

*A Practising  
Guide to Peace*

*by*

*Phra Ajahn Plien Panyapatipo*

## Preface

Many Buddhists have traveled over the years from near and far to come and see me and discuss how to practice meditation to find peace. They all asked whether I had a book to guide them in their practice, and if so, could they have one. When I said there was none, they asked if I would like to write one to give to those interested, for it would be very useful. When it became clear that there was a demand for such a book, I decided to write one according to my wisdom and ability. This is the result. It is a forest monk's explanation of meditation practice to fulfill the good intentions of Buddhists, who have been waiting a long time for it. Many meritorious and faithful Buddhists have donated towards the expenses of producing this book, and for distributing it to those interested in Dhamma practice. I hope this book will show you how to practice *Kammatthanna* meditation, so that you will succeed in finding peace according to your own faith and ability. I hope you will find it useful.

I would like to bless those who helped to make this book a success – may you have happiness, long life, good complexion, and strength always.

Phra Ajahn Plien Panyapatipo

Wat Aranyavivek (Ban Pong)

Tambol Indakhil Ampue Mae Taeng

Chiengmai

# A Practicing Guide to Peace

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Now is the time to practice for peace. It is the start of meditation to find peace within oneself. This delicate, cool, calm happiness is what we are all looking for everywhere. Not many find it, but wise and learned ones may achieve it. This is the kind of happiness that we all seek day and night, and wish to have for ourselves.

On this occasion I'm going to lead you in meditation. There are two methods: the first is "**Concentration develops Wisdom**", and the second is "**Wisdom develops Concentration**". But we don't need to worry about both methods just yet; if we try the first and it does not work, then we'll try the other method. The important thing is that whichever you choose you must do seriously to be successful. The genuine thing has to come from earnest striving, as you'll see for yourself. The result will depend on your effort. The more often you do it, the more you will develop.

To begin, you must find time to meditate. Even though you have to work everyday, I think you'll be able to find a little time to meditate. Most of us are very busy, and have to work for a living, but we should be able to find some time to do the "Concentration Meditation" (*Samadhi Bhavana*). It can be 2-, 3-, 4-, or 5 o'clock

in the morning, or in the early evening, or during the day. Whenever the occasion allows it, you should try to do it, because *Dhamma* is timeless (*Akaliko*). Peace can be seen here and now.

After we have finished most of our work, look around (left and right) to be sure there is nothing else that needs to be done. Now is the time to sit and meditate to find peace and happiness, without having to worry about anything else. Go into your bedroom, or meditation room where you keep the images of the Buddha, and then sit with your hands palm-to-palm in front of your heart. Now pay sincere respect to the Triple Gem. At the first bow, think of the qualities of the Buddha. At the second bow, think of the *Dhamma*, that leads those who follow its teaching and practice to release from suffering. At the third bow, think of the Noble *Sangha*, who are the disciples of the Buddha and follow his teaching until released from suffering. Some other people like to light incense and candles to pay respect to the Buddha, and then arrange a place for sitting.

Before meditating, you should do the Morning and Evening Chanting, depending on whether you are going to meditate in the morning or evening. Some prefer to do a short morning or evening chanting instead. After that, to spread your Divine Attitudes, good will, compassion, appreciation, and equanimity to all beings, chant: *Aham sukhito homi, etc....*

For those who do not want to do morning or evening chanting, nor chant the Sublime Attitudes, at least chant the following (three times):

*Araham sammāsambuddho bhagava*

*Buddham bhagavantam abhivademi*

(BOW DOWN)

*Svakkhato bhagavata dhammo*

*Dhammam namassami*

(BOW DOWN)

*Supatipanno bhagavato savaka-sangho*

*Sangham namami*

(BOW DOWN)

And then chant *Namo tassa ....* three times before starting to meditate.

Try not to sit right in front of the image of the Buddha, but sit a little to one side or the other, wherever you feel comfortable. Sit facing east, north, or south, but no west.

If there is no special meditation room in your house or office, find a suitable place anywhere for sitting meditation. In this case there is no need to light candles or incense. Bow three times to pay respect to the Triple Gem, and then do some brief chanting suitable

for the time available. Don't worry about choosing a particular time to meditate – but don't waste time.

Now we earnestly set the mind for sitting meditation. Sit cross-legged with the right leg on the left leg, the hands flat on the lap with the right on top of the left, and the back straight. If your clothes or belt feel too tight, loosen them. If you are not used to sitting cross-legged, sit with both legs to one side, with the right hand on top of the left as before. This posture is to help control the mind. Keep your back straight, and be determined to concentrate and develop mindful meditation. Move your body right and left, and make sure you feel comfortable. Close your eyes, relax, breathe naturally, and keep your mind still. Do not think about the past or future, things you have to do, your belongings, property, jewelry, car, boat, husband, wife, children, grandchildren, or any forthcoming event such as an impending birth or death, or the country's turmoil. Don't let these things bother your mind. Even if you are a monk or nun, let go of study, and business concerns, both yours and others; don't let them enter your mind.

Now, let us find a subject for meditation (*Kammatthana*) that suits your temperament and habit (*Carita*). This can be very difficult for those who do not know their temperament. Even monks or novices, who are supposed to know how to seek peace and happiness, have difficulty with their practice. Some travel into

forests, stay in caves, go to the tops of mountains, live in deep trackless forests with no one around, and simply look for solitude and nature. Some are confronted by ferocious animals such as tigers, leopards, and wild elephants. Some even lose their lives to such animals, but even so they remain unafraid, because they are looking for peace and the way to stop heat and anxiety in their minds. They seek peace by traveling to a forest, caves, or the countryside, whatever suits their temperament best, or wherever they think they can practice meditation for peace most easily. Any time and any place can serve the purpose for meditating for peace and happiness, day or night, for the *Dhamma* is worldwide. Whoever has wisdom will easily find peace and happiness, but it is hard for those that are not so clever. But if one does not choose a subject for meditating to suit one's temperament, it will delay progress in practice.

After you are sitting properly, pay attention to your breath going in and out. Think "*Budh*" with the in breath and "*dho*" with the out breath. Note that the contact point of the breath will be strong at the nostrils at the tip of the nose. Keep your mind concentrated on the breath, and do not let it wander. Relax, as if you were breathing in the open air. Don't force or hypnotise your mind too much, but let it be comfortable. We are heading to where peace and happiness will be; so do not worry about anything else. Try to

keep your mind aware of the breath until the breath and “*Budhho*” are combined into a single stream.

Your breathing will start to become lighter. Keep your mind focused on the breath and know how light it becomes. Do not send your mind to sense-objects (*Arammana*) outside, but maintain your mind with the breath all the time. Only when you know your mind is staying with the breath can you let go of the word “*Buddho*”. The breath will become lighter and more delicate, and the mind will be aware of the delicacy of the breath. When you reach the point where the mind stays firmly with the breath, the mind will become calm and the breath even lighter and finer until it seems to vanish. At this stage the body will feel very light, as if we had no body at all. Feelings (*Vedana*) of aches and pains will disappear, and we can sit as long as we want to. Next, we can let go of the thinking of the breath, and just watch the lightness and emptiness of the body with happiness. The mind will watch with peace. We should concentrate our mind in peace like this for fifteen or twenty minutes, and then withdraw the mind to outside sense-objects (*Arammana*). We call this kind of concentration of the mind Momentary Concentration (*Khanikasamashi*).

If you have tried practicing meditation along these lines but could not concentrate, not even once, with your mind often wandering away to sense-objects, then you did not choose a meditation object



suitable to your temperament or habits. Let's look for another method – contemplation of death along with the breath. Note the wind at the tip of the nose. If the wind comes in (in-breath) but does not go out, I will die. Similarly, if the wind goes out (out-breath) but does not come in, I'll die. Think this repeatedly, as a way to centre the mind with the breath and with meditation on death. This should prevent the mind from straying outside.

But perhaps your mind still goes outside and persists in thinking about this and that, and won't concentrate on the meditation object. This is simply the nature of the mind. Since it was born, it has been thinking of good things, bad things, all day and all night. Some people think too much until they become insane because of their own thoughts. Why is this? Why does the mind formulate thoughts, ideas, and fantasies (*Sankhara*) all the time? It causes restlessness, suffering, and anxiety, and leaves no time to see things clearly. Why? The answer is because defilement (*Kilesa*) and desire (*Tanha*) control us. They command our hearts all the time, for life after life. When we are in the Round of Rebirth (*Samsara*), which is now, the present life, *Kilesa* and *Tanha* are the commanders of our minds all the time. And so we Buddhists always complain that we are full of suffering. No one ever mentions that they have had enough, or are full, or are comfortable.

But this is how the wise person finds the way to release suffering and be happy.

So, if your mind is still not at peace, let's use your wisdom to ask the mind, what is it thinking of? To whom does the thinking belong? When we die, can we bring that thought with us? No – when we die, those thoughts will not come with us. This contemplation will make the mind let go of what it was thinking of, and bring the mind back to the meditation subject. It is the breathing in and out and the contemplation of death that make our minds concentrate solely on the meditation subject (*Dhamma – Kammatthana*). Think of death with every breath, until the breath will become lighter and lighter and we feel relaxed and comfortable. Use the mind to watch the breath, and the breath will become lighter and finer until we cannot detect any wind at the nose. The body will be light, and the feelings (*Vedana*) of aches and pains will subside. Now we can let go of the notions of breath and death, and instead pay attention to the lightness and emptiness of the body. The mind will be calm and peaceful, as if we were not breathing. When Buddhist practitioners reach this stage they often feel frightened that they may die, because they appear to not be breathing. In fact, we are still breathing but it is so fine and spread so evenly through the body that this creates the feelings of lightness and emptiness. Our minds, although still occupied by a

few fine hindrances (*Nivarana*), will be still with *Arammana* for fifteen to twenty five minutes. Then it will return to normal. We call this calmness Momentary Concentration (*Khanikasamadhi*).

Again, I would like to reassure you at this stage that most people who practice until the breath becomes very fine, so much so that it can't be felt, become afraid that they may die. They suddenly withdraw the mind from concentration, which delays their progress in meditation. So please do not be afraid when you reach this level, for it will eventually lead you to a higher peace.

Both the above methods lead only to Momentary Concentration (*Khanikasamadhi*). If you seriously practice with these methods for several months, but never once find that peace, then the meditation subject you chose is not the right one, and does not agree with your temperament. Let's try the third method, *Kammatthana*.

Sit properly and prepare for meditation as described above. Think of the moral conduct (*Sila*) that you have been doing, and which we are concentrating on. This is called recollection of morality (*Silanussati*) or contemplation of one's own morals. Good conduct will make our mind joyful and happy. This will make our mind calm and easy to settle down. This is another *Kammatthana* method.

The fourth method also involves sitting properly and preparing for meditation as above. Now, think of all the good merit that you have earned for yourself many times. Thinking of these freely give us joy and happiness, and can lead the mind to concentration. This technique is called the recollection of liberality (*Caganussati*), and will suit the temperaments or habits of some of us. The concentration that occurs at this level is momentary concentration only (*Khanikasamadhi*). The mind will stay calm for a while, and then return to outside sense-object (*Arammana*) as before. The mind cannot reach deeper stillness than this, as it does when we use mindfulness of breathing (*Anapanasati Kammatthana*) as a subject for meditation.

If, after trying several methods, the mind is still neither calm nor peaceful, it may be that we are not being serious. If we do not make a real effort, we will not attain peace. But do not give up or become discouraged in your efforts. Some people may complain that there is no peace in Buddhism. Don't believe them. To do so is to look down on, to belittle, the teachings of the wise men, of whom the Buddha was one. He discovered the truth that brings supreme peace, and Buddhist practitioners who follow his footsteps also find peace and happiness. So if we earnestly try, we shall achieve peace one day for sure.

If the mind still doesn't settle down, however, there are several *Dhamma-Kammatthana* that you can use as principal subjects of meditation:

1. *Anussati* (constant mindfulness) – ten exercises
2. *Asubba* (corpses at different stages of decay) – ten exercises
3. *Kasina* (meditation devices) – ten exercises
4. *Brahmavihara* (sublime states of mind) – four exercises
5. *Arupakammathana* (formless spheres as a subject of meditation) – four exercises
6. *Aharepattikulasanna kammathana* (perception of the loathsomeness of food as a subject of meditation) – one exercise.
7. *Catudhaturavatthana* (analysis of the four elements) – one exercise

They are forty mental exercises or meditation subjects listed in the *Visuddhi Magga* scripture. Buddhists, both men and women, can choose any of these to help develop meditation to make the mind concentrated and peaceful. Forty should be plenty to choose from, particularly for those who had the meditation habit in a past life. But the beginner, who is just starting to practice in this life, should try to meditate for only five to ten or fifteen minutes per day, depending on the opportunity. Meditation training in this life will

become a habit in the next life – if we are born again, we shall have ability and wisdom to develop, see peace more easily, and to withdraw oneself from suffering as our noble teacher did.

What to do is the mind still doesn't settle down, even after concentrating on *Kammattana*, but persists in wandering outside and being disturbed by annoying *Sanna aramma* (perception of sense-objects)? When we are sitting in meditation, let us notice what occurs that makes our mind attach itself to *Sankhara* (mental formulation) both inside and outside. Is it a person, object, or world affair? Sometimes the mind becomes stuck on hindrances (*Nivarana Dhamma*) which prevent the mind from settling. We should try and work out the cause, the kind of hindrances, or your type of temperament. When we know the cause, we can correct things and make progress in developing concentration, calmness and peace.

Before going further, I'd like to talk about the intrinsic (or inherent) nature of the personality or temperament of individuals. All people have different characters, for previously we did different good deeds and so received different *Kamma* (volitional action).

There are six types of temperament (*carita*):

1. *Raga-carita* - a propensity to all beautiful subjects;

2. *Dosa-carita* – a propensity to irritation and anger, a hating temperament;
3. *Moha-carita* – a propensity to delusion; a deluded temperament;
4. *Vitakka-carita* - a propensity to excessive thought and worry; a speculative temperament;
5. *Saddha-carita* – a propensity to gullibility and snap judgments; a trusting temperament;
6. *Buddhi-carita* – a propensity to curiosity and intelligence.

From these six types of temperament, try to look at yourself and see which type you are. Then you can use that to correct and improve your meditation. If you do not know what your propensity is, you may not be able to achieve peace through your meditation.

There are *Dhamma* methods for curing each type of temperament, just as cold suppresses warmth. I'll explain the characteristics of all six temperaments, and the *Dhamma* methods to counter them. You will then be able to improve your meditation practice as your ability allows.

1. A *Raga-carita* person tends to have passions for all beautiful subjects. The things that belong to them, whether living or non-living, have to look nice. If they do not, these people become

upset, annoyed, and worried, and have no peace in their hearts. Most people fall into this category, and it is a difficult one to relinquish, for everyone loves nice pretty things. Even so, there is a *Dhamma* method for curing this passion. It is called *Asubba Kammathana* (using a corpse at different stages of decay as a subject of meditation). In this method, one reflects on the reality of the body by seeing your body and the bodies of others as filthy, smelly, and repulsive, with sweat and scurf all over the outside, and excretions pouring out of the nine openings of the body (e.g. urine, faeces, saliva, etc.). Although we try to clean the body several times a day, the filth still shows. People and animals are the same. This is the truth, and this *Dhamma* can cure *Raga-carita*. Keep reflecting constantly and patiently in this way, and the mind will let go of *Raga-carita* and gain reason. Afterwards, the mind will be easy, calm, and peaceful.

2. *Dosa-carita*. These type of people tend towards anger or irritation. When they hear someone say something that is not so nice, they become angry. If they hear someone abuse or scold them, they become worse, show an angry face and act accordingly – grabbing whatever weapon is within reach to try and destroy the person who made them so angry. This kind of anger is not so difficult to cure, sometimes it takes three to five years to cure. It is hard to let go of this anger, and such people find it difficult to calm



and pacify their minds. Nevertheless, there is a *Dhamma* method that can stop or end this anger, and make the person cool and relaxed. It is not beyond people's ability to overcome such anger, but they must be very patient. The *Dhamma* that can suppress or stop this anger is called *Metta-Brahmabihara*, or, the Four Sublime States of mind (1: *Metta* – loving kindness; 2: *Karuna* – compassion; 3: *Mudita* - sympathetic joy; and 4: *Upekkha* – equanimity). With this *Dhamma*, one can eventually find peace and happiness with diligent practice and patience. To try and stop this anger, contemplate and say to yourself that all beings are born to share both suffering and happiness in this world together. Everyone wishes for happiness, and no one wants to suffer or be unsatisfied, so why be oppressive or angry towards others?

If one is still angry, consider another kind of Loving Kindness (*Metta*). Try and recollect the one that we first loved and with whom we were born to share suffering and pain (*Dukkha*) and happiness and joy (*Sukha*). Our mind is not angry with that person; on the contrary, we feel happy and joyful.

Now let us consider the person whom we neither love nor hate. This person was born to share the same world as us. Each one looks after themselves when living. Our mind is not angry with that person, instead, we feel neutral and happy.

Now let us spread Loving Kindness to the person who scolds, abuses, or oppresses us. That makes us very angry, and we lose all desire to see the face or hear the voice of that person again, not one single word. This is kind of vindictive feeling toward that person. Instead, let us realize that we both share suffering and happiness, so please don't abuse, scold, or oppress me. Live your own way and be happy, and may your life be long, rich, may you achieve high status in your position, and look after yourself with happiness. If, after giving thought of Loving Kindness to someone we are angry with, the anger does not disappear, we have to start again. We again give Loving Kindness to the person we love, then again to the person we neither love nor hate, and then again to the person we are still angry with. Do this contemplation over and over again, from the one we love to the one we hate until you feel in your heart that you have spread Loving kindness to all those people equally. Then we can say that you have let go of your anger. But if you practice like this, and give Loving Kindness to that person several times as outlined above and yet still have anger in your heart so that you feel sick and tired of it and can't let it go no matter how hard you try, then you should be called a fool, with no wisdom to improve yourself.

Let us think of another way to rid oneself of anger. Tell yourself you are not a bad person, so why can't you let go of this anger?

No one likes anger, for it is bad and causes the mind to be sad and unhappy. The angry person is likely to bring unhappiness and turmoil down on him or her self. Suppose we hold a grudge against someone for three to five years. How do you feel? We feel unhappy, anxious, and perturbed. We torture ourselves for all those years. Are we not a fool? The wise person never admires anger, it is bad and useless. One who is angry has their hearts full of grief and sorrow.

If you contemplate as just mentioned but are still angry, then let us consider a new method. When we hear someone speak sarcastically, why do we feel so annoyed? If someone says that we are a dog or pig or monkey, we become angry. Let us consider those unpleasant words. They said we are a dog or pig etc., but we are not, we are still human – we don't turn into those animals like they said. Indeed, if we believe them, are we not foolish? We have no wisdom, we are deluded. If we consider this way, and do not believe the content of those words anymore, then we will certainly not be angry with that person anymore. Instead, we will be happy and cheerful all the time. When we hear what other people say, we will let go and not be annoyed.

This is the *Dhamma* that we use for curing or extinguishing anger in our hearts. Then we can sit easily in meditation to develop calmness and peace.

3. *Moha-carita*. This is the temperament of a person who tends to misunderstand or be deluded, like living in a dark world. They know nothing about *Sankhara* (compound things) either inside or outside the body. They are easily led, to do either good or bad, because they lack wisdom. They never think to look for reasons why they should or should not act, and do not seem to have much knowledge. The way to teach such a person how to meditate is very important; if the teacher leads them the wrong way, the result will be tragic. This type of person is already misguided, and wrong teaching will lead them astray into complete darkness, so that they will never have a chance to find peace. The teacher must lead them to the right method of practice.

A person of the *Moha-carita* type is quite difficult to teach, because of their natural lack of understanding. The only way they will learn is to find a very intelligent teacher who is full of wisdom, has a strong, firm mind, and practices well themselves. The teacher must be respected by Buddhist monks, nuns, and lay people. When *Moha-carita* people sit to meditate, before settling down completely, they should ask the teacher to advise and explain the most suitable meditation subject (*Dhamma-Kammatthana*) for further practice, so as to attain the maximum final benefit. If they are lay Buddhists and cannot live with or near their teacher, they must visit their teacher frequently and listen to *Dhamma* talks.

They should also have conversations about the *Dhamma* whenever the opportunity arises, obtain their teacher's advice, and take it home to help their practice.

When we receive the right teaching and learn the right method from an experienced teacher, and follow his guidance, we will find peace and happiness after diligent practice. This is the way for *Moha-carita* people to follow.

4. *Vitakka-carita*. The character of those with the *Vitakka-carita* tendency is one of excessive thought during their practice. They never know for certain which *Dhamma-Kammatthana* they should use to develop their meditation. Such a person thinks and thinks, but are never be able to make any decision. This wastes much time – days and nights pass without any progress.

But, there is a way to cure this. One must try and make a decision about which *Dhamma-Kammatthana* to use, e.g. *Buddhanussati* (contemplation of the Buddha's virtue), *Dhammanussati* (contemplation of the *Dhamma's* virtue), *Sanghanussati* (contemplation of the *Sangha's* virtue), *Silanussati* (recollection of morality), *Caganussati* (recollection of liberality), or *Moranussati* (mindfulness of death), all with breathing in and out. Any of these methods, if they agreed with your character, would bring you to concentration. But choose only one of these subjects initially, do not use several. If, after practicing for several

months, your mind is still not settled and peaceful, you can choose another method and try again. Do this until you find the method that allows your meditation practice to progress. Then, use that one continually to develop your meditation practice. The main thing is to make up your mind – it is very important to cure this skeptical tendency.

5. *Saddha-carita* – the devout or trusting temperament. This is characteristic of the person who has faith as their temperament, and tends to easily believe the stories and rumors they hear. They believe anything, right or wrong, good or bad, true or false. These people find difficulty in meditating, because when they hear that any teacher is good, they immediately believe so. They believe without reason, without looking for cause and effect. You should observe yourself and find out whether you fall into this category – if so, you'd better correct yourself immediately.

You should believe in the Triple Gem – *Buddha*, *Dhamma*, and *Sangha*. Believe in your heart that the Buddha has compassion (*Karuna*) for all beings, and was patient and enduring in his search for the essence of Truth until he saw it clearly with his own wisdom. Then he brought his discovery to both religious and lay people, and taught the people to understand the *Dhamma* clearly so as to find peace within themselves. These are the noble qualities of the Buddha that we should bear in mind.

Now I shall talk about the noble qualities of the *Dhamma*, which is the teaching of the Buddha. The *Dhamma* is full of knowledge which is essential for people to follow and practice. If they follow the teachings, they will recover from defilement and disease which have been sitting like an evil ghost in their hearts for hundreds or millions of years, and they will be at peace. The supreme qualities of the *Dhamma* can lead those who follow and practice them to removal of suffering and dissatisfaction. This is the precious quality of the teaching of the Buddha. Let us set our minds to believe this.

Now, about *Sangha*. The Noble *Sangha* have existed since the Buddha's time. They listened to the *Dhamma* from the Buddha. They are the Blessed One's disciples who practiced well, straightforwardly, and methodically until they clearly saw the truth. They let go of all desire, and cut off all defilements – existence (*Bhava*), birth (*Jati*), and the Round of Rebirth (*Vattasamsara*) from their minds. They are free from all suffering and followed the Buddha. Those Noble *Sangha* remembered the *Dhamma* that they practiced, and taught people continuously until the present day. This is why we should consider those *Sangha*'s noble qualities as one of the Gems to respect in our minds.

Belief in the Triple Gem – the *Buddha*, *Dhamma*, and *Sangha* – for the above reasons will guide those with *Saddha-carita* to the right

way. It will prevent their going astray, misunderstanding, or following rumors or good luck charms outside the Buddhism. When we follow the right way, when we practice meditation, we shall find peace. So, firm belief in the Buddha, *Dhamma*, and *Sangha* is the *Dhamma-Kammattana* for those with *Saddha-carita*.

6. *Buddhi-carita*. People who have *Buddhi-carita* temperament are generally intelligent, moderately well educated, and have heard a lot. They are prepared to try any meditation position – standing, walking, sitting or lying down. But they don't really know how to do it, what to think about, which way to go, and how. How to practice, which *Dhamma* of the Buddha should they use in order to find happiness in this world and the next? Most wise people say that the next world, and the attainment of *Nibbana* are of supreme, incomparable happiness, and they would like to attain it. The *Buddhi-carita* always think along these lines, but they can't peace or happiness in themselves. They study worldly knowledge and the *Dhamma* also, and think that they know more than their masters, but cannot find any firm facts to base themselves on.

For these people there is a way to correct themselves. They have to change their thinking, to consider the *Dhamma* in a different way, and to consider the Three Characteristics (*Tilakkana*), which are the impermanence, state of suffering, and non-self of all



compound things (*Sankhara Dhamma*). This is the *Dhamma* method for those with *Buddhi-carita* to keep in mind when meditating or contemplating.

The beginning of consideration is to see all *Sankhara Dhamma* both inside and outside beings and non-beings. Anything that appears or arises will be subject to change, e.g. when we build a house or other building, a car, boat or airplane, all will become old, shabby, and worn out. And these are inanimate things. Now look at living beings, both ourselves and other animals. All of them change, are impermanent. We used to be young and small, and we longed to stay like that, but grew up – we cannot go back to being young, but instead grow old, deaf, wrinkled, with poor eyesight, missing teeth. Sitting down and standing up become painful, breathing becomes difficult and eventually slows, lightens and disappears, when presumably we die. It happens to everyone.

Next, we contemplate the suffering of all beings. When everything is impermanent, this causes change and the three feelings (*Vedana*) – pleasure, pain, or indifference. Suffering affects all beings.

Because the body has physical form, it and all its organs are subject to disease. We have eyes, and so we suffer eye disease. We have ears, and so we suffer ear disease. The nose suffers nose disease, the liver, liver disease, the kidney, kidney disease, the lungs, lung disease, the stomach, intestines, and so on. All the

organs in our body suffer all kinds of diseases. Because of this, we can say that compound things bring suffering. It can be hard to bear. But there are times when we feel happy, and sometimes we feel neither happiness nor suffering. So the wise person admits that compound things, including the body, can cause suffering. Let us observe and get to know and understand suffering.

Now, consider the impermanence of compound things (*Sankhara Dhamma*). All beings and non-beings go on in the same way, there is no difference between them. And because they are impermanent, they cause suffering. All beings, human and animal, wish to have a permanent body, feelings, perceptions, volitional mental activities, and consciousness (the Five Aggregates – *Rupa, Vedana, Sanna, Sankhara, and Vinnana*). But these Aggregates do not do as we wish, but change all the time as we age. We tell our body not to become sick, but it does, sometimes seriously, and then we treat it with medicine it sometimes gets no better. It's as if our body does not listen to us – especially when we tell it not to die. For these reasons, we can say that all things are non-self, or outside our control.

People with the *Buddhi-carita* propensity should consider the above to develop their meditation practice to achieve peace and happiness.

These six propensities occur in almost everyone born in this world. Some have mixed propensities: *Raga-carita* – beautiful subjects plus *Dosa-carita* – irritation and anger;

*Dosa-carita* – irritation and anger plus *Moha-caita* – delusion;

*Moha-carita* – delusion, plus *Saddha-carita* – gullibility and snap judgments;

*Saddha-carita* – gullibility and snap judgments plus *Vitakka-carita* – excessive thought or worry; and

*Vittaka-carita* – excessive thought and worry plus *Buddhi-carita* – curiosity and intelligence.

When we look at a number of people, the majority have *Moha-carita* – delusion, a deluded temperament. It makes people unsure of what kind of temperament they have, so that they cannot correct themselves. This is one of the problems that make it difficult for people to find peace during meditation.

Now, observe yourself so as to find your temperament, and then you will know which method you should use in order to obtain peace and calmness without delay during meditation. It is very important to understand our propensities before we meditate. Some *Dhamma* act as obstacles to our practice; they are like a thick cover over our eyes and prevent us from seeing and from finding peace of mind. These *Dhamma* cause worry, anxiety,

sadness, and depression – some people cannot even eat or sleep as they think about them more and more, and become exhausted and weary because of such obstacles. These obstacles are like a thick cloud covering the sun, moon, or stars, preventing them from giving out their bright light.

The Five Hindrances are all like this. They destroy peace, and prevent us from doing good deeds. The Hindrances pester the mind and prevent it from settling down meditation. So, let those of us who still cannot find peace for meditation learn about the Five Hindrances (*Nivarana Dhamma*), which are:

1. *Kamachanda Nivarana*

2. *Byapada Nivarana*

3. *Thinamiddha Nivarana*

4. *Uddhacca-Kukkucca Nivarana*

5. *Vicikiccha Nivarana*

1. *Kamachanda Nivarana* – sensual inclinations, attraction to sensual objects. This is the hard one to let go. Everyone wants love and happiness, both desire and sensuality (*Kilesakama*) and sensual objects (*Vatthukama*). These occupy them day and night, except during sleeping. But some even encounter *Nivarana Dhamma* during sleep by dreaming of desire

(*Kilesakama*) and objects (*Vatthukama*) which arise from outside.

Now I shall briefly explain the characteristics of *Kilesakama*. Those who are attached to it long for, and fall for the appeal of, form, sound, smells, tastes, and touch, especially those of the opposite sex. The mind is attracted to that sensual figure, and tries to find a way to fulfill its desire. The form of the opposite sex is a major hindrance to peaceful meditation, especially for those who are unmarried. But even some people who have a family are still not satisfied with their partner and long for further sensual gratification. This can be a problem. Then, those that do not have a happy family life may worry about their sons, daughters, grandchildren, etc. – for example, they worry about who their children will marry, or if their children are studying abroad, how well they are doing, are they good students, how do they live, etc. Parents' worries are never-ending, and make it very hard to meditate peacefully.

Now, I shall explain *Vatthukama*. These are objects such as our house or shop, and belongings such as jewelry, animals, lands, car, boat, etc. They are very useful in this world of living, we expend effort to acquire them, and then we worry in case we lose them, or that they age and wear out. These worries prevent

peaceful meditation, and that is why the Buddha included them in *Kamachanda* (sensual desire).

Now, I'll explain about the most important *Kamachanda Nivarana*, which is ourselves. These are diseases and illnesses, whether mild or serious. These very much occupy the mind and prevent meditation. Those who are very ill worry that they may die, others worry if they are going to recover. One should try to recover from disease or illness, or at least let them subside before trying to seriously meditate.

Some young people think that meditation is only for old people. They say they are too young, or when they feel unwell they say they are too sick to meditate. Some old people blame their old age and aches and pains and say they cannot meditate, they are just too old. Everyone finds all sorts of excuses. Some blame mosquitoes and worry about malaria, some say it is too hot, others that it is too cold, and yet others think it is too noisy. After sitting for a while, some feel aches and pains in the legs, back, waist, tummy, etc. They feel uncomfortable, unhappy, and confused, and want to stand up. It is hard to meditate peacefully when you feel like this. The Buddha listed *Kamachanda Nivarana* as number one among the hindrances. It is the one that is hardest to relinquish.

We can exemplify a person with *Kamachanda Nivarana* in their mind by the following thought experiment. Put a glass of clear and colorless water on the table in front of us. Now pour into it some yellow color, then red color, then green, then black. After they are mixed together we can't say what the color is – it is neither red, nor yellow, nor green, nor black. What color is it? It is muddy and cloudy color, and useless for painting anything. No one likes it and no one wants it. It is the same with sensual desire – when it occupies one's mind, it makes that mind completely dark and confused. One worries about sense-objects (*Sanna-Arammana*) of the kinds mentioned before, which prevent one doing good.

Even monks and novices don't understand the Five Hindrances. They became ordained, follow the code of conduct, undertake ascetic travel, live in forests away from villages, or in caves or empty houses, anywhere that is peaceful. But when they want to meditate to find peace, they cannot, because infatuation with the perception of sensual objects blocks their mind. They still look for worldly things to have and use and enjoy, without considering whether they are suitable for ordained people. Thus, hindrances arising from external objects can destroy the peace of monks, nuns, and novices. But there is also inner and deeper worry that is worse because it is destructive. So new monks and

novices who are just starting to develop their meditation have great difficulty. They have to start to understand the characteristics and power of *Kamachanda Nivarana*. This hindrance may occur in a person's mind, such as when sitting for a long time and concentrating on a meditation subject. Feelings (*Vedana*) arise, such as aching legs, back pain, or headache, or we feel itchy, or stuffy, or generally uncomfortable. The mind becomes distracted with these feeling, goes to the leg, back, head, and ends disturbed and in turmoil and thinking that the body will be destroyed or broken. With that thought, one gets up and leaves meditation. The symptoms are caused by *Kamachanda Nivarana* that occupy a person's mind.

This *Kamachanda Nivarana* is a very significant obstacle, but there is *Dhamma*-method we can use to let go of this hindrance. It is not beyond the ability of one who is patient and tries to correct oneself at every opportunity. It is a very important method. Now I shall explain it.

When we sit in meditation and concentrate on a meditation subject, our minds may think and attach itself to sensual defilements (*Kilesakama*) and sensual objects (*Vatthukama*), either with or without soul. Try to resist this, do not think about them, do not let them come into your mind. This is perception of objects of consciousness (*Sanna-Arammana*), the Tempter



(*Mara*) of defilement (*Kilesa-mara*) and Tempter of Kama-formation (*Sankhara-mara*). Leave them outside. If we let go of them we shall easily find peace. If we cannot let go of them, we shall be disturbed and confused as usual. Let us observe our minds. What is it that the mind attaches itself to? And, where is it? The thing that the mind attaches to is an object of consciousness (*Arammana*) of sensuality as defilement (*Kilesakama*) or a sensual object (*Vatthukama*). Sensual objects are such things as property, money, silver, gold, jewelry, etc. – also animals. They are all our belongings, with or without soul. Now think carefully – when we die, we have to part with all these. We cannot take anything with us when we die. So, why do we become attached to these things? If we answer this question with wisdom, we shall conclude that we have to give up ourselves and let go of all these valuable objects. Bring the mind back to the meditation subject that we are concentrating on, and our minds will find peace and calmness easily. This is one method to enable us to let go of outside objects. But suppose our minds are still attached to our body, or form. It is very common for all beings, including animals, to love and be concerned about their own bodies – they all feel the same.

There is a way to separate the mind from the body. The body is a corporeal, visible object (*Rupa-Dhamma*). Feelings (*Vedana*),

mental formulations and volitional activities (*Sankhara*), and consciousness (*Vinnana*) are mental factors (*Nama-Dhamma*). The body and mental factors are different, but occur together. We can liken the body to a building or house that we live in, and our mind to the person who lives inside the building. They live together every day and night.

So, if we ask how to separate the body from the mind, I can explain it like this. As I said, the body is like a house that we live in. At the beginning it is new and strong, but as the years pass, the sun and rain wear it down, the roof starts to leak, the foundations rot, the walls deteriorate, and the house grows old and shabby. We repair it, but eventually when strong winds blow it down or fire burns it, the old house cannot be repaired anymore. Those who lived in the house have to build another one with what they have available. And so our mind lives in our body as we live in our house. If our body becomes sick we go and see the doctor. If it becomes worse we have to stay in hospital, and if it becomes very serious and can't be cured no matter where we go, it becomes hopeless. Then the mind wants to leave the body and be born in a new existence or condition (*Bhava*). The body stops breathing, lies there and decays, and is buried or cremated.

Now that we understand this, when we sit in meditation and start to feel aches and pains, we should not think about them, but instead try and ignore them, pay no attention to them, leave them alone. If the mind wants to attach itself to that pain area, we must use our mindfulness, wisdom, and patience and not stand up before the time we have set for meditating is completed. We must be brave and not surrender to the feeling, no matter how painful. Just let it be. We must be firm and continue our progress in meditation until the time is up. Then we can get up and change our position.

We must be true and fight against mistakes, and then we can let go of feelings (*Vedana*). When we do this, the mind will concentrate on the meditation subject (*Dhamma-Kammattana*) that we are using. This will make the mind calm and peaceful, and enable it to concentrate easily. When we find the right *Dhamma*-method to correct our practice, we should try to remember it well. Then when next we meditate and our mind wanders off and attaches itself to something, we can use that *Dhamma*-method to overcome the problem and resume peaceful meditation. But successful meditation also depends on your ability. Be patient, keep trying, and don't be discouraged. If you are not heedless, have patience, and try and let go. You will succeed, as many have done before.

2. *Byapada Nivarana* – the ill-will hindrance. A person who has this character has a mind easily irritated, sad, moody, disturbed, and at times angry. Such a person is like a fire burning in a pile of rice husks. It is hard to tell if a pile of husks is burning or not, and to be sure one must poke the pile with a stick and dig into it before the red-hot fire and black smoke appear. One can unwittingly step on a pile of burning husks and burn the feet badly, so that one has to go to see a doctor and if it's bad enough, be treated at a hospital. Thus, a person troubled with the ill-will hindrance meditates without peace. Instead they feel bad-tempered, sad, annoyed, with a perturbed mind, and feels like hurting those whom he does not like. They think that if they could rid the world of their enemy, they would be happier. But this wicked thought destroys peaceful meditation. The ill-will hindrance prevents one from doing the good deed that one wishes to accomplish.

Even though this *Byabada Nivarana* is hard to give up, there is a *Dhamma*-method that can extinguish the fire in the heart. This is Loving Kindness as a Sublime State of Mind (*Metta-Brahmavihara* 4). One must develop loving kindness as patiently as one can.

Here is how to develop benevolence towards our enemies. If a person is angry with us, or curses us, or even wants to kill us,

we must not react in the same way. Instead, we must be intent on developing thoughts of benevolence and feelings of loving kindness and sorrow towards that person. Tell yourself that all living beings are born in the same world, we all love happiness and hate unhappiness. We are all afraid of death, so don't be angry with me or scold at me, and don't think of killing me. I am not angry or vindictive towards you; on the contrary, I love and feel sorry for you. When you succeed in what you are doing, gain rank and position, become rich and have all you wish for, I shall rejoice with you. I am happy because now I can let go of my anger and ill-will towards you. When our enemies are faced with calamity or destruction, we shall develop thoughts of loving kindness towards them instead of cursing them and wishing calamity upon them. We continue to develop benevolence in our mind, so that if someone is unfortunate enough to die, even though we tried to help, we should not feel despair, but be neutral. We do what we can, but if it does not turn out the way we want, we have to develop equanimity (*Upekkha*).

A person's mind that is occupied by *Byabada Nivarana* is like a pot of boiling water on a hot stove. The water boils vigorously, and there is no coolness or stillness in it until someone extinguishes the fire underneath, or removes the pot from the

fire. The mind of a person occupied by *Byabada Nivarana* is agitated, upset, perturbed, and without peace, like the boiling water in the pot. When we use Loving Kindness as a Sublime State of Mind (*Metta-Brahmavihara*), the angry person will be cured from their ill-will and hatred, and will recover from the suffering caused by their irritation, anger, and confusion. That person becomes, cool, calm, and happy, and finds it easy to sit and meditate. So, if ill-will arises when you are practicing, overcome it with this method each time, until it never occurs in your heart again. This is called Eradication by Cutting Off (*Samuccheda-Pahana*).

3. *Thinamiddha Nivarana Dhamma* (sloth and torpor). This hindrance prevents the mind from doing good. When it affects a person who is sitting in meditation, they become sleepy, drowsy, lethargic, unable to sit straight but lean to the left or right, and can't sit still. Their mind is weary and depressed. One so affected seriously tries to sit straight, but after not very long feels drowsy and sleepy again, discouraged, and wants to go to bed. It would be shameful to fall asleep in front of others meditating quietly, and so they try again and again to sit still and straight. But in the end they don't succeed, and eventually have to get up and go to bed. Even after sleeping for several hours they still can't get up and meditate as they promised

themselves. They always feel like this during sitting meditation, and so the Buddha mentioned that this obstacle prevents the mind from doing good. So, let us try to do Samadhi practice again by understanding the character of the *Thinamiddha* hindrance.

We can compare *Thinamiddha Nivarana* to water plants and duck weed that cover a pond of clear water, our mind. When someone walks past, they cannot see the clear clean water in the pond, and if they want a drink, they have to use a stick or their hand to part the weeds before they can see the clear water underneath. Then they can take some out with a vessel to drink or use for washing, as they wish. The weed and water plants return and cover the clear area again. The next person that comes will not be able to see the water. So, *Thinamiddha Nivarana* covers or occupies the mind and prevents it from achieving the good that one wishes to do.

There are several ways to overcome torpor and lethargy during meditation. First, be firm in your intention not to get up, no matter what, before the time you allot for meditation. Will your body fall apart? We shall see. Don't be afraid of anything, but be brave and aim for the happiness from meditation.

If you still feel drowsy and sleepy, and your heart is dull and weary, and no matter how you try and make yourself bright and

clear, the only solution is to change posture – stand up and do walking meditation instead, or go outside into the fresh air and look at the clear sky. Refresh yourself, then go back and try sitting meditation again.

Again, after sitting for a while you may feel sleepy, can't sit any longer but have to get up. This time, wash your face with water, and wipe your legs and arms with a wet towel until you feel nice, cool, and comfortable. Then go back and start sitting meditation again.

This time you must be more serious, patient, and brave. Prepare to fight to the end. Many people have described the calm, peace, and happiness that result from successful meditation. No other happiness compares. But if again sleepiness and lethargy set in, then you must rest, there is no alternative. The body needs rest, and to fight against this need is no use when you are truly tired and sleepy. So we must get up and go to bed. But before we sleep, we must make a firm commitment that as soon as we wake, we will continue our meditation. Make this commitment every time we prepare for sleep. When we are in bed, we should recite the word “Bud-dho, Bud-dho...” until we sleep. When we wake up, we should start with sitting meditation until it is time to do one's daily work.



If we are patient, we can correct ourselves. We can compare the *Thinamiddha Nivarana* to a clean freshwater pond with duck weed on top. The weed prevents people from seeing the clear water beneath. But the wise person knows there is clean water below, and uses sticks to part the weeds. The clean water appears, so then they can use a bucket to carry some of the clean water to drink or bathe as they wish. We can compare the pond to our body, and the weed to torpor and lethargy (*Thinamiddha*), and the nice clear water to our mind. Our minds are naturally good and clear, but become tainted by defilement such as torpor and lethargy. These cloud the mind and prevent it doing good.

When we let go of this hindrance, we find peace, like the person who parted the weed with a stick and found the clear water below.

Another reason that people tend to feel tired and sleepy during sitting meditation is the eating of fatty food and /or overeating. These make one feel uncomfortable and fat, and it's difficult to move about in the four postures. The way to overcome hindrance is to reduce the amount of food, and to eat less fatty food.

Try and observe why these hindrances arise when sitting in meditation, and when you know how to get rid of them, you will have a peaceful and calm mind during meditation.

4. *Uddhacca-Kukkucca Nivarana* – mental restlessness and anxiety. This is the hindrance experienced by a person whose mind does not stay with the subject of meditation, but lets its attention stream take hold of external objects. The mind naturally likes to think of good things, bad things, making merit, unwholesomeness, the past, the future, its thinking never stops. This is particularly so when one has trouble at work, or with one's family, or with people around you. Then the mind drifts away from meditation subjects that we intended to concentrate on. It is the nature of the mind to think – of getting or not getting, to do good, to do evil, and so on all day and much of the night. Whenever we think of our belongings, we keep on thinking about them, about our property, whether living or not living. We think of this one, then that one, with no end. Things are even worse for one who has a family - one must think how to find the means to look after the family, including children, grandchildren, servants, disciples. When you think too much, you may become moody and sensitive, and yearn to satisfy every bodily craving. Not only lay people, but also monks, nuns, and novices have to obey the rules of conduct. They are supposed to let go of the family, for if they are not careful they will become involved with business or get too close to their disciples, so that they will have no time to rest and have their

own peaceful time. This will lead to mental restlessness and anxiety during meditation.

Those experienced in meditation can let go when this hindrance arises, but lay people find it more difficult. They seem to want everything, and after making an effort to obtain their belongings, they worry about how to protect them from being taken away – both non-living and living things. People want to have a family – husband, wife, and children. After he has married, a man worries that his wife may like someone else, and the wife is also afraid that her husband may have an affair with another woman, and will desert her. When her husband is ill, she worries that he may not recover, may even die, and she would be left alone. Likewise, a married man fears that his wife may have an affair with another man, or that she may sicken and die, and he is afraid to be parted from her. He worries that, even though his children are good now, will they be food in the future? If they turn out bad, how will he solve the problem? If they fall ill, he worries that they may not live, and he would be parted from them. These thoughts can fill some men's minds. If he has many possessions, such as a house, farm animals, jewelry, and money, he worries that they may be stolen, making him poor. He doesn't know where to put them. All these worries make

him restless, annoyed, and irritated, and prevent his mind from obtaining goodness.

A person with worries like these can be compared to a container filled with water and left out in the open. The breeze ruffles the surface of the water, and when someone tries to look through the water to see into the depths, the ripples block their vision. The water is the mind of a person, and the wind is the *Uddhacca-Kukkucca* hindrance that prevents the mind's wisdom from being accessible.

Now I'll explain how to overcome the *Uddhacca-Kukkucca* hindrances. Before we sit down to meditate, we should check if anything needs to be done, and do it. Most people, however, are busy all the time, their work never ends, so they just have to set aside time for sitting in a quiet place and concentrating on meditation subject. If our mind goes out and takes hold of external objects, becomes restless and anxious, ask ourselves why our mind is attached to those objects, and what do we gain when we think about them? Will we become rich, or happy – or unhappy? If the answer is that the mind becomes unhappy, anxious, and restless, ask ourselves again why we think these things? When the mind receives repeated questions until it cannot answer them, it calms down and surrenders to reason.

Then it will return to the meditation subject that we were trying to concentrate on before. This is a mind-technique.

For those people who have difficulty in meditating, after they sit down they should recite the word “Bud-dho”, “Bud-dho”. But the word “Bud-dho” may disappear from their concentration, because the mind runs away, perhaps goes around the world. Then they are helpless, lack awareness, they let the mind travel to another world, attach itself to external objects. They do not know how to concentrate on meditation. They sit there soaked with sweat, but the mind is unclear and sad, and they cannot find peace.

Some people know that their minds are anxious, and are annoyed that they cannot find peace, but they don't know why their minds become attached to outside objects. As soon as they let go of one object, their mind attaches to another. It seems hopeless. However, if they try to understand what they are thinking of, i.e., that the mind wants to be calm and peaceful, then, when it goes out and attaches itself to an outside object, they realize that the mind has become involved with those compound objects (*Sankhara Dhamma*), and this causes anxiety and confusion. When they realize that, they'll try to use awareness and wisdom to pull back or draw the mind from those compound objects, both from the past and the future. It does

not matter what they are, whether beings, such as your spouse, children, or grandchildren, or non-beings, such as business, travel, study, work or your possessions, when meditating you should leave all those things behind, and not let them bother your concentration. You can think about them after meditating, if you wish.

When you are able to separate your mind from those objects, then concentrate on the meditation subject. The mind will be peaceful and calm. But, after you have been meditating for a while, the mind will renew its wanderings, become restless and anxious and out of your control. Your mind is playing up. When we realize this has happened, we must use wisdom and awareness to observe and study the mind. What is it that the mind is involved with? If the mind is attached to our house, ask the mind, does that house really belong to me, or to somebody else? The mind will answer at once for sure, it is mine. Now ask again, if that house burns down, what will be left for me? If I die, can I take the house with me, or do I have to leave it behind for others to live in? After the mind gets asked so many questions, it eventually won't be able to find an answer, and will surrender to your wisdom and awareness. And these will tie the mind to the object of meditation with more control this time,

until the mind settles down peacefully and concentrates on meditating.

In summary, the mind that is occupied by *Uddhacca-Kukkucca* hindrances cannot accomplish goodness. So we have to use the methods described above to let go of these hindrances. Whatever trick that works, we should remember it and use it again when the need arises. This will minimize delay in achieving peace and stability of mind during your practice.

5. *Vicikiccha Nivarana* – uncertainty, indecision, lack of conviction. When this hindrance occupies someone's mind, their mind has doubts, is unsure of what to do or what it wants, and they cannot “make up their mind”. We are afraid to do something wrong, and live in fear and suffering. When meditating with a friend or teacher, they are sometimes willing to meditate, but at other times they are afraid, for there is a rumor that now and then surfaces that some people who meditate become insane. The more they think, the more they feel afraid, and don't know what to do. They listen to their teacher explain and advise how to practice, but dare not do as the teacher says, because they are afraid, and cannot make up their mind.

Some people are reluctant to impose themselves on others in case they hurt the others' feelings, or cause trouble, or get

blamed for what they say or do. Sometimes after they have talked to their parents, teachers, or friends, they remember and think about it – the words they said, the place, the day, with that person – did I say the right words or not? They think about it constantly, did I say something wrong? They feel bad, unhappy, irritated, and distressed. They are most unsettled when sitting and trying to meditate with this hindrance occupying the mind.

We can compare the *Vicikiccha Nivarana* hindrance to a person who wants to go to a certain place. Lots of people talk about it, it is a large and beautiful park with green trees, ponds full of clear and clean water suitable for drinking and bathing, especially when one is hot. It is so pleasant to stand, sit, walk, or lie down there, it is very comfortable. People who go there feel very happy, and their sadness disappears. Those who hear about the park long to go there. There are several gates by which to enter the park, and those who have not been there, but would like to go and visit the park, hear on the way that when they arrive they should enter by the north or east gate. But while traveling on the way, they meet another passer-by, and, asking again which gate they should use, are told they should use the west or south gate. Now they become confused, and when they arrive at the park they walk round and round past all the gates, unable to make up their mind, until they are so tired



they sit down for a rest. They still cannot make up their mind which gate to enter by, they are afraid to choose the wrong gate, and even when they decide on a gate, they worry about which gate to exit by. They simply cannot decide, and eventually stand up and go home without seeing the park that they wanted so much to see. Thus, a person hindered by *Vicikiccha Nivarana* seeks out experienced teachers and learns all the *Dhamma* teachings that would guide them during meditation, but cannot decide which advice to use, and so they miss what they should gain from meditation.

Another comparison for the *Vicikiccha Nivarana* hindrance is a fog covering a forest, mountain, or any beautiful place that people talk about with admiration, but when they go to see such a place, their sight is obscured by the fog, and they are disappointed. People occupied by this hindrance are always in doubt, unclear, and lacking in conviction. *Dhamma* teaching is no use to them, because they can't decide how to use it – so they gain no peace from meditation.

There is a way to let go of *Vicikiccha Nivarana* hindrance. After you visit an experienced teacher and have learnt how to practice, try to remember what you learned, and put it into practice. Do not hesitate or feel uncertain about the meditation object you are using, whether it is saying “Bud-dho” with your

breathing in and breathing out, or using Dying as your meditation object, or reciting “Buddho – Dhammo – Sangkho” or using the Recollection of Morality (*Silanussati*) as your meditation object. Whichever one you use, it will create mindfulness to suit your temperament. Try and do so much as you can. Success will come from constant, earnest practice, with the degree of accomplishment depending on your ability and wisdom.

There are forty mental exercises or objects of meditation (*Kammatthana*) that one can choose to match your *Kammatthana*, try and practice whenever the occasion allows, without delay, discouragement, doubt, or fear. If you succumb to these, you will gain no result from your practice. Keep practicing diligently, and you will achieve the result yourself, and you will be calm, peaceful, and happy. One who has not experienced these cannot know. Although we may ask those who are experienced at practicing and achieve good results, we can never understand their explanation. We have to do it and experience the results ourselves. We can compare it to cooking and eating a meal. We follow a good recipe with correct amounts of ingredients, and after the cooking is finished, we put that well prepared and delicious food on a plate and eat it until

we are satisfied. The one who does not cook has no chance to eat, and will not be satisfied.

So, I have explained the six temperaments (*Carita*) and five hindrances (*Nivarana Dhamma*) to guide you to consider and choose the suitable one to suit your individual character during practice.

After you have read what I have explained about temperament and propensities (*Carita*), you can observe yourself and know your own temperament, e.g. Desire and longing (*Raga-carita*) or irritation and anger (*Dosa-carita*). Then you can correct yourself as I explained above, and try and let go of those *Carita* before sitting in meditation.

The other group which is as important as the temperaments or propensities are the Five Hindrances (*Nivarana Dhamma*). They are significant obstacles that interfere with or block our goal of doing good as we would like. The *Nivarana Dhamma* can be compared to a high brick wall coated with cement, very solid and strong and forming barrier that occupies the mind and prevents it from succeeding in meditation. If you can understand them when they arise during meditation, you can find a suitable *Dhamma* to counter them, until you can let go of these hindrances. The more you practice with patience, the

more skill you will gain. Finally, you can let go of obstructions very easily, and so gain more peace during meditation.

So, to attain peace of mind during meditation, you must consider, observe, and study the Six Propensities and Five Hindrances, until you understand them.

# A Method for Starting a Sitting Meditation

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Let us try to find peace within our minds.

Starting a sitting meditation is not easy. The happiness of peace meditation is a kind of profound happy feeling, that everyone seeks. It is very hard to obtain, except for clever people who have wisdom. It is hard for those without wisdom, or who are occupied by delusion. But with diligent and patient practice, you can develop concentration that brings the happiness of peace. This is why Buddhists try to find that happiness day in and day out. They travel in every direction and in every country looking for happiness and trying to demolish sadness and unsatisfactoriness.

Some people come back with nothing. They never say that when I went to such-and-such a city, I felt happy, and all my sadness disappeared. They say on that some cities are all right, whereas others are miserable and uncomfortable, too cold or too hot, and wearisome. We say that they gain no benefit from traveling, but see more places than those who cannot travel. The wiser ones find some happiness during traveling, but they are not many.

It is difficult to find happiness without wisdom. We cannot see the truth easily. People look for happiness at others' expense, but that

creates trouble for themselves and for others. It is a waste of time looking for happiness this way, it is the wrong path. The more that unwise people search in the wrong way, the more trouble they will find.

Suppose there is a group of people who gather together to travel to a distant place. No one in the group knows the way. They set out, travel for some distance, and arrive at a deep forest which has several tracks heading in different directions in front of them, and with no food or drink along the way. They have to decide which track to take. They ask each other if anyone knows which track is the right one, but no one does. So they decide to select a leader, and choose a track to continue their journey. They walk all day, but still do not reach their destination. By now they are very tired, and sit down to rest. They realize that they can go no further, so they decide to return along the track to where the various tracks meet. The leader asks if he can resign and walk behind the group. So another one has to decide which way to go. No one knows for sure if it is the right track or not. They keep going until they are exhausted. All the food and drink that they brought with them has been consumed. They have no strength left, and decide to rest. Some of them fall asleep. There are dangerous animals in the forest – elephants, tigers, and leopards – and some of them come and attack the group. Some are killed, others are hurt, and some escape

and flee back to their homes. So you see, this is the result of not knowing the way. One ends up going the wrong way, suffering, being exposed to danger and even death. No one reaches the place where they wanted to go.

The Buddha used to say that ‘The person who has no wisdom, who has the Wrong View (*Micchaditthi*) behaves in the wrong way. Whenever they do this they oppress themselves and others and bring unhappiness and tress to themselves and others. When a person with wrong views realizes this, they should improve themselves to become a Right View person (*Sammaditthi*). They should practice according to the teaching of the Buddha, and then whatever they do with body, words, or mind, that will bring happiness and success.

Now, I’ll lead you in meditation. There are two methods:

1. ‘Concentration (*Samadhi*) develops Wisdom (*Panna*)’, and
2. ‘Wisdom develops Concentration’

The techniques for developing tranquility from meditation by the two methods are a little different. If you use one method and patiently practice for a while, say one month to one year, but gain no calm or peace at all, not even once, then try the other method. Whichever method you use, you must do with firm belief and strong intent, patience, and courage. The true result comes from

earnest practice. The degree of tranquility achieved depends on the individual's wisdom. If you want something whether it be a worldly thing or understanding of the *Dhamma*, you have to work for it.

When you start meditation, leave all your work and worries behind. It is normal to work for a living, and everyone is always busy, sometimes worried, and always pressed for time to rest and find peace. But you should be able to find time to meditate occasionally. It can be during the day or night; do not choose a particular time because *Dhamma* is timeless (*Akaliko*). Whoever practices in the right way will find tranquility and peace.

Now, when busy people get ready for meditation, they should try to finish those things which have to be done immediately, then look around to make sure there is no more urgent thing to do, so that you have nothing to worry about. Then go to your meditation room, it can be your normal bedroom or a room where you keep Buddha images. Sit down, then bow three times with humility and respect. During the first bow, think about the qualities of the Buddha, his purity, wisdom, and loving kindness to all beings. During the second bow, think about the *Dhamma*, the teaching of the Buddha that leads people to freedom from suffering. During the third bow, think about the Noble *Sangha*, the disciples of the Buddha who practise the Buddha's teaching and are already free



from suffering. After paying respect to the Triple Gem (*Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha*), do a brief morning or evening chanting if the place is suitable, i.e., home or temple.

Now, prepare for sitting meditation as laid down by the Noble Teachers, i.e., sit cross-legged on a cushion, or if this is not possible, sit with both legs to one side. Use whichever posture that enables you to sit for a lengthy time comfortably. But if you can, sit cross-legged, for it is a well-balanced position.

Next, put the right leg on top of the left leg, and place your hands on your lap, right on top of left, and keep your back straight. If your clothes are too tight, loosen them so that you are comfortable. If you don't like to sit cross-legged, sit in any position that you find comfortable, but the right hand must be on top of the left – that is the proper posture to control the mind.

After sitting straight for a while with your mind firm and attentive, you can move around to relieve the feelings of weariness, but when you decide to meditate in earnest, you should return to the correct posture. Close your eyes. Breathe naturally, relax, and set your mind firmly on the task before you, i.e., tranquility meditation. Let go of the past, future, business, worries about your belongings such as money, gold, silver, rings, diamonds, gems, your farm or your car; your spouse, children, grandchildren; impending births or deaths; the chaos of international relations; traveling or study. Let

go of everything, and take care not to think about them. This applies to ordained people also; monks should let go of everything, and not think about work that has to be done, or *Dhamma* teaching for themselves or others. Let go of thoughts of the past and future, and strengthen and control the mind not to go out of your body.

Now, let us choose the subject for meditation (*Dhamma-Kammatthana*). This is very important. The subject must be in harmony with your temperament or propensity (*Carita*). This can be difficult if you do not know this. Not only lay people have this problem, but also monks and novices. Many people search for peace and happiness. Some go into a forest, or cave, or other solitary place. Indeed, some places are dangerous, where people can be hurt or killed by wild animals. But this does not stop them from seeking calm and peace to extinguish the turmoil in their hearts. The Buddha and other sages praised lonely places, as these are where people most easily develop peace of mind during meditation, for they are least mingled with worldly chaos. Some may prefer one type of meditation place, others another – it depends on the individual's habits and preferences. There is *Dhamma* everywhere, and wise and intelligent people can easily find a suitable place. Those without wisdom find it harder.

Some people practice meditation every day for years, but still cannot find peace. Why is that? One reason is that they do not use

the right meditation subject, the one that suits their propensities. And so they waste their time. Most sages and wise people who achieve a good result from meditation use a subject that agrees with their propensity, or temperament.

Now that we are sitting in the right posture, think of the in-and-out breath at the tip of the nose. Silently repeat the word ‘*Bud-*’ as you breathe in, and ‘*dho*’ as you breathe out. Let your breathing be natural. Keep your mind perfectly still, and focus on the breath as it comes in and goes out of the nostrils. Be mindful, and know every moment. We call this ‘Practising Mindfulness of Breathing as a Meditation Subject’ (*Anapanasati kammattana*).

When the mind is with the in- and out-breath and coordinated with the word ‘*Bud-dho*’, do not let the mind follow the breath while it travels down to the chest or abdomen. Center your mind on the breathing in-and-out at the tip of the nostrils, for this is a short cut to making the mind peaceful and concentrated. When the mind loses focus on the breath at the tip of the nostrils, you will know, and so try to bring your attention back to the breath. Be constantly and fully aware. Don’t let your attention wander. Let the breath be relaxed and natural. Do not hypnotise yourself, and do not force your breath for you may get a headache or fever, or break out in a sweat – this can be very uncomfortable, and forces you to stop meditating.

While sitting in meditation, do not wish for a vision, and do not force yourself to find peace quickly. Those who wish for these never achieve them. So try and remember not to do them. The right way, which the Buddha pointed out was the way we should use, is called the middle path. It is not too tight and not too slack. The middle path is the right path to make the mind peaceful in meditation. So, remember this.

Continue to pay attention to the breath. Focus your mind on the breath at the tip of the nostrils. Is the breathing in strong, or the breathing out strong? Is the breathing in short, or the breathing out short? Take note, be aware whether the breathing in is long, or whether the breathing out is long. Then pay attention to the mind, to see if it is still focused on the breath. Continue observing carefully, and the breathing will become lighter. Maintain the mind on the breath, and silently recite the word '*Bud-dho*' as before.

At this point, some people who are not used to sitting for very long may feel aches and pains in the legs, arms, or back. Then the mind tends to go to where the pain is, instead of staying with the meditation subject, i.e., the breath at the tip of the nostrils. We must try and pull the mind back from feeling the pain, not let it stay there. Try and let go of the feeling. Just note it. Do this by focusing your mind back on to the meditation subject, as before. But if the more we try, the more we feel the pain, we have to be

firm with our mind, and not be discouraged because of the pain. Be brave and strong, and continue with the practice, even if your legs feel as if they were being torn apart. Your intention is stronger than the pain. Do not worry that the painful feeling will destroy your whole body. If we have strong determination and earnest will-power to practise, your mind will let go of the feeling of pain (*Vedana*). We must be firm, brave, and honest, and then our minds will be at peace in meditation. When most people feel the pain arise during meditation practice, their mind becomes weak and discouraged. They cannot bear the pain, and some fear that they may die. So they cannot withdraw the mind from that painful feeling. Their minds will not find peace and tranquility.

Many people do not find peace during meditation because they do not practise honestly. If they are serious in doing the practice, they will achieve a result according to their ability. The mind will let go of the feeling of pain, and concentrate on the subject of meditation, as before.

When the mind continues with the breathing in-and-out at the tip of the nose, let us observe it. The breath becomes finer and lighter than before. Make a mental note if the breathing is short or long, and how light it is. Try constantly to control your mind to stay with the breathing, don't let it wander away. Now you can let go of the word '*Bud-dho*'. Your breathing will become even lighter and finer.

Maintain your mind to stay with the breath. The breathing will become finer, and your body will feel very light. Pain will subside. All these happen because of profound breathing.

At this stage, some people experience rapture (*Piti*) in various forms. Some feel their hair stand on end, or tears start to flow. Some feel as if a light wind were blowing through their body, or a feeling of satisfaction appears for a moment in the heart, or feel that their body is very light, as if floating. Later, this rapture disappears and pleasure (*Sukha*) arises. These phenomena, which you will never have experienced before, occur as a result of the peace that we gain by practice.

Let us check if the mind is still managing to maintain its focus on the breath. If you know that your mind has focused exclusively on things connected with the breath for fifteen to twenty five minutes, then if you wish, you can withdraw from the concentration. We call meditation that has reached this stage, Momentary Concentration (*Kanika-Samadhi*).

Don't stay at this stage, but continue to develop your meditation. Be patient. Maintain your mind to stay with the breathing in and out as it becomes very fine and comfortable. Make a note, or just know, if the breathing is fine, and short or long. When the breath is very fine and profound, it seems to disappear. In fact it is still there, but it spreads and coordinates with other breathing sensation in the

body. Our body appears very light, and feelings of pain grow calm. Peace of mind arises, rapture becomes stronger but then disappears. Pleasure (*Sukha*) arises immediately, and the mind stays with that.

After the breath becomes so fine that it seems to disappear from the nose, the body lightens and there is no feeling of pain. Some practitioners fear at this stage that they may die, for they can't feel themselves breathing. They withdraw from concentration, and their mind wanders outside to perception (*Sanna*). So they have to start developing meditation from the beginning again. Then if you fear of dying happens again, you have to go back and start yet again. Then if your fear of dying happens again, you have to go back and start yet again. This delays your meditation development. Practitioners should try and understand and not be afraid, but brave and patient instead.

Next, let our minds focus on the pleasure (*Sukha*), and the lightness will become one with the mind. This fills the body with pleasure and happiness. We shall continue to develop meditation for further peace and happiness yet to come.

At this time, the mind is staying with pleasure and lightness. Be mindful, and keep the mind with those sense-objects (*Arammana*). When the mind stops wandering outside, it settles down into deep concentration. At this stage some people have a vision of white light appearing, some see it as neon light, some see what appears to

be the light from a torch passing in front of their face, and some see a bright light with no source. It appears, disappears, reappears again. Why is this? It is because our mind is still not stable in its concentration.

Now, let us continue to focus the mind on the lightness and pleasure. Focus your mind in your chest. The more you concentrate, the brighter will be the vision of light, like the light from the moon or sun. Some people see a vision of soft white light radiating from the body as far as one kilometer away. Maintain your mind to stay in this white light, and you may see pictures or signs (*Nimit*) appear. They are different for each person, but they are all simply mental images. Here are some examples of these images. Some people see a picture of themselves already dead, decaying, and being carried towards himself. Some see themselves sitting and visibly decaying, leaving only a pile of bones. Some see themselves sitting in front of themselves. Some see their teacher sitting in front of them, teaching the *Dhamma*. Some see the figure of a skeleton walking toward them, or a ghost with harmful intent. Some see a skeleton floating in the air. Some see a car or boat approaching as if to hit them. Some see themselves in the air, or falling into a chasm. Some see someone else approaching them. These images appear and disappear one after the other as if we were watching a movie. All of them are merely mental images.



Let me give you a word of encouragement about these images. If they appear while you are sitting in meditation, such as a ghost or skeleton or someone who is already dead, do not be afraid. Make your mind brave and strong. If you fear these images, your mind will withdraw from concentration, and will not want to meditate again. So, don't be afraid, the images are one of the *Dhamma*. Later, when the mind is really calm and still, we shall use them for consideration, and wisdom will appear from observing these images.

Many other images appear to people while meditating. Some see themselves growing bigger and bigger, until they fill the room that they are sitting in. If they withdraw their mind from meditation to see how big they have become, then their concentration is disturbed and they have to start from the beginning again. This can take a long time and maybe many times before they can find calm and peace. This wastes much time in developing meditation. We must correct and improve ourselves – if we see ourselves larger, it is just a perception (*Sanna*) which is not real. It is a delusion which deceives us, so just let it go. The image will disappear, and our mind will deepen its concentration.

Now, a word of warning. If you let your mind stay in the condition where you see images (*Nimitta*), some of them appear to foretell future events. You may see *Nimitta* of someone who in your mind

is coming to visit you, and that person really does come to visit you a little later. You even see a lottery number, which turns out to win the prize in real life. You should not play with these images, nor become attached or hooked on them, because they are impermanent. Wise ones tell us not worry about or become attached to mental images. If you do, you may become misrepresented as one who has special powers, or who can see with inner eyes. Those who are deluded with *Nimitta* can be retarded in developing their concentration for five to ten years. So, the *Dhamma* practitioner should eventually let go of these *Nimitta*, and developing their concentration until it is firm, strong, and wise. Later, you can carefully consider those *Nimitta*. If you have your wits about you, put the images to work for you. But be worried, at this stage you have not developed strong enough wisdom to play with these images – it could lead you to mistaken assumptions.

Now, when our minds have ceased their concern with *Nimitta*, try and maintain your mind to stay calm and peaceful, with lightness and refined happiness. The longer your mind keeps still, the more the white light that appears will recede to a greater distance, and instead of appearing to emanate from a point source, it will appear as an even white light around you. This will enable you to see images clearly. Pleasure (*Piti*) will become stronger and make you feel excited, for you won't have experienced this before. Those

that meditate to this stage will find finer pleasure than before (*Sukha*). Try and keep your mind perfectly still and focused on the lightness, fine pleasure, and bright light. This will enable you to see *Nimitta* very clearly.

All these phenomena arise only after peaceful meditation. If you can stay in this peaceful stage for forty-five minutes to an hour, it is likely that your mind will reach threshold concentration level (*Upacara-samadhi*). If we practice further and with patience, we can gain a more subtle peace.

The next stage in development of practice is to let go of the images (*Nimitta*). If your mind is still attached to them, and cannot let go, we must use mindfulness to pull our minds back and focus on the lightness and refined pleasure (*Sukha*) again. If your mind remains stubbornly attached to the *Nimitta*, we have to use knowledge and mindfulness to consider that they are inconstant (*Aniccam*) and soon change and deteriorate. We may wish them to stay constant, but it cannot be, and we shall experience disappointment, suffering, and stress (*Dukkham*). The images are nothing in themselves, nor yourself nor anyone's self, they are empty and void (*Anatta*). When we consider this thoroughly and truly know it, the mind will disengage, let go of the *Nimitta*, and focus on the lightness and refined pleasure, as it did previously.

But suppose, after we do all the above, our minds still cannot let go of the *Nimitta* images. Then we have to find another method, which is, simply to pay no attention to the images. Focus on the lightness and refined pleasure (*Sukha*) only. Compare yourself to a person standing at a noisy cross-roads where lots of people pass by. We see and hear them, but do not concern ourselves with them, we just let them go.

When we let go of the *Nimitta* this way, try and observe your mind and what it is holding on to and just know it (like taking a note). When our minds focus on the lightness and refined pleasure, just know it. The mind will let go of both images and exterior noise, will focus on the same preoccupations as before, but more subtly, and just know it. This will give rise to more intense rapture and a greater sense of pleasure.

When your mind is still and peaceful, you can barely hear external sounds, but instead you are able to hear far distant sounds, such as people talking about you, or your teacher teaching *Dhamma* to you. He may tell you several *Dhammas* in Pali language, and you'll remember them clearly. Or, you may have been studying the *Dhamma*, or trying to recite some of the Chanting, and suddenly you'll be able to do it very easily and without mistakes. You can suddenly translate Pali *Dhamma* or Chanting. You feel very skillful, and know all the *Dhamma*. You believe that you know the

teaching of the Buddha, and that no one knows as much as you do. When these ideas arise, your mind will withdraw from the concentration that you are developing. When someone comes to see you, you are keen to give them a *Dhamma* talk, and you keep on like this until people become annoyed and don't want to listen to you anymore. When this happens, you start going to them to give them a *Dhamma* talk, without thinking whether the time, place, or person is suitable or not. Then people become upset and angry and do not want to see you or hear from you – they may want to chase you away, or they go away from you themselves. Be warned, when you practise at this level, wrong belief can arise.

So, when you start to hear inner voices, or can suddenly translate *Dhamma* from the Pali, be watchful and tell yourself that you are not enlightened yet, for you have still not overcome suffering (*Dukka*). If you are not careful, you can go astray. If this happens, it will retard the development of your practice, so that you'll have to start again from the very beginning. You will have wasted your time.

When you have practiced to this stage and not gone astray, the next step is to keep your mind still, and focus on the lightness and refined pleasure (*Sukha*). Let go of noise both inside and outside, whether pleasant or irritating. After you let go of all sound, the mind will be deep, intense, cool, calm, and peaceful. It will

become neutral, still, and in a state of equanimity (*Upekkha*). The feeling of refined pleasure is much better defined, the body seems to disappear, and the feeling of pain vanishes. Only the mind stays on the emptiness and happiness just in front of you. The mind has separated from the body, and they can do this because they are different things.

How can we say that we can separate the mind from the body? Suppose we sit here but think of somewhere else, then we know immediately that our mind is not here with our body. Consider also that when we die our mind or soul leaves our body to be born in another state of existence (*Bhava*). So we clearly see that body and mind are separate.

When you meditate to this stage, the stage of empty mind and happiness, the mind is deep, cool, calm, and at peace. You can go on sitting in this state for days, or as long as you like. You feel neither weak nor tired, nor hot nor cold, nor hungry nor thirsty. You don't want to think, and you don't want anything. You feel a great sense of happiness and well-being, and you like this for it is empty and without turmoil and noise. It is devoid of pain, it is a place where you can find refuge from pain if it occurs in your body. What shall we call this empty, happy, delicate, noiseless, solid, stable state of mind? Can it be *Bhavanga Citta* (the passive state of mind, or state of functional subconsciousness)? Is it *Bhava Citta*

(the process of becoming)? Is it *Jhana* (meditative absorption in a single notion or sensation)? Or is it *Appanasamadhi* (fixed concentration)? You can call it any of these.

At this stage, if the mind is still and stable like this, there is no further development. The mind is neutral and still, and does not want to think or observe. Then, discernment cannot arise, nor wisdom appear. We mistakenly believe that we have already attained enlightenment, know all the Buddha's *Dhamma*, and have already overcome suffering and stress (*Dukkha*). This belief will lead us astray, where we will be stuck and unable to progress further, sometimes for a year or more. People feel happy in this condition, as though without defilement. They stop thinking, considering, and observing, and so no wisdom or knowledge arises. We can call it delusion or ignorance concentration (*Moha-samadhi*). But to overcome suffering, we have to consider truth and create clear understanding. Up to this stage, our meditation practice has only brought your mind to calm and peaceful tranquility. We have not considered the *Dhamma*, and so we shall do that next.

Insight or development (*Vipassana Kammattana*) gives rise to knowledge and insight via the mind. Practise meditation from the beginning until our mind is firm and stable in peace and happiness unaware of noise inside or out. Now carefully or mindfully

withdraw the mind to the stage of threshold concentration (*Upacara-samadhi*), i.e., the stage with bright light and clear images (*Nimitta*). Now try and control the mind to stay here.

Now we refer to matter or form (*Rupa Dhamma*) and mental factors (*Nama Dhamma*), i.e., physical and mental phenomena as expressed in terms of the Five Aggregates or elements of existence<sup>1</sup>. The body and mind are the origin of these Aggregates. Why do we use our bodies for consideration or observation? Because the body is the cause of all goodness – when we do a good deed, we use the body to do it. The body is our world. When we offer *dana*, or give charity with material things, we use the body to do it. When we want to develop concentration so as to acquire knowledge and wisdom and so overcome suffering, we use the body. The body is the base where we plant all wholesomeness, and so it is indispensable. For this reason, use your body in the right way to bring yourself happiness. The Buddha pointed out ways to use our body for good for oneself and for others. At the very least, it can be a refuge for ourselves.

Let us not waste the time we spend as a human, and even more so if we are lucky enough to find Buddhism. This teaches us to

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<sup>1</sup> Five Aggregates – visible form or corporeality (*Rupa*); Feelings of pleasure, pain, or indifference (*Vedana*); names allusions, or perceptions (*Sanna*); causes, processes, and results (such as our body) of mental formulations and conditioning (*Sankhara*); and cognizance, consciousness, or awareness (*Vinnana*).



understand cause and the effect, that when one does good, one will receive good in return, and that when one does evil, one will receive evil in return. Sin earns misery, goodness earns wholesomeness and happiness. When one realizes all these, one should not hesitate to do the right thing.

Now let us consider the Foundation of Mindfulness, or Four Frames of Reference (*Satipatthana*):

1. Contemplation of the Body, or Mindfulness of the Body as a Frame of Reference (*Kayanupassana Satipatthana*);
2. Contemplation or Mindfulness of Feelings as a Frame of Reference (*Vedananupassana Satipatthana*);
3. Contemplation of Mind, or Mindfulness of Thoughts as a Frame of Reference (*Cittanupassana Satipatthana*);
4. Contemplation of Mind-Objects, or Mindfulness of Mental Phenomena or Ideas as a Frame of Reference (*Dhammanupassana Satipatthana*).

First, I explain Contemplation of the Body, or Mindfulness of the Body as a Frame of Reference. When our mind is at peace, at the stage when the white light has arisen, we focus on and contemplate the figure of the body, which, by common convention we call ‘animal’, or a ‘person’, or ‘I’, ‘we’, ‘he’, ‘she’, or ‘it’. These are

just the names we use to recognize them. Let us consider also the four elements making up the body, i.e., earth, water, fire, and wind.

Now, when people who are unstable in their concentration start to investigate the body, their mind withdraws from concentration and wanders to the external sense-object. Their mind can neither focus on nor contemplate the body, and feels restless, annoyed, and irritated. If this happens to you, you have to go back and develop meditation from the very beginning again, until your mind is firm, stable, and peaceful. Then you withdraw your mind into the stage with bright light and clear images (*Nimitta*). Now you can start to contemplate the body again. If your mind wanders outside again, you have to start and develop meditation from the very beginning again, until your mind is cool, calm, stable, and peaceful. Then withdraw your mind back to stay at the stage of threshold concentration (*Upacara Samadhi*).

The reason for doing this is as follows. When you develop your concentration until you feel calm and empty, the mind is so subtle and profound that it does not want to investigate or concern itself with anything. The mind is in a state of deep absorption, emptiness, and happiness. It wants to stay like that, and so wisdom can never arise. If there is no wisdom, there is no way to go beyond suffering (*Dukkha*). For this reason, after your mind reaches peace and happiness, you must withdraw it back to threshold concentration

(*Upacara Samadhi*), because this is where the light (*Nimitta*) appears. Now you will be able to see the body, make inner contact with the body, contemplate the body, and focus the mind on the body (*Kaya*), which is a conglomeration of four elements.

Let us observe the earth element. The solid parts of the body, such as hair, nails, skin, flesh, tendons, and bones are the earth element. Contemplate and scrutinize them again and again. After we die, all these parts decay and return to the earth whence they came. We know this from our own wisdom.

After you understand the earth element, consider the water element. Its characteristic is its liquidity and permeation throughout our bodies. Consider it with mindfulness and wisdom. Substances such as bile, phlegm, lymph, sweat, oil, tears, blood, saliva, pus, and nose drops are called the water element. Contemplate and scrutinize them again and again. After we die, the body will decay, and the water in our bodies will seep back to the place whence it came. With experience and meditation, one can see all these facts.

Now let us consider the fire element. The fire element gives the heat that keeps the body warm and prevents it from dying. There are four aspects to fire:

1. Heat which keeps the body warm.

2. Heat which ages the body and wastes it away, blurring the eyes, wrinkling the skin, whitening the hair.
3. Heat which inflames the body, making it feverish and restless, unhappy and wilted.
4. Heat which digests food and distils its nutritive essence so as to send it throughout the body.

Consider these four aspects of the fire element until you see the truth. After the body has been destroyed, the fire element will return to the surroundings where it originated. Consider mindfully until wisdom arises.

Consider the wind element. It flows throughout the body. What is its character? We can observe this wind moving back and forth as it goes in and out of our nostrils. It has six manifestations:

1. The upgoing wind
2. The downgoing wind
3. The wind flowing throughout the entire body
4. The wind in the intestine
5. The wind-flow in the space of the body
6. The in-and out-breath

These six aspects of the movement of the wind give all beings their shape and their ability to move, stand, walk, and speak. The wind

is very important because it helps us to remain alive, for we die if we do not breathe. Consider carefully and understand the significance of the wind. When we die, the wind returns to the surrounding air.

We use mindfulness and wisdom to consider the body in order to understand that our bodies and those of other animals are a conglomeration of these four elements. By convention, we assume it is human, or animal, or 'we' or 'them', and we call that person, or this person, the conventional or agreed name for convenience. Something else we must realize is that when all these elements come together to become a body, they must be in the right proportions to create a happy and well balanced body. If one or more element is out of proportion, the body will be sick and unhappy. So, we should understand our body and the bodies of others, for they are all the same in principle.

Once we know enough about our body (*Kaya*), we go on to consider feelings and sensations (*Vedana-Khanda*), which are mental factors (*Nama Dhamma*) lodged in the body. There are three kinds of feelings: suffering or depression (*Dukkha*), good or happy feelings (*Sukha*), and neutral feelings (neither *Dhukkha* nor *Sukha*).

Let us consider sensations of suffering or depression (*Dukkha-Vedana*). All beings, whether human or animal, suffer. Since we

were born, we have experienced heat or cold, hunger or thirst, sickness, aches and pains, or sadness. Sometimes we are unjustly blamed or accused, or become separated from our loved ones. All these things make us suffer.

Good or happy feelings, or a sense of ease or well-being in the mind (*Sukha-Vedana*) arise when we get what we want, or when we receive praise. These make us happy.

When the mind feels neutral or indifferent, neither pleasurable nor painful, we say the mind is neither *Dukkha* nor *Sukha*. This is also a kind of feeling (*Vedana*).

When we consider *Vedanānu-passana-satipatthana*, the mind must be still, must concentrate and carefully observe until it clearly understands the character of feelings. Try and keep your mind neutral, or in the middle. Like bodies, the words we use to describe feelings (*Vedana*) are agreed conventions; they are not really the animal, person, self, we or them.

Let us consider feelings from another point of view. Whence do they arise? They arise from the body (*Kaya*), and from the four elements making up the body. The four elements make up a corporeality (*Rupa-khandha*). Their counterparts are feelings (*Vedana*), perceptions (*Sanna*), mental formulations (*Sankhara*), and consciousness (*Vinnana*), collectively called the aggregate of

mental factors (*Nama-khandha*). When we combine the two groups they are called the Five Aggregates (*Panca-Khandha*). These give rise to six internal sense-fields (*Ajjhattikayatana*) – the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. The corresponding six external stimuli (*Bahirayatana*) are sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touch, and thoughts or moods. All these are present in normal people, and there are nerves that connect the sensors so that they can do their duties when they detect the external stimuli, i.e., the eye with forms, the ear with sounds, nose with smell, tongue with taste, body with touch, and the mind with thoughts. But we are not mindful enough to realize the very moment when these phenomena arise.

When the eye sees a form, if it is pretty you feel desire arise, or at least are very pleased to see something you like. When the ear hears beautiful sounds, or some one praises you with nice words, you feel happy. When the nose smells a pleasant smell, or the tongue tastes something delicious, or you touch nice soft objects, the mind experiences the emotion of happiness. These feelings are called *Sukha-Vedana* – good or happy moods. They produce a sense of carefree well-being in the mind.

If you see an ugly or deformed shape or figure, you don't like it. Similarly with discordant sounds or insults, you don't want to hear them again. When you smell a bad smell, taste unpleasant food,

touch hard or uncomfortable objects, or you experience unpleasant thoughts or moods, then you feel unsatisfied and unhappy. The emotions that arise from those phenomena called *Dukkha-Vedana* – depression, sorrow, unhappiness.

When the eye sees form and feels indifferent, the ear hears sound but pays no attention, the nose smells either a good or bad smell but is not interested in that smell, the tongue may taste something delicious or nasty but pays no attention, the body touches hard or soft objects but pays no attention, or the mind may connect with good or bad thoughts but remain undisturbed, then we experience neither pleasure nor pain, but indifference from our mind's interaction with all these, and this is another kind of emotional feeling (*Vedana*).

These three kinds of *Vedana* occur in everyone, they are not limited to any particular class or ethnic group. The feelings of pleasure, pain, or indifference appear and disappear continually, according to their contact with sense-objects. That is why they are called *Vedana-Khanda*.

Now I wish to discuss perception (*Sanna-Khanda*). The characteristic feature of perception is the process of labeling or memorization when the mind detects external stimuli (*Arommana* – sense-objects). For instance, when the eye sees a form, whether beautiful or ugly, coarse or delicate, then the mind labels are



remembers that form. Similarly the mind labels and remembers sounds, smells, tastes, and the touch of things. The mind also remembers the associated feelings of pleasure, pain, or indifference. But all these are only memories, not the real thing. They are categorized as *Sanna-Khanda*.

Next, we consider mental formulations – *Sankhara-Khanda*. These can be characterized as the thoughts you formulate at the moment when you think about form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and thoughts of the mind. Use your awareness to consider about *Sankhara*, which can be useful thoughts or useless thoughts, good thoughts or bad thoughts. They fashion the thoughts which arise and which fade away. New thoughts soon appear again, it is a natural characteristic of *Sankhara*. We have to understand and realize that the *Sankhara* are mental formulations. What are you thinking at the moment when *Sankhara* arise, when there is contact with the issues outside or inside the body and mind, and which cause the memory of perceptions (*Sanna*) to appear, which leads to the act of mental formulation? What cause *Sankhara* to arise? They arise because of the continuous contact with perception (*Sanna*). This is called *Sankhara-khandha*.

Next we consider consciousness or self-awareness (*Vinnana-Khanda*). This denotes the noticing of the mind at the moment that you make inner or outer contact with anything. An example is

when the eye sees a form or object. The optic nerve carries the message to the brain, and we notice that the object is good or bad, coarse or fine, beautiful or ugly. The noticing is called *Vinnana*. It occurs in humans and animals. The noticing of seeing is called eye-consciousness (*Cakkhu Nivarana*).

Ear –consciousness (*Sota Vinnana*) arises when sound contacts the nerve of the ear, and we notice if the sound is pleasant or not.

Nose-consciousness (*Ghana-Vinnana*) arises when an odour contacts the nerve of the nose, and we notice if the smell is pleasant or horrible.

Tongue-consciousness (*Jivha-Vinnana*) arises when we eat or drink. The taste stimulates the nerves in the tongue, which transmits the impulses to the brain, and we notice if the taste is sweet, sour, salty, or bitter.

Body-consciousness (*Kaya-Vinnana*) arises when the nerves that are spread all over the body are stimulated by temperature changes or by contact with soft or hard objects. We notice whether we feel hot or cold or just comfortable, or whether the object is pleasant or unpleasant to touch.

Mind-consciousness (*Mano-Vinnana*) arises at the moment when our mind notices anything at all, or recognizes a sense-object (*Arammana*), either within or without. So when the eye sees a

beautiful or ugly object, or the ear hears a beautiful or ugly sound, or the tongue tastes a delicious or horrible taste, or the body touches soft or hard or dirty or prickly objects, the mind experience of knowing all these knowings we call *Vinnana-Khandha*. The act of noticing and knowing the consciousness of the mind depends on the specific organ of the body doing its duty, i.e., that the eye sees clearly, the ear hears properly, the nose smells well, the tongue tastes accurately, the body feels sensitivity, and the mind thinks clearly. All these depend on the living body. When we die, there is no self-awareness (*Vinnana*).

Let us consider the character of consciousness or self-awareness. This is important for the act of knowing and noticing. Knowing may not really get at the truth, if it is not discerning knowing. One may be conscious and self-aware but still have very fine defilement (*Kilesa*), or ignorance or delusion (*Avijja*). The latter is present in the minds of most people, and this causes endless rebirth. Defilement is the main cause, however, which is why the knowing of self-awareness is not the knowing of truth (Enlightenment).

Consciousness or self-awareness can be defiled when we react emotionally. For example, the eye may see a beautiful person or object, and become infatuated with craving or desire (*Raga*). If the eye sees an ugly person, and feels dislike or revulsion, this is another defilement called hatred or ill-will (*Dosa*). If the ear hears

a lovely sound and feels satisfied, *Raga* arises; if it hears an unpleasant sound, *Dosa* arises. If the nose smells a nice smell, *Raga* arises; if a bad smell, *Dosa* arises. If the tongue tastes a delicious taste, *Raga* arises; if a horrible taste, *Dosa* arises. If the body touches a soft and pleasing object, *Raga* arises; If a hard and angular object, *Dosa* arises. The mind contacts both pleasant and unpleasant consciousness (*Arammana*), and attaches to both without knowing the truth, such as when we fall in love or grow to hate someone. In fact, the eyes' only duty is to see forms, whether nice or ugly. The ear is the same, its main duty is to listen to pleasant and unpleasant sounds; the nose's main duty is to smell, both nice smells and unpleasant smells; and likewise the tongue's main job is to taste sweet, sour, bitter, or salty tastes. The whole body is one large sensor for soft or hard objects, and for heat and cold. In this regard, the mind's duty is to make contact with cognizable objects (*Dhammaramana*). It doesn't matter if these are good or bad, the mind does its own duty of sensation.

The sense organs are just the first stage in sensing. The person does not realize the natural duties of these organs. When the eye sees form, the ear hears sound, the nose smells a smell, the tongue tastes a taste, the body touches something, then if the person likes the sensation they will be pleased, and if not, not. We are deluded by feelings of love and hate, and they are all defilement (*Kilesa*). If

it is passion, lust, or greed we call it *Raga*, if hatred, anger, or ill-will, we call it *Dosa*.

Because of this, *Vinnana-khanda* is not the truth of knowing, it is the knowing of delusion. Delusion deceives us, for sometimes it makes us feel passionately in love, at other times angry or hateful. Some people become attached to form, sound, smell, taste, and touch – these sensual pleasures or sensual objects we call the Five *Kamaguna*. These Five *Kamaguna* are dangerous and harmful, for they deceive us into becoming attached to those pleasurable sensations. They can be compared to a string sewn through the heart of an animal like a garland of flowers, which causes the animal to be trapped in the endless round of rebirth (*Samsara*), because of defilement (*Kilesa*), ignorance (*Avijja*), craving (*Tanha*), attachment (*Upadana*), and deeds (*Kamma*). These lead beings into delusion, because they don't know the truth. That's why we consider that knowledge is not truth.

Next, we consider the contemplation of feelings, or mindfulness with regard to feelings (*Vedananupassana Satipatthana*). We contemplate these to see how the following three categories arise:

1. Feelings of pleasure, good mood, or a carefree sense of ease or well-being in the mind (*Sukha-Vedana*). When an external object contacts you, such as the wind blowing on your body, and we feel happy by knowing that through our

consciousness (*Vinnana*), we call this external *Sukha-Vedana*. But the feeling of happiness that arises when the mind contacts an object of consciousness (*Arammana*), such as when the mind becomes calm and peaceful while meditating, we call internal *Sukha-vedana*.

2. Feelings of displeasure or depression (*Dukka-vedana*). When our body comes in contact with such things as hot weather, a hard object, or insect bites, which make us feel unhappy or displeased (but through our consciousness – *Vinnana*), we call this external *Dukha-vedana*. But the feeling of displeasure or pain that arises when the mind contacts an unpleasant object of consciousness (*Arammana*), we call internal *Dukha-vedana*.
3. If the mind is neither pleased nor displeased, but indifferent, we call this *Adukkhamasukha-vedana*.

So, be careful and consider with mindfulness until you understand clearly how our emotional responses (*Vedana*) arises. How do they stay? How do they pass away? This is how to practice contemplation of feeling (*Vedananupassana Satipatthana*).

Next, we consider contemplation of mind, or mindfulness regarding thoughts (*Cittanupassana Satipatthana*). To contemplate your own mind is difficult, especially if you have not previously

meditated. So we should first meditate until the mind is still, calm, and peaceful. You will have to be diligent, patient, mindful, and practice in the four postures: standing, walking sitting, and lying. While contemplating your mind, keep your mindfulness and presence of mind firmly in place, and then make a focused investigation of the mind. What is the mind thinking at that moment? What is concerning the mind? What is it attached to? Is it in the past or the future? We must watch closely and understand the mind. Is the mind thinking about goodness or badness? We need to know. Wholesomeness or evil? We must know what our minds are thinking at the present moment.

The mind's nature is to think. It starts doing this since we are born, and does it day and night. Some thoughts are useless, but the mind still keeps thinking, sometimes until it is tired and weary. Sometimes it thinks of evil and other worries, which irritate both mind and body. At other times it thinks wholesome thoughts, or about making merit, which bring happiness to the mind. The more we think meritorious thoughts, the more the mind is happy and delighted. If we must think, we should think of good things.

Another profitable line of thought is: How can we find a way to let go of suffering, pain, and dissatisfaction (*Dukkha*)? The method is to eliminate defilement (*Kilesa*) and craving or desire (*Tanha*) from our minds. Only then will we find true happiness. How do we

eliminate defilement, craving and desire? By using mindfulness and wisdom to control the mind, one who thinks this way, the right way, the way that brings happiness, is called a Right Thought User. One who is unmindful, does not know what their mind is thinking, can't control their mind, lets their mind think in the wrong or bad way, thinks unwholesome, evil thoughts, thinks hurtful, oppressive, or vengeful thoughts which bring suffering to them and unhappiness and anxiety to others, is called a Wrong Thought User or Wrong Way Thinker.

Another line of thinking is concerned with longing for something, such as money, jewellery, silver, gold, gems, buildings, or land, or someone such as your spouse, parents, children, or relatives. These thoughts are all about one's belongings, which we are attached to and worry about. The more we concern ourselves with these, the more we worry about them. We become sad, anxious, and unhappy about them. This is a wrong way of thinking. We have to mindfully look into our mind and notice what the mind is thinking at the present moment. This is how to contemplate the mind – mindfulness regarding thoughts.

Next let us consider the *Dhamma* within *Dhamma* contemplation of mind-objects, or mindfulness regarding ideas (*Dhammanupassana-Satipatthana*). *Dhamma* contemplation is to consider nature or ultimate truth, such as doing good or evil,



thinking good or evil, assuming good or evil either inside or outside compound things (*Sankhara*). Some of these have souls, such as human beings or animals, whether they are large or small, black or white, tall or short, with two legs or four legs or many legs or no legs, mobile or immobile. They are all *Dhamma*. An object that has no soul, such as a building, house, tree, mountain, pond, swamp, car, boat, anything that cannot move by itself, we also call *Dhamma*.

When we want to contemplate *Dhamma* within *Dhamma*, we can choose any of these things to consider. If we decide to use an external *Sankhara* or object, such as a building to contemplate, we ask ourselves, how did this building arise? How does it deteriorate? We consider all these carefully until we realize the truth. We call this *Dhamma* contemplation in *Dhamma*.

Alternatively, we can contemplate an internal *Sankhara*, eg., a part of the body, such as a bone, as a subject of meditation. We mindfully consider and investigate the bone with our wisdom. Is the bone an earth element? Carefully focus the mind on that piece of bone until one realizes the truth, which we call *Dhamma* contemplation in *Dhamma*.

Or we can contemplate goodness and badness as the world assumes them to be. Consider carefully whether they are true.

If we consider any of the *Dhamma* listed above, but still cannot see the truth, we are still attached to worldly convention (*Sammati*) which prevents us from being free of suffering.

Why are we deluded by worldly convention? Because we are infused with ignorance (*Avijja*), craving (*Tanha*), and attachment (*Upadana*). And because of good and bad deeds (*Kamma*) performed with good or bad volition and our attachment to the consequences of those deeds.

What is it in our mind that realizes the significance of our *Kamma*? It is our consciousness. It does not realize the truth, and holds tightly to attachment and makes us perform both good and bad deeds. This causes us to be born again. We are endlessly born and die in the Round of Rebirth (*Samsaravatta*).

When we contemplate the *Dhamma* within *Dhamma*, we realize that we are deluded. But we would like to be free from suffering (*Dukkha*), and not be born again. The Noble One (*Ariyapuggala*), who had enlightened Phra Ariya before he himself was enlightened, was a human being just like us. He broke free from suffering and entered Nibbana. How did he do it? Was he full of wisdom (*Panna*) and ripe perfection (*Parami*) so that he was able to achieve enlightenment? Although we think that we neither have

ripe perfection nor strong wisdom to realize the truth of the *Dhamma*. If we are patient, diligent, and brave in our practice, and do not become discouraged, we will achieve the supporting or helpful condition called *Paccaya* which will follow us through the next life. With this support, we may then become enlightened. But it is better to enter nibbana in this lifetime, and with patient and diligent practice we can hope to do so.

Now, consider worldly, or common, agreed convention (*Sammatti*) and realize that we are deluded by it. We are deluded in various thoughts, ideas, and fantasies (*Sankhara*), both internal and external. We are attached to corporeal objects (*Rupa Dhamma*), mental factors (*Nama Dhamma*), and the Five Aggregates body, sensations, perceptions, volitional mental activities, and consciousness; *Pancakkhandha*), all making up body and mind. We think in terms of 'I', or 'we', or 'them', 'this', or 'that', animal or person. This is understandable, but based on mistaken assumptions. It is natural that we love ourselves, because of our delusion, so we cannot see things as they really are.

Let us consider mindfully the Five Aggregates, and contemplate them until you can see the truth that they have three characteristics (*Tilakkhana*) – they are impermanent, stressful, and non-self. This is a truth that applies to thoughts and ideas – they are not under our control, they are not of our selves (*Anatta*).

Why do we have to contemplate the body again? Because the body is the centre of the world. Wholesomeness arises from the body. When we want to do something meritorious for the benefit of our next life, we depend on the body. We take precepts by using our body. When we wish to practice meditation and to free ourselves from suffering, we depend on this body. The body is the foundation from which we do goodness. The Buddha teaches us to use the body as a subject of contemplation. Meditation reveals that suffering clearly arises from the body.

For this reason, the Buddha taught the *Dhammacakkappvattanasutta* sermon to his first five disciples (*Pancavaggiya*): ‘Bhikkus: contemplate suffering in your body with your own wisdom’. The Buddha intended to teach us that suffering is to be faced and known fully, if you are to live happily. The body is the source of suffering and sickness. When you are finally fed up with suffering, try and free yourself by means of your own wisdom. The Noble Path (*Magga*) and its Result (*Phala*) also arise from suffering, and lead us to develop insight by contemplation of the body to achieve freedom from suffering.

Now, consider mindfully the body. It is inconstant. How? The body begins as a tiny speck in the mother’s womb, and gradually grows bigger and bigger until it is born. After it is born, it continues to grow and develop, learns to walk and run. This clearly

shows that the body is not a constant thing. When we reach the age of about 20 years old, we are full grown men and women – active, skillful, proficient, healthy, and strong. The body keeps on developing until 50 or 60 years old, when it is fully mature and wise. But consider how inconstant the body is – if it were not, we should stay as young and small as when we were babies. But babies grow up, reach puberty, become fully grown men and women, and then start to age – the skin becomes wrinkled, the eyes foggy, the ears deaf, hair turns white, the cheeks become hollow, and our teeth start to fall out. Walking and sitting and generally changing position become difficult, and eventually we die. After death, the body decays, falls apart, and returns whence it came. All this shows how impermanent the body is, but most people see it as permanent and become very attached to it.

If the body were permanent, we should remain as tiny babies all our lives and never grow. But the body is not constant – it grows and ages. So, let us see the truth – the body is inconstant.

After we understand compound mental formulations (*Inner Sankhara*), consider next compound things (*Outer Sankhara*). They are non-beings such as a tree, mountain, car, boat, building, house, and generally useful objects. Take a tree as an example. It starts as a tiny plant, then grows, becomes old, dies and falls, decays and finally disappears into the ground. This shows how

inconstant it is. Other things show the same process. When we first buy a car or clothes, they look very new and beautiful, but after we use them for a while they start to become torn and shabby, and at the end are old and broken and disappear back into the ground. A building or house or utensil shows the same inconstancy – they look beautiful and new at the beginning, but crumble to pieces at the end and disappear to where they came from. So, we can see that both inner and outer *Sankhara* are inconstant, and we must contemplate them until we really know this with our wisdom and insight.

Next, we use our mindfulness and wisdom to consider how the body suffers. When we are in our mother's womb, we have to lie in that small place like a prison. If the mother eats hot and spicy food, this irritates the baby, but it has no way to escape. It has to put up with whatever conditions exist. When the baby is born, it starts life by crying. It spends its early life lying down, unable to sit or stand or walk. The skin of the baby is very sensitive to heat or cold. Babies easily fall ill, with much pain and suffering. Even after they're grown, sickness and disease attack the body at times. No one can escape these sufferings. It is as if we were born in a fire, with heat and danger all around. Life is replete with suffering. There is danger all around the body, and we have to be careful and protect our bodies all the time. We have to protect them from

disease, poisonous animals, and from accidents such as plane crashes, car smashes, and boat sinking. Even in your house, an intruder may enter and harm you. There are dangers everywhere , and we must consider them.

After that, we can contemplate the suffering we get from having a body. When we are born we come into contact with external heat and cold. When the body feels hot, we yearn for a cold bath or a stream of cold air, and if we feel cold, we have to cover it with a blanket or put a heater on. When we feel hungry we have to eat, and when thirsty, drink. All this suffering arises because we have a body.

Consider the body when attacked by disease. Every organ in the body can be attacked - the eyes can become infected or blurred, ears can get an abscess, the nose can become inflamed, the teeth can decay and abscess, and the tongue can become ulcerated. Likewise with our internal organs – the liver can become enlarged or cancerous, the kidneys infected, the heart enlarged or weakened, the lungs can be attacked by pneumonia or tuberculosis, and the intestines and stomach can become ulcerated or cancerous. The bones can become dematerialized and brittle, and the skin can become psoriatic or cancerous. It seems every organ has its own disease – there are too many to describe. Our legs and arms acquire aches and pains, and our heads have headaches until we

moan and struggle with pain. Then, when we age, we can end up crying out with pain, our lives a misery with disease and suffering.

When we are separated from our loved ones – husband, wife, children, grandchildren – we become depressed and unhappy, and suffer.

When we encounter some thing we do not like, we feel unhappy. When we want to be other than what we are, or cannot get what we want, we suffer.

In conclusion, what is the cause of suffering? The cause is our thoughts, ideas, and fantasies that we formulate in our minds – our *Sankhara* - together with visible objects (*Rupa-Dhamma*), mental factors (*Nama-Dhamma*), and the Five Aggregates – body, sensations, perception, volitional mental activities, and consciousness. All these cause no end of suffering, even after we are dead. We should carefully contemplate this until we see clearly that these *Sankhara* (*Rupa-Dhamma* and *Nama-Dhamma*, the Five Aggregates) of ourselves, of others, and of animals, contribute to our great load of suffering. Even non-beings are impermanent, which can cause our suffering also. When we realize this, our mind will perceive the truth and we can let go of *Sankhara*.



Next, we try and see if these *Sankhara* are non-self (*Anatta*). Consider this. Since we were young and small, we wished to stay that way, but the body kept on growing and never listened to what we were trying to tell it. We have no power to control the body because it does not belong to us. It is non-self - *Anatta*. We reach puberty, look very strong and beautiful, and we wish we could stay like that, but our body does not listen. It just keeps aging. The skin becomes wrinkled, the eyesight blurred, the ears deaf, hair turns white, the cheeks become sunken, and our teeth start to fall out. We feel tired and fatigued. This is normal for all *Sankhara*, because they are non-self (*Anatta*).

We try to tell the eyes to be bright and clear as they were when we were young, but they do not obey, instead they become foggy and blurred. The ears used to hear very well, and we tell them to stay the same, but they do not, and they become deaf. We tell our hair not to turn white, but it ignores our wish. If these things belong to us, they should do as we tell them. They are like another person, not us. The teeth likewise, we tell them not to fall out, but they do. When our legs are in pain, we tell them not to be so, but pain persists even after we take some medicine or have injection. The legs do not do what we want them to, so how can we say they belong to us?

When we are sick, we tell the body not to be sick. If it belonged to us, it should listen and obey, but no, it remains sick. If it cannot be cured, it may die. We don't want to die, and animals don't want to die, but at the end we all do. Death is not under the control of anybody.

So, you can see that *Sankhara*, both internal – mental formulation – and external – compound things – obey the Law of Three Characteristics (*Tilakkhana*) – they are inconstant (*Aniccata*), constitute suffering (*Dukkha*), and are non-self (*Anatta*). We cannot control them, they do not belong to us, so let us try and understand this with our wisdom and knowledge.

Next, we consider feelings (*Vedana*) – the sensations or moods that the mind experiences. Feelings can be pleasant, painful, or indifferent. These are the three kinds of feelings, and we encounter them day and night and during meditation, whether standing, sitting, walking, or lying down. The three feelings also come under the Law of Three Characteristics – impermanence, stress and not-self. An example of impermanence of feeling (*Aniccata*) is feeling of happiness or pleasure. These feelings do not last very long, and quite commonly change to feelings of unhappiness. Or if we are under stress, they'll change again, perhaps to feelings of indifference. The feelings of the mind shift from one state to another. This is their inconstancy, which we can

see with our wisdom and experience if we watch mindfully and carefully.

Next, how do feelings become suffering (*Dukkha*)? When our mind experiences happiness or pleasure, we wish for that feeling to continue. But it doesn't, we feel disappointed, and so we suffer. Or maybe our mind feels neither pleasant nor painful and we would like to maintain it like that. But it doesn't stay as we wish, and we feel stressed or suffering, again. This is how feelings bring suffering.

Next, we look at how feelings qualify as non-self (*Anatta*). While we are feeling pleasure, we wish that that feeling would last but it does not, even though we tell it to do so. The feeling neither listens nor obeys, so it is not ourself, but rather, like someone else, and stubborn too. So, feelings are “non-self”, and obey the Law of Three Characteristics (*Tilakkhana*) – they are inconstant (*Aniccata*), constitute suffering (*Dukkha*), and are non-self (*Anatta*). Feelings belong to no-one. Try and understand this.

Next, let us consider perception (*Sanna*). How does perception qualify as inconstant, stressful, and non-self? We already know that perception is impermanent, for it is the memory or labeling of form, sound, smell, taste, and touch. For a time you remember what you read or say, but after a while those memories are forgotten. This shows the impermanence of perception. Moreover,

when we realize that we've forgotten these perceptions, we wish that we could remember them, and this makes us upset and feel stressed. Furthermore, the fact that we cannot remember these things even when we tell ourselves that we must do so, shows that they do not belong to us and are not under our control. So they are "non-self". So now you can understand that perceptions do follow the Law of Three Characteristics – impermanence (*Aniccata*), suffering (*Dukkha*), and non-self (*Anatta*).

Now let us consider how mental formulation (*Sankhara*) also obeys the Law of Three Characteristics. *Sankhara* is the force or mental activity in us which formulates ideas and judgments about forms that we see, sounds we hear, smells we smell, tastes we taste, or things we touch – are they beautiful or ugly, pleasant or unpleasant? But after we think about these things for a while, be it short or long, the thought disappears, and we go on to the next one. But our thoughts about that also eventually disappear. Clearly, the thoughts, ideas, and judgments of our minds are impermanent. Try and understand this.

Next, we examine how *Sankhara* make us feel stressed or suffer. When we think about all sorts of things such as forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touch, mind-objects, the past or future, one's possessions, money, family, or business, the more we think of them the more we suffer. Thinking too much of these can stop us

sleeping, take away our appetite, and make us tired and wilted. Yes, *Sankhara* can make us suffer.

How can *Sankhara* partake of non-selfness? When we think of something nice, we want to maintain that pleasure, but the thoughts eventually disappear. We can formulate ideas, but they don't stay where we want them to, they don't do what they are told. They are not under our control, and so are not of our self.

So we can see that all *Sankhara* obey the Law of Three Characteristics – impermanence (*Aniccata*), suffering (*Dukkha*), and non-self (*Anatta*). Contemplate this.

Now let us look at consciousness (*Vinnana*), how it is impermanent, causes suffering, and is not of our self.

How is consciousness impermanent? Consciousness arises from stimulation of nerves by form, sound, smell, taste, and touch – the act of noticing these sense-objects is consciousness. Some make us happy – positive consciousness, and some unhappy – negative consciousness. You hope that the positive consciousness will stay, but no, it disappears, and another noticing arises whether you like it or not. So consciousness is not permanent. Further evidence comes when we grow old. Then, the nerves in the eye do not work very well and we cannot see clearly, and so with the ears, nose, and tongue. When people have a heart attack or stroke, some become

paralyzed because the nervous system in the body fails, which affects consciousness. So, consciousness is impermanent (*Aniccata*).

Next, we consider how consciousness causes suffering. We normally notice, or are conscious of, form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mood very well, but as we grow older this ability starts to decline and deteriorate. This makes us disappointed, and we suffer (*Dukkha*).

Next, how is consciousness not part of our self? When we are conscious of form, we notice if it is beautiful or ugly, coarse or neat; or sound, whether it is pleasant or unpleasant; smell, good or bad; taste, sour bitter, sweet, or salty; touch, soft or hard; and mood good or bad. When the experience is pleasant, we wish for it to last, and we tell the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind to stay with the pleasantness. But they do not do so, and so they are not of us nor of ourselves. If we contemplate this we shall understand it clearly. When the nerve impulses of these organs decline with age or illness and cannot function properly, consciousness and noticing also become poor. So we can say consciousness is not of our self – it is non-self (*Anatta*).

We can conclude from the discussion above that consciousness obeys the Law of Three Characteristics – inconstancy, suffering, and non-self.

Now we can combine all these – corporeality (*Rupa-khandha*), feelings or mood (*Vedana*), perception (*Sanna*), mental formulations (*Sankhara*), and consciousness (*Vinna*) – into Five Aggregates (*Pancha-khandah*). After we contemplate all these, we see that they all obey the Law of Three Characteristics – inconstancy, suffering, and non-self.

The Five Aggregates, those internal and those external, whether coarse or delicate, good or bad, neat or untidy, here or there near or far, are all inconstant.

The Five Aggregates are also a source of danger, disease, and sickness. This is hard to bear. They bring trouble and suffering, distress, melancholy, grief, tears, unhappy days and nights. We should contemplate this.

Next, look into the Five Aggregates and how they are not of our self. They are not under our control as we wish they were. They change constantly from when we are young until we are old. They arise and disappear. We all wish for happiness, and want the Five Aggregates to stay still while we are happy, but they do not do so. They continually change from happiness to suffering or to indifference. They never do what we want them to – they have their own will, and are not of us.

When we consider carefully, we will understand that the Five Aggregates, which make up your own *Sankhara* body, other people, and animal bodies all obey the Law of Three Characteristics.

Even inanimate *Sankhara*, such as trees, buildings, cars, ships, are the same. After they were planted or built, they are inconstant, and change from new at the beginning to old, shabby, decrepit, and ruined at the end. When a house is first built it looks very new and beautiful, but as the years go by it ages, deteriorates, and eventually returns to the earth – its entropy increases. The same thing happens to things such as cars and boats. They are impermanent – they arise and then disappear. They do not belong to anyone, but are objects that serve us in this world, and they stay in this world.

Consider all *Sankhara*, both animate and inanimate. The bodily ones (*Rupa-Dhamma*) and mental ones (*Nama-Dhamma*) together make up the Five Aggregates (bodily objects – *Rupa*, feelings or moods – *Vedana*, perception – *Sanna*, mental formulations – *Sankhara*, and consciousness – *Vinnana*). External *Sankhara*, such as trees, mountains, cars, yachts, buildings, and houses, have no soul. All *Sankhara*, both animate and inanimate, appear in the past and disappear back into the past. They do not continue into the future. *Sankhara* that will appear in the future have not yet arisen.



yet, but when they do they will disappear back into the past. The present *Sankhara* we are experiencing at this moment will be destroyed in time; they are impermanent, and do not continue into the future.

For those reasons, the Buddha established the notions of duration of *Dhamma* (*Dhammathiti*), the general law of cause and effect (*Dhammaniyama*), and natural phenomena (*Sabhavadhama*). The first two apply to all *Sankhara*. *Sankhara* arise and disappear – they are impermanent (*Dhammathiti*). *Sankhara* prefer to be born, but they eventually have to die – the law of cause and effect (*Dhammaniyama*). All *Sankhara* arise as a form and later vanish. It doesn't matter how often they are born, it doesn't matter how much they are fashioned, all *Sankhara* finally disappear. Some may notice this, some may not, but all *Sankhara* continually appear and disappear. It is their usual way.

When we consider compound things, either internal or external (*Sankhara*), wherever they arise, in whichever district or country, they will fall apart and vanish there. When we contemplate *Sankhara* with knowledge and insight, we realize how much of a burden our *Sankhara* are. When we are born, we have a body comprising, legs, arms, head, eyes, ears, nose, etc. All these are prone to sickness, which brings us suffering. If we are born a hundred times, we suffer a hundred births. If we are born a

thousand times, we suffer a thousand births (*Jati*). If you really understand suffering, you would not like to be born. You would only want to escape from suffering (*Dukkha*).

Why, when we are born, are we burdened with suffering? It is because we have bodies, which feel too hot or too cold, sometimes hungry, sometimes thirsty, sometimes diseased. Sometimes we feel hurt by the cursing or scolding by others. All this suffering arises because we have bodies. It would be good to find a way to free ourselves from suffering.

Let us investigate if it is the body that causes suffering, or the mind. In fact, suffering or stress is the feeling in the mind, not in the body, because the mind has the faculty of consciousness, of noticing. This attaches the mind to the body. The body suffers, and this travels into our mind. The body is the ultimate cause of suffering.

To be free of suffering, we have to find out why we have a body. What are the conditions that cause us to be born? We are born because we are subject to ignorance or delusion (*Avijja*), desire (*Tanha*), attachment (*Upadana*), and our actions (*Kamma*). Ignorance causes our craving to be born in this world, in the mistaken belief that it is a beautiful, happy, and enjoyable place. When we are born and find it pleasing, we become attached to it and cling to it. And then we start to do actions or deeds from good or bad volition. Our actions are very important. When you do a

good and wholesome deed, the result will be that you will be born into a pleasant state or existence. But if you do bad or unwholesome deeds, you will be born into a lower, less pleasant state or existence. You are born into an existence governed by your previous actions.

So, when we still have ignorance or delusion, desire, attachment, and our actions occupying our minds, we are deluded into being pleased at being born. We should find out more, such as who built our body? Where did it come from? It comes from our parents, when we are conceived by the love of our parents. At an early stage, the soul enters the new body in the mother's womb. The body gradually grows bigger until it is born from the mother. This body continues to carry suffering from its previous life. When we consider carefully, we see that the body arises or appears because of the delusion of pleasure, of attachment to pleasure. From this, good or bad deeds will have good or bad consequences (*Kamma*). This causes all beings to travel endlessly around the Round of Rebirth (*Samsara*). When we realize that it is the craving for pleasure and our attachment to pleasure that causes us to be born again, let us ask ourselves if we wish to be born again, with all the suffering that that entails. The wise person will say no. After that the mind will be disgusted by sensual pleasure. Also, it will withdraw from attachment when it sees that all compound things

(Sankhara Dhamma) are good or bad, whether they are external or internal, living or not.

If you look further, you will see that human beings come from four elements that come together – earth, water, fire, and wind. When we die, the earth elements, such as hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, tendons, bones, etc., decay and eventually pass back into the ground. They combine with what, for convenience, we call the earth. The water element is the same. Normally it permeates the whole body, but when we die the water flows away and, as we say, soaks into the ground or evaporates. The fire element is the same. It keeps the body warm and prevents it from decaying. When we die, the body gradually becomes cold – the fire element leaves the body and combines with what we call the fire element outside. The wind element is the same – when it comes out of the nose but does not return, the person dies, as we say. When the wind goes out of the body, it combines with what we call the wind element outside. Even our names are just agreed or common convention that we find convenient to use.

External *Sankhara* of non-being are only conventions (*Sammatti*), such as buildings, houses, cars, boats. They are made of the earth element e.g. rock, cement, iron, rubber. When a building, house, car or boat is old, shabby, worn out, and deteriorates and vanishes into the earth, we regard it as belonging to the earth element. If we

do not call it the earth element, what will we call it? We do not have anything else to call it. We all agree, by common convention, that things – buildings, houses, cars, boats, utensils that we use – are just names that we use to refer to them. All internal and external *Sankhara* (compound things) are just agreed conventions. If we do not call them something, then there will be nothing to say.

But when we name all these *Sankhara* in this world, we delude ourselves. We believe that they are real, and attach ourselves to them. We are all deluded by the necessity to agree on a name for each *Sankhara*. Even I, while explaining about the *Dhamma*, am still deluded by the use of these conventions. That is why I was born again. If I were not so deluded, I would not be born again, for sure. Even the worldly notions of good and bad are only conventions. The conventions, or suppositions (*Sammatti*), of all *Dhamma* arise and disappear. One must consider carefully with mindfulness and wisdom these suppositions. The mind that does not attach or cling to conventions will not attach to the suppositions of the *Dhamma*. The mind will be free from conventions, suppositions, and assumptions. After we realize this, we will understand well these conventions. Wisdom (*Panna*) knowledge (*Vijja*), and insight (*Vipassana*) are called the “knowing elements” of the *Dhamma*. When we do not call them insight, wisdom, and knowledge, then there is nothing left to call

them – and we have gone beyond conventions and assumptions. But do not show that you are enlightened and capable of understanding all the Buddha's Dhamma. Just the learning is enough.

For these reason, we should all study carefully until we understand the conventions and suppositions of the *Dhamma*, as mentioned before. Let our wisdom know the true facts of conventions and assumptions. When we see an object with our eyes, hear a sound with our ears, smell with our nose, taste with our tongue, or touch with our bodies, we are seeing *Sankhara Dhamma* arise, stay, and eventually disappear. But our mind is in neutral, and not disturbed with what happens to those *Sankhara* (compound things). Be mindful always of knowing the present moment.

Carefully watch your own mind with awareness and wisdom, and know every moment of the present. How is the mind? What is the sensation or feeling in the mind? What is the mind focused on? Just watching and knowing, or is the mind attached to something in this world? If our mind is free, we shall know that from our own wisdom and insight. But when we do realize this, do not think that you are enlightened and free from the world. Never assume that. Just keep watching your own mind at the present moment. If you can do just that much, you will not be deluded, sleepy, worried, hungry, or craving for something, but instead you will be satisfied

and contented. Wherever you go, you will be full of happiness, whether standing, walking, sitting, or lying down. You will be very happy and satisfied.

The person in that state realizes that the body gives us both harm and value. When we see that our body is very valuable to us, we should look after it properly, and according to its age. The day will come when our body will be broken and destroyed, for this is its natural condition.

I have been explaining the practice of *Dhamma* from the beginning. Use anything suitable for use in practicing. My practice is the forest *Dhamma* of one who is still learning. If anyone sees any errors in any part of this *Dhamma* practice, please let me know any time. If anyone would like to add some light to our knowledge, please do so at any time.

I now end this *Dhamma* talk here. May the power of the Triple Gem – *Buddha*, *Dhamma* and *Sangha* – protect you from all dangers. May your good wishes come true, and may you have happiness, long life, and good complexion, and strength every day and every night. Now it is time to stop.