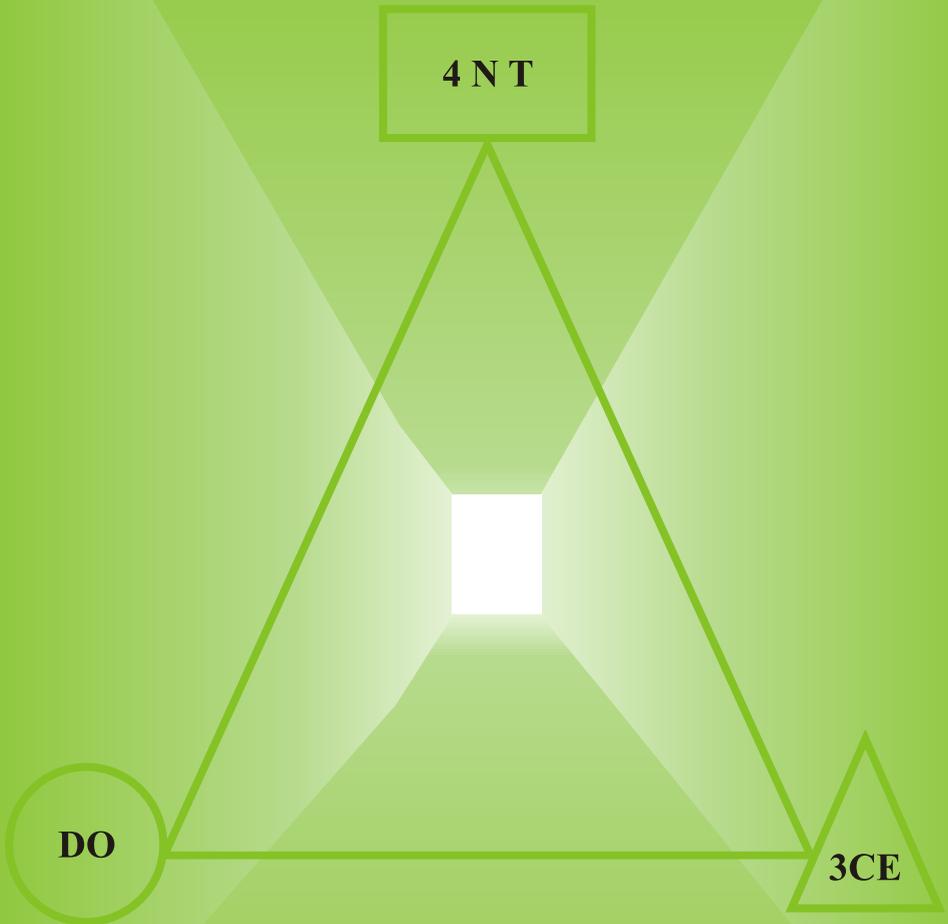
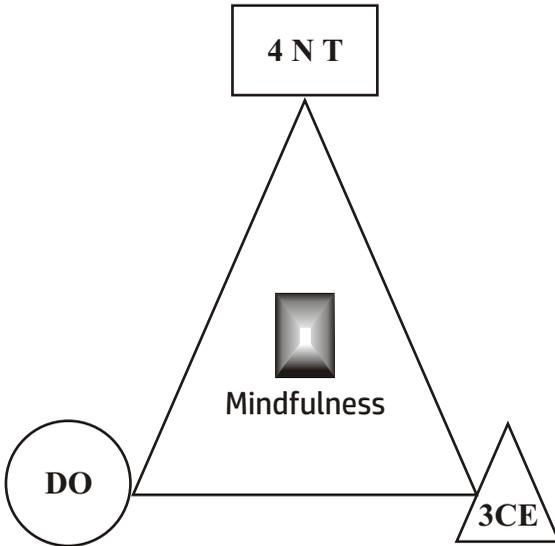


Mindfulness and Clear Comprehension



Bhikkhu T. Seelananda

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Front Cover Illustration

This is the *Dhamma* triangle. *Dhamma* is the everlasting phenomenon in the world. Three of the most basic shapes in nature are the circle, the square, and the triangle. The Buddha reflects these essential patterns in his most basic teachings as the Four Noble Truths (square), Dependent Origination (circle) and the Three Characteristics of Existence (triangle). The whole teachings of the Buddha could be condensed into these three principles. The three sides of the triangle depict the commonality of the teaching of the Buddha in all branches of Buddhism based on *Theravāda, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna*.

In order to understand and realize these three principles, one has to practice one thing: MINDFULNESS, the nucleus of the triangle. Practicing and cultivating mindfulness is like delving into a square shape tunnel (four establishments of mindfulness). When delving, one has to do it mindfully with clear comprehension (insightfully) with the tool of wisdom. Whatever one finds in the tunnel while delving mindfully, one has to understand it clearly as it is and throws it away (letting it go). Finally, one sees the light (liberation) at the end of the tunnel.

The Gift of Dhamma Excels All Others

This Dhamma dâna (gift of Dhamma) is another special meritorious deed done by Mr. Hemachandra Gunasekara and Mrs. Sriyani Gunasekara at 2339 Bedfordshire Circle, Reston, Virginia, USA in memory of the **late Mr. Andris Gunasekara and Mrs. Roberthina Gunasekara (Hemachandra's Parents) of Korathota, Kaduwela, Sri Lanka** and the **late Mr. Albert Abeyagunasekera and Mrs. Mallika Abeyagunasekera (Sriyani and Tissa's Parents) of Mt. Lavinia, Sri Lanka.**

We wish them all a peaceful samsâric journey and finally, the attainment of the supreme bliss of Nibbâna.

May they all attain Nibbâna!

Excellent! Excellent! Excellent!



Pûjemi Buddham

A Humble Offering to The Buddha. This work is humbly and respectfully offered with utmost confidence in the triple gem in the name of the Supreme Buddha Gotama, the seventh sage (muni sattama) who attained supreme enlightenment in the year 588 B.C.E. under the Bodhi Tree in Buddhagayâ, India.

Excellent! Excellent! Excellent!

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Abbreviations for Sutta References

A.N. Anguttara Nikāya
Dhp. Dhammapada
D.N. Digha Nikāya
M.N. Majjhima Nikāya
S.N. Samyutta Nikāya

Acknowledgment

In the *Dhamma*, the teachings of the Buddha, mindfulness and clear comprehension are indispensable factors. These two factors have inspired me to enthusiastically study, practice, and experience the profound wisdom of the *Dhamma* more and more.

Whatever I study, practice and understand from the ocean of the *Dhamma*, it resonates in me to share with others. It is because of this intention, I started to write books. Writing books is neither easy nor difficult. However, there is always the need for a second person, a third person or more to give suggestions and refine the work to be more and more comprehensible.

For the publication of this book, several friends of mine and a special friend, a Bhante, helped me. I sincerely acknowledge them all with my deepest appreciation and gratitude.

First, I wish to sincerely thank Ven. *Bhante Henepola Gunaratana*, the author of *Mindfulness in Plain English*, the Abbot of the Bhavana Society Forest Monastery, WV.

Secondly, I want to express my gratitude and sincere thanks to my friends; Bhante Paññaratana, Judy Larson, Ami Goldsmith, Beverley Anne Vantomme and Dushmantha Kumari Ranawella who refined the language and made appropriate suggestions.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge *Mr. Hemachandra Gunasekara*, *Mrs. Sriyani Gunasekara* and her brother *Mr. Tissa Abeyagunasekera* for their sponsorship for the printing and the entire team at US Lanka Printers Mt. Lavinia, Sri Lanka for their kindness and help in bringing this book to you in this presentable manner.

Preface

In this book, you will read the words of the Buddha. I did not want to quote from the work of unenlightened persons. No other word is equal or superior to the word of the Buddha. The sole purpose of this book is to help readers and practitioners better understand what mindfulness and clear comprehension are from the very words of the Buddha. All quotations are from the Buddha's original discourses. These “gems of *Dhamma*” I have strived to thread together as a garland. If you wish, use and enjoy this garland daily to be more and more humble, simple, peaceful and happy.

This book is intended for lay practitioners and intermediate students of meditation. If you are completely new to meditation and the study of Buddhism, let me recommend the following:

Mindfulness in Plain English (20th Anniversary Edition) by Venerable Bhante *Henepola Gunaratana*.
Wisdom Publications, 2011.

Read original discourses

1. Sutta Central: <https://suttacentral.net>
2. Access to Insight: www.accesstoinsight.org
3. Metta.lk: www.metta.lk

When practicing Buddhist meditation, both mindfulness and clear comprehension are equally important.

Buddhist meditation is based on these two principles. For successful meditation, these two should go hand in hand. In practice, there are two levels of meditation:

1. Serenity (*samatha*)
2. Insight (*vipassanā*).

When you practice either one, you need to understand mindfulness and clear comprehension as well. Without mindfulness and clear comprehension, there is no Buddhist meditation. These factors are of utmost importance. **However, great their significance, most practitioners are unfamiliar with them and their implications; therefore, no attention is given to understanding them. My goal in writing this book is to explain and clarify these two essential factors for Buddhist meditation practice.**

The Buddha frequently talked about these two and gave instructions to his disciples to practice and develop them in meditation. *Simply, mindfulness is the attention that you focus on an object again and again. Clear comprehension is the deep understanding of the moment-to-moment changing nature of that object.* If one is developing both of these factors, one is step-by-step approaching the ultimate goal and before long will realize the nature of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and non-self. With this understanding, one comes to the realization of real peace and real happiness of life. This is the purpose of human life.

Let us be more and more mindful in daily life striving to understand things clearly as they are, not merely as they appear, so we can live peacefully sharing friendly thoughts and harmoniously respecting other's rights and attitudes.

May you live long in peace!

Bhikkhu T. Seelananda

Bhavana Society Forest Monastery

West Virginia, USA

January 30, 2017

Part 1

Mindfulness

"The mindful one thrives in happiness."
-The Buddha- (S.N. 10.4)

The entirety of the Buddha's teaching could be condensed into the word 'mindfulness'. It is both the power of mind and the power of memory. When developed and cultivated as the power of mind, mindfulness brings us the highest bliss and when mindfulness is developed and cultivated as the power of memory, one can recollect one's previous lives and remember countless things.

Mindfulness is the key to the door of deathlessness. If one has superb mindfulness, one can live happily and peacefully in the present moment by attaining liberation from all fetters and all impurities of mind. However, with mindfulness, even lacking highly developed clear comprehension, one is still able to live happily and peacefully in society with a calm and pacified mind. However, living peacefully and calmly is not the entire purpose of life.

There are many paths one can choose to develop and cleanse the mind. In order to choose among them, one must discern between the proper way and the improper way.

Once the Buddha said, "*Mindfulness is the way to deathlessness and non-mindfulness is the way to death.*" Explaining this, the Buddha said, "*Those who are mindful never die, but unmindful ones are like dead ones*".¹ Once you've cleansed your mind, you are completely free from death. That is 'deathlessness.' This is not a dream.

Naturally, no one wants to die. We all want to live. Not only that, we all cling dearly to life. That is why we should live and let others live. However, one day all are born into this world will die. Death is unpredictable, inevitable and inescapable. If we have not cut off the fetters (unwholesome habits of mind) through which we are bound to the circle of birth-and-death (*samsāra*), we all have to face death and birth again and again. Death is the ultimate result of birth. After death is another life!

This is the problem for all of us. In different religious traditions, this is what is called resurrection, reincarnation, transmigration, rebirth, palingenesis, metempsychosis or re-becoming. All beings are born into this world have to die. That is the nature of all beings. The Buddha understood this situation of all living beings and found 'The Way' to stop birth. Once birth is stopped, death is also stopped; this is the theory that the Buddha rediscovered. 'Mindfulness' is the way he discovered for the ceasing of birth and the attainment of both 'birth-less-ness' and 'deathlessness.' Where there is no birth, there is no death. Things exist

because of other things exist in the world. In this manner, the Buddha rediscovered the "Theory of Causality" or "Dependent Origination" (*paticca samuppāda* - in the Pāli language, which was originally called *Māgadhi* through which the Buddha communicated 2,600 years ago, in India).

Mindfulness, when properly and systematically developed and cultivated in conjunction with clear comprehension and wisdom is certainly of great benefit. It brings us serenity, insight and perfect peace. That is called 'Right Liberation'.

(i). The Term Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the English equivalent of the Pāli term '*sati*' as in the terms *sati+patthāna*, *ānāpāna+sati*, and *marana+sati*. Its Sanskrit form is '*smṛti*', which means "remembering" or "recollecting". In order to attain liberation or enlightenment, one should practice and develop both mindfulness and wisdom. For this purpose, one has to develop and cultivate mindfulness. Here, mindfulness means the awareness, watchfulness, vigilance or attention in the present moment. Literally, this is moment-to-moment observation of impermanence, un-satisfactoriness, and non-self of body, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness. The term meditation is normally defined as reflecting again and again on a particular subject. However, according to the Buddhist tradition,

if you are thinking while practicing meditation, you are neither meditating nor being mindful. You are also not being mindful whenever you are not being observant. Mindfulness occurs before a concept or thought. To be more precise, mindfulness is a mental action, not merely a word.

Mindfulness is an innate capability of every person which can be developed and cultivated. However, it can only be developed and cultivated in the present moment, not in the past or the future. Liberation from all defilements is possible only by being mindful in the present moment because liberation only occurs in the present moment. Being in the present is the establishment of mindfulness. The technique of Buddhist meditation is based on this one thing, 'mindfulness'. When mindfulness is developed and cultivated properly, it overcomes all things of spiritual life.

(ii). The Buddha's Experiential Wisdom

The Buddha had mindfulness from the beginning of his life and developed it further and further to the point of human perfection. According to the discourse "Wonderful and Marvelous Things"² in *The Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha*, he had mindfulness even while he was in his mother's womb. When he was about five years old, one day he sat under a rose-apple tree and practiced mindfulness of breathing. As a result, he attained the first *jhāna*.³ Again,

while he was with his first teachers, he developed mindfulness as a faculty.⁴ After that, he risked his life practicing six years of arduous austerities. He always maintained constant mindfulness. Later on, he said, "*Although tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness was established, my body was overwrought and unsettled because I was exhausted from the painful striving. But such painful feeling that arose in me did not invade my mind and were impermanent.*"⁵

On the full moon day of May (*Vesak*), he practiced mindfulness of breathing, developed his mind to the point of human perfection and uncovered the true nature of all beings and phenomena throughout the universe and attained supreme Enlightenment. This no doubt was the greatest result of the Buddha's mindfulness practice.

In the discourse of "Fear and Dread" in *The Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha*,⁶ he explains his experience with mindfulness under the *Bodhi* tree on that full moon day - now celebrated as *Vesak* day and how he gained liberation by saying, "Tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness was established. My body was tranquil and untroubled. My mind was concentrated and unified. Quite secluded from sensual pleasures and unwholesome states, I entered upon and abided in the first *jhāna*, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion. With the stilling of applied and sustained thought, I

entered upon and abided in the second *jhāna*, which has self-confidence and singleness of mind with rapture and pleasure born of concentration and without applied and sustained thought.

With the fading away of rapture, I abided in equanimity while remaining mindful and fully aware and still feeling pleasure within the body, I entered upon and abided in the third *jhāna due to which the noble ones* announced: 'He has pleasant abiding and has equanimity and mindfulness.' With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, I entered upon and abided in the fourth *jhāna*, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness due to equanimity.

When my concentrated mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfections, malleable, wieldy, steady, imperturbable, I directed it to the recollection of past lives. I recollected my manifold past lives. One birth, two births, three births, four births, five births, ten births, twenty births, thirty births, forty births, fifty births, a hundred births, a thousand births, a hundred-thousand births as well as many eons of world-contraction, many eons of world-expansion, many eons of world-contraction and expansion. 'There I was so named, of such a clan, with such an appearance, such was my nutriment, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my life-term. Passing away from there, I reappeared elsewhere and there too I was so named, of such a clan, with such an

appearance and such was my nutriment, such my experience of pleasure and pain, such my life-term and passing away from there, I reappeared here.' Thus, with their aspects and particularities, I recollected my manifold past lives. This was the **first true knowledge** attained by me during the first watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose as happens in one who abides diligent, ardent and resolute.

When my concentrated mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and imperturbable. I directed it to the passing away and reappearance of beings. With the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses that of the human, I saw beings passing away and reappearing, inferior and superior, fair and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate. I understood how beings pass on according to their actions, 'These worthy beings who were ill conducted in body, speech, and mind, revilers of noble ones, wrong in their views, giving effect to wrong view in their actions, on the dissolution of the body, after death, have reappeared in a state of deprivation, in a bad destination, in perdition, even in hell, but these worthy beings who were well conducted in body, speech, and mind, not revilers of noble ones, right in their views and rightly viewed their actions, on the dissolution of the body have reappeared after death in a good destination even in the heavenly world.' Thus with the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses that of the human, I saw beings

passing away and reappearing, inferior and superior, fair and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate, and I understood how beings pass on according to their actions. This was the **second true knowledge** attained by me during the middle watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose which, happens to one who abides diligent, ardent, and resolute.

When my concentrated mind was thus purified, bright, unblemished, rid of imperfection, malleable, wieldy, steady, and imperturbable. I directed it to the destruction of the taints. I directly knew things as they actually were. I identified that, 'This is suffering' and I directly knew as it actually was, 'This is the origin of suffering' and I directly knew as it actually was, 'This is the cessation of suffering' and I directly knew as it actually was, 'This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.' I directly knew as it actually was, 'These are the taints' and I directly knew as it actually was, 'This is the origin of the taints' and I directly knew as it actually was, 'This is the cessation of the taints' and I directly knew it as it actually was, 'This is the way leading to the cessation of the taints.'

When I knew and saw thus, my mind was liberated from the taint of sensual desire, from the taint of being, and from the taint of ignorance. When it was liberated, there came the knowledge: '*It is liberated.*' I directly knew 'Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done and there is

no more coming to any state of being.' This was the **third true knowledge** attained by me during the last watch of the night. Ignorance was banished and true knowledge arose, darkness was banished and light arose which happens to one who abides diligent, ardent, and resolute."

Mindfulness does not mean that one's mind is full like a spoonful, cupful or handful. In fact, when one is mindful, one's mind is not full, but clear. One is well aware of what is going on, fully alert, vigilant, wise, and living in the present moment. Sometimes, it is translated as 'bare-attention' because it is merely the attention to understand things properly. There is no desire to grasp anything or to repel anything. One has only a bright and clear mind. When one's mind is bright with that clarity, wisdom and clear comprehension also arise which leads to seeing things as they really are (*vipassanā*).

(iii). Mindfulness as the Power of Memory

When mindfulness is well developed as a faculty, one can direct one's mindfulness to understand one's previous lives. That is exactly what the Buddha did under the *Bodhi* tree on that full moon night when he gained the first deep knowledge. For understanding the nature of the faculty of mindfulness, there is a classic example in the discourse of "The Analysis" of *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*.⁷ In this discourse, the Buddha says, "And what, monks, is

the faculty of mindfulness? Here, monks, the noble disciple is mindful, possessing supreme mindfulness and remains prudent. One who remembers and recollects what was done and said long ago. This is called the faculty of mindfulness." This is not mindfulness in the present moment, which leads to the realization of things as they are, but mindfulness developed as a faculty and extended to recollect one's previous lives. Whenever recollecting one's previous lives, one should think of only something referring to one's five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness) or one of the five. In the "Chewed Up" sutta of The Connected Discourses, the Buddha said this very clearly. Addressing the monks, he said, "*Bhikkhus, those ascetics and brahmins who recollect their manifold past abodes recollect the five aggregates subject to clinging or even just one of them. What five? When recollecting thus, bhikkhus: 'I had such form in the past,' it is just form that one recollects. When recollecting, 'I had such a feeling in the past,' it is just feeling that one recollects. When recollecting: 'I had such a perception in the past,' it is just perception that one recollects. When recollecting, 'I had such volitional formations in the past,' it is just volitional formations that one recollects. When recollecting, 'I had such consciousness in the past,' it is just consciousness that one recollects.*"⁸

Whenever you think of anything about the five aggregates subject to clinging, if you are mindful enough, you cannot be really happy; instead, you become disenchanted because you see the real nature

of it. That is the nature of impermanence. If there are no five aggregates of clinging, there is no suffering at all. The Buddha said, "*In short, these five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering*".⁹ This we have to understand clearly.

Venerable Ananda, whose mindfulness was a well-developed faculty, was the preeminent mindful monk. We will explore his story later in this book. It is true that when mindfulness is developed and cultivated, it has the power to recollect past lives and remember many things, but in order to understand things as they really are, one has to be mindful in the present moment. That is the only way to understand reality of deathlessness according to the Buddha.

First, one has to practice meditation gradually to cultivate and develop mindfulness. Only then does mindfulness become a spiritual faculty together with other four faculties. The other four spiritual faculties are confidence, energy, concentration, and wisdom. Development of mindfulness as a faculty for the purpose of enlightenment is a unique teaching of the Buddha. Once they are cultivated and developed, they themselves become the five spiritual powers and lead to the perfection of the seven factors of enlightenment and finally the attainment of enlightenment. The first factor of enlightenment itself is mindfulness.

Even being aware of remembering something in the past is also mindfulness. For instance, suppose at

present, you are remembering your mother and you know that you are remembering her. That is mindfulness because you are in the present moment with the memory of your mother and the awareness of having that thought. This is what is called mindfulness of mind (*cittānupassanā*). This is very clearly mentioned in the third component of mindfulness in the “*Great Discourse of the Establishment of Mindfulness*.” It is said, “*When the mind is lustful he knows that the mind is lustful. When the mind is free from lust he knows that mind is free from lust etc.*”¹⁰

As mentioned earlier, it is the same faculty of mindfulness that when further developed becomes 'spiritual power.' Then, it becomes 'mindfulness as a power.' If one develops mindfulness even further, that same mindfulness becomes a 'factor of enlightenment', which leads you to the final goal, the attainment of Enlightenment or Liberation. However, we should understand clearly that one never attains enlightenment by remembering or recollecting. One has to eradicate all defilements through *vipassanā* and empty one's mind. It is important to remember that emptiness is nothing but the emptiness of soul or self [soullessness]. There are no permanent things to be grasped as soul or self in the world or in the whole universe. Everything is impermanent, unsatisfactory and without a soul or self (*aniccā, dukkhā, anattā*).

(iv). The Meanings of Mindfulness

Mindfulness simply means focusing bare attention. However, this term 'attention' is not sufficient to convey the full meaning of the *Pāli* term 'sati' as the Buddha used it in his discourses. We see that there are also the terms such as, '**awareness,**' '**ever-alertness,**' '**earnestness,**' '**watchfulness,**' and '**vigilance**'. Therefore, as far as we understand, all these nuances of meaning are encompassed by the word '*sati*.' What is more important are not the words, but the action. This is an action in the present moment. As mentioned earlier, it is a mental state that occurs prior to one's thought and concepts. Therefore, it has no connection with thought or concepts. One is undoubtedly mindful when one is free from all thoughts and concepts. Just like a flash of light, it is a flash of mind. That flash of mind is to be developed and cultivated by the wise so that it becomes a bright light. That light arises as the result of the development of mind through unremitting mindfulness. That is what the Buddha said, "Light arose in me (*āloko udapādi*)."
This light is the light of wisdom.

As we discussed earlier, the *Pāli* term for mindfulness is 'sati'. *Pāli* terms are rich and profound. This is why the Buddha used this language to convey his noble message of truth and the wonderful technique of *vipassanā*, rather using Sanskrit, which was the most used language in India at that time.

(v). Unparalleled Service Based on Mindfulness

The mindful and young ascetic, *Siddhārtha*, became the Buddha of our era on the full moon day of May in the year 588 BCE. His enlightenment is not something bestowed by any external superhuman agent. He gained it through his own effort and wisdom. He realized the true nature of things as they are. This is his self-awakening. After his enlightenment, he led an exemplary life full of purity and mindfulness. His mindfulness was constant. *The Buddha was born mindfully, lived mindfully and finally, at the age of 80, passed away mindfully.* That is the great and wonderful nature of the Buddha. Not only this Buddha of our historical era, but also all other *Buddhās* and *arahants* (*liberated persons*) who live their whole lives mindfully and vigilantly.

According to the biography of the Buddha, after he attained enlightenment, he started to teach his unique technique of meditation based on mindfulness. First, he taught *Dhamma* to only five ascetics. Thereafter, day-by-day, many people from all walks of life came to meet him and learn from him. They practiced, developed mindfulness and attained enlightenment. Eventually, they became the disciples of the Buddha. According to Buddhist literature, within one year, the Buddha had 20,000 enlightened disciple monks in his Order. It was together with them all that the Buddha visited his father and other relatives to offer his gratitude to them. That was a

historic visit during which many of his relatives became followers of the Buddha.

The Buddha extended his unparalleled service to all humanity irrespective of their color, gender, caste, creed or any other social differences. He became the teacher of both humans and deities. Thousands of deities came to listen to the Buddha to learn how to practice mindfulness because it is the way to live happily and peacefully.¹¹ Who does not want to live happily and peacefully?

Everybody would like to lead a happy and peaceful life. This is why everybody should understand this wonderful technique of developing mindfulness. This is the main teaching of mental development (*bhāvana*), the Four Establishments of Mindfulness. This teaching remains immutable, irrefutable, unchanged and untarnished by skeptics and intellectuals in the world. The Buddha's teaching is not to be taken for granted or by mere faith, but by investigation and based on empirical facts. It is a visible teaching here and now, unaffected by time and space, calling one to come and see which leads onwards. It is to be realized by the wise individually by observing things internally or externally, objectively without personalizing anything. Once the Buddha said. "*There is nothing to cling to in the world,*"¹²

When one is mindful, one's wisdom and clear comprehension also comes to maturity and perfection.

As a result of this, one can realize that all things are in the process of changing. This is the evanescent nature of all animate and inanimate things. Then, when one further sees underneath of that changing nature, one sees there is no unchanging, permanent entity. That is what is called insubstantiality (*anattā*). In this process, whatever one grasps as mine, me or myself is, ultimately unsatisfactory. This is also realized. These three insights are the understanding and realization of the three characteristics of existence of all things. This is what is called insight (*vipassanā*). With this understanding, one cuts off three fetters and enters upon the path as a stream enterer (*sotāpanna*) and gains the knowledge of the three principles of the teachings of the Buddha.

They are:

1. The Four Noble Truths
2. The Dependent Origination
3. The Three Characteristics of Existence.

Further more, he himself understands that he will never be born in the animal, hungry ghost, or hell realms. His *samsāric* journey is cut off and he is destined for liberation and in no more than seven life times. He will be free from all discomforts (*dukkha*). This is why it is said that the state of 'stream enterer' is greater and nobler than the state of 'universal monarch.'¹³ Mindfulness is the key to this achievement.

(vi). How to Develop Mindfulness

As mentioned earlier, Mindfulness, when developed and cultivated, leads to both the power of memory and the power of mind. In the process of development, first one has to start with contemplation exercises, such as contemplating the internal and external elements (earth, water, fire, air, and space), then recollecting and developing exercises like the four sublime abodes (loving-friendliness, compassion, appreciative joy and equanimity) or recollecting the great qualities of the *Buddha*, *Dhamma*, and the *Sangha*. These are called "*anussati bhāvanā*" which basically leads to serenity or *samatha*.

Then, further one has to develop and cultivate their mind with clear awareness and mindfulness, which is called "*sati bhāvanā*" which means mindful meditation that directly leads to insight. It is both serenity and insight in tandem. Though we've categorized them here for our easy understanding, it should be noted that these are not two different kinds of meditation but two levels of meditation. As a beginner, without practicing serenity, one cannot practice insight. That is why we see both these as two levels on the same path or with a modern simile, two spots on the same escalator.

(vii). A Unique Teaching

When practicing mindfulness meditation in such a way, one can develop and cultivate mindfulness

as a spiritual faculty. Developing mindfulness as a spiritual faculty for the purpose of enlightenment is a unique teaching of the Buddha. No other tradition uses this same technique. When mindfulness is practiced and developed in such a way, it becomes a spiritual faculty as well as a spiritual power. It is this same mindfulness, which leads to the mindfulness factor of enlightenment and becomes the seventh factor of the noble eightfold path.

In order to develop insight, first practice mindfulness of breathing or another object understanding the nature of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and the soullessness of that object. Then, apply the same to understand the nature of the five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, volitional formations and consciousness) as well as the six bases (the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind). This is how the Buddha gave step-by-step instructions to his own son, the Venerable *Rāhula*, in both “The Greater Discourse to *Rāhula*” and “The Shorter Discourse to *Rāhula*.”¹⁴

In many a discourse, the Buddha has explained how to develop mindfulness. Especially in the discourses, “The Establishment of Mindfulness” in *The Long Discourses (Dīgha Nikāya)*, “The Mindfulness of Breathing” in *The Middle Length Sayings (Majjhima Nikāya)*, *The Connected Discourses (Samyutta Nikāya)* and *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha (Anguttara Nikāya)*. Once, while the Buddha was dwelling in the

*Ambapāli's Grove at Vishāli addressing the monks, the Buddha said, "Monks a bhikkhu (meditator) should dwell mindful and clearly comprehending. This is our instruction to you." Then he further explained, "And how, monks, is a bhikkhu mindful? Here, monks, a bhikkhu dwells contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world. He dwells, contemplating feelings in feelings ... mind in mind ... phenomena in phenomena, ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world. It is in this way, monks, that a bhikkhu is mindful. And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu exercise with clear comprehension? Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu is one who acts with clear comprehension when going forward and returning; when looking ahead and looking aside; when drawing in and extending the limbs; when wearing his robes and carrying his outer robe and bowl; when eating, drinking, chewing his food, and tasting; when defecating and urinating; when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, speaking, and remaining silent. It is in such a way that a bhikkhu exercises clear comprehension."*¹⁵

(viii). Be Mindful at all Times

One day, a group of 16 students who had been encouraged and directed by their teacher named Bāvāri went to meet the Buddha and asked questions not verbally but mentally. The Buddha having understood them clearly and perfectly answered each question. Afterwards, the students were elated by the

responses from the Buddha and wanted to ask additional questions individually. Each of them asked many different questions about the Dhamma. Subsequently, they all attained enlightenment and became the disciples of the Buddha. One of them was a student named Mogharāja. He asked, "*Venerable Sir, how should one see the world so that one is not to be seen by the King of Māra?*" Then, the Buddha said, "*Mogharāja, be mindful all the time and see the world as empty. Uproot the view of 'self.' In this manner you will go beyond Māra. The one who sees the world as such will never see the King of Māra.*"¹⁶

In the same group, there was a student named *Ajitha*. He asked, "Venerable Sir, streams (cravings) flow everywhere, with what the streams should be shielded? Tell me, what is the constraint for the streams? By what are the streams dammed?" The Buddha said, "*Whatever streams there are in the world, they are shielded with mindfulness. I tell you the restraint of streams, they all are dammed by wisdom.*" It is clear that mindful one restrains from craving.

On one occasion, a certain deity came to the Buddha and said,

"As if smitten by a sword,
As if his head were on fire,
A meditator should behave mindfully
To abandon sensual lust."

Then the Buddha said,

“As if smitten by a sword,
As if his head were on fire,
A meditator should behave mindfully
To abandon identity view.”¹⁸

The abandonment of sensual lust is not the purpose of practicing in the holy life. Abandoning lust is only a fraction of the practice. What is more difficult is abandoning one's personalization or the identity view (*sakkāyaditthi*). This is the first fetter, which is to be cut off to enter the path as a 'stream enterer'. This is the most difficult one of the ten to be cut off. However, the Buddha clearly said, "*It is possible.*" The Buddha's advice here is clear: a meditator should behave mindfully to abandon the identity view so that it leads to the path directly and comes to the end of all discomforts and attains liberation.

(ix). Kind Admonitions of The Buddha

“Be mindful and wise, practice patiently, diligently, vigilantly.” This is the gist of the admonitions of the Buddha. (All Buddha’s advice us not to do evil, do what is good, and to cultivate the mind.¹⁹) In this manner, the Buddha frequently admonished and encouraged his disciples to practice mindfulness. One of his kind and genuine admonitions to his disciples was, *“Meditate, O bhikkhus! Do not be heedless. Let not your mind whirl on sensual pleasures. Heedless, do not swallow a red hot iron*

ball, lest you cry when burning, 'O this is suffering!'"²⁰ As we come across his discourses, time after time, filled with compassion and seriousness the Buddha instructed as follows:

*"What should be done for his disciples out of compassion by a teacher who seeks their welfare and has compassion for them, that I have done for you. There are these tree roots and, these empty huts. Meditate, do not delay or else you will regret it later. This is our instruction to you."*²¹

This is how the Buddha wanted his disciples and all followers to practice mindfulness mainly because he knew the significance of practicing mindfulness better than all other humans and deities. Whenever he said, '*meditate*' it meant practicing mindfulness or the four establishments of mindfulness. Even his last words were "*Practice diligently, earnestly*" (*appamādena sampādeṭṭha*). The Pāli term *appamāda* conveys the meaning "*mindfulness*." This brings to light that '*sati*' and '*appamāda*' are synonyms for both meaning '*mindfulness*'. There is a chapter entitled *Appamāda* in the *Dhammapada* where the Buddha admonishes us, "*Delight in mindfulness! Guard well your thoughts! Draw yourself out of this bog of evil just as an elephant draws himself out of the mud.*"²²

In the same chapter of the *Dhammapada*, giving a metaphor, the Buddha suggested building one's own '*island*'. Here he says, "*By sustained effort, earnestness*

*(mindfulness), discipline, and self-control, let the wise person make an island which no flood overwhelms.”*²³ Here, making the island means developing the four establishments of mindfulness. He described this idea clearly in the discourse delivered towards the end of his life known as The Last Days of the Buddha (*Maha-Parinibbāna Sutta*). Here, the Buddha addressing the Venerable Ananda says, “*Ananda, I am now old, worn out, venerable, one who has traversed life’s path, I have reached the end of life at the age of eighty. Just as an old cart is made to go by being held together with straps, so the Tathāgata’s body is kept going by being strapped up. It is only when the Tathāgata withdraws his attention from all outward signs, and by the cessation of certain feelings and enters into the sign-less concentration of mind, then only his body is painless. Therefore, Ananda, you should live as islands unto yourselves, being your own refuge, with no one else as your refuge, with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as your refuge and with no other refuge. And, Ananda, how does a monk live as an island unto himself, being his own refuge, with no one else as his refuge, with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as his refuge, with no other refuge? Here, Ananda, a monk abides contemplating the body as body, ardently, clearly comprehending, mindfully and having put away all hankering and fretting for the world, and likewise with regard to feelings, mind and mind-objects as well.*”²⁴

The person who is mindful is called 'satimā' in Pāli. We come across this term in many discourses. In “*The Great Discourse of the Establishment of Mindfulness,*”

the Buddha pointed this out as one of the four qualities to be kept in mind and maintained all the time while practicing meditation. The four qualities are:

1. Ardently (*ātāpi*)
2. Clearly comprehending (*sampajāno*)
3. Mindfully (*satimā*)
4. Having removed covetousness and grief (*i.e. equanimity*) (*vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassam*)

In the process of developing *jhāna*, when the practitioner comes to the state of third *jhāna*, he or she can experience an equanimous mind. It is said, "*With the fading away of rapture, one dwells in equanimity, mindful and discerning, and one experiences in one's own person that bliss of which the noble ones say, 'Happily lives one who is equanimous and mindful (satimā sukha vihāriti).'*" Here again, we see that the person who comes to this state is called *satimā* which means the one who is mindful.

In accordance with "*The Discourse of the Rhinoceros*" in the Snake Chapter of the *Sutta Nipāta*, when we are mindful with a clear understanding of the real purpose of practicing, we can live solitarily as a rhinoceros. The Buddha says, "*Desiring the destruction of craving, not neglecting, not foolish, learned, possessing mindfulness, having considered the doctrine, restrained, energetic, one should wander solitary as a rhinoceros.*"²⁵

In The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha admonishing the monks, the Buddha said, "*For one's*

own sake, O monks, diligent mindfulness should be made the mind's guard, and this is for four reasons. What are the four? Thinking:

- i. May my mind not harbor lust for anything inducing lust!
- ii. May my mind not harbor hatred towards anything inducing hatred!
- iii. May my mind not harbor delusion concerning anything inducing delusion!
- iv. May my mind not be infatuated by anything inducing infatuation!"

The Buddha's assurance here is, "Such a practitioner will not waver, shake or tremble, he will not succumb to fear, nor will he adopt the views of other ascetics".²⁶

(x). One More Factor to be Recollected

In *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha* itself, Chapter Six, *Sutta* No 29, there is a discourse titled *Udāyi*. According to this discourse, the Buddha addressed Venerable *Udāyi* saying, "*Udāyi, how many are the things to be recollected?*" In response, Venerable *Udāyi* was silent. For the second time, The Buddha asked Venerable *Udāyi*, "*Udāyi, how many are the things to be recollected?*" For the second time, Venerable *Udāyi* was silent. For the third time, the Buddha asked Venerable *Udāyi*, "*Udāyi, how many are the things to be*

recollected?" For the third time, venerable *Udāyi* was silent. Then, Venerable *Ananda* said to Venerable *Udāyi*, "Friend, *Udāyi*, the Teacher addresses you. "Friend, *Ananda*, I hear The Blessed One. Here, Venerable Sir, the *bhikkhu* recollects the manifold previous births such as one birth, two births, ... thus with all details, he recollects the manifold previous births. Venerable Sir, these are the recollections," he finished. Then, the Buddha addressed Venerable *Ananda*, "*Ananda I knew this Udāyi is a hollow person who does not dwell devoted to the higher mind! Ananda, how many are the recollections?"* the Buddha asked.

"Venerable Sir, there are five recollections, *Ananda* said:

1. First, second, and third *jhāna*: [As he explained, they all are developed for the peaceful abiding here and now.]
2. The sign of light, which is conducive to gaining knowledge and vision.
3. Thirty-two parts of the body, which when reflected, are conducive to dispelling sensual greed.
4. Nine charnel ground reflections which when reflected are conducive to uprooting the conceit of 'I am'.
5. The fourth *jhāna* which when reflected is conducive for the realization of various elements.

Thereupon, the Buddha said, "Good! Ananda, bear in mind this sixth one, sixth recollection too. "The bhikkhu proceeds mindfully, recedes mindfully, stands mindfully, sits mindfully, lies mindfully, and intends activity mindfully. Ananda, when this is recollected it is conducive to mindfulness and clear comprehension."²⁷

Here, the Buddha teaches us how to practice both mindfulness and clear comprehension.

Similes about Mindfulness Concerning Individuals

Throughout the discourses, the Buddha has given many fitting similes to explain mindfulness. The main purpose of developing and cultivating mindfulness is to abandon the identity view and to enter the stream, completing the steps of the path one by one leading to the final destination: liberation. For this purpose, one has to make effort and practice mindfulness diligently. There is no time for heedlessness or un-mindfulness. Once, a certain demon named *Alavaka*, in an attempt to embarrass the Buddha, asked him the following four questions:

" How does one cross over the flood?
How does one cross over the sea?
How does one overcome suffering?
How is one purified?"

Then, the Buddha said,

*" Through conviction, one crosses over the flood
Through heedfulness [mindfulness], the sea
Through persistence, one overcomes suffering
Through discernment, one is purified."²⁸*

A simile certainly gives a different perspective and a clearer picture of the situation. Through similes, one can gain a deeper understanding. The use of similes is one of the most powerful methods of teaching. The Buddha repeatedly used this method in his teachings. There are thousands of similes in his discourses.

(i). The Most Beautiful Girl of the Land

On one occasion, addressing the monks and giving a typical simile the Buddha said, "Monks, suppose that upon hearing, 'The most beautiful girl of the land! The most beautiful girl of the land!' A great crowd of people would assemble hoping that most beautiful girl of the land would dance exquisitely and sing exquisitely. On hearing, 'The most beautiful girl of the land is dancing! The most beautiful girl of the land is singing!' an even larger crowd of people would assemble. Then, a man would come along, wishing to live, rather than die, wishing for happiness and was averse to suffering. Someone would say to him, 'Good man, you must carry around this bowl of oil filled to the brim between the crowd and the most beautiful girl of the land. A man with a drawn sword will be

following right behind you, and if you spill even a little of it, right there he will cut off your head.' "What do you think, monks, would that man stop attending to that bowl of oil and out of negligence turn his attention outwards?" "No, Venerable Sir" the monks replied. "I have made up this simile, monks, in order to explain something. This simile will help explain mindfulness. 'The bowl of oil filled to the brim', is like mindfulness directed to the body. Therefore, monks, you should train yourselves, 'We will develop and cultivate mindfulness directed to the body, make it our vehicle, make it our basis, stabilize it, exercise ourselves in it, and fully perfect it.' Thus, monks, should you train yourselves."²⁹ This is how one has to practice mindfulness. It is to be done giving full attention just like the person giving attention to the brimming bowl of oil. Mindfulness is to be kept as a resolution for life because without fail, it brings us success in life.

(ii). Mindfulness as the Stick for Cows

According to the discourse of the "Two Kinds of Thought" in *The Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha*, the Buddha pointed out the difficulty of guarding cows when taking them across a well-grown rice field. For this purpose, the cowherd uses a stick to tap and poke the sides of the cow to keep them from eating the rice; otherwise, the owners of the rice field would blame the cowherd. Likewise, if one is lacking in mindfulness, the mind is inclined towards

unwholesome thoughts, which are counterproductive to the development of mindfulness and wisdom. Here, the Buddha says, "*Bhikkhus*, whatever a *bhikkhu* frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will become the inclination of his mind. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of sensual desire, he has abandoned the thought of renunciation to cultivate the thought of sensual desire, and then his mind thinks about sensual desire. If he frequently thinks thoughts of ill will, he has abandoned thoughts of non-ill will to cultivate thoughts of ill will, and then his mind thinks about thoughts of ill will. If he frequently thinks thoughts of cruelty, he has abandoned the thoughts of non-cruelty to cultivate thoughts of cruelty, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of cruelty.

Just as in the last month of the rainy season in the autumn, when the crops thicken, a cowherd would guard his cows by constantly tapping and poking them on this side and that with a stick to check and curb them. Why is this? Because he sees that he could be flogged, imprisoned, fined, or blamed [if he let them stray into the crops]. So too I saw in unwholesome states danger, degradation, and defilement, and in wholesome states the blessing of renunciation and cleansing."³⁰

Further more, showing its opposite, the Buddha says, "*Bhikkhus*, whatever a *bhikkhu* frequently thinks about will become the inclination of his mind. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of

renunciation, he has abandoned the thought of sensual desire to cultivate the thoughts of renunciation, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of renunciation. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of non-ill will ... upon thoughts of non-cruelty, he has abandoned the thought of cruelty to cultivate the thought of non-cruelty, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of non-cruelty.

Just like during the last month of the hot season, when all the crops have been brought inside the villages, a cowherd would guard his cows while staying at the root of a tree or out in the open. Just as he only needs to be mindful that the cows are there, so too, I only needed to be mindful that those states were there."³¹

This is really a practical example. When the cows are around the crops, the cowherd should be extra vigilant to wisely prevent them from eating the crops. This is clearer if you imagine someone who wants to take a cow through the crops through a narrow track in the field. Can you imagine how the cowherd uses the stick to control the cow by touching and poking the sides of the cow? Ah... like a stick for the cow, mindfulness is needed at all times. Stick to present moment and be here in this very moment. Observe the present movements of your eyes and hands, etc.

(iii). Mindfulness is the Watchful Driver

One day, as usual, Venerable *Ananda*, the attendant monk of the Buddha, went from house to house collecting alms in the city of *Sāvatti*. On his way, he saw a *Brahmin*, named *Jānussoṇi*, departing from the city in an all-white chariot drawn by mares. The horses yoked to it were white, its ornaments were white, the chariot was white, its upholstery was white, the reins, goad and canopy were also white as well as his turban, clothes, and sandals. All the while he was being fanned by a white chowry (*fly-whisk*). People, having seen this said: "Divine indeed, sir, is the vehicle! It appears to be a divine vehicle indeed, sir!" Then, the Venerable *Ananda* walked for his alms in the city. After returning to the monastery and after having his meal, he approached the Buddha and told this story to the Buddha. Then he continued, "It appears to be a divine vehicle indeed, sir! Is it possible, Venerable Sir, to point out a divine vehicle in this *Dhamma* and Discipline (*dhamma vinaya*)?" Then, the Buddha said, "Yes, it is possible, *Ananda*," "It is a designation for this Noble Eightfold Path: 'the divine vehicle' and 'the vehicle of *Dhamma*' and 'the unsurpassed victory in battle.'"

Illustrating this further, the Buddha said, "Right understanding, *Ananda*, when developed and cultivated results in the removal of lust, hatred and delusion. Right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration, when developed and cultivated,

result in the removal of lust, hatred and delusion. In this way, *Ananda*, it may be understood how this is a designation for this Noble Eightfold Path: 'the divine vehicle' and 'the vehicle of *Dhamma*' and 'the unsurpassed victory in battle.'" Then, using four beautiful verses, the Buddha explained the nature of the chariot of the Noble Eightfold Path as follows:

" Its qualities of faith and wisdom
Are always yoked evenly together.
Shame is its pole; mind its yoke-tie,
Mindfulness, the watchful charioteer.

The chariot's ornament is virtue,
Its axle *jhāna*, energy its wheels;
Equanimity keeps the burden balanced,
Desirelessness serves as upholstery.
Good will, harmlessness, and seclusion:
These are the chariot's weaponry,
Forbearance its armor and shield,
As it rolls towards security from bondage.

This divine vehicle unsurpassed
Originates from within oneself.
The wise depart from the world in it,
Inevitably winning the victory."³²

In these verses, the Buddha aptly compared mindfulness to the charioteer. The driver of any vehicle should be careful, conscious and observant. Otherwise, the passengers in the vehicle as well as others on the road are in danger. Even if one is alone in the vehicle, without mindfulness, the driver is in danger. For the protection of oneself and others, one should be always

mindful. Then, one can journey safely and reach the destination quickly and happily. "Protection of one's self is the way to protect others as well."

In the *Sedaka Sutta* of *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha* on the Establishments of Mindfulness, the Buddha makes another interesting analogy for the practice of mindfulness with an anecdote about acrobats. The Buddha said, "*Bhikkhus*, once in the past an acrobat set up his bamboo pole and addressed his apprentice *Medakathālikā* thus: 'Come, dear *Medakathālikā*, climb the bamboo pole and stand on my shoulders.' Having replied, 'Yes, teacher,' the apprentice *Medakathālikā* climbed up the bamboo pole and stood on the teacher's shoulders. The acrobat then said to the apprentice *Medakathālikā*, 'You protect me, dear *Medakathālikā*, and I'll protect you. Thus, guarded by one another, protected by one another, we'll display our skills, collect our fee, and get down safely from the bamboo pole.' When this was said, the apprentice *Medakathālikā* replied: 'That's not the way to do it, teacher. You protect yourself, teacher and I'll protect myself. Thus, each self-guarded and self-protected, we'll display our skills, collect our fee and get down safely from the bamboo pole.'

That's the method there," the Buddha said. "It's just as the apprentice *Medakathālikā* said to the teacher. 'I will protect myself,' *bhikkhus*, thus should the establishments of mindfulness be practiced. 'I will protect others,' *bhikkhus*, thus should the

establishments of mindfulness be practiced. Protecting oneself, *bhikkhus*, one protects others; protecting others, one protects oneself.' And how is it, *bhikkhus*, that by protecting oneself one protects others? By the pursuit, development, and cultivation [of the four establishments of mindfulness]. It is in such a way that by protecting oneself, one protects others.

And how is it, *bhikkhus*, that by protecting others one protects oneself? By patience, harmlessness, loving friendliness and sympathy. It is in such a way that by protecting others one protects oneself. 'I will protect myself,' *bhikkhus*, thus should the establishments of mindfulness be practiced. 'I will protect others,' *bhikkhus*: thus should the establishments of mindfulness be practiced. *Protecting oneself, bhikkhus, one protects others; protecting others, one protects oneself.*"³³

(iv). Mindfulness is the Cushion of the Chariot

On one occasion, when the Buddha was dwelling at *Sāvatti* in *Jeta's Grove*, *Anāthapindika's Park*, after nightfall, a certain deity of stunning beauty illuminating the entire grove, approached the Buddha. Having approached him, he paid homage to the Buddha and stood to one side. Then, he recited this verse in the presence of the Buddha:

“ Resounding with a host of nymphs,
Haunted by a host of demons!
This grove is to be called 'Deluding':
How does one escape from it?”

The Buddha then said,

" The path is called straight
Without fear is the destination;
The carriage is called 'silent'
Accompanied by the Wheel of *Dhamma*.
Conscience is the brake
And **mindfulness the upholstery**;
I call *Dhamma* 'driver'
And right view runs ahead of it.
And whether it be a woman,
Or whether it be a man,
Whoever travels by this carriage
Shall draw close to *Nibbāna*."³⁴

Here, the Buddha compared mindfulness to the upholstery of the chariot. We all like comfortable cushions in our vehicles. Mindfulness is the cushion. In “The Great Discourse of the Establishments of Mindfulness” the Buddha gave us four comfortable cushions. These four include the mindfulness of body, the mindfulness of feelings, the mindfulness of mind and the mindfulness of mental objects. We can use these four “cushions” of mindfulness for a comfortable life.

(v). The Buddha's Mindfulness

In the *Theragātha*, the Verses of the Elder - Monks, the Buddha is compared to an elephant. His mindfulness is compared to the elephant's neck and his wisdom to the elephant's head.³⁵ Just as the head is connected to the body with the neck, the Buddha's wisdom is connected with his mindfulness.

An elephant's neck is short and rigid which is always exposed to a lion's attack. The elephant uses his huge body to protect his neck from the lion. Whenever he turns his head, he turns it very carefully together with his body. He is careful not to turn his head without turning his body along with the head. Then, the lion finds it difficult to grab the vulnerable neck. However, this is not a developed skill of the elephant. It comes to him naturally and instinctively.

Similarly, the Buddha's mindfulness was present from his birth. It was always there even prior to his birth. According to "*The Discourse of the Wonderful and Marvelous Things*" in The Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha,³⁶ he was mindful in The Heaven of Contented Devas (*Tusita deva*) from where he descended to his mother's womb at conception. Since his mindfulness was developed to the utmost, wherever the Buddha went or whatever he was engaged in, he did so with full awareness. He did not have to make any special effort to be mindful. He was born mindfully, lived mindfully and passed away

mindfully. At the age of eighty, after rendering unparalleled service to mankind and deities, he passed away mindfully as a supreme human, never to be born again.

Mindfulness is both awareness and attention in the present moment as well as the recollection of the past as memory. When it is developed as a faculty, it becomes a powerful tool that can be directed to the past and recollect to many past events. It is through this power that the Buddha recollected eons of his past lives. Some of these are recorded as "Birth Stories of the Buddha." It is because of his development of the faculties of mindfulness and wisdom that he remained so alert even at the age of eighty.

Regarding his mindfulness and wisdom, the Buddha gave a distinctive example in "The Greater Discourse on the Lion's Roar." Addressing the Venerable *Sāriputta*, the Buddha said, "*Sāriputta*, there are certain recluses and *brahmins* whose doctrine and view are these: 'As long as this good man is still young, a black-haired young man is endowed with the blessing of youth, in the prime of life, so long is he perfect in his lucid wisdom. But when this good man is old, aged, burdened with years, advanced in life, and has come to the last stage in life at age eighty, ninety, or even one hundred years old, then the lucidity of his wisdom is lost.'

But it should not be regarded as such. I am now old, aged, burdened with years, advanced in life, and come to the last stage as I have turned eighty.

Now suppose that I had four disciples who lived to be one hundred years old with perfect mindfulness, retentiveness, memory, and lucidity of wisdom. Just as a skilled archer, trained, practiced, and tested, could easily shoot a light arrow across the shadow of a palm tree, suppose that they were even to that extent perfect in mindfulness, retentiveness, memory, and lucidity of wisdom. Suppose that they continuously asked me about the four foundations of mindfulness and that I answered them when asked and that they remembered each answer of mine and never asked a subsidiary question or paused except to eat, drink, consume food, taste, urinate, defecate and rest in order to remove sleepiness and tiredness. Still the *Tathāgata's* [Buddha's] exposition of the *Dhamma*, his explanations of factors of the *Dhamma* and his replies continued, but meanwhile those four disciples of mine with their hundred years' lifespan would have died at the end of those hundred years. *Sāriputta*, even if you have to carry me about on a bed, still, there will be no change in the lucidity of the *Tāthāgata's* wisdom. Rightly speaking, were it to be said of anyone: 'A being not subject to delusion has appeared in the world for the welfare and happiness of many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, welfare, and happiness of gods and humans,' it is of me indeed that rightly speaking this should be said."³⁷

According to the Chapter on *Māra*, in *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, at one time the Buddha was dwelling at *Uruvelā* on the bank of the river *Nerañjarā* at the foot of the Goatherd's Banyan Tree. At this time, *Māra*, the Evil One, had been following the Buddha for seven years seeking to gain access to him, but he was unsuccessful due to the incomparable mindfulness of the Buddha. Then *Māra*, the Evil One, approached the Buddha and addressed him in verse:

Māra:

Is it because you are sunk in sorrow
That you meditate in the woods?
Because you've lost wealth or pine for it,
Or committed some crime in the village?
Why don't you make friends with people?
Why don't you form any intimate ties?

Buddha:

" Having dug up entirely the root of sorrow,
Guiltless, I meditate free from sorrow.
Having cut off all greedy urge for existence,
I meditate taintless, O kinsman of the negligent!"

Māra:

" That of which they say 'This is mine,'
And those who speak in terms of 'mine' —
If your mind exists among these,
You won't escape me, ascetic."

The Buddha:

" That which they speak of is not mine,
I'm not one of those who speak [of mine].
You should know thus, O Evil One:
Even my path you will not see."

Māra:

" If you have discovered the path,
The secure way leading to the Deathless,
Be off and walk that path alone;
What's the point of instructing others?"

The Buddha:

" Those people going to the far shore
Ask what lies beyond Death's realm.
When asked, I explain to them
The truth without attachment."

Māra then continued. "Suppose Venerable Sir not far from a village or a town there was a lotus pond in which a crab was living. Then a group of boys and girls left village or town to visit the pond. Suppose they would pull the crab out of the water and put it on the ground. Then, whenever that crab would extend one of its claws, those boys and girls would cut it off, break it and smash it to bits with sticks and stones. After all its claws have been cut off, broken and smashed to bits, that crab would be unable to return to that pond. So too, Venerable Sir, all those distortions, maneuvers, and contortions of mine have been cut off, broken and smashed to bits by the Blessed One. Now, Venerable Sir, I am unable to approach the Blessed One again seeking to gain access to him."

Then, *Māra* the Evil One, in the presence of the Buddha, recited these verses of disappointment:

" There was a crow that walked around
A stone that looked like a lump of fat,

' Let's find something tender here,' [he thought,
' Perhaps there's something nice and tasty.'
But because he found nothing tasty there,
The crow departed from that spot.
Just like the crow that attacked the stone,
We leave *Gotama*, disappointed." ³⁸

Through the seven years of following the Buddha, *Māra* could find neither fault nor lapse in the mindfulness of the Buddha.

vi. Venerable Ananda's Mindfulness

Among all the disciples of the Buddha, Venerable *Ananda* was the foremost in mindfulness. Not only in mindfulness, but he was declared by the Buddha as preeminent in five categories. [All other monks were excelled in only one or two categories.] These five categories are:

1. Of those who had learned much of the Buddha's discourses, he was the preeminent (*bahussutānam aggo*)
2. Of those who had a good memory (*satimantānam aggo*)
3. Of those who had mastery over the sequential structure of the teachings (*gatimantānam aggo*)
4. Of those who were steadfast in study and learning (*dhitimantānam aggo*) and
5. Of the Buddha's attendants (*upatthakānam aggo*).

Venerable *Ananda* was born on the same day as the Buddha. They were cousins. At the age of 37, he decided to enter the order of the Buddha together with his brother, *Anuruddha* and other cousins named *Devadatta* and *Kimbila*. After his ordination, during his very first rains, he attained the fruit of stream-entry. When both the Buddha and Venerable *Ananda* were fifty-five years of age, the Buddha called a meeting and declared,

"In my twenty years of leading of the *Sangha*, I have had many different attendants, but none of them has really filled the post perfectly. Again and again some willfulness has become apparent. Now I am fifty-five years old and it is necessary for me to have a trustworthy and reliable attendant." At once all the noble disciples offered their services, but the Buddha did not accept them. Then, the great monks looked at Venerable *Ananda*, who had held back modestly, and asked him to volunteer. Then, the Buddha declared that *Ananda* would be pleasing to him and would be the best choice for the post. *Ananda* was in no way prideful that the Master had preferred him to the other disciples, but instead asked for eight favors as follows.³⁹

1. The Master should never pass a gift or robes onto him.
2. He should never give him any alms-food, which he himself had received.

3. Having received a dwelling place, he should never give it to him.
4. He should never include him in any personal invitations.
5. If he [*Ananda*] was invited to a meal, he should have the right to transfer the invitation to the Buddha or to include the Buddha to this invitation.
6. When people come from outlying areas, he should have privilege to lead them to the Buddha.
7. If he has any doubts or inquires about the *Dhamma*, he should have the right to have them cleared up at any time.
8. When the Buddha gives a discourse during his absence, he should have the privilege to have it repeated to him privately.

The Buddha granted him these very reasonable requests. With these favors, Venerable *Ananda* became the attendant monk of the Buddha. From then on, Venerable *Ananda* was the constant companion, attendant and helper of the Buddha until his last breath at the age of eighty. According to the *Theragāthā*, he says that during his twenty-five years of close connection with the Buddha and because of his unwavering devotion to the Buddha, no thoughts of lust or hate arose in him.⁴⁰

Venerable *Ananda* was the living embodiment of the *Dhamma* and though he was only a stream-enterer, his wisdom was profound. Once, after he answered a question and left the place, the Buddha said, "*Ananda* is still on the path of higher training, yet it is not easy to find one who equals him fully in wisdom."⁴¹

His power of mindfulness was wonderful. Venerable *Ananda* remembered all the Buddha's discourses. At the first council, Venerable *Mahā Kassapa* asked to have each discourse recited one by one and each participant note when, where and to whom each discourse was delivered. It was because of *Ananda's* mindfulness, circumspection and orderliness, he repeated them all clearly, distinctively and flawlessly without leaving out a single syllable. His ability was phenomenal. He could repeat discourses of the Buddha flawlessly up to sixty-thousand words without leaving out a single syllable. He was able to remember and recite fifteen-thousand four-line stanzas of the Buddha.

According to this information, it is clear that Venerable *Ananda's* mindfulness strengthened his ability to recollect things. We have already discussed mindfulness and the power of memory. Venerable *Ananda* was able to do this because he had completely eradicated his five hindrances and developed his faculty of mindfulness. The five hindrances are sensual desire, ill will, sleepiness and drowsiness,

restlessness and doubt. There are also five faculties to be developed by wise persons. They are confidence, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. When they are developed and cultivated in this manner, they become five mental powers, which lead to the seven factors of enlightenment and eventually to the realization of the Four Noble Truths and the attainment of enlightenment.

(vii). Venerable Nanda's Mindfulness

Let us now understand how the famous, passionate (lustful), monk, Venerable *Nanda* developed and cultivated mindfulness. He was a sternly passionate monk. He was one of the cousins of the Buddha. On the third day of the Buddha's visit to his father and relatives, the Buddha visited his cousin *Nanda's* place while the triple ceremonies of *Nanda's* coronation, house warming and marriage were in progress. The Buddha entered the house for alms. When the meal was offered to the Buddha, he kept his alms-bowl on *Nanda's* hands wishing him to follow the Buddha and bring the bowl to the monastery.

Then, the Buddha, rising from his seat got ready to leave the place. However, *Nanda*, out of reverence for the Buddha, did not dare say, "Venerable Sir, please take your bowl." He thought that the Buddha would take it at the head of the stairs. When the Buddha reached the head of the stairs, he did not take it. Then,

Nanda thought that the Buddha would take it at the foot of the stairs. The Buddha did not take it there either. Then, *Nanda* thought that Buddha would take it in the palace court yet the Buddha did not take it even there either. Finally, he had to follow the Buddha to the monastery.

By seeing that, *Nanda* was following the Buddha, his bride *Janapadakalyāni* said, "Please come back soon." Eventually, when he went to the monastery, the Buddha asked, "*Nanda* would you like to become a monk?" Then, because of his reverence for the Buddha was so great, he could not refuse. He accepted the offer. Thus, *Nanda* became a monk in the Dispensation of the Buddha.

However, he was not happy. He was always thinking of his bride and discontented; he told his companions that he was dissatisfied and going to leave religious life soon. On hearing this, the Buddha summoned him and asked why. Then he said, "Venerable Sir, when I left my house, my noble wife, with her hair half-combed, took leave of me and said, 'Please come back soon.' Venerable Sir, it is because I keep remembering her that I am dissatisfied. Therefore, I intend to leave this religious life." The Buddha then took him to the Heaven of the Thirty-three.

On the way, the Buddha pointed out to him a burnt field with a greedy monkey sitting on a burnt stump who had lost her ears, nose and tail in the fire.

When they reached the heaven, the Buddha pointed out to him five hundred pink-footed celestial nymphs. The Buddha asked, "*Nanda*, which do you regard as being more beautiful and fair to look upon? Your noble wife or these five hundred pink-footed celestial nymphs?" Venerable *Nanda* replied:

"As far inferior as this greedy monkey which has lost her ears and nose and tail is to my wife, even so, far inferior, Venerable, is my noble wife to these five hundred pink-footed celestial nymphs." "Cheer up, *Nanda!*" replied the Buddha. "I guarantee that you will win these five hundred pink-footed celestial nymphs."

Thereupon, Venerable *Nanda* said, "If the Buddha guarantees that I shall win these five hundred pink-footed celestial nymphs, Reverend Sir, I shall take the greatest pleasure in living the exalted life of the religious man." With this guarantee, Venerable *Nanda* came back and started his practice. However, his fellow-monks looked down on him for striving to seek celestial nymphs. Nonetheless, living in solitude, withdrawn from the world, ardent, resolute and being perfectly mindful, vigilant and wise, he attained the supreme goal of *Arahantship* in no time. Later on, one day the Buddha said, "When speaking of *Nanda*, O monks, one may describe him as from a good family, strong and handsome and very passionate.

How else could *Nanda* live the perfect and pure holy life except by guarding the sense doors, by being

moderate in eating, by cultivating wakefulness and by setting up mindfulness and clear comprehension? This, Monks, is how *Nanda* guards his sense doors. If *Nanda* has to look to the east, he does so only after having considered everything thoroughly by thinking, "While I am looking to the east, I will not let covetousness and grief, or other evil, unwholesome states, enter my mind. Thus, he has clear comprehension. If he has to look to the west, south or north, he does so only after having considered everything thoroughly by thinking, 'While I am looking to the west, south, north, I will not let covetousness and grief, or other evil, unwholesome states, enter my mind'."

Then, the Buddha explained how Venerable *Nanda* was mindful and clearly comprehending things as they really are.

"This, monks, is *Nanda's* mindfulness and clear comprehension. Here, monks, for *Nanda* understands his feelings as they arise, as they remain present and as they pass away. He understands his perceptions as they arise, as they remain present and as they pass away. He understands his thoughts as they arise, as they remain present and as they pass away. This, monks, is *Nanda's* mindfulness and clear comprehension,"⁴² the Buddha explained.

(viii). Mindfulness as a Protection

According to a story from the *Dhammapada*, the following happened in the city of *Rājagaha* in India during the time of the Buddha. One day, a woodcutter went into woods with his son to cut firewood. On their way back, they stopped their cart because they wanted to relax and eat some food. They took off the yoke from the two oxen to enable them to graze nearby. However, without their knowledge, the two oxen wandered off. As soon as the woodcutter discovered that the oxen were missing, he went to look for them leaving his son alone with the cart. He entered the town looking for his oxen. Finally, he got them back and headed back to his son and the cart. Unfortunately, it was getting dark and the city gate was closed. Therefore, he had to remain in the city for the night, and the young boy had to spend the night alone underneath of the cart.

The woodcutter's son though young, was always mindful and had a good confidence in the Buddha. He often contemplated the great virtues of the Buddha. That night, while he was under the cart, he slept while contemplating the virtues of the Buddha. During the night, two evil spirits arrived who were hoping to frighten and harm this young man. One of them pulled on the leg of the boy and the boy cried out, "Homage to the Buddha" (*Namo Buddhāya*)." Hearing these words, the evil spirits were frightened and decided to look after the boy instead. Then, one of them remained near the boy protecting him from harm

while the other went to the king's palace and brought the food tray of the King *Bimbisāra*. The two evil spirits then fed the boy as if he were their own son. At the palace, the evil spirit left a written message concerning the royal food tray which was only visible only to the king.

In the morning, when the king's men discovered that the royal food tray was missing, they became very upset and were frightened. Then, the king found the message left by the evil spirit and directed his men to go find it. They followed the directions from the note and found the royal food tray among the firewood in the cart as well as the boy slept underneath the cart. When they questioned, the boy said that his parents came to feed him at night, after taking his food, he went to sleep contentedly and without fear. The boy knew only that much and nothing more. The king sent for the parents of the boy. Afterwards, he took the boy and his parents to the Buddha. The king, by that time, had heard that the boy was always mindful, recollected the great virtues of the Buddha and that he had cried out "*Namo Buddhāya*" when the evil spirit pulled on his leg at that night.

The King asked the Buddha, "Is mindfulness of the virtues of the Buddha the only thing that protects against evil and danger?" The Buddha replied, "O king, there are six things including mindfulness, which serve as good protection against evil and danger." Thereupon the Buddha giving a discourse to the king

recited the following.

1. "Those disciples of *Gotama* [*Buddha*] ever awaken happily who day and night constantly practice the *Recollection of the Qualities of the Buddha*.
2. Those disciples of *Gotama* ever awaken happily who day and night constantly practice the *Recollection of the Qualities of the Dhamma*.
3. Those disciples of *Gotama* ever awaken happily who day and night constantly practice the *Recollection of the Qualities of the Sangha*.
4. Those disciples of *Gotama* ever awaken happily who day and night constantly practice *Mindfulness of the Body*.
5. Those disciples of *Gotama* ever awaken happily whose minds by day and night delight in the *practice of non-violence*.
6. Those disciples of *Gotama* ever awaken happily whose minds by day and night delight in the *practice of meditation*."⁴³

At the end of the discourse, the boy and his parents were delighted by the teaching and attained the state of stream entry and eventually joined the order of the Buddha and attained enlightenment.

(ix). Mindfulness and Loving Friendliness

Mindfulness is the way to develop wisdom. When practicing and developing mindfulness, it is necessary to practice mindfulness and loving friendliness in conjunction with one another. Since there is a companion, the journey is much easier and smoother. Loving friendliness cannot do what mindfulness can do; likewise, mindfulness cannot do what loving friendliness can do. There is a confrontation with a demon in *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha* where the Buddha has illustrated the necessity of both mindfulness and loving friendliness.

According to this simple story, the demon named *Manibaddha* came to the Buddha while the Buddha was living in a place called *Manimālaka Shrine*, which was haunted by this demon. After approaching the Buddha, the demon addressed the Buddha in a verse as follows:

“ It is always good for the mindful one,
The mindful one thrives in happiness.
It is better each day for the mindful one,
And he is freed from enmity.”

The Buddha replied:

“ It is always good for the mindful one,
The mindful one thrives in happiness.
It is better each day for the mindful one,
But he is not freed from enmity.

“ One whose mind all day and night
Takes delight in harmlessness,
Who has loving friendliness for all beings,
For him there is enmity for none.”⁴⁴

According to this account, mindfulness is good and the mindful one thrives in happiness. Nevertheless, he is not free from enmity. This means that one may be mindful, but still may have anger and resentment. This is why one has to practice *metta* (loving friendliness) whenever possible as a part of practicing meditation. One has to extend loving friendliness to all beings equally without any discrimination. In the discourse of loving friendliness, the Buddha advised keeping loving friendliness as a resolution (*etam satim adhitteyya*) and that is called divinely dwelling here.⁴⁵

Mindfulness and Real Dhamma

(a). What the Buddha Really Taught

The Buddha, on several occasions clearly mentioned what he really taught for the benefit and happiness of all. In the Last Days of the Buddha (*Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta*), addressing his monks, the Buddha said, "Monks, the *Dhamma* which I have discovered and proclaimed should be thoroughly learned by you, practiced, developed and cultivated, so that this holy life may endure for a long time, that it may be for the benefit and happiness of the multitude, out of

compassion for the world, for the benefit and happiness of deities and humans. These *Dhammas*, which I have discovered and proclaimed, are:

1. The Four Establishments of Mindfulness
2. The Four Right Efforts
3. The Four Bases for Spiritual Power
4. The Five Spiritual Faculties
5. The Five Spiritual Powers
6. The Seven Factors of Enlightenment
7. The Noble Eightfold Path.¹⁴⁶

This is what the Buddha really taught. These are the 37 Factors of Enlightenment. In this list, the first thing given is the establishment of mindfulness.

Therefore, cultivating mindfulness should be the first step of the path to liberation. For the development of mindfulness, the Buddha gave four different components. It is for this purpose that the Buddha delivered the special discourse named “The Great Discourse of the Establishment of Mindfulness.” According to this discourse, the components to be developed and cultivated are as follows:

1. Mindfulness in the body as body
2. Mindfulness in the feelings as feelings
3. Mindfulness in the mind as mind and
4. Mindfulness in the mental objects as mental objects.⁴⁷

(b). Development of Mindfulness of the Body

The Buddha stressed the need for practicing, developing and cultivating mindfulness of the body. For this purpose alone, he delivered a special discourse named "Mindfulness of the Body." In this sermon, he explained that if anyone has not developed and cultivated mindfulness of the body, *Māra* would find an opportunity to exploit him. The Buddha gave several precise similes to make this very clear. The Buddha said, "Suppose a man were to throw a heavy stone ball upon a mound of wet clay. What do you think *bhikkhus*? Would that heavy ball enter that mound of wet clay? "The monks responded, "Yes, Venerable Sir. "The Buddha continued, "So too, *bhikkhus*, when anyone has not developed and cultivated mindfulness of the body, *Māra* finds an opportunity to influence him.

"Suppose there were a dry sapless piece of wood, and a man came with a torch thinking: 'I shall light a fire! I shall produce heat.' What do you think, *bhikkhus*? Could the man light a fire and produce heat by placing the dry sapless piece of wood with a torch?" The monks responded, 'Yes, Venerable Sir.' The Buddha continued, "So too, *bhikkhus*, when anyone has not developed and cultivated mindfulness of the body, *Māra* finds an opportunity to influence him.

"Suppose there were a hollow empty water jug set out on a stand and a man came with some water.

What do you think *bhikkhus*? Could the man pour the water into the jug?" The monks replied, "Yes, Venerable Sir." The Buddha continued, "So too, *bhikkhus*, when anyone has not developed and cultivated mindfulness of the body, *Māra* finds an opportunity to influence him.

On the contrary, if anyone has developed and cultivated mindfulness of the body, the Buddha says, "*Bhikkhus*, when anyone has developed and cultivated mindfulness of the body, *Māra* cannot find an opportunity to influence him. Here also the Buddha gives similes: "Suppose, a man were to throw a light ball of string at a door-panel made entirely of heartwood. What do you think *bhikkhus*? Would that light ball of string go through that door-panel made entirely of heartwood?" The monks responded, "No, Venerable Sir." The Buddha continued, "So too, *bhikkhus*, when anyone has developed and cultivated mindfulness of the body, *Māra* cannot find an opportunity to influence him.

"Suppose there were a wet sappy piece of wood, and a man came with a torch thinking: 'I shall light a fire! I shall produce heat.' What do you think *bhikkhus*? Could the man light a fire and produce heat by touching the torch with the wet sappy piece of wood?" The monks responded, "No, Venerable Sir." The Buddha continued, "So too, *bhikkhus*, when anyone has developed and cultivated mindfulness of the body, *Māra* cannot find an opportunity to influence him.

“Suppose, set out on a stand, there were a water jug so full of water that crows could drink from it, and a man came with some water. What do you think, *bhikkhus*? Could the man pour the water into the jug?” The monks responded, “No, Venerable Sir.” The Buddha continued, “So too, *bhikkhus*, when anyone has developed and cultivated mindfulness of the body, *Māra* cannot find an opportunity to influence him.

“Suppose there were a square pond on level ground, surrounded by an embankment with water so high full of that crows could drink from it. Whenever a strong man loosens the embankment, would water come out?” The monks responded, “Yes, Venerable Sir.” The Buddha continued, “So too, *bhikkhus*, when anyone has developed and cultivated mindfulness of the body, then when he inclines his mind towards realizing any state that may be realized by direct knowledge, he attains the ability to witness any aspect therein being a suitable basis.

“Suppose there were a chariot on even ground at the crossroads, harnessed to thoroughbreds, waiting with goad lying ready, so that a skilled trainer, might mount it, and taking the reins in his left hand and the goad in his right hand, might ride down any road he likes. So too, *bhikkhus*, when anyone has developed and cultivated mindfulness of the body...he attains the ability to witness any aspect therein, there being a suitable basis.”

(c) Benefits of Developing Mindfulness of the Body

As the Buddha pointed out in the above discourse from *The Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha*, there are ten benefits of practicing, developing and cultivating mindfulness of the body. The Buddha said, "*Bhikkhus*, when mindfulness of the body has been repeatedly practiced, developed, cultivated, used as a vehicle on a regular basis, established, consolidated, and well undertaken, these ten benefits may be expected."

The ten benefits:

- 1) One becomes a conqueror of discontent and delight. Discontent does not conquer oneself and one abides overcoming discontent whenever it arises.
- 2) One becomes a conqueror of fear and dread. Fear and dread do not conquer oneself and one abides overcoming fear and dread whenever they arise.
- 3) One endures cold and heat, hunger and thirst, and contact with gadflies, mosquitoes, wind, the sun, and creeping things. One endures ill-spoken, unwelcome words and arisen bodily feelings that are painful, racking, sharp, piercing, disagreeable, distressing and menacing to life.

- 4) One obtains at will, without trouble or difficulty, the four *jhānas* that constitute the higher mind and provide a pleasant abiding here and now.
- 5) One wields the various kinds of supernatural powers. One wields bodily mastery even as far as the Brahma-world.
- 6) With the divine ear element, which is purified and surpasses the human, one hears both kinds of sounds, the divine and the human, those that are far as well as near.
- 7) One understands the minds of other beings, of other persons, having encompassed them with one's own mind. One understands a mind affected by lust as affected by lust; or as it is finally, liberated mind as liberated mind and un-liberated mind as un-liberated.
- 8) One recollects one's manifold past lives, that is one birth, two births... Thus, with their aspects and particulars one recollects one's manifold past lives.
- 9) With the divine eye, which is purified and surpasses the human, one sees beings passing away and reappearing, inferior and superior, fair and ugly, fortunate and unfortunate, and one understands how beings pass on according to their actions (*karma*).

- 10) By realizing for oneself with direct knowledge, one here and now enters upon and abides in the deliverance of mind and deliverance by wisdom that are taintless with the destruction of the taints.

(d). How Mindfulness Leads to Liberation

According to the discourse on the establishment of mindfulness, one has to start with mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*). Once, Venerable *Ananda* asked, "Venerable sir, is there one thing, which when developed and cultivated fulfills four things and four things, which when developed and cultivated fulfill seven things and seven things which when developed and cultivated fulfill two things?" Then, the Buddha said, "Yes, *Ananda*, there is one thing which when developed and cultivated fulfills four things and four things, which when developed and cultivated fulfill seven things and seven things which when developed and cultivated fulfill two things."

Then, Venerable *Ananda* asked, "What is that one thing Venerable Sir?" The Buddha said, "*Ananda*, when mindfulness of breathing is developed and cultivated it fulfills the four establishments of mindfulness, when the four establishments of mindfulness are developed and cultivated, they fulfill the seven factors of enlightenment and when the seven factors of enlightenment are developed and cultivated they fulfill knowledge and liberation." That is how one

develops and cultivates them gradually.

For this effort, first of all, when one develops mindfulness and wisdom, one can realize the true nature of the five hindrances and with a clear understanding, one can completely destroy these five hindrances. Thereafter, one can understand the nature of the five aggregates of existence. These five aggregates of existence interdependently exist as physicality and mentality. They are: form, feeling, perception, volitional formations and consciousness. Form arises because of four elements. Feeling, perception and volitional formations arise because of contact. The consciousness arises because of mentality and materiality.

What we call mentality (*nāma*) is feeling, perception, volitional formation, contact and attention. Materiality is constituted by earth, water, fire and air and their derivatives. That there is nothing permanent in these five aggregates. That is the realization that one gains by cultivating mindfulness.

Then, one can further realize the true nature of the twelve bases. They are the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and the mind as internal bases and then their corresponding six external bases as well: forms, sounds, odors, flavors, tactile-objects and the mental objects.

By this time, one's faculties are well developed. There are five faculties to be developed and cultivated.

These faculties are: confidence, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom. When they are well developed, they themselves become five powers which can be further developed with wise attention to lead seven factors of enlightenment. The seven factors of enlightenment are mindfulness, investigation of the Dhamma, energy, rapture, tranquility, concentration and equanimity. Finally, these seven factors lead us to the realization of the Four Noble Truths. This is the central teaching of the Buddha. These four Noble Truths are:

1. The discomfort (*dukkham*)
2. The arising of discomfort (*dukkha samudayam*)
3. The cessation of discomfort (*dukkha nirodham*)
4. The Path leading to the cessation of discomfort (*dukkha nirodha gāmini patipada ariya saccam*)

Of these Four Noble Truths, the fourth is the Noble Eightfold Path that leads to right liberation. That is the final result of practicing, developing and cultivating mindfulness.

Referring to the Noble Eightfold Path, the Buddha said, "*Friends, this is the only direct path. There is none other for the purification of insight. Follow this path, and you will bewilder Māra. Walking upon this path, you will end of suffering. Having discovered how to pull out the thorn of lust, I make known the path. You yourselves must strive. The Buddhās can only point the Way. Those meditative ones who follow the path are released from the bonds of Māra*"¹⁴⁹

Even those who have come to the end of the path need to maintain mindfulness. They have completely eradicated all defilements and abide in an absolutely calm and peaceful, but always remain mindfulness. The best example is Venerable *Sāriputta*, the chief disciple of the Buddha. According to the *Kalāra Sutta* of the *Connected Discourses of the Buddha*,⁵⁰ referring to the Venerable *Sāriputta*'s declaration of the attainment, the Buddha asks, "*Sāriputta*, if they [other monks] were to ask you, 'Friend *Sāriputta*, through what kind of deliverance have you declared final knowledge' as, I understand that birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done and there is no more for this state of being?" How would you respond to this question?"

The Venerable *Sāriputta* then said, "If they were to ask me this, Venerable Sir, I would respond, 'Friends, through an internal deliverance, through the destruction of all clinging, I dwell mindfully so that the taints do not flow within me and I do not despise myself.' Being asked this, Venerable Sir, I would answer in this way."

In the discourse "The Great Forty" of *The Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha*, the Buddha very clearly pointed out how 'Right Mindfulness' leads to right liberation. Here, the right understanding is the first thing. Right understanding means the understanding of the Four Noble Truths. According to this discourse, the Buddha says, "And what, monks, is right

understanding? Right understanding, I say, is twofold. There is first right understanding that is affected by taints, partaking of merit, ripening in the acquisitions, and second, there is right understanding that is noble, taintless, supra-mundane and a factor of the path. And what, monks, is right understanding that is affected by the taints, partaking of merit and ripening in the acquisitions? There is what is given and what is offered and what is sacrificed. There are rewards and results of good and bad actions. There is this world and the other world. There is mother and father. There are beings who are reborn spontaneously. There are in the world good and virtuous recluses and *brahmins* who have realized for themselves by direct knowledge and declare this world and the other world. This is right understanding affected by taints, partaking of merit, and ripening in the acquisitions.

And what, monks, is right understanding that is noble, taintless, supra-mundane and a factor of the path? The wisdom, the faculty of wisdom, the power of wisdom, the investigation-of-states as an enlightenment factor, the path factor of right understanding in one whose mind is noble, whose mind is taintless, who possesses the noble path and is developing the noble path. This is right understanding that is noble, taintless, supra-mundane and a factor of the path. One makes an effort to abandon wrong understanding and to enter upon right understanding. This is one's right effort. Mindfully, one abandons wrong understanding. Mindfully, one enters and

abides in right understanding. This is one's right mindfulness. Thus, these three states [right understanding, right effort and right mindfulness] run around with and are closely related to right understanding."⁵¹

In the process of understanding the teachings of mindfulness, right understanding is essential. When one has right understanding, one understands effectively. Then, one develops mindfulness, which leads to right concentration, right knowledge and right liberation. With these accomplishments, one's path becomes the tenfold path. In this discourse itself, the Buddha says, "The Eightfold Path is the path for the trainee (*sekha*) and the Tenfold Path is the path of the Enlightened One (*asekha*)."

In this manner, mindfulness leads to liberation. Once you are liberated, you fully understand liberation. You have put the burden of defilements aside. You are fully alert and completely unattached like a swan that abandons the lake leaving every home behind. There is no more worldly existence for such a wise one who like the earth resents nothing, who is as firm as a high pillar and as pure as a deep lake free of mud. Calm are his thoughts, calm are his speech and actions. He truly knows, is wholly freed, perfectly tranquil and wise. These are some characteristics of the one who has reached the goal, *Nibbāna*.

The key to this goal is mindfulness. As the Buddha clearly said, "If one developed and cultivated one thing which fulfills four things and four things when developed and cultivated fulfill seven things and seven things, when developed and cultivated fulfill right knowledge and right liberation." Then, what is this one thing to be developed and cultivated for the final attainment of liberation? 'That is mindfulness of breathing'. Let us now consider further and understand mindfulness of breathing.

Tips to remember:

1. Listen to every sound that you make.
2. Pay attention to your actions and notice the beginning and the end of each action.
3. Smile intentionally whenever possible.
4. Label objects as such.
5. Observe the pace of separate actions.

Part 2

Mindfulness of Breathing

"I do not say that there is the development of mindfulness of breathing for who is forgetful, who is not fully aware."

-The Buddha- (M.N. 118:26)

All *Buddhās* attain Supreme Enlightenment by practicing mindfulness of breathing. According to the teaching of the Buddha, everybody can attain enlightenment without any discrimination. There are three kinds of Enlightened Ones:

1. Perfectly Self-awakened One (*Sammā Sambuddha*)
2. Silent Buddha (*Pacceka Buddha*)
3. Enlightened One (*Arahant Buddha*).

They all practice and develop mindfulness of breathing. In short, those who have attained enlightenment in the past practiced mindfulness of breathing; those who are currently seeking enlightenment practice mindfulness of breathing and those who will strive to attain enlightenment in the future will practice mindfulness of breathing. The breath reveals all the secrets of life and death. Life persists or ceases because of breath. One can understand the real nature of all things through the breath.

The breath is the first thing that we bring here to this world and the last thing that we leave behind. It has many activities, functions and it gives bliss to those who see it clearly as it is without controlling it. It gives the bliss of life, real peace and real happiness.

The nature of the breath is incessant, yet impermanent. From the time of our birth, it functions day and night until we die. However, most people do not know the nature of the breath either because they do not want to see it or do not know how to see it. They have never heard of how to attend to the breath or the significance of doing so. It is our very lifeline and the secret of bliss. That is why some sages have said that the ultimate bliss is right under the nostrils.

Today, there are millions of people observing breath as a practice of meditation; therefore, they live happily and peacefully. There is no religion, culture or caste to breath. Breath is pristine. It teaches us the real nature of things in the world. Within this sensual sphere of existence, only humans can sit and observe breath to understand the real nature of all things animate or inanimate. In that sense too, we humans are certainly fortunate! Again, only those who are intelligent and wise enough to think to contemplate the breath, at least for a while are on the path of liberation. It is a great thing, which provides abundant benefits and fruitfulness.

(i). Mindful Prince under a Rose-Apple Tree

The Buddha, before his enlightenment, around the young age of five, understood the significance of observing breath and mindfulness of breathing. One day, while his father was plowing in the field together with many farmers, he observed his breath and practiced mindfulness of breathing. As a result, he experienced a deep state of serenity (*jhāna*).

Later that day, he shared that experience of what happened to him with a debater named *Saccaka*. He said, "*When my father the Sākya was occupied, I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree, quite secluded from sensual pleasures and unwholesome states. I entered upon and abided in the first jhāna, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion.*"⁵²

Again, according to the biography of the Buddha, we can accept that he must have practiced mindfulness of breathing as a meditation for the gaining of concentration and *jhānic* experience while he was with his teachers *Alāra Kālāma* and *Uddaka Rāmaputta*. He developed all material and immaterial *jhānas* and attainments under these two ascetic teachers. However, as he did not see that it was the way to complete eradication of defilements and attainment of enlightenment, he departed from them and followed the Middle Path.

After leaving them, he came to the village of *Senāni* where he saw a place suitable for spiritual pursuits. He explained, "Still in search, *bhikkhus*, of what is wholesome, seeking the supreme state of sublime peace, I wandered by stages through the *Magadhan* country until eventually I arrived at *Uruvela* at *Senānigāma*. There I saw an agreeable piece of ground, a delightful grove with a clear-flowing river with pleasant, smooth banks and nearby a village for alms resort. I considered, 'This is an agreeable piece of ground; this is a delightful grove with a clear-flowing river with pleasant, smooth banks and nearby a village for alms resort. This will serve for the striving of a clansman intent on striving.' And I sat down there thinking, 'This will serve for striving.'"⁵³

(ii). Mindfulness of Breathing for the Goal

When the ascetic Siddhartha came to this spot, he sat down under the *Bodhi* tree and strived by practicing mindfulness of breathing. As previously mentioned, mindfulness of breathing is the meditation that all the *Buddhās* practice in order to attain enlightenment. Consequently, the ascetic Siddhartha did the same. That was the full moon day of May. He started to practice mindfulness of breathing and by dawn, he became the Buddha of our era. The Buddha revealed this moment in the discourse of "The Noble Search" in *The Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha*, "Being myself subject to defilement, having understood the danger in what is subject to defilement,

seeking the undefiled supreme security from bondage I attained the undefiled supreme security from bondage, *Nibbāna*. The knowledge and vision arose in me: my deliverance is unshakeable; this is my last birth; now there is no renewal of being."⁵⁴

After his attainment of enlightenment, he taught the Dhamma, the technique of meditation. For this purpose, he used the practice of mindfulness of breathing. He taught this in many discourses. Mindfulness of breathing is the first sub-section of "The Great Discourse on the Establishment of Mindfulness." Here, the Buddha introduces only four steps of breathing as contemplation of body as body. Let us now understand those four steps.

(iii). The Four Steps of Mindfulness of Breathing

First, as a preparatory step, the Buddha's advice is to simply observe breath mindfully. He says, "Mindfully breathe in and mindfully breathe out." Then, giving full attention, one has to understand the following four steps:

1. When breathing **in** long, he/she understands as breathing in long.
When breathing **out** long, he/she understands as breathing out long.
2. When breathing **in** short, he/she understands as breathing in short.
When breathing **out** short, he/she understands as breathing out short.

3. Breathing **in**, he/she trains by observing whole breath-body and being sensitive of the whole process of breath [from beginning to end, all the way].

Breathing **out**, he/she trains by observing whole breath-body and being sensitive of the whole process of breath [from beginning to end, all the way].

4. Calming the breath body, breathing **in** he/she trains.
Calming the breath body, breathing **out** he/she trains.

[Note: Here, the first two are to be understood as the nature of the breath in order to know it. (The verb used here is *pajānāti* = to know.) It is not necessary to start with a long breath. If you observe the short breath first, it is all right. Where there is short, there is long and vice-a-versa. This is a fact. Try to understand these two. Then, the third and fourth are to train yourself. (The verb used here is *sikkhati* = to train.) It is your training. While in training, you have to do what the trainer asks. Likewise, here you are not supposed to do anything but follow your breath as it feels to you. Become more and more sensitive until you understand the whole breath-body and the calming of the breath. If you do so, you will definitely experience something special and new. I promise.]

These are the four steps to follow in the practice. For practice, the Buddha's first instruction is to find a suitable, congenial place, which is not prone to disturbances. He recommended three places. The first place he recommended was a jungle, a thicket wood. This is the best place to practice. The second place is under a tree where there is good ventilation and enough natural oxygen. In such a place, you can really feel that you are well protected and safe from many things. The third place is an empty house or hut. The third recommended place is often available; therefore, we can find a place and practice easily.

When practicing mindfulness of breathing, posture is also very important. You can use a chair, cushion or any other comfortable way to sit. However, it is recommended to sit keeping the upper part of the body erect because you are going to observe your breath. The breath needs to flow naturally without obstruction. Hence, let it flow naturally and observe your natural, peaceful, smoothly flowing breath: in...out... in...out... the whole breath-body, the calming breath.

(iv). Mindfulness of Breathing and Unshaken Mind

One day, the Buddha saw a monk, sitting cross-legged, nearby. His body was nicely straight and he was fully alert and mindful. Seeing him, the Buddha addressed the monks and said, "*Monks, do you see any shaking or trembling in this bhikkhu's body?*" Then, the

monks said, "Venerable Sir, whenever we see this venerable one, whether he is sitting in the midst of the community or sitting alone in private, we never see any shaking or trembling in this venerable one's body." The Buddha then said, "Monks, this *bhikkhu* has gained at will, without trouble or difficulty, this concentration through the development and cultivation of which no shaking or trembling occurs in his body and no shaking or trembling occurs in the mind because of his concentration through mindfulness of breathing."⁵⁵

Mindfulness of breathing is the way to peaceful abiding. It is practiced by general persons, spiritual persons and those who are still in the process of training as stream enterers, once returners, non-returners, and the *arahants*, and the fully enlightened persons, who have achieved the goal, *Nibbāna*. Even the Buddha practices mindfulness of breathing.

(v). Everybody's Practice

On one occasion, the Buddha was living in the woods at a place known as *Ichhānangala*. There the Buddha addressed the monks saying, "*Bhikkhus*, I wish to go into seclusion for three months. I should not be approached by anyone except the one who brings me my meals." The monks said, "Yes, Venerable Sir," and no one approached the Buddha except the one who brought him his meals. After three months, the Buddha emerged from his seclusion and addressed the monks again. "*Bhikkhus*, if wanderers of other sects ask

you: 'in what dwelling, friends, did the Buddha generally dwell during the rainy seasons?'—you should respond by saying, 'During the rainy season, friends, the Buddha generally dwelt in the concentration by mindfulness of breathing.'"

He further said, "Here, *bhikkhus*, mindful I breathe in, mindful I breathe out. When breathing in long I know: 'I breathe in long'; when breathing out long I know: 'I breathe out long.' When breathing in short I know: 'I breathe in short'; when breathing out short I know: 'I breathe out short.'... If anyone, *bhikkhus*, speaking rightly could say of anything: 'It is a noble dwelling (*ariya vihāra*), a divine dwelling (*brahma vihāra*), the *Tathāgata*'s dwelling (*Tathāgata vihāra*),' it is through concentration on mindful breathing that one could rightly say this. *Bhikkhus*, those *bhikkhus* who are trainees, who have not attained their mind's ideal, who dwell aspiring for the unsurpassed security from bondage: for them concentration on mindful breathing when developed and cultivated, leads to the destruction of the taints. Those *bhikkhus* who are *arahants*, whose taints are destroyed, who have lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden, reached their own goal utterly destroyed the fetters of existence and those completely liberated through final knowledge: for them concentration by mindfulness of breathing when developed and cultivated, leads to a pleasant dwelling in this very life and to mindfulness and clear comprehension."¹¹⁵⁶

One day, the Buddha, early in the morning took his bowl and robe and went to the city for his alms-round. The Venerable *Rāhula*, his son, also dressed, took his bowl and outer robe and followed close behind the Buddha. On the way, there the Buddha looked back and said, "*Rāhula*, any kind of material form whatever, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near all material forms should be seen as they actually are with proper wisdom thus, "This is not mine, this I am not, and this is not myself." Then, Venerable *Rāhula* asked, "Is that only material form, Sir?" The Buddha said, "Material form, *Rāhula*, and feeling, perception, volitional formations and consciousness."

Having listened to this wonderful admonition of the Buddha, Venerable *Rāhula* thought, "Who would go into the town for alms today when personally advised by the Buddha in this manner, it would be better to practice right now." He then turned back and sat down at the root of a tree, folded his legs crosswise, corrected his posture, and began his meditation. By this time, Venerable *Sāriputta*, his mentor, saw him sitting and addressed him saying, "*Rāhula*, develop mindfulness of breathing. When mindfulness of breathing is developed and cultivated, it is greatly beneficial and fruitful." Then Venerable *Rāhula* practiced. When it was evening, he went to the Buddha and asked, "*Venerable Sir, how is mindfulness of breathing developed and cultivated, so that it is greatly beneficial and fruitful?*" The Buddha advised him to understand both

the internal and external five elements [earth, water, fire, air and space] as simply elements. And see them as they are with proper wisdom as 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not myself.' He further said, "When one sees it thus, as it actually is with proper wisdom, one becomes disenchanted with these elements and makes the mind dispassionate towards these elements."

Thereafter, the Buddha instructed him to practice meditation like earth, like water, like fire, like air and like space. Nonetheless, he further advised, "*Rāhula*, develop meditation on loving friendliness, on compassion, on appreciative joy, on equanimity, on foulness, on the perception of impermanence." Finally, the Buddha said, "*Rāhula* develop mindfulness of breathing. When mindfulness of breathing is developed and cultivated, it is greatly beneficial and fruitful." Here, the Buddha explained the sixteen steps of breathing. He explained mindfulness of breathing exactly as explained in the Discourse on Mindfulness of Breathing in *The Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha*. This is a step-by-step development of mindfulness and clear comprehension.

In "The Great Discourse of the Establishment of Mindfulness," the Buddha pointed out these four steps as the primary steps to understand the body as body, which we discussed above. Let us now understand the other steps as well according to "The Discourse of Mindfulness of Breathing" from *The Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha (Majjhima Nikāya)*.⁵⁸

(vi). The Sixteen Steps of Breath

The Buddha delivered the discourse "Mindfulness of Breathing" while he was living at *Sāvatti* in the Eastern Park, in the Palace of *Migāra's* Mother. One day, there were many very well known elder disciples of the Buddha with him: the venerable *Sāriputta*, the venerable *Mahā Moggallāna*, the venerable *Mahā Kassapa*, the venerable *Mahā Kaccāna*, the venerable *Mahā Kotthita*, the venerable *Mahā Kappina*, the venerable *Mahā Cunda*, the venerable *Anuruddha*, the venerable *Revata*, the venerable *Ananda* as well as other very well known senior disciples.

On that occasion, these elder monks had been teaching and instructing new monks; some elder monks had been teaching and instructing ten monks, and some elder monks had been teaching and instructing twenty...thirty...forty new monks. The new monks, taught and instructed by the elder monks, achieved successive stages of high distinction.

It was a full moon that night. The Buddha was seated in the open surrounded by the community of monks. Then, surveying the silent community of monks, the Buddha addressed them. "*Bhikkhus*, I am content with your progress. My mind is content with your progress. So, arouse still more energy to attain the unattained, to achieve the unachieved, to realize the unrealized. This assembly is free from prattle; this assembly is free from chatter. It consists purely of

heartwood. Such is this community of monks such is this assembly. Such an assembly as is worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of reverential salutation, an incomparable field of merit for the world—such is this community of monks, such is this assembly. A small gift given to such an assembly becomes great and generous with giving, such is this community of monks, such is this assembly. Such an assembly is rare for this world, such is this community of monks, such is this assembly. Such an assembly as would be worth traveling great distance to see such is this community of monks, such is this assembly. In this community of monks, there are monks who are *arahants* with taints destroyed, who have lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down their burdens, reached their own goals, destroyed the fetters of existence and are completely liberated through final knowledge—such is this community of monks.

In this community of monks there are monks who, with the destruction of the five lower fetters, are due to reappear spontaneously [in the Pure Abodes] and there attain final *Nibbāna*, without ever returning from that world. There are such monks in this community of monks. In this community of monks there are monks who, with the destruction of three fetters and with the attenuation of lust, hate and delusion, are once-returners, returning once to this world to make an end of suffering. There are such monks in this community of monks. In this community of monks there are monks who, with the destruction of

the three fetters, are stream-enterers, no longer subject to perdition, bound for deliverance, headed for enlightenment. There are such monks in this community of monks. In this community of monks there are monks who abide devoted to the development of the four foundations of mindfulness—such monks are there in this community of monks. In this community of monks there are monks who abide devoted to the development of the four right kinds of striving...of the four bases for spiritual power...of the five faculties...of the five powers...of the seven enlightenment factors...of the Noble Eightfold Path. There are such monks in this community of monks. In this community of monks there are monks who abide devoted to the development of loving-friendliness...of compassion...of appreciative joy...of equanimity...who meditate on foulness...of the perception of impermanence. There are such monks in this community of monks. In this community of monks, there are monks who abide devoted to the development of mindful breathing." Then, the Buddha taught how to practice mindful breathing for the completion of the path and attainment of enlightenment. Here, the Buddha pointed out the sixteen steps as follows:

1. "Breathing in long, he understands: 'breathe in long'
Breathing out long, he understands: 'breathe out long.'

2. Breathing in short, he understands: 'breathe in short'
Breathing out short, he understands: 'breathe out short.'
3. He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in experiencing the whole body [of breath].'
He trains thus: 'I shall breathe out experiencing the whole body [of breath]
4. He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in tranquillizing the bodily formation.'
He trains thus: 'I shall breathe out tranquillizing the bodily formation.'
5. He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in experiencing rapture'.
He trains thus: 'I shall breathe out experiencing rapture.'
6. He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in experiencing pleasure'
He trains thus: 'I shall breathe out experiencing pleasure.'
7. He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in experiencing the mental formation'
He trains thus: 'I shall breathe out experiencing the mental formation.'
8. He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in tranquillizing the mental formation'
He trains thus: 'I shall breathe out tranquillizing the mental formation.'

9. He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in experiencing the mind'
He trains thus: 'I shall breathe out experiencing the mind.'
10. He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in gladdening the mind'
He trains thus: 'I shall breathe out gladdening the mind.'
11. He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in concentrating the mind'
He trains thus: 'I shall breathe out concentrating the mind.'
12. He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in liberating the mind'
He trains thus: 'I shall breathe out liberating the mind.'
13. He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in contemplating impermanence'
He trains thus: 'I shall breathe out contemplating impermanence.'
14. He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in contemplating fading away'
He trains thus: 'I shall breathe out contemplating fading away.'
15. He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in contemplating cessation'
He trains thus: 'I shall breathe out contemplating cessation.'

16. He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in contemplating relinquishment'
He trains thus: 'I shall breathe out contemplating relinquishment.'

Bhikkhus, that is how mindfulness of breathing is developed and cultivated so that it is greatly beneficial and fruitful.

(vii). Fulfillment of the Four Establishments of Mindfulness

In these 16 steps, we can see that there are four tetrads. When the practitioner is practicing and developing the first tetrad, he/she is practicing and developing the first component of the establishment of mindfulness [body as body]. When the second tetrad is practiced and developed, they fulfill the second component of the establishment of mindfulness [feelings as feelings]. When the third tetrad is practiced and developed, they fulfill the third component of the establishment of mindfulness [mind as mind] and when the fourth tetrad is practiced and developed, they fulfill the fourth establishment of mindfulness [mental objects as mental objects]. Thus, when these sixteen steps are practiced and developed, the four establishments of mindfulness are fulfilled. As the Buddha said, the four establishments of mindfulness are;

1. The contemplation on body as the body

2. The contemplation on feelings as the feelings
3. The contemplation on mind as the mind
4. The contemplation on mental objects as mental objects.

(viii). Fulfillment – Seven Enlightenment Factors

In this discourse, the Buddha very clearly said that breath is a certain body among the bodies. Therefore, we have to understand clearly that our breath body is another body. Fittingly, now we know that we have two bodies: the corporeal body and the breath body. According to the explanation of the Buddha, when the four establishments of mindfulness are developed and cultivated, they fulfill the seven factors of enlightenment. The seven factors of enlightenment are:

1. Mindfulness
2. Investigation of *dhamma*
3. Energy
4. Rapture
5. Tranquility
6. Concentration
7. Equanimity

Let us now understand how this happens. Let us read from the very word of the Buddha. “*Bhikkhus*, on whatever occasion a *bhikkhu* abides contemplating the body as a body, ardent, fully aware and mindful, having put away covetousness and grief for the

world—on that occasion unremitting mindfulness is established in him. On whatever occasion unremitting mindfulness is established in a *bhikkhu*—on that occasion the **mindfulness** enlightenment factor is aroused in him, and he develops it, and by development, it comes to fulfillment within him. Abiding mindfully, he investigates and examines that state with wisdom and embarks upon a full inquiry into it. On whatever occasion, abiding mindfully, a *bhikkhu* investigates and examines that state with wisdom and embarks upon a full inquiry into it—on that occasion the **investigation-of-dhamma** enlightenment factor is aroused in him, and he develops it, and by development it comes to fulfillment within him. In one who investigates and examines that state with wisdom and embarks upon a full inquiry into it, tireless energy is aroused. On whatever occasion tireless energy is aroused in a *bhikkhu* who investigates and examines that state with wisdom and embarks upon a full inquiry into it—on that occasion the **energy** enlightenment factor is aroused in him, and he develops it, and by development it comes to fulfillment within him. In one who has aroused energy, unworldly rapture arises.

On whatever occasion unworldly rapture arises in a *bhikkhu* who has aroused energy, on that occasion the **rapture** enlightenment factor is aroused in him, and he develops it, and by development it comes to fulfillment in him. In one who is rapturous, the body and the mind become tranquil. On whatever occasion,

the body and the mind become tranquil in a *bhikkhu* who is rapturous, in these instances, the **tranquility** enlightenment factor is aroused in him, and he develops it, and by development it comes to fulfillment in him. In one whose body is tranquil and who feels pleasure, the mind becomes concentrated. On whatever occasion the mind becomes concentrated in a *bhikkhu* whose body is tranquil and who feels pleasure, on that occasion the **concentration** enlightenment factor is aroused in him and he develops it, and by development it comes to fulfillment in him. He closely looks on with equanimity at the mind thus concentrated. On whatever occasion, a *bhikkhu* closely looks on with equanimity at the mind thus concentrated—on that occasion the **equanimity** enlightenment factor is aroused in him, and he develops it, and by development it comes to fulfillment in him." [Feelings as feelings, mind as mind and mental objects as mental objects are all the same.]

(ix). Fulfillment – True Knowledge and Liberation

Then, the Buddha said, "When these seven enlightenment factors are developed and cultivated, they fulfill true knowledge and deliverance. How this is done is illustrated in this discourse and also in some other discourses like the discourse "*To Kimbila*" and the discourse "*To Ananda*" in the *Connected Discourses of the Buddha (Samyutta Nikāya)*".⁵⁹

This is how the Buddha said it, "And how, *bhikkhus*, do the seven enlightenment factors, developed and cultivated, fulfill true knowledge and deliverance? Here, *bhikkhus*, a *bhikkhu* develops the mindfulness enlightenment factor, which is supported by seclusion, dispassion and cessation, and ripens through relinquishment. He develops the investigation-of-states enlightenment factor...the energy enlightenment factor...the rapture enlightenment factor...the tranquility enlightenment factor...the concentration enlightenment factor...the equanimity enlightenment factor. These are supported by seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, and ripen in relinquishment. *Bhikkhus*, that is how the seven factors of enlightenment, developed and cultivated, fulfill true knowledge and deliverance."

This is the way to practice and develop mindful breathing for the culmination of truth and the attainment of enlightenment.

Tips to remember:

1. Breath has no religion, color or caste.
2. Breath is the first thing we bring here and the last thing to leave behind.
3. Bliss is right under the nostrils.
4. Mindfulness of breath is the noble living, divine living and the Buddha's living.
5. Breath has 16 steps as the Buddha has revealed.
6. Mindfulness on breath is the way to true knowledge and liberation.

Part 3

Mindfulness and Clear Comprehension

“Bhikkhus, dwell mindful and clearly comprehending:
this is our instruction to you.”

-The Buddha- (S.N. 47.2.2)

Mindfulness and clear comprehension should always go together, interdependent as an inseparable pair. This is a prerequisite of the meditation technique that was taught by the Buddha. Clear comprehension simply means full awareness, clear awareness. The meditator should have full awareness of the object of meditation while he/she is practicing; otherwise, the mind is clouded and muddled. As a result, the meditator cannot understand what he/she is doing or where he/she is heading. For this purpose, the meditator should have a developed and sharp mindfulness with undivided attention.

One can easily develop wrong mindfulness, which leads to the wrong path and the wrong end. That is why we need clear comprehension. Clear comprehension is the determinant for mindfulness. Both mindfulness and clear comprehension cannot be developed and cultivated either in the past or in the future. Both are to be developed and cultivated in the present moment. Once developed and cultivated, certainly, they are greatly beneficial and fruitful for this life and the life after this.

When the meditator has full awareness of the object of meditation and the surrounding environment, he/she knows it very well. 'Knowing it very well', is the real meaning of clear comprehending. Consequently, if you have clear comprehension, you know it very well. What can you understand very well while you are practicing meditation? Basically, if you are practicing mindfulness of breathing as your meditation, you can understand your breath very well. When you understand your breath, you know it very well as it arises, you know very well as it remains present and you know very well as it passes away. You know very well the beginning of the process of changing the object, you know very well the process of changing in the middle of the object [from beginning to the end] and you know very well the ending of the object very well.

In this manner, you clearly comprehend the entire series of the changing nature of your breath. Other objects of meditation are the same. When you see this process, you see the nature of impermanence. Thus, you can experience the truth of the nature of impermanence of things, which leads to the realization of the three characteristics of existence of all things, animate or inanimate. These three things are the nature of impermanence, un-satisfactoriness and soullessness. This is what is called *vipassanā* or insight.

(i). Sati Sampajañña

The Buddha, in his many a discourse explained the terms 'mindfulness' and 'clear comprehension' together. The Pāli term he used is "*Satisampajañña*". 'Sati' means, as we already know, 'mindfulness' and '*sampajañña*' means 'clear comprehension.' This is in other words, wisdom. This is lacking in many other traditions of meditation today and as well as in traditions contemporaneous with the Buddha and before the time of the Buddha. That is why even in such great traditions, it was quite impossible to find a way to complete cessation of un-satisfactoriness (*dukkha nirodha*) and the attainment of enlightenment. Since there was no way to attain the cessation of un-satisfactoriness, there were no stream enterers, no once returners, no non-returners or *arahants in such traditions*. The Buddha very clearly pointed this out in "The Shorter Discourse of the Lion's Roar" of *The Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha*."⁶⁰

The Buddha realized this as a fact and incorporated the necessity of clear comprehension in his teaching on the technique of meditation. He always advised his disciples to practice and develop both mindfulness and clear comprehension. In the discourse of "The Last Days of the Buddha," while he was dwelling at *Ambapāli's Grove*, addressing the monks he said, "Mindful should you dwell, *bhikkhus*, clearly comprehending; thus I exhort you. And how, *bhikkhus*, is a *bhikkhu* mindful? When he dwells

contemplating the body in the body, earnestly, clearly comprehending, and mindfully, after having overcome covetousness and grief for the world, and when he dwells contemplating feelings in feelings, the mind in the mind, and mental objects in mental objects, earnestly, clearly comprehending, and mindfully, after having overcome covetousness and grief for the world, then he is said to be mindful.

And how, *bhikkhus*, does a *bhikkhu* have clear comprehension? When he remains fully aware of his coming and going, his looking forward and his looking away, his bending and stretching, wearing of his robe and carrying of his bowl, his eating and drinking, masticating and savoring, his defecating and urinating, his walking, standing, sitting, lying down, going to sleep or keeping awake, his speaking or silence, then he is said to have clear comprehension." ⁶¹ This is how the practitioners should practice both mindfulness and clear comprehension. Whatever we are doing, whatever we are engaged in, should be understood very clearly, as it is.

According to "The Discourse of Mindfulness and Clear Comprehension" (*Satisampajañña Sutta*) of *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, the Buddha says, "*Bhikkhus*, (1) when there is no mindfulness and clear comprehension for one deficient in mindfulness and clear comprehension, (2) the sense of moral shame and moral dread lack their proximate cause. When there is no sense of moral shame and moral dread, for one deficient in a sense of moral shame and moral dread,

(3) restraint of the sense faculties lacks its proximate cause. When there is no restraint of the sense faculties, for one deficient in restraint of the sense faculties, (4) virtuous behavior lacks its proximate cause. When there is no virtuous behavior, for one deficient in virtuous behavior, (5) right concentration lacks its proximate cause. When there is no right concentration, for one deficient in right concentration, (6) the knowledge and vision of things as they really are lacks its proximate cause. When there is no knowledge and vision of things as they really are, for one deficient in the knowledge and vision of things as they really are, (7) disenchantment and dispassion lack their proximate cause. When there is no disenchantment and dispassion, for one deficient in disenchantment and dispassion, (8) the knowledge and vision of liberation lacks its proximate cause.

Suppose there is a tree deficient in branches and foliage. Then its shoots do not grow to fullness; also its bark, softwood, and heartwood do not grow to fullness.

So too, when there is no mindfulness and clear comprehension, for one deficient in mindfulness and clear comprehension, the sense of moral shame and moral dread lack their proximate cause. When there is no sense of moral shame and moral dread . . . the knowledge and vision of liberation lacks its proximate cause.

Bhikkhus, (1) when there is mindfulness and clear comprehension, for one possessing mindfulness and clear comprehension, (2) the sense of moral shame and moral dread possess their proximate cause. When there is a sense of moral shame and moral dread, for one possessing a sense of moral shame and moral dread, (3) restraint of the sense faculties possesses its proximate cause. When there is restraint of the sense faculties, for one who exercises restraint over the sense faculties, (4) virtuous behavior possesses its proximate cause. When there is virtuous behavior, for one whose behavior is virtuous, (5) right concentration possesses its proximate cause. When there is right concentration, for one possessing right concentration, (6) the knowledge and vision of things as they really are possesses its proximate cause. When there is the knowledge and vision of things as they really are, for one possessing the knowledge and vision of things as they really are, (7) disenchantment and dispassion possess their proximate cause. When there is disenchantment and dispassion, for one possessing disenchantment and dispassion, (8) the knowledge and vision of liberation possesses its proximate cause.

Suppose there is a tree possessing branches and foliage. Then its shoots grow to fullness; also its bark, softwood, and heartwood grow to fullness. So too, when there is mindfulness and clear comprehension, for one possessing mindfulness and clear comprehension, the sense of moral shame and moral dread possess their proximate cause. When there is a

sense of moral shame and moral dread . . . the knowledge and vision of liberation possesses its proximate cause.”⁶²

The significance of both mindfulness and clear comprehension for the growth of the path to purity is very clear. From the beginning to the end of the spiritual path, both mindfulness and clear comprehension are a must without which no one can attain enlightenment.

(ii). What is Clear Comprehension?

Since I explained what mindfulness is in the preceding chapter, I'll now explain clear comprehension. Clear comprehension has some synonyms such as 'clear knowing', 'clear awareness', 'full awareness', 'constant understanding of impermanence', 'consideration' and 'discrimination'.

The Pāli term is *sampajānāti*, a compound word, which can be divided into *sam+pa+jānāti*. Here, the root is "ñā" (to know), [*Sanskrit root: "gñā"*] together with the prefix, the verb becomes "*pa+jānāti*" (meaning: to know well), and with another prefix *sam+pa+jānāti* meaning 'know it very well.' [*Sampajāñña* is the noun.] It is clear that the meaning here is to understand things very well. In order to understand a thing very well, one should give full attention to that object. That is mindfulness (*sati*). Therefore, the full term "*satisampajāñña*" means giving full attention and understanding very clearly. This is how one sees things

as they really are. This is, in other words, *vipassanā* (insight). *Without* clear comprehension, there is no *vipassanā* and without *vipassanā*, there is no attainment of enlightenment. Consider this simple simile. Suppose you are walking along a trail in the dark with a flashlight. Since you have a light, you can see things on the trail properly, clearly. Mindfulness is the light that you focus on the object and seeing things clearly is your clear comprehension.

If we are mindful, it takes only little time for us to understand things clearly. To illustrate this here, I would like to highlight an incident, which took place on the Buddha's return trip to *Uruvela* after delivering his first sermon to the five disciples. *Uruvela* is near where he attained enlightenment. After his first discourse, in the presence of sixty *arahants*, the Buddha decided to dispatch them all as missionaries for the dissemination of the word of the Buddha. Before he dispatched them, addressing the monks he said, "*Freed am I, O Bhikkhus, from all bonds, whether divine or human. You too, O Bhikkhus, are freed from all bonds, whether divine or human. Go forth, O Bhikkhus, for the good of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good, benefit, and happiness of gods and men. Let not two of you go by one way: Preach, O Bhikkhus, the Dhamma, excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle, excellent in the end, both in the spirit and in the word. Proclaim the holy life, altogether perfect and pure. There are beings with little dust in their eyes, who not hearing the Dhamma, will fall away. There will be those who understand the Dhamma.*"

I too, O Bhikkhus, will go to Uruvela in Senanigāma, in order to preach the Dhamma."

With these inspiring words, the Buddha dispatched the group of sixty monks and he himself left for *Uruvela*. On his way, he stopped and sat at the foot of a tree. By this time, a group of thirty happy, young men had gone to a particular pleasure grove together with their wives to amuse themselves. As one of them had no wife, he had taken with him a courtesan. While they were enjoying themselves, this woman stole their valuables. As the young men searched for her in woods, they came to the place where the Buddha was sitting. Seeing the Buddha, they asked whether the Buddha saw a woman passing that way. Then, the Buddha inquired, "*Which do you think, good young gentlemen, is better; seeking a woman or seeking oneself?*" "*Seeking oneself is better, O Venerable Sir!*" they replied. "*Well then, sit down. I shall teach the way to you,*" said the Buddha. They listened attentively to Buddha as he preached the Dhamma. Finally, they all got the '*Dhamma-eye*' (*Dhamma cakkhu*). They all entered the Order and became the disciples of the Buddha.

They clearly understood which is more important. This is clear comprehension, wisdom. This is because listening to the teachings of the Buddha, they aroused their mindfulness. Where there is mindfulness, there arise both clear comprehension and wisdom. This is natural. Upon hearing the

teachings, the wise become perfectly purified like a lake deep, clear and still. Referring to this, it reminds us of the powerful words of the Buddha. It is really interesting. The Buddha says that through out his life a fool associates with the wise, he never comprehends the Truth like a spoon though used until it is well worn, never knows the flavor of the soup. Likewise, "*Though only for a moment a discerning person associates with a wise person, quickly he comprehends the Truth, just like the tongue that tastes the flavor of the soup.*"⁶³

Clear comprehension is not something that spontaneously comes out of nothing. It arises due to causes and conditions. According to the teachings of the Buddha, nothing happens without causes and nothing happens due to only one cause. There is no singular cause in Buddhism. The Buddha's teachings are about cause and effect (*hetu+phala*).

Hence, what is the cause of arising clear comprehension? In the discourse on "Ignorance" (*Avijjā*) in *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, the Buddha says, "Monks, I say clear comprehension also comes to be with a cause, it is not without a cause, what is the cause of the arising of clear comprehension? 'Wise attention' is to be said."⁶⁴ Therefore, it is clear that wise attention is the cause of clear comprehension. Let us now figure out what the wise attention is.

(iii). What is Wise Attention?

This is undoubtedly a vital factor to understand clearly and practice repeatedly by the wise person. Wise attention is also sometimes referred to as 'proper attention'.

Mindfulness, clear comprehension, wisdom, wise attention, serenity and insight are all wonderful qualities to be developed by humans. Only humans can develop these qualities.

Wise attention is *yonisomanasikāra* [in *Pāli*]. There are two terms here: *yoniso+manasikāra*. *Yoniso* literally means 'in accordance with the origin/base or cause' and *manasikāra* means 'attention.' Therefore, *yonisomanasikāra* really means, "giving attention to understand the causes/roots." That is how one understands the causes of things. Why do things happen in this manner? How do they happen in such a way? One has to give attention and understand things wisely. This is what is called wise attention. If one has mindfulness, clear comprehension and wise attention, one can definitely understand things properly and pretty soon can enter the right path and realize the Four Noble Truths and attain the ultimate bliss of *Nibbāna*.

Sometimes, in his discourses, the Buddha used the term *paññā* (wisdom) also in order to denote *sampajaññā* (clear comprehension); like in the context of '*sammapaññāya datthabham*' meaning, 'to be seen

clearly through proper wisdom' or '*sammapannāya passati*' (sees with proper wisdom).⁶⁵

According to this same discourse of "Ignorance" in *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, the Buddha pointed out that wise attention arises due to confidence; confidence arises due to listening to the *Dhamma*, and that the opportunity to listen to the *Dhamma* occurs due to the association with good friends. That factor of association with good friends is of utmost significant for all of us to understand because we sometimes do not value highly enough the association of a good friend. Good friends are quite rare in society. Once the Buddha said that the whole Dispensation of the Buddha is dependent on good friends.

Decisively, these two factors; wise attention and association with a good friend are two of the four factors for attaining the state of stream enterer. (The other two factors being listening to the *Dhamma* and practice of the *Dhamma* in its entirety).

Clear comprehension is the moment-to-moment awareness and understanding of things as they really are. This comes to effect only if one is practicing the *Dhamma*. Without practicing, none can gain bliss. This bliss is only gained through effort. For the practice of clear comprehension, we need right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration and equanimity.

When the Buddha introduced the Buddhist technique of meditation in “The Great Discourse on the Establishment of Mindfulness,” he stated that one has to maintain the four qualities all the while practicing. Of the four factors to be maintained, the second factor is clear comprehension (*sampajāno*). According to his instruction, here one has to practice the four establishments of mindfulness: ardently, clearly comprehending, mindfully and with equanimity. (This is having removed both covetousness and grief.)

(iv). The Fruits of the Contemplative Life

In the *Long Discourses of the Buddha (Digha Nikāya)*, the second discourse is about the fruits of contemplative life (*Sāmaññaphala Sutta*). In accordance with this discourse, once a certain king came to the Buddha and asked about the fruits of the contemplative life because he saw others enjoying the visible fruits of their work and were delighted and pleased with their parents, children, friends, and colleagues, but there were no such rewards for those who are following the contemplative life. Therefore, he asked, “Can you Venerable Sir, point out such a reward visible here and now as a fruit of the contemplative life?” Then, the Buddha gave a list of the fruits of the contemplative life visible here and now, in this very world. Explaining the contemplative life that the disciples of the Buddha lead, the Buddha expounded how the monks lead a life with mindfulness and clear

comprehension. Here, the Buddha said, "And how, Sir, is a monk accomplished in mindfulness and clear awareness? Here, a monk acts with clear awareness in going forth and back, in looking ahead or behind him, in bending and stretching, in wearing his outer and inner robe and carrying his bowl, in eating, drinking, chewing and swallowing, in evacuating and urinating, in walking, standing, sitting, lying down, in waking, in speaking and in keeping silent, he acts with clear awareness. In this way, a monk is accomplished in mindfulness and clear awareness...Abandoning sloth-and-torpor he dwells perceiving light, mindful and clearly aware, his mind is purified of sloth-and-torpor."⁶⁶

In the illustrious discourse of the technique of Buddhist meditation, "*Satipatthāna Sutta*," the Buddha explained what clear comprehension is as follows: "Again, *bhikkhus*, a *bhikkhu* is one who acts in full awareness when going forward and returning; who acts in full awareness when looking ahead and looking away; who acts in full awareness when flexing and extending his limbs; who acts in full awareness when wearing his robes and carrying his outer robe and bowl; who acts in full awareness when eating, drinking, consuming food, and tasting; who acts in full awareness when defecating and urinating; who acts in full awareness when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, and keeping silent. In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body internally, externally and both internally and

externally... And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That too is how a *bhikkhu* abides contemplating the body as a body."⁶⁷

(v). Know it Very Well

According to this explanation, it is very clear that to be mindful means to know things very well. The practitioner has to understand things very well whatever he/she is doing. That is the meaning. When you understand a thing very well, you do not cling to that thing as your own. You will see the origination of things and the cessation of things. As you see the arising and perishing nature of things, you see that things are impermanent, unsatisfactory and without a self. Similarly, you see things are not mine, not I am (me) and not myself. This is what reality is. This is how the Buddha, all Enlightened Ones and all those who see through proper wisdom can see things.

When you see forms, feelings, perceptions, volitional formations and consciousness in terms of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, without a self, or as not mine, not me and not myself; you never cling to these things. Then, you have no suffering at all. We can see this from the life of the Buddha and the Enlightened Ones.

(vi). A Boulder to the Buddha's Head

Once while the Buddha was practicing walking meditation at the foot of a mountain, *Devadatta*, the

Buddha's brother-in-law and arch-enemy, rolled a boulder down toward the Buddha's head. Fortunately, because of the power of the virtues of the Buddha, it did not hit the Buddha's head. However, a splinter of the rock wounded the Buddha's foot. It was bleeding with unbearable pain. That was the bodily feeling, pain. The Buddha took it as simply 'pain', not the Buddha's pain. In the discourse of "The Stone Splinter"⁶⁸ of *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, it is said that it was painful, racking, sharp, piercing, harrowing and disagreeable. However, the Buddha endured it with mindfulness and clear comprehension. Thus, it was because of the Buddha's clear comprehension that the Buddha endured it in such a way. Not only the Buddha, anyone could do that if they have developed and cultivated mindfulness and clear comprehension. Nonetheless, it depends on the extent to which one has developed and cultivated mindfulness and clear comprehension. It is true that we cannot do it to the extent that the Buddha did. In comparison to the Buddha, we are extremely far behind. However, unlike the other religious masters, it is only the Buddha who says that we too can come to that level, that state. Even we can become the Buddhās.

If you have clear comprehension, your mindfulness is also well established because mindfulness and clear comprehension always go in tandem. Where there is mindfulness, there is clear comprehension and vice-versa. This is why the Buddha always used the two terms mindfulness and

clear comprehension together.

When one is mindful and clearly aware of an object, one can see what is going on clearly and properly. When one sees things properly, in him/her arises the knowledge of arising, passing, gratification, danger and escape of that particular object (*samudayan ca attangaman ca assādan ca ādinavan ca nissaranan ca yathābhutam pajānāti*). These are the things to be understood by oneself for a clear understanding of things. This is what is called seeing things as they really are. When you see things as they really are, you never cling to things, nor are you repelled from things. In other words, you have neither attachment to things nor repulsion from things. You have abundant of happiness and peacefulness in your mind. You live in society light heartedly.

The discourse “Mindful” in the *Satipatthāna* chapter of *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, the Buddha describes how a meditator should exercise clear comprehension as follows: “And how, *bhikkhus*, does a *bhikkhu* exercise clear comprehension? Here, *bhikkhus*, for a *bhikkhu*, feelings are understood as they arise, understood as they remain present, understood as they pass away. Thoughts are understood as they arise, understood as they remain present, understood as they pass away. Perceptions are understood as they arise, understood as they remain present, understood as they pass away. It is in this way, *bhikkhus*, that a *bhikkhu* exercises clear comprehension. *Bhikkhus*, a

bhikkhu should dwell mindful and clearly comprehending. This is our instruction to you.”⁶⁹ These are the main things to be understood by the practitioners. All these three things (feeling, perception, and thought) arise because of contact. Therefore, one has to be more and more mindful and clearly comprehend at the time of contact. It is also necessary to understand the nature of perception according to the teaching of the Buddha.

(vii). How does Perception take Place?

In many discourses, the Buddha clearly pointed out how feelings, perception and thoughts or volitional formations come to be. Let us understand this according to the discourse known as “The Honeyball” of *The Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha*.⁷⁰ Here, Venerable *Mahā Kaccāna* explains, “*Dependent on the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition there is feeling. What one feels, that one perceives. What one perceives, that one thinks about. What one thinks about, that one mentally proliferates. With what one has mentally proliferated as the source, perceptions and notions [born of] mental proliferation beset a man with respect to past, future, and present forms cognizable through the eye.*” Perception by the ear, nose, tongue, body and mind are the same.

The first thing to understand is that there are six types of internal and external bases and six types of consciousness (eye consciousness, ear consciousness, nose consciousness, etc.). It is because of these things,

contact takes place and because of contact all feelings, perceptions and thoughts come to be. This is vividly and categorically explained in the well-known discourse of the “Six Sets of Six” in *The Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha*.⁷¹ The Buddha giving the synopsis of the discourse says, “*The six internal bases should be understood. The six external bases should be understood. The six classes of consciousness should be understood. The six classes of contact should be understood. The six classes of feeling should be understood. The six classes of craving should be understood.*” Thus, it is with this understanding that the practitioner comes to a clear comprehension of things within and without.

(viii). The Buddha's Illness and Clear Comprehension

The Buddha gave all instructions based on his own experience having understood them all clearly. One time, during his Rains Retreat in the place called *Beluva*, he was gravely ill experiencing sharp pains. It was as if he were about to die. However, he endured all the pain mindfully, clearly comprehending and without complaining. He thought: “It is not fitting that I should attain final *Nibbāna* (death) without addressing my followers and taking leave of the order of monks. I must hold this disease in check by energy and apply myself to the force of life.”⁷² He did so and the disease abated. This is because of his mindfulness and clear comprehension. His whole life is an exemplary model for all of us. He lived a very simple life yet a blissful life. This was due to his development

and cultivation of mind to the utmost level of human perfection.

In meditative practice, whenever you have mindfulness and clear comprehension, you can clearly see your own five hindrances. Then, you can completely eradicate them, so they do not return. From that time, there will be no such hindrances for you on the path. As it happens to you, your mind comes to the state of collectedness and serenity. This naturally happens when you have developed and cultivated your mindfulness and clear comprehension. At that time, you can see the hindrances as follows:

1. Whenever they are in your mind, you can see them.
2. Whenever they are not in your mind, you can see.
3. Whenever they arise in your mind, you can see them.
4. Whenever they pass, you can see them.
5. Whenever they never arise in the future, you can see.

When you practice and develop the seven factors of enlightenment, you can see them clearly because of your mindfulness and clear comprehension. Then, you can see them as they are, as follows:

1. Whenever the seven factors are there in your mind.
2. Whenever the factors are not there in your mind.
3. Whenever they arise in your mind.
4. Whenever they develop, you can see them as they are developed; thus, leading to the realization of the Four Noble Truths.

If you have well-developed, cultivated mindfulness and clear comprehension, no matter where you are or what you are engaged in, you will realize the real nature of existence. Having completely removed all taints and all latent tendencies, you will attain enlightenment.

(ix). Enlightenment on the top of two Bamboo Sticks

Once, in the time of the Buddha, a theatrical troupe consisting of five hundred dancers and acrobats came to *Rājagaha* and performed on the grounds of the palace of the King for seven days. A young dancer, who was the daughter of an acrobat, sang and danced on top of a long bamboo pole. *Uggasena*, the young son of a rich man, fell desperately in love with her and his parents could not stop him from marrying her. Therefore, he married the young dancer and followed the troupe. As he was not a dancer nor an acrobat, he was not of much use to that

party. Consequently, as the party moved from place to place, he had to carry boxes and drive the cart, etc. Over time, a son was born to them. To his child, the dancer would often sing a song which ran thus, "O you, son of the man who keeps watch over the carts; the man who carries boxes and bundles! O you son of the ignorant one who can do nothing!" *Uggasena* heard the song; he knew that his wife was referring to him and he was very much hurt and depressed.

Subsequently, he went to his father-in-law, the acrobat, and requested him to teach him acrobatics. After a year's training, *Uggasena* became a skillful acrobat. Then, *Uggasena* went back to the city and proclaimed that he would publicly demonstrate his skills in seven days time. On the seventh day, a long pole was put up and *Uggasena* stood on top of it. At a signal given to him from below, he somersaulted seven times on the pole.

At this time, the Buddha saw *Uggasena* in his vision and knew that it was time for him to attain enlightenment. Accordingly, the Buddha entered the city and willed that the audience should turn their attention to him instead of applauding *Uggasena* for his acrobatic feats. When *Uggasena* saw that he was being quite neglected and ignored, he just sat on the top of the post feeling very discontented and depressed. The Buddha said, "*Uggasena, let go of the past, let go of the future, let go of the present, and cross over to the farther shore of existence. With mind wholly liberated, you shall*

come no more to birth and death." By this time, he was mindful and very well aware of things going on with him. With that clear comprehension, though he was still on the top of the pole, he realized what truth is and attained enlightenment. He then came down and entered the Dispensation of the Buddha.⁷³ Thus, no matter where you are, it is there if you are ready.

This is exactly what happened to many monks and nuns in the Dispensation of the Buddha. Not only monks and nuns, many lay persons too became the Enlightened Ones because of their mindfulness and clear comprehension. There is a famous story of the layperson named *Bāhiya*. He was an ascetic who lived in South India in the time of the Buddha. He mistakenly thought that he was an Enlightened One. As such he was respected, revered, honored and venerated by the people. He obtained the four requisites of robes, alms-food, lodging and medicines from people wrongly thinking that he was enlightened. One day a certain deity, one of his relatives in his previous life, said that he was not enlightened and further the deity said that there is an Enlightened One in the North India and he was the Buddha.

Thereafter, seeking the Buddha this man *Bāhiya* went all the way to the North India. When he went to the Monastery, the Buddha had left for his alms round. He then went to see the Buddha. On the road, seeing the Buddha as pleasing and lovely to see, with calmed senses and a tranquil mind, attained to perfect poise

and calm, controlled, a perfected one, watchful with restrained senses he approached him and fell down with his head at the Buddha's feet, and said: "Teach me *Dhamma*, Venerable Sir, teach me *Dhamma*, the Well Gone One. That it will be for my good and happiness for a long time." The Buddha said that it was not the proper time to preach. For a second time and a third time he requested though the Buddha said, that it was not the proper time. However, eventually, the Buddha gave an instruction to him.

The Buddha said, "*Bāhiya, what is seen will be merely what is seen; what is heard will be merely what is heard; what is sensed will be merely what is sensed; what is cognized will be merely what is cognized. In this way you should train yourself. When, Bāhiya, for you what is seen is merely what is seen... what is cognized is merely what is cognized, then, Bāhiya, you will not be 'with that.'"⁷⁴ So that was the instruction. From simply listening to this instruction he attained enlightenment because of his clear comprehension. This is because he had both mindfulness and clear comprehension.*

Kisa Gotami was a woman in the time of the Buddha who lost her child and became utterly desperate. Though many said that her child was dead, she wouldn't believe them and wanted to find a doctor

to give some medicine to her child. Many thought that she had lost her mind. Eventually, one old man told her to go to the Buddha and he would give her medicine. The Buddha told her that before he could bring the child back to life, she must find a handful of mustard seeds from a family where no one had died. Frantically, she went from house to house but to her disappointment, she could not find a household where no a death had occurred. Finally, she gained clear comprehension and the realization struck her that there was no household where no one had died. She returned to the monastery and the Buddha comforted her and preached to her. She being more mindful and clearly comprehending the real nature of life attained enlightenment. This was because of her clear comprehension.

Patacara, another woman lived in the time of the Buddha who lost her husband, two children, both parents, and her only brother on the same day. Nonetheless, she was destined to be the preeminent nun for discipline in the Dispensation of the Buddha. She lost her mind and ran towards the monastery naked in hysterics. The Buddha instructed his disciples not to obstruct her, but to let her come near the Buddha. When she came closer to the Buddha, she regained her sanity. After she realized that she was naked, she felt ashamed and crouched on the ground. A layperson threw her a cloak and she wrapped herself in it. She prostrated to the Buddha and described the tragedy that befallen her. The Buddha then preached

to her and at the end of the talk as she was mindful and clearly comprehending, she entered the path as a stream enterer and became a nun.

Thereafter, one day while she was washing her feet, she saw the water just flowing from high to low. As she was mindful, her mind became calm and then she took her lamp and went to her *kuti* [a small, simple room for meditators]. On her bed, she got a pin and pushed the wick of the lamp down with it to douse the lamp. The lamp went out, together with that, as she had clear comprehension and mindfulness, the darkness of delusion vanished and the light of wisdom arose in her. She became an enlightened nun. This is the nature of clear comprehension. This is why we need to develop and cultivate both mindfulness and clear comprehension. Clear comprehension is undoubtedly great significance in the practice. It is because of this, one can come to the clear understanding of the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma* and the *Sangha*. That is what is called faith [confidence]. Faith is twofold in the teaching of the Buddha [the *Pāli* term is *saddhā*.]:

1. Baseless faith (*amulikā saddhā*)
2. Faith with wisdom (*ākaravati saddhā*).

What one should have is not baseless faith, but faith with wisdom. When one has faith with wisdom, one understands things properly. One never simply grasps things with blind faith but with clear

comprehension. Accordingly, faith should always go with clear comprehension. Faith without clear comprehension is certainly blind.

According to the *Upāli Sutta* of *The Majjhima Nikāya*, after listening to the Buddha with a great confidence and having a great comprehension of the Dhamma, *Upāli* composed a long hymn using 100 epithets for the Buddha right there on the spot. Then, his former teacher *Niganthanātaputta* asked "When did you compose that hymn of praise to the recluse *Gotama*, householder?" *Upāli* then said, "Venerable Sir, suppose there were a great heap of many kinds of flowers, and then a clever garland-maker or garland-maker's apprentice were to knot them into a multicolored garland; so too, Venerable Sir, the Blessed One has many praiseworthy qualities, many hundreds of praiseworthy qualities. Who, Venerable Sir, would not praise the praiseworthy?"

Now, it is clear that if we practice mindfulness and clear comprehension, we can realize reality, the highest Bliss of *Nibbāna* at any time. This is why the teaching of the Buddha is called unaffected by time (*akālika dhammo*). There are thousands of stories in the canonical discourses and the commentaries about how various people attained enlightenment because of their practice of *vipassanā* or mindfulness and clear comprehension. This is what happened to all enlightened monks and nuns in the verses of monks and nuns, the *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā*. This will be

the same thing that would happen to everyone if they practice mindfulness and clear comprehension as a part of their lives.

(x). Mindfulness and Clear Comprehension for a Contented, Peaceful and Happy Life

In general, we lose our peacefulness and happiness of mind mainly because of our own discontentment. We are often quite insatiable. Inherently, we want more and more things to be happy. However, what really happens is when we get more and more things, our happiness and peace of mind flies out the window. No matter how many material things we have, we cannot be happy. We need still something more. That is the nature of human experience and that itself is the problem.

Once the Buddha said, "There is no satisfying sensual desire, even with a rain of gold coins. For sensual pleasures give little satisfaction and much pain. Having understood this, the wise man finds no delight even in heavenly pleasures. The disciple of the Supreme Buddha delights in the destruction of craving."⁷⁵

Peace and happiness should be sought not out there but within. It is always with us. It is the same mind that brings us sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair that brings us peace and happiness as well. You are your master. You are the only person to pave

the way for your happiness and peacefulness. Therefore, first believe yourself, your mind. Trust yourself, be more and more mindful in the present moment and strive to understand things clearly. Give full attention to things and understand what is going on right now. Practice mindfulness with a clear understanding of the object of your meditation. Do this daily for a couple of weeks and then you will be able to understand the difference.

We all have to be contented with what we have. As humans, we can think and act. Therefore, we have to consider the necessity of things. If something is not really necessary for us, why should we worry about such things? Let things go rather than holding onto and clinging to them. Clinging to anything is suffering. Whenever you practice mindfulness and clearly comprehending what you are doing, naturally you will be able to develop your wisdom and clear comprehension so that you can see things as they really are. Then, one day, you can completely detach from all attachments and come to a real state of peace and happiness: real peace, real happiness.

Vedanā, or feeling, is one of the crucial things to be understood for the realization of things as they are. It is because of feelings that craving arises. Craving is the cause of unsatisfactoriness. Therefore, in order to understand craving, you must understand feelings. There are many kinds of feelings. In one particular discourse, the Buddha said that there are 108 kinds of

feelings.⁷⁶ Referring to feelings, and comparing them to the different winds in the sky, the Buddha said, "If one has clear comprehension, one could fully understand them in their entirety and come to the state of taintlessness in this very life".

" Just as many diverse winds
Blow back and forth across the sky,
Eastern winds and western winds,
Northern winds and southern winds,
Dusty winds and dustless winds,
Sometimes cold, sometimes hot,
Those that are strong and others mild —
Winds of many kinds that blow;
So in this very body here
Various kinds of feelings arise,
Pleasant ones and painful ones,
And those neither painful nor pleasant.
But when a *bhikkhu* who is ardent
Does not neglect **clear comprehension**,
Then that wise man fully understands
Feelings in their entirety.
Having fully understood feelings,
He is taintless in this very life.
Standing in *Dhamma*, with the body's breakup,
The knowledge-master cannot be reckoned.⁷⁷

Once, the Buddha pointed out four kinds of development of concentration. He said, "Monks, there is a development of concentration that leads to a pleasant dwelling in this very life; there is a development of concentration that leads to obtaining

knowledge and vision; there is a development of concentration that leads to mindfulness and clear comprehension; and there is a development of concentration that leads to the destruction of the taints." ⁷⁸ According to this teaching, there is one type of concentration that leads to mindfulness and clear comprehension. Explaining this further the Buddha said, "And what is the development of concentration that leads to mindfulness and clear comprehension? Monks, a practitioner must understand feelings as they arise, as they remain present, as they pass away; perceptions must be understood as they arise, as they remain present, as they pass away; thoughts must be understood as they arise; as they stand remain present and as they pass away. This is the development of concentration that leads to mindfulness and clear comprehension."

Tips to remember:

1. Mindfulness and clear comprehension should always go together, conjoined.
2. Clear comprehension means 'know it very well'.
3. Where there is mindfulness and clear comprehension there is *vipassanā*.
4. There is no first cause in Buddhism.
5. Wise attention is an indispensable factor.
6. No matter where you are, if the conditions are fulfilled you are an enlightened one.
7. What you see, hear, smell, taste, tangibly feel, or cognize is nothing but an experience (that will arise, manifest and cease).

Part 4

Mindfulness, Clear Comprehension and Concentration

“Bhikkhus, I shall teach you noble right concentration with its supports and its requisites.”
-The Buddha- (M.N.117)

Concentration, serenity, tranquility or calmness is the state of collectedness of mind known as '*samādhi*' in Pāli. Without practicing serenity or concentration at least for some time, one cannot come to insight. Whenever the practitioners practice mindfulness of breathing or any other method of meditation like loving friendliness, recollection of the qualities of the *Buddha*, *Dhamma* or the *Sangha*, even though they have not come to a deep level of serenity, they practice calmness or serenity meditation. According to *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, there are four kinds of meditations and four types of practitioners. The four kinds of meditation are as follows:

1. Insight preceded by serenity.
2. Serenity preceded by insight.
- 3. Serenity and insight in conjunction.**
4. The mind is seized by restlessness about the *Dhamma*.⁷⁹

However, much one is practicing meditation, success in meditation depends on factors such as effort, dedication and also the maturity of one's faculties. Only the Buddha had the unparalleled knowledge to understand the development of one's faculties. There are five mental faculties (confidence, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom), to be developed and cultivated for successful meditation. Then, only one can develop the seven enlightenment factors and attain enlightenment. For the success of one's practice of meditation, virtue, concentration and wisdom (insight) are equally important.

As the Buddha once said, there are four types of persons (practitioners) in society. He says, "*Bhikkhus*, there are these four kinds of persons found existing in the world. What four? Here, *bhikkhus*, some person does not fulfill virtuous behavior, concentration, and wisdom. Another person fulfills virtuous behavior but does not fulfill concentration and wisdom. Still another person fulfills virtuous behavior and concentration but does not fulfill wisdom. And still another person fulfills virtuous behavior, concentration, and wisdom. These are the four kinds of persons found existing in the world."

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(i). The Four Kinds of Development of Concentration

According to the *Samādhi Bhāvanā Sutta* of the chapter titled *Rohitassa* in the *Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, there are fourfold developments of concentration itself. The Buddha says, "There are, O

monks, these four kinds of development of concentration. What are these four?

1. There is a development of concentration that leads to a pleasant dwelling in this very life.
2. There is a development of concentration that leads to obtaining knowledge and vision.
3. There is a development of concentration that leads to mindfulness and clear comprehension.
4. There is a development of concentration that leads to the destruction of the taints."⁸¹

It is interesting to analyze, as the Buddha himself intended, the four kinds of concentration related to mindfulness and clear comprehension. Let us take a few moments to analyze these four.

1. Being secluded from sensual pleasures and secluded from unwholesome states, a meditator enters and dwells in the first *jhāna*, which is accompanied by applied thought and sustained thought, with rapture and happiness born of seclusion. Then, with the subsiding of applied thought and sustained thought, he enters and dwells in the second *jhāna*, which has internal confidence and unification of mind, is without applied thought and sustained thought, and has rapture and happiness born of concentration. Then, with the fading away as well of rapture, he

dwells equanimous and mindful and clearly comprehending; he experiences happiness with the body; he enters and dwells in the third *jhāna* of which the noble ones declare: 'He is equanimous, mindful; one who dwells happily.' Then, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain and with the previous fading away of joy and sadness, he enters and dwells in the fourth *jhāna*, which is neither painful nor pleasant and includes the purification of mindfulness and equanimity. This is called the development of concentration that leads to a pleasant dwelling in this very life.

2. Here, a meditator attends to the perception of light; he resolves upon the perception of daytime; as by day, so at night, as at night, so by day. Thus, with an open and unencumbered heart, he develops a luminous mind. This is the development of concentration that leads to obtaining knowledge and vision.
3. Here, for a meditator, feelings are understood as they arise, as they remain present, as they pass away; perceptions are understood as they arise, as they are present, as they pass away; thoughts are understood as they arise, as they are present and as they fade away. This is the development of concentration that leads to mindfulness and clear comprehension.
4. Here, a meditator dwells contemplating the rise and fall of the five aggregates subject to

clinging: "such is form, such its arising, such its passing away, such is feeling... such is perception... such are volitional formations... such is consciousness, such its arising, such its passing away." This is the development of concentration that leads to the destruction of the taints.

Serenity or calmness without mindfulness and clear comprehension is not the teaching of the Buddha. One can be calm and keep a serene mind for some time or hours, but it helps only for peaceful abiding. That is not enough. One has to be more and more mindful and clearly comprehend the real nature of things within oneself and the world as well. The Buddha's teaching is for that purpose. The Buddha teaches both serenity and insight. His famous teaching technique is serenity and insight in tandem (*yuganaddha*). In the *Mahā Satipatthāna Sutta*, from its beginning to the end, we come across this teaching. At the end of the discourse, the Buddha guaranteed, *"If one would practice this method as given for a maximum of seven years or a minimum of seven days, one would attain enlightenment."*

(ii) The Five Hindrances, *Jhāna* and Higher Knowledge

Whenever we talk about serenity, there are many objects for serenity meditation. Practicing serenity is easy and benign. There are about forty different objects for practicing serenity meditation in the traditional teachings. When practicing serenity

meditation, you have to subdue the five hindrances first. They are:

1. Sensual desire
2. Ill will
3. Drowsiness and laziness
4. Restlessness and worry
5. Doubt

As long as you have these five, you will never obtain mental serenity. Therefore, the first thing to be done is calming and subduing these five hindrances. Only then you can come to the state of serenity. Though you practiced and developed serenity, defilements such as greed, hate and delusion are still there. You have merely subdued them. That subduing is not enough because they come to surface later and remain bothersome. That is why they are to be completely eradicated. The way to complete eradication is *vipassanā*.

The Buddha has never underestimated the value of practicing serenity because it is necessary to develop knowledge and practice of *vipassanā*. As previously mentioned, serenity is the first thing to practice as meditation. However, the thing that we have to understand clearly is that serenity is not enough and it is not everything. When practicing serenity, one can gain five kinds of deep knowledge, which are called *abhiññā*.

When the mind is well developed in serenity

meditation based on the *jhānas*, in the third *jhāna*, one experiences sound mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati sampajañña*). This is a special characteristic of the third *jhāna* in the teachings of the Buddha. This characteristic is unavailable in the other traditions of meditation. It is because of this characteristic of clear comprehension, that one can realize the three characteristics of existence: impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and soullessness.

When the mind is further developed and cultivated, one can experience the fourth *jhāna*. At this stage, one's mindfulness and clear comprehension both are well purified and reinforced with equanimity. In the discourses, it is explained as follows: "With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, one enters and dwells in the fourth *jhāna*, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure, purity of mindfulness, and equanimity."⁸² It is from this time that the meditator can practice and develop *abhiññā*, the five kinds of deep knowledge, psychic powers. There are five kinds of knowledge that can be gained by any person if practiced and developed. These five kinds of knowledge are:

1. Miraculous powers (such as the ability to vanish or walk on water)
2. Clairaudience (divine ear)
3. Ability to read others' mind
4. Knowledge of one's previous lives
5. Clairvoyance (divine eye)

In comparison with the true knowledge of destruction of all taints that was rediscovered by the Buddha, these five kinds of knowledge are worldly knowledge and worldly powers. The Buddha and many of his disciples too had developed these five kinds of deep knowledge through which they could perform many miracles and gained different kinds of abilities, such as listening to the sounds beyond normal perception, seeing others' mind, reading one's previous lives. However, the Buddha's teaching is not for this purpose. It is for the destruction of all defilements and attainment of Liberation.

The Buddha constantly encouraged his disciples to practice and destroy all defilements based on greed, hatred and delusion. When one has practiced and developed the first four *jhānas* as a part of serenity meditation, one can further develop and gain the immaterial attainments as well. There are four immaterial attainments or *jhāna*. They are called immaterial referring to the first four *jhānas* as material *jhāna*. Altogether there are eight material and immaterial *jhānas* or attainments (*samāpatti*). The last one of the eight is the state of neither perception-nor-non-perception. All these are gained as the result of practicing serenity meditation. As the result of practicing serenity, one can reach the highest attainment. That is the state of cessation of perception and feelings (*saññā vedayita nirodha*).

(iii) The Cessation of Perception and Feelings

In order to illustrate this state of mind, I would like to quote a dialogue between an enlightened nun named *Dhammadinnā* and her former husband *Visākha*. *Dhammadinnā*, with clear comprehension of the teaching of the Buddha entered the Dispensation and attained enlightenment. After that, one day, *Visākha* went to meet her and asked many questions concerning the *Dhamma*. She gave very clear answers to all of his questions. Having listened to her, *Visākha* went to the Buddha and reported their entire discussion. Then, the Buddha approved her answers with these words: “The *Bhikkhuni Dhammadinnā* is wise, *Visākha*, the *Bhikkhuni Dhammadinnā* has great wisdom. If you had asked me the meaning of this, I would have explained it to you in the same way that the *Bhikkhuni Dhammadinnā* explained it. Such is its meaning and so you should remember it.” The following is that discussion from the discourse on “The Shorter Series of Questions & Answers” from *The Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha*.⁸³

Visākha: Lady, how does the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling come to be?

Dhammadinnā: Friend *Visākha*, when a *bhikkhu* is attaining the cessation of perception and feeling, it does not occur to him: 'I shall attain the cessation of perception and feeling,' or 'I am attaining the cessation of perception and feeling,' or 'I have attained the

cessation of perception and feeling'; but rather his mind has previously been developed in such a way that it leads him to that state.

Visākha: Lady, when a *bhikkhu* is attaining the cessation of perception and feeling, which states cease first in him: the bodily formation, the verbal formation or the mental formation?

Dhammadinnā: Friend *Visākha*, when a *bhikkhu* is attaining the cessation of perception and feeling, first the verbal formation ceases, then the bodily formation, then the mental formation.

Visākha: Lady, how does one emerge from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling?

Dhammadinnā: Friend *Visākha*, when a *bhikkhu* is emerging from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, it does not occur to him: 'I shall emerge from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling,' or 'I am emerging from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling,' or 'I have emerged from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling'; but rather his mind has been developed in such a way that he naturally enters that state.

Visākha: Lady, when a *bhikkhu* is emerging from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, which states arise first in him: the bodily formation, the verbal formation or the mental formation?

Dhammadinnā: Friend *Visākha*, when a *bhikkhu* is emerging from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, first the mental formation arises, then the bodily formation, then the verbal formation.

Visākha: Lady, when a *bhikkhu* has emerged from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, what kinds of contact does he experience?

Dhammadinnā: Friend *Visākha*, when a *bhikkhu* has emerged from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, he experiences three kinds of contact: voidness contact, signless contact, desireless contact.

Visākha: Lady, when a *bhikkhu* has emerged from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, to what dwells in his mind, what are his preferences, what are his tendencies?

Dhammadinna: Friend *Visākha*, when a *bhikkhu* has emerged from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, his mind inclines to seclusion, leans to seclusion, tends to seclusion."

Referring to this state of cessation of perception and feeling, once the Buddha gave a wonderful answer to Venerable *Ananda*. One day, Venerable *Ananda* went to the Buddha and asked, "Venerable Sir, is there a concentration to the *bhikkhu*, abiding in which, in earth he has no perceptions of earth, in water he has no

perceptions of water, in fire he has no perceptions of fire, in air he has no perceptions of air, in the sphere of space, he has no perceptions of the sphere of space, in the sphere of consciousness, he has no perceptions of the sphere of consciousness, in the sphere of nothingness, he has no perceptions of the sphere of nothingness, in the sphere of neither perceptions nor non-perceptions, he has no perceptions of the sphere of neither perceptions nor non-perceptions. In this world, he has no perceptions of this world. In the other world, he has no perceptions of the other world. Yet is he perceptive?"

The Buddha then said, "*Ananda*, there is that concentration to the *bhikkhu*, abiding in which, in earth he has no perceptions of earth, in water he has no perceptions of water, in fire he has no perceptions of fire, in air he has no perceptions of air, in the sphere of space, he has no perceptions of the sphere of space, in the sphere of consciousness, he has no perceptions of the sphere of consciousness, in the sphere of nothingness, he has no perceptions of the sphere of nothingness, in the sphere of neither perceptions nor non-perceptions, he has no perceptions of the sphere of neither perceptions nor non-perceptions. In this world, he has no perceptions of this world. In the other world, he has no perceptions of the other world. Yet he is perceptive."

Then, the Venerable *Ananda* asked, "Venerable Sir, what is that concentration?" The Buddha revealed,

"Here, *Ananda*, the *bhikkhu* is perceptive in this way: This is peaceful, this is exalted, such as the appeasement of all determinations, giving up of all endearments, destruction of craving, disenchantment, cessation and extinction. *Ananda*, in this manner, the *bhikkhu* has this sort of concentration, abiding in which, in earth he has no perceptions of earth, in water he has no perceptions of water, in fire he has no perceptions of fire, in air he has no perceptions of air, in the sphere of space, he has no perceptions of the sphere of space, in the sphere of consciousness, he has no perceptions of the sphere of consciousness, in the sphere of nothingness, he has no perceptions of the sphere of nothingness, in the sphere of neither perceptions nor non-perceptions, he has no perceptions of the sphere of neither perceptions nor non-perceptions. In this world, he has no perceptions of this world. In the other world, he has no perceptions of the other world. Yet he is perceptive."⁸⁴ This is the cessation of perception and feeling and the ultimate result of it.

(iv). How Venerable Sāriputta Practiced and Developed Jhāna and Higher Attainments

Let us now understand how the chief disciple of the Buddha, Venerable *Sāriputta*, practiced these different *jhānas* and attained each of them all one by one according to the *Anupada Sutta* of *The Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha*.⁸⁵ Here, the Buddha addressing the monks said, "*Bhikkhus*, *Sāriputta* is

wise; *Sāriputta* has great wisdom; *Sāriputta* has wide wisdom; *Sāriputta* has joyous wisdom; *Sāriputta* has quick wisdom; *Sāriputta* has keen wisdom; *Sāriputta* has penetrative wisdom. During half a month, *bhikkhus*, *Sāriputta* gained insight into each state sequentially." Thereafter, the Buddha explained how each of them occurred.

According to the Buddha's explanation, Venerable *Sāriputta* being quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, entered and abided in the first *jhāna*, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion. And the states in the first *jhāna*—the applied thought, the sustained thought, the rapture, the pleasure, and the unification of mind; the contact, feeling, perception, volition, and mind; the zeal, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention—these states were defined by him one by one as they occurred; known to him those states arose, known they were present, known they disappeared. He understood thus: 'So indeed, these states, not having been, come into being; having been, they vanish.' Regarding those states, he abided unattracted, unrepelled, independent, detached, free, dissociated and with a mind free of barriers. He understood: 'There is an escape beyond,' and with the cultivation of that [attainment], he confirmed that there is.

Again, with the stilling of applied and sustained thought, he entered and abided in the

second *jhāna*, which has self-confidence and singleness of mind without applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of concentration. And the states in the second *jhāna*—the self-confidence, the rapture, the pleasure and the unification of mind; the contact, feeling, perception, volition, and mind; the zeal, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention—these states were defined by him one by one as they occurred; known to him as those states arose, known they were present, known they disappeared. He understood thus: ...and with the cultivation of that [attainment], he confirmed its existence.

Again, with the fading away as well of rapture, he abided in equanimity, and mindful and fully aware, still feeling pleasure with the body, he entered upon and abided in the third *jhāna*, on account of which noble ones announce: 'He has a pleasant abiding who has equanimity and is mindful.'

And the states in the third *jhāna*—the equanimity, the pleasure, the mindfulness, the full awareness and the unification of mind; the contact, feeling, perception, volition, and mind; the zeal, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention— these states were defined by him one by one as they occurred; known to him those states arose, known they were present, known they disappeared. He understood thus: ...and with the cultivation of that [attainment], he confirmed its existence.

Again, with the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of joy and grief, he entered and abided in the fourth *jhāna*, which has neither-pain-nor-pleasure and purity of mindfulness and equanimity. And the states in the fourth *jhāna*—the equanimity, the neither-painful-nor-pleasant feeling, the mental unconcern due to tranquility, the purity of mindfulness and the unification of mind; the contact, feeling, perception, volition, and mind; the zeal, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity, and attention—these states were defined by him one by one as they occurred; known to him those states arose, known they were present, known they disappeared. He understood thus: ...and with the cultivation of that [attainment], he confirmed that there is.

Again, with the complete surmounting of perceptions of form, with the disappearance of perceptions of sensory impact, with non-attention to perceptions of diversity, aware that 'space is infinite,' he entered and abided in the base of infinite space.

And these states in the base of infinite space—the perception of the base of infinite space and the unification of mind; the contact, feeling, perception, volition, and mind; the zeal, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity and attention—these states were defined by him one by one as they occurred; known to him those states arose, known they were present, known they disappeared. He understood

thus: ...and with the cultivation of that [attainment], he confirmed its existence.

Again, by completely surmounting the base of infinite space, aware that 'consciousness is infinite,' he entered and abided in the base of infinite consciousness. And the states in the base of infinite consciousness—the perception of the base of infinite consciousness and the unification of mind; the contact, feeling, perception, volition and mind; the zeal, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity and attention— these states were defined by him one by one as they occurred; known to him those states arose, known they were present, known they disappeared. He understood thus: ...and with the cultivation of that [attainment], he confirmed its existence.

Again, by completely surmounting the base of infinite consciousness, aware that 'there is nothing,' he entered and abided in the base of nothingness.

And the states in the base of nothingness—the perception of the base of nothingness and the unification of mind; the contact, feeling, perception, volition and mind; the zeal, decision, energy, mindfulness, equanimity and attention—these states were defined by him one by one as they occurred; known to him those states arose, known they were present, known they disappeared. He understood thus: ...and with the cultivation of that [attainment], he confirmed its existence.

Again, by completely surmounting the base of nothingness, he entered and abided in the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. [This is the pinnacle of the unification of mind]. He emerged mindful from that attainment. Having done so, he contemplated the states that had passed, ceased and changed, thus: 'So indeed, these states, not having been, come into being; having been, they vanish.' Regarding those states, he abided unattached, unrepelled, independent, detached, free, dissociated with a mind rid of barriers. He understood: 'There is an escape beyond,' and with the cultivation of that [attainment], he confirmed that there is.

Again, by completely surmounting the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, he entered upon and abided in the cessation of perception and feeling. And his taints were destroyed by seeing with wisdom. He emerged mindful from this experience. Having done so, he recalled the states that had passed, ceased and changed and thus reflected: 'So indeed, these states, not having been, come into being; having been, they vanish.' Regarding those states, he abided unattached, unrepelled, independent, detached, free, dissociated with a mind rid of barriers. He understood: 'There is no escape beyond,' and with the cultivation of that [attainment], he confirmed that there is not.

"Bhikkhus, rightly speaking, were it to be said of anyone: 'He has attained mastery and perfection in noble virtue, attained mastery and perfection in noble

concentration, attained mastery and perfection in noble wisdom, attained mastery and perfection in noble deliverance,' it is of *Sāriputta* indeed that rightly speaking this should be said. *Bhikkhus*, rightly speaking, were it to be said of anyone:

'He is the son of the Blessed One, born of his breast, born of his mouth, born of the *Dhamma*, created by the *Dhamma*, an heir to the *Dhamma*, not an heir to material things,' it is of *Sāriputta* indeed that rightly speaking this should be said. *Bhikkhus*, the matchless Wheel of the *Dhamma* set rolling by the *Tathāgata* is kept rolling rightly by *Sāriputta*."

In practice, there are nine different attainments here. They are called gradual abiding (*anupubba vihara*)⁸⁶ or the attainments of gradual abiding (*anupubba vihara samāpatti*).⁸⁷

In the "*Jhāna*" discourse of chapter nine, in *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, the Buddha says all these nine kinds of attainments become the causes for the destruction of desire. "*Bhikkhus*, I say that, supported by even the highest state of the mind, there is the destruction of desires. Supported by even the second highest state of the mind, there is the destruction of desires. Supported by even the third highest state of the mind, there is the destruction of desires. Supported by even the fourth higher state of the mind, there is the destruction of desires. Supported by even the attainment the sphere of space, there is the

destruction of desires. Supported by even the attainment the sphere of consciousness, there is the destruction of desires. Supported by even the attainment the sphere of nothingness, there is the destruction of desires. Supported by even the attainment, the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception there is the destruction of desires. Supported by even the cessation of perceptions and feelings, there is the destruction of desires."⁸⁸

(v). The Results of Right Concentration and Similes

In the discourse of "The Five-Fold Concentration" in *the Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*,⁸⁹ the Buddha illustrated the five-fold right concentration of the noble ones where he explained the results of practicing and developing serenity. According to this discourse, the five-fold right concentration is the concentration gained by developing the four *jhānas* and thoroughly penetrating wisdom. The Buddha said, "*Bhikkhus*, what is the five-fold right concentration of the noble ones? Here, the *bhikkhu* secluded from sensual desires ... abides in the elevated state of mind. Then, he over flows and touches this body with joy and pleasantness born of seclusion, up and above and from all sides and around not leaving any spot of the body untouched. Like a clever bather or his apprentice, putting some bathing powder in a bronze bowl and sprinkling water on it would mix it until it is a smooth ball of moist, oily foam with no excess water. In the same manner, he

overflows and touches this body with joy and pleasantness born of seclusion and not leaving any spot of the body untouched by the joy and pleasantness born of seclusion. *Bhikkhus*, this is the first of the five-fold right concentrations of the noble ones.

Again, the *bhikkhu* overcoming thoughts and thought processes ... abides in the second elevated state of mind. Then, he over flows and touches this body with joy and pleasantness born of concentration, up not leaving any spot of the body untouched with joy and pleasantness born of concentration. Like a deep pond with spring water, without inlets from the east, west, and north or south and from time to time refreshed with rainwater. Thus cold water springing up from the bottom touches the pond up and does not leave any spot in the pond untouched by the cold water. In the same manner he overflows and touches this body with joy and pleasantness born of concentration and does not leave any spot of the body untouched by the joy and pleasantness born of concentration. *Bhikkhus*, this is the second of the five-factored right concentrations of the noble ones.

Again, the *bhikkhu* with equanimity to joy and disenchantment ... abides in the third elevated state of mind. Then, he over flows and touches this body with pleasantness free of joy, up and above and from all sides and around not leaving any spot of the body untouched with pleasantness free of joy. Like some of the blue lotuses, white lotuses or red lotuses in a pond

are born, grow and bloom in the water and their tops and roots are touched with the cold water and leave nothing untouched by the cold water. In the same manner he over flows and touches this body with pleasantness free of joy, up and does not leave any spot of the body untouched by the pleasantness free of joy. *Bhikkhus*, this is the third of the five-fold right concentrations of the noble ones.

Again, *bhikkhus*, the *bhikkhu* dispelling pleasantness and unpleasantness ... abides in the fourth elevated state of mind. Then, he sits touching this body with the pure and clean mind, not leaving any spot of the body untouched with the pure and clean mind. Like a man sitting with his head and body covered with a white piece of cloth. There is not a single spot in his body that is not touched with the white cloth. In the same manner, he sits touching this body with the pure and clean mind, not leaving any spot of the body untouched by the pure and clean mind. *Bhikkhus*, this is the fourth of the five-fold right concentrations of the noble ones.

Again, *bhikkhus*, to the *bhikkhu* the sign of reflection becomes well grasped, well considered and thoroughly penetrated with wisdom. *Bhikkhus*, it is like someone reflecting on himself as another, standing, he reflects as though sitting, seated he reflects as though lying. In the same manner, to the *bhikkhu* the sign of reflection becomes well-grasped, well-considered and thoroughly penetrated with wisdom. *Bhikkhus*, this is

the fifth of the five-fold right concentrations of the noble ones.

Bhikkhus, when the *bhikkhu* practices and makes much of these five-fold right concentrations, to the mind directed for the realization of this and other things, the mindfulness in that and other spheres becomes the eyewitness in this respective sphere.

Bhikkhus, it is like a water vessel placed on a stand, full to the brim possible for crows to drink. Would a man consider it, as water, in whatever manner he sees it? "Yes, Venerable Sir." In the same manner, when the *bhikkhu* practices and makes much of these five-fold right concentrations, to the mind directed for the realization of this and other things, the mindfulness in that and other spheres becomes the eyewitness in this respective sphere.

Bhikkhus, it is like a pool on some level ground, with embankments on the four sides, full of water to the brim for crows to drink. Would a man releasing the water, in whatever manner, know it's water? "Yes, Venerable Sir." In the same manner, when the *bhikkhu* practices and makes much of these five-fold right concentrations, to the mind directed for the realization of this and other thing, the mindfulness in that and the other spheres becomes the eyewitness in this respective sphere.

Bhikkhus, it is like a chariot with horses yoked on level ground with reins and a whip ready at hand. A

clever charioteer comes and mounting the chariot taking the reins in the left hand and the whip in the right hand, leads it forwards and backwards as he wishes. In the same manner, when the *bhikkhu* practices and makes much of these five-factored right concentrations, to the mind directed for the realization of this and other things, the mindfulness in that and other spheres becomes the eyewitness in this respective sphere.

If it is his desire, he partakes various psychic feats, one becomes many and many becomes one, manifestly goes through rocks and walls unobstructed while traveling through space. He dives into earth as though diving into water. Walks on water unbroken as though walking on earth. Sits in space as large and small birds do. Touches the moon and sun, as powerful as they are. Thus, wields power as far as the world of Brahma. Thus, mindfulness becomes the eyewitness in this and other spheres.

If it's his desire, with the purified heavenly eye beyond human capacity, he hears sounds both heavenly and human, far or near and the mindfulness in that and other spheres becomes the eyewitness in this respective sphere.

If it's his desire, he sees the minds of others and knows the mind; with greed, without greed, the angry mind and the not angry mind, the deluded mind and the not deluded mind. Knows the contracted mind, the

distracted mind, the mind that has grown great, that has not grown great, the mind with comparison, the mind without comparison, the concentrated mind, the un-concentrated mind, the released mind and the unreleased mind, and mindfulness in that and other spheres becomes the eyewitness in this respective sphere.

If it's his desire, he recollects manifold previous births - such as one birth, two, three, four, five, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, a hundred births, a thousand births, a hundred thousand births, innumerable forward world cycles, innumerable backward world cycles, innumerable forward and backward world cycles of births. In these lives, I was of such name, clan, disposition, such supports, feeling such pleasant and unpleasant feelings and enjoying a particular life span. Disappearing from there was born here. Thus, with all modes and details, he recollects the manifold previous births and the mindfulness in that and other spheres becomes the eyewitness in this respective sphere.

If it's his desire, with the purified heavenly eye beyond human capacity, he sees beings disappearing and appearing in states un-exalted and exalted, beautiful and ugly in good and evil births, knows beings born according to their actions. These good beings endowed with bodily, verbal and mental misconduct, rebuking noble ones, with wrong view and the wrong view of actions, after death are born in loss, in a bad state, in decrease, in hell; as for these good

beings endowed with the right bodily, verbal and mental conduct, not rebuking noble ones, with right view and the right view of actions, after death are born in a good state, in heaven. Thus he sees beings disappearing and appearing in states un-exalted and exalted, beautiful and ugly in good and evil births, knows beings born according to their actions and the mindfulness in that and other spheres becomes the eye witness in this respective sphere.

Destroying desires, releasing the mind from desires and released through wisdom by abiding in the present moment with mindfulness and as well as in other spheres one becomes the eyewitness in this respective sphere."

In accordance with the discourse on "Concentration" of *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha*, the Buddha says, "Monks develop concentration that is limitless, clever and thoughtful. *Bhikkhus*, when developing concentration that is limitless, clever and thoughtful, five kinds of knowledge arise to him internally." Five kinds of knowledge that are arisen in one are as follows:

1. Knowledge arises in him internally, that this concentration is pleasant now and it will bring pleasant results in the future.
2. Knowledge arises in him internally, that this concentration is noble and immaterial.

3. Knowledge arises in him internally, that this concentration is not shared by the ordinary.
4. Knowledge arises in him internally, that this concentration is peaceful, exalted, composes the body, brings the mind to a single point and settles determinations without rebukes.
5. Knowledge arises in him internally, 'I enter this concentration and rise from it mindfully.'⁹⁰

In the discourse of “The Great Forty” in *The Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha*,⁹¹ the Buddha addressing the monks says, “*Bhikkhus, I shall teach you noble right concentration with its supports and its requisites.*” Then the Buddha further questioning said, “*What, bhikkhus, is noble right concentration with its supports and its requisites? That is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, and right mindfulness. Unification of mind equipped with these seven factors is called noble right concentration with its supports and its requisites.*” It is with this right concentration that one can understand clearly the true knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, the nature of taints, the Dependent Origination and the three Characteristics of Existence and finally attain Liberation.

The greatest results of practicing serenity or concentration is given in “The Samādhi Sutta” of *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*.⁹² Here, the Buddha

says, “*Bhikkhus*, develop concentration. A *bhikkhu* who is concentrated understands things as they really are. What does he understand as it really is? The origin and passing away of form; the origin and passing away of feeling; the origin and passing away of perception; the origin and passing away of volitional formations; the origin and passing away of consciousness. And what, *bhikkhus*, is the origin of form? What is the origin of feeling? What is the origin of perception? What is the origin of volitional formations? What is the origin of consciousness?

Here, *bhikkhus*, one seeks delight, one welcomes, one grasps. And what is it that one seeks delight in, what does one welcome, to what does one grasp? One seeks delight in form, welcomes it, and holds onto it. As a consequence of this, delight arises. Delight in form is clinging. With one's clinging as condition, existence [comes to be]; with existence as condition, birth; with birth as condition, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair come to be. Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.

One seeks delight in feeling ... in perception ... in volitional formations ... in consciousness, welcomes it, and remains holding to it. As a consequence of this, delight arises.... Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering. This, *bhikkhus*, is the origin of form; this is the origin of feeling; this is the origin of perception; this is the origin of volitional formations; this is the origin of consciousness.

And what, *bhikkhus*, is the passing away of form? What is the passing away of feeling? What is the passing away of perception? What is the passing away of volitional formations? What is the passing away of consciousness? Here, *bhikkhus*, one does not seek delight, one does not welcome, one does not remain holding. And what is it that one does not seek delight in? What doesn't one welcome? To what does one not hold onto? One does not seek delight in form, does not welcome it, and does not keep holding onto it. As a consequence of this, delight in form ceases. With the cessation of delight comes cessation of clinging; with cessation of clinging, cessation of existence.... Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering. One does not seek delight in feeling ... in perception, in volitional formations ... in consciousness, does not welcome it, does not remain holding to it. As a consequence of this, delight in consciousness ceases.... Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering. This, *bhikkhus*, is the passing away of form; this is the passing away of feeling; this is the passing away of perception; this is the passing away of volitional formations; this is the passing away of consciousness." This is *vipassanā*. It is only with this understanding that one can completely be free from all suffering and attain the supreme bliss of *Nibbāna*. This is the real purpose of practicing serenity and insight. Let us now understand insight.

Tips to remember:

1. Serenity is the collectedness or unification of mind.
2. One has to practice both serenity and insight.
3. Though one has attained all the nine attainments, one has not done what the Buddha expected. That is vipassana.
4. The noble right concentration with its support and requisites is the unification of mind equipped with the first seven factors of the Noble Eightfold Path.
5. Only through vipassana one can completely cut off all defilements and the attain supreme bliss of Nibbana.

Part 5

Mindfulness, Clear Comprehension and Insight

Insight is the English equivalent for the *Pāli* term *vipassanā*. It is the unique meditation technique discovered by the Buddha. *Vipassanā* basically means, "to see through" or "penetration." It is the result of developing mindfulness and wisdom. In actuality, there is no meditation called *vipassanā*, but "mindfulness meditation." When practicing mindfulness and developing wisdom, one can see through. That penetration is to understand the three characteristics of all phenomena of the world. This is called *vipassanā*.

However, in Buddhist context, both teachers and practitioners use four different terms interchangeably to denote *vipassanā* or insight meditation. They are namely;

1. Mindfulness meditation
2. Insight meditation
3. *Vipassanā* meditation
4. Wisdom meditation

(i). Vipassanā

The term *vipassanā* has two parts: (*vi+passanā*) *vi+* is a prefix which means "divide," "through," "penetrate," "special" or "separate." '*Passati*' [verb=sees]

or *passanā* [noun=seeing]. When we see things, we do not see them in their entirety and because of this, ignorance arises and we cling to things. If we can see through or penetrate, we can see things dividedly, separately. That is *vipassanā* (*vividhena passati vipassanā*). Mentally we divide, separate these components and see things as they really are or cut through. This is what is meant by penetration.

There is another meaning. That is seeing things specifically, explicitly (*vishesena passati vipassanā*). Literally, *vipassanā* cuts through the curtain of delusion in the mind and perceives individual components separately. It is the mental scalpel, differentiating conventional truth from actuality (*yathābhuta*). Thereby, in the ultimate sense, *vipassanā* means seeing things as they really are.

Vipassanā is the result of practicing and developing mindfulness, clear comprehension and wisdom. Therefore, these three; mindfulness, clear comprehension, and wisdom work together in unison for the complete liberation from all dissatisfactions (*dukkha*). Hence, it is clear that we have to practice, develop and cultivate mindfulness, clear comprehension and wisdom. This is why it is called mindfulness meditation or wisdom meditation. When practicing serenity meditation, there is mindfulness, but what is more emphasized and more prominent is concentration and calmness of mind. Unlike concentration meditation, practicing mindfulness or

insight meditation is quite different. For the concentration meditation, you can use any mantra, sign, sound or other objects. However, when practicing mindfulness, you have to use an object on which you can focus your mindfulness (*sati*) such as mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*), mindfulness of body (*kāyagatāsati*) or mindfulness of death (*māraṇasati*). Then, it is to be practiced and developed in the proper manner with proper wisdom. Only then does it lead to insight. Many non-Buddhist practitioners practiced concentration meditation even before the birth of the Buddha. They developed all the eight *jhānas*, or attainments which we discussed in the previous chapter, nonetheless they never came across the way to the complete eradication of defilements and attainment of right liberation.

For the practice of mindfulness and insight, the Buddha very well designed the technique of meditation based on the Four Establishments of Mindfulness. Explaining this technique, the Buddha delivered the discourse named "The Great Discourse of the Establishment of Mindfulness."

According to this practice of meditation, through the result of developing and cultivating mindfulness and wisdom, we can understand the real nature of our own five aggregates, twelve bases, nature of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and soullessness (*anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*) and finally the Four Noble Truths. When you see these three characteristics of

existence, you will never want to cling to anything or to resist from anything. Then, you can live in society peacefully and happily unattached like a lotus or a lily in the muddy water, unsoiled by the polluted water.

In this manner, *vipassanā* addresses the real problems of life's stress, distress, or depression. It finds the cause of stress and then eliminates the cause. That is how *vipassanā* finds the solution for the problem in our lives. That is the way to the cessation of stress. It is a practical method for facing the tensions and problems of daily life in a calm and balanced way. Whoever practices *vipassanā* or mindfulness meditation, he/she can understand how things exist without a self. Self-centered thinking is the cause of many problems in our life. Once we realize the nature of existence, we can lead a stress free life. If you are mindful, you are in the present moment. *The present moment has no stress, anxiety, distress or depression. They all belong to either past or future. Therefore, come to the present moment again and again and be mindful.* This is the gist of the whole teaching of the Buddha.

Accordingly, for the practice of mindfulness in this special discourse, the Buddha taught both serenity and insight in tandem. As we have already mentioned in the first chapter, according to this discourse, mindfulness is to be established on four ways:

1. The establishment of mindfulness of the body
2. The establishment of mindfulness of feelings

3. The establishment of mindfulness of the mind
4. The establishment of mindfulness of mental objects.

This is the way to develop and cultivate *vipassanā* or mindfulness. Let us now understand them one by one. This is none other than mental development (*bhāvana*) or meditation. Wisdom that we gain through meditation is experiential wisdom. There are three kinds of wisdom:

1. Wisdom gained through perception as receptive wisdom (*sutamaye paññā*)
2. Wisdom gained through rational thinking as reflective wisdom (*cintāmaye paññā*)
3. Wisdom gained through practicing and developing meditation as experiential wisdom (*bhāvanāmaye paññā*).

As mentioned earlier, wisdom is a synonym for insight or *vipassanā*. Whenever we practice mindfulness, insight or *vipassanā*, what we are doing is developing our wisdom. Here, it is to be mentioned clearly that the three factors; mindfulness, clear comprehension and wisdom are absolutely in conjunction with *vipassanā* (insight) for the realization of things as they are and the attainment of enlightenment. This is why one has to develop mindfulness as meditation. Whenever one is

developing mindfulness, one is also developing clear comprehension and wisdom.

In the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha explained how to train and/or develop the mind. Since the mind does not stand alone, when training and developing the mind, there are two things to be tamed or controlled: the body and the mind because they are interdependent and interrelated. It is clear to everybody that controlling the body is easy despite the existence of physical pain. However, the most difficult task for many practitioners is controlling the mind. The Buddha, as the best psychologist ever born, knew the real nature of mind prior to all other humans and deities. He understood and realized the real nature of this body and the mind, physicality and mentality. That is his wisdom. This is why he is called Buddha.

(ii). The Nature of the Mind

For the first time in the human history, the Buddha was the one who said that all experience is preceded by the mind, led by the mind and made by the mind. Act or speak with a corrupted state of mind, suffering follows as the wagon wheel follows the hoof of the ox. Speak or act with a peaceful mind then happiness follows like one's never-departing shadow.⁹³ In order to develop the mind, first one has to understand the nature of mind.

For the better understanding of the nature of the mind, again, in the *Dhammapada*, the chapter titled

"The Mind" illustrates the Buddha's teaching: "The restless, agitated mind is hard to protect and hard to control. The sage refines the mind like an archer straightens the shaft of an arrow. It is like a fish out of water that was thrown onto land and thrashes about. The unrefined mind is hard to control, flighty and goes wherever it wishes, but the disciplined mind brings happiness. It is hard to see, the sage protects it. It is far ranging, solitary, incorporeal, and hidden. Those whose minds are unrefined do not know true *Dhamma*. Their serenity wavers and wisdom (*vipassanā*) never matures."

To develop the mind, the Buddha advises, "Realize this body is fragile as a clay pot. Establish the mind as firm as a fortress. Then, attack *Māra* (defilement) with the weapon of wisdom. At the same time, guard your own conquest and do not attach to anything."⁹⁴ This is very clear. In short, one should keep the body and mind unshaken and fight the defilements with insight.

In order to keep a steadfast, staunch, pliable, workable mind, one has to practice both *samatha* and *vipassanā* with diligence. As previously mentioned, *samatha* and *vipassanā* are not two kinds of meditation, but two levels of meditation, specifically designed by the Buddha. The whole "Discourse on the Establishment of Mindfulness" is based on these two levels of meditation. Practicing Buddhist meditation is called *bhāvana*, which means development of

skillfulness or wholesomeness of mind, free from greed, hatred and delusion. This is the way to develop and cultivate insight. Whenever we practice insight, there is serenity, wisdom and clear comprehension.

Unlike the practicing of serenity, during *vipassanā*, the practitioner is permitted to observe as many objects as possible so that one can understand the nature of different objects. When we practice in such a way, we can understand the three characteristics of existence. That is real *vipassanā* leading to the realization of the Four Noble Truths, Dependent Origination, and attainment of *Nibbāna*.

Whoever practices this method, gradually and systematically their faculties will develop and mature which lead to liberation from all desire, all defilement and the eventual attainment of Right Liberation (*Nibbāna*) is possible here in this very world.

(iii). The Three Characteristics and the Eye of Dhamma

According to the first discourse of the Buddha, this is what really happened to one of the five disciples of the Buddha. The Buddha attained *Nibbāna* on the full moon day in May. Afterwards, on the full moon day of July, he delivered his first sermon to the five disciples. At the end of the sermon, the wisest person, *Kondañña*, the one who had developed and cultivated mindfulness and clear comprehension with a clear penetration realized the true nature of all things. He

realized "*Whatever is in the nature of arising is in the nature of perishing.*" This understanding is called '*Dhamma cakku*, which means '*Dhamma eye.*' It is through this eye one sees things as they really are. When one sees things as they are, one sees only the three characteristics of existence: impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and soullessness. This is what insight (*vipassanā*) is. This is how one comes to the state of stream entry. From that moment, the destination is clear to him/her. He/she is a stream enterer who will definitely attain enlightenment within this lifetime or within maximum seven lifetimes.

This is the greatest thing that mindfulness and insight do for an individual. If you are mindful in day-to-day activities, you can be happy and peaceful. Once you have reached the stage of stream entry, happiness is boundless and your life is certainly fruitful.

The Buddha gave instructions to practice mindfulness and develop insight in many discourses. His instruction is to be mindful in the present moment so that one can understand things as they are. When one is mindful, one can understand the nature of impermanence. With this deep understanding comes the disenchantment that enables giving up mentally clinging to things. No longer interested or attached to things, you see that things cannot be considered as 'mine.' Thinking of things as 'mine,' makes one think things should be able to be controlled or manipulated at will. However, that is not possible. With that

understanding, one realizes even this body is not mine, feelings, perceptions, mental constructions and even this consciousness. This is what is called true understanding. This arises because of one's mindfulness, wisdom and insight.

In contrast, the deep-seated nature of our thought process since time immemorial makes us believe that whatever exists before us, we can grasp onto and think, 'this is mine,' 'this is me,' and 'this is myself.' This is how we are bound to things and trapped in the snare of *Māra*. Once we are trapped in this manner, we are trapped both inside and out. Once a certain deity came to the Buddha and asked this question in verse:

“ A tangle inside, a tangle outside,
This generation is entangled in a tangle.
I ask you this, O *Gotama*,
Who can untangle this tangle?”

Then, the Buddha said:

“ A man established on virtue, wise,
Developing the mind and wisdom,
A *bhikkhu* ardent and discreet:
He can untangle this tangle.”⁹⁵

Here, 'developing the mind and wisdom' means developing both serenity and insight. Therefore, it is clear that only the person who develops mindfulness and insight can untangle this tangle.

When the Buddha delivered his first sermon, only one disciple came to understand that "*Whatever is in the nature of arising, it is in the nature of perishing.*" The others failed in this understanding mainly because they were from the *Brahmin* tradition. They all firmly believed that there was a permanent entity called 'self' or 'soul.' Therefore, the Buddha had to deliver another discourse to teach them that there is no such thing to be grasped as 'self' or 'soul' within or without. The name of this discourse is "The Characteristics of Non-Self" (*Anattalakkhana Sutta*).

Here, addressing the five disciples, the Buddha said, "*Bhikkhus*, material form is not-self. If form were self, then form would not be a condition for the arising of *dukkha* (*suffering*). Further, it would then be possible to control form; to determine, through an act of will, that my self should take such-and-such a form; that it should not take some other form. But since form is not-self, it is a condition for the arising of *dukkha* and it is not possible to alter form through acts of self-control. Feeling, *bhikkhus*, is not-self, and for the same reasons. If feeling were self, it would not be a condition for the arising of *dukkha*, and it would be possible to say, 'May I have just these feelings, and not those others.' But since feeling is not-self, it does lead to *dukkha*, and it is not possible to alter feelings through acts of self-control.

Perception, *bhikkhus*, is not-self, for the same reasons ... Since it serves as a foundation for *dukkha*, and since it is not possible to say, 'I will perceive just

this, but not that other,' therefore perception is not-self. Mental formations, *bhikkhus*, are not-self. Therefore, they serve as a foundation for the arising of *dukkha*, and we are unable to say, 'Let me have just these mental formations, and not those others.'

Consciousness, *bhikkhus*, is not-self. If consciousness were self, it would not lead to the arising of *dukkha*, and it would be possible to say, 'Let me just be conscious of this part of experience, and not of that other.' But since consciousness is not-self, it does lead to the arising of *dukkha*, and it is not possible to say, 'Let me just be conscious of this, and not of that.' "

Then, the Buddha highlighting it further said, "*Bhikkhus*, tell me what you think: is form permanent or impermanent?"

"It is impermanent, Master."

"Now, that which is impermanent, is that unsatisfactory or satisfactory?"

"It is unsatisfactory, Master."

"Now, does it make sense to regard something that's impermanent, unsatisfying and subject to change with the perception that, 'This is mine; this is what I am; this is my self?'"

"Of course not."

"What about feelings, perceptions and mental

formations? Are these permanent or impermanent."

"They are impermanent."

"Can they be counted on to satisfy, or are they ultimately unsatisfying?"

"Unsatisfying, Master."

"So, does it make sense to regard these things, which are impermanent, unsatisfying and subject to change, with the understanding that, 'This is mine; this is what I am; this is my self?'"

"Definitely not, Master."

"And consciousness; is that permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent."

"In the long run, is it satisfying or unsatisfying?"

"Unsatisfying."

"This consciousness; then – impermanent, unsatisfying, subject to change – does it make sense to say, 'This is mine; this is what I am; this is my self?'"

"That makes no sense, Master."

"So there you have it, *bhikkhus*. Whatever form may have existed in the past; whatever form may come to exist in the future; whatever form exists right now,

whether internal or external, obvious or subtle, gross or spiritual, immediate or dispersed – if you regard that form with proper understanding, face up to the reality of the situation, you must see "This is not mine; this is not what I am; this is not my self."

In the same way, *bhikkhus*, you should regard feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness. Whatever of this nature existed in the past, whatever will exist in the future, whatever exists right now, whether internal or external, whether obvious or subtle, whether gross or spiritual, whether immediate or dispersed, all that must be regarded thus: "This is all not mine; this is none of what I am; nothing of this is my self."

Bhikkhus, the ennobled student who has received this instruction and sees things in this way becomes weary of form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. Grown weary of all these things, he loses interest in them. After losing interest, he becomes dispassionate. And when his passion dissipates, he becomes free. Finally free he awakens to the knowledge: Freedom! He knows what came to be is now gone, the holy life has been lived; what had to be done is done; I'm not going through this again."⁹⁶

That is what the Buddha said. Being mindful and clearly comprehending the discourse and as they listened, insight (*vipassanā*) arose in them. They became completely free from all defilement. All of

them attained enlightenment. When that occurred, the number of the enlightened beings in the world and the Dispensation of the Buddha became six including the Buddha.

(iv). 'Soul' is a Belief

Of the three characteristics of existence (impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and soullessness), the most difficult thing to understand is 'soullessness.' However, these three characteristics are equally important. Without understanding them, nobody can realize the true nature of things and come to the stages of the holy life; namely, stream enterer, once returner, non-returner and enlightened being. What is the soul? As some people firmly believe, it is the spiritual or immaterial part of a human being or animal, regarded as immortal. In some traditions it is said, 'There is neither birth nor death of the soul' suggesting that the soul is everlasting. Some say that it is the incorporeal essence of a person. They believe that it is a living thing or object. Some philosophical and spiritual systems teach that only humans have souls while others teach that all living things and even inanimate objects (such as rivers) have souls. According to animism, the *soul* can function as a spirit, mind or self. Also, some believe that the soul is the mind, which is the most deluded way of thinking. Once the Buddha said, "*It is better, [if you want] take your body as your soul rather taking your mind, because your mind is changing faster than your body.*"

One day, Venerable *Rādha* went to the Buddha and said, "Venerable Sir, it is said, 'non-self, non-self.' What now, Venerable Sir, is non-self?" Then, the Buddha said, "Form, *Rādha*, is non-self, feeling is non-self, perception is non-self, volitional formations are non-self, consciousness is non-self."⁹⁷

On another occasion, the Buddha addressing the monks said, "*Bhikkhus*, the eye is impermanent. What is impermanent is suffering. What is suffering is non-self. What is non-self should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.' "The ear is impermanent.... The nose is impermanent.... The tongue is impermanent.... The body is impermanent.... The mind is impermanent. What is impermanent is suffering. What is suffering is non-self. What is non-self should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.' "Seeing thus, *bhikkhus*, the instructed noble disciple experiences revulsion towards the eye, revulsion towards the ear, revulsion towards the nose, revulsion towards the tongue, revulsion towards the body, revulsion towards the mind. Experiencing revulsion, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion [his mind] is liberated. When it is liberated there comes the knowledge: 'It's liberated.' He understands: 'Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more for this state of being.'⁹⁸

In order to understand the true nature of existence, the Buddha's general instruction for his disciples is "*Bhikkhus*, material form is impermanent, feeling is impermanent, perception is impermanent, formations are impermanent, and consciousness is impermanent. *Bhikkhus*, material form is not-self, feeling is not-self, perception is not-self, formations are not-self, and consciousness is not-self. All formations are impermanent; all things are not-self." ⁹⁹ Nonetheless, for some people, this does not sound correct. Certainly, for them, this is not acceptable nor tolerable. That is the nature.

In the time of the Buddha, one day *Saccaka* the debater, on hearing this instruction of the Buddha from one of the Buddha's disciples, came to have a debate with the Buddha with the intention of refuting this teaching. He then asked whether the Buddha says that material form is not self, feeling is not self, perception is not self, formations are not self, and consciousness is not self? When the Buddha was affirmative, *Saccaka* said, "Just as when seeds and plants, whatever their kind, reach growth, and mature, all do so in dependence upon the earth, based upon the earth; and just as when strenuous works is completed, all are done in dependence upon the earth, based upon the earth—so too, Master *Gotama*, a person has material form as self, and based upon material form he produces merit or demerit. A person has feeling as self, and based upon feeling he produces merit or demerit. A person has perception as self, and based upon

perception he produces merit or demerit. A person has formations as self, and based upon formations he produces merit or demerit. A person has consciousness as self, and based upon consciousness he produces merit or demerit.”

The Buddha then repeated his question whether *Saccaka* asserted that material form is self, feeling is self, perception is self, formations are self, and consciousness is self? He admitted it.

Then, the Buddha questioned him, “In that case, *Aggivessana* [another name for *Saccaka*] I shall ask you a question in return. Answer it as you choose. What do you think, *Aggivessana*? Would a head-anointed noble king—for example, King *Pasenadi* of *Kosala* or King *Ajātasattu Vedehiputta* of *Magadha*—exercise the power in his own realm to execute those who should be executed, to fine those who should be fined, and to banish those who should be banished?

Master *Gotama*, a head-anointed noble king—for example, King *Pasenadi* of *Kosala* or King *Ajātasattu Vedehiputta* of *Magadha*—would exercise the power in his own realm to execute those who should be executed, to fine those who should be fined, and to banish those who should be banished. For even these [oligarchic] communities and societies such as the *Vajjians* and the *Mallians* exercise the power in their own realm to execute those who should be executed, to fine those who should be fined, and to banish those

who should be banished; so all the more so should a head-anointed noble king such as King *Pasenadi* of *Kosala* or King *Ajātasattu Vedehiputta* of *Magadha*. He would exercise it, Master *Gotama*, and he would be worthy to exercise it."

The Buddha then asked, "What do you think, *Aggivessana*? When you say thus: 'Material form is my self,' do you exercise any such power over that material form as to say: 'Let my form be thus; let my form not be thus?'" When this was said, *Saccaka* became silent.

A second time, the Buddha asked the same question, and a second time *Saccaka* was silent. Then, the Buddha said to him, "*Aggivessana*, answer now. Now is not the time to be silent. If anyone, when asked a reasonable question up to the third time by the *Tathāgata*, still does not answer, his head splits into seven pieces there and then." Now on that occasion a thunderbolt-wielding spirit holding an iron thunderbolt that burned, blazed and glowed appeared in the air above *Saccaka*, thinking: "If this *Saccaka*, when asked a reasonable question up to the third time by the Blessed One, still does not answer, I shall split his head into seven pieces here and now."

The Buddha saw the thunderbolt-wielding spirit and so did *Saccaka*. Then, *Saccaka* was frightened, alarmed and terrified. Seeking his shelter, asylum and refuge in the Buddha himself, he said: "Ask me, Master *Gotama*, I will answer." "What do you think,

Aggivessana? When you say thus: 'Material form is my self,' do you exercise any such power over that material form as to say: 'Let my form be thus; let my form not be thus?'" — "No, Master *Gotama*." In this manner such a dominant debater *Saccaka* accepted that there is no such permanent thing to be grasped as self or soul. Finally, *Saccaka* sat silent, dismayed, with shoulders drooping and head down, glum and without response. Then, seeing *Saccaka* is in such a condition, a young person named *Dummukha*, who was there said. "A simile occurs to me, Master *Gotama*." The Buddha replied, "Explain how it occurs to you, *Dummukha*,".

"Suppose, Venerable Sir, not far from a village or town there was a pond with a crab in it. And then a party of children from the village came to the pond, went into the water and pulled the crab out of the water and put it on dry land. And whenever the crab extended a leg, they cut it off, broke it and smashed it with sticks and stones so that the crab with all its legs cut off, broken and smashed would be unable to return to the pond. So too, all *Saccaka's* contortions, writhing and vacillations have been cut off, broken and smashed by the Blessed One, and now he cannot get near the Blessed One again for the purpose of debate."¹⁰⁰

In many discourses in *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, the Buddha says, "*Bhikkhus*, form is impermanent. What is impermanent is suffering. What is suffering is non-self. What is non-self should

be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.' Feeling is impermanent.... Perception is impermanent.... Volitional formations are impermanent.... Consciousness is impermanent. What is impermanent is suffering. What is suffering is non-self. What is non-self should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.'¹⁰¹

Basically, the soul means a permanent thing, a substance, an everlasting phenomenon within us or without. Since ancient time, people have believed that a creator created the world and the soul emanated from that creator. This has been a common belief. Since it is a belief, it is not reality. What is more important is not believing anything simply because somebody says it, but to understand it rationally, to understand it yourself.

The Buddha's teaching is not meant for believing anything but instead to rationally consider things. The Buddha addressing a skeptical group of young men once said, "*Do not believe what your book says. Do not believe what your teachers would say. Do not believe what your tradition says. Do not take anything merely because it comes to you with the authority of somebody else. Make it a personal experience. Think for yourself. Be convinced. And once you are convinced act accordingly.*"¹⁰²

Giving full freedom of thought, the Buddha, in

the “*Vimansaka Sutta*” of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, said, “*Bhikkhus*, a *bhikkhu* who is an inquirer, not knowing how to gauge another's mind, should make an investigation of the *Tathāgata* in order to find out whether or not he is fully enlightened.” Thus, in this manner, in the teaching of the Buddha, investigation is always encouraged rather accepting things with a mere belief.

Referring to a permanent thing, a substance, one day a certain monk came to the Buddha and said, “Is there, Venerable Sir, any form that is permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change, and that will remain the same just like eternity itself? Is there any feeling ... any perception ... any volitional formations ... any consciousness that is permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change, and that will remain the same just like eternity itself?”

Then, the Buddha said, “*Bhikkhu*, there is no form ... no feeling ... no perception ... no volitional formations ... no consciousness that is permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change, and that will remain the same just like eternity itself.” The Buddha then took up a little bit of soil in his fingernail and said: “*Bhikkhu*, there is not even this much form that is permanent, stable, eternal, and not subject to change, and that will remain the same just like eternity itself. If there was this much form that was a permanent, stable, eternal, and not subject to change, this living of the holy life for the complete destruction of suffering could not be discerned. But

because there is not even a small quantity of permanent form which is stable, eternal, and not subject to change, living the holy life for the complete destruction of suffering is discerned. There is not even this much feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness that is permanent, stable, eternal, and not subject to change, which will remain the same just like eternity itself. If there was this much consciousness ... But because there is not even this much consciousness that is permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change, this living of the holy life for the complete destruction of suffering is discerned."¹⁰³

When one enters the path as a stream enterer, the most excellent, brilliant opportunity that one can gain is the realization of non-self. As the result, he/she depersonalizes himself/herself. He/she sees all three characteristics of existence, is grounded, and realizes that they are no longer bound to this world or fixed in destiny: enlightenment is his/her destination. He/she possesses four things:

1. Confirmed confidence in the *Buddha*.
2. Confirmed confidence in the *Dhamma*.
3. Confirmed confidence in the *Sangha*.
4. Virtues dear to the noble ones, which is unbroken, un-torn, unblemished, un-mottled, freeing, praised by the wise, un-grasped, leading to concentration.¹⁰⁴

From this time forward, he/she is on the path and striving diligently, vigilantly and mindfully. As a result, he/she treads the path as a trainee practicing the three trainings: morality, concentration and wisdom. Thus, they gain the next three stages of enlightenment namely; the path and fruition of once returner, non-returner and the arahant ship by realizing the Four Noble Truths and taints as they are. With penetrating insight, they see the taints, the origin of the taints, the cessation of the trains and the way leading to the cessation of the taints. Completely cut off the taints of sensual desire, the taints of existence and the taints of ignorance, they come to the stage of *arahant*. The training is over. They have gained Right Knowledge and Right Liberation. This itself is the result of practicing mindfulness and developing insight. Upon having this experience, he/she - could pronounce, "*Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of existence.*" That is the complete cessation of evolution. Let us now understand the nature of liberation (*Nibbāna*) and how the evolution of both mind and matter comes to complete cessation while the liberated one is still alive.

Tips to remember:

1. Vipassanā basically means to see through; it is the penetration of an object.
2. Everything animate or inanimate has three characteristics to be seen: 1. Impermanence, 2. Unsatisfactoriness, 3. Soullessness.
3. Wisdom is threefold: 1. Received wisdom, 2. Reflective wisdom, 3. Experiential wisdom.
4. Whatever is in the nature of arising, it is in the nature of perishing.
5. 'Soul' is a belief. The soul means a permanent thing. There is no such thing within or without.
6. Liberation means not the person, but the mind. "It is liberated" is the experience of the liberated one.

Part 6

Mindfulness, Clear Comprehension and Liberation

The Buddha said, "The seven factors of enlightenment, when developed and cultivated, fulfill true knowledge and liberation."¹⁰⁵ Here, the seven factors of enlightenment are: mindfulness, investigation of the *Dhamma*, energy, rapture, tranquility, concentration and equanimity. The true knowledge means knowledge of the Four Noble Truths and Liberation means *Nibbāna* the ultimate bliss. It is the complete cessation of greed, hatred and delusion.

This is the last result of practicing and developing mindfulness and clear comprehension. The realization of *Nibbāna* occurs when the evolution of both mind and matter come to complete cessation while the liberated one is still alive.

After the achievement of liberation, the liberated one is living actively in society rendering unparalleled spiritual service to humanity. He/She has no reservations in serving others regardless of color, caste or creed. He/She serves all equally.

In the discourse of "The Noble Search" of *The Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha*, the Buddha says that he found two things in the *Dhamma* which he

rediscovered, that are profound, hard to see and hard to understand. They are considered to be peaceful and sublime and unattainable by mere reason due to attachment. Those two are the Dependent Origination and *Nibbāna*.

He said, "I considered: 'This *Dhamma* that I have attained is profound, hard to see and hard to understand, peaceful and sublime, unattainable by mere reasoning, subtle and experienced by the wise. But this generation delights in attachment, takes delight in attachment and rejoices in attachment. It is hard for such a generation to see this truth; namely, specific conditionality and dependent origination. And it is hard to see this truth; namely, the stilling of all formations, the relinquishing of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, dispassion and cessation: *Nibbāna*."¹⁰⁶

(i). Spiritual Liberation (*Nibbāna*)

According to the teachings of the Buddha, spiritual liberation (*Nibbāna*) is to be experienced here in this very world.

The Buddha proposed the Noble Eightfold Path as the path to liberation. *Nibbāna* or liberation is not a place to visit like a heaven. This is the final result of practicing *vipassanā*. When practitioners practice *vipassanā*, they wash away the glue of craving and attachment. This glue is there in the eye as eye-craving; in the ear as ear-craving; in the nose as nose-craving; in

the tongue as tongue-craving; in the body as body-craving and in the mind as mental-craving. Craving is nothing but an emotional urge. Whatever craving, whether it is eye-craving, ear-craving or any other kind, it should be understood with proper wisdom and completely eliminated through penetration of insight. Only then one can realize the real peace, real happiness of *Nibbāna*.

Nibbāna is the supreme experiential wisdom (*paramam sukham*)¹⁰⁷ that one gains as an ineffable state, which can only be experienced by those who have developed both serenity and insight. This is not an experience of bliss to be gained having visited some place like a heaven or in some other world. He has gained the knowledge of destruction of all defilements and mental impurities. That knowledge is called "*āsavakkhaya ñāna*" in Pāli. This is unique in the teaching of the Buddha. The mind of the one who has gained this knowledge is compared to a still and clear pool on the top of a mountain.

In the discourse of "Contemplative Life" of *Digha Nikāya*, the Buddha said, "With his mind thus concentrated, purified, and bright, unblemished, free from defects, pliant, malleable, steady and attained to imperturbability, the monk directs and inclines it to the knowledge of the cessation of mental fermentations. He discerns as it has come to be, that 'This is stress... This is the origination of stress... This is the cessation of stress... This is the way leading to the cessation of stress...'

These are mental fermentations... This is the origination of fermentations... This is the cessation of fermentations... This is the way leading to the cessation of fermentations.' His heart thus knowing and thus seeing is released from the fermentation of sensuality, the fermentation of becoming and the fermentation of ignorance. With release, there is the knowledge, 'Released.' He discerns that 'The birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled and the task done. There is nothing further for this world.' Just as if there were a pool of water in a mountain glen — clear, limpid, and unsullied — where a man with good eyesight standing on the bank could see shells, gravel and pebbles and also shoals of fish swimming about and resting, it would occur to him, 'This pool of water is clear, limpid, and unsullied. Here are these shells, gravel and pebbles and also these shoals of fish swimming about and resting.'¹⁰⁸

Since his/her mind is liberated from all bonds and defilements, it is very clear and bright with purity and wisdom. Whenever, he/she likes to see the world or anything; it is very clear. He/She can see through and understands clearly and preciously. Whenever they focus their attention on the world, they know everything regarding that subject. Otherwise, if they do not focus attention, they might know nothing of it.

For instance, once while the Buddha was living in a threshing barn, it was raining torrents with lightning flashing and thunder pealing. Two

ploughmen who were brothers were killed and as well as four oxen. Then a crowd of people went to the two brothers and the oxen that had been killed. By that time, the Buddha had come out from the threshing barn and was walking back and forth outside in the open near the doorway. Then, someone went up to the Buddha and after paying homage to him stood to one side. The Buddha asked him: "Why has this crowd of people gathered here friend?" The man then said, "Lord, it has been raining torrents with lightening and thunder and two ploughmen have been killed and as well as four oxen; that is why there is this crowd of people gathered here. But, you, Lord, where were you?" "I was here, friend," said the Buddha.

He then asked, "But did you see it, Lord?" "I did not, friend," the Buddha whispered. "But did you hear the sound, Lord?" he asked. "I did not friend," the Buddha said. "But were you asleep, Lord?" he inquired. "I was not, friend," the Buddha said. "But were you conscious, Lord?" he asked. "I was, friend," the Buddha said. "So then Lord, you were conscious and awake while it was raining torrents with lightening flashing and thunder pealing but you neither saw it nor heard the sound?" "This is so, friend," the Buddha said.

This was because of the peaceful abiding of the Buddha. Having understood the nature of the Noble one, the man thought: "It is wonderful! It is marvelous! What a peaceful abiding those achieved who have gone forth from home into homelessness; for though

they are conscious and awake while it rains torrents with lightning and thunder, they neither see it nor hear the sound."¹⁰⁹ Then, after a while, extending his complete confidence in the Buddha and paying homage to the Buddha, he departed.

Nibbāna, however much one strives to describe, it is impossible for a worldling to describe it. It is like a turtle striving to explain the nature of the land to a fish that has never ever has seen nor heard of land.

This term *Nibbāna* had been used in other religions even before the emergence of Buddhism in the 6th century BCE. However, the Buddha, in accordance with his own experience, described it with multiple names including the unconditioned, the taintlessness, the far shore, the un-aging, the un-manifest, un-proliferated, the peaceful, the deathless, the sublime, the auspicious, the secure, the destruction of craving, the un-afflicted, purity, freedom, the island, the shelter, the asylum, the un-ailing, the amazing, the refuge and subtlety.¹¹⁰

According to the teachings of the Buddha, things are conditioned. The only unconditioned thing is *Nibbāna*. The Buddha said, "*All conditioned things are impermanent. When one sees this with wisdom, one turns away from suffering. This is the path to Purity.*"¹¹¹

Once the Buddha referred to *Nibbāna* as "the destination" by saying, "*The destruction of lust, the destruction of hatred, the destruction of delusion; this is*

called the destination.”¹¹²

Liberation takes place because of the release of the ten fetters discussed in the early chapters. According to the nature of liberation, there are three kinds of liberation:

1. Liberation or deliverance of mind (*ceto vimutti*)
2. Liberation through wisdom (*paññā vimutti*)
3. Liberation in two ways (*ubhatobhāga vimutti*)

Here, liberation of mind means completely free from greed, hatred and delusion. This is the liberation from all cankers and the attainment of enlightenment. Liberation through wisdom means liberation without practicing and gaining all eight kinds of attainment but based on wisdom or insight. Liberation in two ways means liberation by practicing and gaining both as well as all eight attainments of experiences as well as insight.

Nibbāna is the complete cessation of all discomfort (*dukkha*) and the complete cessation of *kamma* as well. The Buddha when talking about *Nibbāna* frequently used this passage “*This is peaceful, this is excellent namely; the stilling of all formations, the relinquishment of all acquisitions, the destruction of craving, detachment, cessation, extinguish.*”¹¹³

Through *Nibbāna*, one is liberated not from the

body, but from the mind. With the experience of liberation, one can clearly observe this state. When one is liberated, one gains that knowledge and sincerely utters, "It is liberated" (not I am liberated nor am I liberated). In many original discourses, the following passage explains the revolution takes place in the mind at the time of liberation. *"Being disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion [his mind] is liberated. When it is liberated there comes the knowledge: 'It is liberated.' He understands: 'Birth is destroyed, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more coming to any state of being."*¹¹⁴

Nibbāna or liberation from all discomfort is not something impossible or impractical. This is certainly something possible and achievable within this lifetime. For that, effort is very much important. It is true that there are some persons who are always in the habit of thinking negatively and attributing this experiential wisdom to be merely metaphysical. It is not something entirely beyond us, but an undisputed, empirical truth that was first experienced by the Buddha and subsequently millions of monks and nuns and lay practitioners during and since the time of the Buddha. Even today, there may be more, but they generally do not reveal their spiritual accomplishments to others.

Once, a certain accountant named *Ganaka Moggallana* came to the Buddha and asked about the teachings of the Buddha. Then, the Buddha described to him the Buddhist practice as a gradual training

process. When it was explained by the Buddha, he asked, "When Master *Gotama's* disciples are thus advised and instructed by him, do they all attain *Nibbāna*, the ultimate goal or do some not attain it?"

Then, the Buddha said, "When, *brahmin*, they are thus advised and instructed by me, some of my disciples attain *Nibbāna*, the ultimate goal, and some do not attain it." "Master *Gotama*, since *Nibbāna* exists and the path leading to *Nibbāna* exists and Master *Gotama* is present as the guide, what is the cause and reason why, when Master *Gotama's* disciples are thus advised and instructed by him, some of them attain *Nibbāna*, the ultimate goal, and some do not attain it?" he asked.

Then, the following dialogue took place between the Buddha and the accountant.

Buddha: "As to that, *brahmin*, I will ask you a question in return. Answer it as you choose. What do you think, *brahmin*? Are you familiar with the road leading to *Rājagaha*?"

Accountant: "Yes, Master *Gotama*, I am familiar with the road leading to *Rājagaha*."

Buddha: "What do you think, *brahmin*? Suppose a man came who wanted to go to *Rājagaha*, and he approached you and said: 'Venerable Sir, I want to go to *Rājagaha*. Show me the road to *Rājagaha*.' Then you told him: 'Now, good man, this road goes to *Rājagaha*."

Follow it for awhile and you will see a certain village, go a little further and you will see a certain town, go a little further and you will see *Rājagaha* with its lovely parks, groves, meadows, and ponds.' Then, having been thus advised and instructed by you, he would take a wrong road and would go to the west. Then, a second man came who wanted to go to *Rājagaha*, and he approached you and said: 'Venerable Sir, I want to go to *Rājagaha*. Show me the road to *Rājagaha*.' Then you told him: 'Now, good man, this road goes to *Rājagaha*. Follow it for a while...and you will see *Rājagaha* with its lovely parks, groves, meadows, and ponds.' Then, having been thus advised and instructed by you, he would arrive safely in *Rājagaha*. Now, *brahmin*, since *Rājagaha* exists and the path leading to *Rājagaha* exists and you are present as the guide, what is the cause and reason why, when those men have been thus advised and instructed by you, one man takes a wrong road and goes to the west and one arrives safely in *Rājagaha*?"

Accountant: "What can I do about that, Master *Gotama*? I am one who shows the way."

Buddha: "So too, *brahmin*, *Nibbāna* exists and the path leading to *Nibbāna* exists. I am present as the guide. Yet when my disciples have been thus advised and instructed by me, some of them attain *Nibbāna*, the ultimate goal, and some do not attain it. What can I do about that, *brahmin*? The *Tathāgata* is one who shows the way."¹¹⁵

When the mind is liberated, it is true that it affects to his/her body as well. However, we should understand clearly that while the person who attains liberation is mentally free from all suffering. He/she may physically be a very simple person and appear to be an ordinary human being.

The Buddha explained about the characteristics of *Nibbāna* for earthly beings, but used negative terms. In the *Itivuttaka*, it is said, "There is, monks, an unborn — unbecome — unmade — unprepared. If there were not that unborn — unbecome — unmade — unprepared, there would not be the case that emancipation from the born — become — made — prepared would be discerned. But precisely because there is an unborn — unbecome — unmade — unprepared, emancipation from the born — become — made — prepared is thus discerned."¹¹⁶

Additionally, in the original discourses, we come across two types of *Nibbānic* experience referred to as elements of *Nibbāna*. In *Pāli* '*sopadisesa nibbāna*' and '*anupadisesa nibbāna*'. *Sopadisesa* means though liberated, five aggregates of existence are still remaining. This is how the Buddha lived 45 years after his attainment of liberation, *Nibbāna*. *Anupadisesa* means after death of the liberated one, there are no more aggregates remaining in the universe. This is the most difficult part to understand for most of us. (We will discuss this soon.)

In reference to these two types of *Nibbānic*

elements, the Buddha said, "Monks, there are two *Nibbānic* elements. Which two? The *Nibbānic*-element with residue left and the *Nibbānic*-element with no residue left. What, Monks, is the *Nibbānic*-element with residue left? Here, a *bhikkhu* is an *arahant*, one whose taints are destroyed, the holy life fulfilled, who has done what had to be done, laid down the burden, attained the goal, destroyed the fetters of being and is completely released through final knowledge. However, his five aggregates of existence remain unimpaired, by which, he still experiences what is agreeable or disagreeable and still feels pleasure and pain. It is the end of attachment, hate, and delusion in him known as the *Nibbānic*-element with residue left.

Now what, Monks, is the *Nibbānic*-element with no residue left? Here a *bhikkhu* is an *arahant*... completely released through final knowledge. For him, here in this very life, all that is experienced and not being delighted in, will be extinguished. That, *bhikkhus*, is called the *Nibbānic*-element with no residue left."¹¹⁷

(ii). Where is *Nibbāna*?

Some people ask where is *Nibbāna*? Actually, there is no particular place to locate *Nibbāna*. However, whenever the necessary conditions are fulfilled, it is attainable, realizable, just as fire is not kept in any particular place, but arises when the necessary conditions exist. Likewise, *Nibbāna* is said to not exist

in a particular place, but it is attained when the necessary conditions are fulfilled.

Designating *Nibbāna*, in the *Udāna*, the Buddha emphatically stated, "There is, *bhikkhus*, that base where there is no earth, no water, no fire, no air; no base consisting of the infinity of space, no base consisting of the infinity of consciousness, no base consisting of nothingness, no base consisting of neither-perception-nor-non-perception; neither this world nor another world nor both; neither sun nor moon. Here, *bhikkhus*, I say there is no coming, no going, no staying, no deceasing, and no uprising. Not fixed, not movable, it has no support. Just this is the end of suffering." ¹¹⁸ There is no particular place for *Nibbāna*, but there is something called *Nibbāna* where there is no earth, water, fire or wind or where actually they never have any footing. Once a certain deity came to the Buddha and asked,

" From where do the streams turn back?
Where does the round no longer revolve?
Where does name-and-form cease,
Stop without remainder?"

Then, the Buddha said,

" Where water, earth, fire, and air,
Do not gain a footing:
It is from here that the streams turn back,
Here the round no longer revolves;
Here name-and-form ceases,
Stops without remainder."¹¹⁹

(iii). The Nature of the Liberated Person

Now, let us come to understand the nature of the liberated person as the Buddha described in his original discourses. The most important quality of him is not the decaying physicality, but the most purified mind. That mind, consciousness is called a "signless consciousness" or "featureless consciousness," which is infinite and luminous from all around. (This will be explained later.)

He/she has come to the end of the journey, free of sorrow, liberated in all ways and released from all bonds. He/she has no fever of defilements at all like the path of birds in the sky; it is hard to trace their path. They have completely destroyed their toxins like horses well tamed by a charioteer; their senses are calm and they have no conceit at all.

His/her mind is unshaken like the earth and without blemish like a lake unsullied by mud. He/she, who knows the unmade, unprepared, has gone beyond faith and entirely cut off re-becoming, is fully at peace. Whether it is a village or a forest, in the low land or the high land or wherever he/she dwells is certainly delightful.

He/she knows his/her own former lives, sees both the heavens and states of woe, has reached the end of births, attained the perfection of insight and the summit of spiritual excellence. Clinging to nothing in

the past, present or future like water on a lotus leaf or a mustard seed on the point of a needle; he/she dwells happily holding onto nothing. He/she has cast off all human and heavenly ties, likes and dislikes alike. Since he/she has come to the end of the *samsāric* existence, they dwell with a delighted heart and bear the final body.¹²⁰

(iv). "I," "Me," or "Mine," and *Arahants*

Some people wrongly believe that the Buddha and the arahants never use the terms like 'I,' 'me,' or 'mine' since they have destroyed all taints and never grasp things as I, me, or mine. Not only humans, but also even some deities, considered this to be true. One day a certain deity came to the Buddha and asked this following question:

“ If a *bhikkhu* is an *arahant*,
Consummate, with taints destroyed,
One who bears his final body,
Would he still say, 'I speak'?
And would he say, 'They speak to me'?”

The Buddha replied,

“ If a *bhikkhu* is an *arahant*,
Consummate, with taints destroyed,
One who bears his final body,
He might still say, 'I speak,'
And he might say, 'They speak to me.'
Skillful, knowing the world's parlance,
He uses such terms as mere expressions.”

The deity further asked:

“ When a *bhikkhu* is an *arahant*,
Consummate, with taints destroyed,
One who bears his final body,
Is it with conceit
That he would say, 'I speak,'
That he would say, 'They speak to me'?”

The Buddha replied,

“ No knots exist for one with conceit abandoned;
For him all knots of conceit are consumed.
Though the wise one has transcended the
conceived,
He still might say, 'I speak,'
He might say too, 'They speak to me.'
Skillful, knowing the world's parlance,
He uses such terms as mere expressions.”¹²¹

(v). The *Arahant* after Death

In the above passage and verses, we come across the phrase “the *arahant* bears his final body.” This phrase refers not only to their final body, but also their final mind. In the time of the Buddha, many people asked the question about the arahant's life after death. This question will be considered in the last section of this book because it is an important component of the Buddha's teachings.

Many folks came to the Buddha with formulated questions. However, there are ten kinds of questions that the Buddha never answered.

Sometimes, these questions are referred to as unanswered questions. They are:

1. Whether the world is eternal?
2. Whether the world is not eternal?
3. Whether the world is finite?
4. Whether the world is infinite?
5. Whether the soul is the same as the body?
6. Whether the soul is one thing and the body another?
7. Whether the arahant exists after death?
8. Whether the *arahant* does not exist after death?
9. Whether the *arahant* both exists and does not exist after death?
10. Whether the arahant neither exists nor does not exist after death?

Of these ten questions, the last four concern what happens to the *arahant* after death. The Buddha did not answer these because he deemed them irrelevant for the purpose of his teachings and one's liberation.

When these were put to the Buddha by *Mālunkya*putta,¹²² the Buddha said, "*Mālunkya*putta,

remember what I have left undeclared as undeclared, and remember what I have declared as declared." The undeclared are these ten questions. The Buddha said why he has undeclared them. He said, "Why have I left such things undeclared? Because they are inconsequential, they do not concern the fundamentals of the holy life, it does not lead to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, enlightenment, or *Nibbāna*. That is why I have left such things undeclared."

Then, the Buddha said, "And what have I declared? 'This is suffering'- I have declared. 'This is the origin of suffering'- I have declared. 'This is the cessation of suffering'- I have declared. 'This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering'- I have declared. Why have I declared that? Because it is beneficial, it belongs to the fundamentals of the holy life, it leads to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment and to *Nibbāna*." Therefore, according to this statement from the Buddha, it is quite irrelevant to ask such questions once the *arahant* has passed away. The nature of the *arahant* after death is given in a stanza in "The Jewel Discourse" as follows:

" Their past is extinct with no new arising,
Their minds not drawn to future birth,
Their old seeds destroyed, their desires no more
growing,
The wise go out just like the lamp."¹²³

On many occasions, the Buddha has given this same simile of the lamp or the extinguishing fire to denote the nature of the passing away of the liberated one.

One day, a certain wanderer named *Vacchagotta* went to the Buddha and asked those ten questions. The Buddha then made it clear that all those were speculative views and all such things can be dealt with by seeing things as they really are. The Buddha further said, "For the *Tathāgata*, *Vaccha*, has seen this: 'Such is material form, such is its origin, such is its disappearance; such is feeling, such is its origin, such is its disappearance; such is perception, such is its origin, such is its disappearance; such are formations, such is their origin, such is their disappearance; such is consciousness, such is its origin, such is its disappearance.' Therefore, I say, with the destruction, fading away, cessation, giving up, and relinquishing of all conceiving, all excogitations, all I-making, mine-making, and the underlying tendency to conceit, the *Tathāgata* is liberated by not clinging."

Then, *Vaccha* asks, "When a *bhikkhu*'s mind is liberated thus, Master *Gotama*, where does he reappear [after death]?"

"The term 'reappear' does not apply, *Vaccha*."

"Then he does not reappear, Master *Gotama*?"

"The term 'does not reappear' does not apply, *Vaccha*."

“Then he both reappears and does not reappear, Master *Gotama*?”

“The term 'both reappears and does not reappear' does not apply, *Vaccha*.”

“Then he neither reappears nor does not reappear, Master *Gotama*?”

“The term 'neither reappears nor does not reappear' does not apply, *Vaccha*.”

Then, *Vaccha* says, "Here I have fallen into bewilderment, Master *Gotama*, here I have fallen into confusion, and the measure of confidence I had gained through previous conversation with Master *Gotama* has now disappeared." Then, the following dialogue took place between the Buddha and *Vaccha*.

Buddha: "What do you think, *Vaccha*? Suppose a fire were burning before you. Would you know: 'This fire is burning before me'?"

Vaccha: "I would, Master *Gotama*."

Buddha: "If someone were to ask you, *Vaccha*: 'What does this fire's flame depend on?' —being asked thus, what would you answer?"

Vaccha: "Being asked thus, Master *Gotama*, I would answer: 'This fire burns due to fuel such as grass and sticks.'"

Buddha: "If that fire before you were extinguished, would you know: 'This fire before me has been extinguished'?"

Vaccha: "I would, Master *Gotama*."

Buddha: "If someone were to ask you, *Vaccha*: 'When that fire was extinguished, which direction did it go in? East, west, north, or south?'—being asked this, what would you answer?"

Vaccha: "That does not apply Master *Gotama*. The fire burned in dependence on its fuel of grass and sticks. When that is used up, if it does not get any more fuel, being without fuel, it is extinguished."

Buddha: "So too, *Vaccha*, the *Tathāgata* has abandoned that material form by which one describing the *Tathāgata* (*arahant*) might describe him; he has cut it off at the root, made it like a palm stump, done away with it so that it is no longer subject to future arising. The *Tathāgata* is liberated from reckoning in terms of material form, *Vaccha*, he is profound, immeasurable, hard to fathom like the ocean. 'He reappears' does not apply; 'he does not reappear' does not apply; 'he both reappears and does not reappear' does not apply; 'he neither reappears nor does not reappear' does not apply."¹¹²⁴

Not only after his death does he not exist, he does not exist even while he is here in this world with us. To illustrate this, let us take another very significant

discourse from *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*. The title of this discourse is “*Anurādha Sutta*”¹²⁵

According to this discourse, once while Venerable *Anurādha* was living in a forest hut, a number of wanderers from other sects approached him and said: “Friend *Anurādha*, when a *Tathāgata* (Buddha) is describing a *Tathāgata* (arahant)—the highest type of person, the supreme person, the attainer of the supreme attainment—he describes him in terms of these four things: ‘The *Tathāgata* exists after death,’ or ‘The *Tathāgata* does not exist after death,’ or ‘The *Tathāgata* both exists and does not exist after death,’ or ‘The *Tathāgata* neither exists nor does not exist after death.’”

When this was said, the Venerable *Anurādha* said to those wanderers: “Friends, when a *Tathāgata* is describing a *Tathāgata*—the highest type of person, the supreme person, the attainer of the supreme attainment—he describes him in contrast to these four things: ‘The *Tathāgata* exists after death,’ or ‘The *Tathāgata* does not exist after death,’ or ‘The *Tathāgata* both exists and does not exist after death,’ or ‘The *Tathāgata* neither exists nor does not exist after death.’”

When this was said, those wanderers said to the Venerable *Anurādha*: “This *bhikkhu* must be newly ordained, not long gone forth; or if he is an elder, he must be an incompetent fool.”

Then, those wanderers of other sects, having denigrated the Venerable *Anurādha* with the terms “newly ordained” and “fool,” rose from their seats and departed.

Not long after those wanderers had left, it occurred to the Venerable *Anurādha*: “If those wanderers of other sects should question me further, how should I answer if I am to state what has been said by the Blessed One and not untruthfully represent him? And how should I explain in accordance with the *Dhamma* so that no consequence of my assertion would give ground for criticism?”

Afterward, the Venerable *Anurādha* approached the Buddha, paid homage to him, sat down to one side and reported the exactly what happened and asked: “If those wanderers from other sects should question me further, how should I answer ... so that no reasonable consequence of my assertion would give ground for criticism?”

Subsequently, the Buddha inquired:

“What do you think, *Anurādha*, is form permanent or impermanent?” – “Impermanent, Venerable Sir.” “Is what is impermanent suffering or happiness?” “Suffering, Venerable Sir.” “Is what is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change if to be regarded thus: This is mine, this I am, this is my self?” “No”, Venerable Sir.” “Therefore, *Anurādha*, any kind of form whatsoever, whether past, future, or present,

internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, all form should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.'" "Any kind of feeling whatsoever ... Any kind of perception whatsoever ... Any kind of volitional formations whatsoever ... Any kind of consciousness whatsoever, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near, all consciousness should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: 'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self. Seeing thus, *Anurādha*, the instructed noble disciple experiences revulsion towards form, revulsion towards feeling, revulsion towards perception, revulsion towards volitional formations and revulsion towards consciousness. Experiencing revulsion, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion [his mind] is liberated. When it is liberated, there comes the knowledge: 'It's liberated.' He understands: 'Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more for this state of being.'"

"What do you think, *Anurādha*, do you regard form as the *Tathāgata*?"

"No, Venerable Sir."

"Do you regard feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness as the *Tathāgata*?"

"No, Venerable Sir."

“What do you think, *Anurādha*, do you regard the *Tathāgata* as in form?”

“No, Venerable Sir.”

“Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as separate from form?”

“No, Venerable Sir.”

“Do you regard the *Tathāgata* as feeling? As separate from feeling? As in perception? As separate from perception? As in volitional formations? As separate from volitional formations? As in consciousness? As separate from consciousness?”

“No, Venerable Sir.”

“What do you think, *Anurādha*, do you regard form, feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness [taken together] as the *Tathāgata*?”

“No, Venerable Sir.”

“What do you think, *Anurādha*, do you regard the *Tathāgata* as one who is without form, without feeling, without perception, without volitional formations, without consciousness?”

“No, Venerable Sir.”

“But, *Anurādha*, when the *Tathāgata* is not apprehended by you as real and actual here in this very life, is it fitting for you to declare: 'Friends, when a *Tathāgata* [Buddha] is describing a *Tathāgata*—the

highest type of person, the supreme person, the attainer of the supreme attainment—he describes him as separate from these four things: 'The *Tathāgata* exists after death,' or 'The *Tathāgata* does not exist after death,' or 'The *Tathāgata* both exists and does not exist after death,' or 'The *Tathāgata* neither exists nor does not exist after death.'"

"No, Venerable Sir."

"Good, good, *Anurādha*! In both the past and present, I describe suffering and the cessation of suffering."

In accordance with this explanation, there is nothing to be apprehended as the existence of an '*arahant*' even in this very world [*dittheva dhamme saccato thetato tathāgate anupalabbhiyamāne*]. Hence, would there be anything to be reckoned as the existence of *arahant* after death? The person who attained liberation is living here like a lamp which is burning because of its fuel. Once the fuel has run out, the lamp is extinguished. If one inquires where the fire has gone, a response is not applicable. Since the *arahant* has no more attachment, he has no more place to be reborn and has no existence (*bhava*). When there is no existence, there is no way to be reborn because birth arises only if there is an existence. The *arahant* has destroyed both existence and birth. Since there is no birth to him/her, there is no decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief or despair. This is the entire cessation of the whole mass of suffering.

(vi). Featureless Consciousness (*Anidassana Viññāna*)

On several different occasions, the Buddha has explained the nature of the mind of the *arahant* who passed away. The classic example is given on the occasion of the death of *Bāhiya* of the Bark-cloth. *Bāhiya* came to meet the Buddha all the way from south India on foot. When he approached the monastery, the Buddha was on his alms-round. He went to see the Buddha while he was on his route. *Bāhiya* respected the Buddha, keeping his head at the feet of the Buddha and said, "Teach me the Dhamma, O Blessed One! Teach me the Dhamma, O One-Well-Gone, that will be for my long-term welfare and bliss."

The Buddha said to him: "*This is not the time, Bāhiya. We have entered the town for alms.*"

A second and third time, he asked the same thing and the Buddha gave the same response. Finally, the Buddha gave this brief instruction to him: "*Then Bāhiya, you should train yourself thus: In reference to the seen, there will be only the seen. In reference to the heard only the heard. In reference to the sensed only the sensed. In reference to the cognized only the cognized. That is how you should train yourself. When for you there will be only the seen in reference to the seen, only the heard in reference to the heard, only the sensed in reference to the sensed, only the cognized in reference to the cognized, then, Bāhiya, there is no "you" in terms of that. When there is no "you" in terms of that, there is no "you" there. When there is no "you" there,*

you are neither here nor yonder nor between the two. This, just this, is the end of suffering."

On hearing this succinct admonition of the Buddha, the mind of *Bāhiya* right then and there was liberated from all defilements. Having exhorted in this manner, the Buddha walked along the way to complete his alms-round.

Unfortunately, not long after the departure of the Buddha, a cow with a calf attacked *Bāhiya* and he died on the spot. Returning from his alms-round, the Buddha saw *Bāhiya's* dead body and said to the monks, "Take *Bāhiya's* body and place it on a litter and carry it away, cremate it and build him a memorial. Your companion in the holy life has died." They did as the Buddha said and went to the Buddha and said, "Venerable Sir, *Bāhiya's* body has been cremated, and his memorial has been built. What is his destination? What is his future state?"

The Buddha then said, "Monks, *Bāhiya* of the Bark-cloth was wise. He practiced the *Dhamma* in accordance with the *Dhamma* and did not pester me with issues related to the *Dhamma*. *Bāhiya* of the Bark-cloth, monks, is totally liberated. Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Buddha on that occasion exclaimed:

" Where water, earth, fire, and wind have no footing:
There the stars do not shine,
the sun is not visible,

the moon does not appear,
darkness is not found.
And when a sage,
a brahman through sagacity,
has known [this] for himself,
then from form and formless,
from bliss and pain,
he is freed.¹¹²⁶

On another occasion, a certain monk, while practicing meditation, a thought arose in him. "Where do these four great elements—the earth, the water, the fire and the wind—cease without remainder?" Then he attained such concentration and with his miraculous power went to the heaven of the Four Great Kings and asked them this question. They did not know the answer. Then from there he went on to the heaven of Thirty-Three and asked the head of gods, *Sakka*. He himself did not know. Then the monk went to different gods like the gods of *Yāmā*, *Suyāma*, *Tusita*, *Santusita*, *Nimmanarati*, *Sunimmita*, *Paranimmitavasavatti*, *Vasavatti*, *Brahmakāyika* and finally, went to the *Brahma* the Great *Brahma* the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the All-Seeing, All-Powerful, the Sovereign Lord, the Maker, Creator, Chief, Appointer and Ruler, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be. He asked this question, "*Where do these four great elements — the earth, the water, the fire, and the wind, cease without remainder?*"

When this was said, the Great *Brahma* said to the monk, "I, monk, am *Brahma*, the Great *Brahma*, the Conqueror, the Unconquered, the All-Seeing, All-

Powerful, the Sovereign Lord, the Maker, Creator, Chief, Appointer and Ruler, Father of All That Have Been and Shall Be." For a second and third time, he posed the same question and the Great *Brahma* again gave the same answer. Eventually, the Great *Brahma*, taking the monk by his arm, went aside and said, "I too, don't know where the four great elements cease without remainder. So you have acted wrongly, acted incorrectly, in bypassing the Blessed One in search of an answer to this question elsewhere. Go right back to the Blessed One, and ask him this question."

Then, the monk disappeared there and immediately appeared in the monastery where the Buddha was dwelling and asked this question. After being asked, the Buddha pointed out that the question itself was incorrect. Thereby first the Buddha corrected the phrase. He said, "*Your question should not be phrased in this way: "Where do these four elements — the earth, the water, the fire, and the wind cease without remainder?"*" Instead it should be phrased like this:

" Where do water, earth, fire and wind
have no footing?
Where are long and short,
coarse and fine,
fair and foul,
name and form
brought to an end [within] ?"

Then the answer was given by the Buddha as follows:

" Consciousness without sign or feature,
without end,
luminous all around;
here, water, earth, fire, and wind
have no footing.
Here long and short,
coarse and fine,
fair and foul,
name and form
are all brought to an end.
With the cessation of [the activity of] consciousness
each is here brought to an end [within]."

This is the consciousness of the *arahant*, the Enlightened One. This is how we have to understand the cessation of all kinds of name, form and consciousness. As long as we have both name and form, we are wandering in *samsāra* and evolving from birth to birth as well as in every moment of existence. When one's mind reaches this state, which is sign-less and featureless, luminous from all direction and without end is the time evolution completely ceases.

The *arahant's* consciousness is called "*anidassana viññāna*." The term *viññāna* is used when the mind is connected to one's senses. That is the perceptive component of the mind. There are three aspects of mind, namely; the emotional aspect of the mind, the intellectual aspect of the mind and the perceptual

aspect of the mind. The worldling's perception takes place with the process and the impingement of the internal bases and their corresponding external bases, consciousness, contact, and feeling. The Buddha taught us that perception arises dependent on contact.

The *arahant's* perception is a "transparent perception." He/she perceives things differently. Worldly people perceive objects and they grasp them as "This is mine, this I am and this is myself." The arahant never grasp objects as such. They perceive not *what* they perceive, but *how* they perceive. Their perception is an **apperception**. With this, he/she sees not the object, but sees transparently like through a glass. The one, who has reached this level of mind has no more state of mind. When you say mind, it is the intellectual aspect which stores memories. The *arahant's* mind has gone beyond the level of mind. It is no longer simply called *viññāna*. As mentioned earlier it is called "*anidassana viññāna*." The better term to be used is "apperception." In the discourse of "The Root of All Things" (*Mulapariyāya*) of *The Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha*, the Buddha explains how the *arahant* sees things.

Normally, worldly persons see things and grasp onto them through personalization. They simply know things. The term used is "*jānāti*" means 'know', but the *arahant* profoundly knows it. The term used for the *arahant's* understanding is "*abhijānāti*." This is why we state here clearly that the *arahant's* perception is

different. He sees through the object. To illustrate this, the Buddha gave the simile of the pool where the water is translucent and the one on the bank (*arahant*) of the pool can see clearly the shoal of fish, pebbles, little plants and shells and so on in the pool clearly. The pool is the world. When *arahants* see the world, they can see things clearly as they really are, as such they never attach to things in the world.

This is the purpose of practicing Buddhist meditation. With the dissolution of mind and matter of the *arahant*, everything comes to cessation, extinction, complete coolness within. This is the complete cessation of the Enlightened One's mind and matter or mentality and physicality. This is the end of the revolution of *samsāric* wheel [re-becoming or rebirth] and the culmination of spiritual evolution as well.

End.

Endnotes

1. The Dhammapada Verse No. 21
2. M.N. 123. Accariya Abbhuta Sutta
3. M.N. 36. Mahā Saccaka Sutta. (“I recall that when my father the Sakyan was occupied, while I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, I entered upon and abided in the first *jhāna*, which is accompanied by applied and sustained thought, with rapture and pleasure born of seclusion.”)
4. M.N. 26. Ariyapariyesana Sutta (“I considered: Not only Alara Kalama has faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. I too have faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom.”)
5. M.N. 36. Mahā Saccaka Sutta
6. M.N. 4. Bhayabherava Sutta
7. S.N. 48.9.9. Vibhanga Sutta
8. S.N. 22.79.7. Khajjaniya Sutta
9. S.N. 56. 11. Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta
10. D.N. 22. Mahā Satipatthāna Sutta
11. S.N. 1&2 Samyutt (Devatā Samyutta and Devaputta Samyutta)
12. D.N. 22. Mahā Satipatthāna Sutta
13. The Dhammapada Verse No. 178 (translated by Acharya Buddharakkhita, Buddha Vacana Trust, Maha Bodhi Society, Bangalore, 1986)
14. M.N. 62. Mahā Rāhulovāda Sutta and No. 147. Cula Rāhulovāda Sutta
15. S.N. 47. 2. 2. Mindful Sutta,
16. Sutta Nipāta 5.15. Mogharāja Sutta (verse 1124)
17. Streams of craving: eye craving, ear craving, nose craving, tongue craving, body craving and mind craving
18. S.N. 1.21 (1). ASword

19. The Dhammapada Verse No.183
20. The Dhammapada Verse No. 371
21. M.N. 8. Sallekha Sutta
22. The Dhammapada Verse No. 327
23. The Dhammapada Verse No. 25
24. D.N. 16. Mahā-Parinibbāna Sutta
25. Sutta Nipāta, translated by K.R. Norman. Verse No. 70
26. A.N. IV.117 .Guarding Sutta
27. A.N. 6. 29. Udāyi Sutta
28. Sutta Nipāta. 1.10. Alavaka Sutta
29. S.N. 47.20 (10). Sedaka Sutta
30. M.N. 19. Dvedhāvitakka Sutta
31. Ibid
32. S.N. 45.4.(4). Brahmin Sutta
33. S.N. 47. 19.9. Sedaka Sutta
34. S.N. 1.46 (6). Accharā Sutta
35. Theragātā Verse No.1090 ("Satipatthana gīvoṣo" See also: No. 695. "sati gīvā siro paññā")
36. M.N. 123. Acchariya-abbhuta Sutta
37. M.N. 12. Mahā Sihanāda Sutta
38. S.N. 4.24.4 and Sutta Nipāta Padhāna Sutta - verse 446 [Satta vassāni bhagavantam anubandhim padam padam. Otāram nādhigacchissam sambuddhassa satimato -For seven years he followed the Blessed One step by step. Yet, did not get an opportunity from the enlightened mindful one.]
39. Great Disciples of the Buddha (p. 139-140) - by Nyanaponika Thera and Hellmuth Hecker, edited by Bhikkhu Bodhi. Wisdom Publications, 1997
40. Theragāthā Verses 1039-1040
41. A.N. 3.78
42. A.N. VIII. 9. Nanda Sutta and Udana III.2
43. The Dhammapada Verses 296-301
44. S.N. 10. 4. Manibhadda Sutta
45. Sutta Nipāta 1.8. Karaniya Metta Sutta
46. D.N. 16. Mahā-Parinibbāna (The Last Days of the Buddha)

47. D.N. 22. Mahā-Satipatthāna Sutta
48. M.N. 119. Kāyagatāsati Sutta
49. The Dhammapada Verses Nos. 273 - 276
50. S.N. 12.32.2. Kālāra Sutta
51. M.N. 117. Mahā Cattārisaka Sutta
52. M.N. 36.31. Mahā Saccaka Sutta
53. M.N. 26. Ariyapariyesana Sutta
54. Ibid
55. S.N. 54.7.7. Mahā Kappina Sutta
56. S.N. 54. 11.1. Icchānangala Sutta
57. M.N. 62. Mahā Rāhulovada Sutta
58. M.N. 118. Anāpānasati Sutta
59. S.N. 45.10. (10). Kimbila Sutta and S.N. 45.13.(3).
Ananda Sutta
60. M.N. 11. Cula Sihanāda Sutta
61. D.N. 16. Mahā-Parinibbāna Sutta
62. A.N. 8.81.1. Mindfulness (Numerical Discourses of
the Buddha. Tr. by Bhikkhu Bodhi. Wisdom
Publication-2012)
63. The Dhammapada Verses 63-64
64. A.N. 10.61.1 Ignorance
65. A.N. 7.55 Destinations of Persons
66. D.N. 2. Sāmaññaphala Sutta, pp.100-101 (Maurice
Walshe's translation)
67. M.N. 10. Satipatthāna Sutta, p.147 (Bhikkhu Bodhi's
translation)
68. S.N. 1.38. (8) .The Stone Splinter
69. S.N. 47.35. (5). Sato Sutta
70. M.N. 18. The Honeyball Sutta
71. M.N. 148. Cha Chakka Sutta
72. D.N. 16. Last Days of the Buddha
73. The Dhammapada Verse No. 348
74. Udana 1.10. Bāhiya Sutta. Translation from John D.
Ireland, Vipassanā fellowship.
75. The Dhammapada Verses Nos. 186-187
76. M.N. 59. Bahuvedaniya Sutta
77. S.N. 36. 12 (2). The Sky

78. A.N. IV.41. Samādhi Sutta
79. A.N. 4. 170. In Conjunction Sutta
80. A.N. 4.136.6. Virtuous Behavior
81. A.N. 4. 41. Concentration
82. M.N. 141. Sacca Vibhanga Sutta
83. M.N. 44. Culavedalla Sutta
84. A.N. 10.1.6. Concentration Sutta
85. M.N. 111. Anupada Sutta
86. A.N. 9.32.1. Dwelling (Anupubba Vihāra Sutta)
87. A.N. 9.33.2. Anupubba Vihāra Samāpatti Sutta
88. A.N. 9.35.4. The Cow (Jhāna Sutta)
89. A.N. 5.28.8. Five-Factored
90. A.N. 5.27.7. Concentration
91. M.N. 117. Mahā Cattārisaka Sutta. See also: A.N. 7.5.2. Samāhiparikkhāra Sutta
92. S.N. 22.5.5. Samādhi Sutta
93. The Dhammapada Verses No.1 & 2
94. The Dhammapada Verse No. 40
95. S.N. 1. 23 (3). Tangle. See also S.N. 7. 6.6
96. S.N. 22. 59 (7). Anatta-lakkhana Sutta
97. S.N. 23. 17. 2 Non-self
98. S.N. 35. 1. 1. The Internal as Impermanent
99. M.N.35. Cula Saccaka Sutta
100. M.N. 35. Culasaccaka Sutta
101. S.N. 22.15.4. See also: S.N. 22, 9 (9), 10 (10) and 11 (11) suttas as well.
102. A.N. iii. Kālāma Sutta
103. S.N. 22. 97 (5) The Fingernail
104. S.N. 55. Sotapatti Samyutta.
105. S.N. 54.13.3. Ananda Sutta
106. M.N. 26. Ariya Pariyesana Sutta
107. Dhammapada verse No. 203 (Nibbānam paramam sukham)
108. D.N. 2. Sāmaññaphala Sutta (translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu)
109. D.N. 16. Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta
110. S.N. 43. Asamkhata Samyutta

111. Dhammapada Verse No. 277
112. S.N. 43.44.33. Destination
113. A.N. 10.60. Girimānanda Sutta
114. M.N. 109. Mahā Punnama Sutta
115. M.N. 107. Ganaka Moggallāna Sutta
116. Itivuttaka 43
117. Itivuttaka 44
118. Udāna 8. Pātali village
119. S.N. 1. 27.7 Streams
120. The Dhammapada Chapters 7 & 26
121. S.N.1.25 (5). The Arahant
122. M.N. 63. Cula Mālunkyaputta Sutta
123. Sutta Nipāta 2. 1. Ratana Sutta
124. M.N. 72. Aggivacchagotta Sutta
125. S.N. 22.86.4. Anurādha Sutta
126. Udāna 1.10. Bāhiya Sutta

This book is intended for lay practitioners and intermediate students of meditation. Since no other word is equal or superior to the word of the Buddha, the author has not quote from the work of unenlightened persons. The sole purpose of this book is to help readers and practitioners better understand what mindfulness and clear comprehension are from the very words of the Buddha. All quotations are from the Buddha's original discourses. These “gems of *Dhamma*” the author has strived to thread together as a garland. If you wish, use and enjoy this garland daily to be more and more humble, simple, peaceful and happy.

About the Author



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