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**\*CAUTION\*** This is a major spoiler for the practice of Vipassana meditation, and you should NOT read this if you are currently practicing or want to experience yourself. Reading this is dangerous if you cannot control your mind well as it may delude you during your practice. This is the most thorough outline I have seen that details how one achieves Nibbana and realize the Eightfold Noble's Path.

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Translator's Foreword \_\_\_\_\_ [\(Top\)](#)

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To present to the reading public a treatise on Buddhist meditation needs no word of apology today. In wide circles of the West, Buddhist meditation is no longer regarded as a matter of purely academic or exotic interest. Under the stress and complexity of modern life the need for mental and spiritual regeneration is now

widely felt, and in the field of the mind's methodical development the value of Buddhist meditation has been recognized and tested by many.

It is, in particular, the Buddha's Way of Mindfulness (*satipatthana*) that has been found invaluable because it is adaptable to, and beneficial in, widely different conditions of life. The present treatise is based on this method of cultivating mindfulness and awareness, which ultimately aims at the mind's final liberation from greed, hatred, and delusion.

The author of this treatise, the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw (U Sobhana Mahathera), is a Buddhist monk of contemporary Burma and an eminent meditation master. A brief sketch of his life is included in this volume. The path of meditation described in these pages was, and still is, taught by him in his meditation center called Thathana Yeiktha, in Rangoon, and is also set forth in his lectures and books in the Burmese language.

The framework of the treatise is provided by the classical "seven stages of purification" (*satta-visuddhi*), just as in Acariya Buddhaghosa's famous *Visuddhimagga*. On

gradually reaching these stages, various phases of insight knowledge (*ñāna*)

are developed, leading on to the stages of ultimate liberation. The approach followed is that of "bare insight"

(*sukkha-vipassana*)

where, by direct observation, one's own bodily and mental processes are seen with increasing clarity as being impermanent, liable to suffering, and without a self or soul. The meditational practice begins with a few selected subjects of body-contemplation, which are retained up to the very end of the road. With the gradually increasing strength of mindfulness and concentration the range widens and the vision deepens until the insight knowledges unfold themselves in due order, as a natural outcome of the practice. This approach to the ultimate goal of Buddhist meditation is called *bare insight*

because insight into the three characteristics of existence is made use of exclusively here, dispensing with the prior development of full concentrative absorption

*(jhana)*.

Nevertheless, and it hardly needs mention, here too a high degree of mental concentration is required for perseverance in the practice, for attaining to insight knowledge, and for reaping its fruits.

As stated in the treatise itself (p.5), it is not the author's purpose to give a detailed introduction to the practice for the use of beginners. The foremost concern in this work is with a stage where, after diligent preliminary practice, the insight knowledges have begun to emerge, leading up to the highest crest of spiritual achievement, arahantship. Of the basic exercises, the treatise gives only a brief indication, at the beginning of Chapter I. Detailed instruction about these may be gathered by the student from the author's *Practical Insight Meditation* or the translator's book

*The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*.

Also a knowledge of the Buddha's original "Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness" (Satipatthana Sutta) will be indispensable.

This treatise was first written in the Burmese language and later, in 1950, a Pali version of it was composed by the author. As the treatise deals chiefly with the advanced stages of the practice, it was originally not intended for publication. Handwritten or typed copies of the Burmese or Pali version were given only to those who, with some measure of success, had concluded a strict course of practice at the meditation center. For the use of meditators from foreign countries, only a few cyclostyled sheets in English, briefly describing the phases of insight knowledge, were issued instead of the treatise itself. This was done to enable the meditator to identify his personal experience with one or other of the stages described, so that he might direct his further progress accordingly, without being diverted or misled by any secondary phenomena that may have appeared during his practice.

In 1954 the Venerable Author agreed to a printed edition of the Pali version in Burmese script, and after this first publication he also permitted, at the translator's request, the issue of an English version. He had the great kindness to go carefully through the draft translation and the Notes, with the linguistic help of an experienced Burmese lay meditator, U Pe Thin, who for many years had ably served as an interpreter for meditators from foreign countries. The translator's gratitude is due to both his Venerable Meditation Master, the author, and to U Pe Thin.

— Nyanaponika Thera  
Forest Hermitage  
Kandy, Ceylon,  
On the Full-moon Day of June (Poson) 1965.

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Introduction [\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_ \(Top\)](#)

[\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_](#) *Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Enlightened One*

Homage to Him, the Great Omniscient Sage, Who spread the net of rays of His Good Law! These rays of His Good Law — His very message true — Long may they shed their radiance o'er the world!

This treatise explains the progress of insight, [1](#) together with the corresponding stages of purification. [2](#) It has been written in brief for the benefit of meditators who have obtained distinctive results in their practice, so that they may more easily understand their experience. It is meant for those who, in their practice of insight, have taken up as their main subject either the tactile bodily process of motion, [3](#) evident in the rising and falling movement of the abdomen, [4](#) or the tactile bodily process based on three of the primary elements of matter [5](#) evident in the sensation of touch (bodily impact). It is meant for those who, by attending to these exercises, have gained progressive insight as well into the whole body-and-mind process arising at the six sense doors,

[6](#)

and have finally come to see the Dhamma, to attain to the Dhamma, to understand the Dhamma, to penetrate the Dhamma, who have passed beyond doubt, freed themselves from uncertainty, obtained assurance, and achieved independence of others in the Master's dispensation.

[7](#)

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## I. Purification of Conduct [\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_ \(Top\)](#)

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Purification of conduct means here, in the case of male and female devotees (*upasakas* and *upasikas*), the acceptance of the precepts, and the proper guarding and protecting of their observance — whether it be the Five Precepts, the Eight Uposatha Precepts, or the Ten Precepts.

[8](#)

In the case of bhikkhus, purification of conduct is the well-kept purity of the fourfold conduct incumbent upon monks, beginning with restraint according to the disciplinary rules of bhikkhus, called the Patimokkha. Of that fourfold conduct, the restraint according to the Patimokkha rules is of first importance, because only when that restraint is pure will one be able to accomplish the development of meditation. [9](#)

## The Method of Insight in Brief [\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_ \(Top\)](#)

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There are two kinds of meditation development, tranquillity (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassana*).

A person who, of these two, has first developed tranquillity, and after

having established himself in either access concentration or full concentration,

[10](#)

subsequently contemplates the five groups of grasping,

[11](#)

is called a

*samatha-yanika*,

"one who has tranquillity as his vehicle."

As to his method of attaining insight, the *Papañcasudani*, commenting on the Dhammadaya Sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya, says: "Herein, a certain person first produces access concentration or full concentration; this is tranquillity. He then applies insight to that concentration and to the mental states associated with it, seeing them as impermanent, etc.; this is insight." In the

*Visuddhimagga*,

too, it is said: "He whose vehicle is tranquillity should first emerge from any fine-material or immaterial jhana, except the base consisting of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, and he should then discern, according to characteristic, function, etc., the jhana factors consisting of applied thought, etc., and the mental states associated with them"

*(Path of Purification, XVIII,3)*.

He, however, who has neither produced access concentration nor full concentration, but from the very start applies insight to the five groups of grasping, is called *suddha-vipassana-yanika*, [12](#) "one who has pure insight as his vehicle." As to his method of attaining insight it is said in the same Commentary to the Dhammadaya Sutta: "There is another person, who even without having produced the aforesaid tranquillity,

applies insight to the five groups of grasping, seeing them as impermanent, etc." In the

*Visuddhimagga*,

too, it is said thus: "One who has pure insight as his vehicle contemplates the four elements."

In the Susima-paribbajaka Sutta of the Nidānavagga Samyutta, too, it is said by the Buddha: "First arises the knowledge comprehending the actual happening of things (*dhammatthiti-ñāna*) and afterwards arises the knowledge realizing Nibbana (*nibbane ñāna*)."

When purification of conduct has been established, the meditator who has chosen pure insight as his vehicle should endeavor to contemplate the *body-and-mind* (*nama-rupa*). In doing so, he should contemplate, according to their characteristics, [13](#) the five groups of grasping, that is, the bodily and mental processes that become evident to him in his own life-continuity (at his own six sense doors).

[14](#)

Insight must, in fact, be developed by noticing, [15](#) according to their specific and general characteristics,

[16](#)

the bodily and mental processes that become evident at the six sense doors. At the beginning, however, it is difficult to follow and to notice clearly all bodily and mental processes that incessantly appear at the six sense doors. Therefore the meditator who is a beginner should first



notice the perfectly distinct process of touch, perceived through the door of bodily sensitivity; because the

*Visuddhimagga*

says that in insight meditation one should take up what is distinct. When sitting, there occurs the bodily process of touch by way of the sitting posture and through touch sensitivity in the body. These processes of tactile sensitivity should be noticed as "Sitting \_ touching \_," and so forth, in due succession. Further, at the seated meditator's abdomen, the tactile process of bodily motion (that is, the wind, or vibratory, element) which has breathing as its condition, is perceptible continuously as the rise (expansion) and fall (contraction) of the abdomen. That too should be noticed as "rising, falling," and so forth. While the meditator is thus engaged in noticing the element of motion which impinges continuously on the door of bodily sensitivity in the abdomen, it becomes evident to him in its aspects of stiffening, of vibrating, and of pushing and pulling. Here, the aspect of stiffening shows the motion element's

*characteristic nature*

of supporting; the aspect of vibrating shows its

*essential function*

of movement; and the aspect of pushing and pulling shows its

*manifestation*

of impelling.

17

Hence the meditator, noticing the tactile bodily process of rise and fall of the abdomen, accomplishes the observation of the *bodily process (rupa)*, by getting to know the characteristic nature, etc., of the element of motion. Later when he has accomplished the observation of mind (*nama*) and the observation of both

*body and mind*

*(nama-rupa),*

he will also come to know the

*general*

characteristics of the processes concerned — their impermanence, liability to suffering, and their being void of a self.

But while he is engaged in just noticing the rising and falling of the abdomen and other tactile processes, there will appear thoughts of desire, etc., feelings of pleasure, etc., or acts such as adjusting various parts of the body. At that time, these activities (of mind and body) must be noticed, too. After noticing them, he should turn again to the continuous noticing of the tactile process of the rising and falling of the abdomen, which is the basic object of mindfulness in this practice.

This is a brief sketch of the methodical practice of insight. It is not the place here to treat it in detail, because this is a brief essay on the progress of insight through the stages of purification; it is not a treatise explaining in detail the methodical practice of insight.

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## II. The Purification of Mind [\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_ \(Top\)](#)

During the early part of the methodical practice, as long as the meditator's mind is not yet fully purified, wandering thoughts arisen by his thinking of objects of sense desire, etc., will also appear intermittently between thoughts of noticing (the objects of meditation). Sometimes the beginning meditator will perceive occurrence (of these

interruptions) and sometimes he will not. But even if he perceives them, it will be only after a short time has elapsed after their appearance. For then the momentary concentration of his mind is still very tender and weak. So these wandering thoughts continue to hinder his mind while it is occupied in developing the practice of noticing. Hence, these wandering thoughts are called "hindering thoughts."

When, however, the momentary concentration of his mind has become strong, the thought process of noticing becomes well concentrated. Hence, when attending to the objects to be noticed — the abdominal movement, sitting, touching, bending, stretching, seeing, hearing, etc. — his noticing thoughts now appear as if falling upon these objects, as if striking at them, as if confronting them again and again. Then, as a rule, his mind will no longer go elsewhere. Only occasionally, and in a slight degree, will this happen, and even in those cases he will be able to notice any such stray thought at its very arising, as expressed in common speech; or, to be exact, he will notice the stray thought immediately after its actual arising. Then that stray thought will subside as soon as it is noticed and will not arise again. Immediately afterwards he will also be able to resume continuous noticing of any object as it becomes evident to him. That is why his mind at that time is called "unhindered."

While the meditator is thus practicing the exercise of noticing with unhindered mind, the noticing mind will close in upon and fix on whatever object is being noticed, and the act of noticing will proceed without break. At that time there arises in him in uninterrupted succession "the concentration of mind lasting for a moment," directed to each object noticed. This is called *purification of mind*. [18](#)

Though that concentration has only momentary duration, its power of resistance to being overwhelmed by opposition corresponds to that of access concentration.

In the Commentary to the *Visuddhimagga*, in the explanation of the chapter relating to mindfulness of breathing, it is said thus: " 'Momentary unification of mind' means the concentration of mind lasting only for a moment. For that (type of concentration), too, when it occurs uninterruptedly with its respective object in a single mode and is not overcome by opposition, fixes the mind immovably, as if in absorption."

"It occurs uninterruptedly with its respective object" refers to the uninterrupted continuity of the thoughts engaged in noticing; after noticing one object, one attends, in the same manner, to another that follows immediately; [19](#) again, having noticed that object, one turns to the next one, and so on.

"In a single mode" means: though the objects to be noticed, as they present themselves, are numerous and varied, yet the force of concentration of the mind uninterruptedly engaged in noticing remains virtually on the same level. For what is meant here is: just as the first object was noticed with a certain degree of concentration, so the second, third, and other subsequent objects are noticed in each case with the same degree of concentration.

"Is not overcome by opposition": this means that the momentary concentration in its uninterrupted flow is not overwhelmed by the mental hindrances. [20](#)

"As if in absorption": this means that the strength of the momentary concentration is similar to that of concentration which has reached full mental absorption. However, such similarity of momentary concentration with fully absorbed concentration will become evident (only) when the methodical practice of insight reaches its culmination. [21](#)

But is it not said in the Commentaries that the term "purification of mind" applies only to access concentration and fully absorbed concentration? That is true; but one has to take this statement in the sense that momentary concentration is included in access concentration. For in the Commentary to the Satipatthana Sutta it is said: "The remaining twelve exercises are subjects of meditation leading only to Access Concentration." [22](#) Now, in the case of the subjects dealt with in the sections of the Satipatthana Sutta on postures, clear comprehension and elements, the concentration of one who devotes himself to these exercises will be definitely only momentary concentration. But as the latter is able to suppress the hindrances just as access concentration does, [23](#) and since it is the neighbourhood of the noble-path attainment concentration, [24](#) therefore that same momentary concentration is spoken of by the name of "access" (or "neighbourhood") and also the meditation subjects that produce that momentary concentration are called "meditation subjects leading to access concentration." Hence it should be understood that momentary concentration, having the capacity to suppress the hindrances, has also the right to the name "access" and "purification of

mind." Otherwise purification of mind could not come about in one who has made bare insight his vehicle by employing only insight, without having produced either access concentration or fully absorbed concentration.

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III. Purification of View [\(Top\)](#)

[op\)](#) **1. Analytical Knowledge of Body and Mind** [\(T](#)

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Endowed with purification of mind and continuing the practice of noticing, the meditator now comes to know body-and-mind analytically as follows: "The rising (upward movement) of the abdomen is one process; the falling (downward movement) is another; sitting is another; touching is another," etc. In this way he comes to know how to distinguish each bodily process that he notices. Further he realizes: "The knowing of the rising movement is one process; the knowing of the falling movement is another." In that way he comes to know each mental act of noticing. Further he realizes: "The rising movement is one process; the knowing of it is another. The falling movement is one process; the knowing of it is another," and so on. In that way he comes to know how to distinguish each bodily and mental process. All that knowledge comes from simply noticing, not from reasoning; that is to say, it is knowledge by direct experience arrived at by the mere act of noticing, and not knowledge derived from ratiocination.

Thus, when seeing a visual object with the eye, the meditator knows how to distinguish each single factor involved: "The eye is one; the visual object is another; seeing is another, and knowing it is another." The same manner applies in the case of the other sense functions.

For at the time, in each act of noticing, the meditator comes to know analytically the mental processes of noticing, and those of thinking and reflecting, knowing them for himself through direct knowledge by his experience thus: "They have the nature of going towards an object, inclining towards an object, cognizing an object." On the other hand, he knows analytically the material processes going on in the whole body — which are here described as "the rising and falling movements of the abdomen," "sitting," etc., knowing them thus: "These have *not* the nature of going or inclining towards an object, or of cognizing an object." Such knowing is called "knowing matter (or the body) by its manifestation of non-determining." For it is said in the

*Mula-Tika*,

the "Principal Sub-commentary" to the Abhidhamma

*Vibhanga*:

"In other words, 'non-determining' (as in the passage quoted) should be understood as having no faculty of cognizing an object."

Such knowledge as this, which analyzes in each act of noticing both the bodily process noticed and the mental process engaged in noticing, according to their true essential nature, is called "analytical knowledge of body and mind."

When that knowledge has come to maturity, the meditator understands thus: "At the moment of breathing in, there is just the rising movement of the abdomen and the knowing of the movement, but there is no self besides; at the moment of breathing out, there is just the falling movement of the abdomen and the knowing of the movement, but there is no self besides." Understanding it thus in these and other instances, he knows and sees for himself by noticing thus: "There is here only that pair: a material process as object, and a mental process of knowing it; and it is to that pair alone that the terms of conventional usage 'being,' 'person' or 'soul,' 'I' or 'another,' 'man' or 'woman' refer. But apart from that dual process there is no separate person or being, I or another, man or woman."

This is called *purification of view*.

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IV. Purification by Overcoming Doubt [\(Top\)](#)

**2. Knowledge by Discerning Conditionality**



[\(Top\)](#)

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When purification of view has come to maturity, the conditions necessary for the bodily and mental processes observed will also become evident. Firstly, the consciousness that is the condition of the (respective) bodily process will be evident. How? For instance, when bending the arms or legs, the consciousness intending to bend these limbs is evident. So the meditator first notices that consciousness, and next he notices the act of bending, and so on. Then he understands by direct experience: "When there is consciousness intending to bend a limb, the bodily process of bending arises; when there is consciousness intending to stretch a limb, the bodily process of stretching arises." And in the same way he understands other instances too by direct experience.

Again, he also understands by direct experience the condition for the mental process, in the following manner: "In the case of consciousness desirous of running off the track, there arises first a corresponding consciousness giving initial attention (to the distracting object). If that consciousness is not noticed (with mindfulness), then

there arises a consciousness that runs off the track. But if the consciousness of initial attention to the distracting object is noticed and known, no stray thought will arise. It is similar in the case of other (types of consciousness, for instance when taking delight or being angry, greedy, etc.). When both the sense door of the eye and a visual object are present, there arises visual consciousness; otherwise visual consciousness will not arise; and so it is in the case of the other sense doors. If there is a noticeable or recognizable object, then there arises consciousness engaged in noticing or thinking or reasoning or understanding, as the case may be; otherwise no such consciousness arises. Similarly he understands what occurs in every other instance (of mind-door cognition).

At that time, the meditator will generally experience many different painful feelings arising in his body. Now, while one of these feelings is being noticed (but without concern), another feeling will arise elsewhere; and while that is being noticed, again another will appear elsewhere. Thus the meditator follows each feeling as it arises and notices it. But though he is engaged in noticing these feelings as they arise, he will only perceive their initial phase of "arising" and not their final phase of

"dissolution."

Also many mental images of various shapes will then appear. The shape of a dagoba, a monk, a man, a house, a tree, a park, a heavenly mansion, a cloud, and many other such images will appear. Here, too, while the meditator is still engaged in noticing one of these mental images, another will show itself; while still noticing that, yet another will appear. Following thus the mental images as they arise, he goes on noticing them. But though he is engaged in noticing them, he will perceive only their initial phase, not the final phase.

He now understands: "Consciousness arises in accordance with each object that becomes evident. If there is an object, there arises consciousness; if there is no object, no consciousness arises."

Between sequences of noticing he also, by considering inferentially, comes to know thus: "It is due to the presence of such causes and conditions as ignorance,

craving, kamma, etc., that body-and-mind continue."

Such discernment through direct experience and through inference as described, when noticing body-and-mind with their conditions, is called "knowledge of discerning conditionality."

When that knowledge has come to maturity, the meditator perceives only body-and-mind processes occurring in strict accordance with their particular and appropriate conditions and he comes to the conclusion: "Here is only a conditioning body-and-mind process and a conditioned body-and-mind process. Apart from these, there is no person who performs the bending of the limbs, etc., or who experiences feelings of pain, etc."

This is called *purification (of insight) by overcoming doubt*.

### 3. Knowledge of Comprehension \_\_\_\_\_ [\(Top\)](#)

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When this "purification (of insight) by overcoming doubt" has reached maturity, the meditator will discern distinctly the initial, middle, and final phases of any object noticed by him. Then, in the case of various objects noticed, he will discern distinctly that only after each earlier process has ceased, does there arise a subsequent process. For instance, only when the rising movement of the abdomen has come to an end, does there arise the falling movement; only when that has ended, is there again a rising movement. So also in the case of walking: only when the lifting of the foot has come to an end, does there arise the carrying forward of the foot; only when that has been completed, does there follow the placing of the foot on the ground.

In the case of painful feelings, only after each single feeling occurring at its particular place has ceased, will another new feeling arise at another place. On noticing the respective painful feeling repeatedly, twice, thrice or more, the meditator will see that it

gradually grows less, and at last ceases entirely.

In the case of the variously shaped images that enter the mind's field, it is only after each single image noticed has vanished, that another new object will come into the mind's focus. On noticing them attentively twice, thrice or more, he will see well that these mental objects which are being noticed move from one place to another, or they become gradually smaller and less distinct, until at last they disappear entirely. The meditator, however, does not perceive anything that is permanent and lasting, or free from destruction and disappearance.

Seeing how each object, even while being noticed, comes to destruction and disappearance, the meditator comprehends it as *impermanent* in the sense of undergoing destruction. He further comprehends it as *suffering*

(painful) in the sense of breaking up after each arising. Having seen how various painful feelings arise in continuous succession — how if one painful feeling ceases, another arises, and when that has ceased, again another arises — having seen that, he comprehends the respective objects as just a conglomeration of suffering. Further, he comprehends the object as consisting of mere *impersonal* phenomena without a master, in the sense of not arising of (or by) themselves, but arising subject to conditions and then breaking up.

This comprehension of an object noticed, as being impermanent, painful, and without a self (impersonal), through knowing its nature of impermanency, etc., by means of simply noticing, without reflecting and reasoning, is called "knowledge by comprehension through direct experience."

Having thus seen the three characteristics once or several times by direct experience, the meditator, by inference from the direct experience of those objects noticed, comprehends all bodily and mental processes of the past, present, and future, and the whole world, by coming to the conclusion: "They, too, are in the same way impermanent, painful, and without a self." This is called "knowledge of comprehension by inference."

Alluding to this very knowledge, it is said in the *Patis ambhidamagga*:

"Whatever there is of materiality, past, present or future, internal or external, coarse or fine, inferior or superior, far or near, all materiality he defines as impermanent. That is one kind of comprehension," and so on.

Also in the Commentary to the *Kathavatthu* it is said: "Even if the impermanence of only a single formation (conditioned phenomenon) is known,



there may be consideration of the rest by induction thus: 'All formations are impermanent.' "

The words "All formations are impermanent" refer to an understanding by induction, and not to an understanding by perceiving a (co-present) object at the same moment. (This passage is the authority for the usage of the term "inductive insight.")

Also in the Commentary to the Majjhima Nikaya [25](#) it is said: "Because in the case of the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, the insight into the sequence of mental factors belongs to the Buddhas alone and not to the disciples, he (the Buddha) said thus thereby indicating the insight by groups." (This passage is the authority for the usage of the term "comprehension by groups.")

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**4. Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away: \_\_\_\_\_ [\(Top\)](#)**

## The Ten Corruptions of Insight 27

When the meditator, in the exercise of noticing, is able to keep exclusively to the present body-and-mind process, without looking back to past processes or ahead to future ones, then, as a result of insight, (the mental vision of) a *brilliant light*

will appear to him. To one it will appear like the light of a lamp, to others like a flash of lightning, or like the radiance of the moon or the sun, and so on. With one it may last for just one moment, with others it may last longer.

There will also arise in him strong *mindfulness* pertaining to insight. As a result, all the successive arisings of bodily and mental processes will present themselves to the consciousness engaged in noticing, as if

coming to it of themselves; and mindfulness too seems as if alighting on the processes of itself. Therefore the meditator then believes: "There is no body-and-mind process in which mindfulness fails to engage."

His *knowledge* consisting in insight, here called "noticing," will be likewise keen, strong, and lucid. Consequently, he will discern clearly and in separate forms all the bodily and mental processes noticed, as if cutting to pieces a bamboo sprout with a well-sharpened knife. Therefore the meditator then believes: "There is no body-and-mind process that cannot be noticed." When examining the characteristics of impermanence, etc., or other aspects of reality, he understands everything quite clearly and at once, and he believes it to be the knowledge derived from direct experience.

Further, strong *faith* pertaining to insight arises in him. Under its influence, the meditator's mind, when engaged in noticing or thinking, is serene and without any disturbance; and when he is engaged in recollecting the virtues of the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, his mind quite easily gives itself over to them. There arise in him the wish to proclaim the Buddha's Teaching, joyous confidence in the virtues of those engaged in meditation, the desire to advise dear friends and relatives to practice meditation, grateful remembrance of the help received from his meditation master, his spiritual mentor, etc. These and many other similar mental processes will occur.

There arises also *rapture* in its five grades, beginning with minor rapture.

## 28

When purification of mind is gained, that rapture begins to appear by causing "goose-flesh,"

tremor in the limbs, etc.; and now it produces a sublime feeling of happiness and exhilaration, filling the whole body with an exceedingly sweet and subtle thrill. Under its influence, he feels as if the whole body had risen up and remained in the air without touching the ground, or as if it were seated on an air cushion, or as if it were floating up and down.

There arises *tranquillity* of mind with the characteristic of quietening the disturbances of consciousness and its mental concomitants; and along with it appear mental agility, etc.

29

When walking, standing, sitting, or reclining there is, under the influence of these mental qualities, no disturbance of consciousness and its mental concomitants, nor heaviness, rigidity, unwieldiness, sickness, or crookedness.

30

Rather, his consciousness and its mental

concomitants are tranquil through having reached the supreme relief in non-action.

### 31

They are agile in always functioning swiftly; they are pliant in being able to attend to any object desired; they are wieldy, in being able to attend to an object for any length of time desired; they are quite lucid through their proficiency, that is, through the ease with which insight penetrates the object; they are also straight through being directed, inclined, and turned only towards wholesome activities.

There also arises a very sublime feeling of *happiness*

suffusing all his body. Under its influence he becomes exceedingly joyous and he believes: "Now I am happy all the time," or "Now, indeed, I have found happiness never felt before," and he wants to tell others of his extraordinary experience. With reference to that rapture and

happiness, which are aided by the factors of tranquillity, etc., it was said:

Superhuman is the bliss of a monk  
Who, with mind at peace, Having entered a  
secluded place, Wins insight into Dhamma.  
When he fully comprehends The five groups'  
rise and fall, He wins to rapture and to joy —  
The Deathless this, for those who understand.

*Dhammapada vv. 373-374*

There arises in him *energy* that is neither too lax nor too tense but is vigorous and acts evenly. For formerly his energy was sometimes lax, and so he was overpowered by sloth and torpor; hence he could not notice keenly and continuously the objects as they became evident, and his understanding, too, was not clear. And at other times his energy was too

tense, and so he was overpowered by agitation, with the same result of being unable to notice keenly, etc. But now his energy is neither too lax nor too tense, but is vigorous and acts evenly; and so, overcoming these shortcomings of sloth, torpor, and agitation, he is able to notice the objects present keenly and continuously, and his understanding is quite clear, too.

There also arises in him strong *equanimity* associated with insight, which is neutral towards all formations. Under its influence he regards with neutrality even his examination of the nature of these formations with respect to their being impermanent, etc.; and he is able to notice keenly and continuously the bodily and mental processes arising at the time. Then his activity of noticing is carried on without effort, and proceeds, as it were, of itself. Also in adverting to the objects, there arises in him



strong equanimity, by virtue of which his mind enters, as it were, quickly into the objects of advertence.

## 32

There arises further a subtle *attachment* of a calm nature that enjoys the insight graced with the "brilliant light" and the other qualities here described. The meditator, however, is not able to discern it as a corruption but believes it to be just the very bliss of meditation. So meditators speak in praise of it thus: "Only now do I find full delight in meditation!"

Having felt such rapture and happiness accompanied by the "brilliant light" and enjoying the very act of perfect noticing, which is ably functioning with ease and rapidity, the meditator now believes: "Surely I must have attained to

the supramundane path and fruition![33](#) Now I have finished the task of meditation." This is mistaking what is not the path for the path, and it is a corruption of insight which usually takes place in the manner just described. But even if the meditator does not take the "brilliant light" and the other corruptions as an indication of the path and fruition, still he feels delight in them. This is likewise a corruption of insight. Therefore, the knowledge consisting in noticing, even if quick in its functioning, is called "the early stage of (or 'weak') knowledge of arising and passing away," if it is beset and corrupted by those corruptions. For the same reason the meditator is at that time not in a position to discern quite distinctly the arising and passing away of bodily and mental processes.

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## V. Purification by Knowledge and Vision [\(Top\)](#)

## **of What is Path and Not-path**

While engaged in noticing, the meditator either by himself or through instructions from someone else, comes to this decision: "The brilliant light, and the other things experienced by me, are not the path. Delight in them is merely a corruption of insight. The practice of continuously noticing the object as it becomes evident — that alone is the way of insight. I must go on with just the work of noticing." This decision is called purification by knowledge and vision of what is path and not-path.

## **VI. Purification by Knowledge and Vision [\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_ \(Top\)](#)**

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### **of the Course of Practice**

After noticing these manifestations of brilliant light and the others, or after leaving them unheeded, he goes on continuously as before with the act of noticing the bodily and mental processes as they become evident at the six sense doors.

While thus engaged in noticing, he gets over the corruptions relating to brilliant light, rapture, tranquillity, happiness, attachment, etc., and

his knowledge remains concerned exclusively with the arising and passing away of the processes noticed. For then, at each act of noticing, he sees: "The noticed object, having arisen, disappears instantly." It also becomes clear to him that each object disappears just where it arises; it does not move on to another place.

In that way he understands by direct experience how bodily and mental processes arise and break up from moment to moment. It is

such knowledge and understanding resulting from the continuous noticing of bodily and mental processes as they arise and dissolve moment after moment, and the discernment, in separate sections, of the arising and passing away of each of them, while being free from the corruptions, that is called "final knowledge of contemplation of arising and passing away." This is the beginning of "purification by knowledge and vision of the course of practice," which starts from this insight and extends to adaptation knowledge (No.13).

## 5. Knowledge of Dissolution

[\(Top\)](#)

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Noticing the bodily and mental processes as they arise, he sees them part by part, link by link, piece by piece, fraction by fraction: "Just now it arises, just now it dissolves." When that knowledge of arising and passing away becomes mature, keen and strong, it will arise easily and proceed uninterruptedly as if borne onward of itself; also the

bodily and mental processes will be easily discernible. When keen knowledge thus carries on and formations are easily discernible, then neither the arising of each bodily and mental process, nor its middle phase called "presence," nor the continuity of bodily and mental processes called "occurrence as unbroken flux" is apparent to him; nor are the shape of the hand, the foot, the face, the body, and so on, apparent to him. But what is apparent to him is only the *ceasing* of



bodily and mental processes, called "vanishing," or "passing away," or "dissolution."

For instance, while noticing the rising movement of the abdomen, neither its initial nor middle phase is apparent, but only the ceasing or vanishing, which is called the final phase, is apparent; and so it is also with the falling movement of the abdomen. Again, in the case of bending an arm or leg, while noticing the act of bending,

neither the initial nor the middle phase of bending is apparent, nor is the form of the limb apparent, but only the final phase of ceasing and vanishing is apparent. It is similar in the other cases of stretching a limb, and so on.

For at that time each object that is being noticed seems to him to be entirely absent or to have become non-existent. Consequently, at this stage of

knowledge, it seems to him as if he were engaged in noticing something which has already become absent or non-existent by having vanished; and the consciousness engaged in noticing appears to have lost contact with the object that is being noticed. It is for that reason that a meditator may here think: "I have lost the insight"; but he should not think so.

For formerly his consciousness

normally took delight in conceptual objects of shapes, etc.; [34](#) and even up to the knowledge of arising and passing away, the idea of formations with their specific features [35](#) was always apparent to him.

Hence his mind took delight in a plainly distinguishable object consisting of formations, with its particular structure

[36](#)

and its particular feature-idea. But now that his knowledge has developed in the way described, no such idea of the formations'

features or structure appears to him, still less any other, cruder concept. At such a stage, the *arising* of formations, that is, the first phase of the process, is not apparent (as it is in the case of knowledge of arising and passing away), but there is apparent only the dissolution, that is, the final phase, having the nature of vanishing. Therefore the meditator's mind does not take delight in it at first, but he may be sure that soon, after becoming familiar (with that stage of the

practice), his mind will delight in the cessation (of the phenomena) too, which is called their dissolution. With this assurance he should again turn to the practice of continuous noticing.

When thus engaged, he perceives that in each act of noticing there are always present two factors, an objective factor and a subjective one — the object noticed and the mental state of knowing it — which

dissolve and vanish by pairs, one pair after the other. For in each single instance of a rising movement of the abdomen, there are, in fact, numerous physical processes constituting the rising movement, which are seen to dissolve serially. It is like seeing the continuous successive vanishing of a summer mirage moment by moment; or it is like the quick and continuous bursting of bubbles produced in a heavy shower by thick rain drops falling on a water surface; or it is like the quick, successive extinction of

oil-lamps or candles, blown out by the wind, as these lights are being offered at a shrine by devotees. Similar to that appears the dissolving and vanishing, moment by moment, of the bodily processes noticed. And the dissolution of consciousness noticing those bodily processes is apparent to him along with the dissolution of the bodily processes. Also while he is noticing other bodily and mental processes, their dissolution, too, will be apparent to him in the same manner. Consequently, the



knowledge will come to him that whatever part of the whole body is noticed, that object ceases first, and after it the consciousness engaged in noticing that object follows in its wake. From that the meditator will understand very clearly in the case of each successive pair the dissolution of any object whatsoever and the dissolution of the consciousness noticing that very object. (It should be borne in mind that this refers only to understanding arrived at through direct experience by one engaged in

noticing only; it is not an opinion derived from mere reasoning.)

It is the perfectly clear understanding of the dissolution of the two things, pair by pair — that is, (1) of the visual or other object appearing at any of the six sense doors, and (2) of the consciousness noticing that very object — that is called "knowledge of dissolution."

## **6. Awareness of**

# Fearfulness [\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_ \(Top\)](#)

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When that knowledge of dissolution is mature, there will gradually arise, just by seeing the dissolution of all object-and-subject-formations, awareness of fearfulness [37](#) and other (higher) knowledges, together with their respective aspects of fear, and so on.

[38](#)

Having seen how the dissolution of two things — that is, any object noticed and the insight-thought engaged in noticing it — takes place moment by moment, the meditator also understands by inference that in the past, too, every conditioned thing (formation) has broken up in the same way, that just so it will break up also in the future, and that at the present it breaks up,

too. And just at the time of noticing any formations that are evident, these formations will appear to him in their aspect of fearfulness. Therefore, during the very act of noticing, the meditator will also come to understand: "These formations are indeed fearful."

Such understanding of their fearfulness is called "knowledge of the awareness of

fearfulness"; it has also the name "knowledge of fear." At that time, his mind itself is gripped by fear and seems helpless.

## 7. Knowledge of Misery \_

[\(Top\)](#)

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When he has realized the fearfulness (of the formations) through the knowledge of

fear, and keeps on noticing continuously, then the "knowledge of misery" will arise in him before long. When it has arisen, all formations everywhere — whether among the objects noticed, or among the states of consciousness engaged in noticing, or in any kind of life or existence that is brought to mind — will appear insipid, without a vitalizing factor, [39](#) and unsatisfying. So he sees,

at that time, only suffering,  
only unsatisfactoriness, only  
misery. Therefore this state is  
called "knowledge of misery."

## 8. Knowledge of Disgust            [\(Top\)](#)

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Seeing thus the misery in  
conditioned things  
(formations), his mind finds  
no delight in those miserable



things but is entirely disgusted with them. At times, his mind becomes, as it were, discontented and listless. Even so he does not give up the practice of insight, but spends his time continuously engaging in it. He therefore should know that this state of mind is not dissatisfaction with meditation, but is precisely the "knowledge of disgust"

that has the aspect of being disgusted with the formations. Even if he directs his thought to the happiest sort of life and existence, or to the most pleasant and desirable objects, his mind will not take delight in them, will find no satisfaction in them. On the contrary, his mind will incline and lean and tend only towards Nibbana.

Therefore the following thought will arise in him between moments of noticing: "The ceasing of all formations that are dissolving from moment to moment — that alone is happiness."

## **9. Knowledge of Desire for Deliverance**

[\(Top\)](#)

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When through this knowledge (now acquired) he feels disgust with regard to every formation noticed, there will arise in him a desire to forsake these formations or to become delivered from them. The knowledge relating to that desire is

called "knowledge of desire for deliverance." At that time, usually various painful feelings arise in his body, and also an unwillingness to remain long in one particular bodily posture. Even if these states do not arise, the comfortless nature of the formations will become more evident than ever. And due to that, between

moments of noticing, he feels a longing thus: "Oh, may I soon get free from that! Oh, may I reach the state where these formations cease! Oh, may I be able to give up these formations completely!" At this juncture, his consciousness engaged in noticing seems to shrink from the object noticed at each moment of noticing,

and wishes to escape from it.

## 10. Knowledge of Re-observation

[\(Top](#)

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Being thus desirous of escaping from the

formations, the meditator makes stronger effort and continues the practice of noticing these very formations with the single purpose of forsaking them and escaping from them. For that reason, the knowledge arising at that time is called "knowledge of re-observation." The term "re-observation" has



the same meaning as "re-noticing" or "re-contemplation." Then the nature (or characteristics) of the formations — their being impermanent, suffering, and without a self — will be clearly evident to him; and among these three, the aspect of suffering will be particularly distinct.

At this stage, too, there will usually arise in his body various kinds of pains which are severe, sharp, and of growing intensity. Hence his whole bodily and mental system will seem to him like an unbearable mass of sickness or a

conglomeration of suffering. And a state of restlessness will usually manifest itself, making him incapable of keeping to one particular posture for any length of time. For then he will not be able to hold any one position long, but will soon want to change it. This state, however, simply

manifests the unbearable nature of the formations. Though he wants to change his bodily posture, still he should not give in easily to that wish, but should endeavor to remain motionless for a longer period in the same posture and continue to carry on the practice of

noticing. By doing so he will be able to overcome his restlessness.

Now his insight knowledge is quite strong and lucid, and by virtue of it even his painful feelings will at once cease as soon as they are firmly

noticed. Even if a painful feeling does not cease completely, he will perceive that it is dissolving, part by part, from moment to moment. That is to say, the ceasing, vanishing, and disappearing of each single moment of feeling will become apparent separately in each

corresponding act of noticing. In other words, now it will not be as it was at the time of the knowledge of comprehension, when the constant flow or continuity of feelings of the same kind was apparent as a single unit. But if, without abandoning the practice, that feeling of pain is

firmly and continuously noticed, it will entirely cease before long. When it ceases in that way, it does so for good and will not arise again. Though in that way the insight knowledge may have become strong and perfectly lucid, still he is not satisfied with that much. He will even think:



"My insight knowledge is not clear." He should, however, dismiss such thoughts by applying the act of noticing to them, and he should go on with his task of continuously noticing the bodily and mental formations as they occur.

If he perseveres thus, his noticing will become more and more clear as the time passes in minutes, hours, and days. Then he will overcome the painful feelings and the restlessness in being unable to remain long in one particular posture, and also the idea that his insight knowledge is not

yet clear enough. His noticing will then function rapidly, and at every moment of noticing he will understand quite clearly any of the three characteristics of impermanence, etc.

This understanding of any

of the three characteristics of impermanence, etc., through the act of noticing which functions with promptness in quick succession, is called "strong knowledge of re-observation."

## **11. Knowledge of Equanimity about**

# Formations

\_\_\_\_\_ (T

op)

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When this knowledge of re-observation is mature, there will arise knowledge perceiving evident bodily and mental processes in continuous succession

quite naturally, as if borne onward of itself. This is called "knowledge of equanimity about formations."

Now, in the act of noticing, effort is no longer required to keep

formations before the mind or to understand them. After the completion of each single act of noticing, the object to be noticed will then appear of itself, and insight knowledge, too, will of itself notice and understand it. It is as if no further effort need be made by the meditator.

Formerly, owing to seeing the dissolution of formations, there arose, in successive order, the aspect of fearfulness, the perception of misery, the aspect of disgust, the desire for deliverance, and dissatisfaction with the knowledge so far acquired. But now these



mental states no longer arise even though, in the present state too, the breaking up of formations which are dissolving more rapidly is closely perceived. Even if a painful feeling arises in the body, no mental disturbance (grief) arises, and there is no lack of fortitude in

bearing it. Generally, however, at this stage, pains will be entirely absent, that is, they do not arise at all. Even if the meditator thinks about something fearful or sad, no mental disturbance will arise, be it in the form of fear or of sorrow. This, firstly, is "the abandoning of fear"

at the stage of  
"equanimity about  
formations."

At the earlier stage, on  
attaining knowledge of  
arising and passing  
away, great joy had  
arisen on account of the  
clarity of insight. But now

this kind of joy does not arise, even though there is present the exceedingly peaceful and sublime clarity of mind belonging to "equanimity about formations." Though he actually sees desirable objects conducive to joy, or though he thinks about various enjoyable

things, no strong feeling of joy will arise. This is "the abandoning of delight" at the stage of "equanimity about formations."

He cherishes no desire nor hate with regard to any object, desirable or

undesirable, that comes into the range of his sense doors, but taking them as just the same in his act of noticing, he understands them (that is to say, it is a pure act of understanding). This is "equable vision" at the stage of "equanimity about formations."

Of these three qualities just mentioned, it is said in the *Path of Purification*:

"Having discarded fear and delight, he is impartial and neutral towards all formations" (*Visuddhimagga*, xxi, 62).

If he resumes the practice of noticing with the thought: "Now I will do it vigorously again!" then, before long, the noticing will function efficiently as if borne onward of itself. From now onwards there is no need for the meditator to



make further (deliberate) effort. Though he does not make a (deliberate) effort, his noticing will proceed in a continuous and steady flow for a long time; it will go on even for two or three hours without interruption. This is "the state of long-lasting (practice)" of equanimity

about formations.

Referring to this it is said in the *Patisambhidamagga*: " 'The wisdom lasting long' is the knowledge present in the mental states of equanimity about formations." The Great Commentary to the *Path of Purification* explains as follows:

"This is said with reference to knowledge functioning in a continuous flow."

Now when noticing functions spontaneously as if borne onward of itself, the mind, even if sent out towards a

variety of objects,  
generally refuses to go;  
and even if it does go, it  
will not stay long but will  
soon return to the usual  
object to be noticed, and  
will resume continuous  
noticing. In this  
connection it was said:  
"He shrinks, recoils, and  
retreats; he does not go  
forth to it."

# 12. Insight Leading to Emergence



[Top](#)



So, through knowledge of equanimity about formations, which is endowed with many

virtues, blessings, and powers, he notices the formations as they occur. When this knowledge is mature, having become keen, strong, and lucid, on reaching its culmination point, it will understand any of the formations as being impermanent

or painful or without self, just by seeing their dissolution. Now that act of noticing any one characteristic out of the three, which is still more lucid in its perfect understanding, manifests itself two or three times or more in rapid succession. This

is called "insight  
leading to emergence."

40

Thereupon,  
immediately after the  
last consciousness in  
the series of acts of  
noticing belonging to



this insight leading to emergence, the meditator's consciousness leaps forth into Nibbana, which is the cessation of all formations, taking it as its object. Then there appears to him the stilling (subsidence) of all formations called

cessation.

This mode of realization of Nibbana has been mentioned in many discourses of the Master, for example: "The vision of truth arose: whatsoever has

the nature of arising is bound to cease." Herein the words "bound to cease" indicate the aspect of realizing the stilling and ceasing of all formations which have the nature of arising.

# Also in the *Questions of King Milinda*

it is said: "His consciousness, while carrying on the practice of bringing to mind (i.e., noticing), passes beyond the continuous occurrence of phenomena and alights upon non-occurrence.

One who, having practiced in the correct manner, has alighted upon non-occurrence, O king, is said to have realized Nibbana."

The meaning is this: the meditator who wishes

to realize Nibbana should repeatedly bring to mind, through the practice of noticing, every bodily and mental process that appears at any of the six sense doors. When he brings them to mind thus, his consciousness engaged in noticing —

here called "bringing to mind" — will, until adaptation knowledge is reached, fall at every moment upon the (conditioned) bodily and mental formations called here "continuous occurrence," because they go on occurring over and over again in

an unbroken flow, like a river's current. But in the last phase, instead of falling upon that continuous occurrence, consciousness passes beyond it and alights upon "non-occurrence," which is the very opposite of the bodily and mental formations



called here  
"occurrence." In other  
words, it arrives at  
non-occurrence, that is  
to say, it reaches, as if  
it "alights upon,"  
cessation, which is the  
stilling of the formations  
(or conditioned  
phenomena). When the  
meditator, having

already before  
practiced correctly and  
without deviation by  
way of the knowledge  
of arising and passing  
away and the other  
knowledges (or by way  
of the purification of  
conduct, of mind, of  
view, etc.), has in this  
manner arrived at

non-occurrence (by the consciousness alighting upon it), he is said to have "realized Nibbana." He is called one who has made Nibbana a direct experience and has actually seen it.

## **13. Knowledge of**

# Adaptation



[Top](#)



Here the knowledge  
by way of noticing that  
occurs last in the  
series constituting  
insight leading to  
emergence, is called

"knowledge of  
adaptation." [41](#)

This is the end of the *p*  
*urification by*  
*knowledge and vision*  
*of the course of*  
*practice.*

# 14. Maturity Knowledge

(Top

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Immediately  
afterwards, a type of  
knowledge manifests

itself that, as it were, falls for the first time into Nibbana, which is void of formations (conditioned phenomena) since it is the cessation of them. This knowledge is called "maturity knowledge." [42](#)

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# VII. Purification by Knowledge and Vision (To p)

## 15. Path Knowledge

(Top)



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It is followed  
immediately by  
knowledge that  
abides in that same  
Nibbana, which is  
void of formations  
since it is the

cessation of them.  
This is called "path  
knowledge." [43](#) It is  
also called  
"purification by  
knowledge and  
vision."

## **16. Fruition Knowledge**

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(T

op)

That again is  
immediately  
followed by  
knowledge that

belongs to the final stage and continues in the course of its predecessor. It abides in that same Nibbana, which is void of formations since it is the cessation of them.

This is called  
"fruition knowledge."

# 17. Knowledge of Reviewing

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[\(Top\)](#)

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The duration of that  
threefold  
knowledge of  
maturity, path, and  
fruition is, however,  
not long. It is very  
short, and lasts for  
just an instant, like  
the duration of a

single thought of  
noticing.

Subsequently there  
arises "knowledge  
of reviewing."

Through that  
knowledge of  
reviewing the  
meditator discerns

that the insight  
leading to  
emergence came  
along with the very  
rapid function of  
noticing, and that  
immediately after  
the last phase of  
noticing, the path



consciousness  
entered into the  
cessation (of  
formations). This is  
"knowledge  
reviewing the path."

He also discerns that the consciousness abided in that same state of cessation during the intervening period between the path and reviewing. This

is "knowledge  
reviewing fruition."

He further discerns  
that the object just  
experienced is void  
of all formations.

This is "knowledge  
reviewing  
Nibbana."

In this connection it  
is said in the *Path  
of Purification:*

" 'By that path,  
indeed, I have  
come'; thus he  
reviews the path.  
'That blessing was  
obtained'; thus he  
reviews the fruition.  
'That state has  
been penetrated as

an object by me';

44

thus he reviews the  
Deathless,  
Nibbana"  
*(Visuddhimagga,*  
xxii, 20).

Some meditators,  
but not all, have  
"reviewing of  
defilements."[45](#)

After having  
reviewed in this

way, the meditator still continues the practice of noticing bodily and mental processes as they become evident. But while he is thus engaged in noticing, the bodily



and mental processes appear to him quite coarse, not subtle as before at the time of the knowledge of equanimity about formations. Why is this so? This is so

because the  
knowledge present  
now has the nature  
of the knowledge of  
arising and passing  
away. For when the  
noble disciples  
(namely,  
stream-winners,

etc.) resume the practice of insight (by noticing), the knowledge of arising and passing away usually arises at the beginning. This is the usual course of order in

this respect.

However, when  
some meditators  
emerge from the  
attainment of path  
and fruition, great

faith, happiness,  
rapture, and  
tranquillity,  
produced by virtue  
of the attainment,  
arise flooding the  
whole body. Owing  
to that, they are  
unable to carry out

the practice of noticing anything apparent at that time. Even if they make double effort and attempt to proceed with the practice of insight, they fail to discern

the phenomena  
clearly and  
separately, at the  
moment of their  
occurrence. They  
continue to  
experience only  
rapture, tranquillity,  
and happiness,

which occur with  
great force. This  
state of mind,  
which is  
extraordinarily  
serene through the  
strong faith  
prevailing, lasts for  
one hour, two



hours, or more,  
without break.

Because of this,  
meditators feel as if  
they were in some  
such place as a  
wide open space  
suffused with  
radiance and most

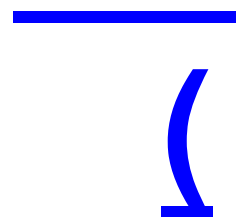
delightful. The  
rapture and  
happiness, of a  
serene character,  
that then arise are  
praised by  
meditators thus:  
"Surely, I have  
never before felt

and experienced  
such happiness!"  
After two or three  
hours have passed,  
that faith,  
happiness, rapture,  
and tranquillity will  
fade. The  
meditators can

once again proceed  
with noticing the  
bodily and mental  
processes as they  
occur,  
distinguishing them  
separately, and  
they will be able to  
discern them

clearly. But at that time, too, first the knowledge of arising and passing away will appear.

## **18. Attainment of Fruition**





and soon will again reach the stage of equanimity about formations. If his power of concentration is still short of perfection, only the equanimity about

formations will go  
on repeating itself.  
But if his  
concentration has  
reached  
perfection, then, in  
the case of one  
who does the  
insight practice of



noticing with a  
view of attaining  
only to the first  
path and fruition,  
the fruition  
consciousness of  
the first path alone  
reaches cessation  
of formations by

way of the *attainm  
ent of fruition.*

46

This occurs in  
precisely the same  
way as the path  
and fruition  
consciousness that  
occurred earlier in

the  
consciousness-seq  
uence belonging to  
the initial  
attainment of the  
first path. The only  
difference here is  
the capacity of the  
fruition attainment

to last long.

One should also  
set one's mind  
resolutely upon the  
further tasks: to be  
able to repeat the

achievement of  
fruition attainment,  
to achieve it  
rapidly, and, at the  
time of  
achievement, to  
abide in it a long  
time, say for six,  
ten, fifteen or thirty

minutes, or for an hour or more.

In one who applies himself to achieving the attainment of

fruition, knowledge  
of arising and  
passing away will  
arise at the  
beginning.

Advancing from  
there in the due  
sequence, soon  
the knowledge of

equanimity about  
formations is  
reached. But when  
skill in the practice  
has been  
acquired, the  
knowledge of  
equanimity about  
formations will



arise quickly even  
after four or five  
acts of noticing. If  
the power of  
concentration has  
reached  
perfection, the  
fruition  
consciousness will

repeatedly become  
absorbed in  
cessation by way  
of fruition  
attainment. The  
mind can thus  
reach absorption  
even while one is  
walking up and

down, or while  
taking a meal, and  
the fruition  
attainment can  
remain for any  
length of time  
resolved upon.  
During the fruition  
attainment, the

mind will abide  
only in the  
cessation of  
formations and will  
not be aware of  
anything else.

## **19. The Higher Paths and**

# Fruitions

-  
p)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(To  
\_\_\_\_\_

When the  
meditator has thus  
become skilled in

achieving the  
fruition attainment,  
he should  
resolutely set his  
mind upon the  
task of attaining to  
the higher paths  
and fruitions.

What should now  
be done by one  
who has set  
himself that task?  
Just as before, he  
should carry out  
the practice of  
noticing (anything

occurring) at the  
six sense doors.

Hence, the  
meditator should  
notice any bodily



and mental  
process that  
becomes evident  
to him at the six  
sense doors.

While he is thus  
engaged, he will  
see, at the stage

of knowledge of  
arising and  
passing away,  
that the first  
objects consisting  
of formations  
appear to him  
rather coarse, and

that his mind is  
not well  
concentrated. The  
development of  
insight belonging  
to the higher  
paths is, in fact,  
not as easy as

that of insight  
belonging to the  
fruition attainment  
already achieved  
by the meditator.  
It is in fact  
somewhat difficult,  
due to the fact

that insight has to  
be developed  
anew. It is,  
however, not so  
very difficult as it  
was at the first  
time when  
beginning the

practice. In a single day, or even in a single hour, he can gain the knowledge of equanimity about formations. This statement is made

here, basing it on  
the experience  
usually gained by  
persons of the  
present day who  
had to be given  
guidance from the  
start and who did

not possess  
particularly strong  
intelligence. Here  
it is applied, by  
inference, to  
similar types of  
persons in  
general.



But although  
equanimity about  
formations has  
been attained, if  
the spiritual  
faculties 47 have

not yet reached  
full maturity, it just  
goes on repeating  
itself. Though he  
who has won (one  
of the lower)  
fruits may be  
able to enter into it

several times  
within one hour,  
yet if his spiritual  
faculties are  
immature, he  
cannot attain the  
next higher path  
within as much as

one day, two,  
three, or more  
days. He abides  
merely in  
equanimity about  
formations. If,  
however, he then  
directs his mind to

reach the fruition  
already attained,  
he will reach it  
perhaps in two or  
three minutes.

When, however,  
the spiritual  
faculties are  
mature, one who  
carries out the  
practice of insight  
for attaining to a  
higher path will

find that  
immediately after  
equanimity about  
formations has  
reached its  
culmination, the  
higher path and  
fruition arise in the

same way as  
before (i.e., as at  
the time of the first  
path and fruition),  
that is to say, it is  
preceded by the  
stages of  
adaptation and



maturity. After the fruition, the stages of reviewing, etc., that follow are also the same as before.

Anything else  
concerning the  
method of practice  
for insight and the  
progress of  
knowledge right  
up to arahantship  
can be

understood in  
precisely the  
same way as  
described. Hence  
there is no need  
to elaborate it any  
further.

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# Conclusion

(Top)

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Now, the present  
treatise on the

"Progress of  
Insight through  
the Stages of  
Purification" has  
been written in a  
concise form, so  
that meditators  
can easily

comprehend it.  
Hence complete  
details have not  
been given here.  
And since it was  
written with a view  
to making it easily  
intelligible, in

many passages of  
this treatise  
relevant canonical  
references have  
not been quoted,  
and there are  
repetitions and  
other faults of

literary  
composition. But  
these  
shortcomings of  
presentation and  
the  
incompleteness of  
canonical



references may  
here be  
overlooked by the  
reader. Only the  
meaning and  
purpose should be  
heeded well by  
the wise. It is to

this that I would  
invite the reader's  
attention.

Though in the  
beginning it was

mentioned that  
this treatise has  
been written for  
those who have  
already obtained  
distinctive results  
in their practice,  
others may

perhaps read it  
with advantage,  
too.

Now these are my  
concluding good

wishes for the  
latter type of  
readers: Just as a  
very delicious,  
appetizing, tasty  
and nutritious  
meal can be  
appreciated fully

only by one who  
has himself eaten  
it, and not without  
partaking of it, in  
the same way, the  
whole series of  
knowledges  
described here

can be  
understood fully  
only by one who  
has himself seen  
it by direct  
experience, and  
not otherwise. So  
may all good

people reach the  
stage of  
indubitable  
understanding of  
this whole series  
of knowledges!  
May they also  
strive to attain it!



This  
treatise on the  
purities and  
insights, For  
meditators who  
have seen things  
clear, Although  
their store of

learning may be  
small — The  
Elder, Mahasi by  
name, in insight's  
method skillful,  
Has written it in  
Burmese tongue  
and into Pali

rendered it.

The Treatise on  
the Purities and  
Insights  
composed on

22.5.1950  
is here concluded.

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**Notes**

(Top

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1. Here, and in the title of this treatise, the Pali term *ñāna* has been rendered by

"insight," as at  
the outset the  
word

"knowledge," the  
normal rendering  
of *ñā*

*na,*

might not be

taken by the  
reader with the  
full weight and  
significance  
which it will  
receive in the  
context of the  
present treatise.

In all the following occurrences, however, this Pali term has been translated by "knowledge," while the word "insight" has



been reserved for  
the Pali term  
*vipassana*.

When referring to  
the several types  
and stages of  
knowledge, the  
plural

"knowledges" has  
been used, in  
conformity with  
the Pali  
*ñānani*.

2. In the canonical Buddhist scriptures, the seven stages of purification (*visuddhi*) are mentioned in

the Discourse on  
the Stage  
Coaches  
(Majjhima Nikaya  
No. 24). They are  
also the  
framework of the  
Venerable

Buddhaghosa's  
*Path of  
Purification  
(Visuddhimagga),*  
where they are  
explained in full.  
(Translation by  
Ñānamoli Thera,

publ. by BPS.)

3. "Motion" (*vayo*,  
lit. wind, air)  
refers to the last  
of the four

# material elements

*(dhatu)*,  
or primary  
qualities of  
matter. The other  
three are: earth  
(solidity,

hardness), water  
(adhesion), and  
fire (caloricity).

These four  
elements, in  
varying  
proportional  
strength, are



present in all  
forms of matter.  
The so-called  
"inner wind  
element" which  
applies in this  
context is active  
in the body as

motion, vibration,  
and pressure  
manifesting itself  
in the passage of  
air through the  
body (e.g., in  
breathing), in the  
movement and

pressure of limbs  
and organs, and  
so on. It becomes  
perceptible as a  
tactile process, or  
object of touch  
*(photthabbaramm  
ana),*

through the  
pressure caused  
by it.

4. The attention  
directed to the

movement of the  
abdomen was  
introduced into  
the methodical  
practice of  
insight-meditation  
by the author of  
this treatise, the

Venerable  
Mahasi Sayadaw,  
and forms here  
the basic object  
of meditative  
practice. For  
details see *The  
Heart of Buddhist*

*Meditation*  
by Nyanaponika  
Thera (London:  
Rider & Co.,  
1962; BPS,  
1992), pp. 94f.,  
106. If preferred,  
the breath itself

may instead be  
taken as the  
basic object of  
meditative  
attention,  
according to the  
traditional method  
of "mindfulness of



breathing"  
*(anapanasati)*;

see

*Heart of Buddhist  
Meditation,*  
pp. 108ff.

*Mindfulness of  
Breathing*

by Ñāṇamoli  
Thera (BPS,  
1982).

5. According to  
the Buddhist

Abhidhamma  
teachings, only  
the three  
elements of  
earth, fire, and  
wind constitute  
the tactile  
substance in

matter. The  
element of water  
is not held to be  
an object of touch  
even in cases  
where it  
predominates, as  
in liquids. What is

tactile in any  
given liquid is the  
contribution of the  
other three  
elements to its  
composite nature.

6. "Door" is a figurative expression for the sense organs (which, including the mind, are sixfold), because they provide, as it

were, the access  
to the world of  
objects.

7. The preceding  
sequence of

terms is  
frequently used in  
the Discourses  
(Suttas) of the  
Buddha to refer  
to those  
individuals who  
have attained to



the first  
supramundane  
stage on the road  
to arahantship,  
i.e., stream-entry  
(*sotapatti*),  
or the following  
ones. See Note

33. The term  
*Dhamma*  
refers here to  
Nibbana.

8. I. The Five

Precepts binding  
on all Buddhist  
laymen, are:  
abstention from  
(1) killing, (2)  
stealing, (3)  
unlawful sexual  
intercourse, (4)

lying, (5)  
intoxicants.

II. The Eight  
Uposatha  
Precepts are:

abstention from  
(1) killing, (2)  
stealing, (3) all  
sexual  
intercourse, (4)  
lying, (5)  
intoxicants, (6)  
partaking of solid

food and certain  
liquids after noon,  
(7) abstention  
from (a) dance,  
song, music,  
shows  
(attendance and  
performance), (b)

from perfumes,  
ornaments, etc.,  
(8) luxurious  
beds. This set of  
eight precepts is  
observed by  
devout Buddhist  
lay followers on

full-moon days  
and on other  
occasions.

III. The Ten  
Precepts: (1)-(6)



= 11, 1-6; (7) = 11,  
7 (a); (8) = 11, 7  
(b); (9) = 11, 8;  
(10) abstention  
from acceptance  
of gold and silver,  
money, etc.

9. The other  
three items of the  
monk's fourfold  
pure conduct are  
control of the  
senses, purity of

livelihood, and  
pure conduct  
concerning the  
monk's requisites.

10. Access (or

"neighbourhood")  
concentration  
*(upacara-samadh  
i)*  
is that degree of  
mental  
concentration that  
approaches, but

not yet attains,  
the full  
concentration  
(*appana-samadhi*  
)  
of the first  
absorption  
(*jhana*).

It still belongs to  
the sensuous  
plane  
*(kamavacara)*  
of consciousness,  
while the jhanas  
belong to the  
fine-material

plane  
*(rupavacara).*

11. *Pañcupadana*  
*kkhandha.*

These five

groups, which are  
the objects of  
grasping, are: (1)  
corporeality, (2)  
feeling, (3)  
perception, (4)  
mental  
formations, (5)



# consciousness.

12. Also called *su  
kkhavipassana-y  
anika.*

**13**. Literally:  
"according to  
their true nature  
and function."

14. This method of meditation aims at "knowledge by direct experience" (*paccakkha-ñāna*), resulting from mindfulness

directed towards  
one's own bodily  
and mental  
processes. It is  
for that reason  
that here express  
mention is made  
of "one's own life

continuity."  
Having gathered  
the decisive  
direct experience  
from the  
contemplation of  
his own body and  
mind, the

meditator will  
later extend the  
contemplation to  
the life-processes  
of others, by way  
of inference  
*(anumana)*.  
See, in the

Satipatthana  
Sutta, the  
recurrent  
passage:  
"contemplating  
the body, etc.,  
externally."

**15**. "Noticing" (*sal  
lakkhana*)  
is a key term in  
this treatise. The  
corresponding  
verb in the Pali



language is

*sallakkheti*

(*sam*

+

*lakh*),

which can be

translated

adequately as

well as literally by  
"to mark clearly."

Though the use  
of "to mark" in the  
sense of "to  
observe" or "to  
notice" is quite  
legitimate in

English, it is  
somewhat  
unusual and  
unwieldy in its  
derivations.  
Hence the  
rendering by  
"noticing" was

chosen.

"Noticing" is  
identical with  
"bare attention,"  
the term used in  
the translator's  
book

*The Heart of*

# *Buddhist Meditation.*

## 16. The Sub-commentary to the Brahmajala

Sutta explains as follows: "Things in their true nature (*param atthadhamma*) have two characteristics or marks: specific

characteristics  
and general  
characteristics.

The  
understanding of  
the specific  
characteristics is  
knowledge by

experience  
(*paccakkha-ñāna*  
),

while the  
understanding of  
the general  
characteristics is  
knowledge by



inference  
*(anumāna-ñāna)*.  
"

The specific  
characteristic, for  
instance, of the  
element of motion

*(vayo-dhatu)*  
is its nature of  
supporting, its  
function of  
moving; its  
general  
characteristics  
are

impermanence,  
etc.

17. The three  
terms printed in  
italics are

standard  
categories of  
definition used in  
the Pali  
Commentaries  
and the *Visud*  
*dhimagga*.  
In the case of

mental  
phenomena, a  
fourth category,  
"proximate  
condition"  
*(padatthana)*  
is added. The  
definition of the

element of motion  
(or of wind)  
occurs, for  
instance, in the  
*Visuddhimagga*  
(XI, 93) and is  
shown in this  
treatise to be a

fact of direct  
experience.

18. "Purification  
of mind" refers to  
mental

concentration of  
either of two  
degrees of  
intensity: full  
concentration or  
access  
concentration  
(see Note 10). In



both types of  
concentration, the  
mind is  
temporarily  
purified from the  
five mental  
hindrances (see  
Note 20), which

defile the mind  
and obstruct  
concentration.

19. The "other"  
objects may also

belong to the  
same series of  
events, for  
instance, the  
recurrent rise and  
fall of the  
abdomen.

20. The five  
mental  
hindrances (*ni  
varana*)  
which obstruct  
concentration,

are: (1)  
sense-desire, (2)  
ill-will, (3) sloth  
and torpor, (4)  
agitation and  
remorse, (5)  
sceptical doubt.  
For details, see

*The Five Mental  
Hindrances and  
their Conquest,*  
by Nyanaponika  
Thera (BPS  
Wheel No. 26).

21. Insight reaches its culmination on attaining to the perfection of the "purification by knowledge and vision of the

course of  
practice." See  
Note 41 and the  
*Visuddhimagga*,  
XXI, 1.



**22**. This passage  
is translated in  
*The Way of  
Mindfulness*  
by Soma Thera  
(3rd ed., BPS,  
1967), p. 104,  
where, for our

term "access  
concentration,"  
the rendering  
"partial  
absorption" is  
used.

**23**. When  
occurring during  
the practice of  
tranquillity  
meditation.

24. This is the fully absorbed concentration (*jhana*) achieved at the attainment of the noble paths and fruitions.

**25**. In the  
Commentary to  
the Majjhima  
Nikaya No.111,  
the Anupada  
Sutta.

26. The *Visuddhi magga* says that both terms, "knowledge by inductive insight"

and  
"comprehension  
by groups," are  
names for the  
same type of  
insight. According  
to the  
*Paramattha-manj*

*usa,*  
its Commentary,  
the former term  
was used in  
Ceylon, the latter  
in India.



**27**. The ten  
corruptions of  
insight (*vipass  
anupakkilesa*)  
are first  
mentioned in the  
*Patisambhidama  
gga*

(PTS, Vol. II, pp.100f.) and are explained in the *Visuddhimagga* (XX, 105ff.). The names and the sequence of the terms as given in

this treatise differ slightly from those found in the above two sources.

28. The five grades of rapture (*piti*), dealt with in the *Visuddhimagga* (IV,94) are: (1) minor, (2) momentarily

recurring, (3)

flooding, (4)

elevating, (5)

suffusing.

**29**. This passage

refers to the six  
pairs of  
qualitative factors  
of mental activity,  
which, according  
to the  
Abhidhamma, are  
present in all

moral  
consciousness  
though in  
different degrees  
of development.  
The first pair is  
tranquillity (a) of  
consciousness,

and (b) of its  
concomitant  
mental factors.  
The other pairs  
are agility,  
pliancy,  
wieldiness,  
proficiency, and



uprightness, all of which have the same twofold division as stated before. These six pairs represent the formal, or structural, side of

moral  
consciousness.  
For details see  
*Abhidhamma  
Studies,*  
by Nyanaponika  
Thera (2nd ed.  
BPS, 1985),

pp.81f.

30. These six  
obstructions of  
mind are  
countered by the

six pairs of  
mental factors  
mentioned in  
Note 29 and in  
the following  
sentence of the  
text.

**31**. *Non-action*,  
non-activity or  
non-busyness,  
refers to the  
receptive, but  
keenly watchful,

attitude of  
noticing (or bare  
attention).

32. *Advertence* is  
the first stage of

the perceptual  
process, as  
analyzed in the  
Abhidhamma. It  
is the first  
"turning-towards"  
the object of  
perception; in

other words,  
initial attention.

**33**. The  
supramundane  
paths and



fruits are:  
stream-entry,  
once-returning,  
non-returning,  
and arahantship.  
By attaining to  
the first path and  
fruition, that of

stream-entry,  
final deliverance  
is assured at the  
latest after seven  
more rebirths.

**34.** "Conceptual objects of shapes" (*sant hana-paññatti*).  
The other two types of concepts intended here are: the concepts

of individual  
identity derived  
from the  
*continuity*  
of serial  
phenomena  
*(santati-paññatti)*,  
and collective

concepts derived  
from the  
*agglomeration*  
of phenomena  
*(samuha-paññatti*  
*).*

**35**. "The idea of formations with their specific features": this phrase elaborates the meaning applicable here of

the Pali term *nimitta*,  
which literally  
means "mark,"  
"sign," "feature,"  
i.e., the idea or  
image conceived  
of an object

perceived.

**36**. "With its  
particular  
structure" (*sa-*  
*viggaha*):



the distinctive

*(vi)*

graspable

*(gaha)*

form of an object.

**37**. *Bhay'upatthana*. The word *bhaya* has the subjective aspect of fear and the objective aspect of fearfulness,

danger. Both are included in the significance of the term in this context.

**38**. This refers to the knowledges described in the following (Nos. 7-11).

**39**. *Niroja*. Lit.

"without nutritive  
essence."

**40**. According to  
the *Visuddhim*

*agga*, the  
"insight leading to  
emergence" is  
the culmination of  
insight, and is  
identical with the  
following three  
knowledges:

equanimity about  
formations, desire  
for deliverance,  
and knowledge of  
re-observation. It  
is called "leading  
to emergence"  
because it

emerges from the  
contemplation of  
formations  
(conditioned  
phenomena) to  
the  
supramundane  
path that has



# Nibbana as its object.

41. The *Visuddhi  
magga*  
says (XXI, 130):

"The knowledge of adaptation derives its name from the fact that it adapts itself to the earlier and the later states of mind. It adapts

itself to the  
preceding eight  
insight  
knowledges with  
their individual  
functions, and to  
the thirty-seven  
states partaking

of enlightenment  
that follow."

42. *Gotrabhu-ñāna*  
*a* (maturity  
knowledge) is,

literally, the  
"knowledge of  
one who has  
become one of  
the lineage ( *gotra* )."

By attaining to  
that knowledge,

one has left  
behind the  
designation and  
stage of an  
unliberated  
worldling and is  
entering the  
lineage and rank

of the noble ones,  
i.e., the  
stream-enterer,  
etc. Insight has  
now come to full  
maturity,  
maturing into the  
knowledge of the

supramundane  
paths and  
fruits. Maturity  
knowledge  
occurs only as a  
single moment of  
consciousness; it  
does not recur,



since it is  
immediately  
followed by the  
path  
consciousness of  
stream-entry or  
once-returning,  
etc.

43. "Path knowledge" is the knowledge connected with the four supramundane

paths of  
stream-entry, etc.  
Here, in this  
passage, only the  
path of  
stream-entry is  
meant. Path  
knowledge, like

maturity  
knowledge, lasts  
only for one  
moment of  
consciousness,  
being followed by  
the fruition  
knowledge

resulting from it,  
which may repeat  
itself many times  
and may also be  
deliberately  
entered into by  
way of the  
"attainment of

fruition" (see No. 17).

44. That means that Nibbana has now become an

object of direct  
experience, and  
is no longer a  
mental construct  
of conceptual  
thinking.

45. The  
knowledge of  
reviewing  
defilements still  
remaining, does  
not obtain at the  
stage of  
arahantship



where all  
defilements have  
been eliminated.  
It may occur, but  
not necessarily  
so, at the lower  
three stages of  
stream-entry, etc.

**46**. See **Note 43**.

**47**. The five  
spiritual faculties

*(indriya)*  
are: faith, energy,  
mindfulness,  
concentration,  
and wisdom. For  
details see  
*The Way of  
Wisdom*

by Edward Conze  
(BPS Wheel  
No.65/66).

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The  
Venerable

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# Mahasi Sayadaw

[\(Top\)](#)

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Mahasi Sayadaw,  
the Venerable U  
Sobhana

Mahathera, was  
the son of U Kan  
Htaw and Daw  
Shwe Ok of  
Seikkhun village,  
which is about  
seven miles to  
the west of

Shwebo Town, a one-time capital of the founder of the last Burmese dynasty. He was born on the third waning of the month of second

Waso in the year  
1266 of the  
Burmese Era (29  
July 1904). At the  
age of six, he  
began his studies  
at a monastic  
school in the



same village, and  
at the age of  
twelve he was  
ordained a  
samanera  
(novice). On  
reaching the age  
of twenty, he was

ordained a  
bhikkhu on the  
fifth waning of the  
month of  
Tazaungmon in  
the year 1285 of  
the Burmese Era  
(23 November

1923). He then passed the Government Pali examinations in all the three classes of Pathamange, Pathamalat and

Pathamagyi in  
the following  
three successive  
years.

In the fourth year

after his bhikkhu ordination, he proceeded to Mandalay — a former capital of Burma — where he continued his further studies in

the Khinmagan  
Kyaung Taik  
under various  
monks of high  
scholastic fame.  
In the fifth year  
he went to  
Moulmein where

he took up the  
work of teaching  
the Buddhist  
scriptures at a  
monastery known  
as Taung Waing  
Galay Taik  
Kyaung.

In the eighth year  
after his  
ordination, he  
and another  
monk left  
Moulmein



equipped with the bare necessities of a bhikkhu (i.e., almsbowl, a set of three robes, etc.) and went in search of a clear and effective

method in the  
practice of  
meditation. At  
Thaton he met  
the well-known  
meditation  
instructor, the  
Venerable U

Narada, who is also known as "Mingun Jetawun Sayadaw the First." He then placed himself under the guidance of the

Sayadaw and at  
once proceeded  
with an intensive  
course of  
meditation.

After this practical course of meditation he returned to Moulmein and continued with his original work of teaching Buddhist

scriptures. He sat  
for the Pali  
Lecturership  
Examination held  
by the  
Government of  
Burma in June  
1941 and

succeeded in  
passing  
completely at the  
first attempt. He  
was awarded the  
title of  
Sasanadhaja Siri  
Pavara

# Dhammacariya.

In the year 1303  
of the Burmese  
Era (1941) and in  
the eighteenth



year of his  
bhikkhu  
ordination he  
returned to his  
native village  
(Seikkhun) and  
resided at a  
monastery known

as "Maha-Si  
Kyaung" because  
a drum  
(Burmese: *si*) of  
unusually big  
(*maha*)  
size is housed  
there. He then

introduced the  
systematic  
practical course  
of Satipatthana  
meditation. Many  
people, bhikkhus  
as well as  
laymen, gathered

round him and  
took up the strict  
practical course,  
and were greatly  
benefited by his  
careful  
instructions. They  
were happy

because they  
began to  
understand the  
salient features of  
Satipatthana and  
had also learned  
the proper  
method of

continuing the  
practice by  
themselves.

In the year 1311  
B.E. (1949) the

then Prime  
Minister of  
Burma, U Nu,  
and Sir U Thwin,  
executive  
members of the  
Buddha  
Sasananuggaha

Association,  
requested the  
Venerable  
Mahasi Sayadaw  
to come to  
Rangoon and  
give training in  
meditative



practice. In his  
twenty-sixth year  
of bhikkhu  
ordination, he  
therefore went to  
Rangoon and  
resided at the  
Thathana

Yeiktha, the headquarters of the Association, where since then intensive training courses have been held up to the present day.

Over 15,000  
persons have  
since been  
trained in that  
center alone and  
altogether over

200,000 persons  
have been  
trained  
throughout  
Burma, where  
there are more  
than 100  
branches for the

training in the  
same method.  
This method has  
also spread  
widely in Thailand  
and in Sri Lanka.

Mahasi Sayadaw  
was awarded the  
title of  
Agga-Maha-Pand  
ita in the year  
1952.

He carried out the  
duties of the  
Questioner (*pucc  
haka*)  
at the Sixth  
Buddhist Council  
(Chattha  
Sangayana) held

at Rangoon for  
two years,  
culminating in the  
year 2500 of the  
Buddhist Era  
(1956). To  
appreciate fully  
the importance of



this role it may be mentioned that the Venerable Maha-Kassapa, as Questioner, put questions at the First Council held three

months after the  
passing away of  
the Buddha. Then  
the Venerable  
Upali and the  
Venerable  
Ananda  
answered the

questions. At the  
Sixth Council, it  
was

Tipitakadhara  
Dhammabhandag  
arika Ashin

Vicittasarabhivam  
sa who answered

the questions put  
by the Venerable  
Mahasi Sayadaw.  
The Venerable  
Mahasi Sayadaw  
was also a  
member of the  
committee that

was responsible,  
as the final  
authority, for the  
codification of all  
the texts passed  
at the Sixth  
Council.

He has written  
several books on  
meditation and  
the following  
notable works  
may be

mentioned.

(1) *Guide to the  
Practice of  
Vipassana  
Meditation* (in  
Burmese) — 2

volumes.

(2) Burmese  
translation of the  
Maha-satipatthan  
a Sutta, with  
notes.



(3) *Visuddhiñāna-*  
*katha* (in  
Burmese and  
Pali).

(4) Burmese  
translation of the  
*Visuddhimagga*,  
with notes.

(5) Burmese

translation of the  
*Visuddhimagga*  
*Maha-Tika,*  
with notes — 4  
volumes.

(6) *Paticca-Samu  
ppada*  
(Dependent  
Origination) — 2  
volumes.

A large number of his discourses, based on the Pali Suttas, have been translated into English and published by the Buddha

Sasananuggaha  
Association (16  
Hermitage Road,  
Kokkine,  
Rangoon,  
Myanmar  
(Burma)).

Mahasi Sayadaw  
passed away on  
14 August 1982  
following a brief  
illness.

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# The Buddhist Path of Practice



Founded in 1958, the

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Mawatha

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