

Meditation:

BUDDHISM IN PRACTICE



By

Ven. S.M. Sujano

Meditation: Buddhism in Practice

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Ven. Sujan

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Preface

How many times do you ask questions, in particular, who, what, why and how to justify yourself or to search for a solution or to seek an appetite for justification? How many times do you compare yourself to, or have been bossy with things and people? How often do you feel unfairness, injustice or that something is wrong out there? As long as these questions and opinions are resting, chatting and rumouring in your brain, without paying any rent to the self, one cannot find peace and happiness in daily life. Nevertheless, you are not alone in harbouring these unjust thoughts and constantly getting distracted by normal life. It needs clear observation, acknowledgement and understanding of the nature of the mind. A properly guided mind builds energy and the effort to realise a ruminating mind and bring it to the present moment for better cause in daily life is called meditation.

This book is divided into two parts; meditation and introduction to Buddhism. The first part aims to provide basic concepts of meditation, in particular to the Buddhist point of view on mental cultivation and a simple step by step instruction to find relaxation and to deepen inner peace

through insight meditation. There are many kinds of meditation technique based on such as breath, sound, word, visual, light, abdomen, colour, movement, loving kindness, compassion and so on, which are claimed to be based on the discourse on foundation of mindfulness that the Buddha explained. These all techniques are beneficial dependent upon individual preferences according to their mental condition. A number of instruction books are available. On this book, however, the Mindfulness Meditation that taught by the Most Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw will be introduced as a foundation for the development of insight meditation.

The second part introduces an overview of Buddhism and its fundamental teachings mainly based on the Theravada Buddhist tradition. Most of the quotations and sayings are, furthermore, mainly referenced from the Theravada Scripture *Tipitaka*, the three baskets of teachings, which are written in *Pali*, a language that is believed to be spoken at the time of the Buddha. It is also known as *Pali* scripture. The word ‘scripture’ in this booklet means referring to the *Tipitaka*. Buddhist terminologies in *Pali language* are given when it is necessary in order to make clear understanding and the concept of those meanings.

It should be mentioned here that originally it was published as an article in *Puandham* magazine published by The Buddhavihara Kings Bromley, now *Watmahathat* UK. Positive feedback of the article provided the encouragement to compose this extended version of the book with extra information regarding knowledge and practice of insight meditation. To that extent, I would like to express my thanks to Ven. Sumana, Dr. D. B. Shaky, Tony Collacott and John Arnold for valuable comments and linguistic help in bringing it to its present form. . I also would like to express admiration to all generous support for the Varapunya Meditation Centre, Aberdeen, in particular families of Mr Paul & Jiraporn Dawson, Mrs Rudee Barker, Aurathai Collins, Nam Ooi Marr, Oranuch Fettes, Sa-ing (Tukta), Nichada Park, Rinong, Pranee Bremner, Vinnie-Varunee, Kanha Clayton and Tony – Kwanjit Collacott.

Ven. Sujan

2013

"When there are reasons for doubt, uncertainty is born. So in this case, Kalamas, don't go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, 'This contemplative is our teacher.' When you know for yourselves that, 'these qualities are unskillful; these qualities are blameworthy; these qualities are criticized by the wise; these qualities, when adopted & carried out, lead to harm & to suffering' — then you should abandon them."

- Anguttara Nikaya 3.65 Kalama Sutta

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INTRODUCTION

Daily rituals of non-stop working, day after day everyone is always wishing for a break in order to relax and find so called happiness. To the contrary, almost every one of us in the present is competitive, hungry for success and material possessions. We have become victims of stress, frustration, unhappiness, depression and so on. As a result we are unable to break through to find relaxation and a happy moment. The main cause of these symptoms is related to the job or work place, or dissatisfaction of things, or not having what is wished for, or our general discontentment.

One works very hard to get a decent job wishing better life ahead, a more comfortable life that will make them happier. Having that desired job, one would be very happy and will be looking forward to a better life. S/he will enjoy the work and salary. That is the moment that her/his mind will start to compare with others who are better well off than her/him. When s/he sees someone with top class shoes/cloths/bags/cars the conscious mind generates a desire to have them all. S/he would constantly calculate measure and dream about it day and night, providing oneself with every possible reason and just cause why they should acquire

these most desirable items immediately. 'I must have them and I will be happy.' They will die for it so they think it will make them happy. Having a decent job with a decent salary there may be a possibility to afford these things but by the end of the month, however, they always find their pockets are empty. The cycle of frustration, stress and depression again begins to spin in their head. Living unmindfully is the main reason behind of all those feelings. If we reverse the process, it would make it clear and we would soon realise that we were living unmindfully; spending to fulfil craving rather than meeting our basic needs. It is possible to have a successful and happy life when one starts to look into themselves; their feelings, emotions, cravings and acceptance of those mental conditions with objectivity.

Similarly, one would feel happy when there is a holiday coming up and looking forward to the holidays. There are people who are happy that they have a decent job. There are many who are not happy with their job. There are many who are not happy that they cannot find a decent job. When a restaurant has few customers the owner is not happy and wishes for many more customers. Meanwhile, when there are many customers they become stressed and out of control and mourn that there are too many. These are some of the

examples that we can relate to how people are trying to find happiness in their lives.

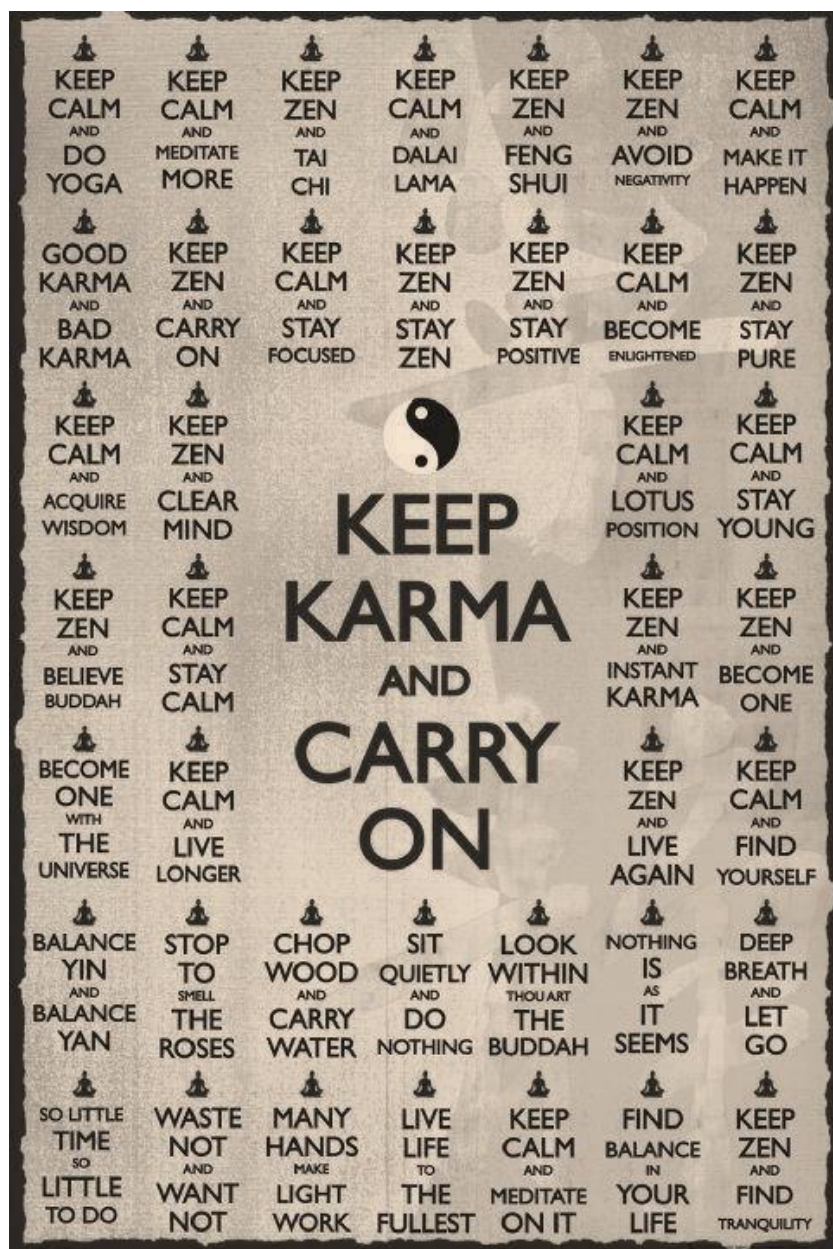
Unfortunately, there is no happiness greater than inner peace, says the enlightened one. Inner peace exists only at the present moment, here and now. To find that inner peace, therefore, is not to search anywhere else but within, at the very moment now, right here nowhere else. People in general spend lots of time and energy to find happiness but at the end of the day always find an empty bottle. If one turns that channel to inside of oneself rather than outside, then it can be seen that unhappiness is relatively thin. It is the mind that causes happiness and unhappiness, which never stays here with us. To learn to bring an unnaturally busy and scattered mind to remain at the present moment, here and now – wherever you are, at work, in the playground, eating, drinking walking, or talking etc. is called mindfulness meditation in Buddhism. It is a state of inner peace and happiness.

To live in the here and now with your body and mind may seem simple but it requires time, energy, determination, and self-discipline to get benefit from it. It can be done by simply observing things at the moment what is happening whilst it is taking place.

Therefore, in meditation first of all meditators are advised to observe the whole body sensation followed by feelings, emotions, thoughts and action and reaction to those feelings, emotions and thoughts. Although it is natural for one to have aims and objectives of any investment of your time and energy, including the practice of meditation, your progress in meditation techniques may lead to another cycle of desire. This desire should be resisted as the benefits of meditation are a natural consequence of your diligent practice and mindfulness. Continuous diligent practice is the key to success in the practice of meditation. Further, there is no quick fix but gradual improvement.

“Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy and rightly self-awakened, consummate in knowledge and conduct, well-gone, and expert with regard to the world, unexcelled as a trainer for those people fit to be tamed, the teacher of divine and human beings, awakened, blessed.”

- *Anguttara Nikaya 11.12*



MEDITATION

It is the nature of the mind that is conditioned to wander and move from one thing to another, one place to the next and one thought to endless thoughts. Meanwhile, everyone would agree that the mind lives within this physical body and plays an essential role in our daily life. There is, however, no doubt that it is hard to know and see it. When one tries to know and see it, then one realises that it is very delicate and subtle yet moves wherever it pleases and lands wherever it desires. The nature of this actively moving from one place to another and endlessly changing places with no destiny is the main reason why we are suffering stressful lives, unhappy lives and restlessness. The mind is the leader, says the Buddha. Therefore, realisation of its subtlety and unsteady state leads to a solution for our restless mind. This means, it is within our capability that the mind can be tamed as a wild horse can be tamed, to keep it heading in the right direction but being fully aware to act at any time. Hence the reason initially one needs to create a boundary to minimise its activities. In meditation practice, therefore, an initial object is given to begin with in order to tame the mind and observe this subtlety, to see it in its original form, observe its

character and to understand it. The process to minimise its activities and open its deeper senses in order to accept true reality by being mindful when it is active is called meditation. Meditation therefore is to guard and to control the unsteady, unsettled, miserable mind to find happiness and peace through complete openness and full awareness.

Meditation, *bhavana*, according to Buddhist terminology, means a mental development or cultivation of mental peace to know the mind. It is such a wonderful technique for development of positive inner strength recognising our own value and the value of others. It is a method of knowing one's own mind and how it works. Knowing the mind helps one to become master of the mind rather than a slave to it.

The human mind most of the time, despite being formless, colourless and shapeless, normally, is engaged either in past memories or in the illusory world of the future. Normal behaviour of the mind is searching for peace and happiness through memories or hopes. It loves to plan for a beautiful future and wishes to be happy, recollecting pleasant memories from previous incidents and tries its utmost to resist remembering or to forget unpleasant memories. It is human nature that wants to have a happy feeling.

The fact is that we have not learnt to notice, or have not tried to notice, our feelings, emotions and any mental tendencies that arise one after another or our reactions to them, so we leave them unnoticed. As a result, we become a slave of these feelings and emotions, which in itself is a cause of unhappiness. In reality these thought processes must change, much like a river flows. The only unchanged aspect should be our ability to recognise these emotions, to note them, and to let them pass. Happiness exists when there is no change or holding on to the pleasant feeling that had happened. So, happiness is stopping at the moment that is preferable or clinging on to that moment. This is of course a happy memory but against the natural law of change because everything is bound to change. When there is a constant change, experience of happiness is also subject to change. Despite the reality of changing nature, almost all the time, the mind longs to remain focused on the pleasant feelings and emotions. It also makes arrangements for tomorrow and speculates a successful future ahead. It plans on the basis of past memories, data and information. These activities of the mind are in fact dwelling on previous memories, times, experiences and incidents. Due to these habit patterns of dwelling in either in the past or the future, normally the present moment is forgotten completely and unnoticed. One forgets that the present moment is the most important and

precious for the whole of one's life. Stress, unhappiness, dissatisfactions, depression and so on cause troublesome mind, which is the result of dwelling into the memories and creating fears of not going to be or creating a condition of 'if that is not' or 'if that is'. If one's body could speak at that moment, it would say 'hey, I am here!' 'Can you notice that I am here with you?'

In reality, therefore, we can never go back to the past other than our recollections and experiences, nor can we be certain about the future. Being here and now is the precious moment that exists and hence the reason we should try our best to live in the present moment. To notice the natural facts of occurring, remaining and dissolving as they truly are, or to know these physical and mental phenomena at the present moment, one has to develop awareness during seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and even during thinking, which occurs at every moment of life. Insight meditation, therefore, is to learn to notice the moment of here and now as it happens with a pure mind not as one wants it to happen. Full awareness and constant noticing of present phenomenon, living in the present moment, without a doubt, therefore, is the key to success and to achieve peace and happiness which would lead to the path of liberation.

We eat various nutritious foods to keep our body healthy and balanced. We clean our bodies every day. Meanwhile, we are feeding our minds with unlimited thoughts, mostly unrelated and negative. Almost every one of us is consuming every bit of news all day that deludes the mind more than assisting us on the path of happiness. On the other hand one can hardly spare any moment to clean the mind. As a result, the mind gets polluted day and night. The mind becomes frustrated, unsettled, diluted and obsessed. Meditation, therefore, is a very efficient way to clean and purify the mind from all sorts of miseries and discomforts. Further, purification of the mind is a natural process which is not limited to any particular, race, class, colour, nationality or religion. Since every one of us has similar tendencies of the mind, desires that are influenced by advertisements to persuade us to consume; so everyone experiences the same result, sooner or later depending on his/her own practice, wisdom and stages of perfection that has already been achieved.

‘It is for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the extinction of suffering and grief, for walking on the path of truth, for the realisation of nibbana, complete extinction and ultimate happiness’

The enlightened one said the above passage in one of his famous discourses, the Great discourse on the foundation of awareness (*Mahasatipatthana Sutta*) regarding the benefits of meditation practice. Therefore, meditation is a set of simple yet powerful mental practices that anyone can apply in their daily lives to live free from miseries, worries, burden and anxiety.

Meditation, as a daily practice, is a type of mental work or yoga for the mind, which helps us to become aware of ourselves and every aspect of our life. This process of paying attention to things that are occurring inside of us assists one to find happiness, rather than paying unnecessary attention to external objects. It is a state of being non-judgmental, complete silence and understanding the reality of change as it is taking place. It is experiencing the mental activities and bodily appearance directly with the right understanding. It is a self-reliant technique that every mental activity is one's own responsibility not that of others. It is a way to find the right medicine for self-created illnesses, anger, hatred, ill-will, dissatisfaction, discomfort and a tool to heal it. Therefore, one has to become a master of one's own mind through one's own diligent effort for the complete liberation from all anxieties, worries, stress and emotions.

TYPES OF MEDITATION

Meditation is to contemplate what one does. However just to contemplate is not enough. In Buddhist meditation one also needs to reflect or concentrate on an object. Therefore, there are two types of meditation in Buddhism, Serenity meditation (*Samatha kammatthana*) and Insight meditation (*Vipassana kammatthana*). *Kammatthana*, a synonym of *Bhavana*, literally means ‘place of action’ or ‘a field where one works’ in other words a workplace or work-station, that is generally translated in English as Meditation.

Samatha kammatthana, in general is translated as concentration meditation or developing calmness, it comes from the term *Samadhi*, one-ness, tranquil mind or serenity. It has 40 types of meditation objects one can use to concentrate on bringing the scattered mind to one object to get peace and tranquillity. The purpose of this type of meditation is to anchoring mind to achieve peace and tranquillity. This meditation relaxes the body and mind thereby using less energy. As a result, it is found that blood pressure goes down, breath slows down and one remains in a tranquil state of mind. It is a foundation for the deeper understanding of true nature.

Vipassana meditation is generally known as an insight-meditation and it means investigation into things in diverse ways (*vividhagarato dassana*). It is a scientific way to realise the truth about oneself in an experiential level. In particular, truth about dissatisfaction, unhappiness and being miserable that one faces time after time in life. Dissatisfaction at work, unhappiness with home life or misery at a party for example, is what keeps moods down, lets emotion boil up high, the body heats up and breath becomes longer and faster. The eradication of these miseries is the ultimate purpose of *vipassana* meditation, so that one can live happily. It leads us to direct perception of changing nature of phenomena, *Anicca*, and finally realisation of non-self, *Anatta*. Human inability to accept the truth of changing nature leads to an unsatisfactory life, unhappiness and misery which the Buddha called *Dukkha*. On the contrary, things that change all the time cannot be regarded as a permanent entity. Realisation of this through reflection leads to development of peace, serenity and liberation, *Sukha*. Nevertheless, these two types of meditation should go hand in hand to get a greater benefit.

In order to develop this skill, the Buddha introduced basic guidelines in his famous discourse, *Mahasatipatthana Sutta*, the great discourse on the Foundation of Mindfulness, which is divided into four foundations. They are:

1. Observation of body in the body
2. Observation of sensations and feelings
3. Observation of mind process
4. Observation of mental contents

Our life, according to Buddhism is a combination of mental and physical structures - psycho-physical phenomena. Firstly, a physical phenomenon is called *Rupa* in *Pali*. This is the entity that can be seen by our naked eyes, can be heard, can be smelled, and can be touched and also mentally can be noted. It is known as corporality or materiality. It is the combination of earth, water, fire and air elements. It does not feel emotion, cold, heat etc. The second phenomenon, a mental/psycho phenomenon, is called *Nama* in *Pali*. This can only be observed and felt mentally. It consists of sensation, perception, formation and consciousness. Although, it is formless, colourless, tasteless it is the basis with which one feels, notices, observes, cognises all six sense activities. According to Buddhism, there are six senses. They are eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind.

In general, these *Nama and Rupa*, are generally understood as mind and matter, inter-dependent on each other for the existence of life. *Vipassana* meditation or Insight meditation, therefore, is to learn to be aware of and to

observe the true nature of these physical and mental activities at the experiential level. Therefore, the purpose of the insight meditation is to be aware attentively and to observe subjects objectively and its natural condition of change, *anicca, dukkha, anatta*, as they are instead of as they appeared to be. When we see things, our naked eyes contact with the visible object that is in front of the eyes and intentionally we observe these two phenomenon mind and matter co-exist at all times. Similarly, hearing a sound; tasting things, touching, smell and thinking: these exist together. The co-existence of these mind and matter can be observed, noticed and experienced through skilful observation. However, it is not easy or simple to notice or to observe its activities simultaneously in normal life. One needs to have an attentive mind, openness and an ability to notice objectively at all times, this is the faculty of mindfulness.

‘You should all make effort to fulfil your aspiration for awakening. You have received the teachings of the Buddha. Now you have to work so that your efforts are equal to those of the wise of old who attained their goal.’

- Ven. Webu Sayadaw



NOTING MIND

*Wonderful it is to train the mind
So swiftly moving, seizing whatever it wants.
Good is it to have a well-trained mind,
for a well-trained mind brings happiness.*

- Dh 35

Noting is an important part in meditation practice and it should be understood properly. Focusing on a primary object supports directly towards concentration and indirectly assists to develop mindfulness. Therefore, paying attention to the primary object is essential to develop faculties to notice visiting objects or secondary objects, which is an awareness of every moment or object. Otherwise, it would be very difficult to observe an object that arises one after another with unsettled mind. In the insight meditation, it is important therefore not only to focus on one object but any object that arises through six senses and that these secondary objects are attentively noticed and noted. Noting an object, hence the reason is essential for development of insight. It is also helping to bring that scattered mind to a unified position to realise whatever is taking place at the moment of taking place. It may appear theoretically simple to unite, but in practice it can be very difficult. Therefore, it is a fundamental

part and an important key in the opening of a door to ultimate happiness. It is the technique of bare attention to note the object objectively. When noting or observing at the moment of actually taking place, it is to make a mental note of the object as you are experiencing it at that very time. The mind, however, will not remain long at the object and soon moves away to another, this is known as distraction. If the mind gets distracted, do not worry or blame yourself. You are not alone in the process but ready to start it again from the beginning each and every time.

Practice of noting is done by continuously noting an object when it occurs but without judgement, analysing or interference. For example when one sees any object just observe mentally as ‘seeing’. Once the object has been observed and fully acknowledged and noted as ‘seeing, seeing, and seeing’ rather than I am seeing. It should be done diligently, attentively, carefully, conscientiously and continuously with no further explanation, judgement or definition. When the mind is distracted, which normally does happen during meditation session, one has to be ready to start from the beginning by collecting the distracted mind and noting the distraction. Distractions can be frequent and in which case the distracted mind can be used as a meditation object in the practice of insight meditation.

Similarly, with other phenomena, like hearing sounds, at first, observe that you are hearing a sound and note that hearing of the sound as ‘hearing, hearing, hearing’ as closely as you can. You are hearing a nature of a sound rather than listening to it. Between hearing a sound and listening into a sound, that is completely different subject. One has to develop that quality of understanding. In the same way, when you smell something, observe the odour-ness of an object, notice that you are observing that smell and note it as ‘smelling, smelling, and smelling’. When you taste food, observe the flavour of the food closely, notice that flavour in a present condition and note it as ‘tasting, tasting, and tasting’. Similarly, when thought arises, observe it that you are thinking, notice it closely and note it as ‘thinking, thinking, and thinking’. Being aware of these objects and observing them closely and noticing them as they truly are, this is the practice one needs to develop. The process of this awareness is known as mindfulness. As discussed earlier this is the practice of observing, acknowledgement, noting and accepting things as they happen in every moment at an experiential level – all the worries, thoughts, feelings, emotions and understanding of it in its true nature. This unique method of cultivating awareness moment by moment of the true nature of things and phenomena at experiential level is called insight meditation.

How to begin

‘Putting a bridle on the wandering mind, single-mindedly the seeker halts his thoughts. He ends their darting waywardness and finds peace.’

Dh37

Meditation is a very special gift you give yourself and finding the right time, place and posture is fundamental. Use your time well, and get the right balance. For the beginners, however, it would not be easy to observe and know these objects at once. One won't be able to see and know it easily. It takes time and also depends on one's dedication and determination on practice. Therefore, at the beginning of practice, first of all, one has to be free from any negativity; bodily, verbally and mentally, but instead living morally and generating loving-kindness and compassion to oneself and to others, being of generous mind and having a willingness to share, being respectful to oneself and others, and being truthful to one self and to other fellow members including all sentient beings.

Secondly, a suitable time and a quiet place to meditate is very essential part to begin with. If you have never tried to notice your mind and experience a silent moment a

comfortable space is crucial to the realisation of complete serenity. A quiet place with minimum distractions and disturbances is ideal to begin with. Finding a suitable time and place may be difficult because of our structured routines but it is essential for a beginner. This will provide a meditative space that is free from noise and other distractions that will assist greatly to bring the mind back to the present moment and to focus on the meditation object. Once your mindfulness practice becomes more familiar and you are able to maintain awareness most of the time, one can maintain practice at any place and situation in daily life. Some prefer early in the morning others in the evening or both to start with. One can start with 5/10 minutes of each session. It should be increased gradually over the course of time but not more than an hour.

Choosing a comfortable meditative posture that does not lead to physical pain is essential. Although, mindfulness meditation is not just doing sitting meditation but being aware of every movement and activities in daily life, sitting meditation is very important as it will allow the body to remain in one position until the end of the meditation period. A frequent change on posture, further, is not conducive for gaining a deeper level of concentration and insight. If pain or discomfort becomes intolerable, one can change the posture

but the successful meditator should try to move as minimum as one can. A comfortable sitting posture can be either on a chair or on the floor depending on individual preferences. The sitting posture in the case of sitting on the floor is either to sit with legs crossed, right leg on top of left; or left leg inside and right leg on the front. The back should be upright but without strain. Do not allow the lower back to be flattened as it will be difficult to maintain this posture for any length of time. Just remember that whatever posture is comfortable for oneself is a good posture. Meditation is not overly concerned in developing skills to find a good posture, but to observe mind and mental activities to purify our minds. Posture is just an essential part that helps the process of purification of mind.

Once seated comfortably gently close your eyes but not tightly. Rest hands on the lap in a comfortable way. In case of sitting on the floor and legs crossed put one hand on top of the other, palms upwards. If sitting on chair, legs should be placed on the ground completely flat but do not lean on the back. One can rest hands on knees or rest on the lap one hand on top of the other. Collect your attention and relax the body from top of the head to the tips of the feet. Spend some time with the body and scan your body to become fully aware of it. Begin with top of the head, your neck, hands, chest,

abdomen, legs and feet and slowly onto your toes. Release all worries, stress and responsibilities. Notice sensations on your body, feel the existence of your physical body sitting calmly and remain at the present moment mentally and physically. Feel the greatness of the body. Feel the sensation throughout the body. Try to be completely one being with the body. This will help to develop concentration. Allow awareness of the body, and release tension wherever one feels any tension.

“The miracle is not to walk on water. The miracle is to walk on the green earth dwelling deeply in the present moment and feeling truly alive”

-Thich Nhat Hanh

Tip One:

Just with a body

Choose a suitable time and leave all responsibilities during that chosen time.

Choose a quiet place, free from any electronic devices, allowing yourself complete silence.

Sit in a comfortable and relaxed position. It is very important to sit with a relaxed body.

Gently close your eyes and spend some time with the body. Just feel the sitting body, the different sensations, and the different movements in your body.

Feel sensation and just pay bare attention to every feeling within the body. Try to live with the body.

Practice this for few minutes and open your eyes. Observe different feeling before and after this practice.

MEDITATION OBJECT

*Dwelling in the cave of the heart, the mind,
without form, wanders far and alone.
Those who subdue this mind are liberated
from the bonds of Mara.
Dhp 37*

The above stanza gives an insight into the nature of mind that exists nowhere but everywhere. To tame such a wild mind scattered far and wide, wandering off and easily getting lost in thoughts, the mind needs something to play on or be with. The untrained mind moves without purpose from one unrelated object to another, restless, disconnected and transient. In order to bring into the moment of now, therefore, it needs an object, which can be sensed, can be observed clearly and engaged with. It is the primary object of meditation called *arammana* in *Pali*. It is a starting point of contemplation that begins with bare attention on the given meditation object. It can be anything; solid or liquid, air or water that acts as an anchor for development of mindfulness, a process of learning to work skilfully with the mind. This helps to bring that scattered and ruminating mind to one meditative object in order to minimize its activities and find quietness. Meanwhile, whatever other objects arise through the six senses; eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind, are

known as secondary objects of meditation, which should be observed objectively, noted in its true reality and let go once fully acknowledged.

At the initial stage, however, once the body is fully relaxed, there would be obvious movements that can be noticed. Among those natural movements are the breath coming in and the breath going out. Meanwhile, when breathing in the abdomen will automatically rise and when breathing out the abdomen will naturally fall. Whichever object is stronger either breath or the abdomen can be object of meditation. In this booklet, the process of inflation and deflation of the abdomen or rising and falling of the abdomen due to air coming in and going out, which is natural, constant and can easily be noticed and observed by its true nature will be introduced as a primary or main object of meditation practice. Attentively feel the sensation, perceive the growing process of the abdomen and observe it by establishing mindfulness at the navel where the abdomen inflates and deflates. When the abdomen rises, bring it to your attention, be fully aware of the sensation of the rising process, observing it closely and noting the inflated abdomen as 'rising'. There is just bare attention of the process and acknowledgment of the rising moment of the abdomen as it occurs. The process of rising should be simultaneous with the

noting of the mind. It should not be one after another or before or after.

It is important to remember to bring your attention to the rising of the abdomen in a relaxed way; get a deep feeling on the rising moment. It should not hold the process or generate upon it or impose any tension on the process. It is just a natural process that is taking place due to air. The result of the bare attention and being aware of the rising moment will gradually settle the mind down. It is a natural awareness of what is happening and when it is conditioned to happen. Similarly, when the abdomen deflates and it falls. Bring it to your attention, feel the sensation, perceive the falling process and observe it by establishing mindfulness at the navel where the abdomen deflates. Become fully aware and note that deflation as ‘falling’, as it occurs simultaneously make a mental note of it. The rising and falling of the abdomen are the initial objects of meditation practice to unsettle the mind. It is a tool unifying the ruminating mind for greater use, and to cut the streams of any negative thoughts. This is the first stage of developing awareness.

It should be remembered here, however, that the important point is to maintain mindfulness of the rising and falling of the abdomen rather than breathing in and out. Being aware of movement due to the pressure of the air element

which is subject to the laws of impermanence, suffering and insubstantially is an essential part of this practice. The breathing process, nevertheless, as a meditation object is also one of the effective initial objects of meditation that is widely practiced in Buddhism and in general. Only one object at one time will help to develop the mature mind, which will play an essential role in cultivating an open mind and full acceptance of its true nature. Therefore, in this practice it is introduced to focus on rising and falling of the abdomen as the basis for development of mindfulness and awareness.

At the beginning, it may not be easy to notice these rising and falling activities of the abdomen due to an unstable, distracted mind despite the natural fact that it happens simultaneously with the breath. If one can observe the process of rising and falling, then there is no problem, but in case of an inability to observe or to notice the rising and falling movements, which does happen to beginners, then the hand can be a useful tool to feel the motions by placing it on abdomen gently. Once the palm is placed gently on the abdomen, physical contact will help to feel the movements of abdomen, and then try to notice the rising and falling movements. However, be careful that the process should be natural and normal. One should not try to force breathing, or hold the breath, or generate long or short breaths, or put

undue pressure on the abdomen, but let the breathing process flow rhythmically and naturally that effects to the moment of abdomen. Know its real nature as it inflates or deflates that does not require any effort. Breathing should be free of any kind of activities rather than just being aware of the process. The reason behind this is that if the meditator were to control breathing process as one wish then not only it will be unnatural, it will also make one tired quickly and bored. Further, it is not a breathing exercise like *pranayama* that we are trying to develop but mental exercise to quieten the restless mind. Therefore, let it flow naturally as it is with no unnatural intervention and observe it closely as it happens. Know it as it truly is, diligently and patiently.

*When we live in the present, we can always be
alert to bad thoughts and bad deeds by
developing an awareness of living in the
present; we can come to know ourselves.*

- Jane Hamilton, A Meditator's Dairy

Tip Two:

Observation of the Abdomen

Gently close your eyes and relax from top of the head to the tips of the toes. Bring your attention to the present abdominal movement.

When you breathe in the abdomen rises. Attentively notice it as rising in a relaxed way, feel the sensation, perceive the rising process and observe it by establishing mindfulness at the navel where the abdomen rises.

When you breathe out the abdomen falls. Notice it as falling. Bring it to your attention, feel the sensation, perceive the falling process and observe it by establishing mindfulness.

Observe the abdomen as it rises and falls. Establish mindfulness on it. Notice as it happens. Not as you want it to happen.

At the end of the period, sit quietly for a minute or two and reflect on your experiences during meditation and prepare for normal life.



DISTRACTION

The right attitude of practice is that the distraction itself becomes a subject of meditation object.

The true nature of distraction is deviation of mind from the primary object to a secondary object by grasping or generating one object after another. In other words, the mind never remains on one object but always sneaks away from the object. Continued distractions or non stopping engagement on thoughts are the cause of stress, depression and unhappy situations. Therefore, mindfulness will help the meditator to understand the distraction and narrows mental activities down in order to use that energy in a right way to deal with our stressful busy daily schedule.

The mind will not exist without objects. Mind only exists when there is something and we allow it to be entertained with the subject. It is very important to know that the mind is where our thoughts are, which are countless and boundless. As a result, the mind rarely remains still but wanders off far and wide like a wild animal unless skilfully tamed. Unskilled, countless and boundless wanderer, the mind ultimately dwells either in the past or in an illusory future and always tends to move away from the present

moment. In fact, only here and now exists, neither the past nor the future exists as described earlier.

In meditation practice your mind is engaging in thought processes. Thinking again and again repeatedly observes that the thinking mind is thinking. Acknowledge that your mind is thinking and gently note its nature of thinking as it is being achieved at the very moment. In case of the mind flowing into the past, accept it that you are in the past memories and acknowledge it. Similarly, if you are planning for the future, accept it as you are planning for the future and acknowledge it. Once properly observed, acknowledge and note its true nature. Finally, let it go and bring the mind back to the present moment, establishing awareness of the rising and falling of the abdomen. Therefore, always be ready to start from the beginning, whenever there has been a distraction.

This process of observing, acknowledging, noting and letting go of the very moment of any sensation, feeling or emotion is the key for the development of insight. Once the process is fully understood and the true nature of each and every distraction has been realised, one would be able to deal with any situation that one may face in their daily lives. For example anger, first of all one needs to observe that one is getting angry. At that moment, one needs to stop being with

the body rather than the thought of anger. Anger generates heat in the body, breathing becomes unnatural, the heart beats faster and the pulse beats stronger. So, one can observe that anger by observing the changes either breathing, heat in the body or heartbeat whichever feels greater. Observe it with our full effort and acknowledge that feeling of anger. When the anger is fully acknowledged mentally note it as anger. Observing helps to realise what is happening. Acknowledging assists to distract from the first object that caused the feelings of anger and noting will help to understand the reality of anger not a cause of anger. In most of the cases, anger generates when something happens against one's wish or not according to one's wish. Noting the anger will help to realise this fact and assist to react mindfully rather than be possessed by the anger.

Meditation is not oriented towards goals as mentioned earlier but allows things to happen with a neutral acceptance of the fact. Human nature has an attitude of craving, desire and want. There is a misunderstanding about meditation that expects a blank mind, or mind with no thought, or complete eradication of unwanted feelings and emotions. Consequently, during meditation when the stream of distraction follows, this generally creates in new meditators more miseries and tension that is caused by the pushing away

of these distractions when what they had hoped for was quietness and inner peace. Further, meditator chooses meditation object to meditate but distraction chooses meditator to distract from meditation object. Therefore, one has to develop a skill to observe, see and know these distractions as and when they appear. One's own diligent practice will help to understand and observe the nature of these occurrences.

One of the most important factors of understanding of the distraction or the right attitude of practice is that the distraction itself becomes a subject of meditation object in insight meditation. However, one needs to develop right understanding of it because a distracted mind will never assist to realise insight.

Tip Three:

Noting Distraction

Every moment when the mind is distracted, do not worry, allow it to occur. Accept its occurrence and acknowledge it by noting it and letting it go

In case of the thoughts, accepting its occurrence and acknowledge it by noting it and letting go and then coming back to the primary object, rising and falling of the abdomen.

Feeling the rising and falling is one thing, thinking about it is another, so, make sure you feel it not think it.

We are not controlling breathing for the abdomen to rise or holding the breath or controlling its fall but trying to let the breath flow naturally.

Our only job is to allow it and just pay bare attention to it.

MENTAL NOTE

In the insight meditation, it is not important to name the word or what one sees but the observation and make a mental note of it. So, bare attention, being aware and being mindful are vital processes in the practice and development of insight meditation.

When one is concentrating on the rising and falling of the abdomen, it is obvious that the mind will wander or thoughts arise, which is the natural habit pattern of the mind. Doubt may arise. Why am I doing this? How long is it going to be? What will happen after this? Have I closed the door? When will my food will be ready? And so on. One should not be disappointed and get angry with these types of distractions, but should establish mindfulness on the distraction itself. Normally, the practitioner chooses a primary object for establishing mindfulness, whereas, secondary objects, generally known as distractions, choose the practitioner. In this case, be aware and gently observe these distractions intuitively. Allowing these distractions to occur and accepting them with equanimity is the right attitude. Acknowledge the distraction and notice it as it really is with a neutral mind. In case of thoughts, for example,

notice it as ‘thinking..., thinking..., thinking...’ Three to four times of making a mental note of the distraction will help to know it closely and the distracted thoughts generally will stop. Once fully observed, acknowledged and noted in its present moment, it will stop generating further thoughts but establishes with the present moment of awareness. The mind knows the thought and becomes fully awake to the present moment with that acceptance of thought. Bring that fully awakened noted mind back to the primary object, which is rising and falling of the abdomen rather than letting it float away along with different thoughts after thoughts. Therefore, while these thoughts arise, observe them clearly with bare attention, acknowledging non-judgementally and note it as ‘thinking..., thinking..., thinking...’ Once fully mindful of the present thought, it generates awareness. Completely aware of the thought generate understanding of its character and when fully understood the true nature of the thought, which is bound to change sooner or later, one would let the thought go naturally. Finally, when the mind will be completely detached from the thought bring that conscious mind of the present moment back to primary object rising and falling of the abdomen.

However, if one does not realise it soon that the mind has wandered off, one should not worry or creating negative

thought against oneself but just relax and wait until awareness comes back and establish mindfulness on the present object. When the mind becomes aware of the present moment, observe it closely, acknowledge its presence and note it as thinking... thinking... thinking. If one sees something or someone in a meditative state then exercise mindfulness and note as seeing... seeing... seeing... Sometimes, you may experience that you are thinking but unable to acknowledge it clearly. In such a case, mentally note as ‘perceiving... perceiving... perceiving’. Any other sensations, for example, pain, itchiness, heat, cold, should also be noted as they occur. A similar process applies to any distraction that may arise during meditation.

Whatever is the situation at any given moment, be aware and be mindful of the situation without losing the mindfulness. It is obvious however, that while meditating one definitely faces discomfort such as itches, aches, pain and the like. One needs to be fully alert at the very moment of occurrence of that and observe its true nature in order to overcome the discomfort. With the inability to note the moment of arising of that feeling of discomfort, one cannot be aware of the feeling, and this may lead to series of thoughts generating the deluded mind to consider that pain is in the mind or ‘I am in pain.’

The rising and falling process has three natural stages that are beginning, remaining and dissolving. When the abdomen is rising, the beginning, middle and end of the rising process has to be closely and carefully observed, acknowledged and noted as it is occurring. Being aware of the process from the beginning to the end as if you are seeing it through open eyes is fundamental for the development of concentration of the mind which will automatically generate insight wisdom and clear vision. Similarly, one has to be aware and be mindful of the falling process from the beginning to the end, observing it closely and carefully. One has to follow the process of rising and falling constantly and continuously with no gaps or lapses in between. The rising movement and the observing mind should be happening simultaneously like an arrow hitting the target, similarly, the falling movement process. Further, once the mind has fully established on this process one can extend one's observations to realise the vibrations of the whole body and the effects of inflation and deflation of air. Gradually one will be able to understand the true body inside the body. Its process of existence moment by moment and the gradual changes that take place moment after moment generating a sense of gratitude. Begin to appreciate the body and its support for our comfortable life. Become one with the body and generate

love and compassion to oneself. This is a part of the body contemplation (*Kayanupassana*).

‘No one can make me angry without my permission,’ is the statement that helps to understand all those unpleasant feelings, anger, hate, frustration and so on. Furthermore, the inability to accept things that are against one’s wishes or hopes generates these negative feelings. Things that come into contact with our senses generate feelings, whether negative or positive. When our eyes make contact with visible objects, our ears make contact with sound, our nose makes contact with smell, our tongue makes contact with taste, our body makes contact with substance and our mind makes contact with thoughts then these occurrences generate a condition to feel the existence of objects. Such as when the mind makes contact with thoughts of memories, it vibrates the mind’s consciousness and feels the existence of thought. So, thoughts arise, which is conditioned. A thing that is conditioned is condition to change. When thought arises observe the thought, acknowledge it as thinking. Similarly, when dreaming, planning, hoping and any positive thoughts that may occur acknowledge them as they truly are. Likewise feelings of boredom, anger, unhappiness or resentment acknowledge them in their reality of that condition, acknowledge that condition to exist, note them as to their true

nature that is subject to change and make a mental note of it. If experiencing a pleasant feeling observe and acknowledge it as it is. There should no personal opinion or judgement involves but only clear understanding of its true nature objectively.

On the other hand, if experiencing an unpleasant feeling, not having as one would wish, acknowledge that you are unhappy or feel the chemical change with the body and notice any unusual change in the body. Similarly, a pain, grief, lamentation, itchiness and sadness cause changes in the body. Breath becomes stronger, body heats up, the pulse quickens. Acknowledge that condition and know it as it is. If experiencing a neutral feeling know it as it is. Whatever feelings you are having both outwardly and inwardly understand their origin and dissolution. Therefore, when one observes the condition of making contact with external objects, one will be able to notice it before the observation generates emotions. It is down to the individual who is able to capture those conditions before they generate further explanation. In the practice of meditation, whenever these sensations or feelings or ability to observe these conditions one has to leave the attention from rising and falling and pay attention to those feelings objectively rather than generating any negativity towards it. Observing it objectively,

acknowledging it fully and noting it as its nature of impermanence. This is called the contemplation of feeling (*Vedananupassana*).

During most of our daily activities, we are evaluating people at work, on the street, at the supermarket; on the basis of their appearance or the way they are acting. We are judging each and everything that we see, hear, smell, eat or touch and make conclusions depending on brief observations and our limited knowledge and understanding of natural facts. We are very judgemental towards liking and disliking and dividing into little pieces, which causes more stress, anxiety, and guilt. There arises a desire for acceptance and a desire for denial, arising from the duality within us. Desire to get and desire to possess are directly generated from the development of a feeling of liking or lust -the attitude of 'I want.' Negligence and denial are the results of a disliking attitude or hatred - the attitude of 'I don't want.' Dependence on these feeling because of ignorance of not knowing the changing nature of all phenomena, the mind generates a desire of liking and disliking, preference and prejudice towards the object.

In the practice of insight meditation one has to develop concentration to realise any sensation, feeling, emotion and so on. Further, if one delves a little deeper into it one will be

able to see a mind that is conditioned with lust, hatred and delusion, a deluded mind. As a result, there is a lack of clarity in the mind. For the mind to be free from these mental hindrances, whatever our mental states are, contemplate on it closely and be mindful of it. Similarly, whatever mental conditions are there, just be aware of those conditions. Observe the conditions, acknowledge the nature of their existence as they are and make a mental note of them; empty the mind of lust and hatred, and for complete clarity let them go. Skilfully observing mental activities to any feeling is known as contemplating on the mind or *cittanupassana*.

Most of the time at the beginning of practice, there is often a tendency to get tangled in thought, which causes more misery and un-easefulness. Due to lack of understanding one grasps, clings and attaches with all the mental activities that arise in the mind as ‘me’ and ‘mine’. The possessiveness of any feelings, it could be vibration, sensation or energy in the body or feeling with a definition of individual selfishness. One identifies with the thinking process as ‘I am’, ‘mine’ and ‘me’, rather than seeing these for what they are, mental processes and their activities, which do not remain permanent. Grasping its existence as a permanent substance and generating thought after thought from just a little dislike or preference to the object results a more miserable mind, not

the clarity that we seek. Right understanding of this process is that nothing remains the same. Realisation of the impermanence of nature is essential in the development of wisdom that awakens us from the misery of our world.

Furthermore, when mindfulness is fully developed the practitioner will be able to distinguish the object into what is mind and what is matter. Fully developed awareness assists to understand the true nature of the moment of the object. Observation of the object is the matter. Knowing that it is observed is mind. Therefore, there is only the observation and the observed in insight meditation. Only an observed non-judgemental mind becomes free from attachment to anything that comes into contact with our senses or worldly phenomenon. Not clinging to anything but becoming completely detached inwardly and outwardly from all hindrances with complete understanding of materiality and mentality, is known as contemplation of natural phenomenon or *Dhammanupassana*. This moment one will be able to understand true nature of any discomforts, stress, depression or any sufferings and its cause and solutions. To diagnose illness it should be realise that it is an illness and fully understood as it is illness. When it is fully realised prescribe medicine to cure it. Similarly, any sufferings, problems, dissatisfactions, anger and all negativities are also should be

realised, understood to find a way to diagnose it. Mindfulness of meditation is a path leading to diagnose root level of causes, ignorance and lack of wisdom.

Insight meditation is paying close attention to the present moment, which means being fully aware of all activities of six senses; eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind. It is the dynamic art of paying attention to daily life performances even very small activities like brushing teeth, combing hair, drinking, and eating, rather than doing things mechanically without being aware of our actions or without being mindful. Consciously try to be present at the present moment with bare attention and an attitude of radical acceptance. Clearly comprehending everything that we are experiencing in our day to day life, emotions of the pleasant, the unpleasant, neutral feelings, turmoil, anxiety, sadness and so on, are created because of contacts with our six-senses. Therefore, it is very important to be aware of every activity such as standing, walking, talking, sleeping and sitting in order to establish a balanced mind. So, if one can really learn to practise mindfulness and be aware of every activity in every moment of life then meditation becomes a way of life which leads to a completely peaceful and happy life.

Tip Four:

Noting the Moment

*Bring your attention to the rising and falling of the abdomen.
Feel the sensation.*

*Experience the present moment with the help of rising and
falling of the abdomen; here and now.*

*If you are having thoughts, acknowledge it by noting it as
thinking, thinking, and thinking.*

*Similarly, whatever sensations are there, just be aware of
that sensation. Observe that sensation as it is and make
a mental note of them as they are.*

*Do not think about the past or about the future but experience
the present moment with the help of rising and falling
of the abdomen.*

*If thoughts are there, just know that you are having thoughts,
acknowledge it and come back to the primary object.*



WALKING MEDITATION

The practice of walking meditation is the first stage of learning to be mindful and being aware of activities in our daily life. It is also a practice that brings a balanced mind with eyes closed and eyes opened. It offers a relaxed moment and helps to develop self confidence to carry on with one's aims, and supports and encourages us to work with full effort and energy for the achievement of a completely balanced mind, to be mindful and alert as in sitting meditation.

We are accustomed to the culture of production, selling, buying and running around ruled by the clock. Our mind is always rushing at its full capacity. Most of the time, we are aimlessly walking on the earth. Each step that you take is full of all the negatives; anger, hate, stress, frustration and depression. With these tendencies and walking aimlessly it is undoubted that one could not be happy. One needs to generate a natural relaxed walk. Every walking step filled of loving-kindness and compassion. Fully aware and mindful of each and every step that one is taking. Stopping at every step and fully being aware of it. The Most Venerable Luangpor Sod, a meditation master once said, ‘when you stop you have arrived.’ Similarly, every journey starts here. In other words, to get to the destination the journey starts here and now. It is very hard to notice any distortions on a wheel which is spinning at full speed, our mental activities in our daily life are even harder to notice than a spinning wheel. Therefore, walking slowly in a natural way brings the mind to the point of full concentration and awareness of surroundings. Slow walking enables us to be aware of our movement and activities around us. It is not just a physical movement but also allows us to observe our mental activities.

In the practice of walking meditation, bring your attention to the moving foot, observe its movement and notice

it with sharp attention and awareness as it moves. There are many stages of practicing walking meditation. However, three initial stages of practice would be enough to begin with.

1. Normal walking, being aware of right foot and left foot while it is moving forward.

2. Noticing steps, being aware of lifting of a foot and placing a foot on the ground.

3. Noticing steps, being aware of lifting, moving forward and placing a foot on the ground.

Practicing walking meditation also involves awareness of standing, walking, turning and the intention of movements. During the practice of walking meditation our eyes are open so it is very easy to be distracted, you can note the distraction and carry on not looking around during practice of the meditation, seeing but not seeing. The practice of walking meditation increases gradually depending upon individual progress through the stages of intention, focusing on heel up, lifting, moving, lowering, placing and pressing.

It is very important not to close your eyes while doing walking meditation but you may close them when practicing the standing position.

Tip Five:

Practice of walking Meditation

Body standing still, gently close your eyes. Do not bend the head too low.

Bring your attention to the top of the head, feel the sensation and mentally note 'Standing'. Scan the body from top of the head to the tips of the toes. Repeat it three times.

Now bring your attention to the eyes and slowly open them looking just a metre ahead.

Bring your attention to the feet and slowly start walking with a sharp mental note of feet; 'right' and 'left'.

Walk slowly and being aware of each and every walking step.

Practice for 5 minutes and then change your practice to other mindfulness practice.

Increase it gradually- intending, heel up, lifting, moving, lowering, placing, and pressing.

RIGHT ATTITUDE OF PRACTICE

*If you have time to breath,
you have time to meditate
-Ajahn Chah*

Insight meditation, *Vipassana* Meditation is learning to let things, moods, feelings and emotions go skilfully. The Transcendental mental state is free from desire and craving, frustration, resentment, craving for the pleasant, not wanting to experience unpleasant feelings or wanting to know things that one may have read or heard of and so on. It is complete acknowledgement and observation of things that happen at the present moment, whether pleasant or unpleasant or of any distractions. It is complete awareness and remaining patiently at the present moment, without drifting away along thoughts of either the past or the future. It is neither creating nor generating anything, nor rejecting objects that senses have observed, but just paying bare attention to the present moment. Creating is the cause of greed. Rejection is the cause of aversion and delusion. These are the root causes of defilements that keep beings in the cycle of life after life – a world of *Samsara*.

The past is gone, it cannot be changed. It is a memory. The future has yet to come, just a dream or illusion. The present moment of here and now is the only fact that is true and real. So experience the present moment by gently letting go of memories, which are generated by personal attachment to certain incidents and let go of future thought, which is illusory and yet to come. It would not be helpful in our search to find peace or satisfaction. The present moment is the body and mind.

Therefore, mindfulness of each activity will assist to generate awareness of the body that exists only at the present moment. The present mind with no greed, aversion or anxiety is the moment of true meditation that one tries to develop by just being here and now, which leads to the complete peace and full understanding. This direct experience of one's own reality of mind and body, this self-realisation as if seeing things with eyes wide open, not just in an ordinary way but seeing things as they really are in ultimate truth, not as they seem to be is the purpose of Insight meditation. This realisation will stop us reacting blindly to any sensation, emotion and feeling, will release us from our judgemental attitude and the generation of negativities, defilements, and illusions and finally one is released from the miseries of life and death and experiences true happiness.

Tip Six:

Noting change

Be aware of the change with a neutral mind and observe the change. It is necessary to be awake and alert.

Everything changes including our emotions and feelings.

Understanding this nature of change is to be free from grasping, clinging, and liking or disliking.

To pay bare attention to every change and to be at the presence of every change

Alertness at every moment is complete mindfulness which leads to complete happiness, free from anxieties, worries and stress.

“Oh bhikkhus! in going forward and in going back, in looking straight on and in looking away from the front, in bending, in stretching, in wearing, in carrying, in eating, in drinking, chewing, savouring, in walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking, speaking, keeping silent, thus, one remains mindful.”

- Satipatthana sutta



BUDDHISM

Buddhism, the philosophy of awakening, is the teachings of the fully awakened one, awakened completely from miseries through inner peace. Buddhism, therefore, is not a religion in the same sense in which the term religion (*religio*) is commonly understood in the West, which means ‘respect for what is sacred, reverence for the gods’ or obligation, the bond between man and the gods but a way of life. Although, there are many explanations, however, the proper definition of the word religion, is ‘reverence for God or the gods, careful pondering of divine things according to Max Muller (<http://wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion#Definitions>).

Buddhism, on the other hand, is the teachings of the Buddha, the man who transformed himself into a superhuman being through perfecting the 10 perfections or completeness of *generosity, morality, renunciation, insight wisdom, acceptance, honesty, resolution, loving kindness-compassion and equanimity*, rather than through a bond to God, or reverence for God.

Buddhism is, therefore, also known as the way of good conduct brought about by mental development, cultivation of good actions and walking the path that leads to the perfect peace. That way is known as meditation.

THE FOUNDER

In all the major world religions, there is someone who is regarded as the great leader or teacher of that religion. Some of these teachers are called Founders, Son of God and Prophet of God depending on their efforts for the development of new faith. There are also a few religions where they regard themselves as the God, who was reborn in human form to save humans from their sins. The Buddha, however, the founder of Buddhism (*Traditionally Buddha-Dhamma*) is an enlightened and fully awakened being who was neither a god, nor a prophet of a god, nor a messenger but a compassionate teacher who taught compassion, love, good will and showed the way to achieve ultimate happiness, unborn, undying, deathlessness which everyone is capable of achieving, the Buddha-nature, complete silence and inner peace. This is the nature of the mental state that every one of us has a capability to achieve - the state of *Buddhahood* - depending on individual effort and perfection. The recent historical Buddha, however, was born 2635 (AD 2012+543 = Buddhist era 2555+80) years ago in Lumbini in present day Nepal, and lived and died as a human. He had transformed

himself from an ordinary human being to supra-ordinary human being through mental training.

Buddhism does not put much emphasis on the Buddha's biography but concentrates on his teachings. Nevertheless, simple collections of his life scattered in the Buddhist scripture suggests that The Buddha's, given name was prince *Siddhattha* (*Sanskrit: Siddharth*), family name *Gotama* and was born to one of the leading men of the Kingdom of *Kapilavatthu*. It is said that he was provided with every pleasure he could desire. He was married at the age of 16 to Princess *Yasodhara* and at the age of 29 years had a son called *Rahula*. One night the Prince *Siddhattha Gotama* walked out of his comfortable life and became an ascetic 'a holy man' (*brahmachariya*) on a quest of finding the way to liberation and to complete inner peace.

The scripture suggests that when Prince Siddhattha had chance to see the world outside the palace life, he saw human life as only a grim cycle of suffering, which began with the trauma of becoming and proceeded inevitably to aging, illness, sorrow, corruption and death. Realising this universal fact that no one is exempt from this, he crept away in his 29th year of age without saying goodbye to his wife, his son and his family. It was as though he did not trust himself his own determination to leave palace in search of salvation in case

his wife requested him to stay. Further, no one can achieve higher knowledge without sacrifice. Once the Siddhattha left the luxurious life, he travelled in his quest of understanding the true nature of life for six years.

The scripture records his quest in different discourses, particularly in *Pali* scripture that provides detailed information about his practice of austerity during his search, his determination and dedication. The scripture also says that he had strong faith and confidence in finding the goals of his quest. His dedication and determination was firm and unshakable towards his quest of finding the ultimate reality of nature despite physical difficulties and being abandoned by his fellow ascetics etc. As a result of this determination and dedication, after six years of austerity practice his eyes opened wide, ultimate light arose in him and ever since he was known as the Buddha, which means fully awakened one, perfectly enlightened, the knower of the world and its condition.

The Buddha is not the name of a person but a title of a man who is fully awakened. Buddha from the root *budh* – means to awake. Thus, it literally means one who has fully awakened by completely extinguishing all sensual pleasures (*bhagga rago*), hatred (*bhagga doso*) and delusion (*bhagga moho*). After the enlightenment, the Sakyamuni Buddha, the

sage of the Sakya clan, travelled to cities and villages sharing his teaching which was based on social, individual and psycho-phenomenal exercises to human kind. The Buddha continued this journey until he was 80 years of age to share and spread the teaching that offers the path that leads to the end of suffering.

*“Wisdom springs from meditation;
Without meditation wisdom wanes.*

*Having known these two paths of progress and decline,
Let a man so conduct himself that his wisdom may increase.”*
- Dhammapada 282

GREATEST HOPE FOR HUMAN BEINGS

Buddhists are indeed the followers of the Buddha and of his teachings, but they do not present in the same way as the followers of other religions, beliefs and faiths. Further, the Buddha did not claim any unalterable truth, nor did he demand that his teachings should simply be accepted, taken on trust or acquired through an act of faith. He instead encouraged his followers to experiment for themselves as individuals, retaining what is useful and wholesome and abandoning what is not. He instructed his followers that

“don't go by reports, by legends, by traditions, by scripture, by logical conjecture, by inference, by analogies, by agreement through pondering views, by probability, or by the thought, 'This contemplative is our teacher.' - Anguttara Nikaya 3.65 Kalama Sutta

Inviting one to come and see, *Ehipassiko*, is one of the qualities of Buddha's teachings that provides a wide space for everyone to come and observe, investigate and question his teachings, rather than asking just 'come and believe'. It is an open question that provides enough space to doubt on his teaching. Furthermore, the Buddha always encourages

everyone to doubt, study, analyse, investigate and put into practice that which one finds useful in order to fulfil human endeavour of inner wisdom and liberation.

The Buddha's teachings, *Dhamma*, therefore, are "well-expounded", to be seen here and now. In the daily Buddhist chanting, the recollection of teachings further explains *Dhamma* that '*it is timeless, inviting everyone to come and see, leading inward. It is to be seen by the wise for themselves through self realisation*', and offers each individual to investigate within themselves rather than the external sensual world.

The birth of the Buddha is man's greatest hope for the future, since he showed the great height to which a man could reach, complete extinction of all defilements, greed, craving, hatred, anger, jealousy and illusion. He achieved this state, enlightenment, by himself through his practice with great energy and strong dedication and unshaken determination. He introduced the same way to be followed by all sentient beings for their liberation but, it seems that only a handful will possess the courage and determination to approximate his great example. Yet it is within each individual's reach and capability to follow the path he has shown and we each possess potential to understand his teachings and eventually attain the ultimate goal of sublime peace.

‘You are your own master, no one else, says the Buddha in one of the verses in the book of the path. He further says that we are a result of what we have created and what we will become is dependent upon what we are doing now. Further, ‘If you want to know your past life, look at your present condition. If you want to know your future life, look at your present actions (*Majjhima Nikaya, Cullakammavibhanga Sutta, No. 135*).’ ‘It is Intentional action’ (*Anguttara Nikaya III*) says the Buddha, “which motivates one to perform beneficial actions or unwholesome actions that defines destiny”. Therefore, we all have the same destiny, and achieve it depending on individual effort, perseverance, dedication and continual practice. if We must make the effort to walk on the guided path, rather than just holding the right signpost, which goes nowhere except running around in the continuous cycle of *samsara*.

Glimpse of Buddha's teaching

What did the Buddha teach? It is a very common question that is generally asked by newcomers into Buddhism. It is indeed a fundamental question that everyone should learn to ask in every aspect of life. Regarding Buddhism, there are different ways to respond depending on the questioner's intention and perspective. Any response however can only be a guideline or a road map. It would not be possible to find the actual answer until one gets into the car and drives along the road.

Buddhism basically is based on the three mainstays called the Triple Gem; the Buddha- one who was awakened, the *Dhamma*- truth/teachings of awakened one and the *Sangha*- a community of the fully awakened one. The Triple Gem is the cornerstone of the Buddhist's beliefs and is the most valuable possession in the spiritual armoury. A formal, ceremonial commitment is made to all three whenever one decides to follow the path of the Buddha, that is, to avoid doing any evil and unwholesome actions that harms oneself and others, basically including taking things that is not given, sexual misconduct, speaking unskillfully and taking things that delude the mind and consciousness, but to cultivate good

wholesome deeds, being kind, compassionate, generous, respecting human rights and equalities, skilful speaking that generates love and compassion and to purify the deluded mind through mindful living.

However, the core foundation of Buddhist teachings is generally understood to be Four Noble Truths (*Catu ariya sacca*). That is:

1. The fact that unhappiness exists (*dukkha*)
2. There is a cause for unhappiness (*samudaya*)
3. There is end of unhappiness (*nirodha*)
4. There is a way to find happiness (*magga*)

These Four Noble Truths are the foundation of all the teachings of the Buddha. It is the master plan or road map that leads one to find a peaceful and tranquil mind that is free from suffering and that leads one to liberation. The Way to the end of suffering that leads to the illumination of ultimate wisdom according to Buddha's instruction is to follow the Middle Way avoiding the two extremes of life (*Dhammacakkappavattana sutta, Mahavagga, p. 10, Samyutta Nikaya Vol. V, p. 420*).

'There are these two extremes that are not to be indulged in by one who has gone forth, says the Buddha. Which two?

That which is devoted to sensual pleasure with reference to sensual objects; base, vulgar, common, ignoble, unprofitable; and that which is devoted to self-affliction; painful, ignoble, unprofitable.

Avoiding both of these extremes, the middle way realised by the Buddha- producing vision, producing knowledge leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to unbinding.”

The middle path, therefore, is a fundamental teaching of the Buddha, sometimes understood as the way of life consisting of eight steps, the Eightfold Noble Path:

1. Right understanding (*Samma Ditthi*)
2. Right thinking (*Samma Sankappa*)
3. Right speech (*Samma Vaca*)
4. Right conduct (*Samma Kammanta*)
5. Right vocation (*Samma Ajiva*)
6. Right effort (*Samma Vayama*)
7. Right alertness (*Samma Sati*)
8. Right concentration (*Samma Samadhi*)

The Buddha, furthermore, taught something unique in his second sermon that impermanence is a natural fact. It is the universal truth. There is a famous Thai statement about the changing nature of all phenomena which says “*the only*

unchanged fact is change itself". Inability to understand the changing phenomenon causes dissatisfaction generally known as suffering, unhappiness or misery.

Suffering, in terms of Buddha's teaching refers to both physical and mental suffering but at a deeper level, it only refers to the mental suffering. The Buddha suggests a possible solution. Suffering or unhappiness can be reduced, according to the Buddha, only through development of selflessness/egoless-ness (non-soul identity), which the Buddha termed *anatta*. Objects that are subject to change cannot be of permanent (*atta*) entity. Hence it is selflessness, no *atta*.

The core Buddhist teaching is also summarised concisely in the verse spoken by one of his first five disciples, Ven. *Assaji* when he was asked by Venerable *Sariputta*, the Buddha's right hand assistant to be. It goes like this:

“Of things that proceed from a cause,
Their cause the Buddha has told and
Also their cessation:
Thus teaches the Great Ascetic.”

(Narada, 1988, p. 117)

The birth is suffering, the Buddha further explains the general nature of human existence and its nature of

impermanence, aging is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress and despair are suffering, associating with things disliked and separation from things liked or loved ones is suffering, not getting things that are desired is suffering, in short the Buddha said, the clinging to five aggregates; form, feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness are suffering (*Mahavagga, p. 10, Samyutta Nikaya Vol. V, p. 420*).

For 45 years The Buddha frequently instructed his listeners that these five aggregates are subject to change and impermanence. One should not be attached to them, or cling to them. These five aggregates should not be accepted or grasped as me and mine, but should be accepted as non-self because it is subject to change. It is impermanent. Learning to avoid clinging to the five aggregates is the path that leads to the ultimate happiness. Detachment from materialism is hard enough for today's consumer world, so it is certain that detachment is not a simple endeavour because of human desire and attachment to things. As a result, Buddhism emphasises the gradual development of letting go from a very basic level of learning to giving away like generosity and then learning to give greatly as a foundation for spiritual development. Learning to give things is a start of learning to give away things that belongs to us. Learning to give things

away is a path to letting go of even unwanted feelings, anxieties, emotions and sensations, discarding and completely disconnecting with it, which everyone can develop through right understanding and proper practice for complete relief.

The Buddha explained The Noble Truth of suffering, its cause that is craving for pleasure, craving for individual existence or release from our present situation, such craving can be transcended and the mind liberated from the demands of the insatiable ego, and we can find a way of life which leads to the end of sufferings. The way leading to the end of suffering is the middle path or the Noble Eightfold Path (*dukkhanirodhagamini patipada* = actions that take one to the path of ending sufferings). These are the foundation stones on which the entire *Dhamma* is based. In the study of Buddhism, therefore, a mere superficial glance or even just learning the philosophical aspects of it and repetition of words is futile unless it leads to a deep understanding, and clarity of the true nature of life. Right understanding and right practice, therefore, are fundamental tools that lead to ultimate reality. Deep understanding at experiential level of right practice is only possible through the mental cultivation known as Meditation (*Bhavana*); vipassana meditation.

THE GOAL IN BUDDHISM

*Realizing this fact let the wise man,
restrained by morality,
hasten to clear the path leading to Nibbana.*

Dh289

The entire Buddhist teaching is to recognise the suffering, *Dukkha*; and its extinction, *Nirodha*. The Buddha taught that life is ‘*dukkha*’ –suffering or dissatisfactory-ness caused by wanting, desire, craving, clinging, grasping attachment. Clear understanding of suffering and its origin and path leading to elimination of it, is the basic Buddhist declaration, this is ‘*sukha*’, happiness or lack of suffering. To eliminate it the Buddha provided a systematic way of dealing with it, which is called meditation, which facilitates one to stop clinging to the unsolved suffering and problems by understanding the true nature ‘*anicca*’- constant change of entire phenomena. Clear mind and right understanding of good and bad actions, regardless of any judgements will help to see this constant change.

Therefore, the Noble Eightfold Path; right understanding, right thought, right speech, right action, right living standard, right effort, right concentration and right

mindfulness, is the moral obligation that needs to be fulfilled through mental development and training, which leads to the elimination of three roots of defilements; Greed, Hatred and Delusion. The ultimate elimination of these three unwanted states is called *Nibbana*, the state of ultimate tranquillity of mind, which one can enjoy in this life, leaving no conditions for new existence. The Buddha said:

*‘The extinction of Greed, the extinction of anger,
and the extinction of delusion:
this indeed is called Nibbana.’ (S.N. 38)*

*“Of all the paths the Eight Fold Path is the best;
Of all the truths the Four Noble Truths are the best;
Of all things passionate passionless-ness is the best:
Of men the seeing one (the Buddha) is the best.
This is the only path;
there is none other for the purification of insight. Tread this
path, and you will bewilder Mara.”*
Dhammapada 273/274

Benefits of Loving Kindness

Monks, when the mind-deliverance of loving-kindness is cultivated, developed, made much of, made the vehicle, made the foundation, established, consolidated, and properly undertaken, eleven blessings can be expected. What are the eleven blessings?



One sleeps at ease, wakes at ease, no bad dreams, one is dear to human beings, one is dear to non-human beings, devas protects one, fire, poison, and weapons do not affect one, one's mind is easily concentrated, the expression of one's face is serene and bright, one dies unconfused, if one penetrates on high one will be reborn in the Brahma world.

Bhikkhus, when the mind deliverance of loving – kindness is cultivated, developed, much practiced, made the vehicle, made the foundation, established, consolidated, and properly undertaken, these eleven blessings can be expected.'

Tip Seven:

Meditation on Universal Love

Sit in a comfortable position, let the body relax. Place your right hand on the same side of the chest where the heart is. Feel the rhythm of your heart. Open the door of your heart like opening a flower. Feel the sensation of kindness and spread love and compassion to yourself.

May I be happy

May I be filled with loving kindness

May I be well

May I be peaceful and at ease.

Can you feel the vibrant feeling of love and compassion?

You are saying it from the bottom of your heart. You are not saying it just like parrot does. Feel it, be a best friend with yourself. Spread the love and compassion from the bottom of your heart to each and every part of the body, your whole body. You are really wishing for yourself that you will be well physically and mentally. Feel peace and tranquillity in every part of the body.

Let us forgive and forget whatever wounds there may have been caused by us to others, and to us by others. Forgive yourself and others by realising the act of wounds and accepting it and share love and compassion to all. I forgive you all.

Feel the vibration of your heart. Open your heart and share love and compassion to one and all.

Whatever beings there are, may they be happy, may they be filled with love, may they be well and may they be in peace.

Similarly, share love and compassion to all other sentient beings in the world

At the end of the meditation sit quietly for a minute or two and reflect on your experiences during meditation and come back to normal life.

It is highly recommended to practice this daily.

Veneration of the Triple Gem

*To the blessed one, the lord who fully attained perfect enlightenment,
To the teaching which he expounded so well and
To the blessed one's disciples, who have practiced well
To these- the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha
We render with offerings our rightful homage.
It is well for us that the blessed one, having attained liberation, still had compassion for later generations.
May these simple offerings be accepted, for our long-lasting benefit and for the happiness it gives us.*

*The Lord, the perfectly Enlightened and blessed one
I render homage to the Buddha, the blessed one.*

(Bow once)

*The Teaching so completely explained by him-
I bow to the Dhamma. (Bow once)*

*The blessed one's disciples who have practiced well
I bow to the Sangha. (Bow once)*

Homage to the Blessed, Noble and perfectly enlightened one. (3)

The Buddha, absolutely pure, with ocean-like compassion, possessing the clear sight of wisdom, destroyer of worldly self-corruption devotedly indeed, that Buddha I

revere the Teaching of the Lord, like a lamp, illuminating the path and its Fruit: the Deathless that which is beyond the conditioned world devotedly indeed, that Dhamma I revere.

The Sangha, the most fertile ground for cultivation, those who have realized peace, awakened after the accomplished one, Noble and wise, all longing abandoned devotedly indeed, that Sangha I revere.

This salutation should be made to that which is worthy;

through the power of such good action. May all obstacles disappear, one who knows things as they are has come into this world; and he is an Arahant, a perfectly awakened being. Purifying the way leading out of delusion, calming and directing to perfect peace, and leading to enlightenment- this way he has made known.

Having heard the Teaching, we know this:

Birth is dukkha, ageing is dukkha, and death is dukkha; Sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are dukkha; Association with the disliked is dukkha, separation from the liked is dukkha. Not attaining one's wishes is dukkha, In brief; the five focuses of identity are dukkha.

These are as follows;

Attachment to Form, Feeling, Perception, Kamma formation, and Sense-consciousness.

For the complete understanding of this, The Blessed One, in his lifetime frequently instructed his disciples in just this way.

In addition, he further instructed:

Form, Feeling, Perception, Kamma formation, and Sense-consciousness are impermanent. Form, Feeling, Perception, Kamma formations, and Sense-consciousness are not-self.

All conditions are transient. There is no self in the created or the uncreated.

All of us are bound by birth, ageing and death, by sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair, bound by dukkha and obstructed by dukkha.

Let us all aspire to complete freedom from suffering.

RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

Ajahn Brahm, *Mindfulness, Bless, and Beyond* (Boston: Wisdom Publication, 2006)

Chris Pauling, *Introducing Buddhism* (Windhorse publications, 1993)

Mahasi Sayadaw, *The Satipatthana Vipassana Meditation* (Malaysia: Majujaya Indah SDN.BHD, 2005)

Ajahn Sumedho, *Mindfulness: the path to the deathlessness* (Amaravati, 1987)

Nyanaponika, *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* (Rider, 1969)

U Silananda, *The Four Foundation of Mindfulness* (Boston: Wisdom Publication, 1990)

Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha taught* (Gordon Fraser, 1967)

Key terms

*Anicca= impermanent, unstable, having the nature of constant change.
One of the three characteristics of conditioned phenomena*

Dukkha=literally means ‘hard to bear’; suffering, restlessness, unsatisfactoriness, disease, inability to accept the reality of changing nature, one of the three characteristics of conditioned phenomena.

Anatta= literally means ‘not-self’, one of the three characteristics of conditioned phenomena, impersonal, without individual essence. Things that change constantly never can be a solid unchanged subject.

Arammana = Object that arises from sense contact with objects, an object of consciousness.

bhagga rago = extinguish all sensual pleasures

bhagga doso = extinguish all hatred

bhagga moho = extinguish all delusion

samsara = the process of birth and death

Kamma = Volitional action, deed, activities

Tipitaka = the text that preserves Buddha's teachings in Pali language, which consist of three baskets; disciplinary rules, discourses and metaphysical teachings. It is the main scripture of Theravada school of Buddhism.

Pali = the language that is used by the Theravada school of Buddhism to preserve the memorised teachings of the Buddha, and that was believed to be in use at the time of the Buddha.

Sukha = happiness, mainly mental satisfaction and joy

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About author

Venerable Sujana was ordained into the Theravada school of Buddhism in Nepal, studied Buddhism and Buddhist Meditation in Thailand where he took higher ordination. Since his arrival in the UK as a Minister of Religion, he has been involved with different Buddhist organisations as a religious worker, teaching Buddhism and meditation and involvement in different religious and social activities. Since the establishment of the Varapunya Buddhist Society and Meditation Centre in Aberdeen he lives and teaches at the centre.

If you have ever considered learning to meditate, or want to learn what meditation is, or enquire further into Buddhism and what it has to offer the modern world, then you may wish to visit or contact the Centre for further information regarding courses and classes.

Varapunya Meditation Centre

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With bad advisors forever left behind,
From paths of evil he departs for eternity,
Soon to see the Buddha of Limitless Light
And perfect Samantabhadra's Supreme Vows.

The supreme and endless blessings
of Samantabhadra's deeds,
I now universally transfer.
May every living being, drowning and adrift,
Soon return to the Pure Land of Limitless Light!

*** The Vows of Samantabhadra ***

I vow that when my life approaches its end,
All obstructions will be swept away;
I will see Amitabha Buddha,
And be born in His Western Pure Land of
Ultimate Bliss and Peace.

When reborn in the Western Pure Land,
I will perfect and completely fulfill
Without exception these Great Vows,
To delight and benefit all beings.

*** The Vows of Samantabhadra Avatamsaka Sutra ***

Taking Refuge with a mind of Bodhichitta

**In the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha,
I shall always take refuge
Until the attainment of full awakening.**

**Through the merit of practicing generosity
and other perfections,
May I swiftly accomplish Buddhahood,
And benefit of all sentient beings.**

The Prayers of the Bodhisattvas

**With a wish to awaken all beings,
I shall always go for refuge
To the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha,
Until I attain full enlightenment.**

**Possessing compassion and wisdom,
Today, in the Buddha's presence,
I sincerely generate
the supreme mind of Bodhichitta
For the benefit of all sentient beings.**

**"As long as space endures,
As long as sentient beings dwell,
Until then, may I too remain
To dispel the miseries of all sentient beings."**

GREAT VOW
BODHISATTVA EARTH-TREASURY
(BODHISATTVA KSITIGARBHA)

**“ Unless Hells become empty,
I vow not to attain Buddhahood;
Till all have achieved the Ultimate Liberation,
I shall then consider my Enlightenment full !”**

**Bodhisattva Earth-Treasury is
entrusted as the Caretaker of the World until
Buddha Maitreya reincarnates on Earth
in 5.7 billion years.**

**Reciting the Holy Name:
NAMO BODHISATTVA KSITIGARBHA**

**Karma-erasing Mantra:
OM BA LA MO LING TO NING SVAHA**

*“Wherever the Buddha’s teachings have flourished,
either in cities or countrysides,
people would gain inconceivable benefits.
The land and people would be enveloped in peace.
The sun and moon will shine clear and bright.
Wind and rain would appear accordingly,
and there will be no disasters.
Nations would be prosperous
and there would be no use for soldiers or weapons.
People would abide by morality and accord with laws.
They would be courteous and humble,
and everyone would be content without injustices.
There would be no thefts or violence.
The strong would not dominate the weak
and everyone would get their fair share.”*

***THE BUDDHA SPEAKS OF
THE INFINITE LIFE SUTRA OF
ADORNMENT, PURITY, EQUALITY
AND ENLIGHTENMENT OF
THE MAHAYANA SCHOOL***

DEDICATION OF MERIT

May the merit and virtue
accrued from this work
adorn Amitabha Buddha's Pure Land,
repay the four great kindnesses above,
and relieve the suffering of
those on the three paths below.
May those who see or hear of these efforts
generate Bodhi-mind,
spend their lives devoted to the Buddha Dharma,
and finally be reborn together in
the Land of Ultimate Bliss.
Homage to Amita Buddha!

NAMO AMITABHA

南無阿彌陀佛

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