

# ARIYÆVÆSA SUTTA

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## INTRODUCTION

This is a new and enlarged translation of the Venerable Mahāṣo Sayādaw's discourse on the *Ariyāvāsa sutta* of *Aṅguttara Nikāya*. Therefore it differs considerably from the condensed English version which I wrote in 1980 for the Mahāṣo Translation Committee. It is far more thorough and comprehensive and it is an indication of this distinctive feature that the book contains nearly five times the number of pages in the original translation.

There is no doubt about the universal appeal of Mahāṣo sermons in Buddhist Myanmar. This is no wonder for given the Ven. Sayādaw's saintly life and his extensive knowledge of Buddhist literature, he deservedly earned the deep faith and veneration of the people. He had a flair for effective delivery of his sermons that brought home to us the fundamental teachings of Buddha-dhamma. Moreover, in his talks he often referred to little-known but highly significant Buddhist teachings that give us much food for thought.

For example, in his sermon on the *Ariyāvāsa sutta* the Ven. Sayādaw described two kinds of *bhikkhu*, viz ... the *vinaya bhikkhu* or a member of the *Sangha* and the *sutta-bhikkhu* or the disciple (*upasaka*) who lives up to the Buddha's teaching. In other words, the term *bhikkhu* is the general designation for any dedicated follower of the Buddha, be he a monk, a hermit or a lay man. This may be surprising to many Buddhists but it is quite in line with the Buddha's teaching. Says the Dhammapada, verse 142: "Whatever the garments a man may wear, he is a *brahmaṇa* or a *samaṇa* or a *bhikkhu* if he has got rid of defilements, disciplined himself, avoids doing evil and cultivates loving-kindness". Again in his dialogue with an ascetic the Buddha said that there were hundreds of his lay disciples, both men and women, who had attained the first three stages on *Ariyan* holy path. (*Mahāvaccagotta sutta*, M.N)

These are only a few of the *Pāṭi* texts that give the lie to some Western writers on Buddhism who would have us believe that the higher teaching of Buddhism is meant exclusively for the monks and that there is no place for the lay followers in its scheme for salvation.

The main topic of the Ven. Sayādaw's talk on *Ariyāvāsa sutta* is the ten *Ariya* dhammas or the ten essential attributes of the *Ariyas* or the Noble Ones. In particular the talk focuses on the practice of right mindfulness based on *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta*. Of course right mindfulness is the cornerstone of Buddhist mental culture and here it is worthy of note that the Buddhist teaching has much in common with modern psychology.

The practice of right mindfulness is generally of three kinds. In the first place, the beginner in the practice is told to make himself aware of everything, mental or physical, that occurs within the range of his sensory impressions. He has no difficulty in mentally noting pleasant feelings, desires, perceptions, etc. It is, however, otherwise in the case of unpleasant or unwholesome states of consciousness. For then his ego or deep-seated conceit stands in the way of his recognizing anything that hurts his self-esteem, - So he tends to ignore it unconsciously. Thus the unwholesome desires or emotions such as anger or envy disappear beyond the threshold of consciousness and become potential threats to mental health.

The connection between mental disorders and the unconscious which modern psychology has conclusively established was well known to the Buddha more than 2500 years ago. Hence his emphasis on the need to recognize one's own moral weakness and avoid self-deception in *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna* and other *suttas*. (See my translation of Mahāṣo Sayādaw's talk on *Sallekha sutta*.)

The second kind of mindfulness that we can hardly over-emphasize is what is known in *Pāṭi* as *ekaggatā* or one-pointedness of mind. It consists in focusing one's attention on a single idea or object for a long time to the exclusion of everything else. It forms the basis of the so-called will-power which is not, as many people believe, some mysterious mental force that some great men have acquired without any effort or practice. As the famous American psychologist William James says,

“The essential achievement of the will is to attend to a difficult object and hold it fast before the mind .... Effort of attention is thus the essential phenomenon of the will”

The vital role of one-pointed mindfulness in the making of great men is in no doubt. It is indomitable will or singleness of purpose (English words for *ekaggatæ*) that distinguishes great teachers like the Ven. Mahæso Sayædaw or great national leaders like Bogyoke Aung San. But from the Buddhist point of view it is indispensable to our welfare since it helps us to cope with the moral problems of life.

Equally essential to our moral well-being is the third kind of mindfulness or *yonisomanasikæra* which we may translate as right or proper thinking. Another appropriate English word for it is wise reflection whereby we seek to overcome intellectually the moral weaknesses that trouble us in everyday life.

Let us consider, for example, envy which the Buddha described as one of the two sources of human suffering in the *Sakkapañhæ sutta*. (See my translation of the Ven. Sayædaw's talk on the *sutta*.) Most people do not like any one who surpasses them in wealth education, power and so forth. They are unmindful of the Buddha's repeated saying that we should not consider ourselves superior or equal or inferior to any other person. Then how are we to overcome envy? In the first place, probably we may have to admit frankly that the man we envy is getting his reward for his special qualifications. If on the other hand, he has employed morally wrong devices for the fulfillment of his wish, we have no reason to envy a man whose conduct outrages our sense of moral values. Again, let us remember that more often than not the life of a successful man is marred by ill-health, unhappy marriage, etc. that overshadow his achievements and make him someone to be pitied rather than envied.

Thus the practice of *yonisomanasikæra* is based on right understanding, intelligence and knowledge. For we need to mobilize all intellectual forces in the struggle against our inner impurities.

Certainly we all owe a deep debt of gratitude to the Ven. Mahæso Sayædaw for his untiring, selfless effort to promote the knowledge of Buddhism and Buddhist meditation. But speeches and writings in praise of his life and work will not suffice to do full justice to the grandeur of a great holy teacher whose name is immortalized in the history of *Theravæda* Buddhism. What matters most for those who cherish the memory of the Ven. Sayædaw is to try to live up to his teaching.

That is our sacred duty in keeping with the tradition of the Buddha-dhamma. For as pointed out in the *Mahæparinibbæna sutta*, just before he passed away the Buddha told *Ænandæ* that the only way for his disciples to adore and honour him was to follow his teaching strictly and diligently. Therefore it is up to all devotees of the Ven. Mahæso Sayædaw to practise right mindfulness at all times and in every place. For at the very least it is the best insurance against preventable diseases and accidents that take a heavy toll of life worldwide. More important, for those who are disillusioned with *samsæric* existence it is the most reliable passport to supreme liberation.

U Aye Maung,  
Translator.

30<sup>th</sup> April, 1993. Yangon.

## DISCOURSE ON ARIYÆVÆSA DHAMMA

## SUTTA AS A GUIDELINE

My sermon to-night has its source in the Ariyævæsa sutta of A<sup>3</sup>guttara Nikæya. It is customary for us to prepare a sermon on the basis of the Buddha's talk in a *sutta*. It is possible to focus on a teaching of the Buddha without reference to any Pæ'i text in the Piṭaka. But we believe that a discourse based on an original Pæ'i text is more significant and profound.

The sermons of the Buddha are called suttas, a Pæ'i term of wide connotation. One interesting thing which it signifies is a string or a guide-line. When a carpenter is about to divide, cut into pieces or turn into any shape a log of wood, he must first mark a line. This is of course common knowledge. If, due to his over-confidence, he relies on guess-work, he will certainly make a mess of his job. The outcome will be in harmony with his desire only if he works with the help of a guide-line.

This holds true also for the study of the Buddha's teaching. The suttas embodying the Buddha's instructions are guide-lines for those who wish to practise the Dhamma. It is up to every Buddhist to follow these guide-lines in his religious life. For instance, it is the duty of Buddhists to conform to the guide-lines laid down by the Buddha for leading a morally good life. He should not invent a new system of ethics. He should observe the five precepts, viz. abstinence from killing, stealing etc. as taught by the Buddha. It is not his business to reduce or increase the number of precepts. Again, we should bear in mind the Buddha's guide-lines for developing *samædhi* (tranquility). There are forty Buddhist methods of cultivating *samædhi* and we need not seek any other technique for mental culture. The Buddha's guide-lines for the development of *paññæ* (wisdom or insight-knowledge) are manifold. He spelled them out in terms of the five *khandhæs* (groups), the *æyatanas* (the sources on which mental process depends) or *dhætu* (elements). There are guide-lines for the attainment of wisdom on the basis of the Four Noble Truths, the conditioned origination (*Paticca samuppæda*) or mind and corporeality (*næmarþpa*).

Thus the suttas serve as guide-lines for the study of the Buddha-dhamma. Just as we write on lined paper to make a script neat and tidy, so also we make it a practice to preach on the basis of *suttas* for the spiritual uplift of the lay people.

## DIFFERENT KINDS OF ARIYAS

The Buddha said, "Monks! There are ten *Ariyævæsadhammas* that form the abode of the *Ariyas* (the Noble ones). The *Ariyas* lived in these abodes in the past, they are still living there and they will live there in future". *Ariya* denotes the eight types of Noble Ones or saints and *ævæsa* means abode or residence and hence *Ariya-ævæsa* refers to the abode of Noble Ones. There are eight types of *Ariyas*, the first four in the category of those who have attained the Path (*magga*) viz. *sotæpatti*, *anægæmi*, *sakadægæmi* and *arahatta* and the other four who have attained the *phala* or fruition corresponding to each of the four paths.

As to the first four *Ariyas* who are well established on the path, it is hard to say explicitly what kind of Noble Ones they are. For the duration of their spiritual climax is a single thought-moment. With the attainment of insight-knowledge, the meditating yogi realizes *Nibbæna* at the *Ariyan* level and while having this split-second experience, he is called the *magga-ariya*. Then there follows immediately the *ariyaphala* (fruition) consciousness and from that time he is called the *phala-ariya*. In short, the *phala-yogis* are the only saints whom we can definitively point out as the *Ariyas* or Noble Ones visible in the world. This is known to most of the practising yogis but I have elucidated it because otherwise my sermon may not be comprehensive.

The *Ariyas* live in the *Ariyævæsa* or the abode of the Noble Ones. In other words, they live in accordance with the ten *Ariyævæsadhammas* proclaimed by the Buddha"

"*Katama dasa idha bhikkhave ..... suvimutta pañño .....*"

If one understands Pæ'i, it is very pleasant to hear it spoken. Some of the yogø disciples who have a fairly good knowledge of Pæ'i say that they feel ecstatic when they hear Pæ'i recitation in my sermons. We wonder how much ecstasy a disciple would have if he heard the Pæ'i words uttered by the Buddha himself. This feeling is called *dhamma-pæti* in Pæ'i. It may arise merely on hearing the Dhamma in Pæ'i or when the yogø appreciates the significance of the Dhamma that is in tune with his life experience. But for many laymen Pæ'i is difficult to understand and they tend to become drowsy in the end. So I will express my quotation in Myanmar.

"*Bhikkhus! What are the Ariyævæsa dhammas? Within the fold of my teaching the Bhikkhu who is well aware of the perils of life-cycle (saµsæra) seeks to eradicate the defilements (kilesas)*"

## TWO KINDS OF BHIKKHUS

There are two kinds of *bhikkhus*, viz. the *Vinaya bhikkhu* and the *sutta bhikkhu*. The *Vinaya bhikkhu* is of course the monk who leads a good life based on *Vinaya* rules. In the time of the Buddha the Lord himself ordained some of them by saying, "Come hither, *bhikkhu*". Most of them, however, were ordained by the *Sangha* in accordance with the *Vinaya* rules.

According to the commentaries, the *sutta-bhikkhu* is any person who practises the Dhamma to get liberated from the cycle of life. He is not necessarily a member of the *Sangha* for he may be a *deva* or a lay man. The *bhikkhu* referred to in *Ariyævæsa-sutta* is the *sutta-bhikkhu*, a term that applies to any human being, *deva* or *brahmæ* who is committed to the practice of the Dhamma.

Commitment to the Dhamma consists in the practice of morality, tranquility and wisdom (*sõla*, *samædhi* and *paññæ*). By virtue of his moral purity the yogø overcomes active defilements (*vitakkama kilesæ*) such as greed, hatred, etc. that leads to grave moral transgressions like killing, stealing, lying and so forth. The yogø who develops tranquility (*samædhi*) is able to forestall the eruption of dormant or *pariyutthana kilesæ* (defilements). Finally the yogø develops insight-knowledge and wisdom, thereby overcoming potential defilements that still lie latent in us (*anusaya kilesæ*) and arise under relevant circumstances.

The practice of the Dhamma is somewhat like cutting away a piece of wood with a small axe, each stroke helping to get rid of the unwanted fragments or digging the earth with a spade and making the heaps of earth come out one after another. Likewise, if we constantly make a note of all the psycho-physical phenomena arising from six sense-organs, the defilements become weak and wither away in due course of time. Thus when the yogø develops insight-knowledge (*Vipassanæ-paññæ*) he is in effect doing away with defilements. Such a yogø is designated a *suttabhikkhu*, regardless of his outward appearance as a layman or a monk or a *deva*.

## TEN ARIYÆVÆSADHAMMAS

According to the Piṭaka there are ten *Ariyævasadhammas* and the first of these dhammas is the elimination of five hindrances (*Nõvaraḥa*). All over the world people live in houses made of bricks, wood, cement etc., buildings that protect them from the heat of the sun, cold or rainy season, robbers, insects, reptiles and other perils of life. But there are many more dangers in the round of births (*samsæra*) if we live in an abode which, unlike the abode of *Ariyas* is devoid of security. The perils of *samsæra* are more deadly and formidable than those threatening a man who does not live in a well-protected house. The insecurity of a ramshackle house does not matter much when compared with the potential evils of *samsæra* that may follow a man from one existence to another, evils that are really very frightening. One may, for instance, land in one of the four lower worlds, as a denizen of hell, a peta or an animal or he may be reborn as a poor, wretched man who has to suffer much just for bare survival or because of the cruelties of other people. Nor is a wealthy man spared the universal evils of life, viz. sickness, old age and death. Common people cannot escape the evils that will bedevil them throughout their life-cycles. Liberation is attained only by the Buddha and the *Arahats* who practise the *Ariyævæssa*-dhammas. So the Buddha proclaimed the dhammas that would provide the best insurance against the perils of *samsæra*.

So the first *Ariyævæsa*-dhamma requires the *bhikkhu* to remove the five hindrances which I will explain later. The second dhamma calls for the exercise of self-control in regard to six sense-objects. The third dhamma stresses the need for a guard or mindfulness. We may liken the *Ariyan* abode to the home of a well-to-do man or high official who keeps guards to ensure security of life and property. The fourth dhamma points to the need for four supports. The fifth dhamma requires the *yogø* to renounce many religious systems (*paccekasacca*) other than the doctrine of the Buddha. These non-Buddhist creeds claim monopoly of truth although they do not accord with the nature of life.

The sixth *Ariyævæsa*-dhamma emphasizes the need for giving up all pursuits once and for ever. The Pæ<sup>1</sup>i text is hard to understand but it clearly insists on the renunciation of all pursuits. The pursuit of something implies lack of self-sufficiency whereas giving up all pursuits is a sign of non-attachment and self-fulfillment. The seventh dhamma says that the mind of the *yogø* in *Ariyan* abode is clear and free from confusion. The eighth dhamma is the possession of quiet bodily function (*passaddha kæya sa<sup>3</sup>khæra*). Here *Kæya sa<sup>3</sup>khæra* means in-and-out breathing. But this shows only that if the *yogø* can cover the whole range of spiritual experience, so much the better for him. What matters most is the extinction of defilements and the attainment of *Arahatship*. For in fact there are many *Arahats* who reached the supreme goal without attaining the fourth *jhæna*.

The ninth and tenth *Ariyævæsa*-dhammas under-scores the fully liberated mind and the fully liberated knowledge or the awareness of one's freedom from defilements. These two dhammas are linked together. With the full liberation of the mind, there arises simultaneously the intellectual apperception of it through wisdom.



## THE GUARD OF MINDFULNESS

Now we will begin with the third *Ariyævæsa*-dhamma because from the practical point of view it enables the yogø to understand the Buddha's teaching easily. The third dhamma emphasizes the importance of a guard in the Ariyan abode. This guard is no other than mindfulness, the essential attribute of the *Arahat*. The *Arahat* is well fortified with mindfulness (*sati*) which pervades every state of his consciousness. He is mindful of whatever he does physically, verbally or mentally. There is nothing which he does absentmindedly. Hence he never acts, says or thinks wrongly or foolishly. The *Arahat* is reputed for his constant mindfulness and the commentaries say that he is mindful even when he is asleep. But this is rather impossible and it may refer to his mindfulness just before he falls asleep and immediately after he wakes up. In any case we should note especially that the *Arahat* is always on his guard whatever he is doing at any moment in his life.

Mindfulness does not appear suddenly with the attainment of *Arahatship*. It develops gradually as a result of previous effort and practice. It is fairly well established at the *Anægæmi* stage before the yogø becomes an *Arahat* and this is due to self-training at the *sakadægæmi* level. There too the yogø possesses mindfulness for which the foundation has been laid at the *Sotæpanna* stage. In fact even at the first stage on the *Ariyan* path the yogø is quite mindful in comparison with the common people. So the *Sotæpan* yogø avoids doing evils that lead to the lower worlds. He is not yet free from sensuous desire, ill-will, hatred, conceit and greed but these are not powerful enough to end up in killing and other grave misdeeds. His unwholesome passions have become weak because of his mindfulness and self-restraint.

This is well known to those who practise meditation. Non-meditators need not have any doubt since the Buddha himself said that a *sotæpan* would never do any evil that would consign him to the lower worlds. We know fairly well from experience that what the Buddha said is quite true. The yogø can find it out for himself if he practises mindfulness seriously. When he has made some progress in his practice, he knows what it means. At the sight of a pleasant object, he craves for it and in the face of an unpleasant object he resents it. For he is not yet free from greed and hatred. But when these emotions become violent, his mindfulness stands him in good stead and helps him restrain them. Thus they lose their momentum and become weak. They are not beyond control as in the case of common people. Although greed and hatred occasionally arise, these defilements are not potent enough to make the yogø capable of killing, stealing or telling a lie harmful to the welfare of other people. Hence the Buddha's emphasis on the moral invulnerability of a *sotæpan* at the initial stage of the holy path.

## THE HERESY OF A POPULAR WRITER

A well-known Myanmar writer has recently expressed his mistaken view about the *sotæpan Ariyas*. Some readers might have come across his writings. Probably puffed up with pride for his literary reputation, he has written nonsense to the point of saying that it is possible for a *sotæpan* to commit homicide. His view is downright degrading to the spiritual status of a *sotæpan* and we wonder at his senseless audacity. He has aggravated the damage to the Buddha's teaching by writing not only in Myanmar but also in a local English magazine. We are concerned that foreigners might have a low opinion of Myanmar and the responsibility for it rests in part with the editors who accepted the article that is harmful to the interest of our country and our religion. Such an article might express the cherished view of the writer but the editors should not have given publicity to it.

Today we are promoting the study of the Buddha's teaching on a high scale that reached its climax in the convention of the Sixth Buddhist Council. As for the practice of the Dhamma we are giving instructions that stress the need for empirical approach to mediation. Foreigners from all over the world are coming to Myanmar to study and practise the Buddha-dhamma. At first some went to India and Sri Lanka. They did not get any help in India and in Sri Lanka there was no one to guide them thoroughly. Then at last on the advice of some Buddhists in those countries they came to

Myanmar and when they practised meditation they found it agreeable and satisfying. There have been many such foreign yogis at our meditation centre.

At a time when there is the nationwide movement for the renaissance of Buddha-dhamma in Myanmar, the aforementioned view of the writer linking the *Sotāpan Ariya* with homicide is damaging to the *Ariyan* Noble Path of the Buddha. The Hindus of India strictly uphold the doctrine of *Ahimsa* that forbids ill-treating or killing any living being. In the time of the Buddha they applied the doctrine even to plant life, saying that plants too have sensibilities like human beings. So in order not to alienate them the Buddha prohibited the monks from destroying grass and trees. Give this strict commitment to the doctrine of *Ahimsa* or non-violence, even among ordinary people it is absurd to say that a *Sotāpan Ariya* would possibly still take life if necessary.

In fact a true *Sotāpan* never takes life nor does he violate other precepts such as those against stealing, sexual misconduct, lying or intoxicating drinks under any circumstance. Yet the writer I have referred to insists on the possibility of the *sotāpan's* moral relapse in regard to five precepts saying that his view is based on his long-time study of human psychology. He apparently regards himself as a *sotāpan* and has studied his own mind. Moreover, he is said to be an alcoholic. Therefore he seems to have incorporated his moral outlook into his view of the *sotāpan Ariya*. There is a Myanmar saying that if our attitude to a man is to be correct, we should project our desires, feelings, etc. on him. But this is true only in the case of two men who resemble each other in many respects. It is certainly impossible for an ordinary man to count on his used knowledge of, say, mathematics for comparing himself with a specialist in the subject. Likewise a common man's opinion of a *sotāpan* will be wide of the mark if it rests entirely on his experience.

#### THE SATIPATTHANA METHOD

Because of his mindfulness the *sotāpan* can restrain his greed, ill-temper and delusion. He is always on his guard against his latent defilements which cannot therefore overpower him to the extent of ruining his moral character. So he is assured of immunity to gross passions and freedom from fear of the lower worlds. Such are the advantages of mindfulness.

The *sotāpan* is always mindful because he has regularly practised mindfulness since the time he started meditating as a good worldling (*kalyāṇa puthujjana*). Indeed he has disciplined his mind fairly well before he attains the first stage on the holy path. He makes it a practice to note all the psycho-physical phenomena that arise from his sensory contact with the external world. This is the *Satipatthana* (applications of attentiveness) method that requires the yogi to be aware of all the mental and physical events that occur to him during his meditation. We have simplified the method so that it may not present any difficulty to the yogis. For how can we expect the ordinary ill-informed man to be able to contemplate in detail corporeality, consciousness, mental factors (*cetasika*), etc. His contemplation will not lead to anything worthwhile and meaningful in his religious experience. So we teach the *Satipatthana* method simply and plainly as did the Buddha.

*"Gacchanto vā gacchamāti pajānāti .... know that you are walking when walking...."*

This is the simple instruction of the Buddha in *Satipatthana sutta*. It does not say that the yogi should know the fact of walking only after analysing the inner corporeality, consciousness and so forth. The Key Pāli word in the Buddha's instruction is *"gacchāmi"* which needs special attention. It literally means "I go or I walk" and should not be translated as "Mind and body go or walk". So says the Ven. Ledo Sayādaw in his *"Anatta Dōpano"*. (A treatise on *Anatta* Doctrine) "In the posture for carriage of body (*iriyapatha*), one should walk focusing his attention on his feet and noting 'I walk'. Not a single step should be taken unmindfully. "This instruction was criticized by the author of a large book that appeared a year ago. He rejected Ledo Sayādaw's explanation on the ground that it refers to the first person. "I" This is tantamount to repudiating the word of the Buddha for the Sayādaw's statement rests entirely on the translation of the Pāli word *gacchāmi* and no Pāli

scholar will deny that his translation is grammatically correct and precise. So there should be no doubt about the Buddha's explicit instruction in regard to the *Satipa#hæna* method of meditation.

### THE USE OF "I" IN DIFFERENT SENSES

There are three different senses in which people use the pronoun "I". It may be the reflection of the belief in a soul entity, it may be associated with conceit or it may be used simply as a term of conventional usage. The word "I" as the subject of the verb "*gacchæmi*" in the Buddha's sermon has nothing to do with ego-illusion or conceit. The Buddha and the *Arahats* too speak of themselves as, for example, "I am doing so-and-so" but there is no reason to misunderstand them. Initially we instruct our yogis to note all phenomena in conventional terms. But with the development of concentration all these common usages disappear and when the yogi walks, his attention is confined to the mind that desires to walk and physical body that moves. In other words, there eventually remains only the reality of all phenomena rising and passing away. The yogi does not see anything such as form, shape of any other sign except the rising and spontaneous dissolution of elements. This experience is not limited to physical objects of sense impressions. It applies as well to consciousness which the yogi always finds in a state of flux.

### PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

We assure every yogi of this experience if he seriously practises meditation according to our instructions. We do not blame the skeptics who have never tried the *Satipa#hæna* method. For only seeing is believing and their skepticism is due to lack of experience. To speak the truth, I myself was a non-believer at one time. In 1931 when I had been a member of the Sangha for eight years I heard that Mingun Zetawun Sayædaw was teaching *Satipa#hæna* method of meditation in Thaton. At first I was not much interested as the method made no mention of *næmarþpa*, *anicca*, *anatta* and requires the yogi only to be aware of what he is thinking, feeling or doing. But later on I had second thoughts about this method: "The method is rather odd, but the Sayædaw is a highly learned monk and he claims to have applied it thoroughly for many years before preaching it. So there may be more to it than being attentive to one's actions". So I decided to pass judgment only after giving it a trial.

Meditating under the Sayædaw's guidance, I applied the *Satipa#hæna* method. In the first month I made no progress in my search for insight-knowledge and this was not surprising because I did not meditate seriously. By contrast some of my disciples developed tranquility to some extent after five or six days' practice and became fairly well familiar with the nature of *næma-rþpa*, *anicca*, *anatta*, etc. As for me even after a month my understanding was nil because of lack of faith and energetic effort. Lack of faith implies skeptical doubt (*vicikicchæ*) which is a barrier to the *Ariyan* Noble Path and enlightenment. It is of paramount importance to remove this barrier but at that time I did not take it seriously and in my view attentiveness to movements of physical body was linked with attachment to conventional usages that had little bearing on ultimate reality. Perhaps the Sayædaw's instruction was a prelude to analysis of *næma-rþpa* which he would deal with in his later sermons. So thinking and hoping, I failed to practise whole-heartedly and did not have any unusual experience in my meditation.

Later on, however, I reassessed the Sayædaw's method and at last I realized its significance. It is the most effective way since it entails attentiveness to everything that is to be known, leaving no room for mind wandering. I now appreciate the Buddha's saying which describes the *Satipa#hæna* method as the only way to liberation: *Ekayæno maggo*.

## DEVELOPMENT OF TRANQUILITY

At the beginning the yogø treats the sense-data as the raw material for meditation and makes a mental note of "walking" "sitting" "lying" "bending" etc. Then as concentration develops, he becomes aware of all psycho-physical events that occur to him. The vanishing of the units of consciousness is as clear as the beads dropping one after another. Some have this experience in two stages, some in three stages. Through constant observation of the dissolution of all phenomena, he finds nothing that is worthwhile and pleasant, nothing that gives ground for ego-belief.

Still, there are some people who talk nonsense about our method, thereby disparaging the Buddha and his teaching. We have been giving instruction since our arrival at this meditation centre and no matter who says what to discredit our method, we are unshaken because our conviction is the outcome of experience. Just after our arrival in Yangon a man started attacking using a newspaper. We do not know his motive and we never refuted his criticism. We went on our way, assuming that beginners in meditation would go to him or come to us according to their inclinations. Thus exercising prudence (*yonisomanasikæra*), we carried on with our work and before long his newspaper stopped coming out for some unknown reason. That was good for those who wished to meditate seriously but he continued to attack us by writing a book. We now take no interest in whatever he is doing.

Of course we welcome anybody's effort to promote the Buddha's teaching. If now there were an extraordinary man who could perform miracles to attract other countries to Buddhism, he would surely receive the overwhelming support of our people. It makes little sense, however, for a man without any practice or experience to criticize those who proclaim the Buddha's method on the basis of their thorough practice and experience.

## THE EMPIRICAL APPROACH

Students at our centre are instructed to focus on every phenomenon arising from the six sense-organs. Before they can note all sense-objects, they concentrate on bodily behaviour. In particular the yogø's first exercise consists in consciously making a note of the rising and falling of the belly. Later on I will explain the rationale for this exercise on the basis of the Buddha's teaching. The yogø's mindfulness should not be restricted to the rising and falling. He should also note his feelings, thinking, imagining, etc. as well as all bodily actions. The yogø who thus practises mindfulness thoroughly and steadfastly is always aware of his six sense-impressions. Then he is in tune with the *Ariyævæsadhammas* that stress the need for the guard of mindfulness: "*Satarakkhena cetasa sæmañña gato*".

Some people contend that a comprehensive course of lessons on *næmarppa*, *anicca* etc., in conjunction with meditation will help the yogø understand the Buddhist concepts more easily. But the ideas which the yogø would absorb thereby are only perceptions (*saññæ*) and have hardly anything to do with empirical knowledge. Such preconceived notions are misleading in that they often make it difficult to distinguish between truth and falsehood. So there are non-Buddhists who have a low opinion of Buddhist meditation. They say that Buddhists blindly believe in impermanence, suffering and impersonality of life as a result of the preconceptions implanted in them by their religious teachers. But this is not true of our yogø disciples. For although we tell them the meaning of *anicca*, *dukkha* and so forth we never elucidate or instruct them how to fix the Pæ'i concepts in their minds. They only note all the phenomena as they really are. They follow our instructions and later on report to us how they become aware of the distinction between mind and body and the ceaseless passing away of the knowing consciousness and the known sense-impressions. Only then do we recognize it as real insight-knowledge (*vipassanæ-ñæ/a*) and help the yogø understand their experience in terms of Buddhist concepts.

## REAL EMPIRICAL KNOWLEDGE

Thus the knowledge which the yogis acquire at our meditation centre is based not on preconceived notions but on personal experience. Knowledge gained in this way is not vague and misty but quite clear and distinct. The yogi sees sense objects and consciousness not in terms of shape, size or substance but only as arising and passing away. When he tells us a bout his experience, we let him know that it is called *bha<sup>3</sup>ga* insight. Experience is followed by explanation on the part of the teacher and not the other way around. We do not tell him in advance what he is to see or experience in the course of meditation. As he keeps on meditating, he becomes more and more mindful until his mindfulness becomes solid and viable at the last stage on the *Ariyan* Noble Path.

Mindfulness is labelled a security guard in the Buddha's talk in the *Ariyævæsa sutta*. It is indispensable to the yogi at every thought-moment. Without it the yogi cannot become a *sotæpan*, let alone an *Arahat*. So it is up to the yogi to be mindful of his actions and reactions, emotions, impulses and so forth. Constant practice of mindfulness helps him develop tranquility and sharpen the intellect. It means dwelling in the *Ariyan* abode that ensures security and protection from the perils of life-cycle.

In order to reside in the *Ariyan* abode, we must be prepared to pay the price in terms of faith, aspiration and effort. It is impossible to do anything without faith (*æaddhæ*). The yogi practises mindfulness only because he is convinced of its being essential to the emergence of insight knowledge. But faith in itself will be to no avail without a strong desire to attain the *Ariyan* Path and *Nibbæna*. It is necessary, too, to exert strenuous and unrelenting effort in the practice of the Dhamma. For the man who possesses these three qualities every moment of mindfulness means temporary residence in the *Ariyan* abode gratis free. At the very least he is protected from the danger of hell as is borne out by the following story.

## THE STORY OF TAMBADATHIKA

In the life time of the Buddha there was in the city of Ræjagaha a public executioner named **Tambadathika**. It was the official duty of this man to execute thieves and robbers condemned to death by the law courts. He went on doing his duty everyday until his mid-fifties when he retired from state service. On the day of his retirement he made preparations to enjoy certain things such as drinking milk gruel, wearing new brand garments, etc. that were taboo to him when he was in service. This prohibition may seem ridiculous nowadays, but anyway it is human nature to crave for forbidden things and so **Tambadathika** was bent on fulfilling his long-suppressed desire.

Then by means of his psychic power the Ven. *Særiputtaræ* knew that death was just around the corner for **Tambadathika**. The man would die soon after drinking the milk gruel. He had not done any good deed, while on the other hand, in consequence of his overwhelming evil deeds he was very likely to suffer in hell after death. Moved with compassion, the thera decided to do something for his salvation and stopped at his house while on the round for collection of food. Tambadathika was then about to drink the milk gruel and if he had lacked faith and ignored the thera, it would have spelt disaster for him in his afterlife. But inspired with strong faith, he promptly offered the food to the *thera* and sat nearby respectfully. As the *thera* was aware of his intense craving for food, he told **Tambadathika** to gratify it. After availing himself of this permission, **Tambadathika** came back to hear the *thera's* sermon.

The Buddha-dhamma is delicate and it is up to the *Ariyan* disciple to preach it skillfully, bearing in mind the varying subtlety of each doctrine. The theras' talk began with alms-giving and preceded to morality, i.e. the observance of the five precepts that leads to longevity, prosperity and so forth in future life. Then the thera spoke of the world of devas and talked about insight-meditation involves constant mindfulness that keeps us on guard against unwholesome thoughts.

**Tambadathika** was upset by the thera's subtle talk that helped revive memories of his unpleasant past. The thera knew what was passing in his mind but still he asked the man why he did not appear to be fussed that remorse and anxiety lay heavy on his conscience and made him unhappy. The thera then asked him whether he had committed the evil deeds of his own free will and the former chief executioner replied that he had carried out the order of the king against his will. "Then how could these evil deeds be yours?" said the thera.

We should here consider the thera's question deeply. It did not deny the moral responsibility of Tambadathika for the execution of the convicts. The question was cleverly designed to ease his conscience and make him attentive to the sermon. In reality an evil deed is always potentially harmful to the doer in the round of rebirth no matter whether it is committed deliberately or at the instigation of someone else. Of course the *karmic* consequences may be grave or light depending on the strength of volition associated with the deed. But Tambadathika was not intelligent enough to see the point. He concluded that he would not have to suffer for the deeds for which only the king was responsible. This conviction laid his anxiety at rest and helped him follow the sermon.

In connection with this story a man in Shwebo once joked that low intelligence is some times good for us because but for it, there would have been no end to Tambadathika's worry and anxiety. But the example of Tambadathika is not to be emulated by our disciples who should rely on scriptures and well-informed people to improve their intelligence and knowledge.

Having listened to the sermon attentively, Tambadathika eventually attained *anuloma ñæ¼a* (adaptive-knowledge) that denotes all kinds of insight-knowledge ranging from *sammæsana-ñæ¼a* to advanced *sa³khærupekkhæ-ñæ¼a* or the insight knowledge that emerges prior to the attainment of the Path.

It is hard to determine the kind of insight-knowledge that was really gained by Tambadathika. According to the commentary, it seems to be the *Sa³khærupekkhæ* insight-knowledge preceding the attainment of the first stage (*Sotæpatti*) on the Path. It is said that the bodhisattas in the holy order meditated till they gained the *anulomañæ¼a* but theirs is not the *anulomañæ¼a* of the path-process (*magga-võthi*). The attainment of the *anuloma* knowledge of the path-process means the outright attainment of the path and its fruition (*phala*).

The process of enlightenment does not end with the arising of *anuloma* insight. Moreover, a *bodhisatta* can achieve the ultimate goal of the Path only when he is about to become a Buddha. He cannot achieve it in his early lives. So we should assume the *anuloma* insight of **Tambadathika** to be *sa³khærupekkhæ* (equanimity insight-knowledge) at the early stage in the round of rebirth. It may be also the ordinary insight knowledge or at the very least *sammæsanañæ¼a*.

Whatever it is, it means mindfulness which is the real passport to the abode of *Ariyas*. Having thus provided **Tambadathika** with protection against rebirth in the lower worlds, the Ven. *Thera Særiputtaræ* left the house **Tambadathika** went out to see the thera off but on the way back he was gored to death by a cow that was an ogress in disguise who had a grudge against the man in a previous life. That is what the Dhammapada commentary says but of course skeptics may say that it was just as an ordinary cow.

The death of **Tambadathika** was the topic of conversation among the monks. They were surprised when the Buddha told them about his rebirth in *Tusita* heaven, one of the six deva-worlds that was reputed as the abode of bodhisattas. **Tambadathika** was assured of a bright future which he owed to his having a good friend in the person of Ven. *Særiputræ* whose sermon helped him acquire *anuloma-ñæ¼a*. But for his mindfulness at the last moment of his life, he would have landed in one of the lower words. In fact he had a narrow escape from hell.

Rebirth in the deva-world is certain for those who practise the Dhamma whole-heartedly and zealously. Some former yogis tell us how mindfulness helps alleviate their suffering when they are

seriously ill. Through constant practice mindfulness may become spontaneous as in the case of the brahmin lady Dhananjani, a *sotæpan* disciple of the Buddha. On one occasion her husband warned her not to extol the Buddha while his brahmin teachers were being entertained. Yet when she tripped, she uttered thrice the sacred formula: "*Namotassa bhagavato .... Praise to the Blessed One, etc .....*" Thus through assiduous practice of the Dhamma mindfulness automatically arises in the face of suffering or imminent death. As for those who have had no such experience, they would be well advised to try practising mindfulness. Once they have savoured its benefits, they will find its appeal irresistible just like the veteran *yogø*s at our meditation centre.

## THE FOUR MAINSTAYS

The *yogø* who cultivates mindfulness should have four requisites viz. clothes, food, medicine and dwelling. These are absolutely essential because they are the basic necessities of life. Indeed they constitute the first mainstay of his *Ariyan* abode.

He is prudent and intelligent in his reliance on the four requisites, always being in mind that he needs them not for his pleasure but for his well-being. Thus he wears clothes for propriety, lives in an abode for protection from rain, heat and cold, eats food and takes medicine for the maintenance of health. He is intelligent enough to know the right quality and quantity of food he needs and the time to take it.

To deny oneself the basic needs of life means self-mortification which is called *attakilamathanuyogas* in Pæ'i. In the time of the Buddha there were Nigantha æjovakas and other heretics who devoted themselves to ascetic practices. Even the Buddha himself practised austerities in the early years of his life as an ascetic in the forest. He adopted such habits as suppressing his in-and-out breathing, eating very little food, etc. Later on he realized the futility of asceticism, gave it up and following the middle way, attained supreme enlightenment. At present the Jains in India are still the devotees of asceticism. But asceticism as well as over-indulgence in sensual pleasure is incompatible with Buddhism which proclaims the middle way between the two extremes. It is therefore up to the *yogø* to consider and determine the proper thing and the proper time to do for his own welfare and of course this means right thinking based on right mindfulness.

The second mainstay of the *Ariyan* abode is the fortitude of mind that makes the *yogø* invulnerable to mental and physical pain. He should be capable of enduring heat, cold, sound, voices and other sensations that trouble him. Some people cannot bear any pain. As soon as they feel uncomfortable, they cease to be mindful and seek to relieve their discomfort, thereby impeding progress in meditation. The *yogø* should be prepared to practise higher meditation even at the risk of his life. Here some people may think that the Buddhadhamma makes unreasonable demands on them. But this statement is aimed at encouraging the *yogø* to do his utmost for his spiritual welfare.

As a matter of fact there is no case of illness, not to mention death resulting from strenuous practice of meditation. On the contrary, there are some people who recovered from ill-health through meditation and their number is quite considerable. A woman who came to our centre recently said that she had a troublesome lump in her womb that made it impossible for her to sit for a long time. A doctor had advised her to have the lump removed but she decided to take up meditation before surgical operation. Her meditation teacher told her to take it easy and meditate in a relaxed frame of mind. Under the guidance of the teacher she made some progress in meditation and at last her illness evaporated surprisingly. She was then able to sit for a long time without feeling any pain. She went to the doctor for another check-up. After examining her the doctor said that she did not need any operation as she had got rid of her lump.

So the *yogø* should exercise forbearance as far as possible in the face of suffering. He must of course do the needful when the pain is unbearable. "*Forbearance leads to Nibbæna*" says a Myanmar proverb and indeed it is vital to the successful practice of meditation. If the meditating *yogø* fidgets

and becomes restless whenever he feels uncomfortable, he will not be able to concentrate and without concentration he can never realize *Nibbæna*.

### THE THIRD AND FOURTH MAINSTAYS

The third mainstay of the Ariyan abode is avoidance. The yogø should give a wide berth to all potential dangers such as vicious animals, cars driven by reckless drivers or places where he runs the risk of meeting with an accident. Even a trivial mishap like being pierced by a thorn may mean a serious setback in meditation. The Buddha himself cautioned the monks against visiting dangerous places unwarily. He told them not to be foolishly overconfident because of their practice of meditation. In particular the yogø should be on his guard against intimate relationship with the opposite sex. This precaution is especially necessary in the case of monks who may otherwise lie open to the false charge of moral impurity.

The fourth mainstay of the *Ariyan* abode is the elimination of unwholesome thoughts (*vitakka*). These unhealthy states of consciousness are of three kinds, viz, sensuous (*kæma*) thoughts, malicious (*vyæpæda*) thoughts and aggressive or violent (*vihimsa*) thoughts. The yogø should dispel unwholesome thoughts about sensual objects, about how to ruin other people or how to inflict suffering on them. It is very difficult to overcome these thoughts because in fact most people enjoy harbouring them. It gives them pleasure to think of the objects of their attachment, the people they would like to see or the plans for the fulfillment of their desires. They fret at what they regard as restrictions of their freedom. This is not surprising because except for the meditating yogø, most people let their minds wander freely when they have nothing to do. The yogø usually get accustomed to restrictions in due course and find it beneficial to their mental culture.

In fact it takes only a few day's practice to acquire the habit of watchfulness that keeps a yogø on guard against unwholesome thoughts. Some Westerners at our meditation centre do not know much about our system but they have faith that arouses their interest in it. The trouble is that they are fond of reading and writing. We advised them to give up this habit during their stay at the Centre because it gives rise to discursive thinking that forms an obstacle to concentration and the development of insight knowledge. At first it was difficult for them to follow our advice but they got used to the restriction in due course and found it conducive to their mind training.

One such foreigner was Mr. Duval, an American who spent several months at the centre, practising mindfulness initially as a lay yogø and later on as a monk. He was much impressed by *Satipa#hæna* method that helped him to attain insight into the ultimate reality of life. According to him, there is no reliable system of mental culture in Europe and America, a deficiency in the Western way of life that has deprived their people of inner peace despite their material prosperity. He said that on his return he would help them to be happy through *Satipa#hæna* meditation.



## THE FIVE HINDRANCES

The first evils that the yogi has to contend with in the practice of constant mindfulness are the five hindrances (*nivaraṇas*). Owing to his weak concentration, the beginner in meditation cannot firmly control his mind which therefore wanders freely revolving about its cherished sense-objects. It is confined there by the hindrances that block the *Ariyan* path to *Nibbāna*. So the yogi should try to remove the five hindrances, viz., sensuous desire, ill-will (*vyāpāda*), indolence (*thina-middha*), restlessness and worry (*uddhiccakukkucca*) and skeptical doubt (*vicikicchā*).

Sensuous desire is desire for pleasant colours of visible objects, delightful sounds, sweet smell, delicious food and so forth. In a sermon of the Buddha pleasant sensual objects are compared to a piece of meat carried off by a kite that becomes a target of fierce attack by other birds until it drops the meat. Only then does it escape harassment by other birds. Likewise, the object of sensual pleasure allures all living beings and hence its owner is the target of attack by other people who wish to rob him of it. Indeed love of sensual pleasure is the mainspring of conflicts between one individual and another and all over the world it is the chief cause of class, racial, ethnic and international conflicts. Hence it is loathed and renounced by all wise men.

Nevertheless, most people turn a blind eye to the evils of sensual pleasure and modern man is excessively fond of it. To him it is the *summum bonum* of life, something to be sought by every possible means regardless of all moral considerations. Of the five objects of sensual desire the visible object covers a wide range of corporeality, both animate and inanimate such as men, women, garments and other consumer goods. In the same way sound as sensual object may mean a person who speaks persuasively as well as a musical instrument. Smell is represented by perfumes and the human beings who use it. Tactile impression is born of physical contact with men, women, bed, clothes, etc. Taste is associated with all good food and people who prepare it.

### SENSUAL DESIRE AS THE CRIPPLING DEBT

In short, all pleasant objects generate sensual desire which is an obstacle to right mindfulness. The Buddha compared the sensual desire and its human victim to the debt and the debtor and he exhorted his disciples to get rid of it promptly just like the debtor who seeks to repay his debt without delay. If a man cannot settle his debt on time, he has to be abject and obsequious in his relationship with the creditor, not daring to say or do anything offensive to him.

Just as the debtor has to respect his creditor so also every man has to respect the object of his desire. The more he loves it, the more care he must take of it. As for gold, silver, jewels and other precious ornaments that are cherished by so many people, they have to be kept in iron-clad boxes under lock and key. When these ornaments are worn on ceremonial occasions the owner has trouble looking for a secure place.

But such troubles are mild in comparison with those rooted in one's attachment to a living being such as one's spouse or children. One has to pay a high price for his or her attachment in terms of scrupulous regard for the feelings of the other, circumspection in talking and so forth. The more deeply a man is attached to a member of his family, or a friend, the more he is concerned about the welfare of his beloved and the more trouble he has to take for it. Thus respect for the living or the non-living object of attachment is like the debtor's respect for his creditor. Non-attachment to anything or a living being obviates the need for respect as in the case of a person who is free from debt.

## CONSTANT MINDFULNESS

Hence we should note and reject every desire that arises. Of course this advice is not of much avail all the time in everyday life and it is to be applied only when one is meditating. If concentration is too weak to dispel every distraction the yogi should keep noting it until it disappears in the end. Practice of the Dhamma means waging war on defilements. If, inspired with fighting zeal, the yogi relentlessly persists in noting, the desire will vanish eventually. This is a fact vouched for by his experience. Indeed the desire which has withered away does not crop up again even when we mentally review the stream of consciousness leading to it.

This is then the best way to combat defilements effectively. If one cannot conquer them, one cannot hope to earn the privilege of living in the abode of the Noble Ones. If a man dies at the time when he is able to note and reject the sensuous desire, he is protected from the danger of the lower worlds. On the other hand there is no such protection for those who die with the defilements still lingering in them. For like residents of a tumble-down house that is exposed to all kinds of danger, so also the worldling is vulnerable to the risk of landing in the lower worlds.

## THE STORY OF THE MONK TISSA

In the time of Lord Buddha there was a monk called Tissa. One day he took fancy to a robe and became attached to it. Intent on wearing it the next day, he hung it on the clothes-line and went to bed. But on that very night he became suddenly ill and died. Given his moral purity, he should have landed in heaven. Instead, because of his attachment to the robe he became a louse on it. Many people were skeptical about the story. They dismissed it as absurd and one man argued that it was impossible for an elephant to become an insect and *vice-versa*. His implication was that in view of the disparity in size of the two souls, such a rebirth was unthinkable.

Such an argument is certainly misleading. Nowadays we hear of a materialistic writer who advocates a view which, masquerading as the Buddha's creed, rejects the idea of a future life. He maintains that even if there is future life, man may be reborn only as a human being because having reached the top in the world of living beings, he cannot assume any lower form of life. A tamarind seed can produce only a tamarind tree and gold cannot revert to its former state of earth. Likewise man's foremost position in the world precludes the possibility of his rebirth as an animal. This kind of argument is calculated to win Buddhists over to materialism and it is a downright distortion of the Buddha-dhamma that would make the proponent of such a view the supporter of *Mara*, the Evil one.

According to Buddhism there is no permanent self or being and so the question of size, magnitude or shape does not arise. The only reality is psycho-physical process in which consciousness is the determining factor. So the doctrine of Dependent Origination (*Paticcassamuppāda*) says that because of ignorance, there arises karma-formations (*sa<sup>3</sup>khāra*) which in turn lead to rebirth-consciousness. Thus when rebirth takes place, it is not the corporeality of the past life or its potency but only the force of consciousness that passes on.

Moreover, there is no such thing as big or small consciousness. The mind of an ordinary human being does not differ basically from that of an animal. It is not strong or mature enough to resist the atavistic regression. It may revert to a lower state as in the case of a psychotic or a victim of hydrophobia. In short, there is no basis for the view that it is impossible for a man to sink to a lower plane of existence after death, a view in conflict with Buddhism.

## DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MIND AND MATTER

We can strengthen and develop the mind by buttressing it up with faith, energy, vigilance and so forth. Therefore the mind of a dying man imbued with wholesome thoughts ensures good rebirth whereas the defiled man is full of greed, hatred, ill-will etc. that lead to the lower worlds. This of course raises the question of how consciousness can reach a far distant place like heaven or hell. The fact is that consciousness has no substance and so distance makes no difference to it. We think of an object which is far or near and at once we mentally gain access to it. For there is no obstacle to consciousness. But it is otherwise with the physical body which therefore takes a relatively long time to reach the same object. Thus at any rate for the short term the destiny of a dying man depends on the last state of his consciousness which is followed by the rebirth-consciousness of what we designate in conventional sense as a deva, a denizen of hell, an animal or a human being.

Hence there is in fact no barrier to heaven or hell or any other world to which a living being passes on in his afterlife. The death of the monk Tissa means the extinction of his attachment to the robe along with his death-consciousness. There followed immediately his rebirth-consciousness as a louse that was determined not by his physical attributes but solely by his obsession with the robe on his death-bed. His ill-fated rebirth was inevitable despite his moral purity because he had not lived in the *Ariyan* abode that is the bulwark against sensual desire and its evil consequences.

## THE BUDDHA'S ADVICE FOR THE CONQUEST OF SENSUAL DESIRE

There are the Buddha's instructions to the monks for curbing sensual desires. The key to the Buddha's advice is the Pæ'i words: "*Patisa<sup>3</sup>khæ yoniso*" or "Wise and proper reflection". It is necessary for monks to wear robes for they have to protect themselves from inclement weather. Men and women wear clothes to make themselves good-looking, an objective that has nothing to do with monks who depend on clothes for protection from heat or cold and to cover the parts of body which we should keep invisible. Thus for the monk the aesthetic value of clothes does not matter and there is no reason for him to be satisfied or dissatisfied with his robe. Moreover, he should reflect on the impurity and impermanence of his body to minimize if not overcome his attachment to it. But the easiest way to eradicate his sensual desire for anything is to note and reject it again and again until it disappears for ever.

Like people who must have money to build a house, so also the yogø needs faith to live in the abode of Noble Ones. He should have no doubt that the practice of *Ariyævæsa*-dhamma guarantees salvation from the lower worlds and the other dangers of *samsæra* (round of rebirth). Some people say that they cannot believe anything without experience. But faith rests on sound reasoning that serves as a substitute for experience. For instance, before going to a place which we have never visited, we resort to hearsay evidence for necessary information. A prerequisite for the successful practice of the *Ariyævæsa*-dhamma is faith born of sound reasoning and a good knowledge of the Buddha's teaching. Again a man visiting a town or a village for the first time needs to check up on his arrival to see whether he has come to the right place. This is an example of a belief founded on experience and in the same way for the yogø who is seriously engaged in the practice of the Dhamma, there arises extraordinary insight knowledge that helps him verify our teaching and leads to unwavering faith in the Buddha-dhamma.

If a man eats a certain food that we recommend and finds it delicious, he will thank us very much. Similarly if, acting on our advice, a man gives the practice of Dhamma a trial and finds it spiritually beneficial, he will be much grateful to us. In fact the doctrine of the Buddha lends itself to empirical investigation. This is in line with one of the well known attributes of the Dhamma, viz. "*Ehipassiko*". "Come and see".

The yogø should have strong will and unflagging energy to realise the higher **Ariyan** dhamma in this life. He needs perseverance that will sustain strenuous effort. Thus equipped with faith, will and energy, he is in a position to build the *Ariyan* abode. He notes all sense-objects while

walking, standing or eating and every moment of his watchfulness means the moment of his building or living in the Ariyan abode and marks a step toward liberation from the danger of the lower worlds. In this way he develops mindfulness to the highest degree and finally as genuine *Ariya*, he realizes *Nibbāna*.

## TWO OBSTACLES TO ENLIGHTENMENT

In the life time of the Buddha there were people who could not benefit by the Dhamma even though they heard it direct from the Teacher. There are two reasons for the non-enlightenment of some people even under favourable circumstances like the encounter with the Buddha. One is the failure to do the needful (*kiriya-parihani*) and the other is evil company (*pāpamitta*).

On one occasion the Buddha was seated amid the gathering of monks when there came *Kandaraka*, a wandering ascetic and *Pessa*, a lay follower. On seeing the monks sitting quietly, still, poised, self-possessed and well mannered, *Kandaraka*, became convinced of the benign influence which the Buddhadhamma had exerted on them. He told the Buddha about his impression of the monks whereupon the Buddha said "Well, what you say is true. My admonitions have helped discipline these monks very effectively. Some of them are already *Arahats*, some have attained different stages on the Path, depending on the degree of their mindfulness. They are all devoted to the practice of *Satipaṭṭhāna*. There is no one who does not practise mindfulness".

On hearing these words of the Buddha, the layman *Pessa* said, "Lord! it is very good of you to admonish the people and make them upright and honest. Animals are not deceptive or cunning. They are artless. Without thinking, they clear themselves of excrement and urine when they want to do so. They have no intention to cheat their masters. If they are forced to do anything against their will, they make a mess of it. Unlike animals, men are crafty and play hypocrite, secretly doing what is harmful to the interests of their master. Lord! we cannot help admiring you for your benevolence because you have reformed the minds of many people who were formerly cunning and hypocritical. I, too, practise *Satipaṭṭhāna* occasionally although I am a lay man".

True, *Satipaṭṭhāna* dhamma is very good for the reformation of moral character. Men are dishonest and deceptive because they are unaware of their moral defects. It is contemplation of our states of consciousness (*cittānupassanā*) that helps us know our inner selves. Full emergence of insight into one's psyche leaves no room for the arising of unwholesome thoughts and desires.

The Buddha was then about to give a talk on the four types of personality when *Pessa* took leave of the Lord saying that he had some business to attend to. The Buddha knew that *Pessa* would not like to stay any longer and that it would not much benefit him to listen to the sermon half-heartedly. So the Buddha let him go away. After his departure the Buddha told the monks that *Pessa* was an intelligent man and that he would attain the first stage on the Ariyan path if he heard the sermon to the end.

In this connection the commentary raises the question of whether a person who had the potential for enlightenment could possibly fail to attain it even in the presence of the Buddha. The commentary insists on the possibility and points out the two causes of non-enlightenment, viz, (1) the failure to do the needful completely and (2) bad company.

## NEGLIGENCE AND BAD COMPANY

Negligence or failure to do the needful is of two kinds: viz, (i) the negligence on the part of the teacher and (ii) negligence on the part of the disciple to do completely what is proper to do.

It is negligence of duty if the teacher does not make his sermons comprehensive and intelligible enough to be understood by his disciples. Some people do wish to practise the Dhamma but there is no teacher to preach or guide them. So they grow old and die without having any opportunity to practise the Dhamma, let alone savour its taste. On the other hand, there are many people who have only themselves to blame for their non-enlightenment. For although they have heard many sermons on the Buddha-dhamma, they do not study or practise it seriously.

The other reason for non-enlightenment is *pāpamitta* or association with an evil friend. "Evil" is the direct translation of the Pāṭi term "pāpa" and if this sounds rather unduly pejorative, we can tone it down to "bad". As an example of the evil consequences of bad company the commentaries cite the story of Ajātasattu. This king had the spiritual potential to become a *sotāpan*, when he heard the Buddha's sermon in Samañña phala sutta. But he kept company with Devadatta, an evil monk whom he regarded as his teacher and at the instigation of Devadatta he killed his father king Bimbisāra. But for this heinous crime of parricide he would have been well established on the Ariyan Noble Path.

There are many other instances of non-enlightenment due to association with undesirable people. Even in the time of the Buddha some people did not get liberated despite their spiritual potential because they followed false teachers opposed to the Buddha. This holds true also for many misguided people today. Hence there are two obstacles to enlightenment viz. (i) the failure to do the needful and (ii) keeping company with bad people.

## PRACTICE OF MINDFULNESS

The Buddha and other Ariyas of yore were committed to Ariyævæsa dhammas and so are the Ariyas led by Gotama Buddha and the Ariyas of future. Ariyævæsa-dhamma is the bulwark against all the evils of life-cycle. The first of these dhammas is mindfulness which the yogi develops gradually just as a school boy learns his lessons step by step. He notes everything arising from six sense organs. As he develops the ability to note all sense-impressions, he attains the first three Ariyan stages (*magga*) one after another until at last he becomes an Arahant and then his mindfulness leaves no loophole for the influx of defilements. In reality although there are ten Ariyævæsa dhammas, perfect mindfulness suffices to ensure total commitment to them.

True, the Buddha expounded the other nine dhammas for the spiritual uplift of his followers but in fact the key to his overall teaching lies in mindfulness. Hence just before he passed away the Buddha summed up his doctrine in his last saying which may be translated as follows;

"*Bhikkhus!* Here is my last advice to you. All compounded things are subject to disintegration. Work out your own salvation with mindfulness".

All compounded things (*sa<sup>3</sup>khāras*) are impermanent. There is nothing eternal or reliable in them. This is a statement of paramount importance although most people do not take it seriously. They believe in personal identity and permanent ego or self. The average man believes that he can live for a long time with his life-force and body. But body, mind and all other conditioned things are ephemeral and in a flux, for ever dissolving and passing away.

Hence there is no substantial, everlasting foundation for our conditioned existence. The only way out of illusory, conditioned existence is *Nibbāna* and the key to this liberation is right mindfulness, the *sine qua non* of Buddhist mental culture epitomized in the last words of the Buddha: "*Appamādena sampādeṭṭha*" --- Practise the Dhamma fully and thoroughly with mindfulness".

Like the death-bed advice of the parents to their children, this last saying of the Buddha should remain fresh forever in the minds of his followers. For it is an admonition that we should bear in mind and apply to daily life. In fact the commentaries describe it as the quintessence of the entire Buddhist teaching in the Pæ'i Canon. The Ariyævæsa-dhamma sutta explains it together with its adjuncts but the key-note of the whole sutta is mindfulness. For the practice of right mindfulness involves the application of all the other dhammas.

I have mentioned the first four Ariyævæsadhammas essential to the development of mindfulness, viz. access to the four basic necessities of life, forbearance in emotional response to unpleasant sense-impressions, avoidance of dangerous places and elimination of sensual desire, ill-will, etc. Now we will turn to the fifth Ariyævæsa-dhamma.

## THE FIVE HINDRANCES

This dhamma calls for overcoming the five hindrances to enlightenment and *Nibbæna*. The yogø need not exert too much effort to achieve this object if his mindfulness is effective enough to cope with them. I have said something about the way to remove the first hindrance of sensual desire. The sooner he overcomes it, the better for otherwise it would be like being a hostage to a debt that plagues us all the time. A good example of its danger is the story of the monk Tissa who was dragged down to the animal world by it. A week later he passed on to Tavatimsæ heaven because he was no longer attached to his robe and became mindful of his good deeds in the past. The rebirth of a man as a louse and then as a *deva* may be baffling to common people but quite understandable. After all it is mental force or energy that determines the quality of a man's future life. There is no impediment to its sudden transfer to a higher or lower plane of existence, depending on the state of his consciousness at the last moment of his life.

This is indeed frightening but it does not matter if we can overcome sensual desire through mindfulness. When the yogø becomes perfectly mindful, he attains *sotæpana*, the first stage on the Ariyan path that protects him fully from rebirth in the lower worlds while at the *anægæmi* stage he eradicates all kinds of sensual desire and when he becomes an *Arahat*, he is totally liberated from the subtle passions for material and immaterial existence.

## THE HINDRANCE OF ILL-WILL

Now we come to the second hindrance viz. ill-will (*vyæpæda*). It is the state of consciousness afflicted with resentment, irritation, displeasure and the like in the face of an unpleasant sense-object. Ill-will is like a disease. Just as we should waste no time in treating even a minor ailment like headache, so also it is up to us to deal promptly with ill-temper and get rid of it through mindfulness. Ill-temper is comparable to disease in another respect. An unhealthy man usually has no appetite for food and what is sweet for others may be bitter for him. His lack of appetite is entirely due to his ill-health. Likewise in the view of an ill-tempered man, there is something wrong with most of his relatives, friends or acquaintances. Formerly he might welcome the advice of his friends and thank them for their kindness. But when he is angry, he turns a deaf ear to them, reject what they say by way of intervention in a quarrel or even hates them under the impression that they are supporting his enemy.

Therefore we need to be cautious when we try to pacify an irate man. By and large two quarrelling men will resent any attempt to mediate between them and bring them to their senses. We would be in trouble if we try to head off violent eruption among bickering people. For consumed with hatred, they do not heed what we say with the best of intentions. So when we are furious about anything, we should consider ourselves infected with disease and restrain our anger quickly. Otherwise it will get worse and in the end spell disaster for its victims as well as for other people.

Therefore from time to time we hear news reports of frictions, disputes, and bitter quarrels among mutually beloved family members whose anger broke loose and ended up in carnage and

bloodshed. The *Hanthawaddy Daily* (28-1-61) contains a news item about the tragic death of a girl stemming from her disagreement with her elder sister over a trivial matter. In a fit of temper the latter hurled a pair of scissors wounding the girl fatally. Such crimes cause much grief and remorse even though they are committed inadvertently. Thus anger is the root cause of many violent crimes and the suffering of some people including the beloved ones of those who cannot control it.

### THE STORY OF VEDEHIKA

A man's lack of control over ill-will often estranges his friends and leads to suffering in the lower worlds in his afterlife. Its destructive nature is clear in the story of Vedeika.

Vedeika was the name of housewife in Sævatthi city before the time of the Buddha. She was held in high esteem by people in her neighbourhood for what they believed to be her noble character, her friendliness, benevolence, and affability. They did not see any defect in her character. Vedeika had a slave girl called Kæli. On hearing the unanimous praise heaped on her mistress by the neighbours, the girl wondered whether it was really due to her noble character. Or was it due to the fact that, having a dutiful and hard working slave-girl who fulfilled all her needs, her mistress had no opportunity to betray the dark side of her character?

So she decided to test the moral character of her mistress and one morning she purposely did not get up early from bed as usual. Vedeika thought that she was unwell but when inquired by her mistress, *Kæli* replied that she did not get up early because she did not want to. Her mistress scowled at her but did not show any other sign of anger by her behaviour. The next day *Kæli* tested her again in the same way. She was now boiling with anger and began to abuse and threaten the girl. Then when the slave girl repeated her test for the third time, *Vedeika* became so furious that she hurled a door bolt at the girl, thereby smashing her head seriously.

Thus *Vedeika's* violent outburst of ill-temper revealed her ugly character. All our behaviour and action stem from the states of consciousness and so there is no doubt about the all-pervading importance of mind and the need to control it. Westerners seek to control the atom and harness the atomic energy to create terrible weapons. They are preoccupied with the study of the external world for the conquest of matter. But far more pressing is the need to control the mind. It is lack of mind-control that has led to much suffering as is evident in the story of *Vedeika*.

The slave-girl *Kæli* went about the neighbourhood exposing the hypocrisy of her mistress, her ill temper and her cruelty that belied her neighbour's high regard for her character. Then they started disparaging her and her detractors outnumbered those who extolled her before. It is easier for us to be blamed than to be praised by other people. For we need to possess self-restraint and other virtues to earn public admiration and the maintenance of reputation requires life-long struggle for moral purity. Some people get tainted with scandals toward the end of their lives, thereby suffering a grievous blow to their social standing. To preserve one's good name is an uphill task whereas it is easy to incur the reproach of other people.

So there are some people who fall into disgrace overnight by doing something morally wrong. The root cause of such public disgrace is generally ill-temper. It is an insidious disease that festers and makes its victim's behaviour abnormal and reprehensible. Hence we need to wipe it out in order that its eradication may be beneficial to its victim and everybody else around him.

## THE REMEDY FOR ILL-TEMPER

We live in society and in every household there is at least a married couple and it is in their interest to get on in harmony with each other. Of course there are inevitable causes for minor frictions and resentments but it is up to them to note immediately the serious symptoms of ill temper and eliminate them. Otherwise it will worsen and find expression in heated disputes and recriminations that usually end up in open hostility and discord. If one does not stop short of doing something physically harmful or mentally very painful to the other, then there is bound to be the break-up of marriage followed by much anguish and suffering. This is the example of the price that one has to pay here and now for lack of self-control. If the outburst of ill-temper results in grave deeds of evil, its victim will have to abide by its *karmic* consequences in terms of prolonged disasters throughout the life cycle.

Those who do not practise the Dhamma, too, need to prevent the outburst of ill-temper for their own welfare in their everyday life. A man afflicted with a disease like leprosy is loathed by other people and given a wide berth even by his relatives and friends who do not wish to come into close contact with him for fear of infection. Likewise people avoid an ill-tempered man because love and friendship evaporate when one is consumed with hatred and ill-temper.

There is one important reason for me to tell my listeners repeatedly in my sermons to be on their guard against hatred. When a man harbours hatred and ill-will, more often than not he target of his anti-social defilements may happen to be someone nearest to him in his social life. He may be a former friend, a relative or someone who lives with us or who is well known to us. Yet these are the kinds of people on whom we have to rely in times of trouble. We have no reason to be angry with someone who lives far away. We may not know him well nor is it possible for him to help us even if he wants to. Mutual assistance based on mutual goodwill is possible only in relationship between two persons who live together or are on intimate terms with each other.

In villages quarrels break out among neighbours whose houses are close together. They seldom occur among those who live one or two houses apart. So intimacy often breeds mutual hostility although we turn to an intimate friend for help that we need. In order to ensure unity, harmony and mutual goodwill among those living together, one should be always on the alert for the infection of ill-temper. In case of infection it should be treated promptly. We should reject it through mindfulness whenever it arises. As soon as we become aware of signs of resentment e.g. a frown in the facial expression, a loud voice or unpleasant feeling, we should restrain and try to nip our ill-temper in the bud in order that it may not affect us emotionally any further. Ill-temper tends to feed on itself and so we should not allow it to gain momentum. We should, for example, stop talking when we notice any hidden sign of it in our voice or words.



## SLOTH, THE THIRD HINDRANCE

Now we turn to the third hindrance, viz. *thinamiddha* which may be translated as torpor and languor. In other words, it denotes sloth, an unwholesome state of consciousness that makes us reluctant to hear and practise the Dhamma. Some people do practise meditation but they are not energetic enough to do so whole-heartedly. Thus sloth is an obstacle to progress on the Ariyan Path and as such it denies many lazy people the flavour of the Dhamma. They are like prisoners in jails who do not have the opportunity to enjoy themselves at cinemas, theatres and other places of entertainment. Other people are at liberty to make merry and recall their enjoyment like cattle chewing the curd. But they cannot share their joy with prisoners who lack experience that would make what they hear vivid and lively.

In the same way the flavour of the Dhamma is known only to those who have practised it. They have testified that it is quite unlike the taste of any other thing that they know from experience. Because of its uniqueness one cannot communicate about it to any one else, particularly to lazy people who will not do anything to savour the Dhamma. So many indolent people are totally in the dark about the supreme peace attainable after realizing the Ariyan Path and Nibbæna. At present the people of Myanmar have easy access to the Dhamma but owing to their laziness many of them are denied the taste of the Buddha's teaching. They are too sluggish and lethargic to be able to appreciate the Dhamma, let alone to have the prospect of realizing its ultimate goal.

True, laziness is not always harmful to us. For one reason or another, at times we do not feel like doing anything worthwhile or meaningful. What matters most for us, however, is that we should be on guard against sloth during meditation. We should get rid of it as soon as we notice its telltale signs such as weariness or boredom.

## RESTLESSNESS AND WORRY

The fourth hindrance is *uddhacca* and *kukkucca* or restlessness and worry. Restlessness is mind wandering as in the case of a young monk who gave free rein to discursive thinking while he was fanning an elderly thera. He thought of leaving the holy order and getting married. He became so much absorbed in his day dream that he beat the old monk, mistaking him for his wife. By the hindrance of worry we should understand remorse over the mistakes we have made in our speech and actions. The man who is a hostage to this hindrance becomes virtually impotent like a slave.

Long ago when slavery was in vogue, an impoverished man might be forced to become the slave of his creditor for payment of his debt. He would have to forfeit his freedom and other human rights and put himself at the mercy of his master. Much credit is due to social reformers in the West for the abolition of slavery through legislation. Still, today there are some countries where the people have no human rights and are de facto slaves of the power elite. Hence it is up to us to free ourselves from restlessness and worry that block access to the Dhamma and appreciation of its essence.

## DOUBT, THE LAST HINDRANCE

The last hindrance to enlightenment is *vicikicchæ* or doubt. It is not doubt that concerns our daily affairs but doubt about the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. It is like the vacillation of a trader who with the robbers in hot pursuit behind him came to a cross-roads and found himself at a loss what to do. He had to pay dearly for his irresolution for he was overtaken by the robbers who killed him. Likewise the yogi committed to the practice of the Dhamma resembles the traveller following a road that is totally foreign to him. For he is bound for *Nibbæna* which is as yet inaccessible to common people. Except for five *suddhævæsas* (The Pure Abodes: a group of five heavens in the category of fine-material worlds) there is no place on earth or elsewhere which is beyond the reach of living beings. But *Nibbæna* and the way to it transcend ordinary human experience. Therefore the yogi should do away with his doubts and follow the teacher's instruction based on the teachings of the Buddha.

## THE WAY TO PRACTISE MINDFULNESS

Our instruction is in accord with the Satipa#hæna method of the Buddha. It is simple in that it requires us only to watch mindfully all psycho-physical phenomena arising from six sense-organs. Whatever the object of attention, it does not make much difference as long as it is linked to the five *khandhas* comprising the mind-body complex of existence. The yogi may begin with any visible object, sound, smell, taste or tactile impression. He can focus his mind on any part of his body or state of consciousness e.g. intention, imagination, thinking or feeling.

We instruct the yogi, however, to begin with the rising and falling of the belly which is a phenomenon of the corporeality (*rþpa*) group. Both rising and falling indicate motion (*væyo-dhætu*), one of the four primary elements. According to the commentaries, the yogi who has not yet developed concentration or tranquility (*samatha*) should begin with the four primary elements when he practises meditation to attain insight-knowledge (*Vipassanæñæ#a*), while on the other hand, the yogi who is well grounded in the practice of concentration may proceed with entranced (*jhænic*) absorption.

Our method does not presuppose tranquility (*samædhi*) on the part of the disciple. It focuses on the observation of the four primary elements as recommended by the commentaries. Of the four elements the earth-element (*pathavî-dhætu*) is a designation for hardness and solidity, a phenomenon that impinges on our consciousness when we touch some object with our hands. The heat-element (*tejodhætu*) indicates heat, warmth or cold while the water-element (*æpodhætu*) denotes liquidity and wetness.

According to the commentary on Visuddhimagga ("The Path of Purity") we should begin the practice of meditation with what is simple and obvious. It is rather like studying the Dhamma. How can one acquire a good knowledge of Buddhism by learning first and foremost the very abstruse *Patthæna*, a book of Abhidhamma pi#aka? How can a child begin his education with a difficult subject? The same holds true for the beginner in meditation. The Buddha's teaching is very simple. It requires us to focus our attention on the four bodily postures or ways of movement, viz. standing, sitting, walking or lying.

*"Gaccanto væ gacchæmæti pajænæti: When you walk, know that you are walking".*

The instruction is so simple that some people doubt that it is the Buddhadhamma or the saying of the Buddha. If it were not mentioned in the Pi#aka as the word of the Buddha, they would have rejected it outright. They wish to argue even over the Buddha's teaching and interpret it in their own way. They view walking in a conventional sense and deny its reality. In fact the Buddha's saying does not need to be rectified. If the Buddha had wished to emphasize the philosophical mode of speech, he would have said otherwise.

In his book on the doctrine of *Anatta* (*Anattadīpanī*), Ledī Sayādaw says, “When you walk, you should focus your mind on every step that you take, noting mentally, “I walk, I walk”. Do not take any step unmindfully.” Here “I walk” or “I go” is the exact translation of the Pāṭi expression, that is that walking is what happens when there is movement of the body due to the inclination of the mind to move. We do not instruct the yogī in so many words. We tell him just to note “Walking, walking” or what he is doing at any moment, e.g. taking a step, raising the leg, putting it down or sitting. This is the easiest method involving only bare awareness, For those who are not interested in bodily postures, the alternative is to note the rising and falling of the belly.

Some beginners in meditation and some people who have heard our sermons wonder whether this is the really effective way to the development of insight knowledge. Their skepticism is not surprising since they have not tested this method nor do they have any clear idea of what insight-meditation (*Vipassanā*) is all about. They are acting on implicit faith in their teachers who have assured them of insight into distinction between mind and matter and the reality of impermanence, suffering and impersonality of life. But they have not realized their hope and hence their doubt about the efficacy of our method.

So some people interested in meditation are at a cross-roads, wavering, indecisive and hesitating to follow the Satipaṭṭhāna method. Unable to live in the Ariyan abode, they have no guard and no protection from the perils attendant on the round of rebirths (*samsāra*). Should they die with lingering attachment to a sensual object, in all likelihood they may land in the lower worlds.

#### PURITY OF MIND

There is still much to be said about the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) to enlightenment. In short, the yogī should note the five hindrances when they arise and eliminate them. To overcome all of them, he should first try to attain purity of mind (*cittavisuddhi*). The *nīvaraṇas* are barriers to mental culture for good and evil thoughts cannot occur together at the same time. So the yogī's states of consciousness are pure and wholesome when he is mindful. Hindrances have their origin in unmindfulness that gives rise to sensual desire, ill-will, sloth, restlessness, anxiety and doubt. The unmindful man gives them free rein, thereby making his mind impure. How can he keep his mind pure when he is continually harassed by one of them even during his meditation? This vulnerability to hindrances is quite familiar to some people who have practised meditation. Many people do not meditate because they count on their acts of alms giving, observance of moral precepts, recitation of scriptures and devotional services for mental and moral purity. They do not meditate, they say, since they never do evil, bear ill-will, and let their minds defiled. Nevertheless, they are quickly disillusioned when they take up meditation.

I remember the experience of a woman who once practised mindfulness under my guidance. I gave her the usual instruction i.e. to note every sense-impression beginning with the rising and falling of the belly. Shortly thereafter she complained of her mental distractions. She said that at home her mind did not give her any trouble but that since the day she started meditating she had had much trouble coping with its impurities.

Of course she did not know the nature of consciousness. At home she was unaware of pure or impure thoughts because of her unmindfulness. She harboured the delusion that her mind was pure but in reality she had no idea about its moral character. Consider, for example, a piece of cloth used in the kitchen and stained with all kinds of dirt. It does not make any difference if we soil it any further. Similarly, the ordinary man defiled with inner impurities is unconscious of their impact on him. For as an absentminded man he is not trying to make his mind pure.

It is only mindful introspection that makes us immediately conscious of ill-will, sensual desire, frustration, and so forth that otherwise would have escaped our attention. Awareness of one's defilements is then no less palpable than that of a stain on a lily-white handkerchief. Gold is always attractive by itself but it reveals its true quality only when tested by means of a touchstone. Likewise

our inner impurities come to light only in meditation; and as every yogø knows from experience, it is only through mindfulness that we can effectively purge ourselves of these impurities. For the stream of consciousness is always clear in a mindful person who is immune to all kinds of mental impurity.

This state of pure consciousness is called *cittavisuddhi* in Pæ'i. Some people who do not know its nature believe that it is accessible only to the *jhænic* (entranced) yogø's. But this *jhæna*-induced mental purity rests on the uninterrupted duration of *jhænic* trance whereas the other kind of mental purity is born of insight-knowledge (*vipassanæ-ñæ¼a*). Both states of pure consciousness are devoid of hindrances.

## DISTINCTION BETWEEN MIND AND BODY

The state of pure consciousness enables the yogø to distinguish between mind and body. Now a few words about the distinction between *næma* (consciousness) and *rþpa* (corporeality). Whether some people like or dislike it, we will begin with the rising and falling of the belly. Many people disliked it at first but when on the advice of their friends they tried it they found our method quite satisfying, so much so that they even blamed those whose criticism had misled them before.

The Satipa#hæna way to mindfulness certainly appeals to those who have seriously followed it because it brings them into contact with ultimate reality. Just as we know the heat of fire, the sweetness of sugar, etc. from experience, so also we can know the truth or otherwise of a doctrine not on hearsay but only through empirical investigation. In fact when we tell the yogø to focus on the rising and falling of the belly, our instruction is in essence the Buddha 's teaching.

The rising indicates the *væyo* or wind-element and its characteristic is instability. In the contemplation of mind and matter the yogø should not bother about the number, size, shape, or designation of the object of his attention. Some people seek to focus on what they believe to be the shape of atomic particles. But shape is linked only with colour and tactile sensation and it is not to be found in any other element of psycho-physical (*næma-rþpa*) complex. Again how can it be possible for the yogø to observe sound, smell or taste atomically? Even if material objects may lend themselves to atomic analysis, the same cannot be said of mind and its elements such as greed, anger, etc.

This has escaped the notice of some people who view *svæy* (wind element) as dissolving atoms. In fact we should focus on the nature of a phenomenon only in terms of its characteristics, etc. For instance we become aware of wind-element when we focus on the rising and falling of the belly. Then how are we to understand the wind-element?

The characteristics of the wind-element are instability, tenseness or tightness and looseness. These are relative terms depending on the comparison of the object with others. For example, of three ropes stretched side by side the first one may be taut or loose compared with the other two ropes. When the yogø focuses on the rising and falling of the belly, he does not at first notice the wind-element nor the distinction between mind and matter. In the beginning he needs to note and overcome the hindrances. Only when hindrances erode leaving the consciousness pure, does he become clearly aware of tenseness and instability. Inclining, bending, leaning, moving walking etc. all convey the same meaning, viz. motion which is the function (*rasa*) of the wind-element (*Væyo dhætu*). *Væyo* means wind which moves from one place to another when it is strong. At other times it remains quiet and tense. This function of wind element is familiar to the yogø who contemplates the rising and falling of the belly. He is quite aware of the gradual movement outward during the rising and inward during the falling.

The resulting phenomenon (*þaccupatthæna*) of the wind element is its propulsion in the direction determined by its tendency. In case of voluntary actions such as bending or stretching the hand, the direction depends on the inclination of the mind. In bending and stretching there is the inward and outward propulsion. In walking we feel being pulled forward or backward. This kind of

feeling is apparent, too, in the rising and falling. It is in fact the resulting phenomenon of wind-element in the form of earnest wish or tendency. (*Abhinhara paccupatthæna*).

The resulting phenomenon is any impression that occurs to the mind when we think of something. Thus when the yogu notes the rising and falling of the belly, he sees the wind-element behind it in terms of its characteristic, function and resulting phenomena. At the same time there may arise unpleasant sensations like heat, cramp, pain in the body, etc.

In this connection the Buddha says: "The monk is aware of disagreeable feelings even as he experiences them". Here "experience" as a verb is the translation of the Pæ'i word "*Vedayæmi*" in the text and its grammatical construction of the Pæ'i word "*Vedayæmi*" in the text and its grammatical construction implies "I" (the first person singular) as the subject just like "*gacchæmæti*: I walk". If this were to be dismissed as mistranslation, it would be like the desecration of the Buddha's teaching.

Myanmar people do not say, "I experience heat". Instead, they say, "It is hot". So our yogu is instructed to make a mental note of the specific sensation that he has: "It is hot". "It is cold". "It is painful" and so forth. The unpleasant feeling has the characteristic of pain or suffering. Its function is to depress the spirit as is evident in sickness and its resulting phenomenon is irritating sensation in the body. Thus the yogu understands unpleasant feeling in terms of its characteristic, function and resulting phenomenon. The same may be said of pleasant or indifferent feeling. There is no need to memorize the three aspects for they become quite clear to the yogu as he keeps on noting the rising and falling.

## THE NATURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

It is the characteristic of consciousness to know its sense-objects. Hence there are different kinds of consciousness, depending on different kinds of contact (seeing, hearing, smelling, etc) with different sense-objects (sound, odour, taste, etc.) The function of consciousness is to lead its concomitants. As the keystone of man's mental life, it takes the initiative and is followed by greed, hatred, faith, mindfulness or other mental factors. The resulting phenomenon of consciousness is its apparent connection with the preceding mental state. The meditating yogu notes one state of consciousness and watches it disappear after giving rise to another mental state. Thus the state of flux characteristic of consciousness is crystal clear to the yogu, a state involving the ceaseless arising and passing away of mental units.

Just as in the case of the wind-element, the yogu can contemplate other psycho-physical phenomena, each with reference to its three-aspects, viz. characteristic, function and resulting phenomenon. Here we will briefly consider the distinction between consciousness and corporeality.

Mindfulness at the moment of seeing an object depends on eye and colour which are corporeal or physical while seeing and knowing are mental. The same may be said of the ear together with the sound (corporeal) and awareness of hearing (mental). At the moment of smelling something, we have nose and odour as corporeal and consciousness of smell as mental. Ear and sound, nose and odour, tongue and taste, body and contact--- these pairs of physical phenomenon have their corresponding mental phenomena of eye-consciousness (*cakkhu-viññæa*), sound-consciousness, scent-consciousness and touch-consciousness.

The scope of touch-consciousness is very wide. It arises in every part of the body and is linked with bending, stretching, moving or walking. So when the yogu is mindful at the moment of bending his hand, the bending is corporeal and the awareness is mental. The stretching of hand causing tenseness and movement is corporeal while knowing it is mental. The rising and falling of the belly, too, indicates the two aspects of life viz., mind and matter. In taking a step, the feeling of lightness as the yogu raises his foot indicates *tejo* (heat) element, tenseness and motion as he puts the foot forward point to *væyo* (wind) elements; the heaviness as he puts down the foot is æpo-element

while the friction and resistance arising from the impact of the foot on the ground is the *pathavø* or the earth-element. Thus the distinctive features of each of the four primary elements are evident.

Whenever the *yogø* observes the behaviour of his body, he distinguishes between the corporeality which does not know the sense-object and the mind which knows it. The Buddha compared the consciousness to the string attached to a diamond. Just as a man with clear eye-sight sees the string clearly apart from the diamond, so also the *yogø* differentiates definitely the consciousness from corporeality.

Later on as concentration develops, the *yogø* becomes aware of the distinction between cause and effect in the process of mindfulness. In the beginning it takes some effort to note the bending or stretching the hand. In due course he learns to note the desire to stretch or bend. Thus he becomes aware of the fact that it is this desire that leads to bending or stretching, that there is no one, no person who causes them but only cause and effect. When we do the bending and stretching, we do not notice the desire to do so because we do not have the habit of mindfulness and concentration. The *yogø* who has acquired this habit is aware of it spontaneously. It is only a matter of a few days' steadfast practice and effort to be familiar with the nature of consciousness. As he notes seeing or hearing something, the *yogø* realizes that the former occurs because of eye and colour or that the latter is due to ear and sound. In short though the practice of mindfulness the *yogø* becomes well aware of the cause and effect relationship between mind and body. This is called *paccayapariggahañæ¼a* in Pæ'i.

#### INSIGHT-KNOWLEDGE OF IMPERMANENCE

With the emergence of this insight the *yogø* can distinguish between the origin and end. These two phases of a phenomenon indicate respectively its arising and fading away. As the *yogø* notes this fact at every moment of his mindfulness, he gains insight into the nature of impermanence. The Pæ'i term for this insight-knowledge is *Sammæšana ñæ¼a*.

According to commentaries, this insight-knowledge has three aspects (i) The *yogø* knows the phenomena that are impermanent (ii) He knows the marks of impermanence and (iii) He gains insight-knowledge of impermanence. The impermanent phenomena are all the psycho-physical complex or groups (*handhas*) that are for ever arising and passing away without cessation. We recognize their impermanence because every unit of these psycho-physical groups arises from non-existence, comes into momentary existence and passes away into non-existence.

This is the characteristic of impermanence. If a thing does not arise at all, we cannot say that it is impermanent. As examples we have *Nibbæna* and conventional terms (*ñæmapañætti*). Nor can we regard anything as impermanent if it arises and exists for ever. But in reality there is no such thing. Every thing that has a beginning has also an end. It is necessary to realize this sign of impermanence from experience. For it is only when we see the constant flux of all phenomena during the practice of mindfulness that we can have a clear idea of impermanence independently.

## SUFFERING AND INSUBSTANTIALITY

## DUKKHA AND ANATTA

This insight-knowledge which the yogø acquires on his own as he notes the beginning and end or arising and passing away of everything is called *aniccavipassanæ-ñæ¼a*. In other words, it is the empirical insight into the nature of impermanence and as such it leads to the realization of suffering (*dukkha*) and insubstantiality (*anatta*) of life. When the yogø realizes *anatta*, he also realizes *Nibbæna*. This does not imply the attainment of the supreme goal of the Buddha-dhamma. It means only the reflection at the level of *sammæsa¼a* insight-knowledge. When this insight-knowledge develops through prolonged mindfulness and reflection on impermanence, suffering and insubstantiality, he stops reflecting and continues to be mindful. Then his awareness gains momentum and he becomes clearly and thoroughly aware of the beginning and end of every sense-object that is noted by him. This is called *udayabbayañæ¼a* in Pæ'i, insight-knowledge stemming from the contemplation of the arising and passing away. He sees wonderful lights and experiences joy, peace, rapture and ecstasy. There is an overwhelming upsurge of faith, lucidity and devoutness to the point of feeling that one knows everything or that one has attained *Nibbæna*.

These unusual experiences should be noted and eliminated. After transcending them, the yogø is left with vanishing of all phenomena as the object of his mindfulness. He no longer sees the image of belly or physical body when he notes the rising and falling. Whatever he notes, he finds the sense-object as well as the cognitive element of consciousness disappearing one after another. When he walks and notes "lifting the foot" "putting it forward" "putting it down", he sees only everything passing away without any mental picture of the foot or the body.

## FROM BHAE GA TO SÆKHÆRUPEKKHÆ

This insight-knowledge of everything passing away is called *bha³ghañæ¼a*. Some people criticize it, saying that it would create visions of a distorted figure with grotesque hands and feet. This shows that they have never experienced *bha³ghañæ¼a*. Otherwise they would not have talked such nonsense.

Being confined to the dissolution of everything, this insight-knowledge leads to fright (*bhayañæ¼a*) which in turn helps develop insight into the futility and emptiness of conditioned existence (*ædinavañæ¼a*). So the yogø ceases to enjoy life and becomes sick of it. (*Nibbidañæ¼a*). He longs for liberation (*muñcitukamyatañæ¼a*) and in order to achieve his object he resorts to special contemplation (*patisa³khæ ñæ¼a*). This results in the thorough comprehension of the three signs of life, viz. impermanence, suffering and insubstantiality of existence (*sa³khærupekkhañæ¼a*).

This insight-knowledge is very subtle and much beneficial to the yogø. Objects of mindfulness arise conspicuously and automatically without any effort on the part of the yogø who can remain mindful for a long time. With the emergence of *sa³khærupekkhañæ¼a* the yogø is in possession of six attributes. In other words, the yogø attains equanimity in regard to the six sense-objects. The Buddha describes this spiritual quality as follows.

"O Monks! The monk who has seen a visible object is neither pleased nor displeased. His mind is in equilibrium as it is not affected either by attachment or by aversion. This is because he has right mindfulness."

Here we should note the words "*cakkhuma rppan disvæ*" (having seen the object). For otherwise we will miss the point which the Buddha wished to emphasize and bring home to his disciples. It makes no sense to speak of a man's defilements linked to a sense object which he has never seen. It is not surprising that we neither love nor hate a man or a woman whom we have never met. On the other hand, we cannot but admire a person who knows some people but does not love them despite their loveliness or does not hate them either despite their repulsiveness.

Such a person is the Arahāt or the *Ariyan* Noble One. The Arahāt is neither pleased nor displeased with what he has seen or heard or tasted. Most people are happy when they see the object which they love or get the object of their desire. Such sense-objects cannot excite the Arahāt emotionally. Nor does he feel unhappy or ill at ease because of his encounter with an unpleasant person.

The Arahāt's state of consciousness is restricted to bare awareness and as such it is well-balanced and devoid of greed or hatred. Through mindfulness and right understanding, he notes every psycho-physical event or phenomenon as it really is, strictly in terms of its characteristics of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*. There is no cause for elation or dejection, pleasure or displeasure, no matter how delightful or unpleasant his sense-impressions may be. He always remains indifferent to any sense-object regardless of its emotional effect on other people.

It is certainly possible for the yogī to strive for Arahātship. According to the commentaries, one who seeks insight-knowledge through the practice of contemplation is capable of attaining the equanimity ascribed to the Arahāt. Of course no one can be assured of it by merely listening to our sermons. You will have to strive for it strenuously and steadfastly, beginning with insight into distinction between *nāma* and *rūpa* and attain one stage after another until you gain *sa<sup>3</sup>khārupekkhāñā<sup>4</sup>a*.

### SELF-EXAMINATION

The tendency among some meditation teachers is to give lectures flattering and gratifying to their disciples. They guarantee, for example, the attainment of *sotāpanna* and *sakadāgāmi*, the first two stages on the *Ariyan* path for those who would attend their lectures once or twice. This is of course pure propaganda to win the confidence of their disciple. It is up to the yogī to examine himself on the basis of the Dhammasa and the stages of insight-knowledge on the Noble Path. (Dhammasa is the Buddha's sermon on how to evaluate one's spiritual progress on the path). In this way he can find out whether or not he has attained the spiritual level promised by his teacher.

It is certainly a mistake for the yogī to regard himself as a *sotāpan* simply on the authority of his teacher's verdict. A genuine *sotāpan* has a firm, unwavering faith in the Buddha as he is well aware of the Lord's superman attributes. His faith is so unshakable that he is prepared to hold on to it even at the sacrifice of his life. This kind of faith in the Buddha stemming from the insight-knowledge of the Lord's noble character is one of what the Lord himself called the four mirrors of the dhamma (*dhammāsa*) or tests for assessing one's progress in the practice of the Dhamma.

The yogī who practises the Dhamma knows independently, too, that as the Buddha pointed out, there are only psycho-physical phenomena that arise and pass away ceaselessly; that they are all painful and devoid of ego-entity. He sees *Nibbāna* at the level of the Path and fruition (*magga-phala*), an experience that reinforces his faith in the Buddha just like a man who is confident of the physician who has effectively cured him of his illness. He has a firm faith, too, in the Noble Ones or Arahats. The implicit faith in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha and an impeccable moral uprightness in conformity with the five precepts constitute the four mirrors of dhamma (*dhammāsa*) that provide the tests for yogīs who wish to ascertain the extent of their spiritual progress.



## GENUINE SOTAPAN

It is important to bear in mind that for the sincere yogø conformity to the moral precepts is to be natural and spontaneous and does not require deliberate effort or a sense of self-imposed duty. It implies moral purity rooted in freedom from evil desire and violent, evil passions. This is not to say that initially there is no need for the yogø to exercise self-restraint to make himself morally pure. What we mean is that he should aim at moral purity that is invulnerable to any violent desire to commit moral transgressions. Therefore he needs to examine himself to see whether he has achieved such kind of moral purity. Otherwise he may run the risk of being deluded like one of my former disciples.

Once a lay man came to me. He was not an ordinary person but an educated and well-informed Buddhist. He said that after he had meditated for several times he was declared to be a *sotæpan* by his teacher. In the Piṭaka there is no mention, no instance of such a verdict being given by Arahats other than the Buddha. We always consider it inadvisable to make such kind of judgment. On the other hand we only give sermons on the stages of insight-knowledge that will provide the basis for assessing one's spiritual progress.

Nevertheless, because of his strong faith in his teacher, the man believed himself to be a *sotæpan* and observed the five precept strictly. Then one day he reported his religious experience to an elderly monk. The 90-year old monk still living and well versed in the Piṭaka is intimate with me. The man told the old monk about his vision of the elements and phenomena evaporating during his practice of meditation and about the verdict of his teacher.

Then the learned Sayædaw said that he was talking nonsense and that there was nothing to warrant his understanding of the Dhamma, let alone his claim to be a *sotæpan Ariya*. The disillusioned man told me that after his interview with the outspoken Sayædaw, he no longer cared much for the strict observance of the five precepts. I advised him not to do like that but to continue to lead a good moral life, whatever other people said about him. It is necessary for the yogø to avoid becoming a self-styled *sotæpan* like that lay disciple.

## EMPIRICAL KNOWLEDGE

Equanimity in respect of the six senses is a foregone conclusion when the yogø attains the stage of *sa<sup>3</sup>khærupekkhæññæ* or insight-knowledge of the equanimity in respect of conditioned existence. For then the yogø knows the real nature of everything although he is barely aware of it. He is not yet a *sotæpan*. But he is neither pleased nor displeased with a sense-object no matter what is its impact on other people. For his awareness is restricted to the arising and passing away of all phenomena. Hence the yogø is in temporary possession of an attribute of the *Arahat* while he is absorbed in meditation.

Whatever other people may think of him, it is a very delicate and gentle stage of consciousness that deserves our admiration inasmuch as it precludes the possibility of greed, anger, despair and other defilements in the face of any sense-object. This super equanimity is the chief attribute of the *Arahat* but as the commentaries say, it can be acquired at least in the short term by the yogø who practises mindfulness. Whatever the sense-impressions linked to the six sense organs, he is free from all emotional reactions.

For his bare awareness helps bring home to him the significance of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*, the three salient characteristics of life. As he notes and contemplates their real nature, it becomes automatically crystal clear to him. This state of consciousness may last from one to three hours and it is conducive to his welfare. He feels no strain or pain. Any disease that afflicts him may subside and indeed in the case of some yogø it may disappear forever. The possession of such a wonderful equanimity by the practising yogø is certainly a cause for self-congratulation and it is a saintly virtue that would earn him public admiration. But even the Buddha can only point out the

way and it is up to the *Ariyan* disciple to exert all-out effort to acquire and experience it for himself. To be sure, some people may misunderstand and disparage him but they will have to abide by the grave consequences of their ignorance.

### RENUNCIATION OF FALSE VIEWS

The two *Ariyævasadhammas* that we have to consider now are those which all for renunciation of what the Pæ'i texts label *paccekasacca* or false heterodox views. There are in brief two such views, to with (1) the eternity view and (2) the annihilation view. According to the first view a living being survives death and continues to exist after taking up its abode in another physical body. Those who hold this view believe it to be the only truth and reject all others as wrong. On the other hand, some people maintain that when a man dies, there is nothing but annihilation and reject the idea of a future life as an illusion.

These two views may be subjectively true for their adherents, but are false when tested in the crucible of natural laws. Hence the need to eradicate them but this task does not require special effort on the part of the yogis. For as I have said, if the yogi constantly keeps on noting everything, he eventually attains insight-knowledge of equanimity and then he is indifferent to six sense-objects. Further progress from then on leads to the first spiritual stage on the Ariyan path, viz. *Sotæpattimagganæ%a* that brings about total liberation from all views.

The two unorthodox views about life after death give rise to ten kinds of delusion which are as follows:-

- (i) A living being is not subject to disintegration and dissolution after death but continues to exist eternally.
- (ii) When he dies, he perishes and is annihilated.
- (iii) A living being is finite.
- (iv) A living being is infinite.
- (v) Life-force or entity is identical with the physical body.
- (vi) Life-force or entity is distinct from the physical body.
- (vii) A living being exists after death.
- (viii) A living being does not exist after death.
- (ix) A living being exists and does not exist after death.
- (x) A living being neither exists nor is he non-existent after death.

All these are false views that need to be repudiated by those who practise the *Ariyævasa-dhammas*. Equally to be repudiated are the three false pursuits.

### THREE KINDS OF PURSUITS

The pursuit of a human being is of three kinds, viz, (1) Pursuit of sensuous pleasure (2) Pursuit of existence and (3) Pursuit of a supposedly holy life. The first is the pursuit of the people who seek sensual objects that delight them. The sensual desire motivating it becomes wholly extinct only at the *Anægæmi* level, the third stage on the holy path. Hence it is up to the yogø to try to reach this stage. As for the second pursuit that is dominated by the craving for existence, the attachment to life does not come to an end even at the *Anægæmi* stage. For then there is still the lingering desire for the fine material existence (*rppabhava*) or immaterial existence (*arppabhava*).

It is only *Arahatship* that puts an end to it and hence the need to achieve it. But this does not require special effort if the yogø seeks it steadfastly through constant mindfulness. The third or last pursuit is that of the ignorant man who commits himself to a wrong way of life, mistakenly believing it to be the right path. All these false views and practices wither away at the sotæpanna level when the yogø clearly understands the Eightfold Noble Path.

### PURE AND SPOTLESS THOUGHTS

Moreover the yogø's thoughts and thinking should be lucid, pure and spotless. He can keep them immaculate if he is mindful of everything that occurs to him. These thoughts (*vitakka*) are of three kinds (1) sensuous thoughts (2) malicious thoughts and (3) cruel or aggressive thoughts. These thoughts usually pass away if the yogø notes them as soon as they arise in his mind. But it is necessary for him to try until he becomes an *Arahat* and can always keep his mind clear and free from all impurities.

The yogø should also seek to attain the fourth *jhæna* with its cessation of in and out breathing. This calls for special effort since it is not within the reach of every *Arahat*. It is accessible only to a few outstanding *Arahats* who possess six higher spiritual powers (*abhiñña*) or three kinds of transcendental knowledge (*vijja*). Some *Arahats* who are called *sukkhavipassaka* do not attain the fourth *jhæna* but they too realize *Nibbæna* like other *Arahats*.

Of course one may regard such kind of *Arahats* as second grade Noble Ones and those who attain both *Nibbæna* and the fourth *jhæna* as the first grade *Arahats*. This does not matter much for the yogø who is bent on *Nibbæna*. For on the attainment of *Nibbæna*, it makes no difference since the total extinction of suffering is the same for Nobles Ones of all grades, be he a Buddha, a first class or a second class *Arahat*.

### SELF-KNOWLEDGE AND LIBERATION

The last two essential attributes of the yogø who dwells in the abode of the Noble Ones are (1) Liberation from defilements and (2) awareness of his liberation. The yogø who practises mindfulness and passes through the successive stages of insight-knowledge is fully liberated when he reaches the last stage on the Ariyan noble path. To put it another way, full liberation is synonymous with *Arahatship* and the mind of the *Arahat* is no longer a hostage to defilements. The Pæ'i term for this full liberation is *svimuttacitta*. This is followed by *svimutta pañño* which means the *Arahat* is well aware of his liberation from greed, hatred and ignorance when he reflects on the stage of his consciousness. Whatever the sense-objects that impinge on his sense-organs, he is wholly free from attachments stemming from defilements.

In other words, there arises in the *Arahat* retrospective knowledge (*paccavakkhanæñæka*) of his freedom. But the *Arahat* is not alone in the possession of this knowledge. A sotæpan, too, knows that he is liberated to the extent of his freedom from defilements. His state of consciousness is not the same as before. He knows consciousness and corporeality as they really are and finds the soul-entity missing.

This kind of experience was once reported to me by a man who had meditated at our centre. He said that formerly he believed in the existence of a permanent soul but now reflection on his experience had revealed nothing about the soul but only the arising and passing away of psycho-physical phenomena. This was his independent judgment that had nothing to do with our sermons and it points to the liberation from ego-illusion gained by some yogīs at the *sotāpanna* level.

### LIBERATION FROM DOUBT

Now a few words about liberation from doubt (*vicikiccha*). Doubt does not arise when there is no cause for it. There arises doubt when someone expresses his doubt about the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha in such a way as to make it infectious. But no matter who is saying what about the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, the enlightened yogī has no doubt for the liberation of his mind from any misgiving about the three jewels (*tiratana*) is self-evident to him. Likewise the first three types of Noble Ones (*Ariyas*) are liberated to the extent befitting their attainments on the Path.

Thus the Noble One at the *Anāgāmi* stage is free from sensual desire and ill-will. This sense of freedom depends not on the sayings of other people but on the yogī's reflection and self-examination. He knows independently that his state of consciousness is always free from defilements and that his wisdom precludes the possibility of their recurrence. The same holds true for every yogī who believes himself to be well established on the Ariyan Noble Path.

Yet as I have said, there are some people who claim to be *Sotāpans* but harbour defilements that run counter to their belief. These self-styled *Sotāpans* seek to rationalize their unwholesome desires and habits saying that drinking liquor or taking life is by no means improper for the yogī at the first stage on the Noble Path. It makes little sense to resort to such biased, wishful and crooked thinking.

Hence to repeat what we have said: The mind of the yogī who has dedicated himself to the practice of the *Ariyāvāsa* Dhamma is relatively free from defilements, a freedom commensurate with his progress on the Path. Moreover, this spiritual freedom is self-evident whenever he reflects on his inner life or evidence based not on his learning or opinion of his teacher but on empirical investigation.

### CONCLUSION

When the yogī first realizes *Nibbāna*, he has become at least a *sotāpan* and is no longer exposed to the danger of suffering in one of the four lower worlds. So every yogī needs to practise mindfulness until he attains at least the *sotāpanna* stage and if possible he should exert his effort to achieve *Arahatship*.

May those who have sincerely and seriously studied the *Ariyāvāsa Sutta* cultivate the *Ariyāvāsa* dhammas so that they may live gracefully in the Ariyan abode, safe and secure from the four lower worlds and the other dangers of life-cycle (*saṃsāra*) and realize the peace of *Nibbāna* in the present life!

## NOTE

## ON THE MORAL SOLIDITY OF SOTÆPAN ARIYA

As I have said earlier in this book all Buddhists should steadfastly bear in mind that no one without total commitment to the five moral precepts can hope to become a *Sotæpan Ariya*. Now I will elucidate the point a little further.

My object in doing so is to help enlighten some ill-informed people and it is not my intention to corroborate my statement again. For barring the writer referred to above, that has been the unanimous view of Buddhist scholars as well as the non-Buddhist Pæ'i scholars for over 2500 years. In fact the writer is the only one who got confused and astray in his thinking and expressed his own preposterous view without any scriptural authority to support it. But if his senseless writings were to influence and mislead ignorant persons, then some drunkards and evil-doers would pose themselves as *sotæpans*, there by damaging the reputation of the Buddha-dhamma and the welfare of its followers.

Hence we can ill-afford to ignore this potential danger and that is why I give serious thought to it in my discourse on *Ariyævæsa-dhamma*. Now I will give a few extracts from the Piṭṭaka and the commentaries for the moral uplift of those who are not well grounded in Pæ'i literature.

In the *A<sup>3</sup>guttara Nikæya* the Buddha describes the *Sotæpans* and the *Sa<sup>3</sup>kadagans* as the *Ariyas* who are totally committed to moral precepts and partly devoted to the practice of tranquility and wisdom. The *Anagan Ariya* is credited with full possession of morality but only with partial practice of wisdom while the *Arahat* is said to be fully dedicated to the practice of morality, tranquility and wisdom. (*sāla, samædhi and paññæ*).

Thus according to this saying, the Buddha ranked the *Sotæpan* with the *Arahat* in terms of total commitment to moral purity. So we should bear in mind that although the *sotæpan* is not yet free from some defilements like sensual desire and ill-temper, by virtue of faith, energy, mindfulness and other path-related traits of character, a *Sotæpan* monk is morally pure in terms of strict abstinence from secular offences; while a lay man *Sotæpan* is wholly pure in his observance of the five precepts. It would be a contradiction of the Buddha's teaching if, in conformity with the opinion of common people, one says that due to the lingering presence of sensual desire, ill-will, etc., the *sotæpan's* moral integrity is vulnerable in the face of life-threatening dangers.

The right way to think and arrive at the proper conclusion is as follows.

The renewed faith of the *Sotæpan* after the attainment of the first stage on the *Ariyan* path is total and solid. It is this power of faith that sustains the moral life of self-restraint in accordance with the disciplinary code (*Patimokkha-samvarasāla*) binding on all monks. In short, complete faith in the Buddha implies compliance with his teaching that in turn leads to moral purity. On the other hand, lack of faith means deficiency in moral life just as doubt about a physician's professional skill makes a patient reluctant to follow his advice.

The *Sotæpan Ariya* is inspired with firm, unwavering and intelligent faith in the Buddha. Likewise he has implicit faith in the Dhamma and the Sangha. So he faithfully avoids doing anything which was proscribed by the Buddha as wrong and reprehensible. Even at the risk of his life he abstains from doing evil. Moreover, because of his path-oriented energy he does not earn his livelihood illegally. Instead, he works hard to get money. Again because of his path-based mindfulness there cannot possibly arise in him violent, uncontrollable greed, hatred etc. that can lead him to the lower worlds. By virtue of such faith, vigilance, mindfulness and other moral qualities, the moral life of a *sotæpan* is absolutely pure and secure.

The following is how the commentaries explain this teaching of the Buddha.

Suppose an authoritative person says to an Ariyan disciple who has unknowingly become a *sotæpan* in another life: "Kill this ant and you will be the monarch of this universe". That *sotæpan* Ariyan disciple is incapable of killing the ant. To put it another way, if a *sotæpan* were threatened with death for his refusal to take the life of a living being, he would choose death rather than do the killing. Thus the *sotæpan* is definitively incapable of taking life under any circumstances.

The commentaries seek by examples to make the Pæ'i text intelligible to us. The following is the Buddha's teaching in the Dhammadaṣa (the mirror of the Dhamma) sutta that will help the *sotæpan*s to assess their spiritual progress.

- (1) "Ænandæ, the Ariyan disciple has unshakable faith in the Buddha for the Lord is called the Arahata because he is worthy of special honour and he is called *Bhagava* because of his infinite power".
- (2) "The Ariyan disciple has unshakable faith in the Dhamma, it being his conviction that the Dhamma is well-proclaimed by the Buddha and that it is to be individually realized and experienced only by the wise Noble Ones for themselves."
- (3) "The Ariyan disciple has unwavering faith in the Sangha, believing that as disciples of the Buddha, the members of the Sangha possess good moral character and as such form the best arable land for all living beings intent on doing meritorious deeds."
- (4) "He has unblemished and untarnished moral character that is conducive to tranquility and admired by the Ariyas (Noble Ones)."

This is the mirror of the Dhamma. The Ariyan disciple who is totally committed to this Dhamma can declare that it is not possible for him to be reborn as a denizen of hell, an animal, a ghost or a demon, that as a *sotæpan*, he is no longer exposed to the danger of the four lower worlds and that he has to pass through only the three higher stages of insight-knowledge prior to his supreme, definitive liberation.

Here the last attribute of a genuine *sotæpan* is what we wish to emphasize. The commentaries elucidate it as follows:-

The Ariyas cherish and adore the five moral precepts and so they do not let it evaporate in afterlife. This observance of the five precepts is unblemished, spotless, and perfect and is therefore conducive to the development of *appanæ-samædhi* (attainment of ecstatic concentration and *upacæra-samædhi* (neighbourhood concentration)).

These Pæ'i texts and commentaries show clearly that the *Sotæpan* Ariya's moral purity remains intact after death and that it is essential to the attainment of genuine tranquility or concentration (*samædhi*).

In a sermon to Anathapindika in the A<sup>3</sup>guttara Nikæya the Buddha referred to the four chief attributes of the *sotæpan* Ariya as mentioned in the Dhammadaṣa sutta cited above. Furthermore, he pointed out the *sotæpan*'s freedom from five kinds of danger that beset anyone who violates any one of the five precepts. These dangers and danger that beset in the present life, danger in a future life, unhappiness, and distress. The commentary describes the two kinds of danger in the present life as internal and external danger. For example, a man has committed murder. The external danger is the

desire for retribution that arises in the son of the murder-victim. The internal danger is his desire to foil the design of the enemy against his life.

On the basis of these Pæ'i texts and commentaries all Buddhists, monks and lay men alike should take it for granted that sotæpan Ariya will never violate the five precepts, and that his moral life is absolutely pure. They should bear in mind once and forever that a morally impure man who claims to be a *sotæpan* is a bogus and not a genuine sotæpan in conformity with the Pæ'i texts and the commentaries.