

A DISCOURSE ON THE SĪLAVANTA SUTTA

by
The Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw
of
Burma

Translated by
U Htin Fatt (Maung Htin)



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Editor's Foreword

This exposition of the *Sīlavanta Sutta* by the late Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw was given in a series of fifteen talks over a period from the 10th March to 16th November 1967. The first edition was published in 1982 by the Buddha Sāsanañuggaha¹ Organization. I have done my usual editorial work of reducing excessive use of Pāḷi where it is not helpful, and restoring the correct original Pāḷi of the *Sutta* or *Commentary* where it is. To make a useful English book from fifteen long discourses originally given in Burmese, is a major undertaking.

I hope I have retained the essential meaning of the Sayādaw's valuable teachings in the process. Those familiar with his teachings and the practice of *Satipaṭṭhāna Vipassanā* meditation will derive great benefit from reading these discourses carefully to stimulate and guide their meditation practice.

The more time I spend editing the Sayādaw's discourses, the more I appreciate his great learning. He is able to find appropriate passages to illustrate the point he is trying to make, by reference to the Pāḷi texts or *Commentaries*, *Suttanta* or *Abhidhamma*, or the *Visuddhimagga* and its *Mahāṭīkā*, in which the Sayādaw was expert.

In looking up the various references, I think I finally see why the *Milindapañha* was included in the *Khuddakanikāya* at the Sixth Buddhist Council. The great Commentator Buddhaghosa referred to King Milinda or his questions in his *Commentaries*,² so even in his time it was considered a seminal work. The Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw also frequently refers to the *Milindapañha*, as well as to the *Visuddhimagga*.

I have added an index, which also serves as a Pāḷi glossary. I have added footnotes with references to the Pāḷi texts of the PTS, in the translations of which the references are usually given in the headers near to the spine, or in [square brackets] in the body of the text in the *Visuddhimagga*. The PDF version contains hyperlinks to other works by the Venerable Sayādaw, or to the *Dictionary of Pali Proper names* compiled by G.P. Malalasekera.

Bhikkhu Pesala
August 2013

¹ Usually written "Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha." However, the Pāḷi breaks down into "Buddha Sāsana Anuggaha" = Assisting the Buddha's dispensation (ed.)

² D.i.275, D.iii.900; M.iii.369, M.iv.118; S.ii.99; A.ii.11, A.i.59; SnA.ii.452.

Preface

It would be appropriate to regard the Silavanta Sutta as a standardised procedure to be practised by those who are either meditating now or who are inclined to take up meditation practice with the serious purpose of attaining the Path, its Fruition, and nibbāna. The reason being that in this Sutta, it has been fully and precisely taught that an ordinary ordinary person accomplished with the virtues of morality will undoubtedly become a Stream-winner (*sotāpanna*), if he or she earnestly contemplates the nature of the aggregates of attachment and truly realises them as impermanent (*anicca*), unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anatta*). In the same way, if a Stream-winner diligently continues with the practice of insight meditation, the realisation of the truth of the Dhamma will be achieved that will elevate him or her on to the stage of a Once-returner. The Once-returner will again gain the next stage of a Non-returner if he or she continues the practice of insight meditation whole-heartedly. Finally, a Non-returner continuing the practice of meditation with proper mindfulness will become an Arahant if true realisation is developed. It is obvious that one cannot even aspire to become a Stream-winner if the procedure is not strictly adhered to. More significantly, if morality is not properly observed, or, even with the full accomplishment of morality, if no contemplation is made with mindfulness on the conspicuous aggregates of attachment at the moment of seeing, hearing, *etc.*, or, if there is no knowing of the fact or awareness that they are in reality impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self, the stage of Stream-winning cannot possibly be reached.

The salient feature herein emphasised is to note with constant mindfulness the nature of the five aggregates of attachment by which the truth of the Dhamma with the characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self will be distinctly known leading to insight of varying degrees.

Mention has been made in this Sutta that if intent on contemplating the Dhamma with an all-out endeavour, a person should first of all be accomplished with purity of morality (*sīla visuddhi*), which out of the seven stages of purity, is a fundamental prerequisite for the purpose of insight meditation.

The light of true wisdom has been shown in this Sutta by way of imparting knowledge relating to wrong views that contradict the right procedure by saying: "It is unnecessary to contemplate since

impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self are already known. It would nothing but misery if contemplation is done — only if the mind is left alone, without resorting to contemplation, can mental peace and tranquility be achieved.” The refutation given by the author in respect of such irrational concepts amounts to a firm ruling in consonance with the noble wishes of the Blessed One. The decision given is a dire necessity, particularly at the present day, as there have been a number of dissenting views promulgated by different sects that sprang up from the time immediately after the conclusion of the Third Buddhist Council (*Saṅgāyana*). In the distant past, Venerable Moggaliputtatissa taught the Kathāvatthu, refuting all sorts of wrong-views such as the doctrine of individuality, which was deeply immersed in the heretical views of self. In those ancient times, however, no false beliefs had appeared that prohibited the method of practicing the Noble Eightfold Path, or the practices connected with tranquillity and insight meditation. Nowadays, some false doctrines go to the extent of obstructing or preventing the practice of meditation in accordance with the Noble Eightfold Path. If such heresies cannot be deterred or nipped in the bud, the three divisions of the Buddha's dispensation — study (*pariyatti*), practice (*paṭipatti*), and realisation (*paṭivedha*) may soon fade out.

As contained in its original teachings, the *Silavanta Sutta* reveals the right method of practical meditation and prevents the spread of these false beliefs and heretical ideas. This *Sutta* expounded by the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw will no doubt be an asset to those who honestly wish to follow the right method leading to the Path, its Fruition, and *nibbāna*.

The *Silavanta Sutta* was originally taught by the Venerable Sāriputta, one of the two Chief Disciples of the Buddha, in response to a query made by the Venerable Koṭṭhika, an eminent monk endowed with analytical knowledge (*paṭisambhidā-ñāṇa*), to enable noble-minded people to distinguish between right and wrong. This *Sutta* is here elucidated by the Venerable Mahāsi Sayādaw in a way adorned with beautiful expressions couched in concise and simple language.

A peculiar feature of this *Sutta* is the strikingly rare revelation of the noble and distinctive qualities inherent in a Stream-winner. This would not only benefit meditators in many ways, but will make it

possible for them to measure the degree of their own spiritual attainments and reject any misgivings they might have inadvertently entertained. This is, indeed, a blessing. Moreover, it is a magnificent exposition of the practical teaching, in accordance with the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, relating to the basic exercise of contemplating the five aggregates of attachment; the development of insight into the characteristics of impermanence and unsatisfactoriness; the Law of Dependent Origination; the true nature of materiality as seen through the mind's eye; the doctrine of not-self; the cause for the arising of craving and the way to eradicate craving by means of insight achieved through the practice of meditation; and how, with the application of right concentration and mindfulness, Stream-winning and higher stages of the Path can be achieved. In brief, this inspiring Sutta discloses the reliability of the method of mindful contemplation of the five aggregates of attachment for the achievement of the different stages of insight up to Arahantship after equipping oneself with moral purity.

Furthermore, the ten powers of Arahants have been vividly described, showing what kind of mental dispositions they are endowed with; how their physical behaviour can be assessed; and how they are devoid of mental corruptions. An Arahant who has eradicated the hindrances to concentration and wisdom always remains mentally alert. The revelation of such noble attributes of an Arahant is really informative and interesting. The guiding principles mentioned in this book are authoritative and precious for those who are really keen to practice insight meditation.

May you all, in this very life, be able to contemplate constantly using the right method of insight meditation, foreseeing the unavoidable perils and miseries that lie ahead in the incessant cycle of existence (*saṃsāra*), and quickly attain enlightenment leading to the blissful state of nibbāna.

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A Discourse on the Sīlavanta Sutta

Part One

Delivered on 10th March 1967¹

My discourse today will be an exposition on the Sīlavanta Sutta, in the Khandhavagga of the Saṃyuttanikāya, which is complemented by the Sutavanta Sutta.² In speaking of one, the other is also relevant.

Introduction

Once, Venerable Sāriputta and Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhika were spending their days together under the tutelage of the Buddha residing in the Deer Park (Migadāvaṇa) monastery at Isipatana in Bārāṇasī. Venerable Sāriputta is too well-known as pre-eminent for wisdom among the Buddha's disciples to need any introduction. The Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhika is less well-known, but among the Buddha's eighty senior disciples he was unrivalled in the knowledge of dialectics (*paṭisambhidā-ñāṇa*) for which he gained pre-eminence.

Paṭisambhidā is an analytical or dialectical science, which generally speaking, investigates the meaning and purport of words used in the scriptural texts with a view to accuracy. There are four divisions of this science

1. Analysis of the meaning (*attha paṭisambhidā*), which enables a student of the Dhamma to get at the true meanings of the words through proper etymological analysis.
2. Analysis of the teaching (*Dhamma paṭisambhidā*), which enables him to understand the text properly,
3. Analysis of the grammar (*nirutti paṭisambhidā*), which teaches him the method of grammatical or syntactical analysis, and
4. Analysis of the essence (*paṭibhāna paṭisambhidā*), which endows him with facility in the appreciation of literary compositions.

All Arahants are deemed to be proficient in this knowledge, but Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhika was an outstanding scholar in this respect. So the Buddha declared him as the foremost among the Arahants, excelling even Venerable Sāriputta in the knowledge of dialectics. The two elders took up residence in the Catusāla, a rectangular brick building that enclosed a courtyard, in the centre of which was a well.

¹ The 14th. Waning of Tabodwe, 1328 M.E.

² S.iii.169. The original has "Sīlavanta," but "Sutavanta" was meant (ed.)

Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhika's Question

Once, Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhika, having spent the whole day in ecstatic meditation, arose from absorption, approached the Venerable Sāriputta, and broke into a friendly conversation with the latter, putting the following question.

“Friend Sāriputta! How should a monk (*bhikkhu*), accomplished in morality, devote himself wisely and well to the practice of the Dhamma?”

First we must understand what a monk is. He is defined as one who foreseeing the dangers of the cycle of existences (*saṃsāra*), and so strives for emancipation from it. When a layman seeks admission into the Saṅgha he requests that he be ordained to become liberated from this cycle of existences. However, what is this *saṃsāra*?

All sensations arising from the six sense-bases — eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind — cause suffering. However, under the spell of ignorance (*avijjā*) or delusion (*moha*), an individual regards them as pleasurable and become attached to them, encouraging craving (*taṇhā*), to arise. Craving clings to the sense-objects, and attachment (*upādāna*) arises. Then the three — ignorance, craving, and attachment — conspire to create the cycle of mental defilements. Once under the influence of desire, one becomes blind to everything except the fulfilment of desire, which results in action (*kamma*) leading to new becoming. This becoming (*bhava*) arises out of the ashes of the past existences. However, in the course of life one is liable to become old and sick. Finally death arrives, with lamentation (*parideva*), pain (*dukkha*),¹ sorrow (*domanassa*), and despair (*upāyāsa*) attendant upon it. These are action's results (*vipāka*). Now we have the three cycles of defilements (*kilesā vaṭṭa*), actions (*kamma vaṭṭa*), and resultants (*vipāka vaṭṭa*), which constitute the cycle of existences called *saṃsāra*.

The Cycle of Existences

The cycle of existences (*saṃsāra*) is terrifying. An individual gets born and then dies to be reborn and to die again *ad infinitum* until

¹ “*Dukkha*” is a term with a range of meanings. We should not always translate it simply as “suffering.” It is absurd to refer to happiness, joy, and pleasure as suffering, and neither are they painful. However, they are impermanent, unstable, and unreliable, so they are unsatisfactory. In this context of Dependent Origination it is more appropriate to translate “*dukkha*” as (physical) pain (ed.)

the world ends. However, there is no way of knowing when it will end, for existence has no end and no beginning. Having been born, one grows into an adult, acquiring knowledge and experience. Then one dies and gets conceived in the womb of a young woman.

Looked at from one's past existence, that young woman who is going to be one's mother might be about the age of one's granddaughter. What an irony of fate! Albeit one has to gestate in one's mother's womb, bereft of any intelligence or capability acquired in one's previous existence, at least until one sees the light of day and lives through the first years of life. Gradually one grows into an adult. Life is hard, for one has to work hard for the basic necessities of food, clothing, and shelter. During this struggle one may suddenly fall sick. This is suffering. In the struggle for existence one may be victimized by rivals. This is another form of suffering. Suffering oppresses us whenever we are unable to obtain what we want, and eventually old age overtakes us. Then comes illness, which brings our life to an end. This is how suffering finally prevails.

Suffering is even more conspicuous in the animal realm. Animals rarely die a natural death. Chickens, ducks, cattle, pigs, and the like are killed for human consumption. The fate of cattle is even more heart-breaking. They first render service to humanity as beasts of burden, only to become meat in the end. Life in the jungle is also very insecure for there the weak are meat for the strong.

Besides animals, there are other beings that haunt the states of loss (*apāya*) and the hell realms (*naraka*). There are hungry ghosts (*peta*) and jealous gods (*asura*), who may be described as fallen angels. In those realms, suffering is pervasive. Those fortunate enough to be reborn in this human world consider that they have nothing to do with those in the abodes of suffering. However, consider this wisely. If humans do not believe in the law of kamma and the result of wholesome (*kusala*) and unwholesome (*akusala*) actions, they would certainly feel free to do evil at will. People like them are queuing up to get a place in any of the abodes of suffering.

One may say that one can find happiness in the celestial realms. However, there too one may find reason to be sad when one cannot get what one desires. When a deity (*deva*) dies with unfulfilled desires, he or she may have unwholesome thoughts, which may drag him or her down to the states of loss. A deity may, if fortunate, get reborn

in the human world, but still he or she cannot escape suffering due to aging, disease, and death. Such will be his or her lot for uncountable existences, and if he or she fails to practice insight meditation, he or she may suffer repeatedly for aeons, wandering endlessly in the cycle of existences. This is said, not out of blind faith in the doctrine of rebirth, but in deference to the law of cause and effect as shown by the Law of Dependent Origination. If one truly studies the causes and effects of actions, one may come to the realisation that the cycle of existence is indeed terrible suffering. It is because of this realisation that a layman enters the Order with a view to getting free from the miseries of existence.

When one becomes a monk, one is required to practise morality (*sīla*). A newly-ordained monk is held to be pure and innocent, for at this stage no opportunity can arise to pollute his mind. His verbal or physical behaviour is usually sound. It will be well if he tries to maintain this state of innocence by establishing himself in morality by observing precepts and other codes of ecclesiastical conduct. Once in a while he might come to think that he has failed in this observance, in which case he should make a confession and get instructions from his superiors for moral rehabilitation. Then he will be absolved from all blame and his morality remains unblemished. If he is thus accomplished in morality, what should he do next to show his devotion to the Dhamma? That is the question that was posed by the Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhika.

In my introduction I referred to the Sutavanta Sutta. In that sutta too Venerable Mahā Koṭṭhika asked how a monk, accomplished in learning, should devote himself to the Dhamma. Taking these suttas together, it may be asked: “How should a monk, accomplished in morality and learning, devote himself to the practice of the Dhamma?” For the present discourse, I will deal with the first part of the question relating to a monk accomplished in morality.

Venerable Sāriputta’s Answer

This question is answered by Venerable Sāriputta as follows:

“Friend Koṭṭhika! A monk accomplished in morality, should incline his mind wisely to the five aggregates of attachment. He should contemplate them as impermanent and unsatisfactory, like a disease, a festering sore, or a thorn in the flesh.

They are baneful, and afflict one like fever. They behave like strangers. They tend to dissolution, are empty, and are not-self. With this correct mindfulness a monk must meditate on the five aggregates of attachment.”

These eleven ways of looking at the aggregates of attachment as expounded here by the Venerable Sāriputta agrees with the teaching of the Buddha in the Jhāna Sutta. First, however, the aggregates just mentioned need be properly understood. There are four aggregates of attachment: to sensual pleasures (*kāṃupādāna*), to wrong-views (*diṭṭhupādāna*), to rites and rituals (*sīlabbatupādāna*), and to self-view (*attavādupādāna*).

In the world of the senses, sensations are created by sense-objects coming into contact with the six sense-bases. The result is the growth of attachment. It is the work of craving (*taṇhā*). The other three modes of attachment arise from wrong-views. Of the three, the basic is attachment to self-view, which regards the five aggregates of mind and matter as self and as permanent. The second type, attachment to rites and rituals, goes contrary to the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path. For details please study the [seventh chapter](#) in the second part of my discourse on Dependent Origination. The last type, attachment to wrong-views, relates to the false religious beliefs that deny the law of kamma and its results. All four attachments can be reduced to craving and wrong-view.

Two Main Attachments

Thus craving and wrong-views form the two main types of attachment to the five aggregates of mind and matter. When materiality or form, the object that we see appears on the eye-base, we say that we see. We then assert that the eye-object, the eye-base and the form are all tangible, being the product of a living personality. The eye is living, the object is living and the physical body that sees and recognises the object is living. It gives us the impression of the existence of a self, so everyone says, “I see.” Every one of us clings to that sense of “I.” To test yourself whether attachment to the “I” or self exists, please ask yourself the simple question, “Whom do you love best?”

Whom Do You Love Best?

This question was answered in the time of King Pasenadi of Kosala. The story goes like this:

Mallikā was a flower-seller. One day she met the Buddha on her way to the garden. Inspired by faith, she offered some cakes to the Blessed One, who told her that because of her meritorious deed she would become a queen. At that time King Pasenadi was fleeing his kingdom, having lost a battle with King Ajātasattu. By chance he arrived at the flower-garden and was received by Mallikā who cared for him well. When peace was restored he made her his queen. Not being a courtier like others in the palace, Queen Mallikā was lonely. Knowing this, the king asked her a question in the fond hope that her reply would justify showering more favours on her. "Do you," he asked, "have anyone whom you love more than you love me?"

Queen Mallikā thought to herself, "No doubt the king wants a reply signifying that I love him more than I love anyone else. However, I cannot tell lies just to please him." She said, "You Majesty. I love myself best. There is no-one whom I love more than I love myself."

This failed to please the king. So Queen Mallikā posed the same question to the king. "Do you have anybody whom you love more than you love yourself?" The king had to admit that he had none.

The next day, the king related what had passed between him and his queen to the Buddha, who then told him: "Go forth to all the points of the compass and find one who loves others more than they love themselves. You will find none, since all sentient beings love their own selves. So one should be wary of harming others."

This incident shows that attachment created by craving grows when one's self is involved. I am citing this example just to refute the claims of those who maintain that as they had realised the knowledge about the three characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self, they had cut off all attachment to the aggregates. My point is that they still love themselves the best.

The five aggregates are also called the five aggregates of attachment because when the aggregate of materiality is involved, all other aggregates get involved. The eye is a sense-organ belonging to the aggregate of materiality. When it sees, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness are involved. When the aggregates of attachment arise one is led to think that what one sees belongs to

the seer and thinks: “This is mine (*etaṃ mama*).” Then one begins grasping, which is craving. When one asserts that the ego, or I, exists, this assertion arises out of the concept of self. This amounts to attachment to wrong-view.

The Five Aggregates of Attachment

There are five aggregates of attachment:

1. The aggregate of attachment to materiality (*rūpupādānakkhandha*),
2. the aggregate of attachment to feelings (*vedanupādānakkhandha*),
3. the aggregate of attachment to perceptions (*saññupādānakkhandha*),
4. the aggregate of attachment to mental formations (*saṅkhārupādānakkhandha*), and
5. the aggregate of attachment to consciousness (*viññāṇupādānakkhandha*).

You need not go anywhere in search of these aggregates. They are within you!

Attachment to Visible Objects

Attachment to materiality arises at the moment of seeing when the eye-base and the eye-object meet. Materiality or form produced as a result of that contact may appear to be agreeable or disagreeable, producing pleasure or displeasure. Such feelings constitute the aggregate of attachment to feeling. The materiality that has been seen is immediately recollected, when perception occurs. It constitutes the aggregate of attachment to perception. It is followed in its wake by mental formations, which exert to form or create the phenomenon of seeing. They are collectively known as the aggregate of attachment to mental formations. In the end eye-consciousness arises and it is called the aggregate of attachment to consciousness.

As you fail to note seeing the object with reference to the three characteristics you might misperceive reality and think that matter, feeling, perception, mental formations and consciousness are your self or yours. Highly pleased with this idea of self, you cling to it. This view of self brings about craving. As attachment increases, the individual tries to do things for the satisfaction of desires that arise. While following these desires he or she resorts to actions, which may

be wholesome or unwholesome. When these actions are wholesome, he or she may be reborn in the higher planes of existence, but if they are unwholesome, he or she may go down to the states of loss. Whatever the case, he or she will be oppressed with suffering throughout the rounds of existence.

Attachment will subside each time seeing is recollected with mindfulness. In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* this method of establishing mindfulness is mentioned. It says: “Know that you go when you go (*gacchanto vā gacchāmi*’ti). Note the four postures of walking, sitting, standing, and lying down just as they take place. Know that you are bending your limbs as you bend and stretching as you stretch. Note every physical activity that occurs. When your concentration develops you will realise that in the act of seeing, the eye and the object are quite distinct, and so are eye-consciousness and mind-consciousness. These phenomena arise in pairs and also dissolve together. Whatever comes up anew ends in dissolution. This transience means unsatisfactoriness. What one actually sees is not a self. It is only the manifestation of phenomena. This way of thinking dispels attachment, and once attachment is severed, no new rebirth can arise. For that particular instant when one is meditating in this way suffering ceases. This means that *nibbāna* has been achieved, albeit for a brief moment. When insight becomes strengthened by constant meditation practice, the round of suffering will be brought to a standstill by dint of the application of the principles of the Noble Path to insight.

Attachment to Audible Objects

The same remarks apply to attachment to objects that can be heard. The ear-base and the sound conjoin to create a sound, which falls under the aggregate of attachment to materiality. Then attachment arises, and on account of this attachment to the material object, pleasant or unpleasant feelings arise. They constitute the aggregate of attachment to feelings. Then perception of the sound occurs and remembrance or recollection occurs. It is grouped under the aggregate of attachment to perceptions. After this, the aggregate of attachment to mental formations arises. As consciousness is finally established, it is grouped under the aggregate of attachment to consciousness. Every time you hear a sound, note these aggregates

of attachment with mindfulness and as you note them constantly, attachment will become severed.

Attachment to Olfactory Objects

Every time you smell an odour, contemplate the nose-base and the odour as the aggregate of attachment to materiality. When you feel that the odour is pleasant or unpleasant, note that the aggregate of attachment to feelings has arisen. When you recollect or identify the odour, note that the aggregate of attachment to perceptions is occurring. Note that volitional activities excite attachment. Note them too as the aggregate of attachment to mental formations. Note that the arising of consciousness of the odour constitutes the aggregate of attachment to consciousness.

Attachment to Gustatory Objects

Here too, meditate on the tongue-base and the flavour, which give rise to the aggregate of attachment to materiality. As you note the pleasant or unpleasant flavour, note you are meditating on feeling, which constitutes the aggregate of attachment to feelings. As you recollect the flavour, note that as the aggregate of attachment to perceptions and contemplate it. Attachment to volitional activities connected with the process of tasting constitutes the aggregate of attachment to mental formations. Ultimately, consciousness of the flavour is established. Attachment to that consciousness constitutes the aggregate of attachment to consciousness.

Attachment to Tangible Objects

The sense of touch is present everywhere in the body. Wherever you touch and know the body-base lies there. There is not one tiny space in the body where touch-consciousness is absent. Sensitivity relates to things both inside and outside the body, which is conscious of the presence of the four primary elements. It knows hardness or softness, the characteristics of the earth element (*pathavī-dhātu*); it knows heat or cold, the characteristic of the fire element (*tejo-dhātu*), or temperature; it knows motion or resistance to motion, the characteristic of the air element (*vāyo-dhātu*). Tactile-consciousness is therefore the most ubiquitous of all forms of consciousness. When it is not noted with due mindfulness, the reality cannot be known.

When we see beauty, we recognise it as such and feel glad. When we see ugliness, we feel repelled by it. When we hear pleasant sounds, we say that they are melodious. However, jarring sounds, are considered to be odious. We distinguish between likes and dislikes. As we see, hear, smell, taste, or touch a sense-object, we recognise it as pleasant or unpleasant. However, according to the Abhidhamma, such pleasure or pain are not ultimate realities (*paramattha*). They are merely the results of wholesome or unwholesome actions. They should be viewed with equanimity as they are merely concepts (*paññatti*). It is only when a meditator notes phenomena with mindfulness that he or she can discover reality. Then he or she will get the true knowledge regarding pleasure and pain. As the meditator is noting feelings he or she becomes aware of the tactile-consciousness, the mind that knows it, and the aggregate of mental formations, which turns the mind towards that consciousness.

We must note the aggregates of attachment at the very moment that they arise. If we fail to observe, remember, recollect, and note the aggregates of attachment, the idea of self will overpower us. So meditate on the body-base and the tangible object, which comprise the aggregate of materiality. Note the tendencies to cling to pleasant or unpleasant feelings as the aggregate of attachment to feelings. Perceptions of those feelings gives rise to the aggregate of attachment to perceptions, which should also be noted. Attachment to volitional activities that produce contact and its consequences must also be noted as the aggregate of attachment to mental formations. Attachment to consciousness is the aggregate of attachment to consciousness, which must be noted likewise.

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta instructs that one must note going as one goes, standing as one stands, sitting as one sits, and lying down as one lies down. A meditator who has developed concentration by constant practice of this method will even become conscious of the will to go that causes the movements as he or she walks. When walking, the meditator is setting the mental aggregates of feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness to work. Pleasant feelings arise when one feels delighted with walking. If one recollects that one is walking, perception arises. If one makes an effort to walk, mental formation will occur. If desire or aversion get involved in the process of walking, for instance, if one is frustrated due to not being

able to pass in front of others, the mental formations are more apparent. If one is conscious that one is walking, consciousness comes into play. If one becomes fatigued or stiff, or if one feels relaxed, one may be sure that the element of motion is playing its part. If one fails to note all these phenomena connected with the aggregates of attachment, one becomes obsessed with self. One might think, "I am walking" or "My body is walking." Now the ideas of I and mine have become established. However, a meditator notes the act of walking while contemplating the three characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self, which expel all notions of self.

The Development of Insight

Insight can be gained through the practice of meditation on walking. As one goes to take a walk, the intention, "I want to go," arises. It prompts the element of motion, which sends a message to materiality that the subject has willed to go. Then it gets possession of the subject's entire body, which is made to move according to instructions, and this phenomenon is called going.

What this exposition suggests is that there is no self that goes. It is not I who goes, it is the mind, served and supported by the element of motion, that causes going. Going is only the machination of the mind, in its various manifestations, that urges the element of motion to serve its will. So it is only a process of arising and dissolution of mind backed up by the element of motion, it is transient and therefore highly unsatisfactory. It is also unsubstantial.

The Rise and Fall of the Abdomen

Instructions to note the rise and fall of the abdomen are given to let the meditator know about the function of the element of motion. When the chest or the abdomen is inflated with air or deflated, one clearly feels the rising or falling movement. In other words, one feels the body being contacted by motion and it is the motion itself that makes the contact. It is felt so clearly and definitely that a non-meditator thinks that the body that receives the contact belongs to him or her. Particularly the rising and falling abdomen is one's own, or so one thinks. In fact, the aggregates of attachment are persuading him or her to think so.

However, with a meditator, whose concentration has developed through the continual practice of insight, all these phenomena of the

rising and falling of the abdomen are just the actions of the aggregates of mind and matter. Once this idea is realised, attachment ceases. It is for this purpose of realising the truth about not-self that you are told to note the rising and falling of the abdomen with the application of insight knowledge.

This meditation exercise is simple. You need not go in search of a mind-object to dwell on. It is conducive to the easy attainment of concentration. In this method of meditation you first concentrate on the rising abdomen. The abdomen rises and then falls. Then you shift your attention from the phenomenon of rising to the phenomenon of falling. As you have to exert only to know two phenomena taking place in succession, there will be no occasion for you to overdo concentration. Your effort to concentrate and the act of concentration will remain perfectly balanced, enabling you to gain concentration quickly. With its development, you will eventually be able to distinguish mentality from materiality. This is called analytical knowledge of body and mind (*nāmarūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*).

When you reach this stage you may be aware that, as you are meditating on standing, the act of standing is quite separate from the act of noting it. When you meditate on walking, the phenomenon of walking is one thing, and that of noting it is another. When you stretch or bend your body, you may be conscious that the noting mind and the noted object are not the same, but that they are two distinct things. So what is there in this body? Nothing except mind and matter. There is no living substance. If you continue practicing insight meditation in this way, you will come to realise the three characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self.

Attachment to Mental Objects

The process of thinking/knowing (as we say in Burmese) relating to mental activity, is the most extensive. When one is awake one begins to think or imagine. The seat of consciousness is in the physical body. The mind-base exists within this corporeal frame. When one thinks of pleasant things, one feels happy. This happiness is pleasant feeling. When one thinks of unpleasant things, one feels unpleasant feeling, which means sadness. At times one may feel indifferent to whatever one is thinking about, then neutral feeling arises. However, it is not as conspicuous as initial application (*vitakka*), sustained

application (*vicāra*), greed (*lobha*), pride (*māna*), confidence (*saddhā*), and mindfulness (*sati*). The function of initial application is to direct the mind to its object. The function of sustained application is to focus the mind on the object. Greed and other mental qualities need no explanation as they are commonly met with when we talk about the Dhamma. They all belong to the category of fifty-two mental properties (*cetasikā*), under which comes the least noticeable one, equanimity (*upekkhā*). However, if you are mindful you can notice it.

When one's attention is directed to an object, one perceives it, and that perception is very conspicuous. Then one may try to bring the process of mind-consciousness to completion through mental formations or volitional activities. We now have mental formations, which is also quite conspicuous. It prompts the subject to do things. Because of it activities come into being. We speak, we go, we sit, we stand, we bend or stretch our limbs as dictated by mental formations. Except for feeling and perception, the remain fifty mental states are easily noticeable. All behaviours of the body, speech, and mind are mental formations, so all are sense-objects and mind-consciousness that can be observed and known. If one fails to note the object at the instant that ideation occurs, the truths of impermanence and conditionality can be missed, leading one to think that the aggregate of attachment to feelings is a self and that all mental formations and their attributes belong to that self.

Attachment to material qualities, wherein lies mind-consciousness when imagination occurs, is the aggregate of attachment to materiality. When imagination causes pain or pleasure, the aggregate of attachment to feeling arises. When perception occurs in the process of imagination, the aggregate of attachment to perception arises. Volitional activities that exert in the process of imagination constitute the aggregate of attachment to mental formations. Mind-consciousness gives rise to the aggregate of attachment to consciousness. Summarising what has been said, the following points are noteworthy:

1. A monk accomplished in morality and knowledge must practice mindfulness of the five aggregates of attachment: materiality, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness.
2. Attachment gives impetus to the idea of self that suggests the existence of I or mine.

3. All kinds of attachments may be classified into two main classes — wrong-view and craving.
4. The five aggregates should be mindfully noted to benefit from realising that state where there is no attachment.

Before concluding this part of the discourse, I wish to say more about the method of noting mind-objects. As you contemplate the rise and fall of the abdomen, your mind may stray to things extraneous to the objects of meditation. Note them every time your mind strays. You will encounter such mental activities as desire, satisfaction, delight, anger, dejection, hatred, repugnance, fear, shame, pity, faith, sorrow, and so forth, while you observe the movements of your abdomen. When the knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*), and knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*), occur in the course of meditation, you will come to understand the nature of the mental aggregates, and your meditation will become easier.

Remember that all aggregates of attachments are within you and that you need not look elsewhere. When you note phenomena, note them correctly. That is, you must apply right mindfulness to the practice of meditation. It means that you must contemplate the three characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self.

Meditation on Impermanence

As concentration develops with constant practice, a meditator will gain personal knowledge of the rising and passing away of mind-consciousness and the mind-object. He or she will be able to recognise the noting mind and the noted object. This will convince him or her of the reality of impermanence, and when impermanence is known, unsatisfactoriness and not-self will also be known.

The Commentaries say that there are three stages in the realisation of the knowledge of impermanence.

1. First one understands what impermanence is.
2. Then one gets familiar with the characteristics of impermanence.
3. Finally one gains insight knowledge about impermanence.

Impermanence embraces all five aggregates of attachment. The abdomen becomes inflated as you breathe in and deflated as you breathe out — note these movements. When you sit, touch, see, hear, and think, note them too. If you feel hot or painful, do not relax, but

continue noting that feeling. As concentration gains strength, you will personally come to understand that the aggregates are arising and instantly dissolving. Now you see impermanence in action.

The Commentaries say that the arising and passing away of the noting mind and its object are the characteristics of impermanence. Things that were neither here nor there before come into being and at the next moment they cease. Whatever arises anew gets dissolved, and disappears into the past. A meditator gains personal knowledge about the origination and dissolution of phenomena. The unmindful are quite unaware of this. They think that the "I" who has been in existence long before, has been seeing or hearing things that have also been existing long before. They fail to recognise dissolution.

When a meditator reaches the stage of knowledge of dissolution, he or she becomes fully aware of the state of flux, which is so sharply focused in the mind that he or she senses that becoming has poked its head through the mind-door only to be instantly snuffed out like a flame as soon as it appears. When lightning flashes, the flash disappears as soon as it has appeared. Such transience is the characteristic of impermanence.

When the characteristics of impermanence are understood, a meditator may be said to have attained insight into impermanence (*aniccānupassanā-ñāṇa*). When you come to understand the state of flux mentioned earlier, you may be sure that you have reached the stage of wisdom. This realisation is attained not through learning the texts, but through practical experience gained at the moment of noting things with mindfulness.

One should, in obedience to the Venerable Sāriputta's instruction, devote one's attention with right mindfulness to the impermanent nature of the five aggregates of attachment.

May the audience who have listened to this discourse with respectful attention know correctly the nature of impermanence, so that the five aggregates of attachment can be discarded, enabling them to gain insight and knowledge of the Path, which pave the way to nibbāna where all suffering ceases.

Part Two

Delivered on the 25th March 1967¹

In my previous talk I mentioned Venerable Sāriputta's admonition that a monk, accomplished in knowledge or wisdom, should also devote his attention to meditation on the five aggregates of attachment. It is only fitting and right that morality should be strengthened by knowledge, as a meditator might sometimes have to meditate without the benefit of a teacher.

Knowledge Defined

The Visuddhimagga says that a meditator in search of insight knowledge would progress if well-versed in the knowledge of the aggregates of mind and matter, the sense-bases (*āyatanā*), the elements (*dhātu*), the sense-organs (*indriya*), the Four Noble Truths (*saccā*), and the Law of Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*). This knowledge will stand him in good stead in the determination of what is right or wrong in case confusion arises regarding the practical application of the Dhamma to exercises in mind-culture.

Those who practice meditation under the proper supervision of an instructor acting as a guide, philosopher, and friend, will undoubtedly gain the fundamental knowledge that all compounded things are composed of mind and matter, that all phenomena relate to cause and effect, that phenomena are subject to the law of impermanence, that the truths of suffering and its cause can be discovered within our physical bodies, and that the truths of cessation and the Path can be achieved by contemplating the nature of suffering and its cause. One who possesses this elementary knowledge may be regarded as well-equipped for the attainment of insight.

Once the king of deities asked the Buddha to expound the Dhamma concisely so that he could readily understand it and reach nibbāna where all sufferings cease. The Buddha gave him the following advice.

“O King of gods! If in my dispensation, a monk who realises that it is wrong to regard this world as permanent, satisfactory, and substantial, is deemed to have gained the higher knowledge of the Dhamma.”

¹ The Full Moon day of Tapaun, 1328 M.E.

This, briefly, is what knowledge means in the present context. If a meditator knows the three characteristics, the purpose is served. To try to know them is the essence of the practice of mindfulness regarding all phenomena. This agrees with what has been laid down in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. There, higher knowledge is defined as knowledge that directs one to understanding all that there is to understand relating to the nature and characteristics of the aggregates of mind and matter. It means knowledge directed to the aggregates of attachment, which are to be noted with mindfulness.

Putting it simply, one must note seeing as one sees and hearing as one hears. Eventually one's concentration will get strengthened with the result that one will come to know the characteristics of mind and matter. When you concentrate on heat, you will know the characteristics of heat. However, here you must remember that heat is one thing and the mind that notes it is another. If you can distinguish the matter denoted by its heat from the mind that notes it, you should have gained analytical knowledge of body and mind.

As your concentration gets strengthened further, you will come to realise that you see because you have eyes to see, and that your body bends because there is the will that urges it to bend. This is knowledge by discerning conditionality (*paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa*). When these two insights arise in unison we say that higher knowledge is gained.

Insight Cannot Be Gained through Mere Learning

It has been shown what is higher knowledge. According to the Commentaries on the Visuddhimagga, there are other kinds of knowledge called wisdom gained through learning (*sutamayā-paññā*) from information supplied by others, wisdom gained through reasoning (*cintāmayā-paññā*), wisdom gained through meditation (*bhāvanāmayā-paññā*), and wisdom gained through acquiring higher knowledge (*abhiññā paññā*). The nature of mind and matter is known by learning what others teach us. Then we think more deeply about it, before undertaking meditation. The higher knowledge, which is gained through insight meditation, far transcends knowledge obtained by the previous means. However, a meditator must begin with knowledge gained through learning so that he or she can arrive at the knowledge of arising and passing away and knowledge of dissolution. This is what the Buddha had to say about this:

“The monk who has gained wisdom relating to the nature of conditioned things will eventually come to realise that all phenomena are subject to the law of impermanence.”

To summarise, below are the salient points relating to the acquisition of learning in preparation for the attainment of insight knowledge.

1. All aggregates of mind and matter are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self.
2. Possession of that knowledge just suffices for a meditator to practice insight meditation.
3. A meditator should direct his intellectual attention to mind and matter, which must be noted with mindfulness.
4. A meditator should realise that all phenomena are but manifestations of the impermanent and unsatisfactory nature of things.

The Law of Dependent Origination

The basic knowledge for a meditator relates to the recognition of the aggregates as the truth of suffering (*dukkha saccā*), and craving as the truth of the cause of suffering (*samudaya saccā*). Craving is the cause and the aggregates are the effect. This knowledge is enough for a meditator to realise the Dhamma. If, having realised it, he knows the law of cause and effect, he may be regarded as accomplished in the Law of Dependent Origination, which, in brief, is as follows.

*“Ye dhammā hetuppabhāvā, tesaṃ hetuṃ Tathāgato āha,
Tesañca yo nirodho, evaṃ vādi mahāsamaṇo.”*

“All phenomena arising from a cause, the Tathāgata reveals their cause, and their cessation. This is what the great sage teaches.”¹

The Paṭiccasamuppāda Sutta² of the Saṃyuttanikāya says:

“Through ignorance are conditioned mental formations; through mental formations is conditioned rebirth-linking consciousness; through consciousness is conditioned mind and matter; though mind and matter are conditioned the six sense-bases; through the six sense-bases is conditioned contact; through contact is conditioned feeling; through

¹ Ap.i.25.

² S.ii.1. Not the “Sīhanāda Sutta” as stated (ed.)

feeling is conditioned becoming; through becoming is conditioned birth; and through birth are conditioned aging, death, grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow, and despair. “

All of these causes and effects were shown succinctly in the first passage beginning “*Ye dhammā...*” In the Commentaries it is shown that this verse reveals firstly, the truth of suffering; secondly, the truth of the cause of suffering; and lastly the cessation of suffering and the way leading to its cessation. Craving is the cause and suffering is the effect. The cessation of suffering (*nibbāna*) is the result of developing the Path. So when we speak of the Four Noble Truths, they embrace the Law of Dependent Origination and vice versa.

My purpose of going into some detail on this subject is to counter the efforts of detractors to demoralise meditators with their assertion that one should not practice insight meditation without the understanding of their version of the Law of Dependent Origination. They base their teaching on the Channa Sutta.

It may be recalled that after his Parinibbāna, as instructed by the Buddha, the monks inflicted the Brahma punishment on the Venerable Channa who, becoming greatly agitated, went into meditation under the supervision of senior monks. They taught him to note with mindfulness the true nature of the aggregates. They taught him that matter is impermanent. So are feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. Matter is not-self and insubstantial. So are feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. However, Venerable Channa had previously been so rooted in the concept of self that he started reasoning in his own mind that it would not be possible for accumulations of actions to produce the results of actions if nothing is substantial. This is how attachment to wrong-view (*ditthupādāna*) arises in ordinary individuals. The Commentaries say:

Not accepting the law of causality, Venerable Channa practiced meditation: but his weak insight failed to shake off the idea of self giving him the impression that if all volitional activities are extirpated, they would be rendered void. Thus he became obsessed with fear that existence would end with death. Here, as this weak and ineffectual insight fails to overcome attachment to the self, an ignorant ordinary person would be highly apprehensive of his self vanishing. He might therefore reflect: “I shall be cut off from existence! I shall not come into being again! He thought he was about to fall into an

abyss. He was very much like a certain Brahmaṇa overhearing an elder reciting the Dhamma. Once Cūlanāga Thera, learned in the Tipiṭaka, was reciting the three characteristics in the ground floor hall of a multi-storey monastery built in bronze. An unknown Brahmaṇa who happened to be listening to the Dhamma at that time came to the knowledge that all mental formations are empty and void. Comprehending this, he felt like one thrown over an abyss. So he ran past the door of the monastery and got to his house where he took his son to his breast and said, “Son! Having reflected on the doctrine propounded by Sakyamuṇi, I felt lost and destroyed!”

Now a word about this comment. It is quite clear that the Venerable Channa failed to note mind and matter with mindfulness. Had he done so he would have developed concentration and been able to distinguish mentality from materiality. Ultimately he would have discovered the truth about the origination and dissolution of conditioned things, which are subject to the three characteristics. However, in his case, his thinking had been so superficial that he had not watched the flow of the aggregates with mindfulness. The kind of meditation that he practiced is called “Weak insight (*dubbala-vipassanā*),” which the Commentaries speak of in the story of the Brahmaṇa who fled from the truth.

Insight meditation conducive to the development of analytical knowledge of body and mind and knowledge of conditionality is true insight meditation, which in its initial stage is usually called “Immature insight (*taruṇa-vipassanā*).” So it is highly improper for detractors to cite the example of Venerable Channa and lead those meditators doing correct meditation exercises away from the right path by suggesting that insight is not to be practiced without a knowledge of the Law of Dependent Origination.

When a meditator contemplates mind and matter and gains concentration, he or she is able to distinguish mentality from materiality, cognising the sense-bases and the sense-objects. He or she comprehends that volition prompts actions, and realises that failing to note phenomena results in the increase of craving, thus obstructing the appreciation of reality. Craving drives him or her to fulfil desires, which produces actions. Wholesome actions give wholesome results and unwholesome actions unwholesome results. When all these causal relations are known, conviction about the three

characteristics becomes firmly established. It would be presumptuous to say that conviction can be gained at once without going through all the stages of insight knowledge. If one starts with the basic knowledge and proceeds step-by-step to higher knowledge one should not get thrown into confusion as Venerable Channa did, even though one may not be well-grounded in the Law of Dependent Origination. It may be noted here that Venerable Channa, with all his failings, attained at long last to the Fruition of the Path at the moment he heard Venerable Ānanda expound the Law of Dependent Origination. So even when a meditator is ill-equipped in the knowledge of the Dhamma, he or she will become proficient under the guidance of a meditation teacher.

So Venerable Sāriputta answered Venerable Koṭṭhika's question in the following way.

“Friend Koṭṭhika! One who is accomplished in wisdom should incline his mind rightly to the five aggregates of attachment as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self.”

The Sīlavanta Sutta emphasises morality, while the Sutavanta Sutta¹ emphasises knowledge or wisdom. Drawing an inference from these two suttas, it may safely be taken that a monk practising meditation would do better if he is accomplished in both morality and knowledge.

The Aggregate of Attachment to Materiality

The aggregates of attachment comprise mentality and materiality. When materiality is presented as a sense-object, it is considered as form or colour and is translated as such. When its intrinsic qualities are to be shown it is generally translated to its nearest equivalent as matter. Visible objects, audible objects, olfactory objects, gustatory objects and tangible objects are all materiality. In the Khajjanīya Sutta² it is defined as follows.

“Kiñca, bhikkhave, rūpaṃ vadetha? Ruppattī kho, bhikkhave, tasmā Rūpa’nti vuccati. Kena ruppattī? Sītenapi ruppattī, uñhenapi ruppattī, jīghacchāyapi ruppattī, pipāsāyapi ruppattī, ḍaṃsamakasavātātapa sarīsapa samphassenapi ruppattī. Ruppattī’ti kho, bhikkhave, tasmā Rūpa’nti vuccati.”

¹ S.iii.169.

² S.iii.86.

“O monks! Why is materiality so called? It is so called because it is liable to change. Why does it change? It changes because of cold or heat, hunger or thirst, flea-bite, or mosquito bite, or snake-bite, or exposure to the elements or solar radiation. As it is thus subject to change it is called materiality.”

The root meaning of materiality is to change or to perish. It changes at the dissolution phase of the three phases of the thought-moment, namely, arising (*upāda*), stasis (*thiti*), and dissolution (*bhaṅga*). However, it does not mean that every type of matter is perishable all the time. It changes its character only when it comes into contact with factors that run counter to its stability.

Change Due to Cold

The scriptures cite the instances of changeability of materiality coming into contact with extreme cold. One of the states of loss is Lokantanirayā, so called because it occupies the space just beyond this world. It is so intensely cold that anyone destined to fall headlong into it will at once get frozen. We know this not from practical experience, but from what the texts say. However I shall try to give you some real examples from life. In the Mahimsaka province of Southwest India, men die because of falling snow. Mahimsaka is modern Poona, which, I am informed, is very cold due to snow during winter. It is about 6,000 feet above sea-level. In Burma, Taunggyi, Mogok, and Kyatpyin, 4,000 feet above sea-level, are also intensely cold. People living there, if they are insufficiently clothed, die of cold. It has also come to my knowledge that old people in the Kayah State usually die of cold in winter. They are mostly Padaungs. and people say that winter is the season of death for those indigenous people. Water and coconut-oil freeze in cold climate, mostly in central Burma. This proves that matter changes with temperature. When it is subject to sudden changes in temperature, it becomes unstable.

Change Due to Heat

The Commentaries speak of destruction due to heat in Avīci, the worst of the hell realms. In summer we sweat copiously due to heat. Burns and electric shocks are examples of suffering due to heat. When you take piping hot broth, you experience heat. Sweating is the result of heat. So matter undergoes change when subjected to heat.

Change Due to Hunger and Thirst

This change due to hunger and thirst can be found in the world of departed spirits unable to get released from a state of suffering. Hunger is most acutely felt in times of famine in this human world. It brings about change in the stamina of the physical body. In the world of the jealous gods (*asura*), water is unknown. Kālakañjakā, a jealous god, went in search of water to slake his thirst.

He found the waters of the Ganges flowing, but when he got to the river the entire expanse of water turned into a sheet of stone-slab. He ran about the place the whole night in the hope that he would at least get a drop of water to drink. When it dawned, a monk in his daily round for alms-food met him, and discovering that the poor spirit was unable to reach for the water he sought, he poured it into his mouth. When it was time for the monk to go he asked the thirsty being if he was satisfied. Rude as he was, the jealous god said, swearing, "Not one drop of water got into my mouth. That is the truth. If, what I said is untrue, may I continue to suffer in this jealous god-world." This is what the scriptures say. If you want to get a personal knowledge about thirsty conditions, go to villages where water is scarce. A little distance from my native village of Seikkhun there is a hamlet called Khunnakhaukkon where there is a story of a man who actually died of thirst.

Change Due to Insect-bites

Everyone, I think, is aware of the effects of insect-bites. The bitten will feel itchy. His wound will swell. This is because materiality has suffered a change. Regarding change brought about by disease, everyone has his own experience. Change brought about in the physical body by the work of the sun is quite familiar with desert-dwellers. There is the story of a woman travelling with her child in a desert. One day she got parted from her companions and she had to go alone. It was usual for travellers to travel during the night, resting during the day under the tents or shelters. As she was alone and had no shelter, she sat on her basket carried along with her child. When the sun was unbearably hot, she was forced to sit on the back of her own child for relief. From this incident comes the Burmese proverb: "When she cannot help it, even a mother fails to regard her own child as her own."

Not All Materiality Is Ever-changing

Some imaginative people like to think that, as materiality means change, what changes is materiality, and that solidity or hardness is not materiality, heat is not materiality and what one sees is also not materiality. They are just concepts and are not real. Such is their way of thinking, the result of their intellectual exercises. It has come to my knowledge that a certain layman teaching meditation asserts that the material body, the subject of contemplation, is in itself changeable or perishable, suggesting the futility of exercises in mindfulness. This shallow interpretation stems from not understanding the Commentaries properly. Materiality changes, but it is not changing all the time. The change occurs only when there is a sufficient cause, which disturbs its stability. When cold or heat destabilises materiality, it changes. The *Visuddhimagga Mahāṭīkā* says this:

“Materiality has the characteristic of change. It signifies change.
“However, change here means what occurs when opposing forces come into conflict revealing the fact that new materiality arises out of the old.”

Then how is it that materiality that changes is applied to the world of the Brahmas? There, too, materiality is subject to change when two opposing factors confront each other. This nature cannot be dispensed with even in the world of the Brahmas.

However, in the world of the Brahmas it is very rare to have two opposing forces, such as heat or cold, working against each other. Material phenomena make the Brahmas appear to remain unchanged from the moment of their rebirth-linking consciousness to that of their death-consciousness. However, the intrinsic quality of matter is with them all of the time. It may not be changing at every moment, but it changes when the conditions set out above are present.

How the Aggregates of Attachment Arise

The realities of the five aggregates of attachment can be seen when the six modes of consciousness relating to seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking arise. At a particular moment of arising, mind and matter are to be noted with reference to the law of impermanence, *etc.* Failure to reflect on the three characteristics would result in the birth of the idea of I or mine when

attachment will dominate. Noting this attachment with mindfulness will arrest the flow of kamma and mental formations, in the absence of which no new becoming can arise. When becoming ceases, aging and disease cannot arise, and all suffering ceases.

Contemplating Unsatisfactoriness

When concentration develops, a meditator will come to understand the causes and effects relating to conditioned things, being able to see the rise and fall of mind and matter. Things come into being and perish to become again and also perish, *ad infinitum*. If the meditator sees this continual change, he or she would have gained insight into impermanence (*aniccānupassanā*). However, one's conviction in the reality of this nature must be deep-seated because only then will one truly realise that suffering is baneful and that all baneful things are fearful. This conviction will lead to the development of knowledge of disgust (*nibbidā-ñāṇa*). Finally, wisdom relating to the Path and its Fruition will arise. This direct personal knowledge is insight into unsatisfactoriness (*dukkhānupassanā*).

All phenomena are impermanent. Whatever is impermanent is unsatisfactory. However, what exactly is unsatisfactoriness? Being oppressed again and again by the inevitableness of arising to perish the next moment is indeed unsatisfactory. Oppression itself is the root of all ills. The characteristic of unsatisfactoriness is oppression. One develops insight into unsatisfactoriness when one is constantly mindful that all conditioned things are arising and passing away. One may think that becoming is not to be considered as unsatisfactory. However, perishing is certainly unsatisfactory, Things come into existence to perish. You might have noticed at the beaches small crabs digging holes in mud flats at low tide. At high tide these holes are washed away and destroyed. When the tide recedes the little creatures start digging them again, but they are washed away at high tide as before. Don't you think that it is unsatisfactory for them?

A woman wanted to have a baby, but she was childless for some time. Eventually she gave birth, and was very pleased. However, the child died soon afterwards. How sad! She beat her breast and lamented the day that the child was born. She thought that it would have been better not to have conceived it! There are even worse cases of mothers bearing several children, but losing them all.

The nature of origination and dissolution oppresses us constantly. A meditator notes this characteristic of unsatisfactoriness with mindfulness every time it presents itself at the six sense-doors. Thereby attaining insight into unsatisfactoriness. It may not be possible for a meditator to know all the roots of suffering; but when he or she is noting conditioned things, he will have a personal experience of the appearance of suffering which stems from the material body and consciousness. A sense-object generating unwanted sense-impressions will certainly produce unpleasant feelings that are disgusting. This is suffering.

That suffering generates fear and anxiety needs no explanation. Depending on the material body for succour while that material body is subject to dissolution is like living in a dilapidated building which might come down at any moment to crush the residents to death.

Materiality as a Disease or a Wound

Materiality is like a disease or a wound. A sick man loses appetite and sleep, unable to do what he like to do as a healthy individual. He is dependent on others who nurse him. If he is bedridden it will be all the worse for him. He will have to be helped to be bathed, clothed, fed and led to his toilet. He will be compelled to take physical exercises whether he likes them or not. When he wants to scratch himself, he will be obliged to let someone do it for him. Thus he is always dependent on others. Materiality is likewise dependent.

Materiality is also like a festering sore. Defilements like greed, anger, and delusion are like pus flowing out from the six sores that are the six sense-organs. A meditator should note this comparison while contemplating unsatisfactoriness.

Materiality is also like a thorn. It pierces the flesh and remains stuck there. One cannot take it out by oneself. All evil actions produce unwholesome results. One pays for the crimes one commits. When one's kamma is bad one ends up in trouble. Adversity drives one almost mad in the struggle for the satisfaction of one's needs in respect of food, clothing, and shelter. In that struggle for existence one may be oppressed or victimized, competition being so keen in life. As you get older you will realise how troublesome it is to make a living. If you have to do evil just for the sake of your material body and its mental formations you are destined for the states of loss.

Materiality is also compared to a fever. There may be many prescriptions for curing fevers. However, there no such cure for the fever of mentality and materiality, which is constantly oppressing us. One cannot escape from the onslaught of these mental and physical aggregates wherever one may be, whether in the states of loss, in the animal realm, or in the realms of men or gods. They are all made up of suffering, and even when one is reborn in the human or celestial realms, one will still be subject to old age, disease, and death.

Realisation of Stream-winning

The round of suffering is endless. However, insight meditation on the aggregates of attachment as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self can pave the way to the realisation of Stream-winning. Alluding to this Venerable Sāriputta said:

“Thānaṃ kho panetaṃ, āvuso, vijjati yaṃ sīlavā bhikkhu ime pañcupādānakkhandhe aniccato dukkhato rogato gaṇḍato sallato aghato ābādhato parato palokato suññato anattato yoniso manasi karonto sotāpattiphalāṃ sacchikareyyā’ti.”

“Friend Koṭṭhika! If a monk, accomplished in morality, contemplates the five aggregates of attachment as impermanent, as unsatisfactory, as a disease, as a festering, a dart, as misery, as an affliction, as a stranger, as disintegrating, as empty, as not-self, it is possible that he may realise the fruit of Stream-entry.”¹

In brief, this means that one can aspire to the state of a Stream-winner if one practises insight meditation on the five aggregates of attachment in the way prescribed above.

I conclude this discourse with the usual prayer that this audience attain nibbāna as quickly as possible by virtue of their wholesome action in listening to this discourse and meditation on the five aggregates of attachment.

¹ S.iii.167, Silavanta Sutta.

Part Three

Delivered on 5th April and 8th May 1967¹

My last discourse dealt with meditation on mind and matter as subject to impermanence and unsatisfactoriness. I will now talk about it in relation to not-self or insubstantiality. However, before going on, let me explain to you what the self or ego is.

The Doctrine of Self

The doctrine of soul or self is widely accepted in India. It is mentioned in the Hindu scriptures that the living soul arises in the body of an individual by the time he or she is conceived in his or her mother's womb. The Burmese are also influenced by this idea of an animus or living spirit residing in the body, acting as a moral governor of the world and a dispenser of the fruits of our actions. It is believed that it has the power to regulate our actions according to our wishes. This kind of self is called self as the master (*sāmi attā*).

"*Sāmi*" means an owner or master. The self, as a master commands things to happen. When I will myself to go, I go. When I will myself to eat, I eat. When I will myself to sit, I sit, and so on. I am the self, and the self belongs to me. This notion recognises individuality or personality (*sakkāya*) from the compound personality-view (*sakkāya-ditṭhi*) derives. This heretical view accepts the existence of ego; and so it is also known as self-view (*attā-ditṭhi*). However, the Buddha taught us as follows in the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta:

"Rūpaṃ, bhikkhave, anattā. Rūpaṃca idaṃ, bhikkhave, attā abhaviṣṣa, nayidaṃ rūpaṃ ābādhāya saṃvatteyya, labbhettha ca rūpe — 'Evaṃ me rūpaṃ hotu, evaṃ me rūpaṃ mā ahoṣī'ti. Yaṃ mā ca kho, bhikkhave, rūpaṃ anattā, tasmā rūpaṃ ābādhāya saṃvattati, na ca labbhati rūpe — 'Evaṃ me rūpaṃ hotu, evaṃ me rūpaṃ mā ahoṣī'ti."

"Materiality, monks, is not self. If, monks, materiality were self, it would not tend to affliction, and it would be possible to say of materiality, 'Let it be thus (good), let it not be thus (bad). However, monks, because materiality is not-self, it tends to affliction, and it is not possible to say of materiality. 'Let it be thus (good), let it not be thus (bad)'."

¹ The 5th waxing of Takhū, 1328 M.E. and on the 14th waning of Takhū, 1329 M.E.

So matter cannot satisfy our wishes and desires regarding what we want it to be or what we do not want it to be. Likewise, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness are not a self to whom one can make the request, "Let them behave thus; let them not behave thus." They all tend to sickness or decay and are unable to give satisfaction to our wants and desires.

"*Anatta*" is a compound word consisting of "*na*" and "*atta*," meaning not-self. However, our learned teachers of old render it as "Incapable of governing," following Burmese usage. It has been rendered thus because they would like to stress the meaning conveyed by the self that behaves like a master who governs.

Earlier I told you that matter should be regarded as an utter stranger. This is in agreement with what the *Sīlavanta Sutta* has to say. It emphasises the fact that a devotee should understand the nature of materiality, which cannot be commanded because it is not-self. If you have a friend, you may ask him or her to do something for you, and he or she will certainly oblige. However, you cannot do this to a perfect stranger.

Those who believe in the doctrine of self assume that a living substance takes up its perpetual abode inside their bodies until they die. When death occurs the spirit leaves the body of the deceased either through the nose or through the mouth. This view of self is called an abiding self (*nivāsī atta*). The egoists also believe that when the material body is destroyed, the abiding self discards its old home to find a new one. It is so infinitesimal that it can pierce through thick walls, they say. The Buddha enjoins us not to look for it in matter, feeling, perception, mental formations, or consciousness. Only when this notion of ego making matter its home is rejected, can a devotee see reality. That all mental, verbal, and physical activities are caused by self is another form of egoism known as self as the doer (*kāraka atta*). An egoist of that kind thinks, "I see, I hear, I go, I stand or I sit, because I am being all the time prompted by the self." However, a meditator who notes with mindfulness the phenomena of seeing, hearing, *etc.*, as they arise, understands that no self exists that prompts anybody. Actions just take place as matter and mind co-operate, the one being the cause while the other is the effect. It is with a view to realising the true nature of phenomena that the meditators are encouraged to meditate on conditioned things. Remember the instruction:

“Note that you are going when you go and apply that principle to all physical actions such bending, stretching, etc.”

When you are feeling miserable or happy, you might think that it is your self who is feeling miserable or happy. This stems from a sense of attachment to the idea of self; and this kind of egoism is called the self as the experiencer (*vedaka attā*). The Buddha taught us to meditate on the three feelings of pleasure, pain, and indifference, which are all subject to impermanence, because he wanted us to break free from self-view. However, some non-conformists, during their flights of imagination, teach that meditation must be directed only on indifference, and that the other two feelings should not be contemplated. This teaching goes against the tenets of Buddhism. Those who accept this way of thinking will be deprived of the knowledge about the reality of pain and pleasure. Equanimity is a state of mind that cannot be easily felt and understood. So the meditator may not be able to contemplate it. The result will be that he or she will be all at sea, buffeted by latent defilements. Under such circumstances he or she will unwittingly be deprived of the benefits bestowed by the Buddha’s dispensation (*sāsana*).

A serious study of the above four categories of self-view will reveal that only insight meditation on mind and matter with reference to the three characteristics can bring about the eradication of wrong-views of self. A casual analysis of this body into its components is not enough. The apparent disappearance of materiality while meditating is also not enough, for although the concept of materiality as self seems to be abnegated, the mind still keeps a stranglehold on its object. Self-view remains at the base. In this case the meditator would think, “It is I who meditate. It is I who gain knowledge. I feel happy.” This means that he or she is still attached to feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness as a self. To discard the idea of self and gain proper knowledge of not-self, meditation on the lines hitherto suggested is essential.

In contemplating the five aggregates of attachment a meditator must view them as impermanent (*aniccato*) and therefore unsatisfactory (*dukkhato*). They must also be regarded as a disease (*rogato*) or a festering sore (*gaṇḍato*). One must know that they are painful like a thorn in the flesh (*sallato*), that they are oppressive (*ābādhato*) because they are conducive to unwholesome actions, which produce

unwholesome results, that they behave like strangers (*parato*) and that they are therefore ungovernable, and that they are like a fever that oppresses a patient (*aghatō*), and that they are subject to perpetual decay (*palokato*). It must also be remembered also that they are empty (*suññato*) and not self (*anattato*).

Every individual considers himself or herself to be a living being possessing a physical body that is so tangible and real that no amount of self-analysis entailing dissection of it into tiny parts can dissuade him or her from the notion that a self or ego does not exist. "I think, therefore I am." However, when a meditator is firmly convinced of the impermanence of all compounded things, the idea of self subsides. Every time he or she notes the mind-object and the noting mind with due awareness, he or she discovers that both dissolve at the very moment of being noted. He or she now sees not-self. This knowledge of not-self grows in three stages. Firstly, the recognition of the aggregates of attachment as not-self constitutes the realisation of the truth about not-self. Secondly, this will give rise to the knowledge that, in this phenomenal world, things happen of their own accord, without any agency that controls or governs them. This is called a characteristic of not-self. Having discovered this sign of not-self or impersonality, a meditator continues meditating on the five aggregates of attachment, keeping an eye on the eleven ways by which not-self is to be contemplated, and acquires, finally, insight into not-self (*anattānupassanā-ñāṇa*).

Contemplation of the Three Characteristics

All things considered, the eleven view-points in connection with meditation enumerated above will convey to the meditator the meaning of the three characteristics. However, the idea of impermanence is hard to be assimilated for the following reasons.

Firstly, it is very seldom that one becomes mindful of the arising and vanishing of mind and matter. Everything in the phenomenal world appears to be continuous. In other words, all becoming is continuous. That continuity conceals the true fact that all conditioned things are in a state of flux. Under such circumstances the characteristic of impermanence remains concealed under the false view of continuity. It is only with right understanding that the idea of a continuum of all phenomena that can be found in nature can be destroyed. When a

meditator contemplates the characteristic of impermanence, its true nature reveals itself. This is in accordance with the teaching in Visuddhimagga to the effect that what has not arisen before arises now and disappears the next instant. This phenomenon is like a flash of lightning. The flash as one sees it was not there before. However, it has now appeared. At the next moment it is gone! It is indeed impermanent, but it is hard to realise because the perception of continuity covers up the truth about the transient nature of the flash. This concealment is made possible by the fact that we are unable to note properly the arising and dissolution of mind and matter as they occur.

The truth about the impermanent nature of conditioned things cannot be realised merely by thinking about the aggregates of mind and matter, or by reciting that they arise and pass away. One must contemplate what one sees, hears, smells, tastes, or touches every time contact is established between the sense-bases and the sense-objects. This is in accordance with the injunction:

“Note that you go when you go. All physical behaviour must be made known to consciousness. Pain, pleasure, and indifference must be recognised at every moment they arise. When consciousness arises accompanied by craving, it must be noted with mindfulness. One must try to be aware of the arising of desire and lust the instant that they rear their heads. Consciousness must be able to grasp its object the moment it appears.”

Seize the Moment of Occurrence

The true nature of mind and matter can be known only when one can seize the moment of occurrence of the phenomenon and meditate on it. In the analogy of the flash of lightning, it is only when one looks at it the moment of its occurrence that one knows its origination and dissolution and understands its true nature. The following three points may, therefore, be noted.

1. Note the phenomenon as it arises to know its true nature.
2. When its true nature is known, origination and dissolution will become apparent.
3. Only when one can appreciate the rise and fall of the aggregates can one gain knowledge about impermanence.

When one fails to observe the phenomenon at the time of its occurrence, one is inclined to think that it is continuous. There

appears to be no hiatus in the chain of events. This is the concept of continuity (*santati-paññatti*). Influenced by this concept one labours under the notion of I and thinks that one's ego is a permanent entity that enables one to say, "I hear. I see. It is I who think and know."

A swarm of white ants moving in single-file appears to be a long and unbroken line, but a closer look reveals that each individual insect is unconnected to the others. A meditator does not see any phenomenon as a continuous chain of events. He or she sees that it has its precedence and subsequence which are separate and distinct. What one saw in the past is not what one sees now. The sense-impression gained a moment ago is not the same as that being received now. Each is entirely distinct and separate from the other. These remarks apply to all other phenomena connected with the senses. As each phenomenon arises, dissolution follows. When this characteristic is known, insight into impermanence is developed.

The Four Postures Conceal Suffering

The four postures are walking, sitting, standing, and lying down. They help to keep the body comfortable. When thus comforted, the body does not experience physical pain and suffering. The Visuddhimagga says that the characteristic of suffering is concealed by the lack of mindfulness of the nature of its oppressive tendencies, and by the four postures contributing to that negligence. If one inclines one's mind to the oppressive nature of suffering, by excluding the comfort created by the four postures, pain and suffering will be revealed in all its ignominy. We rarely regard ordinary physical discomforts as suffering because we can remove them by changing our posture, or by taking exercise. We fail to realise the oppressive nature or suffering which, however, is always lurking in the body. While meditating, one is constantly aware of one's physical behaviour, and one's mind is always alert, so one can notice seeing, hearing, or touching. As one is contemplating the rise and fall of the abdomen, one may feel tired, hot, or painful. One notes all of these sensations. Then one may want to correct the posture to relieve discomfort. One notes the desire as it grows. Then one may make efforts to correct the posture. If so, one notes those efforts, or one may endure all discomforts, concentrating the mind on the feelings of fatigue. Ultimately, fatigue disappears, then one gains the knowledge that

the physical body is, after all, a mass of suffering, and this knowledge is called insight into unsatisfactoriness (*dukkhānupassanā-ñāṇa*).

Solidity Conceals Not-self

The elements (*dhātu*) that comprise mind and matter are divisible and can be analysed. However, an ordinary individual, being unmindful of this nature, labours under the false notion called the concept of solidity (*ghana-paññatti*), which takes conditioned things as one indivisible whole, as massive and substantial. This concept of solidity covers up the true nature of not-self or insubstantiality. A meditator, being able to analyse the composition of mind and matter comes to the understanding that it has no substance whatsoever.

One of the characteristics of not-self is ungovernability. The self cannot be made to comply to our will. We cannot dictate it to be thus or not to be thus. All are rendered impotent under its tutelage. Those who are not used to meditation cherish the impression that they see things because they possess the will to see them. For example, when they exercise their will to hear, they can hear; when they exercise their will to bend or stretch the body, they can bend or stretch; or when they exercise their will to think, they can think. The self, they presume, is the governor of all their actions and arbiter of their destiny. To a meditator, however, all things appear as mere mind and matter, which just arises and passes away because it is its nature to arise and pass away. Actions follow their own natural course and no self can manipulate them. The eye contacts the visible-object, and seeing occurs. You may not have the desire to see. You may not make any attempt at seeing. However, you cannot help but see the object when it comes into contact with the eye. The same may be said regarding hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and thinking. You may wish that only pleasant things happen, and that all such pleasant things abide by you forever. However, since you do not have the power to control or govern what you consider your self, nothing obeys your wish. For those who fail to meditate in the way that has been suggested, the notion of solidity of the aggregates of mind and matter dominates the nature of insubstantiality of all conditioned things. The concept of solidity manifests in four ways: 1) Continuity of solidity (*santati-ghana*), 2) Wholeness of solidity (*samūha-ghana*), 3) Function of solidity (*icca-ghana*), and 4) Object of solidity (*ārammaṇa-ghana*).

Continuity of Solidity

I have dealt with the concept of continuity (*santati-paññatti*), which is related to the continuity of solidity. When one looks at an object, one sees its image for the duration of one thought-moment, after which it disappears and recedes into the past. Then the next image immediately fills the vacuum thus caused giving one the impression that the past is linked with the present to form a chain of continuity, thus giving rise to the appearance of the sameness of the object under study. This leads to the belief that the phenomenal world is unchanging and stable. This is continuity of solidity (*santati ghana*).

When we see a thing, hear the sound it makes, and think about it, the acts of seeing, hearing, and thinking are separate and distinct. What we have just seen, heard, or thought about is quite different from what we are seeing, hearing, or thinking about now. However, to an ordinary individual the entire process of cognition is continuous and the object appears to exist as one entity throughout that period. From the nature of this process arises the assumption of the existence of a self or ego that sees, hears, or thinks. Hence we say, "I see; I hear, I think," as if this "I" remains stable throughout. This assumption prevents a non-meditator from realising the truth about not-self. However, a meditator noting the arising and passing away of mind and matter gains a clear knowledge of impermanence and insubstantiality. This knowledge dispels all concepts of continuity and solidity.

Wholeness of Solidity

All factors of consciousness combine together to give us an impression of wholeness or entirety. Eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness and touch-consciousness conspire to give the notion that collectively they constitute an individual who remains whole and solid. That is, all phenomena in the domain of mental formations constitute individuality or personality. An ordinary person who lacks insight thinks, "I see, I hear, I think," however much he or she has learned from books that matter is divisible into its components. When a mindful observer examines himself or herself he or she realises that the eye-base, the eye-object, the eye-consciousness, and the feeling of pleasure derived from seeing are all functionally distinct. One who fails to note seeing as it occurs prefers to think that these functions combine to produce a solid self,

and would reflect, "I am this physical body that possesses the eye, the hands and feet that I see are mine, the one who experiences the pleasure of sight is myself." Matter coalesced into a mass gives us the impression of wholeness or entirety, which is then mistaken for solidity that is identified as an individual. This is called wholeness of solidity (*samūha-ghana*).

A meditator who has acquired the knowledge of arising and passing away, and the knowledge of dissolution, understands correctly that the eye-base, the visible-object, and eye-consciousness are separate and distinct, and are subject to decay. When the concept of individuality is destroyed, the truth about not-self is revealed, and this insight is called insight into not-self (*anattānupassanā-ñāṇa*).

Function of Solidity

Eye-consciousness performs the function of visual cognition, and ear-consciousness performs the function of aural cognition. However, non-meditators take it that it is their self that performs these functions, as a consequence of which they see or hear. The pervasive idea of "I" arouses the ego, which they regard as the prime-mover. In the phenomenon of seeing, the eye-base performs the function of receiving the image that the visual-object supplies. Then eye-consciousness takes over to do the job of discernment. When these different functions are taken together as a whole, the concept of ego-entity that enjoys the sights and sounds during the phenomena arises; and this concept is called the function of solidity (*kicca-ghana*), created by functions that merge together. An insight meditator can differentiate these functions performed by the sense-base, the sense-object, and the sense-consciousness in all that occurs. As concentration develops, he or she is able to distinguish mentality from materiality by such differentiation of functions and eventually realises that they dissolve together. This shows the futility of self. All conditioned things are immaterial or unsubstantial. Thus insight into not-self is developed.

Object of Solidity

Seeing occurs when the mind dwells on the visual-object; hearing when it dwells on the audible-object; smelling when it dwells on the olfactory-object; tasting when it dwells on the gustatory-object; touching when it dwells on the tactile-object; and thinking when it

dwells on the mental-object. In all of these phenomena the sense-objects are varied and many; but the subject appears to be one individual for all the actions relating to seeing, *etc.*, are created by him or her. This is the concept of solidity conjured up by a combined force of many different sense-objects. It is called object of solidity (*ārammaṇa-ghana*).

A meditator who has developed insight is fully aware that seeing and hearing by one individual are two different phenomena although seeing and hearing the object are simultaneous. By confining attention to only one phenomenon the meditator is able to appreciate that what was seen a moment ago is not the same as what is being seen now. What is more, the meditator is able to understand that the visual-object that is being contemplated dissolves at the very moment of contemplation. To the meditator, therefore, the many processes of seeing, hearing, *etc.*, are not attributable to an individual. They are just manifestations of various aspects of the phenomenon. This way of thinking virtually destroys the notion of solidity, and leads one to the knowledge of not-self.

The Visuddhimagga Mahāṭīkā says that the characteristic of not-self becomes apparent when the concept of solidity created by the elements that combine to make a compound is shattered. The mental and physical phenomena react on one another to combine themselves into a solid mass. One who has no background knowledge about mental formations, takes this compound mass as one entity. This kind of notion is called the concept of wholeness (*samūha-ghana*). In this way one considers phenomena that can be functionally differentiated as one whole or entity. The eye-base, the visual-object, and the eye-consciousness are separate and distinct. Ordinary individuals, however, take all these different phenomena as one complete whole. This concept is the function of solidity (*kicca-ghana*). There are also other phenomena, such as sense-bases, which can be classified into basic qualities by dint of their different inclinations towards their sense-objects. However, an ordinary individual takes them as one entity. This idea of solidity springing from such a notion is called object of solidity (*ārammaṇa-ghana*). However, when insight meditation is called into help, the idea of entity or solidity breaks up like foam touched by hand. Then realisation arises that all phenomena occur naturally without any agency prompting them and that they

just take place to dissolve. These four types of solidity conspire to create the view of self, and when their nature is duly noted with mindfulness, the characteristic of not-self becomes known.

Not-self, Real and Apparent

When matter is analysed into its components, the notion of materiality usually disappears. Some would like to think that when this knowledge of disappearance arises, insight into not-self is established. However, this casual knowledge cannot lead one to the conviction of the doctrine of insubstantiality, for although materiality in its physical sense has been discarded, one still clings to the individual. If the idea of materiality still remains in consciousness, one will be unable to realise not-self. In the formless realms, Brahmas possess no physical body, but as they retain consciousness, they regard that as their self, and cannot conceive not-self. One may be able to do away with the idea of body, but one still clings to the idea of mind. It must be remembered that even when one has attained conceptual knowledge about not-self, one may not become firmly established in the ultimate reality (*paramattha*). It is only when one contemplates the arising and vanishing of the five aggregates, gaining practical experience of their ungovernability, that one can say with certainty that one knows insubstantiality. Outside the Buddha's dispensation, sages like Sarabhaṅga, a Bodhisatta, could teach about impermanence and unsatisfactoriness, but not about not-self as it is very difficult to explain. The Buddha himself had to explain not-self to the group of five monks by first introducing the subjects of impermanence and unsatisfactoriness.

The law of impermanence that people outside this Buddha's dispensation know is elementary. When a pot is broken one is reminded that it is impermanent. When one stumbles and gets hurt, one may exclaim to oneself that life is suffering. However, such revelations are all conceptual knowledge, which can hardly be improved upon unless the absolute truth about impermanence and unsatisfactoriness is realised through insight meditation.

Nevertheless, do not lose heart. In the first Sutta of the Book of Nines in the Numerical Discourses, it says that if impermanence is known, not-self can also be known. The Commentaries also explain that once impermanence is known, unsatisfactoriness and not-self can be recognised.

Advantages of Meditation

What, it may be asked, are the advantages of meditation on the three characteristics? Regarding this, note what Venerable Sāriputta said:

“Friend Koṭṭhika! When a monk, accomplished in morality, is noting the five aggregates of attachment with mindfulness contemplating their impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and insubstantiality, he comes within sight of the Fruition of Stream-winning.”

In my next discourse I will deal with this subject about Stream-winners. Now I conclude with the usual prayer.

May all who have listened to this discourse on the *Sīlavanta Sutta* attain nibbāna having realised the nature of the five aggregates of attachment through the practice of insight meditation!

Part Four

Delivered on 23rd May and 7th June 1967¹

My last discourse relates to the subject of meditation on the five aggregates of attachment with reference to the three characteristics to be applied in the eleven ways suggested by the Buddha. In the present discourse I propose to say something about the Jhāna Sutta,² wherein it has been shown that, when a monk arises from the first absorption (*jhāna*), he usually reflects on the five aggregates operating at the time of the absorption from the point of view of impermanence in the eleven aspects that have just been mentioned.

The Jhāna Sutta

An extract from the Jhāna Sutta runs thus:

“Paṭhamampāhaṃ, bhikkhave, jhānaṃ nissāya āsavānaṃ khayaṃ vadāmī’ti, iti kho panetaṃ vuttaṃ. Kiñcetaṃ paṭicca vuttaṃ? Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu vivicceva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi savitakkaṃ savicāraṃ vivekajaṃ pītisukhaṃ paṭhamaṃ jhānaṃ upasampajja viharati. So yadeva tattha hoti rūpagataṃ vedanāgataṃ saññāgataṃ sañkhāragataṃ viññāṇagataṃ, te dhamme aniccato dukkhato rogato gaṇḍato sallato aghato ābādhato parato palokato suññato anattato samanupassati. So tehi dhammehi cittaṃ paṭivāpeti. So tehi dhammehi cittaṃ paṭivāpetvā amatāya dhātuyā cittaṃ upasaṃharati — ‘Etaṃ santaṃ etaṃ paṇītaṃ yadidaṃ sabbasañkhārasamatho sabbūpadhipaṭinissaggo taṇhākkhayo virāgo nirodho nibbāna’nti. So tattha t̥hito āsavānaṃ khayaṃ pāpuṇāti.”

“A monk abides in the first absorption (*jhāna*) accompanied by initial and sustained application, aloof from sensuality and unwholesome mental states, established in joy and bliss. Arising from absorption he contemplates the five aggregates. Realising that they are impermanent, unsatisfactory, like a disease, a festering sore, or a thorn in the flesh. They are baneful, and afflict one like fever. They behave like strangers. They tend to dissolution, are empty, and are not-self. His recoils from those phenomena, and he directs the mind to the deathless element, thinking, ‘This is peaceful, this is

¹ The full moon day and the 15th waning of Kason, 1329 M.E.

² A.iv422.

excellent, namely, the stilling of all formations, the relinquishment of all rebirth, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, nibbāna.’ If he is resolute in this he attains the destruction of all corruptions (Arahantship).”

This passage means essentially that a monk who has arisen from absorption contemplates the five aggregates of attachment, that persisted in absorption, aware of the eleven aspects of impermanence. While in absorption the mind was intent on that state. On arising from absorption he contemplated intent on insight, which can be acquired through wholesome actions pertaining to the sensual realm (*kāmāvacara kusala*). It means that while in absorption, one experiences absorption consciousness (*jhāna citta*), and as an ordinary monk one experiences wholesome consciousness pertaining to the sensual realm (*kāmāvacara kusala citta*).

The Commentaries give an explanation of the phrase, “Directs the mind to the deathless element,” that occurs in Jhāna Sutta as follows: “A meditator may get inclined to nibbāna through hearsay, through a proper study of the scriptures, or through the acquisition of conventional knowledge, without being able to appreciate the fact that nibbāna is peace par excellence. However, intuitively he may have come to know the characteristics of nibbāna. A monk established in the knowledge of nibbāna means that monk who has established himself in insight through insight meditation keeping the three characteristics as his meditation object. Arahantship is attained when the four Paths are accomplished in due sequence.”

The mind becomes intent on nibbāna when one is fully convinced of the unsatisfactoriness of all mental formations, and so tries to escape from them and embrace nibbāna, encouraged by the knowledge of the Path. It must also be noted here that one cannot gain the knowledge of the Path without the practice of insight meditation.

The Anicca Sutta

I will now tell you what the Anicca Sutta¹ has to say about meditation that leads to the knowledge of disgust (*nibbidā-ñāṇa*):

“Monks! Matter is impermanent, feeling is impermanent, perception is impermanent, mental formations are imperma-

¹ S.iii.21.

ment, and consciousness is impermanent. Seeing thus the well-informed noble disciple becomes disgusted with matter, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. Being disgusted, the mind becomes dispassionate. Being dispassionate it is freed. Then one knows, 'Birth is destroyed. The holy-life has been lived. All that should be done has been done and nothing remains of this existence.'

These are the words of Buddha when he was explaining the Dhamma relating to knowledge of reviewing (*paccavekkhaṇa-ñāṇa*). Disgust is developed when one contemplates the aggregates and gains intuition that they are all void. Yet some belittle insight meditation, maintaining that if one has understood impermanence, it is superfluous to contemplate. This way of thinking cannot lead one to insight that eradicates passion and paves the way to the Path. In the same chapter on the aggregates, the *Dukkha Sutta* and *Anatta Sutta* follow the *Anicca Sutta*, and the same observations apply.

Disgust Must Be Developed

Disgust can be truly developed only when the faults and foibles of the aggregates are fully realised. Those living in the dry zone are oblivious to the unfavourable conditions under which they live. Only when thirst and hunger assault them as a result of drought, do they realise its shortcomings and leave the place in disgust. People are usually pleased with their bodies. They cling to them without giving a thought to the three characteristics. They lack conviction and faith in the teaching. For them the road to *nibbāna* is closed.

Ignorance About the Aggregates of Attachment

Everyday we see, hear, smell, taste, or touch sense-objects. However, we rarely contemplate them in the light of the three characteristics. No doubt, we read about them in the texts, but we hardly know that seeing, hearing, *etc.*, comprise the aggregates of attachment. So we regard the impermanent as permanent, suffering as happiness, and what is insubstantial as substantial. We regard this world stable, happy, and substantial. Labouring under such delusions we fail to gain knowledge of disgust and knowledge of the Path.

Disgust Motivated by Insight Knowledge

When insight is gained, one becomes weary of the burdensome aggregates. When concentration gets stronger through the practice of insight meditation, one becomes fully aware that the object that is known arises and passes away along with the mind that knows, and that the former is the cause, while the latter is the effect. This continual arising and passing away is impermanent and unsatisfactory. As no agent can govern it, what we consider as the self is, after all, insubstantial and void. This knowledge marks the birth of the investigative tendency called knowledge by comprehension (*sammasana-nāṇa*).

As the meditator continues to practise, he or she will personally experience the reality of the existence of fleeting moments during which the rise and fall of the aggregates take place with unparalleled speed, revealed by lights and colours that thrill the meditator with joy. However, both the body and mind are at peace while remaining alert at all times. Memories and perceptions arise at break-neck speed. This condition is apparent when one gets to the stage of knowledge of arising and passing away.

Having mastered this knowledge, the meditator leaves joy aside and goes on meditating until the origination and dissolution of the aggregates becomes vivid, especially the speedy dissolution of the noting mind and the noted object in pairs. At this stage, the meditator may be noting the rising and falling of the abdomen without being aware of its shape. Similarly, when contemplating walking, or bending and stretching the limbs, one is unaware of the shape of the limbs or the manner of the movements. Now one has gained knowledge of dissolution, here represented by the noting mind (*ārammaṇaka*) and the noted object (*ārammaṇa*). This stage of knowledge is described in the Visuddhimagga¹ as follows:

*“Nāṇe tikkhe vahante saṅkhāresu lahuṃ upatṭhahantesu uppādaṃ
vā ṭhitiṃ vā pavattaṃ vā nimittaṃ vā na sampāpuṇāti.
khayavayabhedanirodheva sati santiṭṭhati.”*

“Once his knowledge works keenly and formations quickly become apparent, he no longer extends his mindfulness to their arising or presence or occurrence or sign, but brings it to bear only on their cessation as destruction, fall and breakup.”

¹ The Path of Purification, Knowledge of Dissolution (Vism.640).

When knowledge of dissolution arises the intellect is rendered so sharp that its performance appears to be almost automatic in setting volitional activities in motion in all clarity, under which circumstance the mind skips over the stage of origination, the stage of establishment and the stage of imprinting imagery of the phenomenon and assimilates only its destruction, decay, and disintegration. At the stage of knowledge of arising and passing away, the origination of mind and matter becomes clearly evident. At the stage of knowledge by comprehension, the static stage, or stasis (*thiti*), of the thought-process presents itself clearly as a result of the law of continuity, notwithstanding recognition of the nature of impermanence of mind and matter. However, in the beginning, just before coming to this stage of investigating knowledge, only establishment of the phenomenon is obvious as the rise and fall of the aggregates are yet to be experienced. Here, even the imagery of the phenomenon can be seen. However, at the knowledge of dissolution stage, neither the origination, nor the establishment, nor the imagery are clear. What is clear now is only dissolution every time the phenomenon is noted. This agrees with the personal experience gained by meditators. This shows that the *Visuddhimagga*, written 1,500 years ago has stood the test of time.

The following brief passage occurs in *Paṭisambhidāmagga*:¹

*“Ārammaṇaṅca patisaṅkhā, bhaṅgaṅca anupassati;
suññato ca upatṭhānaṃ, adhipaññāvipassanā.”*

“Having gained knowledge of dissolution with regard to the mind-object, a meditator continues contemplating the dissolution of the mind that notes the object. He or she then realises that all mental formations are empty and void. This realisation is the highest form of insight knowledge.”

Here the idea of self is totally eradicated by the knowledge of dissolution. When all phenomena are known to decay at any time, fear sets in, which is knowledge of fearfulness (*bhayatupatṭhāna-ñāṇa*). This prompts one to arrive at the knowledge of the five aggregates of attachment as miserable, which is knowledge of misery (*ādinava-ñāṇa*). Then knowledge of disgust (*nibbidā-ñāṇa*) develops. When this sense of revulsion is developed, one abandons all desire to keep them as one’s own possession. One looks forward to dispensing with them

¹ Pts.i.58.

altogether. This wish to escape from the shackles of the aggregates is knowledge of desire for deliverance (*muñcitukamyatā-ñāṇa*).

If you really want to escape from the burden of the aggregates you must strive further to practise meditation. In fact, you must make a special effort to contemplate the five aggregates of attachment as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self. This is the knowledge of re-observation (*paṭisañkhā-ñāṇa*). When this knowledge becomes strengthened, equanimity towards all conditioned-things will be developed, which is knowledge of equanimity about formations (*sañkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*). The Visuddhimagga comments on this knowledge of re-observation with the simile of the fisherman.

The Fisherman and His Catch

“A man thought to catch a fish, it seems, so he took a fishing net and cast it in the water. He put his hand into the mouth of the net under the water and seized a snake by the neck. He was glad, thinking, “I have caught a fish.” In the belief that he had caught a big fish, he lifted it up to see. When he saw three marks, he perceived that it was a snake and he was terrified. He saw danger, felt dispassion (revulsion) for what he had seized, and desired to be delivered from it. Contriving a means to deliverance, he unwrapped [the coils from] his hand, starting from the tip of its tail. Then he raised his arm, and when he had weakened the snake by swinging it two or three times round his head, he flung it away, crying “Go, foul snake.” Then quickly scrambling up onto dry land, he stood looking back whence he had come, thinking, “Goodness, I have been delivered from the jaws of a huge snake!”¹

A meditator who is unaware of the three characteristics, contemplates seeing, hearing, *etc.*, and considers phenomena to be pleasant and delightful. He or she is very much like that fisherman who was pleased with his catch that he thought was a fish. Then the meditator discovers that what was thought to be pleasurable is subject to the three impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self. Terrified like the fisherman grasping the fish by the neck, on seeing the tell-tale signs of a poisonous snake. Realising this mistake, the meditator becomes disgusted with the aggregates of mind and matter, and wants to fling it away, if that is possible.

¹ The Path of Purification, Knowledge of Reflection (re-observation), (Vism.652).

If you want to escape from misery, having recognising it as such, it is imperative to practise insight meditation with reference to the three characteristics. If you are misled to believe that contemplation is superfluous since you already know about the three characteristics, you can never reach the knowledge of desire for deliverance, without which liberation is impossible.

The kinds of insight that I have enumerated are in accordance with what has been expounded in *Paṭisambhidāmagga*.

Meditation Leading to Stream-winning

Meditation on the five aggregates of attachment, keeping an eye on the eleven aspects of the characteristics of impermanence as emphasised in this discourse, leads the meditator to Stream-winning. When insight reaches the knowledge of equanimity about formations, the meditator regards all mental formations with indifference — being unaffected by pleasant or unpleasant objects. On reaching this stage the arising and passing away of objects just appears naturally to the meditator, who need make no special effort to note them. They may be good or bad, but that does not matter. He or she can note them for an hour or two at a stretch just as each phenomenon occurs. The mind, mellowed by equanimity, is quick to assimilate all phenomena and aligns itself with the peace of *nibbāna*. The Path of a Stream-winner fructifies in due course. Both the Path and its Fruition are now accomplished and he or she becomes a Stream-winner.

The Milindapañha on Stream-winning

The following extract is from the *Milindapañha*:

“The mind of a meditator who cultivates attentiveness progressively functions beyond the continuum of repeated occurrences to enter into a state where such occurrences are absent. When this state of non-arising is achieved, the meditator sees *nibbāna*.”

When the knowledge of equanimity develops, the meditator reaches the knowledge of adaptation (*anuloma-ñāṇa*), in its vigorous form. After that he or she gains the knowledge of the Path and its Fruition and becomes a Stream-winner, the fundamental stage that Venerable Sāriputta explained to Venerable Koṭṭhika.

Smashing the Core of Defilements

The Visuddhimagga says that once the mind adverts to the element of nibbāna, defilements disintegrate, although ordinarily defilements such as greed, anger, and delusion are unbreakable like steel. When an ordinary person comes face to face with pleasant things, he or she wants to possess them, and thereby greed arises. However, when coming into contact with unpleasantness, he or she develops aversion accompanied by ill-will. Delusion makes the ordinary person think that unwholesome is wholesome and vice versa.

In passing, let me point out the impropriety of giving charity publicised by entertainments of music and dancing. Donors may feel gratified with such alms-giving, but it leads to unwholesome actions like greed and covetousness. It must be borne in mind too that when greed arises, anger accompanies it. When desire develops, the greedy person becomes possessive, and may become angry if he or she fails to get what is wanted. Greed gives the impression that everything is permanent, delightful, and substantial.

Observance of the moral precepts can remove defilements caused by speech and action, but it cannot remove the greed, anger, and delusion latent in the mind. It is only through meditation that one can dispel them. Even then it is hard to remove self-view (*atta ditṭhi*). The five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), lust, ill-will, sloth, restlessness, and doubt may be conquered by a meditator, but this conquest can be achieved only by attaining absorption and remaining in that state. Attachment to wrong-views and desire for existence are very persistent. They cannot easily be shaken off, so they dwell even in the minds of those achieving the status of a Brahma. Concentration cannot eradicate defilements, only insight can do that.

The Virtues of Stream-winning

Contemplation of the aggregates with regard to the three characteristics can eradicate all latent defilements (*anusaya kilesā*). However, even then it can hardly eradicate the disposition inherent in the concept of continuity (*santānānusaya*). Only the Noble Path can eradicate it. Hence the saying that Stream-winning can break the rocks of defilements. However, this refers only to personality-view (*sakkāya-ditṭhi*), doubt (*vicikicchā*), and attachment to rites and rituals (*sīlabbataparāmāsa*) that lead to the states of loss.

If a meditator continues practising insight meditation, he or she will always be mindful of all compound things as composed of only mind and matter. This means that there is no living substance or self. However, if one neglects to meditate, the view of self will recur leading one to the wrong belief in the existence of a spiritual being. Perhaps, this belief may be absent in the present existence, but it may re-assert itself in the next. This cannot happen to a Stream-winner.

A Stream-winner is firmly established in faith. Having acquired wisdom through practice and personal experience, he or she recognises mind and matter as the cause and effect of the phenomenal world, always subject to impermanence, *etc.* The more one realises the nature of conditioned things the more faith in the Buddha grows, and when a Stream-winner realises nibbāna, faith in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha becomes unshakable.

When all doubts about the Triple Gem are dispelled, one develops firm confidence in the practice of morality, concentration, and wisdom. Now one has become established in right conduct, doing away with all the rites and rituals that negate the Noble Eightfold Path. One now disdains teachings that eternal bliss can be achieved when one goes to heaven without the advantage of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path.

Attachment to rites and rituals (*sīlabbataparāmāsa*) refers to ascetic practices that imitate animal behaviour. It includes the worship of nature spirits and gods, the king of the gods, and those like Brahmā who are believed to be Creators in the hope that they can liberate one from miseries and grant happiness. These religious practices teach that the mind should be kept at rest without burdening it with insight meditation, which investigates the Four Noble Truths. The mind at rest, they maintain, gains peace. Not knowing the right path, ordinary people follow false teachers and accept their teachings. The ordinary person (*puthujjana*) means having many teachers. Not knowing what a true teacher is like an ordinary person goes in search of one among many whom he encounters. However, a Stream-winner knows the true teacher and his teaching and rejects all rites and rituals that negate insight and looks askance at rites and rituals.

At the time of the Buddha there was a female lay devotee by the name of Visākhā. Her father-in-law worshipped naked heretics. Once, he threw a feast for these false-saints and invited his daughter-in-law

to the feast. When she saw that they were naked, she left in disgust. Stream-winners are free from the bondage of false views, doubts, and rites and rituals. This is according to the Pāḷi canon. The Commentaries say that they are also free from envy (*macchhariya*).

The Path Dries up the Ocean of Saṃsāra

The Visuddhimagga says that Path of Stream-winning dries up the ocean of saṃsāra, the endless cycle of existences, besides breaking down the wall of greed. The word endless denotes that the cycle has no beginning. This means that saṃsāra has an infinite past, and so far we have been unable to extricate ourselves from it. That cannot be changed. However, we must try to cut it off so that it cannot arise in the future. If we fail to do so, it will create endless suffering in the existences yet to come. It can only be arrested with the development of the Noble Path. The volume of water in the ocean can be measured, but the magnitude of saṃsāra is immeasurable. If the Path is not realised now, saṃsāra will flow on indefinitely!

Unwholesome actions pave the way to the states of loss. Of all sufferings, suffering in the states of loss is the worst. The Commentaries say that it is the home of evil-doers who are always negligent of the Dhamma. They may leave their home for a time, as if going out for a brief visit elsewhere, but they always return to their original hovel. A Stream-winner has no need to worry about such miserable existences, and has at the most only seven more fortunate existences remaining, after which he or she will attain *parinibbāna*.

There is a saying that for a Noble One accomplished in the Path, all the gates to realms of misery are closed. No doubt a Stream-winner has not discarded all greed, anger, and delusion, but he or she has closed all doors to unwholesome actions. The following points summarise what has been said.

1. A Stream-winner realises that there is no self or soul, only mind and matter.
2. He or she never entertains doubts about the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha.
3. The ocean of saṃsāra has dried up, and the final liberation of *parinibbāna* is now guaranteed with seven existences at the most.
4. The gates to the four states of loss are closed.

The Wealth of the Noble Ones

The Noble Path brings seven kinds of wealth. However, the wealth of the Noble Ones is unlike the material wealth of mankind. A gardener's wealth is his vegetables, and a jeweller's his gold and precious stones. They are very useful to them throughout their lives and they are very pleased with them. However, when they die they cannot carry them to their next existence. Their usefulness ends with their death. Such material wealth pales into insignificance when compared to the spiritual wealth of the Noble Ones, which proves beneficial to them throughout their remaining existences. Possessing this wealth, they know no suffering; and this absence of suffering constitutes the highest form of happiness for those who have become Stream-winners.

The seven kinds of wealth are enumerated below:

*“Saddhādhanaṃ sīladhanaṃ, hirī ottappiyaṃ dhanaṃ.
Sutadhanañca cāgo ca, paññā ve sattamaṃ dhanaṃ.*

*“Yassa ete dhanā atthi, itthiyā purisassa vā.
Adaliddoti taṃ āhu, amoghaṃ tassa jīvitaṃ.”*

“Faith, morality, shame, dread, learning, liberality, and wisdom are the seven categories of wealth possessed by the Noble Ones. Those possessing such wealth, whether men or women, are to be considered to be wealthy. Their lives are not lived in vain.”

Faith in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha is made possible by the path of Stream-winning. This has been dealt earlier.

Regarding morality (*sīla*), the texts say that a lay person observing the five precepts can prosper in life and can never be reborn in the four states of loss. One's life would be all the more noble if one observes eight or ten precepts. Stream-winners never break the five precepts, and so there is no occasion for them to fall down to the realms of misery. In the course of his teaching, the Buddha has said that one who has established faith in the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha, having accomplished morality, may declare himself or herself as a Stream-winner.

Shame (*hirī*) and dread (*ottappa*) of wrong-doing are two wholesome dispositions that guide people towards absolute purity. One possessing these two virtues would hesitate to do evil or commit

crimes. Such a one will be regarded as abstaining from evil actions that bring about unwholesome actions.

Learning (*suta*) is of two kinds: one derived from what one hears from others and the other from one's own personal observation. A meditator who is in the habit of practicing the Dhamma is deemed to possess both kinds of knowledge.

Liberality (*cāga*) is usually practised by all Buddhists either in moderation or liberally. A Stream-winner practises it freely and without restraint, giving away everything to others who are endowed with morality. This virtue of a Stream-winner has been explained at length in my discourse, "[To Nibbāna via the Noble Eightfold Path](#)," and "Memorable Qualities (*Saraṇīya Dhamma*)."

Wisdom (*paññā*) is the seventh attribute of a Stream-winner. It is of three kinds, namely, wisdom gained from what one hears from others, wisdom derived from the exercise of one's intellect, and wisdom derived from meditation.

Lay devotees who possess the seven noble attributes shown herein, are regarded as wealthy although they may be materially poor. Such wealth always proves beneficial to them.

The Story of Suppabuddha

At the time of Buddha there was a leper born with untold suffering. When his mother conceived him, she was afflicted with starvation. When he was born she had to beg both for herself and for her newly-born baby. However, when he came of age she abandoned him giving him her begging bowl. So the leper wandered the streets begging in the day and sleeping at night whimpering because of his disease. This disturbed his neighbours so much that they named him Suppabuddha — one who awakens sleepers.

He was miserable in this existence because in a previous existence he maligned a Solitary Buddha (Pacceka Buddha), saying, "Who is that leper roaming the streets wearing rags?" This unwholesome action gave its unwholesome result, and he was reborn repeatedly in the states of loss, finally returning to the human realm in his present existence as a leprous beggar.

One day he met a gathering listening to a discourse delivered by the Buddha as he made his daily round for alms. At first he thought that the crowd had gathered because someone was throwing a feast

to passersby. However, discovering that it was an informal religious meeting, he listened respectfully to the teaching. The Buddha deliberately selected a discourse to suit the beggar's intelligence, knowing that he possessed potential that would enable him to realise the Dhamma. As a result, Suppabuddha attained the path of a Stream-winner.

He became a Stream-winner for two reasons. Firstly, he had perfections that stood him in good stead for the realisation of the Path and its Fruition. Secondly, he was moved by spiritual urgency (*saṃvega*) due to repentance for his previous misdeeds. The affluent are seldom agitated by this sense urgency, so their faith is weak. He trailed behind Buddha to go the monastery and left him in the end to go his own way. Meanwhile, the king of gods came down to earth intending to test his faith. "Suppabuddha," he said, "if you do what I say I will cure you of your disease and make you rich. Say that the recluse Gotama is not really enlightened and that his teachings are false, and that his disciples are spurious. If you declare that you will have none of them, I will give you all the riches that you want."

Coming to know the stranger as the king of gods, Suppabuddha was very much mortified and said. "You, the king of gods, are foolish and unabashed. It is not worthy of me to get into conversation with you. You say that I am poor. However, possessing the seven kinds of wealth of the Noble One, I am indeed the richest man on earth. The king of gods left him, went to the monastery, and related the incident to the Buddha who told him that he would never be able to shake the faith of Suppabuddha. After this incident Suppabuddha was gored to death by a stray cow. This was due to his previous bad kamma. In one of his previous existences he was the son of a millionaire. He and his three companions killed a prostitute for her money after they had taken their pleasure. The dying woman swore that she would be avenged in future existences. Whenever the four miscreants got reborn as men, she appeared as an ogre eating them up one by one. It so happened that Suppabuddha was reborn a man along with his friends, Pukkusāti, Dārucīriya, and Tambadāṭhika, while the ogre was also reborn as a cow. She gored them to death one by one under different circumstances.

I would like to point out, by the way, that the woman's vengeance was to her own disadvantage, for kamma results would overtake her throughout her future existences. However, for the four who

were gored to death they are to be considered as fortunate, in ordinary parlance, for Dārucīriya became an Arahant, while Pukkusāti became a Brahma in Suddhāvāsa, destined to become an Arahant later, and Tambadāthika became a deity in Tusita. Suppabuddha who died a Stream-winner was reborn in Tāvatiṃsa, released from suffering as a leprous beggar of this human world. Had he not met this kind of fate, he would have to continue to be miserable throughout his life as a beggar.

Why Suppabuddha Became a Deity

The Udāna Pāli Text gives reasons for Suppabuddha being transported to Tāvatiṃsa on his death. Having heard the Buddha's teachings, he became established in faith, morality, knowledge, charitableness, and wisdom. So after his demise he was reborn in a better and more noble plane of existence. The Commentaries elaborate on this point, mentioning his great faith in the Triple Gem, and defining liberality as contributory to the abandonment of defilements and cessation of mental formations, and wisdom as leading to insight knowledge.

Faith, morality, knowledge, charitableness, and wisdom are the five wholesome actions that lead Suppabuddha to the celestial realm. However, my personal view is that insight might have played a larger part in his destiny, for it can bring about the cessation of suffering. How is this cessation brought about? When a meditator is mindful of the three characteristics, all attachment to the ideas of permanence, pleasure, and substantiality subside, as insight eradicates all tendencies to defilements. When defilements are eradicated, wholesome or unwholesome actions have no opportunity to arise. In Suppabuddha's case the wholesome volition in the practice of insight determined his destiny for a higher and better form of existence.

Maturity Knowledge

Maturity knowledge (*gotrabhū-ñāṇa*) is accompanied by change of lineage volition (*gotrabhū cetanā*), which inclines towards the Path, its Fruition, and nibbāna. It transcends the sense sphere lineage to aspire to the sublime lineage. It is the highest stage of insight knowledge, which can bring about the most exalted results. Suppabuddha was reborn as a deity because of his change of lineage volition.

When he gained his place in Tāvātimsa, he was more powerful than the other gods who were there before him by virtue of their wholesome actions done outside of the Buddha's dispensation. As they were envious they made unfavourable remarks about the new arrival, saying that he was only a leprous beggar in his former existence. The king of gods restrained them, saying that Suppabuddha was superior to them because he was accomplished in morality, knowledge, liberality, and wisdom. I hope the story about him will encourage meditators to try to accumulate wholesome actions through the practice of insight meditation.

More Noble than a Brahma

The Buddha said:

*“Pathabyā ekarajjena, saggassa gamanena vā.
Sabbalokādhiccena, sotāpattiphalaṃ varaṃ.”*

“Better than absolute sovereignty over the earth,
better than going to heaven,
better even than lordship over all the worlds,
is the Fruit of a Stream-winner.” (Dhp v 178)

For fuller details on this subject please refer to my discourse, “On the Nature of Nibbāna.” I conclude by drawing your attention to the fact that knowledge leading to Stream-winning eradicates defilements, dries up the ocean of *saṃsāra*, closes the gates to the states of loss, and endows one with seven kinds of wealth befitting a Noble One.

May you all attain nibbāna as quickly as possible by virtue of your practice of insight meditation in accordance with the teachings of the Enlightened One regarding meditation on the five aggregates of attachment in relation to the three characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self.

Part Five

Delivered on 21st June and 29th July 1967¹

This is the seventh in the series of talks entitled "A Discourse on the Silavanta Sutta," Previously, I enumerated the four virtues of a Stream-winner. I will now tell you about the remaining virtues.

Right versus Wrong

The Visuddhimagga says that the Path of Stream-winning renounces the eightfold wrong path, namely, wrong-view, wrong-thought, wrong-speech, wrong-action, wrong-livelihood, wrong-effort, wrong-mindfulness and wrong-concentration.

Right-view (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) dispels wrong-view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), namely, self-view (*atta-diṭṭhi*), personality-view (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), eternalism (*sassata-diṭṭhi*), annihilationism (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*), and nihilism (*natthika-diṭṭhi*).

Insight knowledge is incompatible with eternalism. Those who hold this wrong-view fail to gain the insight knowledge that negates self and brings one to the path of the Arahant who realises nibbāna where mind and matter cease.

Those holding the view that one lives only one life, which is annihilated after one's death, consider the accumulation of wholesome kamma and abstention from evil as fruitless and unnecessary. For them, there is no kamma, wholesome or unwholesome, nor any results of kamma. Of all wrong-views, this view of annihilation is the most damaging. Right-view dispels this wrong-view. It enables one to appreciate insight about mind and matter as cause and effect in the phenomenal world being subject to impermanence, *etc.*, and this insight dispels self-view, eternalism, and annihilationism. When a meditator contemplates seeing, he or she realises that seeing arises as the eye-base contacts the visible-object, which is then recognised by eye-consciousness.

The phenomenon of knowing is also realised in the same way: the consciousness that knows occurs because there is the object to be known by the mind-base. They meditator sees mind and matter as the cause and effect in bringing about conditioned things, beyond which there is no agency to create seeing or knowing. In other words,

¹ The 14th waning day of Nāyon and the 8th waning of Wāso, 1329 M.E.

there is no self that sees or thinks, and when this self-view is removed, views of eternalism and annihilation are eradicated.

Right-thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*) or right intention, dispels wrong-thought (*micchā-saṅkappa*), which includes lustful thoughts (*kāma-vitakka*), ill-will (*byāpāda-vitakka*), and cruelty (*vihiṃsā-vitakka*). A Stream-winner has not yet broken entirely loose from the five strands of sensual pleasure, but takes special care not to get involved in those pleasures that lead him to the realms of misery (*apāya*). He or she resists all inclinations to steal, tell lies, *etc.* A Stream-winner is not yet able to conquer anger, but he or she shuns evil deeds such as killing, or injuring living-beings. He or she may be unable to abstain from all acts of cruelty — for example, a Stream-winner may beat a beast of burden while hurrying on a journey — however, he or she is not vindictive.

Right-speech (*sammā-vācā*) dispels wrong-speech (*micchā-vācā*), which consists of telling lies, maligning others, using bad language and indulging in frivolous talk. When one observes five or eight precepts, one renounces wrong-speech. A meditator usually refrains from it, but it may not be wholly uprooted. For instance, under certain circumstances he or she may be persuaded to tell lies, but may never speak ill of others. Wrong speech will be totally abstained from when one becomes a Non-returner (*anāgāmi*). An Arahant will have no occasion whatsoever to indulge in maligning others unwittingly, even through inadvertent wrong-effort, wrong-mindfulness, or wrong-concentration.

Right action (*sammā-kammantā*) dispels wrong-action (*micchā-kammantā*). Those keeping the five precepts have nothing to do with misdeeds. For a meditator there will be no opportunity for them to arise. A Stream-winner can uproot all tendencies to do mischief or unwholesome actions.

Right livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*) dispels wrong livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*). As noted above, those established in the observance of the five precepts and those who practise meditation usually abstain from earning their living in the wrong way, but such an abstinence lasts only for the duration of the observance of precepts or during the practice of meditation. Only when one becomes a Stream-winner is able to renounce wrong livelihood altogether.

Right-effort (*sammā-vāyama*) dispels wrong-effort (*micchā vāyama*). Wrong efforts have to be exerted in the execution of evil

deeds, which can only be avoided by wholesome efforts that give wholesome results. A meditator cannot accomplish this noble task without exerting right effort. Being fully occupied with the practice of mindfulness gives full support to right-effort. A Stream-winner has eliminated all wrong efforts that lead to the realms of misery.

Right-mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) dispels wrong-mindfulness (*micchā-sati*). All recollections of unwholesome actions on which the mind and its concomitants dwell constitute wrong-mindfulness.

When one delights in evil that one has committed, or in memories of unhealthy exploits done along with one's near and dear ones, or in recollections of evil intentions, one is said to be practising mindfulness in the wrong way. This kind of mindfulness can be abolished only when one keeps wholesome actions in mind, recalling the virtues of the Triple Gem. A meditator can abolish it temporarily, but a Stream-winner can avoid it altogether.

Right-concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) dispels wrong-concentration (*micchā-samādhi*). The mind that concentrates on lust or criminal actions like murder or theft is said to be revelling in wrong-concentration, which can be abandoned only when a meditator concentrates on the virtues of the Triple Gem, or on in-breathing and out-breathing, or on a meditation device (*kaṣiṇa*), or gains absorption. This concentration is usually established only for the duration of the meditation exercise. However, a Stream-winner abnegates forever all kinds of wrong-concentration that paves the way to the states of loss.

The wrong-path (*micchā-magga*) paves the way to the four states of loss (*apāya*). However, even if one can avoid it and gets reborn in the human world, it can produce results of a miserable existence. One may be born short-lived, diseased, or destitute. Consider the case of Suppabuddha mentioned in my last talk. He indulged in using insulting language against a Paccekabuddha, for which unwholesome action he suffered in the states of loss. His wrong speech was motivated by wrong-thoughts or intentions, which misled him to make wrong-efforts. In this way, a chain of wrongness rose up to the stage of wrong-concentration. Suppabuddha was reborn as a leprous beggar as a result of this wrong-speech, and he was killed by a cow as a result of his other misdeed of killing a prostitute. The virtue of a Stream-winner consists in the practice of the right path — the Noble Eightfold Path.

A Stream-winner Knows No Enmity or Fear

A Stream-winner has no enemies, and so has nothing to fear. The terms enemy (*vera*), and fear (*bhaya*), suggest the presence of danger. A Stream-winner is free from it. The Milindapañha and the Saṃvega Vatthu Dīpanī mention twenty-five dangers.

The first group of five consists of dangers arising from killing, theft, sexual misconduct, lying, and taking intoxicants. The Aṅguttara-nikāya says that they are to be regarded as the most dangerous enemies that negate morality, and pave the way to the states of loss. A Stream-winner cannot be assailed by such enemies.

The Vibhaṅga mentions four dangers, namely birth, aging, disease, and death. A Stream-winner cannot escape from these dangers, but has to meet them only for seven existences, after which he or she will be totally released from them.

Then there are also four dangers arising from the four enemies of mankind, and they are rulers, thieves, fire, and flood, which are usually added to the first four. A Stream-winner may be harassed by these four enemies in the present existence, but it is possible to avoid them in future existences due to wholesome kamma.

To this second set of four may be added a third set consisting of dangers arising from waves (*ūmi*), crocodiles (*kumbhīla*), whirlpools (*āvatta*), and sharks (*susukā*).¹ These suggest dangers usually met by travellers crossing the ocean. However, they are not meant to be taken literally. The Buddha was referring to dangers that distract monks from their aim of renouncing the world to get free from birth, old age, disease, and death. A newly-ordained monk may find it irksome to be admonished by his teachers, who may be younger than himself. Intolerant of the strict instructions, and angry with his instructors, he may leave the Order to become a layman. Such ex-monks are likened to people drowning in rough seas during storms. The rules of discipline relating to monastic conduct have many restrictions that prove distressing to a new monk. He therefore leaves the Order to enjoy freedom as a layman. He is likened to a man wrestling with crocodiles in the river. A neophyte, coming into contact with

¹ The original edition here has "Sea-monsters." Bhikkhu Bodhi translates it as "fierce fish," while the PTS dictionary suggests "alligators or sea-cows." The context is of a monk who, on entering the village for alms unmindfully, sees women who are improperly dressed, and so becomes lustful. Sharks will attack a man who is drowning and floundering in the ocean, so that is a suitable translation (ed.)

mundane life as he walks for alms, is often reminded of his former home-life. Becoming dissatisfied with the monastic life, he returns to lay-life. He is likened to a man thrown into a whirlpool. Then there is the monk who reverts to household life because of lust. He is likened to a drowned man eaten by sharks.

Then there is the fourth set of dangers arising from self-accusation (*attānuvāda*), allegations by others (*parānuvāda*), punishment, and unfortunate destinations (*duggati*). When a person accuses himself, the case against him must usually be true. Such a person is deemed immoral. However, the guilt-ridden cannot be found among Stream-winners. When others accuse him of faults, the allegations may be true or false. If a Stream-winner is falsely accused, he or she will have no qualms about it. He or she may not be able to escape from punishments meted out by the authorities even though the charges are false. However, such unjust punishments cannot happen to a Stream-winner in future existences. A Stream-winner has no fear of falling down to the states of loss. These sixteen dangers are not only mentioned in the Vibhaṅga, but also in the Aṅguttaranikāya¹ and the Commentary on the Vibhaṅga.²

The fifth set of dangers relates to the loss of relatives (*ñāti-byasana*), the loss of wealth (*bhoga-byasana*), loss of health (*roga-byasana*), loss of morality (*sīla-byasana*), and loss of right-view (*ditṭhi-byasana*).³

The last set consist of vocational hazards (*ājīvika*), ignominy (*asiloka*),⁴ self-consciousness due to one's defects (*parisāsāraja*), and famine (*dubbhikkha*).⁵ A Stream-winner is not⁶ liable to meet these dangers, except perhaps, dangers arising out of famine.

¹ A.ii.121, **Paṭhamabhayasuttam**: Birth, aging, disease, and death. **Dutiya-bhayasuttam**: Fire, water, kings, and thieves. **Attānuvādasuttam**: Self-accusation, allegations by others, punishments, and unfortunate destinations. A.ii.123, **Ūmi-bhayasuttam**: Storms, crocodiles, whirlpools, and sea-monsters.

² Vbh.A.501. Sammohavinodanī Atthakathā.

³ A.iii.146.

⁴ Literally "worldly daggers." At Vbh.A.501 it is explained as reproach (*garahā*).

⁵ Vbh.378. There are five listed here — the first three, plus the fear of death and the fear of unfortunate destinations, but not famine, so the Sayādaw may have been referring to the Saṃvega Vatthu Dīpanī (ed.)

⁶ The original edition omits "not," which contradicts what was said earlier. Vocational hazards are explained as the dangers arising out of doing immoral deeds for the sake of a livelihood, which a Stream-winner would not do. He or she would also not be subject to being reproached as a liar, thief, adulterer, etc., and would have no cause to fear reproach on entering an assembly. Even Arahants might have to face the danger of food shortages (ed.).

A Stream-winner is a true son or daughter of the Buddha because his or her faith in the Triple Gem is unwavering. Ordinary people who have not realised the Path and its Fruition cannot be regarded as the Buddha's true sons and daughters because their faith can waver under the influence of diverse teachers who deviate from the truth.

A Stream-winner is always blessed with the beneficial result of faith in the Triple Gem. Anchored in faith, he or she has no need to look out for other teachers as ordinary people do. He or she abides in the joy of the realisation of the true Dhamma, and is destined to be an Arahant after the lapse of, at most, seven existences from the day of becoming a Stream-winner. Before attaining Arahantship, he or she can always find shelter in the Dhamma, which safeguards one from falling down to the lower planes of existence.

Knowledge of Reviewing

I will now talk briefly about the knowledge of reviewing (*paccavekkhaṇa-ñāṇa*), the knowledge derived from self-examination. They are of two kinds, one relating to the contemplation of the Path, its Fruition, and nibbāna. Earlier I mentioned maturity knowledge (*gotrabhū-ñāṇa*), which characterises the sublime stage in insight practice when a meditator's mind is sanctified and ennobled through meditation on the arising and passing away of mind and matter. At this stage one looks back in retrospect at the path trodden, at the phenomenon of cessation of the aggregates and at the extinction of the state of the flux of the aggregates. The Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha defines knowledge of reviewing as self-examination in relation to how many defilements have been eradicated.

The second category of reviewing relates to examination of the qualities and virtues that a Stream-winner possesses. It is, in fact, self-appraisal of the application of the noble knowledge to the task of achieving the Path and Fruition of Stream-winning. This knowledge is called "Great Reviewing Knowledge (*mahā-paccavekkhaṇa-ñāṇa*) as it is extensive, and is shown as having seven principles (for which see the appendix¹ to my discourse, "To Nibbāna via the Noble Eightfold Path.")

Reviewing Active Defilements: The first great reviewing knowledge is self-examination conducted by a Stream-winner is

¹ My edition is not complete yet, and so doesn't include this appendix (ed.)

whether he or she is free from active defilements (*pariyuṭṭhāna kilesā*), a virulent form of defilements prompted by sensual desires, animosity, sloth and torpor, or doubt. He or she retires to a forest, sitting under a tree, or to some other place of solitude, and reflects on his or her achievements, thinking, "If my mind is still defiled, I will not be able to know the reality of the mental and physical phenomena that arise and vanish. Are those active defilements still present?" Then he or she concludes that such defilements are no longer present, and that the Four Noble Truths have become established in the mind. This is the first self-appreciation.

REVIEWING LATENT DEFILEMENTS: The second great reviewing knowledge is for a Stream-winner to investigate whether any latent tendencies (*anusaya kilesā*) are still present. A Stream-winner is usually firmly established in the Path, which enables him or her to realise the cessation of the aggregates. This results in firm conviction regarding impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self. Freed from care and anxiety, he or she meditates continually, thriving on the knowledge of the Path. So when, on self-examination, he or she discovers that the coarser defilements mentioned earlier have all withered away. However, one has to be wary of the subtler forms such as personality-view (*sakkāya-ditṭhi*), doubt (*vicikicchā*), and attachment to rites and rituals (*sīlabbataparāmāsa*). On reflection he or she sees that these have also been discarded.

REVIEWING THE UNIQUENESS OF THE PATH: This principle relates to the reflection that outside the Buddha's teaching, there is no recluse or priest who is accomplished in the knowledge of the Noble Eightfold Path. This means that outside this Buddha's dispensation there can be no Noble Ones who have trodden the Path.

REVIEWING BLAMELESSNESS: A Stream-winner reflects whether he or she has acquired the nature of a Noble One accomplished in the knowledge of the Path. A Noble One never conceals his or her faults and imperfections, but admits them with a view to correction. There are certain monastic rules that may be broken at times, whether knowingly or unknowingly. For example, it is an offence for a monk to sleep under the same roof as novices or laity for three consecutive nights. He may or may not have realised that this impropriety has occurred. Nevertheless, he has technically committed the offence if the fact that he has slept under the circumstances mentioned. In such

a case he has to make a confession undertaking not to repeat the offence. The nature of a Stream-winner is to observe the rules of discipline strictly and to make amends if he breaks them consciously or unconsciously.

Ordinary people who delights in the pleasures of the senses do not regard sensual-indulgence as sinful. So they have no qualms about it. However, a Stream-winner is always mindful that sensual pleasures generate mental defilements and so is very wary of them although he or she may not be able to avoid them entirely.

Reviewing Desire for the Training: The fifth great reviewing knowledge is to examine oneself whether one has a strong desire for the training in higher morality (*adhisīla-sikkhā*), higher concentration (*adhisamādhi-sikkhā*), and higher wisdom (*adhipaññā-sikkhā*). This reviewing knowledge is very similar to the fourth, but one step higher. A Stream-winner who is mindful of this principle is likened to a nursing cow whose attention is always fixed on her offspring although she may be munching grass. A Stream-winner may be occupied with daily chores like all worldly people, but he or she never neglects the three trainings.

Reviewing Respect for the Dhamma: A Stream-winner examines reflects whether he or she possesses the power of the Noble Ones that relates to respectful attention to be given to teachings on the Dhamma and Vinaya (the Rules of Discipline). An ordinary person pays heed to the Dhamma perfunctorily. His or her mind may wander during Dhamma discourses. He or she may talk to others while the teacher is expounding the teaching.

During the convention of the Sixth Buddhist Council, its proceedings were broadcast and they were highly appreciated by most people. However, it came to my knowledge that a certain woman had her radio closed down the moment she heard the words, “*Yaṃ tena*” that prefaced the recitations of the Saṅgha, saying that they were jarring to her ears. This gives you an idea of the kind of power possessed by a Noble One and that of an ordinary person. A Stream-winner inclines the mind to every word that is uttered by teachers as if it is a precious jewel to be treasured.

Reviewing Delight in the Dhamma: This seventh great reviewing knowledge of a Stream-winner consists in joy. This is not mundane joy, but extremely sublime. Ordinary people find delight

to hear romantic tales and phantasy, but they get bored when they have to listen to serious religious discourses. However, the joy of a Stream-winner in listening to the Dhamma is sincere and ecstatic. If, after self-examination, a meditator finds that he or she is endowed with the seven virtues suggested by the principles of the seven kinds of great reviewing knowledge, he or she may rest assured that he or she has all the qualifications of a Stream-winner.

I will now close with the usual prayer for the audience attending this discourse to be blessed with the peace of nibbāna after realising the Path of Stream-winning.

Part Six

Delivered on the 13th and 20th August 1967¹

I have so far delivered eight discourses, in the last two of which I talked about the virtues of a Stream-winner, who usually makes a self-appraisal by reviewing knowledge. I will now deal with the three types of Stream-winner.

Three Types of Stream-winners

A Stream-winner is classified into three types according to the number of existences remaining in the final leg of the journey to final nibbāna. They are:

1. Having seven births at the most (*sattakkhattuparamaṇi*),
2. Ascending through higher realms (*kolaṅkola*), and
3. Having one rebirth only (*ekabhījī*).

The Puggalapaññatti² defines the seven births at the most Stream-winner as one who has severed the bonds of attachment to wrong-views, doubts, and attachment to rites and rituals. As a result of such severance, a Stream-winner can never go down to the states of loss (*apāya*), having become assured of a higher existence, heading for the higher Path, and destined to sojourn in the human or celestial realms for a period of seven lives to arrive at the point where all suffering comes to an end.

Sometimes a Stream-winner may take only two or three rebirths to win Arahantship when he or she is known as “*kolaṅkola sotāpanna*.” Here the statement “two or three rebirths” should not be taken literally. It is only a general statement. So some Commentaries suggest that Stream-winners who undergo six rebirths before becoming an Arahant may also be classified as a *kolaṅkola* Stream-winners. The term “*kolaṅkola*” means ascending from each existence to a higher one.

The “*ekabhījī*” Stream-winner has only one existence left before becoming an Arahant. All three types of Stream-winners remain as such until their last existence without reaching the Once-returner or Non-returner stage in the intervening existences. They all become

¹ The 8th waxing day and the Full-moon day of Wāgaun, 1329 M.E.

² Pug.15. “*Katamo ca puggalo sattakkhattuparamo? Idhekacco puggalo tiṇṇaṇaṃ saṃyojanānaṃ parikkhayaṃ sotāpanno hoti avinipātadhammo niyato sambodhiparāyano. So sattakkhattuṃ deve ca mānuse ca sandhāvitoṃ saṃsaritvā dukkhassantaṃ karoti — ayaṃ vuccati puggalo “sattakkhattuparamo.”*”

Arahants only in the final existence. This diversity of the types is due to the degree of intensity with which insight meditation is practised. According to this theory expounded in the Commentaries, if a Stream-winner makes intensive efforts in the practice of insight, he or she can be raised to the stage of a Once-returner, and progressively to that of a Non-returner and finally to that of an Arahant in this very existence. During the time of the Buddha certain monks attained to Arahantship forthwith.

Stream-winners Who Delight in Existence

As well as the three types already mentioned there is another type who prefers progressive realisation of the knowledge of the Path and its Fruition, while undergoing successive existences. Such a Stream-winner likes to be reborn a second time to aspire to Once-returning, and also a third to aspire to Non-returning to reach the Pure Abodes (Suddhāvāsa) from which he will be released as an Arahant. The Commentaries¹ refer to them as Stream-winners who delight in existence (*vattajjhāsayā* or *vattābhiratā*), because they have a predilection for existence. Examples of such Stream-winners are given as Anāthapiṇḍika, Visākhā, and the deities Cūlaratha, Mahāratha, Sakka, and Nāgadatta. They sojourn in the six celestial planes one after another, glorifying them with their presence and finally reaching Akaniṭṭhā,² the highest of the Pure Abodes in the realms of form. This will be their final existence from which they attain *parinibbāna* as Arahants.

From such examples, some Commentators deduce that such Stream-winners wander through all the six celestial planes from the first to the last or through all the five Pure Abodes from the first to the last. However, to my mind, it will be more appropriate to assume that a Stream-winner in this category goes progressively through all the states of Fruition appertaining to a Stream-winner, a Once-returner, a Non-returner, and ultimately an Arahant. In the Dhammasaṅgaṇī these four fruits are shown as four planes in an allegorical sense.

That a Stream-winner wanders progressively through all the six celestial planes cannot be taken as textually precise, for the Sakka-pañha Sutta in the Dīghanikāya, says of Sakka, the king of gods, that he will become a Non-returner while in Tāvatiṃsa and will be reborn in Akaniṭṭhā, the highest realm of the Pure Abodes, where he will

¹ SA.iii.239. Ekabijjīsutavaṇṇanā.

² Chart of the 31 Planes of Existence.

realise the Path and its Fruition as an Arahant. There are other instances of Stream-winners being reborn seven times in the human world to become Arahants in their final existence. Likewise, there are others who are born repeatedly in any of the celestial planes to become Arahants in their final existence. They, however, do not come under the category of "*sattakkhattuparamam*," which is applied only to those who go back and forth from one existence in the human world to another in one of the celestial planes during the careers to attain Arahantship.

It has been said that a seven births at the most Stream-winner goes through seven existences before attaining *parinibbāna*. Here existence does not mean just one span of life in one plane of existence, for example, in the human world or in one of the celestial realms. If one is reborn in this human world for a number of times successively, this is counted as one, and the same applies to one reborn successively in any abode other than the human abode.

The Dhammasaṅgaṇī Mūlaṭīkā says that for a Non-returner, existence is counted as one even though he may be reborn repeatedly in the five Pure Abodes, or in the four abodes of the formless realms. That is to say, all five births in the Pure Abodes or all four births in the formless realms count as one existence. The seven existences of a Stream-winner and the two of a Once-returner are also counted similarly based not on the number of rebirths in one abode, but on the number of planes of existence traversed.

After the attainment of the knowledge of the Path a Stream-winner enjoys the fruits of that knowledge when he or she is said to be absorbed to the Fruition of the Path which is a technical term that has been explained in the *Visuddhimagga*. When a meditator contemplates the five aggregates of attachment, the mind becomes inclined to the cessation of those aggregates. Then he or she acquires the knowledge of arising and passing away, and with continued contemplation, insight develops stage by stage until reaching the knowledge of equanimity about formations. It is not unusual for a well-practised meditator to arrive at this stage of insight after just a few minutes of meditation. When this progress of insight gains momentum, the meditator will reach *nibbāna* where mind and matter cease. That is attaining the Fruition of the Path of a Stream-winner. In the usual course of meditation he or she might attain this stage for

only two or three instants, but when ecstatic meditation is achieved, the meditator will be able to abide in cessation (*nibbāna*) for more than two or three minutes — for ten, twenty, or thirty minutes, or even for an hour depending on the strength of concentration acquired at the stage of knowledge of equanimity about formations.

Method of Practice to Realise Once-returning

When Venerable Koṭṭhika asked Venerable Sāriputta what a Stream-winner should recollect, the latter emphasised contemplation of the five aggregates as before. In this respect there is no distinction between an ordinary meditator and a Stream-winner, both being urged to take up insight meditation on the same lines suggested in my earlier discourses. An ordinary person who is unaccustomed to insight practice may be oppressed by wrong-view due to craving. A Stream-winner has severed attachment to wrong-view, although he or she may be oppressed with conceit (*māna*) prompted by craving. As this conceit is allied with wrong-view, it is also called “*diṭṭhi-māna*.” Someone with this kind of conceit asserts, “I am clever. I can do. I know.” This is called self-conceit (*asmi māna*). After the group of five monks became Stream-winners on hearing the Dhammacakka Sutta, the Buddha taught them the Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta, the Discourse on Not-self, because he would like them to get rid of self-conceit born of wrong views regarding the ego. I urge all meditators to practise insight meditation continually until perfection is attained, for one’s achievement is likely to fritter away without repeated exercises which can lead one to knowledge of equanimity about formations with the least effort. However, one may find it rather difficult to attain the highest knowledge in the absence of right exertion.

If one repeatedly and continually practises insight meditation one will gain the knowledge of equanimity about formations, which will lead to further realisation of that stage where both mental formations that cause knowing, and the known, cease altogether. Here one gains the Path and Fruition of a Once-returner. On attaining the Path and its Fruition, a Once-returner is bound to reflect on cessation, on defilements that have been eradicated, and on defilements that remain. However, it is said that only those who are learned in the Dhamma can reflect on the mental defilements.

The Story of Mahānāma

With regard to this statement let's consider the case of Mahānāma, one of the Buddha's cousins. The Buddha's father Suddhodana had four younger brothers, namely, Sukkodana, Sakkodana, Dhotodana, and Amitodana. Mahānāma and Anuruddha were the sons of Sukkodana, the former being older than the Buddha while the latter was younger. Venerable Ānanda, who was also younger than Buddha, was the son of Amitodana.

Once Mahānāma asked the Buddha: "I have long realised that greed, anger and delusion, always burning like fire, are the result of an impure mind. Although most of us are aware of this fact, it so happens that our wholesome mind is overwhelmed at times by them. Why should that be so?"

Mahānāma asked this question because it occurred to him that there might be other defilements that a Once-returner could not get rid of although it was an accepted fact that the Once-returner does annihilate the defilements of greed, anger, and delusion.

Regarding this the Commentaries make the observation. It is quite natural for the noble disciples to entertain such doubts because they are not well-grounded in the knowledge of the Teaching. He may have been wondering whether it is possible for a certain Path to annihilate a certain kind of defilement. No doubt he might have made a self-appraisal using reviewing knowledge. However, his application of this knowledge may not be adequate.

One Noble One may make a self-examination as to the presence or absence of defilements that he or she is trying to expel. Another may reflect only on how much of the defilements are still remaining. Still another may be occupied with the examination of the realisation of the Fruition or nibbāna.

As such examinations do not cover all aspects, a Noble One, unskilled in the Teaching, may have doubts about it. He or she might have failed to reflect effectively on the kinds of mental impurities that had been successfully eradicated and which had not. Only those skilled in the Dhamma can discriminate. The Visuddhimagga therefore says that there are some who make a self-appraisal in relation to whether defilements are still lurking within or not, and also there are some who do not.

What Once-returners Reject

A Stream-winner is able to eradicate wrong-views about individuality, doubts, and attachment to rites and rituals. He or she also rejects coarse forms of greed, anger, and delusion. So a Stream-winner will never fall down to the states of loss after death. A Once-returner has not only severed the three bonds of wrong-views, *etc.*, but has also reduced to a minimum the passions of lust and ill-will. With ordinary people these passions are uncontrollable, often arising violently. Because of this violent passion, Ajātasattu murdered his own father. Devadatta tried to assassinate the Buddha when this dangerous passion was aroused. Normally a Stream-winner rejects these passions, but he or she can hardly break himself loose from them completely until raised to the status of a Once-returner. However, at this stage too one has to make further attempts at the reduction of these undesirable passions. The Dhammasaṅgaṇī says that the Path of Once-returning reduces the degree of intensity of sensual lust (*kāmarāga*) and ill-will (*byāpāda*) to a bare minimum.

With Once-returners the defilements do not recur frequently as with ordinary people. Depraved human passions may arise at times, but they come severally, one here and one there, and inconspicuously, like seedlings sown sparsely in a nursery-bed. Even when they make their presence felt, they are neither oppressive, pervasive, nor overbearing. They can exert their influence only in a small way. In fact, they are so rare that the Commentaries employ the simile of a whiff of vapour or the wing of a fly to describe it. So when a Once-returner gets angry, his or her anger is barely noticeable. When it comes to lust it is usual for critics to ask if he or she finds satisfaction of desires by merely touching the body or by actual carnal knowledge. Once-returners do not, I think go to that length. However, there are other points of view in this respect. Judging from the number of offspring a Once-returner begets, some would like to presume that he or she is able to suppress lust for a good length of time and that, however, when they burst he or she is unable to stem the tide. Some would like to suggest that procreation is possible for a Once-returner by mere contact between the sense-basis and the sense-object. However, this may not please Western science. Deities, however are known to derive sensual pleasure from contact between the sense-bases and the sense-object. However, these are all asides. What is to

be noted is that a Once-returned works for the reduction of human passions and that he or she is destined to come back to a plane of existence only once before attaining *parinibbāna*. For example, a Once-returned of this human world may be reborn in the celestial realms and come back again to this world where he or she will become an Arahant. He or she returns only once.

Towards Non-returning

For a Once-returned to become a Non-returned the same principle that requires contemplation of the five aggregates applies. However, concentration must be perfected just as morality is perfected in the case of a Once-returned. This, however, is not easy to achieve as is evident from the case of the brick monastery at Nātikā village in Vesālī. The Buddha personally enumerated the number of devotees there and discovered that more than fifty of them were Non-returneds, more than ninety were Once-returneds and more than five hundred were Stream-winners. This proportion shows that it is hard to gain the stage of a Non-returned. Incidentally, the population of Noble Ones in the time of the Buddha is most encouraging. Today it is rare to find meditators realising the Dhamma within two or three months of intensive meditation. However, when we actually have them among us, some impious individuals would like to discredit them saying that it is too much for too many. This is unworthy of a devotee.

A Non-returned totally rejects lust and malevolence. Not for him are the five constituents of sensual pleasures, nor sex, nor such sensual objects as forms, sounds, odours, flavours, and tactile-objects. Released from lust, a Non-returned enjoy absolute happiness.

The Example of Ugga

When the millionaire Ugga became a Non-returned at the time of the Buddha, he called his four wives and said: "I have now become a celibate observing the precepts of the holy life (*brahmacariya*). You can live here in my house if you please, enjoying all the wealth and comfort that it gives and doing meritorious deeds. Or, if you wish to get a new husband, please say so." The eldest of the wives said that she would take a new husband of her choice. Unruffled, Ugga sent for the man and wedded him to his erstwhile wife.

The Example of Visākha

On his arrival at Rājagaha for the first time, the Buddha was welcomed by King Bimbisāra. There he taught the Dhamma to an audience of 120,000 among whom were Visākha, the millionaire, who at once became a Stream-winner. From then on he frequented the monastery to listen to the Buddha teach. Subsequently he was raised to the status of a Non-returner.

Returning home, Visākha was met as usual by his wife Dhammadinnā who at once noticed the change in her husband when he neglected her presence. At bed-time the husband retired to another room to sleep alone. After two or three nights, Dhammadinnā could contain herself no longer and demanded that he say if he had found another mistress or if she had caused some offence. "Dhammadinnā," he explained, since I have had the advantage of becoming illumined by the Dhamma, I cannot have a normal married relationship with you. I own 400 million of property and you own the same amount. Take both portions and be the lady of this house. However, do look after me. I shall be content with what you provide for me. If you want to marry again, go back to your parents with all the property that you now possess and do so. If you want to remain here, just please yourself. I shall always regard you as my own sister or as my own mother."

Then Dhammadinnā asked him if it would be possible for a woman to abide in the Dhamma like men. On being assured that it was possible, she, with her husband's permission, got herself ordained. She then became an Arahant in no time, winning pre-eminence as the best teacher of the Dhamma. Visākha's case is cited to show that a Non-returner eradicates lust totally. ¹

A Female Meditator

Years ago I came to know a woman in her late forties who took up insight meditation. After she had realised the Dhamma, she developed disenchantment with household life. She persuaded her husband to take her younger sister as his wife so that that she could be free to lead a religious life. She came from an affluent family, efficiently managing her household. Yet she wanted to renounce everything and succeeded in doing so.

¹ Their story is told in the Sayādaw's Discourse on the Cūlavēdalla Sutta (ed.)

Objects of Sensual Attachment

Sense-objects comprise not only those that ordinarily sustain sensual pleasures, but also those that satisfy one's tastes and comforts, like entertainments, soft beds, good food, and other forms of luxury. Addiction to tobacco and betel is addiction to the sense of taste. One who has developed no attachment to liquor or opium should be able to eradicate the habit of smoking and betel-chewing.

A Non-returner is free from anger and ill-will. He or she is never beset with anxiety, and is never sad. He or she has no fear, ill-will, or envy, all of which have been discarded while a Stream-winner. Nor is he or she troubled by remorse. When anger is abandoned all other passions subside.

A Non-returner is destined for the pure abodes in the realms of form or higher abodes in the formless realms. He never returns to the sphere of the senses; and so is known as a Non-returner.

When Stream-winners and Non-returners reach the realm of form or the formless realm they attain the higher Path and its Fruition and realise *parinibbāna* from the respective realm. Such Noble Ones are known as Non-returners with *jhāna*.

When a Stream-winner, established in the first *jhāna*, dies and is reborn in the Brahmā realm, he can aspire to the state of a Non-returner with *jhāna*, as in the case of Unnābha. One day he came to the monastery and listened to a discourse expounded by the Buddha. He at once became a Stream-winner winning the first *jhāna*. Seeing this, the Buddha said: "If Unnābha, who has just left the monastery, dies before reaching home, the fetters that entangle him to this sensual realm, will be severed." Here note that the emphasis is on "Before reaching home." There is the possibility that if he reached home his *jhāna* might be disturbed by his home surroundings including his wife and family --- which are all pleasurable sense-objects. Before getting home he was abiding in the first *jhāna*, and if he died in that state of *jhāna* he would be transported to the world of Brahmās where he could aspire to the state of a Non-returner with *jhāna*. If he fails to become an Arahant in the plane of the first *jhāna*, he would attain Arahantship in the plane of the second *jhāna*, and failing that he would do so in the plane of the third *jhāna*. Were that still not possible, he would become an Arahant in the Vehapphala Brahma abode.

There are also other categories of Non-returner. Usually they are reborn in the five Pure Abodes, of which Avihā is the lowest. If a Non-returner fails to become an Arahant in that abode, he can go up to the next higher one called Atappā where he can also become an Arahant. Failing that, he goes up to Sudassā, or to Sudassī the next, or to Akaniṭṭhā where Arahantship is ultimately assured. Such a Non-returner who has to go through all these stages is known as a Non-returner who ascends the abodes of existence in regular succession till he reaches Akaniṭṭhā (*iddhaṃsota akaniṭṭhagāmi anāgāmi*) where he lives out his term to become an Arahant and attain *parinibbāna*. He goes through all these five existences times, but they are all counted as one as they are in the same plane.

May all of you who have listened to this discourse attain the Path and its Fruition by virtue of your insight meditation on the five aggregates of attachment and finally realise nibbāna.

Part Seven

Delivered on 8th August and 18th September 1967¹

Having dealt with success achieved by Non-returners in dissipating their lust and ill-will, I will now discuss some of the mental defilements that remain lurking in a Non-returner.

Defilements That Attack Non-returners

A Non-returner is incapable of breaking the chains of attachment to the realms of form (*rūpa-rāga*), attachment to the formless realms (*arūpa-rāga*), pride (*māna*) or conceit, restlessness (*uddhacca*), and ignorance (*avijjā*).

That a Non-returner comes into being in the realm of form or in the formless realms is proof enough that he has not yet been able to get rid of covetousness for the life of a Brahma in these realms. So I will not elaborate on this subject. However, pride or conceit may need some explanation. It is of two kinds, the first being pure conceit that disturbs the foolish individual who likes to compare himself or herself to those who are superior (as in the case of a sinner having the effrontery to consider himself or herself as a saint), while the second relates to the pride or satisfaction of one who considers himself or herself equal to others (as in the case of a religious person who likes to think he or she is as pious as any other devotees). Both kinds of conceit go under the category of self-conceit (*asmi māna*), which I have explained earlier. This conceit relishes the idea: "I know. I can. I am above others."

Venerable Khemaka and Sixty Elders

Self-conceit was once the subject of discussion between sixty elders and Venerable Khemaka — a Non-returner — on the question of Arahantship. The latter told them through their intermediary, *Dāsaka*, that he could not discover a self or its attributes in any of the five aggregates of attachment. The elders then concluded that he had become an Arahant and asked him if he was. This called for further elucidation and so he said, "I cannot yet claim to be an Arahant, but I have the notion that I am still in the realm of the five aggregates of attachment (*asmī'ti adhigatam*), although I would hesitate to say that

¹ The 8th waning day of Wāgaun and the Full Moon day of Tawthalin, 1329 M.E.

this particular thing is 'I'. Then the elders again enquired, "Does I exist in feelings, perceptions, mental formations, or consciousness?"

This drove Venerable Khemaka to the presence of the elders so that he could offer a personal explanation, which runs as follows: "Brothers! I cannot say I am matter, nor can I say that I am feeling, perception, mental formations, or consciousness, or anything beyond the five aggregates. However, there still clings to me the notion that I am still in the realm of the five aggregates. However, at the same time I cannot say, "This is I."

Venerable Khemaka did not consider any one of the aggregates of attachment as a self in the conventional sense. This term suggests that he thought, "I know, I can, I am skilled." This is self-conceit, which grows out of the accomplishment of virtue that he had truly achieved. Consider the fragrance of a water-lily. Does it originate from its stem? From its petals? From its anthers? One can say only conventionally that it emanates from the lily, but one cannot find any matter that produces fragrance. The notion of self is there, but I cannot say, "This is I."

Venerable Khemaka then continued, "A Noble One destroys the bonds of individuality, doubts, attachment to rites and rituals, lust and ill-will. However, at this stage he cannot break away from self-conceit, self-will, and the latent tendency to pride. They are subtle kinds of attachment to self, desire for self, and inclination toward self. If, however the noble disciple notes with mindfulness the arising and passing away of the five aggregates of attachment, such subtle passions will subside.

"Consider this metaphor of a washerwoman. She washes clothes with soap and water and they become clean and white, but they still smell of soap. Only when they are kept in an airing-cupboard do they lose their odour. If one continually contemplates the five aggregates of attachment, all these subtle passions will be washed away and one can remain without any vestiges of such passions.

Hearing this elucidation all sixty elders became Arahants.

Distraction and Ignorance

A Non-returner is usually held to be accomplished in concentration. Mental distraction therefore hardly troubles him or her although it is possible that it may be present in a subtle form.

With a Non-returner, ignorance may not be very extensive. Delusion, however, may affect him or her. When one wrongly perceives that the realm of form or formless realm can give lasting happiness one is said to be deluded by the hallucination of perception (*saññā-vipallāsa*), and when one wrongly realises that those two realms are the seat of eternal happiness, one is said to be deluded by the hallucination of thought (*citta-vipallāsa*).

When a Non-returner practises insight meditation as repeatedly urged by Venerable Sāriputta he or she attains Arahantship. However, one must be wary when one gains the knowledge of equanimity in the course of meditation. It can so happen that a Non-returner, at this stage of insight knowledge, becomes so much enamoured of it that he or she becomes partial to attachment to the Dhamma (*dhamma-rāga*), or delight in the Dhamma (*dhamma-nandī*), which is akin to craving. If he or she can override it with the attainment of knowledge of adaptation (*anuloma-ñāṇa*) and maturity knowledge (*gotrabhū-ñāṇa*), he or she can finally realise the goal of nibbāna.

Attachment to the Dhamma Hampers Progress

Although a meditator fails to reach Arahantship because he or she has too much penchant for concentration, he or she may be destined for the Brahmā realms for it is no longer possible for him, now that he is a Non-returner, to return to the sensual realm. This is mentioned in the Jhāna Sutta.¹ A meditator must be careful to avoid undue attachment to exercises in concentration for they can reach only the state of Non-returner. Tranquillity (*samatha*) is only a basic absorption, while insight is the highest stage of wisdom as, for instance, in the case of knowledge of equanimity. In this *Sīlavanta Sutta*, therefore we are more concerned with insight meditation than with concentration. Hence it should be noted that undue attachment to knowledge of equanimity, when one can look upon mental formations with equanimity, hampers the meditator's progress to Arahantship. Knowledge of adaptation and maturity knowledge, are far more felicitous than the knowledge of equanimity. However, there will be no opportunity for a meditator to get attached to them for they get developed with the greatest velocity. So when attachment to or delight in the Dhamma arises, note and reject it.

¹ A.iv422.

Reflections for an Arahant

When the goal has been achieved, an Arahant reflects on his or her attainments. This is an exercise in reflective knowledge. As he or she reflects, he or she is aware of the cessation of the aggregates of attachment and mental formations. Reflection on these two states is reflection on the Path and its Fruition on the one hand and nibbāna on the other. The Arahant also reflects on the total and final termination of rebirth in the following way: "Birth is destroyed. The holy life has been lived. I have done what should be done; and nothing remains to be done."

It is also a reflection on defilements that have been totally uprooted. I would like to remind you of that fisherman who, discovering that he had grasped a poisonous snake instead of a fish, flung it away, and yet looked back as he ran away from it. Here reflection on cessation as it occurs is reflection on Fruition, and that on mental formations is reflection on nibbāna.

Reflection on the Path, its Fruition, on nibbāna, and uprooted defilements constitutes the four reflections for an Arahant. Since no defilements can reside in an Arahant it would appear that it is superfluous to reflect on those that remain to be extinguished. However, it is imperative for the three lower stages of Non-returner, Once-returner, and Stream-winner to reflect on the presence of defilements that might be lurking within in case they have not been discarded. There are five reflections for each of these Noble Ones, altogether fifteen, to be added to the four for the Arahant, making a total of nineteen. At this final stage all these nineteen categories of reviewing are also carried out, so say the Commentaries.

I am going into all these details just for your information. For a lay person to become an Arahant is not easy. In fact, it was never easy even in the time of the Buddha, there being only a few such cases as in the cases of King Suddhodana and the minister Santati.

The First Power of an Arahant

Once the Buddha asked Venerable Sāriputta about the powers possessed by a monk who is able to declare that the mental corruptions have been extinguished. The elder then described the ten kinds of power as related in the Khīṇāsavabāla Sutta¹ as follows:

¹ A.v.174.

“In the realm of this Buddha's dispensation, Venerable sir, those monks who, having declared themselves to be free from all corruptions, gain ten kinds of power. A monk in whom the corruptions have become extinct, comes to the realisation correctly through insight that all mental formations are impermanent. An Arahant possesses that power of conviction of this law of impermanence.”

It means that the power of an Arahant lies in his firm conviction regarding the impermanence of mind, matter, and mental formations. Besides an Arahant no other Noble Ones gain this knowledge perfectly and completely. It is conceded that even ordinary ordinary people can realise this knowledge if they meditate strongly to cultivate the knowledge of dissolution, but this knowledge will be only transitory, lasting for the moment of its revelation. As soon as they forget to resume meditation after the blooming of the knowledge, their conviction regarding the law of impermanence wanes.

With a Stream-winner it is different. He or she is described in the *Visuddhimagga* as one who has discarded the three hallucinations: hallucination of perception (*saññā-vipallāsa*), of thought (*citta-vipallāsa*), and of view (*diṭṭhi-vipallāsa*). From this it can be adduced that he or she is incapable of being deflected from the view of impermanence. However, a Stream-winner is not free from self-conceit derived from the view of the existence of ‘I’. It is because of this that the Buddha once had occasion to chasten Venerable Meghiya.¹

“Meghiya! To uproot the conceit that asserts, “I am, I know,” the reflection on impermanence should be cultivated. One who cultivates the perception of impermanence becomes established in the perception of not-self. When the perception of not-self gets well established, self-conceit will be eradicated, and *nibbāna*, where all sufferings cease, will be realised in this very existence.”

Conceit is fickle — it is arrogant at one moment, and deflated in the next. It dominates one who thinks that all things are permanent and stable. However, it meets its nemesis when one realises that one has to face death, and is unable to retain immortality. So when one contemplates impermanence constantly one can never be possessed

¹ A.iv.354. *Meghiya Sutta*.

by this conceit. The Commentaries say that once impermanence is appreciated, unsatisfactoriness and not-self will also be realised. If one recognises only one of the three characteristics one may be deemed to have known all.

That a Stream-winner rejects the hallucination of view is quite evident. However, I think that when we come to the hallucinations of thought and perception, we can only say that he or she develops no attachment to things as an ordinary person does. It may not be reasonable to say that a Stream-winner is constantly aware of impermanence like an Arahant. If he or she really is, there can be no opportunity for conceit to appear. With Arahants self-conceit becomes totally extinguished. An Arahant has no desire for either the realm of form or for the formless realm. So we say that an Arahant knows impermanence thoroughly (*aniccato suddhiṭṭha*).” That is why an Arahant can boldly proclaim to the world that he or she is free of all depravities like attachment to sensual pleasure (*kāmāsava*), attachment to erroneous views (*diṭṭhāsava*) and conceit arising out of erroneous views (*diṭṭhimāna*), already explained as self-conceit. The power of an Arahant lies in his or her perspicacity in the view that all mental formation are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self.

The Second Power of an Arahant

Venerable Sāriputta continued with the exposition of the second power of an Arahant.

“Again, Venerable sir! A monk in whom the corruptions have become extinct, realises truly through the exercise of insight knowledge that all five strands of sensual pleasure are like live coals, he may be regarded as possessing the power of an Arahant, who may duly proclaim the corruptions to be destroyed.”

The five strands of sensual pleasures are generated by visible objects, audible objects, olfactory objects, gustatory objects, and tangible objects. These objects relate to men and women, sights and sounds, foods, dress, beds and home, beasts of burden and vehicles, gold, silver, and precious stones. They all give rise to defilements that burn like fire. The flames of greed, anxiety, and envy cause untold miseries, leading to woeful existences, or throwing one into the whirlpool of *saṃsāra*. The trouble starts from the moment a man

falls in love with a woman. He goes to great lengths to be near her and finally to possess her. The story does not end there. When he possesses her he becomes worried lest he loses her to his rivals. He also acquires wealth by all means, fair or foul, and when he has accumulated it, he becomes troubled by anxiety and fear lest he should lose it. If he gets what he wants through vice and lawlessness, he will fall down to the states of loss as a result.

What ordinary people treasure is regarded as trash by Arahants. Cattle consider grass to be appetizing, but cattle-fodder is unpalatable to humans. Pigs, poultry, and insects wallow in filth and garbage, which is considered as detestable. Toys give delight to children, but not to adults. Tobacco is delightful to smokers, but non-smokers find it repulsive. Intoxicants and narcotics are pleasurable to addicts but obnoxious and harmful to teetotallers. Entertainments and festivals are fun for those who like them, but wearisome to sober people who regard them as time-wasting and causing loss of sleep. All such sensual pleasures are deemed unprofitable by Arahants.

Those who have a predilection for the five strands of sensual pleasures, have no interest in the formless realms where they cannot be found. In the formless realms there is only mind. There is consciousness and mental properties, but matter is totally absent. Those hankering for sensual pleasures will be unable to enjoy seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching in the formless realms. Brahmās thrive on thinking, which does not appeal to sensualists.

In the realm of forms there may be vestiges of sense-organs like eyes, ears, *etc.*, but the sense-bases (*pasāda*) are missing, so the Brahmās in that realm are denied the enjoyment of sights, sounds, smell, taste, and touch. They are also sexless. So pleasure-seekers have no desire to go to the world of Brahmās in the realm of forms. They prefer not to practise wholesome actions that can result in *jhāna*. They take pleasure only in the senses. Their kamma result will be that they can sojourn only in the world of senses to suffer old age, disease, and death repeatedly. For them nibbāna is the least to be desired, so they have no inclination to practise insight-meditation. The result is that they cannot get liberated from the cycle of existence. These five strands of sensual pleasure are like live coals or burning charcoal. Anyone who claims to be free from all corruptions should reflect whether he or she is free from all five strands of sensuality.

Some still develop attachment to the pleasures of smoking and betel-chewing. Some like good food and clothing. Some are partial to soft and comfortable beds. Such people should consider if they can claim to have gotten rid of sensuality.

In the year 700 of the Buddhist Era a king by the name of Vasabha reigned in Sri Lanka, who put a so-called Arahant to an acid test. Inviting the pretender to an offering, he took a very delicious drink of plum cordial himself. This made the monk's mouth water. Then he let it be known that the so-called Arahant was no Arahant at all. "A true Arahant," says the Commentary, "who has eradicated all corruptions, has no attachment to taste. He takes no enjoyment even in such delicious tastes that can be met with in the world of gods.

The Third Power of an Arahant

Continuing, Venerable Sāriputta said:

"Again, Venerable Sir, a monk in whom the corruptions have become extinct, inclines to, abides in and enjoys the seclusion of nibbāna, the end of suffering, delighting in renunciation of the sensual world, remaining entirely aloof from all defilements that accompany corruptions. This inclination towards nibbāna is also a power of an Arahant, who may duly proclaim the corruptions to be destroyed."

An Arahant inclined to nibbāna enjoys being absorbed in the Fruition of the Path. The Buddha used to remain so absorbed during brief intervals while teaching when the audience were expressing their satisfaction with the Dhamma by saying, "Sādhu!" It is on record that the Venerable Revata used to remain absorbed in loving-kindness, while the second Buddhist Council was going on.

Very few, however, can incline their minds to nibbāna where materiality, mentality, and mental formations are all absent. Most are not responsive to the idea of the extinction of mind and matter. So there is a kind of wishful thinking among them that the Buddhas and Arahants who have attained *parinibbāna* reside in nibbāna with their special elements of mentality and materiality. True Arahants, however, exclude all substrata of existence from nibbāna. They have no desire for a life accompanied by its accessories of mentality and materiality.

“Nābhinandāmi maraṇaṃ, nābhinandāmi jīvitaṃ.
Kālañca paṭikañkhāmi, nibbisaṃ bhatako yathā.”

“I do not long for death, neither do I delight in life.
Biding my time, as a worker waits for his wage.”¹

“Happy in his renunciation of sensuality (*nekkhammābhirataṃ*),”² suggests that a monk is content. However, renunciation (*nekkhamma*) is also a term for nibbāna. Here, it would be more appropriate to substitute nibbāna for renunciation, for in nibbāna there are no depravities relating to the sensual world, nor to rebirth, nor to false views. The inclination to nibbāna is therefore the power of an Arahant.

The Fourth Power of an Arahant

There are 37 requisites of enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiya-dhamma*), in seven groups:

1. the four foundation of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*),
2. the four right exertions (*sammappadhāna*),
3. the four bases of success (*iddhipāda*),
4. the five controlling faculties (*indriya*),
5. the five powers (*bala*),
6. the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*), and
7. the eight path factors (*maggaṅga*).

These factors also constitute the power of an Arahant, and so they are now shown as the fourth power. Referring to these, the Venerable Sāriputta continued:

“Again, Venerable Sir, a monk in whom the corruptions have become extinct, cultivates the four foundation of mindfulness thoroughly. This cultivation of mindfulness is also the power of an Arahant in whom all corruptions have become extinct, who may duly proclaim the corruptions to be destroyed.”

The four foundations of mindfulness are mindfulness of the body, feelings, thoughts, and phenomena (*dhamma*). I do not propose to go into details on this subject. Suffice it to say that the cultivation of mindfulness or the practice of mental culture is very important for an Arahant.

¹Thag.62. Saṃkiccattheragāthā, Thag 90. Sāriputtatheragāthā, etc.

²A.v.174.

When does an Arahant cultivate or develop mindfulness? Meditation begins from the time when one is an ordinary person with the aim of becoming a Stream-winner. Again when one becomes a Stream-winner one continued to practise meditation intent on becoming a Once-returner, and when one becomes a Once-returner one continues the practice, aspiring to become a Non-returner, and when one becomes a Non-returner one does the same with the mind inclined to Arahantship. So it must be taken that an Arahant has been engaged in mindfulness meditation constantly since the time when he or she was just an ordinary ordinary person. In the *Sāla Sutta*¹ the Buddha enjoined his disciples to practice meditation from the moment they joined the Order.

Cultivate Mindfulness After Embracing Buddhism

The Buddha said:

“Monks! Those monks who are newly ordained, not long gone forth, recently come to this Dhamma and Discipline, should be exhorted to cultivate the four foundations of mindfulness. Establish them there, instil in them the habit of meditating, and let them stand firm on it.”

Just as they do now, in those days when the Buddha was living, new converts had to be ordained. They accepted the teaching out of their own conviction. The Buddha foresaw the need to offer them good advice so that they realised the Dhamma, and that advice was for them to practise mindfulness. I think we should be concerned not only with the newly-converted, but also with new monks who were born into Buddhist families. Such newly-ordained monks are innocent, with their morality undefiled. They are strong in their faith and full of enthusiasm. Thus they are a good situation for the realisation of the Dhamma, and if this realisation is accomplished, their morality will become stable and pure throughout their career as monks. Even if that ideal is not achievable, it will definitely teach them some self-control. How then should they practise the four foundations of mindfulness? Here is the instruction:

¹ S.v.144.

Contemplation of the Body

“Come, friend! To know the nature of the body as it really is (*kāyassa yathābhūtaṃ ñāṇāya*), dwell contemplating the body in the body (*kāye kāyānupassino viharatha*), ardent (*ātāpino*) and clearly comprehending (*sampajānā*), with the mind unified (*ekodibhūtā*), lucid (*vippasannacittā*), composed (*samāhitā*), and one-pointed (*ekaggacittā*).”

All matter is impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self. What is more, it is repulsive like a corpse. Meditators should contemplate such characteristics with the greatest effort, exercising their concentration coupled with wisdom. Here effort and steadfastness of mind are emphasised. A meditator’s attention must remain steadfastly focused on the mental and physical objects of contemplation.

If you practise mindfulness of respiration, note the phenomenon each time you breathe in or out. As you concentrate your mind on breathing, it will be rendered pure and tranquil. From the point of view of insight meditation there can be no doubt that this breathing exercise will lead one to the knowledge of realities regarding the arising and dissolution of conditioned things. If one contemplates the hairs of the head and the body, the same purpose can be served.

If you start practising by noting the postures, note the lifting, the stretching, and the putting down of the feet as you walk. Keep your mind on each phenomenon. When standing, concentrate your mind on standing, and when sitting do likewise. If you practise mindfulness on the rise and fall of your abdomen, keep your mind on each phenomenon, noting that your abdomen is rising or falling. You will achieve clarity of mind. You will find that the noting mind and the noted object remain steadfastly together in pairs.

Consciousness retains constancy, and so the consciousness that has gone before appears to be the same as that which has followed. Later you will come to realise that the subject that you are noting is matter, and that taking note of it is mind. Further, you will realise that one is the cause and the other is the effect, and that ultimately both dissolve together, which is impermanence. What is impermanent is unsatisfactory, to be regarded as suffering. All these phenomena will reveal themselves. They take place without any agency motivating them. They are therefore ungovernable. They have the character-

istic of insubstantiality. This is how the three characteristics are revealed to the meditator.

This is how the Buddha exhorted newly ordained monks to practise mindfulness, especially mindfulness of the physical body. Since there are many methods described in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, one can take up any suitable one and practise it, but one should not be negligent. If one who does not practise the Dhamma, but is brazen enough to censure those who do, one will be accumulating unwholesome actions and defying the Buddha. The Buddha also exhorted his disciples to meditate on feeling in the following words. “To know the nature of feeling as it really is, dwell contemplating feelings in feelings (*vedanāsu vedanānupassino viharatha*).”

Contemplation of Feeling

Feeling is threefold: painful, pleasant, and neutral. When you feel tired and uncomfortable you should note these phenomena with mindfulness as misery or pain. When you feel sad, meditate on the dejection. When you feel happy and joyous, note this state of mind as pleasurable feeling. There is another kind of feeling, which is neither pain nor pleasure. This neutral feeling (*upekkhā vedanā*) arising out of mind and its concomitants, regards wholesome or unwholesome mental activities such as greed, faith, or mindfulness with equanimity. Neutral feeling is not obvious, but it must be noted.

However, there is a point of view championed by a few who maintain that only neutral feeling needs be contemplated to the exclusion of the other two categories of feeling. This view is clearly heretical, for the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta¹ clearly states that pleasant feeling is also a subject for meditation. The Saṃyuttanikāya² is also explicit on this subject, exhorting the meditator to contemplate pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral feelings. The suggestion to meditate

¹ D.ii.298. *‘Adukkhamasukhaṃ vā vedanaṃ vedayamāno ‘Adukkhamasukhaṃ vedanaṃ vedayamānī’ti pajānāti.* – When feeling a neutral feeling he knows, ‘I feel a neutral feeling.’ (ed.)

² I could find no Saḷāyatana Sutta. The Saḷāyatanaavagga contains the Saḷāyatana-saṃyutta and the Vedanāsaṃyutta. The Pahāna Sutta (S.iv.205) of the Vedanāsaṃyutta says that the latent tendency to lust in pleasant feeling, the latent tendency to aversion in unpleasant feeling, and the latent tendency to ignorance in neutral feeling should be abandoned. Another Pahāna Sutta (S.iv.15) urges monks to abandon the three kinds of feelings, so that may also be the source to which the Saḷāyādaw was referring. There are many other similar sources (ed.)

only on neutral feelings in the practice of insight is therefore a deviation from Buddha's teaching.

In fact all that arises in the six sense-doors belongs to the aggregates of attachment, which must be noted with mindfulness. They encompass the three kinds of feeling. If you are unmindful of the arising of unpleasant feelings, the latent tendency to anger will be brought into play. In the same way if pleasant feeling is overlooked, the latent tendency to lust will be aroused. Meditation on both kinds of feelings can eradicate the latent mental defilements.

Here, let me relate to you my personal experience. Once I was bitten by a scorpion. For a whole week I suffered excruciating pain. I concentrated my mind on it noting it as, "painful, painful!" This weakened the sense of pain, dispelling all inclinations to rage. I then noticed that the sense of pain did not show itself continuously. It had intervals between the arising and passing away. It appeared to me that when one painful sensation passed, a new one followed, giving the impression of impermanence. So I think my aphorism, "Note feeling to know its true nature" is appropriate.

Contemplation of Thought

The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta prescribes contemplation of thought. To know the true nature of thought, contemplate it. An example of this kind of meditation is also given there. It says, "When a lustful mind arises, know that a lustful mind is present."

The mind is a free agent. It wanders wherever it will, and cannot be deterred or harassed. It cannot be governed. This is true for all ordinary people who take delight in the wandering mind. They would let it be as it is. Since they leave it unrestrained, greed and anger come to the fore. If one tolerates greed and anger and obeys their command, one may get involved in criminal actions, which pave the way to the states of loss. So the mind needs be bridled. When you keep watch on its activities you will come to know when it develops craving, and when you note that craving, the undesirable tendency to grab and possess things will disappear.

I am saying this on the authority of the Abhidhamma. However, when we put the theory of meditation into practice, we cannot always occupy ourselves with analysing the mind into its properties, We simply note greed as it arises, and as soon as we recognise it, it

subsides, leaving only the wholesome actions of knowing and noting it. Such actions belong to the dispassionate mind, which must also be noted. This method of observation for insight can be applied to the uprising of anger, doubt, and other negative emotions. However, it is not easy to contemplate thoughts and gain insight. Observing materiality may not raise any problems, for it is incapable of making impressions on the meditator's mind, so we recommend the noting of the rise and fall of the abdomen. You may feel greed asserting itself as you contemplate the abdominal movements. Then note the greed. As soon as you are aware of its uprising it will subside. If you can do this, do it two or three times, or more, until it finally disappears.

I am talking about mind and its ideation which you should note. However, there are also many physical phenomena, for instance tiredness, discomfort due to oppressive heat and the like. When you note them, your mind may have the occasion to hop from one sense-object to another. Then the question arises whether that amounts to mind-wandering. Those who are not acquainted with the nature of concentration in insight practice may take it for distraction. However, insight knowledge does not mean the mind dwelling only on one phenomenon. The texts say that all phenomena or activities must be observed and known (*sabbam pariññeyyam*). A meditator must, therefore, practise in such a way that makes one aware of all that occurs at the six sense-doors. Concentration must be established on the sense-object that appears, now here, now there, for the duration of that appearance. The mind following various sense-objects should not be regarded as the disruption of concentration, which adheres to the object noted every time that object becomes noticeable. Concentration establishes itself on the object irrespective of the latter's changeability. It is because of this nature that one can gain knowledge about impermanence, in the practice of concentration.

Contemplation of Mental Objects

Venerable Sāriputta also urged the meditator to contemplate mental objects (*dhamma*). To know the true nature of all phenomena, contemplate them. Mental objects manifest themselves as nature beyond what we know as physical phenomena, feelings, and thoughts. The states of mind like anger, desire, awareness of the

image seen, *etc.*, are mental objects. So body, feeling, and consciousness are phenomena that should be noted with mindfulness so that one gains the knowledge that they constitute nothing but mind and matter, one being the cause while the other is the effect, always arising and dissolving, subject to the three characteristics of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self, neither controllable nor governable.

I advise meditators to consider if they can see the realities of phenomena merely by learning about mind, matter, and Dependent Origination. Insight does not depend on learning, but on the actual practice of mindfulness on phenomena whenever they arise.

Trainers and Non-trainers Practise Mindfulness

Trainers (*sekkhā*) are those who are undergoing training in the Dhamma. They are also required to practise mindfulness, to know the true nature of the body (as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self). They should contemplate it and abide in that knowledge. Trainers should meditate until they realise the path of an Arahant. This does not mean that who are fully trained and gained Arahantship do not need to practise mindfulness.

This is what Buddha said to his disciples:

“Monk! Those who have become Arahants, who have destroyed the corruptions, lived the holy life, done what should be done, laid down the burden (of the aggregates), realised the benefits (of Fruition), destroyed the bonds of existence, and are freed by right knowledge, such monks remain resolute in exertion, in right understanding, in concentration, in lucidity, steadfast, and one-pointed, detached from the concept of a physical body.”

Arahants therefore continue to practise mindfulness even after attaining Arahantship.

Mindfulness of the Aggregates of Attachment

In the Sāla Sutta the Buddha points out that newly-ordained monks, Nobles Ones under training, and Arahants all practise the four foundations of mindfulness. In this Silavanta Sutta it says that ordinary people as well as Stream-winners, Once-returners, Non-returners, and Arahants should meditate on the aggregates of

attachment. Both Suttas agree on this. The practice of mindfulness aims at right-mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), with the Noble Eightfold Path as its objective. Meditation on the aggregates of attachment also leads one to the Noble Path. So mindfulness and meditation on the aggregates of attachment are synonymous, one complementing the other. The objects of mindfulness are the body, feelings, thoughts, and mental-objects. They constitute the aggregates of attachment: matter, feeling, thoughts, and mental-objects, *i.e.*, perception, mental formations and other objects of attachment. The meditator must therefore bear in mind that meditating on the aggregates of attachment and practising mindfulness are the only two methods by which one can realise nibbāna.

However, it may be asked whether other meditation exercises are not also relevant. There are such exercises as recollection of the qualities of the Buddha (*Buddhānussati*), which lend themselves to tranquillity. However, without insight this cannot contribute to the realisation of the Path and its Fruition. All hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) to the higher stages of insight that lead to nibbāna can be dispelled with the cultivation of tranquillity. At the moment when it sweeps away all hindrances, insight must be resorted to with contemplation of mind and matter with reference to the three characteristics, so that reality is known. Then only one can arrive at the Path and its Fruition.

As an Arahant is always mindful, he or she is never uncouth, ill-mannered, or imprudent in speech like ordinary people who are in the habit of idle chatter and gesticulation. An Arahant is always alert and observant. Being always mindful of feelings there is no occasion for an Arahant to grumble about discomfort or to hunt for comfort. With this power of mindfulness an Arahant is able to claim to be devoid of all corruptions.

To summarise, I would like to stress that an Arahant also contemplates the five aggregates of attachment like Non-returners, Once-returners, and Stream-winners.

May this audience be happy in mind and sound in body, able to contemplate the five aggregates of attachment, being mindful of the body, feelings, thoughts, and mental states so that they can aspire to attain nibbāna with the realisation of the Path and its Fruition.

Part Eight

Delivered on the 11th and 18th October 1967¹

In my previous discourses I have spoken about four of the powers of Arahants. I now propose to deal with the others.

As you might know, an Arahant meditates on the five aggregates of attachment like all other Noble Ones. What benefits can accrue to a fully accomplished saint from meditation? Can an Arahant hope to become a Paccekabuddha or a Sammāsambuddha? According to the Theravāda School, Arahantship is the highest state of holiness. He or she has eradicated all mental corruptions and is due to attain *parinibbāna*, the final end of suffering. An Arahant has done all there is to be done, leaving nothing to be done. An aspirant to the state of Paccekabuddha has to pray for it before a Supreme Buddha whom he happens to encounter in any one of his existences. However, at times it may so happen that he is born into an empty aeon (*suñña-kappa*) when no Buddhas appear. In such an exceptional case, he may perfect himself to become a Paccekabuddha by his own efforts. To become a Sammāsambuddha is extremely difficult and arduous. Myriads of empty aeons usually precede the appearance of a Buddha.

In a Sārakappa only one Buddha appears, in a Maṇḍakappa there are two Buddhas, three in a Varakappa, four in a Sāramaṇḍakappa, and five in a Bhaddakappa² (a fortunate aeon like the current one). These were Kakusandha, Koṇāgamana, Kassapa, and Gotama, and Metteyya Buddha will arise in the future. Many millions of aeons pass by without any Buddha appearing, but once in a very long while, one, two, three, four, or even five may appear. A Sammāsambuddha, of whom Gotama Buddha is just one, attains Enlightenment by his own efforts to discover the Four Noble Truths without the guidance of any teacher.³ The Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas and Arahants all attain *parinibbāna* in the same way. However, those of the Mahāyāna School say that it is not enough for an individual to become a Paccekabuddha or an Arahant. Everyone must wish and pray for Buddhahood; and when one has become a Buddha one should not attain *parinibbāna* before all sentient beings on earth have become

¹ The 8th waxing day and the Full Moon of Thadingyut, 1329 M.E. ² BuA.191.

³ Although the Buddha had teachers who taught him tranquillity meditation, and other teachers who taught him secular knowledge, there was no one who could show him the way to realise nibbāna as the right path was then unknown (ed.)

Buddhas. According to this belief all creatures should go together to nibbāna in the final moment. To my mind this is making a difficult task impossible. How can we wait for others to come with us to nibbāna? This belief is quite untenable. According to learned authorities, it was not yet current at the time of the Third Buddhist Council held in the year 230 of the Buddhist Era.

Parinibbāna means the cessation of the aggregates and therefore of all becoming on the extermination of all the forces of kamma and defilements through the potency of the Path and its Fruition. On their demise, all Buddhas, Paccekabuddhas, and Arahants attain this state of cessation. Why is there any necessity for anyone to wait for others to reach the ultimate together?

When an Arahant has attained *parinibbāna*, he or she has accomplished all that there is to be accomplished, leaving nothing undone.

Benefits Arahants Get from Meditation

Venerable Sāriputta said:

“Natthi, khvāvuso, arahato uttari karaṇīyaṃ katassa vā paticayo; api ca ime dhammā bhāvitā bahulikāṭā ditṭhadhammasukhavihārā ceva saṃvattanti satisampajaññā cā’ti.”

“There is nothing further, friend, to be done by an Arahant, and nothing that needs to be repeated. However, when these things are developed and cultivated, they lead to pleasant abiding in this very life, and to mindfulness and clear comprehension.”

The benefits accruing to Arahants from the practice of insight meditation are the establishment of happiness and mindfulness. At the Non-returner stage, sorrow (*domanassa*) has been dispelled, so an Arahant experiences no sadness or sorrow when confronted with undesirable sense-objects. Meditating on the aggregates of attachment makes an Arahant happier than if remaining unmindful. A man who is fond of reading feels happier when he has something to read than when he has none. Of course those who do not enjoy reading might feel it burdensome. In the same way, those who are not used to meditating might feel it burdensome to practise. When at home you have to do your daily chores, but in the monastery you can meditate. Which gives more happiness and peace of mind?

Being well-disciplined, Arahants are happy to practise meditation. Though they are liable to experience physical discomfort such as pain and fatigue like any ordinary person, since they are constantly aware, all inconveniences vanish. In fact, when insight is well-developed, no fatigue can arise. Our meditators know this from experience. Those who are suffering from minor ailments like colds feel that they subside as their minds dwell on the knowledge of equanimity. After one or two hours of meditation such ailments disappear. Some even maintain that serious ailments wither away during meditation.

There are many instances cited in the scriptures of insight healing pain and disease. Venerable Mahākassapa recovered from his illness as he listened attentively to the Buddha reciting the [Bojjhaṅga Paritta](#) about the factors leading to enlightenment. The Buddha himself averted death by intensive practice of insight as he became afflicted with a very serious ailment while he was spending his last Rains Retreat (*vassa*) in the village of Veḷuvana.

When an Arahant is constantly mindful in the practice of insight, he can attain the Fruition of the Path at will. The Commentary on the Gaṇakamoggallāna Sutta¹ says that there are two kinds of Arahants who have freed themselves of all corruptions, namely, those who continue insight after becoming Arahants, and those who do not. The former can get absorbed in Fruition the moment that they have complete their daily monastic duties, while the latter cannot do so even though they may be engrossed only in light tasks.

Once an elder monk dwelt with a novice (*sāmaṇera*) in a village monastery which had accommodation for only one person. The former was concerned as his disciple had no proper place to rest. So he passed his days without being able to gain ecstatic meditation as he was wont to do, while the novice spent all his days in the whole Rains Retreat enrapt in the trance of the Fruition of the Path in spite of the lack of accommodation. When the Rains Retreat ended, he asked the elder monk if he found the monastery congenial. The reply was in the negative. Remember, therefore, that an Arahant in constant practice of insight can enter into ecstatic meditation whenever he wants to. Although such meditation can neither help to add to the truths already realised nor realise new truths, it blesses the meditator with the benefits of constant mindfulness.

¹ MA.iv.70. Gaṇakamoggallānasuttavaṇṇanā.

The Fifth Power of an Arahant

Continuing to describe the powers of an Arahant, the Venerable Sāriputta said.

“Again, Venerable Sir, a monk in whom the corruptions have become extinct is accomplished in the four right exertions. Once these have been fully and well accomplished, he may be regarded as possessing the power of an Arahant, who may duly proclaim the corruptions to be destroyed.”

Coming under right-effort (*sammā-vāyama*), one factor of the Noble Eightfold Path, the four right exertions (*sammappadhāna*) are:

1. The effort to discard unwholesome actions that have arisen,
2. the effort to prevent the arising of unwholesome actions that have not yet arisen,
3. the effort to develop wholesome actions not yet arising, and
4. the effort to augment wholesome actions that have arisen.

In the same way as he is careful to avoid catching influenza, he is careful to avoid committing unwholesome actions, which he might have noticed others committing. At times he might have committed evil through anger or other passions due to failure to control them. In that case he must be carefully not to repeat committing such evil. He may be usually innocent, but there is the possibility that latent defilements might arise at any time. So he must be wary of them. For that matter he will have to rely on insight meditation. It is imperative that he cultivate wholesomeness by actually practising charity, morality and mental development. Having done so, it will be well of him to retain wholesomeness with him and to abide in it. Arahants make the utmost efforts to become accomplished in the four right exertions after their attainment of Arahantship.

The Sixth Power of an Arahant

About the sixth power of Arahants Venerable Sāriputta says:

“Again, Venerable Sir, a monk in whom the corruptions have become extinct, is perfected in the four bases of success (*iddhipāda*). Having perfected himself in these, he may be regarded as possessing the power of an Arahant, who may duly proclaim the corruptions to be destroyed.”

“*Iddhi*” means attainment or success, and “*iddhipāda*” means fundamentals leading to that attainment. There are four of them:¹

1. Will to succeed (*chandiddhipāda*).
2. Effort to succeed (*viriyyiddhipāda*).
3. Investigation to succeed (*cittiddhipāda*).
4. Knowledge or wisdom to succeed (*vimaṃsiddhipāda*).

Even in mundane affairs possession of one if not all, of these four bases of success can contribute to the attainment of perfection. In any major undertaking we need a particularly strong power. To achieve merit by practising charity or morality ordinary power may be enough, but when it comes to developing wholesome actions through the practice of concentration, mindfulness, and insight, either will, effort, investigation, or wisdom must be extraordinarily strong. Arahants take up meditation with these four bases of success.

I urge the meditators here to excel themselves in at least one of these powers. That is to say that they must try to possess either the will, effort, investigation, or wisdom in seeking the Dhamma.

The Seventh Power of an Arahant

Venerable Sāriputta went on with his exposition as follows:

“Again, Venerable Sir, a monk in whom the corruptions have become extinct, has developed the five controlling-faculties truly and well. Having developed this power of the five controlling-faculties, he may be regarded as possessing the power of an Arahant, who may duly proclaim the corruptions to be destroyed.”

Controlling-faculty (*indriya*) means that which governs. There are twenty-two faculties that govern the aggregates and their concomitants. The first set are the five faculties of the senses: the eye-faculty (*cakkhundriya*), the ear-faculty (*sotindriya*), the nose-faculty (*ghānindriya*), the tongue-faculty (*ṭṭhindriya*), and the body-faculty (*kāyindriya*). The second set relates to the differentiation of the sexes into male and female: the female-faculty (*iṭṭhindriya*) and the male-faculty (*purisindriya*).

¹ DA.ii.642, in the Commentary on the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, Venerable [Ratthapāla](#) is cited as one who cultivated resolute will, Venerable [Soṇa](#) as one who cultivated resolute effort, Venerable [Sambhūta](#) as one who cultivated resolution investigation, and Venerable [Mogharāja](#) as one who cultivated resolute wisdom (ed.)

Vitality is the life-faculty (*jīvitindriya*). Another factor that governs the consciousness of mind-objects is the mind-faculty (*manindriya*). Then come the five factors governing feeling: the pleasure-faculty (*sukkhindriya*), the pain-faculty (*dukkhindriya*), the happiness-faculty (*somanassindriya*), the sorrow-faculty (*domanassindriya*), and indifference-faculty (*upekkhindriya*).

The group of five spiritual faculties are the faith-faculty (*saddhindriya*), effort-faculty (*viriyindriya*), mindfulness-faculty (*satindriya*), concentration-faculty (*samādhindriya*), and wisdom-faculty (*paññindriya*). The remaining three are the faculty relating to Stream-winning, which is knowledge of what was previously unknown (*anaññātāññasāmīndriya*), the faculty relating to the knowledge of the three lower Fruits and the three higher Paths (*aññindriya*), and the faculty relating to the knowledge of Arahantship (*aññātāvindriya*).

In this context, however, the powers of an Arahant are the five spiritual faculties of faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom. When we say faith, of course we mean confidence in the true teachings. It has nothing to do with beliefs in the false teachings of heretics, which are classified as wrong-resolve (*micchā-adhimokkha*). To know the true teacher, his true teachings and his true Order, you must know the nine virtues of the Buddha, the six virtues of the Dhamma and the nine virtues of the Saṅgha. There are nine supramundane phenomena, which are the four Paths, the four Fruits, and nibbāna. All teachings relating to these are the true teaching, and all that have nothing to do with them are not.

One of the nine virtues of the Saṅgha is practising the Dhamma well (*supaṭipanno*) by cultivating morality, concentration, and wisdom, and by discarding defilements such as greed, anger, and delusion. The eight Noble Ones -- those attaining the four Paths and the four Fruits are endowed with these virtues, are therefore the true Order (Saṅgha) of the Buddha's disciples. Among ordinary people there are many who are striving for spiritual and moral development. They are classified as virtuous ordinary people (*kalayāṇa puthujjana*), who may also be classed as the true Saṅgha, since they are practising the Dhamma to realise the Path and Fruition of Stream-winning.

Faith in the Triple Gem, and in the law of kamma is the true faith, which is the faculty of faith (*saddhindriya*). Casual reflection on the virtues of the Buddha does not amount to the firm establishment of

this faculty. It is only when one practises insight meditation leading to the path of a Stream-winner that one's faith becomes firmly rooted. insight reveals the true nature of mind and matter, one as the cause and the other as the effect, always arising and passing away, never permanent, always unsatisfactory or producing suffering, and insubstantial, ungovernable, or not-self. When the path knowledge of Stream-winning is achieved one is fully prepared for nibbāna. At this stage the faculty of faith remains rock solid.

Faith is the manifestation of wholesome consciousness (*kusala citta*), which arises along with knowledge of arising and passing away, knowledge of dissolution, and knowledge of equanimity, at which stage the meditator's mind becomes as pure as a crystal with radiant consciousness. When Arahantship is achieved purity becomes perfect.

The faculty of energy is almost synonymous with right exertion, which signifies intensive energy, while it merely denotes factors governing exertion. Nonetheless it is very important for its part in the practice of insight — without it one cannot gain insight knowledge leading to Arahantship.

The faculty of mindfulness has been dealt with previously.

The faculty of concentration means one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*), without which one cannot attain analytical knowledge of body and mind (*nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*). Those who glibly talk about insight being attainable by mere learning fail to appreciate the seven stages of purity required for the realisation of the Dhamma. Analytical knowledge and purity of views are not possible unless one achieves purity of morals and purity of mind. Purity of mind cannot be achieved without at least momentary concentration (*khaṇika samādhi*), or proximate concentration (*upacārasamādhi*), or full absorption (*jhāna*). Momentary concentration is akin to proximate concentration and both contribute to the expulsion of the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*).

Analytical knowledge of body and mind is followed by knowledge by discerning conditionality (*paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa*), knowledge by comprehension (*sammasana-ñāṇa*), and knowledge of arising and passing away (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*), in that order.

In the Saḷāyatana Saṃyutta¹ the Buddha enjoins his disciples to practise meditation so that they can understand the true nature of conditioned things. How can one see realities? A meditator, says the

¹ S.iv.1.

Buddha, recognises that the eye-base is impermanent, that the visible-object that is seen is impermanent, that the eye-consciousness that sees is impermanent, that the contact between the eye-base and the visible-object is not permanent, and that joy, sorrow, and indifference felt on seeing are also impermanent. In brief, all sense-bases, sense-objects, consciousness, contacts, and feelings that appear at the six sense-doors are impermanent.

The faculty of wisdom relates to intelligence, but not the kind of intelligence derived from what one hears from others or from thinking and reasoning, but from intuitive insight through the practice of meditation. Insight knowledge is superior to knowledge acquired by learning (*sutamayā-paññā*), knowledge acquired by reasoning (*cintāmayā*), and knowledge acquired through meditation (*bhāvanā-mayā-paññā*). For an ordinary meditator, insight meditation is the faculty of wisdom as it governs insight practice. For a Noble One, Path knowledge is the faculty of wisdom as it governs knowledge relating to the attainment of nibbāna. Knowledge of the Path leading to the state of Stream-winner is the faculty of knowledge regarding what was previously unknown (*anaññātaññassāmītindriya*). The knowledge relating to higher Paths (*aññindriya*) are knowledge gained through the accumulation of experience.

The faculty of wisdom must be developed through contemplation of the five aggregates of attachment. In the beginning, one cannot follow all the detailed incidents connected with the act of seeing or hearing, especially when the concentration has not yet properly developed. That is why we propose that a meditator should begin with noting the four postures in accordance with the injunction: “Know that you go when you go (*gacchanto vā gacchāmīti pajānāti*).” When you are sitting, note that you are sitting. However, this is an elementary practice not contributing to the development of the power of exertion to match the required concentration. This can bring about sloth and torpor. So we advocate noting the rising and falling of the abdomen. The movements of the body indicate the existence of the element of motion (*vāyo dhātu*). When you note this activity, you are not confined only to noting one object — you have to be mindful of the rising and falling of the abdomen. Neither can you lessen your exertion in noting the two phenomena. We think that this exercise requires both concentration and effort in equal measure.

The faculty of wisdom encompasses factors governing the attainment of knowledge about conditioned things and their impermanence. On the realisation of the nature of mind and matter, knowledge of equanimity will be established resulting in enlightenment of the highest stage of the Path called Arahantship, which constitutes the seventh power of an Arahant.

The Eighth Power of an Arahant

Venerable Sāriputta continued with his exposition.

“Again, Venerable Sir, a monk in whom the corruptions have become extinct, is accomplished in the five powers. Well accomplished in these five powers, he may be regarded as possessing the power of an Arahant, who may duly proclaim the corruptions to be destroyed.”

The five powers (*bala*) are the same spiritual powers as the five controlling-faculties that I spoken of earlier. A monk endowed with the power of faith has firm confidence in the Triple Gem, and this faith in them remains adamant like a rock which can withstand the buffeting of the storm of doubt.

A monk who possesses the power of effort is not troubled by sloth and torpor. He exerts himself to achieve the factors of enlightenment. If he is endowed with the power of mindfulness, he can forever be mindful of the phenomena around him noting them as he sees, hears, or touches sense-objects. Nothing passes him unnoticed. If he is endowed with the power of concentration, his mind will never get scattered and he can concentrate on his objective. The establishment of concentration becomes substantial when he reaches the stage of knowledge of equanimity. At this stage a meditator can sit for several hours without being aware of the sense of time.

A monk endowed with the power of wisdom can dispel delusion, which regards conditioned things as permanent. When delusion is at work it fools one into believing that what one sees or hears is everlasting. Even if one is an ordinary person, someone who has gained the knowledge of arising and passing away, knowledge of dissolution, and the knowledge of equanimity knows the realities of the phenomenal world by virtue of the power of wisdom. A Noble One stands firm in the knowledge of impermanence. Well-accom-

plished in the power wisdom, an Arahant remains unruffled by the onslaught of any delusion which hides the truth about impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and not-self.

The Ninth Power of an Arahant

Continuing, Venerable Sāriputta addressed the Buddha:

“Again, Venerable Sir, a monk in whom the corruptions have become extinct, has fully and completely developed the seven factors of enlightenment. When he has cultivated and developed these factors, he may be regarded as possessing the power of an Arahant, who may duly proclaim the corruptions to be destroyed.”

These seven factors of enlightenment lead to the knowledge of the Four Noble Truths.

1. Mindfulness (*sati sambojjhaṅga*),
2. Investigation (*dhammavicaya sambojjhaṅga*),
3. Effort (*virīya sambojjhaṅga*),
4. Joy (*pīti sambojjhaṅga*),
5. Tranquillity (*passaddhi sambojjhaṅga*),
6. Concentration (*samādhi sambojjhaṅga*), and
7. Equanimity (*upekkhā sambojjhaṅga*).

The Enlightenment Factor of Mindfulness

This is mindfulness of all physical and mental activities together with feelings. It is therefore the same as the four foundations of mindfulness. It cannot be won without meditation. Even a beginner in insight, used to cultivating this factor, is unaware of being mindful as knowledge has not yet developed sufficiently. When knowledge of arising and passing away arises, he or she becomes familiar with it. However, it must be noted that the four enlightenment factors of mindfulness, effort, concentration, and investigation occur, albeit in milder forms, at the very beginning of meditation. When knowledge of arising and passing away is realised, a meditator will think that there is nothing that passes his or her attention, so powerful has this faculty of mindfulness developed. It is because of this power that one is able to realise the true nature of mind and matter which is subject to decay.

The Enlightenment Factor of Investigation

This factor of enlightenment relating to the investigation of the dhamma is almost the same as the faculty of wisdom. Specifically this investigation relates to what is wholesome and what is unwholesome. It encompasses all phenomena like deeds and their consequences, the element of nibbāna, and so forth. However, in the present context only wholesome and unwholesome phenomena are meant as the principle subjects of investigation.

As you see or hear, you just note the sights and sounds as sights and sounds which, by their nature, arise and pass away, never being permanent. A meditator recollects clearly this constant flux of mind and matter. In fact he or she can more clearly recollect the constant state of flux when concentrating on sounds. Some meditators told me that they could discriminate the sounds that they heard by the right ear or by the left ear, their sense of hearing being so sharpened through the practice of meditation.

That materiality cannot know objects is usually understood by a meditator whose faculty of the senses has been rendered keen through the practise of insight. However, mind can know objects. So at the stage of keen perception, the subject is able to differentiate mind and matter. When concentration gains strength with the continual practice of meditation, one can follow the swift flow of mind and matter that arises and passes away. Having come to know this transient nature of conditioned things, one realises that such things are ungovernable and unsubstantial and that, therefore, they are unsatisfactory, engendering nothing but suffering. The more one's intelligence is sharpened by insight, the better one can reflect on the rapid dissolution of things that occur. This becomes all the more apparent when the knowledge of dissolution arises. At this point one may not be aware of the arising of conditioned things, but one is clearly conscious of their rapid dissolution, which covers both the noting mind and the noted object. When the knowledge of equanimity is achieved one needs no special effort to know rapid dissolution. When the Path is reached the cessation of mental formations can be noticed.

The Enlightenment Factor of Effort

This is similar to faculty of effort and right exertion, which usually occur with the knowledge of arising of and passing away. If exertion

is wanting, contemplation will be ineffective. If effort is excessive, anxiety arises to thwart the progress of concentration. It must be kept in equilibrium.

The Enlightenment Factor of Joy

In the beginning of the meditation practice, joy is not usually felt, but it arises in a milder form called delight (*pāmojja*), which is accompanied by goose-bumps. When the stage of arising and passing away is reached, the meditator will be overwhelmed with joy so much so that the power of recollection becomes improved, when he or she will get the feeling that he or she has seen the light of the Dhamma. He or she must note this phenomenon until it disappears. The working of this joy becomes more apparent when one reaches the stage of knowledge of equanimity about formations.

Some meditators do not experience this joy, so they put forward the theory that joy is unnecessary. However, it is a prerequisite for the attainment of enlightenment. If it fails to occur, it must be assumed that the knowledge of arising and passing away has not arisen.

The Enlightenment Factor of Tranquillity

Tranquillity consists of physical serenity (*kāya-passaddhi*), and peace of mind (*citta-passaddhi*). Physical tranquillity is achieved when mental properties gain equanimity. This is only natural, for when the mind is at peace, the body follows suit.

The element of tranquillity is present in every meritorious action, but it usually remains hidden and does not show up even in the earlier stages of meditation. It becomes apparent at the stage of arising and passing away, for at this stage there is no need for a meditator to make much effort to concentrate, since everything goes smoothly with the practice. This tranquillity arises at the stage of the realisation of knowledge of equanimity about formations.

Tranquillity is endowed with mental qualities of lightness, softness, pliability, open-mindedness, and mental clarity. It is because of these qualities that a meditator, accomplished in the knowledge of arising and passing away, feels that the body is so light that it has levitated. When joy is excited, it reaches the stage of uplifting-joy (*ubbega-pīti*), an intense joy that enables one to float into the air. In that condition both the mind and the body are rendered subtle and

pliant, receptive to contemplation and going straight to the objective. A meditator told me that she used to victimize her husband and that when she attained the knowledge of arising and passing away by insight practice her mind became so gentle that she no longer worried her husband as before.

The Enlightenment Factor of Concentration

It is the same as faculty of concentration, which I have earlier explained and which, therefore, needs no further elaboration.

The Enlightenment Factor of Equanimity

This factor of enlightenment relating to indifference is rather difficult to understand. It may be applied to feeling, wisdom, exertion, and mental properties. When we speak of pleasure or pain, we are referring to feelings that we experience in everyday life. However, beyond them there is a state of mind called indifference or neutral feeling (*upekkhā vedanā*). When we say wisdom, we mean insight knowledge and knowledge of equanimity about formations, which suggests evenness of the mind. When we speak of exertion, we mean exertion that is balanced so that it is neither excessive nor lacking. Besides them there are other kinds of equanimity, such as six-factored equanimity (*chaḷaṅgupekkhā*) to the six senses, equanimity of the Brahmā realm (*brahmavihāra upekkhā*), equanimity of absorption (*jhānupekkhā*), and equanimity of purity (*parisuddhupekkhā*). They are mental qualities that come under the enlightenment factor of equanimity. They also connote a mind in equilibrium. However, in the present context, one cannot be very pragmatic about their nature since one rarely encounters them in life. It is only when an insight meditator attains the knowledge of arising and passing away that he or she really experiences them and that by intuition.

These enlightenment factors are hard to experience in daily life because ordinarily they are either lacking or in excess. When faith is exercised too strongly the power of investigation weakens. When one fails to investigate the phenomenon with due care one fails to arrive at the truth. However, when the investigative instinct is too overbearing, faith weakens, and as one loses faith, one fails to exert oneself in the search for truth. Even when one is diligent enough, if faith is lacking, one cannot establish concentration, which is essential

for the attainment of insight. When faith is excessive, the moment that a meditator encounters things out of the ordinary, he or she dwells on them with self-satisfaction and gets lost on the way without being able to arrive at the objective. When concentration is stronger than is necessary while exertion is weak, sloth and torpor get the better of the meditator and no further progress can be achieved. When exertion dominates concentration, anxiety impedes progress.

To keep concentration and effort in proper balance, we advocate the method of meditating on the rise and fall of the abdomen. In this exercise, as the meditator has to note the rising and falling of the abdomen, he or she has to be mindful of only two phenomena and therefore his concentration is not unduly taxed. As the exercise does not involve noting three or four phenomena, undue exertion is also not called for. Both are kept on an even keel. In order that the meditator's personal health remains unimpaired we advise to meditate for only an hour after which one can change posture from sitting to walking and continue meditation while walking. To keep faith, and wisdom in equilibrium you must get the advice of your meditation teachers who will explain things relating to the practice.

In this way the mind inclined to insight becomes properly balanced, and the meditator's contemplative mood will improve. When one attains the stages of arising and passing away and knowledge of equanimity about formations, one will feel that all five controlling-faculties work together in unison and all that remains to be done is to let oneself be carried away by them. When two bullocks are pulling a cart with equal force, it behaves well for the rider to remain at ease and follow the trail without any worry. Only when this enlightenment factor of equanimity is accomplished can a meditator proceed from one stage of knowledge to another.

The enlightenment factor of joy is recognisable by the meditator when concentration has developed and when, as a result, he or she can fully exercise the faculty of mindfulness. The other six factors are involved in every occurrence of noting. When the Noble Path is reached, especially at the time of the first and second *jhāna*, all the seven factors are brought into play, and finally everything that has to be accomplished becomes accomplished. A meditator may cultivate these seven factors at any time. When mindfulness is exercised all others will be brought into play.

Earlier I have pointed out that the cultivation of the enlightenment factors has the power to heal. When the Venerable Mahākassapa fell sick, the Buddha gave a discourse on the seven factors of enlightenment thus reminding him to bring to mind the factors of enlightenment. At once the sickness disappeared. When the Venerable Moggallāna fell sick, the same thing happened. When the Buddha himself fell sick, Venerable Cunda recited the same discourse and as the Enlightened One listened to the recitation and contemplated the factors, his sickness dissipated. When the Buddha spent his last Rains Retreat at the village of Veḷuva (Beḷuva), he was afflicted with an ailment that would have ended his life. However, he practised insight meditation, and cured his sickness. This practice was nothing other than contemplation of the seven factors of enlightenment.

So they should be cultivated and developed. However, such development should be taken up in accordance with the directions of the four foundations of mindfulness — mindfulness of the body, feelings, thoughts, and mental-objects. The aim of practising mindfulness is to direct the meditator to cultivate these factors of enlightenment, which constitute the ninth power of the Arahants.

I will deal with the tenth power in my next discourse. I will now conclude this talk with the usual blessing and prayer.

May you who have listened to this discourse with respectful attention be able to contemplate the impermanence of the five aggregates of attachment and develop the factors of enlightenment, through the cultivation of the requisites of enlightenment that lead to the Path and its Fruition and bring nibbāna into view.

Part Nine

Delivered on the 1st and 16th November 1967¹

I have already given fourteen discourses on the *Sīlavanta Sutta* covering the subjects up to the ninth power of an Arahant. It now remains for me to discuss the tenth power and conclude the series with a brief summary of what has been taught.

The Tenth Power of an Arahant

Continuing with the subject of the powers of an Arahant, Venerable *Sāriputta* addressed the Buddha thus:

“Again, Venerable Sir, a monk in whom the corruptions have become extinct, has fully and completely cultivated and developed the Noble Eightfold Path. Having accomplished that task, he may be regarded as possessing the power of an Arahant, who may duly proclaim the corruptions to be destroyed.”

The Noble Eightfold Path is so called because it is the path followed by the Noble Ones. In our daily language a path means a route that leads to our destination, such as to a village, a town, an office, a pagoda, or a monastery. In the Buddha’s teaching, paths lead to a destination (*gati*), which may be the hell realms, the animal realm, the realm of hungry ghosts (*peta*), the human world, or the celestial realms. However, the only path that avoids those destinations is the Noble Path. It behoves us to cultivate and develop the factors of that Path from the very beginning of our lives as ordinary people.

All that I have said previously relates to this theme, and it will be superfluous to repeat it here. I will only enumerate those eight factors of the Noble Path:

1. Right-view, (*sammā-dit̐hi*),
2. Right-thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*),
3. Right-speech (*sammā-vācā*),
4. Right action (*sammā-kammantā*),
5. Right-livelihood (*sammā-ājīva*),
6. Right-effort (*sammā-vāyama*),
7. Right-mindfulness (*sammā-sati*), and
8. Right-concentration (*sammā-samādhi*).

¹ The 14th waning day of Thadingyut and the Full-moon day of Tazaunmun, 1329 M.E.

There are five types of right-view:

1. Right-view regarding the ownership of kamma (*kammassakatā sammā-dit̥ṭhi*),
2. Right-view relating to absorption (*jhāna-sammā-dit̥ṭhi*),
3. Right-view relating to insight meditation (*vipassanā-sammā-dit̥ṭhi*).
4. Right-view relating to the Path (*magga-sammā-dit̥ṭhi*),
5. Right-view relating to the Fruition (*phala-sammā-dit̥ṭhi*).

If right-view relating to reviewing knowledge (*paccavekkhaṇa-sammā-dit̥ṭhi*) is included, there are six.

Right-view relating to the Path refers to knowledge enjoyed by a Stream-winner, Once-returner, Non-returner, and an Arahant.

Right-view relating to reviewing knowledge is included under right-view relating to the Path, therefore a meditator need not make any special effort to review the achievement of the Path. What is essential, however, is the development of right-view relating to the Path, which is preceded by right-view relating to insight, for it is only when insight is attained that this view is established. For the right-view of insight to arise, right-view regarding the ownership of kamma and right-view relating to absorption must be cultivated.

Buddhists need not make it a point to make special efforts to develop right-view regarding the ownership of kamma since they have accepted the law of kamma by embracing Buddhism. Their practice of charity, morality, and meditation shows their belief in kamma and its results. It is with the belief that the meritorious action of *jhāna* leading to the realms of form and the formless realms that one practises meditation. The result of this action is bound to be beneficial. Insight meditation can prove beneficial only to those who sincerely believe that it can lead to the Path, its Fruition, and nibbāna.

That mental-development has its foundation in the practice of morality cannot be over-emphasised. Analytical knowledge about body and mind, and purity of view, can be accomplished only when purity of mind is established. Hence before meditation is practised one must undertake to observe moral precepts. A meditator preparing to practise meditation, must observe the eight precepts. For monks, absolute purity of morals is required for the practice of meditation. Being pure in morality one can easily develop concentration that enables one to enter absorptions, or at least gain proximate concentration. Failing that, one

should meditate on the four postures and the four elements and gain momentary concentration. These are the fundamentals to the cultivation of the basic path (*mūla-magga*). Beginning with the fundamentals a meditator proceeds to meditate on the five aggregates of attachment that appear at the six sense-doors to establish the right-view of insight. Continuing the practice, meditation will lead one to the knowledge by discerning conditionality (*paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa*). The next stage of insight is knowledge by comprehension (*sammasana-ñāṇa*), which recognises the impermanence of all conditioned things. When dissolution is noticed during meditation, one must know that one has come to the stage of knowledge of dissolution (*bhaṅga-ñāṇa*). Then knowledge of equanimity about formations (*saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*) arises when the mind will be entirely bent on mind, matter, and mental formations. Then the highest stage of insight called insight leading to emergence (*vuṭṭhānagāminī-vipassanā-ñāṇa*), will be reached. Knowledge of adaptation (*anuloma-ñāṇa*), as a component of insight leading to emergence, seeks nibbāna as its mind-object. This is a preliminary path (*pubba-magga*) to the Noble Path. The basis for the path of insight, as has been pointed out earlier, is called the basic path, which consists of right-view regarding ownership of one's kamma, the path of morality, and the path of concentration. To remember this please note this maxim:

“The basic path (*mūla-magga*), the preliminary path (*pubba-magga*), and the Noble Path (*ariya-magga*), lead to nibbāna.”

So if you really want to realise nibbāna in this very existence, abide by the law of kamma and its result, fulfil the purity of morals by practising right-speech, right-action, and right-livelihood, which are basic conduct for the realisation of the Dhamma. This will lead you to the next stage which heralds the knowledge of adaptation (*anuloma-ñāṇa*), and maturity knowledge (*gotrabhū-ñāṇa*), which will transport you to nibbāna.

When right-view is established through the practice of insight, right-thought (*sammā-saṅkappa*) will follow in its wake. It is a state of mind that inclines to nibbāna. Right-thought and right-view belong to the wisdom group of the Noble Eightfold Path.

Right-effort (*sammā-vāyama*) is striving to contemplate sense-objects at the very moment they are seen or heard. This brings about right-mindfulness (*sammā-sati*). In practising this you have to note

the sense-object, and as you note it your mind gets closer to it. Then concentration is achieved, which is right-concentration (*sammā-samādhi*). In the initial stages of the practice, momentary concentration (*khaṇika-samādhi*), is developed, and this, in conjunction with right-effort and right-mindfulness, constitute the concentration group of the Noble Eightfold Path.

Right-speech, right-action, and right-livelihood come naturally at the moment of taking up the practice of meditation. No special efforts are necessary to realise these virtues. As conviction in the impermanence of conditioned things grows, wrong-speech, wrong-actions, and wrong-livelihood are abandoned.

Now that right-view is established, all three paths have been fulfilled. As insight meditation gains strength, the Noble Path and Fruition of Stream-winning arise.

As a Stream-winner continues with the practice of the Noble Eightfold Path, he or she gets to the next stage of a Once-returner. As a Once-returner practises relentlessly he or she reaches the next stage of a Non-returner, and as a Non-returner makes further efforts in the practice he or she becomes an Arahant accomplished in the Path and its Fruition, which constitute his or her power.

Now my exposition of the ten powers of an Arahant is complete. The question now remains whether an Arahant claims to be freed of all corruptions openly and directly. Regarding this, here is what the Khema Sutta¹ has to say.

The Khema Sutta

Once Venerable Khema and Venerable Sumana were respectfully waiting upon the Buddha residing at Jetavana monastery at Sāvatti. Venerable Khema then addressed the Buddha thus: “Venerable sir! An Arahant in whom all the corruptions have become extinguished never considers that he has superiors, equals, or inferiors.”

Venerable Khema’s statement is an admission of the total absence of the three types of pride in an Arahant. So an Arahant is one who has no sense of pride that prompts him to compare himself to others. Having said this, the Venerable Khema left. Then Venerable Sumana addressed the Buddha in almost the same way as follows: “Venerable

¹ A.iii.358. Not the Khemaka Sutta, as stated in the original edition, but the Khema Sutta, which is about a different monk. The Khemaka Sutta was quoted earlier, hence the confusion (ed.)

sir! An Arahant in whom all the corruptions have become extinguished, never considers that he has no superiors, equals, or inferiors." Having said this, he also left. Then the Buddha said: "Monks! Men of good family speak of Arahantship by inference in the way that the Venerable Khema and Sumana have just done. Arahants do not openly proclaim themselves to be so, but they let it be known by indirect suggestions. Fools make a laughing-stock of themselves by declaring that they have become Arahants, and this results in a general opprobrium that usually torments them."

Venerable Soṇa's Avowal of Arahantship

Venerable Soṇa was a millionaire's son brought up in the lap of luxury and ease. He was so pampered by his parents that he literally never walked on the earth, with the result that his soles became soft and hairy. When, however, he had the opportunity to listen to the Buddha's teaching, he determined to practise the Dhamma as a monk. So he became a recluse and took up insight meditation by contemplating the act of walking along a footpath in a graveyard. Although he tried hard with his meditation exercise until the ground became spattered with the blood that oozed from his tender feet, he failed to get enlightened. In desperation, therefore, he thought to himself: "Those making the greatest endeavour might be doing the same thing that I am now doing and could not have strived any harder, yet I cannot get rid of these cankerous defilements from my mind. I have amassed a great deal of wealth at home. It is better for me to revert to lay-life and perform meritorious deeds as a layman."

Knowing Venerable Soṇa's mind, the Buddha appeared before him and advised not to go to the extremes of being either too zealous or too lax, learning from a lute-player whose instrument is out of tune when played with over-tight or loose strings. Venerable Soṇa then relaxed, keeping exertion balanced with concentration, and his efforts then proved successful.

Then he addressed the Buddha thus: "Venerable sir! An Arahant in whom all the corruptions have become extinguished, keeps his mind solely on the emancipation of human passions, on the establishment of solitude, on the negation of attachment, on the abandonment of craving, and on the expulsion of delusion. Even so arguments are put forward that the Arahant's inclination for a passionless state

is prompted by faith only. However, it is not faith alone that drives him to be dedicated to that state, but his abandonment of lust, anger, and delusion, for he has accomplished all there is to be accomplished leaving nothing undone. Again it may be argued that he inclines to solitude just for the reputation that stands him in good stead for the acquisition of material gains. That also is not so for he has accomplished all there is to be accomplished in discarding lust, anger, and delusion. Again, it may also be put forward that he becomes tolerant and meek because rites and rituals require him to be so. That is also not true for an Arahant, who has accomplished all there is to be accomplished in conquering passions like lust, anger, and delusion. Venerable Sir! A monk who has become truly emancipated from human passions never falls prey to the wiles of materiality, seen by the keenest eye that catches its appearance. Even when it shows itself, it has no influence on the Arahant's mind, which is incompatible with defilements, remaining unperturbed by what it sees as the dissolution of the form and the consciousness that recognises the form. Removed from defilements, an Arahant refuses to fall in with the objects that he sees whether they are pleasant or otherwise. He is always conscious of the dissolution of the subject that sees and the object that is seen. This statement applies to all other phenomena of hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching. An Arahant's mind is unruffled by these phenomena." Awareness of the dissolution of the sense-object along with the mind that notes it is within the experience of our meditators. Venerable Soṇa spoke in several stanzas in a similar way, but I will deal only with the last two of them.

*"Selo yathā ekagghano, vātena na samīrati;
Evaṃ rūpā rasā saddā, gandhā phassā ca kevalā.*

*"Itthā dhammā anitthā ca, nappavedhenti tādino;
Thitaṃ cittaṃ vippanuttaṃ vayañcassānupassati"ti.*

"As a stone mountain, one solid mass, is not stirred by the wind, so no forms and tastes, sounds, odours, and tactile objects, and phenomena desirable or undesirable, stir the stable one's mind. His mind is steady and freed, and he observes its vanishing."¹

This is how Venerable Soṇa made known his Arahantship.

¹ A.iii.379.

Venerable Sāriputta's Avowal of Arahantship

ONCE A MONK KNOWN BY THE NAME of Kaḷārahattiya told Venerable Sāriputta that Venerable Moliya Phagguna had left the Order to become a layman.¹ This drew comment from the latter who observed, "Moliya Phagguna has failed to get a comfortable foothold in this Buddha's dispensation." At this Kaḷārahattiya asked the elder in derision, "Am I then to take it that in your case you have got a comfortable foothold?"

"I have," said Venerable Sāriputta, "there is no doubt about it."

"However, then," said the taunting monk, "Can you have your foothold in the future?"

"I have no doubt about it," repeated the elder.

Here 'foothold' denotes a firm stand established on the foundations of the three lower Paths and their Fruition. If the monk in question had realised them, he would have been a Non-returner and would not have left the Order.

Kaḷārahattiya asked again, "Have you extricated yourself from the hold of a new rebirth in the future?" This is an oblique way of asking if Venerable Sāriputta had become an Arahant.

"I have," repeated the elder monk, "there is no doubt it."

Then Kaḷārahattiya went to Buddha and reported this conversation, saying, "Venerable Sir! Venerable Sāriputta has been avowing himself that there will be no new rebirth for him, that he has practised the noble conduct and that he has accomplished all there is to accomplish leaving nothing undone. He has declared himself to be an Arahant!"

The Buddha summoned Venerable Sāriputta and asked him if he had said so.

Venerable Sāriputta replied that he had simply told the younger monk that he had accomplished all that was to be accomplished in relation to the denial of future rebirths and that he had told him nothing about the Fruition of Arahantship.

"Venerable Sāriputta," said the Buddha, "However indirectly you say this, it amounts of the admission that you have become an Arahant."

"Venerable Sir!" said Venerable Sāriputta, "I am merely reasserting that I did not use those words as reported, but I would not say that I have said nothing."

¹ Kalāra Sutta, S.ii.50ff.

This is how, as revealed by the teachings of the original Pāḷi texts, Arahants themselves, never saying directly that they have attained Arahantship.

Noble Ones Are Unknowable

When the Buddhist religion was at its height in Sri Lanka, there was an Arahant residing in Cittalapabbata with an ascetic as his disciple. Once the latter asked his mentor as to how he could know a Noble One. “Even you, an old monk, replied the Arahant, “may not be able to identify an Arahant although you may be serving him as his disciple by your side. He is unknowable.” The old monk failed to know the Arahant as an Arahant in spite of this hint.

Usually a Noble One wishes to remain unknown to others.

A Brief Résumé

Before concluding I will make a brief résumé of what I have been saying about Sīlavanta Sutta.

First, Venerable Koṭṭhika asked Venerable Sāriputta how a monk, accomplished in morality should devote himself to the practice of the Dhamma. Venerable Sāriputta replied that such a monk should devote himself to meditation, wisely and well, on the five aggregates of attachment, contemplating them as impermanent and unsatisfactory, likening them to a disease, a festering sore, a thorn in the flesh, as baneful, as an affliction like fever. They behave like strangers, they tend to dissolution, they are empty and not-self. One who is established in this mindfulness can be a Stream-winner.

Secondly Venerable Koṭṭhika asked how a Stream-winner should devote himself to the practice of the Dhamma. Venerable Sāriputta replied that he should also meditate on the five aggregates of attachment correctly and well, as advised before, to become a Once-returner.

Thirdly Venerable Koṭṭhika asked how a Once-returner should devote himself to the practice of the Dhamma. Venerable Sāriputta’s reply was the same as before, pointing out that a Once-returner could become a Non-returner by the same method.

Fourthly Venerable Koṭṭhika’s enquiries relate to the question of the practice of the Dhamma by a Non-returner. Venerable Sāriputta repeated what he had said before, saying that he should also practise

meditation in the way already stated so that he could become an Arahant.

Finally Venerable Koṭṭhika enquired how an Arahant should practise the Dhamma. Venerable Sāriputta again emphasised that Arahants should also meditate on the five aggregates of attachment keeping his mind on the characteristics of impermanence.

An Arahant, indeed, need not go beyond what he has achieved and accomplished for the realisation of Arahantship, but if he continues to practise insight, he shall dwell in the happiness derived from the practice, fulfilling clear comprehension and mindfulness.

I will now close with the usual prayer that all who have listened to this discourse with respectful attention will attain nibbāna, the end of suffering, having realised wisdom, by virtue of their wholesome actions regarding the Path and its Fruition, as a result of insight meditation on the five aggregates of attachment.

Abbreviations

*A		Commentary on *
A		Aṅguttaranikāya
Abhi	Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha	
Ap		Apadāna
Bu	Buddhavaṃsa	
Cp		Cariyapīṭaka
D		Dīghanikāya
Dhp	Dhammapada	
Dhs	Dhammasaṅgaṇī	
Iti		Itivuttaka
Jā		Jātaka
Khp	Khuddakapāṭha	
Kvu	Kathāvatthu	
M		Majjhimanikāya
M.E.	Myanmar Era (638 years after C.E.)	
Miln	Milindapañha	
Nd1	Mahāniddeśa	
Nd2	Cūḷaniddeśa	
Nett	Nettipakaraṇa	
Paṭṭh	Paṭṭhāna	
Pṭs		Paṭisambhidāmagga
PTS	Pali Text Society	
Pug	Puggalapaññatti	
Pv		Petavatthu
S	Samyuttanikāya	
Sn		Suttanipāta
Thag	Theragāthā	
Thig	Therīgāthā	
Ud	Udāna	
Vbh	Vibhaṅga	
VbhA	Sammohavinodanī	
Vin		Vinaya
Vism	Visuddhimagga	
Vv		Vimānavatthu

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