

Vipassana Meditation Instructions

Venerable **U Sīlānanda**

Published for Free Distribution Only

Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery
Dharma Propagation Division
Awaken Publishing and Design
88 Bright Hill Road
Singapore 574117
Tel: (65) 6849 5342
E-mail: publication@kmspks.org
Website: www.kmspks.org

1st Edition, September 2008 | 3,000copies

2nd Edition, 1st reprint, December 2008 | 5,000copies

ISBN-13: 978-981-08-1514-1

Cover designed by Zoe Wei

© Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery

EVIP-0201-1208

Although reprinting of our books for free distribution is encouraged as long as the publication is reprinted in its entirety with no modifications, including this statement of the conditions, and credit is given to the author and the publisher, we require permission to be obtained in writing, to ensure that the latest edition is used.

Printed by

Fabulous Printers Pte Ltd

Tel: (65) 6544 0200 • www.fabulousprinters.com



Published with environmental mindfulness.

Printed in Singapore on 100% recycled paper.

Cover is printed using paper manufactured from 55% recycled fibre and 45% pulp from sustainable forests.

It is very, very rare for one to have a precious human life and still be able to encounter the Buddha-Dharma, therefore please handle this book with utmost respect and care.

VIPASSANA MEDITATION INSTRUCTIONS

VENERABLE U SĪLĀNANDA

For Free Distribution Only
Not For Sale

Dear Reader,

If you wish to share in the production costs of this and many other beautiful Dharma Books and CDs for free distribution, so that more people can be touched by the beauty of Dharma and be inspired to live a happy and meaningful life, please photocopy the sponsorship form at the back of this book, fill in your particulars and return it to us.

“The gift of Dharma excels all gifts”

The Venerable Sayadaw U Sīlānanda (1927 – 2005) was nominated by the most Venerable Mahāsi Sayadaw of Burma (Myanmar) to carry out the honourable mission of spreading the Dhamma in the West, more than 30 years ago.

The Venerable Sayadaw is the Abbot of Dhammānanda Vihara in California and the Spiritual Director of the Theravada Buddhist Society of America, Dhammachakka Meditation Centre and the Tathagata Meditation Centre of San Jose in Burma, he is also one of three Spiritual Directors of the Mahāsi Meditation Centre in Yangon.

Born to a devout Buddhist family in Mandalay on 16 December, 1927, the Venerable Sayadaw received his early education at an American Baptist Mission School for boys. He was ordained as a novice monk and began formal religious training at the age of 16, receiving full bhikkhu ordination four years later.

The Venerable Sayadaw holds two Dhammācariya degrees and has taught at the Athithokdayone Pali University. He was an External Examiner at the Department of Oriental Studies, University of Art and Sciences in Mandalay, Myanmar.

He was the Chief Compiler of the Tipitaka Pāli-Burmese Dictionary and was one of the distinguished editors of the Pali Canon and associated Commentaries at the Sixth Buddhist Council held in Rangoon (Yangon) from 1954 to 1956.

The Venerable Sayadaw is the author of seven Burmese Buddhist books and three in English namely, *The Four Foundations of Mindfulness*, *Volition – An Introduction to the Law of Kamma* and *No Inner Core – An Introduction to the Doctrine of Anattā*.

Well-regarded as a compassionate teacher with deep insight knowledge, the Venerable Sayadaw teaches Vipassana meditation, Abhidhamma and other aspects of Theravadian Buddhism in English, Burmese, Pāli and Sanakrit. He has led meditation retreats throughout the USA, Japan, Europe and Asia.

In 1993, the Venerable Sayadaw was awarded the title of Aggamahāpandita by the Burmese religious authorities. More recently, in 1999 he was conferred the title of Aggamahāsaddhamma Jotika as well as appointed Chancellor of the newly created International Theravāda Buddhist Missionary University of Yangon in Myanmar.

CONTENTS



FOREWORD.....	8
INTRODUCTION TO VIPASSANA MEDITATION.....	10
MEDITATION INSTRUCTIONS.....	15
SITTING MEDITATION: POSTURES.....	16
SITTING MEDITATION: VIPASSANA (BREATHS AS MAIN OBJECT).....	17
SITTING MEDITATION: VIPASSANA (MOVEMENTS OF THE ABDOMEN AS MAIN OBJECT).....	26
COMMON TO BOTH METHODS.....	27
WALKING MEDITATION.....	29
HOW YOGIS KNOW.....	34
FORGIVENESS AND LOVING-KINDNESS.....	40
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT VIPASSANA.....	47
FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS.....	60
CONTINUANCE OF THE TEACHING.....	62
SHARING OF MERIT.....	64

FOREWORD

This booklet consists of (1) Introduction to Vipassana Meditation, (2) Answers to frequently asked Questions, and (3) Meditation Instructions.

The materials on these topics are extracted from some of Venerable U Sīlānanda's taped lectures. They are covered in a short, concise and easily understood manner for both beginners and experienced meditators alike.

The meditation instructions include the two sitting postures and other alternatives for meditators to select whichever is most suitable and comfortable to them. As a prelude to the Vipassana Meditation, the importance of Forgiveness and Loving-Kindness Meditation

were suggested and elucidated. Then the two Sitting Meditations (a) *Breath as Main Object* and (b) *Movements of the Abdomen as Main Object* are described in detail. For those who intend to meditate longer than half an hour or an hour, who may need some kind of movement, walking meditation instruction is also given in detail and on how to alternate between the sitting and walking meditations.

This booklet will serve as a very useful guide for every meditator.

Maung Tin-Wa, Ph.D.

INTRODUCTION TO VIPASSANA MEDITATION

Vipassana meditation is an awareness meditation. It teaches you to be with the present moment, to live in the present moment. It teaches to be aware of everything that comes to you and is happening to you. Only the present moment is important. And everything that comes to you at the present moment through the six sense doors: “eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind” is to be noted, to be watched, to be observed as the object of awareness.

When you practise Vipassana meditation, by making mental notes or just watching the various things that come to you, you will bring

awareness to a high level so that you will be able to see things as they truly are. You will come to see the true nature of mind and body, of the mental and physical phenomena of which you are composed. “True nature” means the nature of impermanence, the nature of dissatisfaction, and the nature of insubstantiality or the absence of an unchanging self or soul. It is important to see these three characteristics of nature so that you can have a correct view of things, so that you may have less attachment to mind and body, and gradually be able to weaken the hold of mental defilements that prevent enlightenment.

When you practise Vipassana meditation, you choose an object on which to focus your mind. That object will be the “home” object of meditation. Traditionally, the breath is taken as the object. You keep your mind focused on the breath and make mental notes “in-out-in-out” along with the breaths. During the notings of the breath when your mind gets lost or distracted,

you make notes of them too, such as “thinking” or “hearing” or “distractions” or “emotions”, etc. And also you make notes of the feelings in your body. In this way, you keep yourself aware of everything that is happening in you or that comes to you through the six sense doors.

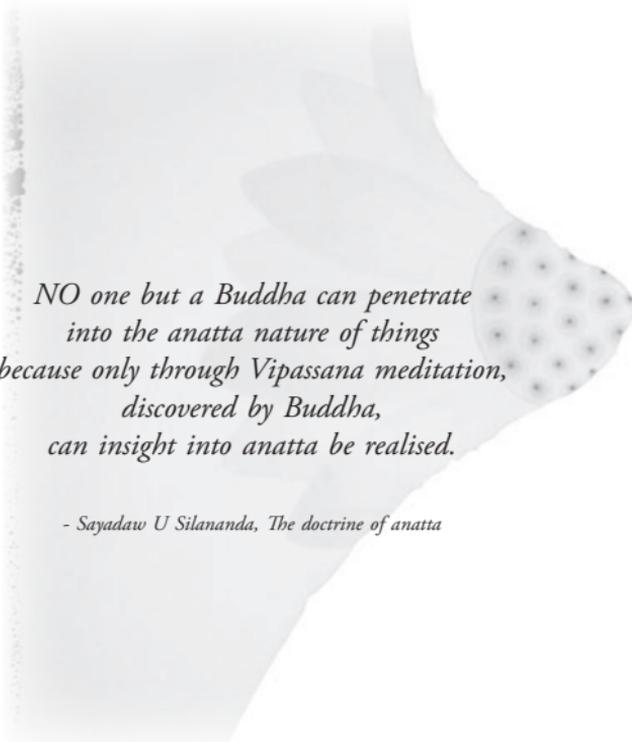
By keeping your mind on the object of meditation, you are able to develop concentration or one-pointedness of mind which is necessary for the penetrative knowledge into the true nature of mind and body to arise. Without concentration this cannot happen. So what you need first is concentration. And in order to have concentration, you must first keep your mind focused on one object. If you can keep your mind focused on one and the same object for some time you can get the necessary concentration. But you will find that in the beginning that is very difficult to do even for a short time. That is because you are dealing with the mind which is very unruly and difficult to control. You can keep

a wild bull by tying it with ropes. But you cannot tie your mind with ropes, so you tie your mind to the object with awareness or mindfulness. In the beginning, mindfulness may not be strong enough to tie the mind down to one object and you may have many distractions to interfere with your meditation. But when distractions come to you, whether through the eyes, ears or nose, etc., do not get irritated or upset. Just turn them into the objects of meditation by making notes of them too.

The beauty of Vipassana meditation lies in the fact that all things are the object for this meditation. The breath is only the “home” object. If you have no other object to note, just keep noting them too. Whether you are keeping your mind on the breath or on other distractions, you are doing good meditation if you are aware of them.

When you practise Vipassana meditation, you have to be patient and persevere. Do not

get discouraged, if you cannot get concentration at the beginning. Everybody has that experience. Leave all your expectations behind when you are meditating. Just be in the present moment. And if these thoughts come to you in spite of the instructions, just make them the object of meditation. In this way, you can effectively deal with everything that comes to you.



*NO one but a Buddha can penetrate
into the anatta nature of things
because only through Vipassana meditation,
discovered by Buddha,
can insight into anatta be realised.*

- Sayadaw U Silananda, The doctrine of anatta

MEDITATION INSTRUCTIONS

(For Loving-kindness Meditation and
Vipassana Meditation)

By U Silananda

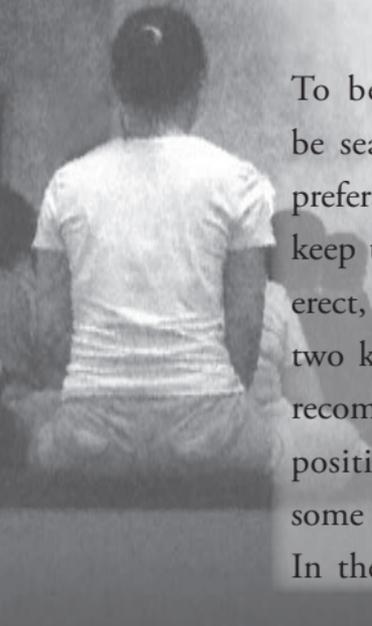
[The instructions given here are for those who want to practise meditation for an hour or so. So detailed instructions are given only for sitting meditation and walking meditation.]

To practise meditation, you have to look first for a suitable place. A suitable place is a place which offers you the necessary seclusion for your meditation. You may find secluded places in nature. However, when you are meditating inside a house, you have to look for the place which is most suitable for meditation and you will then use this place for meditation each time. You may

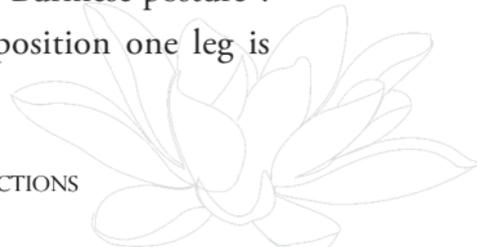


want to put up a statue or a picture of the Buddha, some flowers, a candle or some incense to assist your meditation, but these items are not so important as is the necessity for a secluded place where you will always practise your meditation in the future.

SITTING MEDITATION: POSTURES



To begin your meditation, please be seated in a comfortable posture, preferably in cross-legged position, and keep the upper portion of your body erect, but not stiff or tense. One of the two kinds of cross-legged position is recommended, namely, the half lotus position or the easy posture, which some teachers call “Burmese posture”. In the half lotus position one leg is



put on top of the other, but in the easy posture one leg is put in front of the other, thus the pressure on either leg is minimised. If any of the cross-legged position is still too difficult for you, you may take any sitting posture which is most comfortable for you. Because some comfort is necessary to continue the practice of meditation, you may even sit on a cushion, a chair or a bench. Though the cross-legged position is the ideal position for meditation, you have to decide for yourself in which position you can maintain your meditation best. Important in all sitting positions is that you keep the upper portion of your body erect.

SITTING MEDITATION: VIPASSANA BREATHS AS MAIN OBJECT

Now focus your attention on the breaths; keep your mind at the tip of the nose, or at the entrance of the nostrils. When you breathe in, be

mindful of the in-breath for the whole duration, or from the beginning to the end. And when you breath out, be mindful of the out-breath for the whole duration, or from the beginning to the end. In-breath and out-breath each last about four or five seconds. Be really mindful of the breaths. You may feel a sensation of the air at the tip of your nose or in your nose. Be mindful of it. And concentrate on the nature of breath, the moving nature or the supporting nature of breath, rather than the shape or form of the breath. Try to see the in-breath and out-breath as two separate things, not just one and the same breath going in and coming out. Do not let your mind follow the breath into your body or outside the body. Your mind is like a gatekeeper standing at the gate, taking note of people going in and coming out. Do not force or strain yourself. Just calmly be mindful and watch the breaths. You may make a mental note when you breathe in and when you breathe out, as

“in”, “out”, “in”, “out”. Making mental notes, or labelling, is just to help you keep your mind on the object; if it interferes with your meditation, you don't have to do it, but just be mindful of the object. What is important in this meditation is mindfulness of the object at the moment, and not the notes you make.

If your mind can be on the breaths only, that is very good. However, the mind has a tendency to wander quite often. So, if, in the course of keeping your mind on the breaths, your mind wanders or goes out and you are aware of it, do not feel guilty, or be upset; just be mindful of its going out. Or you may say to yourself, “going out, going out, going out”, two or three times and then go back to the breaths.

If you see something or someone in your thoughts, be mindful of seeing, or say to yourself, “seeing, seeing, seeing” until that object disappears from your mind; then go back to the breaths.

If you hear somebody talking in your thoughts, be mindful of hearing or say to yourself, “hearing, hearing, hearing” and then go back to the breath.

If you talk to someone in your thoughts, or if you talk to yourself, be mindful of talking, or say to yourself, “talking, talking, talking” and then go back to the breaths.

If you speculate about something, be mindful of speculating; if you analyse something, be mindful of analysing; if you make judgments, be mindful of making judgments. In *Vipassana* meditation, you pay just bare attention to the object, without any additions of your own, as “beautiful”, “ugly”, “good”, “bad”, etc. Or, in other words, you take the object as it is, without subjective additions of your own.

If you remember something in the past, be mindful of the remembering, or say to yourself, “remembering, remembering, remembering” or “thinking, thinking, thinking” and then go back

to the breaths. If you think of the future and make plans, be mindful of it, or say to yourself, “thinking of future, thinking of future, thinking of future”, or “planning, planning, planning” and then go back to the breath.

If you become lazy, be mindful of your laziness, or say, “lazy, lazy, lazy”. The laziness will go away after some moments, then go back to the breaths. If you feel bored, be mindful of boredom, or say to yourself, “bored, bored, bored” until boredom goes away, then go back to the breaths. If you have resistance, be mindful of it, or say to yourself, “resisting, resisting, resisting”. When resistance disappears, go back to the breaths.

If you have thoughts of attachment or greed or lust, again do not feel guilty, but be mindful of these thoughts, or say to yourself, “attachment, attachment, attachment” or “greed, greed, greed” or “lust, lust, lust” until they disappear and then go back to the breaths. If you are upset or angry

for any reason, just be mindful of that anger, or in other words, make that anger the object of meditation. Concentrate on your anger, or you may say to yourself, “anger, anger, anger” or “angry, angry, angry” or “upset, upset, upset”. After some moments, the anger will disappear and when it has disappeared, go back to the breaths.

If you want to swallow your saliva, first be mindful of the intention or desire to swallow, saying to yourself, “intention, intention, intention” or “desire, desire, desire”. And when you have gathered the saliva in your mouth, be mindful of the gathering, or say to yourself, “gathering, gathering, gathering”. When you swallow it down, be mindful of swallowing, or say to yourself, “swallowing, swallowing, swallowing” then go back to the breaths.

If you have an itching sensation, do not scratch it right away. Concentrate on the place of that itching and be mindful of it, saying to

yourself, “itching, itching, itching”. In most cases, the itching will go away after some time. When it goes away, return to the breaths. Sometimes, the itching will not go away, but will even become more intense. In that case try to be with it, taking note of it and be aware of it, as long as you can. If you think you cannot bear it any longer, you may scratch. But before scratching, be mindful of the intention or desire to scratch; and when you move your hand to the place where you experience the itch, be mindful of moving. Move your hand slowly, following the movement with mindfulness. When your fingers touch the place, say “touching, touching, touching”. When you scratch, say “scratching, scratching, scratching”. When you take the hand back, say “taking, taking, taking” or “moving, moving, moving”. When your hand touches your lap, the knee or the other hand again, be mindful of touching, or say to yourself, “touching, touching, touching”. Then go back to the breaths.

If you have painful or unpleasant feelings in the body—numbness, stiffness, or heat—focus your mind on the place of these feelings and be mindful of them. If you have pain somewhere in the body, focus on the place of that pain, and be mindful of that pain, or say to yourself, “pain, pain, pain”. You will have to be very patient with painful feelings. Pain will not easily go away. You have to be patient and be mindful of it. It may go away or it may become more acute. Stay with it as long as you can. Actually pain is a very good object for meditation. It is a strong object. Your mind is pulled towards the place where there is pain. So be mindful of it and try to see it just as a sensation, an unpleasant sensation. And it is important that you do not identify pain with yourself, so do not say to yourself, “it is *my* pain” or “*I* feel pain”. There is just the pain, just the sensation. If the pain becomes so intense that you think you cannot bear it any longer, you may ignore pain altogether and go

back to the breaths, or you may make movements or change posture to ease pain. But when you make movements or change posture, first note the intention to change, or be mindful of the intention to change and then make movements slowly, one at a time, following each movement with mindfulness. And when you have made the changes, go back to the breaths.

So the breaths are the home object of your meditation. Whenever there are no other objects to be mindful of, you just continue with being mindful of the breaths. If there are more prominent objects, then you take note of them, be aware of them, or be mindful of them, and then go back to the breaths. Do not use force, do not strain yourself, just calmly watch the objects, take note of them, or be mindful of them. Do not try to forcefully push distractions or emotions or feelings in the body away, just watch them and let them go by themselves.

SITTING MEDITATION: VIPASSANA MOVEMENTS OF THE ABDOMEN AS MAIN OBJECT

For some people, it is difficult to concentrate on the breath at the tip of the nose. Such people can keep their mind on the abdomen and be mindful of the rising and falling movements of the abdomen. When you inhale, the abdomen extends or rises and when you exhale, it contracts or falls. These movements—rising and falling of the abdomen—can be the main object of meditation instead of the breaths. Keep your mind on the abdomen and be really mindful of the rising movement from the beginning to the end, and also of the falling movement from the beginning to the end. Your mind is like a jockey riding a horse, your mind and your abdomen are both moving. You may even put your hand on the abdomen to feel the rising and falling movements. After some time, you may be able to follow the rising and falling movements

without your hand on the abdomen. Here also, you may make mental notes as “rising, falling”, “rising, falling”, “rising, falling”. The rest is the same as for taking the breaths as main object. The only difference is to substitute ‘breaths’ with ‘movements of the abdomen’.

COMMON TO BOTH METHODS

Let your mindfulness be precise, i.e., going concurrently with the objects. Take only one object at a time; take the one which is most prominent and be mindful of it. If you cannot decide which is most prominent, choose just one and be mindful of it. What is important in this meditation is to be mindful of the object at the present moment; so whether you are mindful of the main object or the secondary object, so long as you are mindful, you are doing the right thing. Do not have any expectations, do not expect to experience something strange or to see visions or to get results or even to get

concentration. Expectations are good because they motivate us to practise, but when we are right in the practice, they become obstacles to concentration. That is because they are a mild form of greed or attachment which is a hindrance to concentration. So if expectations come up in spite of yourself, do not be irritated by them, but just be mindful of them, or say to yourself, “expecting, expecting, expecting”. Then go back to the breaths or the movements of the abdomen. When you practise mindfulness you make effort, mental effort; the effort you make thus must be neither too much nor too little; if you make too much effort, you will become agitated and you cannot concentrate; and if you make too little effort, you will become sleepy and again cannot concentrate. The effort you make must, therefore, be well-balanced. If you miss to be mindful and then remember, then be mindful of that missing, or say to yourself, “missing, missing, missing”, or “forgetting, forgetting, forgetting”. Above

all, do not be tight or tense in your mind; be relaxed, and calmly watch, or be mindful, or make mental notes.

WALKING MEDITATION

Having meditated for about thirty minutes or more, you may practise walking meditation. When you practise *Vipassana* meditation, it is important to keep mindfulness with you always. So, when you change from sitting to standing, keep mindfulness with you. Before standing up, therefore, be mindful of the intention to stand up or to get up. You may say to yourself “intention, intention, intention” or “desire, desire, desire”. Then get up slowly, keeping your mind on the whole of your body, or saying to yourself, “getting up, getting up, getting up”. And when you are standing, be mindful of the standing position, or say to yourself, “standing, standing, standing”.

When you walk, it is better to choose a walking path and stay on it. Walk on it back and forth. When you walk, you walk slowly, keeping your mind on the foot or rather the movements of the foot, being aware of at least four stages of each step. And keep your eyes down always.

In order to make a step, you first raise your foot. Keep your mind on the foot and be mindful of the raising or lifting, saying, “lifting”. Then you push your foot forward, or you move your foot forward. Be mindful of that moving, saying to yourself, “moving”. When you put your foot down on the floor, be mindful of the putting down, or just say, “putting”. Then you shift weight to make the other step. Keep your mind on the whole body and say, “shifting”. Then make the next step, being mindful of lifting, moving, putting down, and shifting, making movements slowly. Keep your eyes open and look at the floor about three or four feet in front of you. Do not close your eyes. You may fall if you close your

eyes. Keep them a little open and look at the floor, or look down.

When you reach the end of the walking space, you stop and be mindful of stopping, or say to yourself, “stopping, stopping, stopping”. When you want to turn around, be mindful of the desire or intention to turn around, or say to yourself, “intention, intention, intention” or “desire, desire, desire” and then you turn slowly. Be mindful of the turning movement, or say to yourself, “turning, turning, turning”. Then walk again, taking note of the different stages in each step, lifting, moving, putting down, shifting and so on, until you reach the other end of the walking space. Stop there and be mindful of stopping. When you turn around, be mindful of turning around and then walk again. Also, when you walk, you may keep your hands in front or in the back or on the sides. So, you walk back and forth until the end of the walking period.

NOTE:

Walking meditation is designed to give exercise to the body. When you are practising for half an hour or an hour, walking may not be necessary. But when you are on a retreat and practising the whole day, your body needs some kind of movement. Hence the walking meditation. At the end of the walking period, the sitting period begins again. So you go back to the sitting place, walking slowly, making notes, being aware of the different stages and steps. Before lowering yourself down, be mindful of the desire to sit down. Then lower yourself down slowly, keeping your mind on the whole body. When the body touches the floor, say “touching, touching, touching”.

When you arrange your legs and hands, say “arranging, arranging, arranging”. And then, go back to the breaths and be mindful of the in-breaths and out-breaths. This way, you alternate sitting and walking and maintain your mindfulness, trying not to lose it at any moment during the retreat.

During retreats, eating is also done with meditation, for everything has to be done with mindfulness. Even the activities in the bathroom should not escape your mindfulness.

For full instructions for practice at a retreat, please read *PRACTICAL VIPASSANA MEDITATIONAL EXERCISES* by the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw.

HOW YOGIS KNOW

When he is going, a monk knows, “I am going”.

In this matter of going, readily do even dogs, jackals and the like know when they go that they are going. But this instruction on the modes of deportment was not given concerning similar knowing (awareness), because knowing of this sort does not shed the (wrong) belief in a living being, does not knock out the perception of a soul and neither is meditation nor the development of Arousing of Mindfulness.

The knowing of ordinary persons:

- they do not know every time the intention to go and the material phenomena that move arise;

- they do not know intention (mind) and matter separately;

- they do not know that successive movements arise due to successive moments of intention;

- they do not know that there are only two things at a time: successive intention and successive movement, and none other;

- they do not see for themselves that successive intentions and successive movements arise and disappear at the very moment, section by section, link by link, part by part, and do not reach to the next moment of intention and the arising of movements.

But the knowing of one who practises meditation sheds the belief in a living being, knocks out the idea of soul and is both meditation and development of Arousing of Mindfulness.

The knowing of meditations:

- they know every time the intention to go and the material phenomena that move arise;

- they know intention (mind) and matter separately;

- they know that successive movements arise due to successive moments of intention;

- they know that there are only two things at a time: successive intention and successive movement, and none other;

- they see for themselves that successive intentions and successive movements arise and disappear at the very moment, section by section, link by link, part by part, and do not reach to the next moment of intention and the arising of movements.

Actually this statement was made with reference to knowing the answers to the questions: “Who goes?”, “Whose going is it?”, “On what account does he go?”

Who goes? No living being or person whatsoever.

Whose going is it? Not the going of any living being or person.

On what account does he go? Because of the diffusion of the air-element caused by mind.

Therefore, he knows thus: First the thought (intention) 'I will go' arises. That (thought or intention) causes the air-element to arise. The air-element causes the (bodily) intimation to arise. And moving forward of the whole body by the diffusion of the air-element caused by mind is called 'going'. To him who knows thus occurs this thought: It is said, "A being goes", "A being stands". But in reality there is no living being who goes or stands. Just as it is said, "A cart goes", "A cart stands", but there is no cart that goes or stands (by itself). However, when the clever driver ties the four oxen to the cart and drives, it is mere usage to say, "The cart goes", "The cart stands". In the same way, the body is like the cart because it is driven, air-elements are like the oxen, and mind is like the driver. When the thought "I will go" arises, the air-element arises causing the arising of intimation; because

of the diffusion of the air-element caused by mind, going and the like occur. So, sayings like “A being goes”, “A being stands”, “I go”, “I stand” are mere convention.

Therefore it is said:

“Just as a ship goes by the force of wind, just as an arrow goes by the force of bowstring, so goes this body driven by wind (air-element caused by mind).

“Just as a puppet goes, stands and sits motivated by the force of strings (attached to it), so does this body motivated by the string of mind go, stand and sit.

“Who is there in this world that can, without causes and conditions, by his own power, sit or go?”

*You yourselves should make the effort;
Buddhas are only teachers who show the way.
Those who enter the path and
practise Tranquillity and Insight Meditation
will be freed from the fetter of illusion.*

- Dhammapada verse 276

*Better than a hundred years in the life of a person
who is idle and inactive, is a day in the life of one
who makes a zealous and strenuous effort
(in Tranquillity and Insight Development Practice).*

- Dhammapada verse 112

FORGIVENESS AND LOVING-KINDNESS

Teachers of meditation suggested that we ask forgiveness from those whom we may have offended by deed, speech or thought; forgiving others and ourselves also clears our minds of ill-will. The practice of loving-kindness is also beneficial in that it calms our minds down so that we can go into *Vipassana* meditation smoothly. So, before we practise *Vipassana* meditation, we will practise forgiveness (which consists of asking forgiveness from others, forgiving others and forgiving ourselves), and loving-kindness meditation.

We practise forgiveness to remove any feelings of guilt. Sometimes you did something wrong to somebody by body, speech or in mind and then you have this feeling of guilt. Especially,

when you are meditating, you want to keep your mind pure but these thoughts come to you again and again and spoil your meditation. Like cleaning the slate, you first ask for forgiveness from others. This is one aspect. The other aspect is to forgive others. There may be somebody who has done something wrong to you and you have some anger or grudge against that person. You have to get rid of this anger or grudge, too. In order to practise loving-kindness fully, you must be able to send thoughts of loving-kindness to all beings without exception. But if you cannot forgive some people (including yourself), you will not be able to practise loving-kindness meditation fully. So, loving-kindness and forgiveness go together. And thirdly, you forgive yourself. Sometimes, you find it more difficult to forgive yourself than to forgive others. If you cannot forgive yourself, you will not be able to practise loving-kindness to yourself; and if you cannot practise loving-kindness to yourself, it is very unlikely that you can practise it to other beings.

Therefore, before entering *Vipassana* meditation, you have to practise forgiveness; after that you practise loving-kindness meditation.

Loving-kindness is a kind of love, i.e., love without attachment, craving or lust. It is a wholesome and genuine desire for the well-being of all beings including ourselves. So when you practise loving-kindness and wish for your own happiness, saying, “May I be well, happy and peaceful”, this should not be interpreted as selfishness because, in order to send out thoughts of loving-kindness to others, we have to generate these thoughts first in ourselves. Also, when you send thoughts to yourself, you can take yourself as an example. That means, when you say, “May I be well, happy, and peaceful,” you think, “Just as I want to be well, happy and peaceful, so do all other beings. So may they also be well, happy and peaceful.” To be able to practise loving-kindness towards other beings, you first have to practise loving-kindness towards yourself. Then you send your thoughts to other beings. You can send

these thoughts in different ways. You can send thoughts to all beings by location. You can send loving-kindness to all beings in this house. By “all beings” we mean not only human beings, but also animals, insects, etc. Then you send loving-kindness to all beings in this area, in this city, in this county, in this state, in this country, in this world, in this universe, and last, to all beings in general. When you say the sentences to yourself, please, mean them and try to see and visualise the beings you mention as really well, happy, and peaceful, and your thoughts of loving-kindness reaching them, touching them, embracing them and making them really well, happy and peaceful. It will take about fifteen minutes.

When practising forgiveness, fold your hands up, and say,

*If by deed, speech or thought,
Foolishly I have done wrong,
May all forgive me honored ones,
Who are in wisdom and compassion strong.*

*I freely forgive anyone
who may have hurt or injured me.*

I freely forgive myself.

Now you can practise loving-kindness meditation. When practising loving-kindness meditation, repeat the following sentences silently to yourself, about ten times each.

May I be well, happy, and peaceful.

*May all beings in this house be well, happy,
and peaceful.*

*May all beings in this area be well, happy,
and peaceful.*

*May all beings in this city be well, happy,
and peaceful.*

*May all beings in this county be well, happy,
and peaceful.*

*May all beings in this state be well, happy,
and peaceful.*

*May all beings in this country be well, happy,
and peaceful.*

*May all beings in this world be well, happy,
and peaceful.*

*May all beings in this universe be well, happy,
and peaceful.*

May all beings be well, happy, and peaceful.

*May suffering ones be suffering-free
and the fear-struck fearless be.*

*May the grieving shed all grief,
and all beings find relief.*

Loving-kindness can also be practised by
way of persons, as follows:

May I be well, happy, and peaceful.

*May my teachers be well, happy,
and peaceful.*

*May my parents be well, happy,
and peaceful.*

*May my relatives be well, happy,
and peaceful.*

*May my friends be well, happy,
and peaceful.*

*May the indifferent persons be well, happy,
and peaceful.*

*May the unfriendly persons be well, happy,
and peaceful.*

*May all meditators be well, happy,
and peaceful.*

May all beings be well, happy, and peaceful.

*May suffering ones be suffering free
and the fear-struck fearless be.*

*May the grieving shed all grief,
and all beings find relief.*

After you have sent thoughts of loving-kindness to the whole world and all beings, you practise *Vipassana* meditation.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT VIPASSANA

1. Where does the practice of *Vipassana* come from?

Vipassana meditation chiefly comes from the tradition of Theravada Buddhism. There are two major divisions of Buddhism in the world today—Mahayana and Theravada. Mahayana tradition developed as Buddhism spread to the Northern Asian countries of Tibet, China, Japan, etc. Theravada tradition stay in Southern Asian and spread to Sri Lanka, Burma (Myanmar), Thailand, Cambodia and Laos.

2. What does *Vipassana* mean?

The word *Vipassana* is composed of two parts—‘*Vi*’ which means **in various ways** and ‘*passana*’ which means **seeing**. So *Vipassana* means seeing in various ways.

3. What can *Vipassana* meditation do for me?

The ultimate purpose of *Vipassana* is to eradicate mental impurities from your mind altogether. Before that stage, there are benefits of tranquillity, peace of mind and the ability to accept things as they come. *Vipassana* helps you to see things as they truly are, not as they appear to be. Things appear to be permanent, desirable and substantial, but actually they are not. When you practise *Vipassana* meditation, you will see for yourself the arising and disappearing of mental and physical phenomena. And you will have a clearer comprehension of what is going on in your mind and body. You will be able to accept things

as they come to you with less agitation and deal with situations in a more positive way.

4. Who needs Vipassana meditation?

Vipassana meditation is for the cure of diseases of the mind in the form of mental defilements like greed, hatred, delusion, etc. We all have these mental diseases almost all the time. In order to at least control them we need Vipassana meditation. So Vipassana is for all people.

5. When Vipassana is needed?

Since mental impurities are almost always with us, we need Vipassana meditation almost all of the time. There is no fixed time for the practice of Vipassana. Morning, during the day, before bed...anytime is the time for Vipassana. And Vipassana may be practised at any age.

6. Do I have to be a Buddhist to practise Vipassana?

There is nothing which can be called particularly Buddhist in Vipassana meditation. There is no element of religion. It is a scientific investigation and examination of yourself. You just observe closely every single thing that comes to you and is happening to you in your body and mind at the present moment.

7. Is Vipassana meditation difficult to practise?

Yes and no. Meditation involves control of mind and mind is most unruly. You come to know this personally when you practise meditation. So it is not easy to practise Vipassana meditation because it is not easy to control the mind...to keep the mind on one and the same object. In another way, Vipassana meditation is easy to practise. There are no elaborate rituals to follow or much to learn before being able to

practise. You just sit, watch yourself and focus your mind on the object. Just that.

8. Are there prerequisites for Vipassana meditation?

You need a genuine desire to practise and a readiness to follow the instructions closely because if you do not practise properly, you will not get the full benefits of meditation. You also need to have confidence in the practice and the teacher and an open mind to try it and see what it can do for you. Patience is also very important. When you meditate, you have to be patient with many things. There will be distractions, sensations in your body, and you will be dealing with your mind. You must persevere when these distractions come and you cannot concentrate on the object. Also in Theravada Buddhism, purity of morals is emphasised because without pure moral conduct, there cannot be good concentration or peace of mind. Thoughts of something wrong you have

done will come to you again and again, especially when you are in meditation, and it will be more difficult for you to get good concentration.

9. What gadgets do I need for Vipassana meditation?

Actually, you do not need anything at all. All you need is a place where you can sit down, close your eyes and focus on the object. But I am not against using cushions, benches or even chairs and other things because in order to practise meditation, you need some degree of comfort. But while you do not need to inflict pain on yourself unnecessarily, you should take care not to be too attached to comfort, or sloth and torpor will come to you and you will go to sleep.

10. In what posture can Vipassana be practised?

Vipassana meditation can and should be practised in all postures—sitting, standing, walking, and lying down. Whatever you do, you should be mindful.

11. Is cross-legged posture essential in sitting meditation?

Although it is customary and traditional to sit on the floor to practise meditation, it is not essential in **Vipassana**. If you cannot sit cross-legged, you may sit any way you like as long as it is comfortable for you. What matters in *Vipassana* is just the awareness, not the posture.

12. Must my eyes be closed when meditating?

It is better to keep your eyes closed, but you may leave them open if you like, whichever is

least distracting for you. But if you happen to look at anything, then you have to be aware of the “looking” and note it. The important thing is to have good concentration.

13. What should I do with my hands when meditating?

There are no strict rules as to how to put your hands in **Vipassana**. You may put them any way you like. The most usual position is on the lap one over the other. Or you may put them on your knees.

14. How long must I practise at a time?

That depends on how much time you can spend for meditation. There is no fixed rule. It is good if you can sit for one hour. But if you cannot sit for one hour at the beginning, then you may sit half an hour or fifteen minutes, and little by little extend the time, until you can sit longer. And if you can sit for more than an hour

without much discomfort, you may sit two or three hours if you like.

15. Should I practise every day?

We eat every day, care for our bodies every day. Since we almost always have mental defilements with us we need to cleanse our minds every day. I recommend the morning hours because then your body and mind are rested and you are away from the worries of the previous day. It would also do you good to meditate in the evening before you go to bed. But you may practise any time. And if you make it a habit to practise every day, it will be good and beneficial to you.

16. Do I need a teacher to practise Vipassana?

This is important. Whenever you learn a new skill, you need a teacher. With the advice of a teacher, you learn quicker and you cannot go wrong. You need a teacher who is competent to

give instructions, correct your mistakes, and give guidance when you have trouble in the course of meditation. There are some meditators who think they are making progress while in reality, they are not making progress at all. And sometimes they are making progress but think they are not doing well. Only the teacher can tell, and so at such a time he or she is indispensable. If you cannot find a teacher, you may rely on books, although no book can entirely take the place of a teacher. You may be able to do fairly well by reading the instructions and following them carefully. But even then, you may have need for discussion with a teacher occasionally.

17. Can Vipassana be applied to daily life?

You can have awareness of whatever you do whether you are working, walking, doing, etc. It will not be as intense as in meditation or during a retreat, but a more general awareness. And when you apply mindfulness to problems

in your life, you will be able to deal with them more effectively.

18. What is a meditation retreat?

A meditation retreat provides an opportunity to deepen meditation practice in a supportive environment with the guidance of a experienced teacher. Everything you do at a retreat becomes the object of meditation.

19. What happens at a retreat?

A retreat day consists of alternate periods of sitting and walking meditation, a nightly lecture and personal interviews with the teacher. Continuity of practice is developed by bringing mindfulness to all other activities throughout the day as well. **Noble silence** is observed during the retreat. Retreats can last for one day, a weekend, a week or longer.

20. Why should I go to a meditation retreat?

The intensive practice of a retreat is very beneficial for developing good concentration and quieting the mind. Since concentration is essential for penetrative wisdom to arise, a meditation retreat gives you the best possible opportunity to be able to experience for yourself the true nature of reality.

MAY ALL BEINGS BE WELL,
HAPPY AND PEACEFUL!



*“Everything arises and passes away.”
When you see this (with insight-wisdom),
you are away from sorrow.*

- Dhammapada verse 277

FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

This is the *only way*, monks,
for the purification of minds of beings,
for overcoming sorrow and lamentation,
for the disappearance of pain and grief,
for reaching the Path,
for the realisation of Nibbana,
namely, the Four foundations of Mindfulness.

What are the four? Herein, monks,

a monk dwells practising
body-contemplation on the body,
ardent, clearly comprehending
and mindful,
overcoming covetousness and grief in
the world;

he dwells practising
feeling-contemplation on feelings,
ardent, clearly comprehending and
mindful,
overcoming covetousness and grief in
the world;

he dwells practising
mind-contemplation on the mind,
ardent, clearly comprehending and
mindful,
overcoming covetousness and grief in
the world;

he dwells practising
dhamma-object contemplation on
dhamma-objects,
ardent, clearly comprehending and
mindful,
overcoming covetousness and grief in
the world.

CONTINUANCE OF THE TEACHING

Once, the Venerable Ananda and the Venerable Bhadda lived at Pataliputta, in the Cock Monastery. In the evening, after the Venerable Bhadda had risen from his seclusion, he betook himself to the Venerable Ananda, and after he had exchanged friendly and polite greetings, he spoke to him:

“What, brother Ananda, is the cause, what is the reason by which, after the decease of the Perfect One, the Good Law does not continue for long? And what, brother Ananda, is the cause, what is the reason by which, after the decease of the Perfect One, the Good Law continues for long?”

“Well said, brother Bhadda, well said.

Pleasing is your wisdom, pleasing your insight,
excellent is your question. ”

“If, brother, the four Foundations of Mindfulness are not cultivated and not practised regularly, the Good Law will not continue for long after the decease of the Perfect One. But, brother, if the four Foundations of Mindfulness are cultivated and practised regularly, then the Good Law will continue for long after the decease of the Perfect One.”

(From *Samyutta Nikaya*, The Heart of Buddhist Meditation, p.141.)

Last revision: August 18, 1997.

SHARING OF MERIT

After meditation, we share merit. It is a good practice to share merit with all beings whenever we have done some meritorious deeds.

Sharing of merit means letting other beings get a chance to get merit themselves by having them rejoice at our merit. By rejoicing at our merit, they themselves get merit, and that merit of theirs is what gives them happy results. Our merit does not decrease when we share it; in fact, it increases, because sharing of merit is itself an act of merit which is *dana* or giving. Therefore, sharing of merit is beneficial to both the sharer and the recipient.

Please share merit as follows and say,
“Sadhu! Sadhu! Sadhu!” at the end:



May all beings share this merit
which we have thus acquired.
For the acquisition of
all kinds of happiness.

May beings inhabiting space and earth,
Deities and others of mighty power,
Share this merit of ours!
May they long protect the teachings.

