taggha, cunda, bojjhaṅgā; taggha, cunda, bojjhaṅgā”ti. Idamavocāyasmā cundo. Samanuñño satthā ahoṣi. Vuṭṭhahi ca bhagavā tamhā ābādhā. Tathāpahīno ca bhagavato so ābādhō ahoṣīti. Chaṭṭham.]”<sup>74</sup>*

## **The Bojjhaṅga (English Version)**

[On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Rājagaha in the Bamboo Grove, the Squirrel Sanctuary. Now on that occasion the Blessed One was sick, afflicted, gravely ill. Then the Venerable Mahācunda approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, and sat down to one side. The Blessed One then said to the Venerable Mahācunda:

“Recite the factors of enlightenment, Cunda.”]

“These seven factors of enlightenment, venerable sir, have been rightly expounded by the Blessed One; when developed and cultivated, they lead to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna. What seven?

The enlightenment factor of mindfulness has been rightly expounded by the Blessed One; when developed and cultivated, it leads to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

The enlightenment factor of investigation has been rightly expounded by the Blessed One; when developed and cultivated, it leads to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

The enlightenment factor of energy has been rightly expounded by

the Blessed One; when developed and cultivated, it leads to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

The enlightenment factor of rapture has been rightly expounded by the Blessed One; when developed and cultivated, it leads to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

The enlightenment factor of tranquillity has been rightly expounded by the Blessed One; when developed and cultivated, it leads to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

The enlightenment factor of concentration has been rightly expounded by the Blessed One; when developed and cultivated, it leads to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

The enlightenment factor of equanimity has been rightly expounded by the Blessed One; when developed and cultivated, it leads to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

These seven factors of enlightenment, venerable sir, have been rightly expounded by the Blessed One; when developed and cultivated, they lead to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.”

[“Surely, Cunda, they are factors of enlightenment! Surely, Cunda, they are factors of enlightenment!”

This is what the Venerable Mahācunda said. The Teacher approved. And the Blessed One recovered from that illness. In such a way the Blessed One was cured of his illness.]<sup>75</sup>

## **The *Bojjhaṅga Sutta* (Pāḷi Version)**

*Saṃsāre saṃsarantānaṃ  
sabbadukkhavināsane  
satta dhamme ca bojjhaṅge  
mārasenāpamaddane*

*Bujjhivā ye cime sattā  
tibhavā muttakuttamā  
ajāti-majarābyādhiṃ  
amataṃ nibbayaṃ gatā*



*Evamādiguṇūpetam  
 anekagunasāṅgham  
 osadhañca imam mantam  
 bojjhaṅgañca bhaṅāma he*

*Bojjhaṅgo satisaṅkhāto  
 dhammānam vicayo tathā  
 viriyam pīti passaddhi  
 bojjhaṅgā ca tathāpare*

*Samādh 'upekkhā bojjhaṅgā  
 satt 'ete sabbadassinā  
 muninā sammadakkhātā  
 bhāvitā bahulīkatā*

*Samvattanti abhiññāya  
 nibbānāya ca bodhiyā  
 etena saccavajjena  
 sotthi te hotu sabbadā*

*Ekasmim samaye nātho  
 moggallānañ ca kassapam  
 gilāne dukkhite disvā  
 bojjhaṅge satta desayi*

*Te ca tam abhinanditvā  
 rogā mucchimsu taṅkhaṇe  
 etena saccavajjena  
 sotthi te hotu sabbadā*

*Ekadā dhammarājā pi  
 gelaññenābhipīlito  
 cundattherena tam yeva  
 bhaṅāpetvāna sādaram*

*Sammoditvāna ābādhā  
 tamhā vuṭṭhāsi ṭhānaso  
 etena saccavajjena*

*sotthi te hotu sabbadā*

*Pahīnā te ca ābādhā  
tiṇṇannam pi mahesinam  
maggahatā kilesā va  
pattānuppatti-dhammatam  
etena saccavajjena  
sotthi te hotu sabbadā*

*Bojjhaṅga-suttam niṭṭhitam*<sup>76</sup>

## **The *Bojjhaṅga Sutta* (English Version)**

Having known by way of experience the seven kinds of Dhamma called factors of enlightenment which destroy all sufferings of beings who wander through this *samsāra* (round of rebirths) and which defeat the army of Māra, the Evil One, these excellent persons were liberated from the three kinds of existence. They have reached Nibbāna where there is no rebirth, ageing, death, and danger.

Oh good people! Let us recite this *Bojjhaṅga Sutta* which is endowed with the aforementioned attributes, which gives not a few benefits and which is like a medicine and a mantra.

These seven factors of enlightenment, namely: mindfulness, investigation of dhammas, effort (or energy), rapture, tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity, which are well-expounded by the All Seeing Sage, promote, when practised repeatedly, penetration of the truth, cessation of suffering and knowledge of the path. By this utterance of truth, may there always be happiness for you.

Once when the Lord saw Moggallāna and Kassapa being unwell and suffering, he preached the seven factors of enlightenment.

They, having rejoiced at the discourse, immediately were freed from the disease. By this utterance of truth, may there always be happiness to you.

Once when the King of the Dhamma was oppressed by disease, he had the Venerable Cunda recite the discourse respectfully, and having rejoiced at the discourse was immediately cured of the disease. By this utterance of truth, may there always be happiness to you.

The diseases of the three Great Sages that were eradicated reached the stage of never occurring again like the mental defilements eradicated by the path. By this utterance of truth, may there always be happiness for you.

End of *Bojjhaṅga Sutta*<sup>77</sup>

May all beings realize the Dhamma and live in peace and happiness.

## GLOSSARY

<i>abhiññā</i>	higher or supernormal knowledge
<i>abyākata</i>	
<i>āhāraja rūpa</i>	kammically indeterminate
<i>akusala</i>	phenomena
<i>ananta</i>	nutriment-produced materiality
<i>anāgāmī</i>	unwholesome
<i>ānāpānasati</i>	infinite
<i>anattā</i>	non-returner, a being having reached
<i>anicca</i>	the 3 <sup>rd</sup> stage of enlightenment
<i>arahant</i>	mindfulness of breathing
	non-self
	impermanence
	Arahant, a liberated one, a being
	having reached the 4 <sup>th</sup> stage of
	enlightenment
<i>ariya</i>	a noble one, a being having attained
	one of the stages of enlightenment
<i>asubha bhāvanā</i>	recollection on the loathsomeness of
	the body; the 32 parts of the body
	are: hair of the head, hair of the
	body, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews,
	bones, marrow, kidneys, heart, liver,
	diaphragm, spleen, lungs, intestines,
	mesentery, stomach, faces, brain,
	bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat,
	tears, grease, saliva, nasal mucus,
	synovial fluid, urine
<i>Avīci</i>	the lowest of the hell realms
<i>bhāvanā</i>	development, cultivation, meditation

<i>bojjhaṅga</i>	enlightenment factor
<i>Bojjhaṅga Sutta</i>	the <i>Bojjhaṅga Sutta</i> , the Discourse on the Factors of Enlightenment
<i>bojjhaṅgupekkhā</i>	equanimity as an enlightenment factor
<i>brahmā</i>	celestial being of the higher celestial realms
<i>brahmavihāra</i>	the four Divine Abidings, namely loving kindness ( <i>mettā</i> ), compassion ( <i>karuṇā</i> ), sympathetic joy ( <i>muditā</i> ), and equanimity ( <i>upekkhā</i> )
<i>brahmavihārupekkhā</i>	equanimity as a Divine Abode
<i>buddhānussati</i>	the recollection of the Buddha's attributes
<i>buddhatthacariya</i>	the conduct to realize the Four Noble Truths
<i>cariyagūṇa</i>	virtuous conduct
<i>cetasika</i>	mental factor
<i>chaḷaṅgupekkhā</i>	six-fold equanimity
<i>citta</i>	consciousness, mind
<i>cittaja rūpa</i>	mind-produced materiality
<i>cittānupassanā</i>	mindfulness of the mind together with its associated states
<i>cittapassaddhi</i>	tranquillity of consciousness or mind ( <i>citta</i> )
<i>dāna</i>	generosity, giving
<i>deva</i>	literally, 'a shining one,' celestial being
<i>dhammavicaya</i>	investigation of states
<i>dhammavicaya-sambojjaṅga</i>	the enlightenment factor of investigation of states
<i>dosa</i>	hatred, one of the three unwholesome roots, it covers all degrees of hatred, ill will, anger, aversion, irritation, and animosity
<i>dukkha</i>	unsatisfactoriness, suffering
<i>dukkhavedanā</i>	unpleasant feeling
<i>dummedha</i>	fool, stupid person, a person without insight and wisdom

<i>jhāna</i>	absorption
<i>jhānupekkhā</i>	equanimity of <i>jhāna</i> <i>Jhānupekkhā</i> means the fifth <i>jhāna</i> (according to the Abhidhamma method) that is devoid of rapture ( <i>pīti</i> ) and happiness ( <i>sukha</i> )
<i>kamma</i>	action; in Buddhism, it is only the intentional actions of body, speech, and mind that are called <i>kamma</i> ; volition
<i>kammaja rūpa</i>	<i>kamma</i> -produced materiality
<i>karuṇā</i>	compassion
<i>kāyapassaddhi</i>	tranquillity of mental factors ( <i>cetasikas</i> )
<i>Kayin</i>	one of the 38 ethnic groups living in Myanmar (Burma)
<i>khaṇika pīti</i>	momentary rapture
<i>khuddaka pīti</i>	minor rapture
<i>kilesa</i>	defilement, afflictive state of mind
<i>kusala</i>	wholesome
<i>lobha</i>	greed, one of the three unwholesome roots, it covers all degrees of selfish desire, longing, attachment, and clinging
<i>lokatthacariya</i>	the conduct for the welfare of the world
<i>lokuttara</i>	supramundane
<i>magga</i>	path
<i>magga ñāṇa</i>	path knowledge
<i>magga sacca</i>	the truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering
<i>Māra</i>	the personification of evil, the Tempter
<i>maraṇassati</i>	recollection on death
<i>mettā</i>	loving-kindness, friendliness, benevolence, goodwill
<i>mettā bhāvanā</i>	the cultivation of loving-kindness
<i>mudīta</i>	sympathetic joy
<i>nāma</i>	mind, mental phenomena

<i>nāmakāya</i>	the mental body
<i>nāmakāyaguṇa</i>	the virtues of the Buddha's mind
<i>nāmarūpapariccheda ñāṇa</i>	the insight knowledge discerning mental and physical phenomena
<i>ñātathacariya</i>	the conduct for the welfare of one's relatives
<i>Nibbāna</i>	Literally, 'extinguish, blow out,' final deliverance from suffering; deliverance from greed, hatred, and delusion is the principal and highest goal of the Buddhist teaching; the Sanskrit form ' <i>nirvana</i> ' is more commonly known in the West
<i>okkantika pīti</i>	showering or flood of rapture
<i>paccayapariggaha ñāṇa</i>	the insight knowledge of cause and effect
<i>pañca mahāpariccāga</i>	the five great renunciations, they are: renouncing material possessions ( <i>dhanapariccāga</i> )
	renouncing one's children ( <i>puttapariccāga</i> )
	renouncing one's wife ( <i>bhariyapariccāga</i> )
	renouncing one's limbs and organs ( <i>aṅgapariccāga</i> )
	renouncing one's life ( <i>jīvitapariccāga</i> )
<i>paññā</i>	wisdom, understanding, insight, knowledge
<i>paññindriya</i>	mental faculty of wisdom
<i>pāramī</i>	perfection, completeness
<i>parinibbāna</i>	final Nibbāna, final cessation of bodily and mental phenomena
<i>pārisuddhupekkhā</i>	equanimity of purification
<i>parittas</i>	protective suttas
<i>pariyatti</i>	studying and learning the scriptures
<i>pasādaniyasuttanta pacca-vekkhaṇā</i>	the reflection on inspiring suttas

<i>passaddhi</i>	tranquillity
<i>passaddhi-sambojjhaṅga</i>	the enlightenment factor of tranquillity
<i>peta</i>	hungry ghost
<i>phala</i>	fruition
<i>phala nāṇa</i>	fruition knowledge
<i>pharaṇa pīti</i>	pervading rapture
<i>phoṭṭhabbadhātu</i>	tangible element
<i>phoṭṭhabbāyatana</i>	tangible sense-base
<i>pīti</i>	rapture, zest, pleasurable interest, joy, delight, exuberance
<i>pīti-sambojjhaṅga</i>	the enlightenment factor of rapture
<i>rūpa</i>	physical phenomenon, matter, materiality
<i>rūpakāyaguṇa</i>	the virtues of the Buddha's body
<i>rūpakkhandhā</i>	aggregate of materiality
<i>saddhā</i>	confidence, faith
<i>saddhindriya</i>	mental faculty of faith or confidence
<i>sakadāgāmi</i>	once-returned, a being having reached the 2 <sup>nd</sup> stage of enlightenment
<i>sakyadhītā</i>	daughter of the Buddha
<i>sakyaputta</i>	son of the Buddha
<i>samādhi</i>	concentration
<i>samādhindriya</i>	mental faculty of concentration
<i>samādhi-sambojjhaṅga</i>	the enlightenment factor of concentration
<i>samatha bhāvanā</i>	concentration meditation
<i>sammasana nāṇa</i>	the insight knowledge of clear comprehension
<i>saṃsāra</i>	the round of repeated births
<i>saṃvega</i>	spiritual urgency
<i>saṅkhāra</i>	conditioned phenomena, formations
<i>saṅkhārupekkhā</i>	equanimity about formations
<i>saṅkhārupekkhā nāṇa</i>	the insight knowledge of equanimity toward formations
<i>sāsana</i>	teaching, dispensation; in this context: the teaching of the Buddha
<i>sati</i>	mindfulness, awareness



<i>satindriya</i>	mental faculty of mindfulness
<i>satipaṭirūpaka</i>	imitation of mindfulness
<i>sati-sambojjhaṅga</i>	the enlightenment factor of mindfulness
<i>satipaṭṭhāna</i>	foundation of mindfulness
<i>sīla</i>	morality, ethical behaviour
<i>sotāpanna</i>	stream-enterer, a being having reached the 1 <sup>st</sup> stage of enlightenment
<i>sukhavedanā</i>	pleasant feeling
<i>tatramajjhataṭā</i>	neutrality of mind or ‘there in the middle-ness’
<i>tatramajjhātupekkhā</i>	equanimity as specific neutrality
<i>Tāvatiṃsa</i>	one of the <i>deva</i> realms
<i>ubbega pīti</i>	uplifting rapture
<i>udayabbaya ñāṇa</i>	insight knowledge of arising and passing away
<i>upekkhā</i>	equanimity
<i>upekkhāvedanā</i>	neither-pleasant-nor-unpleasant feeling, neutral feeling
<i>upekkhā-sambojjhaṅga</i>	the enlightenment factor of equanimity
<i>uposatha</i>	a day of observance that coincides with the full moon, new moon, and half moons. Lay Buddhists often observe the <i>uposatha sīla</i> (eight precepts) on this day. Monks and nuns recite the <i>patimokkha</i> (rules of monastic discipline) on the full moon and new moon <i>uposatha</i> days.
<i>utuja rūpa</i>	temperature-produced materiality
<i>vāyo dhātu</i>	wind-element
<i>vedanā</i>	feeling, it is of three kinds: pleasant feeling ( <i>sukhavedanā</i> ), unpleasant feeling ( <i>dukkhavedanā</i> ), and neither-pleasant-nor unpleasant feeling ( <i>upekkhāvedanā</i> )
<i>vedanānupassanā</i>	mindfulness of feelings
<i>vedanupekkhā</i>	equanimity as a feeling

<i>veyyāvacca</i>	selfless service, volunteer
<i>vimokkha</i>	liberation
<i>vipassanā</i>	insight
<i>vipassanā bhāvanā</i>	insight meditation, mindfulness meditation
<i>vipassanūpekkhā</i>	equanimity about insight
<i>virīya</i>	effort, energy
<i>virīya-sambojjhaṅga</i>	the factor of enlightenment of effort
<i>viriyindriya</i>	mental faculty of effort
<i>viriyupekkhā</i>	equanimity of energy
<i>yonisomanasikāra</i>	careful attention, wise attention

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- <sup>3</sup> VRI, *Paṭṭhānuddesadīpanīpāṭha*:-Mya.:0.504
- <sup>4</sup> SN 46:5; *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha, A New Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya* by Bhikkhu Bodhi, Wisdom Publications, 2000
- <sup>5</sup> This sutta can be found at SN 46:14; *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha, A New Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya* by Bhikkhu Bodhi, Wisdom Publications, 2000
- <sup>6</sup> VRI, *Dhammasaṅgaṇi-aṭṭhakathā*:abhi.aṭṭha.-Ro.: 0.119
- <sup>7</sup> Maybe this refers to the Channovāda Sutta, MN 144; *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha, Translated by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli and Bhikkhu Bodhi*, Wisdom Publications, 1995  
There it says that the bhikkhu Channa used the knife blamelessly because there was no clinging to a new body. In other words, it means that shortly before he committed suicide he had become an arahant and, therefore, he had no more clinging to his body.
- <sup>8</sup> This story is told in Sayadaw U Indaka's own words. The story can be found in the two commentaries to the Satipatṭhāna Sutta: VRI, *Saṃyuttanikāya*(pu-vi):Mya.:1.21 and VRI, *Mahāvagga-aṭṭhakathā*(dī.ni):dī.ni.aṭṭha.-2-Ro.:2.692
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- <sup>13</sup> VRI, *Dhammasaṅgaṇi-aṭṭhakathā*:abhi.aṭṭha.-Ro.:0.122
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- <sup>15</sup> VRI, *Dhammasaṅgaṇi-aṭṭhakathā*:abhi.aṭṭha.-Ro.:0.122
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- <sup>19</sup> VRI, Mahāniddesa-aṭṭhakathā:khu.ni.aṭṭha.-Ro.:1.221
- <sup>20</sup> VRI, Mahāvagga-aṭṭhakathā(dī.ni.):dī.ni.aṭṭha.-2-Ro.:2.531
- <sup>21</sup> VRI, Ekanipāta-ṭīkā:a.ni.ṭī.-1-Mya.:1.250
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- <sup>24</sup> VRI, Mahāvaggapāḷi(saṃ.ni.):saṃ.ni.-5-Ro.:5.66
- <sup>25</sup> VRI, Mahāvagga-aṭṭhakathā(dī.ni.):dī.ni.aṭṭha.-2-Ro.:3.787
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- <sup>36</sup> VRI, Mūlapaṇṇāsa-aṭṭhakathā:ma.ni.aṭṭha.-1-Ro.:1.84
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