

## SIXTEEN INSIGHT KNOWLEDGES

Compiled by

Phrakhrughositbuddhisat (Theerapan Vajirañano)

Edited by

Ben Heffer

.....

To practice insight meditation in accordance with the four foundations of mindfulness is the only way to purify the mind of practitioners. It leads them to the cessation of suffering and the attainment of Nibbana. Practitioners must first purify their Silas (precepts); if they are monks, they have to do Âpatti-desanâ (forgiveness of offences). Samaneras (Buddhist novices) have to undertake their ten Sîlas again; lay people must undertake five or eight Silas according to their own abilities.

The purified Silas build concentration (Samâdhi) easily, the concentrated mind is then focused on an object of meditation firmly, and it will become tranquil and free of the five hindrances. If the practitioner's mind is pure (Cittavisuddhi), and free of defilements, then insight knowledge arises seeing Rûpa (corporeality or nature of bodies) and Nâma (mind or mentality) as they really are. If they have confidence to practice meditation intensively, they will achieve good results and see the following:

1. Nâmarûpapariccheda-ñâna (ñâna is pronounced NYANA): This is the insight knowledge of the seeing clearly of mentality-materiality.

When the meditator is giving a report to a meditation master saying that while he is observing rising and falling of his abdomen, he realizes the rising and falling differently, i.e. one is rising and another is falling, it should be known that the meditator can discern Rûpa and has entered Rûpapariccheda- ñâna. By closely observing the abdomen moving, he

sees that rising and falling are occurring, and his mind comes to know them well. It should also be known that he has seen mentality clearly and has entered Nâmapariccheda- ñâna.

In this state, the rising-falling of the abdomen and the mind knowing “rising-falling” are separated from each other (i.e., the rising-falling movement is one thing and the mind knowing the rising-falling movement is another).

However if both the mind knowing “rising-falling” and the rising-falling movement occur simultaneously then he has had Insight knowledge to realize both Rûpa and Nâma.<sup>1</sup>

In the same way, even the observing of minor positions should be known in exactly the same way. While the meditator is being mindful of his hand, his foot stretching or bending, his body dropping to sit down or supporting his body to stand up, these features of movement arise from many small combined movements. If the meditator is mindful of many of these movements intensively, in the present moment, he will realize that it is solely a feature of stretching or bending that is occurring. Even the mind feeling just the movements is only a mental state, and from this realization itself, the meditator is known as one who can separate the bodily state and the mental state (e.g. moving and knowledge of moving) from each other, and this insight knowledge is called Nâmarûpapariccheda- ñâna.

This realization in the Nâmarûpapariccheda- ñâna should be understood as a realization coming only from the wisdom that arises out of mental development (Bhâvanâmayapañña). It is not wisdom caused by education, called Sutamayapañña, or self-thinking, or wisdom resulting from reflection, called Cintamayapañña. It is an experiential wisdom that has arisen.

---

<sup>1</sup> Bhaddanta Âsabhathera Dhammâcariya, **Vipassana Sub-commentary** (in Thai), Bangkok : Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya Press, 2532 B.E., P 84

The acknowledgement of the abdominal rising-falling as well as softness and hardness of the body without form is also the realization of a specific characteristic of the Earth Element (solidity, firmness, and strength). This realization helps the meditator have the right understanding of rising-falling or softness and hardness. They really are not beings and persons, selves, “an I” or “a you” at all. There is only the feature that understands that the meditator has removed the wrong view of a personhood (Atta-ditthi). There is only the natural state; so the meditator is regarded as having attained purity of View (Ditthi-visuddhi).<sup>2</sup>

2. Paccayapriggaha- ñâna<sup>3</sup>: This is the insight knowledge of discerning the conditions of mentality-materiality.

When the meditator has attained Nâmarûpapariccheda- ñâna, and continues to practice, the fruit of practice occurs to him, i.e., if while the meditator is sitting and mindfully observing rising-falling of the abdomen, the rising-falling disappears, it causes the meditator to observe nothing. He feels bored, and like giving up the practice of meditation, because he doesn't know what to note. It implies that he has noted the conditions, e.g. he has realized the causes and effects of Nâma (mentality) and Rûpa (physicality). It means that when there is no rising-falling to be noted, it causes him to feel like giving up practice. The rising-falling (Rupa) is the cause that affects the mind (Nâma/mentality), the rising-falling (Rûpa/physicality) disappearing is a cause, the mind (Nâma) which observes nothing is an effect.

When the meditator comes to know that he is going to bend or to stretch out his hand, is going to bend down or to raise his head, is going to stand up, to walk, to sit, to lie down or to do something that first the intention arises in his mind, then the intended mind orders his hand to

---

<sup>2</sup> Janakabhivamsa, Aggamahakammattanacariya, **How Insight Meditation progress** (in Thai version translated by Mondatip Kunavadhana) Bunsirikarnpim Press, 2549 B.E., pp. 15-19

<sup>3</sup> Bhaddanta Âsabhathera, Dhammacariya, **Vipassana Sub-commentary** (in Thai), pp. 92-94

bend, etc.. This shows that the meditator realizes the mind (Nâma/mentality) as the cause, and realizes the movement of body (Rûpa/physicality) as the effect. This should be known that the meditator has attained Paccayapriggaha- ñâna.

Nimitta (sign): This appears for the first time when the meditator in this stage. Nimitta is sometimes seeing the objects in Paccayapriggaha- ñâna as he has known and understood them. Sometimes the objects show themselves inside of the meditator (Ajjhattikârammana), but there are other objects in Paccayapriggaha- ñâna that show themselves outside of the meditator (Bahiddhârammana). While the meditator is observing an object of meditation, he sees pictures of trees, mountains and various scenes. When he observes them, they do not appear; when he does not observe them, they appear. He understands that when the object is appearing, he observes it; and when it disappears, he cannot observe it. Therefore it should be known that the sign (Rûpa/physicality) is the cause, the feeling of seeing or not seeing. The noting of seeing or not seeing (Nâma/mentality) is the effect.

The specific characteristic of Paccayapriggaha- ñâna: In this second ñâna (knowledge), the rising-falling happens first, and the mind knows it later. The meditator knows and understands that Rûpa (physicality) and Nâma (mentality) are related to each other; e.g. Rûpa (physicality) is the cause, Nâma (mentality) is the effect, or Nâma (mentality) is the cause, and Rûpa (physicality) is the effect. So, there is no being, person, self or “an I” or “a you”, and this noting simply transcends doubt. This knowledge is called Kankhâvitaranavisuddhi (purity of transcending doubt).

Because of Ditthivisuddhi (purity of view), the meditator realizes the five aggregates, that is, corporeality, feeling, perception, mental formation and consciousness. He is not a self, but he is only Rûpa (physicality) and Nâma (mentality) which are arising, being static, and finally passing away in the present moment. He knows that they have arisen in the past, and they will arise in the future. Knowing Nâma

(mentality) and Rûpa (physicality) just as they are, his sixteen doubts are removed; they are<sup>4</sup>:-

1. Had I ever been born in the past?
2. Had I never been born in the past?
3. What had I been when born in the past?
4. What was my body (size, shape or appearance), if I had ever been born?
5. In past births, what had I been, and even before that, what had I been?
6. After my death in this birth, will I be born again?
7. After my death in this birth, will I be non-existent?
8. After my death in future, what will I be when born?
9. After my death in future, what will my shape be, if I take birth?
10. In the next future lives, what will I be, and for the next state of existence, what will I be?
11. In this body, there is a being, a person, self and “an I” or “a you”, is it real?
12. In this body, there is not a being, a person, self and “an I” or “a you”, is it real?
13. What am I myself as a being, a king or a millionaire or....?
14. What is my shape as a living being, big or small, round or flat?
15. Which state of existence or place did I myself shift from?
16. When I die from this birth, where will I be born?

Transcending these doubts means that the meditator has really believed in rising and passing away of Rûpa (physicality) and Nâma (mentality) in the last birth, being born or not being born is not doubted, because he can understand both the cause and effect of Rûpa (physicality) and Nâma (mentality). Having such clear knowledge of them leads to the eradication of doubt of both this birth and the next birth. So, one who wishes to know whether there is this birth and the next birth or not; whether in the past, he himself had ever been born, and ever died or

---

<sup>4</sup> Sobhanamahathera, Aggamahapandit(mahasi sayadaw), **Principle of Practice of Insight Meditation** (in Thai version translated from Burmese version by Chamroon Dhammada), Bangkok: Thairai-wan-karnpim Press, 2546 B.E., pp. 62-64

not, practices insight meditation in order to attain Paccayaparigaha- ñâna so that can eradicate these doubts completely.

3. Sammasana-ñâna: it is the insight knowledge of comprehending mentality-physicality as impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self.

When a meditator puts more effort into practice and continues to practice, his mindfulness gradually becomes stronger, more attentive and more precise. His concentration becomes constant and the meditator's wisdom can be developed to realize the three characteristics (impermanence, the state of unsatisfactoriness and not-self) of Rûpa (physicality) and Nâma (mentality) clearly. This is a specific characteristic of Sammasana-ñâna,<sup>5</sup> i.e., when meditator attentively makes a note of rising-falling, and knows rising and falling movement differently; that is<sup>6</sup>:

-For the first Nâmarûpapariccheda-ñâna, the meditator knows only the middle of rising-falling.

-For the second Paccayapariggaha-ñâna, the meditator knows only the beginning and middle of rising-falling.

-For the third Sammasana-ñâna, the meditator knows the beginning, middle and end of rising-falling. There are not only characteristics of inside objects (Ajjhattikâramana) which have been known before, but also there are outside objects (Bahiddhâramana). For example, Nimitta (sign) gradually arises, is static, and gradually disappears. If it is a light, it gradually appears in front of him, gradually becomes smaller, and disappears. It may seem to be a small light occurring in a far away place which gradually soars into the air and comes

---

<sup>5</sup> Janakabhivamsa, Aggamahakammathanacariya, **How Insight Meditation progresses** (in Thai version translated by Mondatip Kunavadhana) p. 40

<sup>6</sup> Bhaddanta Âsabhathera, Dhammacariya, **Vipassana Sub-commentary** (in Thai version), pp. 97-98

closer. This is different from the signs (Nimittas) in the second Paccayapariggaha-ñâna, which do not yet disappear; the new sign appears quickly, so the meditator cannot see the sign disappearing.

It is the appearance of signs clearly in these three moments (previously he had seen only two moments)- the moment of arising, the static moment, and the moment of passing away, which is the cause of realization of the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self. At this point, the meditator has really attained insight knowledge.

Having a painful sensation is another way the meditator may know that he has attained the Sammasana-ñâna. A strong pain occurs to him that is indescribable. The appearance of such indescribable strong pain causes him to be clearly mindful of the three characteristics (Tilakkhana), so that he rightly understands Rupa (physicality) and Nâma (mentality) just as they really are. He sees suffering clearly when the painful sensation is observed. Because the pain disappears when noted, he realizes impermanence which is a specific characteristic of non-self which cannot be controlled by anyone.

It should be noted that the clear realization of impermanence is a specific characteristic of the Sammasana-ñâna, and it means that the meditator will face many painful sensations. It is the meditation master's duty to pacify and encourage the meditator to develop more confidence so that he has even more strength to continue his practice.

4. Udayabbaya-ñâna: this is the insight knowledge of the contemplation on rising and falling.

Having faced strong painful sensations in the Sammasana-ñâna, if the meditator does not give up his practice, and if he attentively and patiently puts more effort into practice, his insight knowledge will be

developed to the fourth Udayabbaya-ñâna<sup>7</sup> that can be known in the following ways:-

a. It can be known by noting inside of us (Ajhattikâramana), such as the rising-falling of his abdomen. It occurs and disappears quickly. Such quick arising-falling movements are the clear appearance of Upadi (arising) and Bhanga (passing away), but Thîti (a static moment) occurs more quickly than he can observe. In short, the rising-falling in the Udayabbaya-ñâna is quick.

b. It can be known from outside objects (Bahiddhâramana), which are various signs (Nimittas) that arise and disappear as if a piece of stone is thrown up into the air and then suddenly falls down to the ground.

c. It can be known from the appearance of a painful sensation in the Udayabbaya-ñâna which is not as strong a painful sensation as before. When it is observed, it disappears, and then it arises again. The meditator, who has been afraid of the painful sensation in the Sammasana-ñâna, now has no more fear of it because he has reached the Udayabbaya-ñâna.

When the meditator puts more effort into practice, his concentration has calmed down and his mind gradually becomes tranquil and peaceful so that he can feel superbly happy. His mind is not disturbed by any hindrance and his mindfulness is sharp, clear and strong. It is very easy to make a note of the objects of meditation. Even though the meditator has put more effort into practice, he is not too serious or too passive. Meditator exerts right effort to cause his mind to be cheerful through the power of concentration. Now the meditator may face various kinds of mental phenomena which are called "Vipassanûpakilesa", and there are ten kinds of Vipassanûpakilesa (defilements of insight) which may occur at any ñâna from stage 2 , 3 and stage 4. They are as follows:-

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid pp. 98-99



1. Obhâsa (effulgence of light): it is really the effulgence of insight. The meditator sees a bright light in a room where he is sitting and practicing insight meditation. Sometimes it seems as if there is a light in a place very far away from him, and if he wrongly contemplates it, he will note the experience and think that he himself has attained Magga-ñâna (knowledge of path) and Phala-ñâna (knowledge of fruition). Then he satisfies himself saying “Because of it I have achieved high perfection, so I have seen what a common man could not see”.<sup>8</sup>

However, the meditator<sup>9</sup> has seen various kinds of signs (Nimittas) since reaching the first insight knowledge. For example, he sees various kinds of shapes clearly, but doesn't see their arising and passing away. When he attains the second insight knowledge, he can see various kinds of colored lights such as green, red, blue, yellow etc. Their arising is seen clearly, but their passing away cannot be seen clearly, because he has to observe a new object of meditation continually. To see these signs depends upon his efficiency of concentration. In the third insight knowledge, the meditator can see clearly the shape of the signs, because the signs stay static for a moment longer, and then gradually disappear.

But in the fourth insight knowledge, if an object of meditation is observed for just one noting, it disappears at that one noting and if the meditator is only mindful of a nimitta, it also disappears. The characteristic of appearance and disappearance of the object of meditation in the Udayabbaya-ñâna is that it arises quickly and also passes away quickly.

When the meditator has observed the arising of Rûpa (physicality) and Nâma (mentality) as immediately as it passes away, he may see a radiance appearing and it is because of the power of insight knowledge. It

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid pp. 99-100

<sup>9</sup> Sobhanamahathera, Aggamahapandit (mahasi syadaw), **Principle of Practice of Insight Meditation** (in Thai version translated from Burmese version by Chamroon Dhammada) pp. 146-149

may be a dim light, or it may appear for a while like a round fire ball soaring in the air around him. It may appear like a car's headlight coming towards him, or like the sun or the moon shining, or like a light that is fully illuminating a room where he is sitting and practicing meditation. The meditator feels that the light comes from somewhere around him. It may appear in front of him, from the upper side of him, from the side of him, or from the lower part of him. And while the light is shining, even if it is night time, it looks as if it is day time. Even though it is the day time, the meditator clearly can see the effulgence as if it is seen by ordinary eyes.

2. Ñâna: This is insight knowledge which arises from practising meditation, because the meditator can observe Nâma (mentality) and Rûpa (physicality) quickly and is surprised. Before, he attentively observed the objects of meditation with difficulty and with great care, but even so, he was often careless in his mindfulness. But now he is mindful of the objects easily, and he may have some doubt arising, for example, "Could my teacher observe as I have done? He might be giving me incorrect meditation instructions." In this stage, the meditator may look down upon his teacher because of such increased knowledge.<sup>10</sup>

3. Pîti: This is rapture caused by the insight (Vipassanâ) that is mental bliss; sometimes there is lightness of body as if one is soaring in the air. There are five kinds of rapture<sup>11</sup>:-

A. Khuddakapîti: This is trivial rapture, its characteristics are as follows:-

1. There is a white colored light appearing which can also be mixed with other colors.
2. Being cool, the body gets goose bumps and the body feels heavy.
3. Tears flow, skin of the head seems to rise up.

---

<sup>10</sup> Bhaddanta Âsabhatthera Dhammâcariya, **Vipassana Sub-commentary** (in Thai), p. 100

<sup>11</sup> Phratersiddhimuni (Jodok Pali 9), **Manual of Meditation Report** (in Thai version), Bangkok : Mhachulalongkornrajavidyalaya Press, 2541 B.E., pp. 10-14

4. Feeling of numbness on the body and bodily swelling.
5. Feeling that the body is becoming taller and taller or shorter and shorter.
6. Feeling the legs becoming longer, arms becoming longer, and teeth becoming longer.

B. Khanikâpîti: This is momentary increasing of rapture, its characteristics are as follows:-

1. Pure red-colored light is seen, or may appear to be mixed with other colors.
2. Feeling of lightning within the eye.
3. Feeling like there are sparks as if a flint is being struck.
4. Feeling a stinging all over the body, and bodily hardness.
5. Feeling like insects are on the body, or crawling on the body.
6. Feeling heat all over the body.
7. Feeling the heart beating.
8. Getting small goose bumps.
9. Feeling itchy, like ants are crawling on the face and or all over the body.
10. Feeling like the body's tendons are beating.
11. Feeling as if hot water is boiling inside the body.
12. Feeling as if fishes are rising in a pond when bait is thrown down onto the water.

C. Okkantikâpîti: This is a tingling rapture, and its characteristics are as follows:-

1. The body is vibrating lightly, shaking or rolling around slightly.
2. The face, an arm or a foot is twitching.
3. Feeling like there is a beating movement or a shaking movement as if a boat is on the wave in the sea.
4. Feeling like you will vomit, and sometimes actually doing so.

5. Feeling like you are being attacked by a wave.
6. The heart is beating rapidly as if it is a stick stuck in rapidly flowing water.
7. Light yellow or light blue is seen or it appears mixed with other colors.
8. The body shakes.
9. Feeling like you have a fever.
10. Feeling heat moving at great speed across the body.
11. Feeling like you are playing on a surfboard in the sea.
12. Feeling like there is a strange symptom in the body.

D. Ubbengâpîti: This is thrilling rapture, and its characteristics are as follows:-

1. Your body feels light, it feels tall or that the body is lifting off the floor.
2. Feeling itchy, like insects are moving on the face and over the body.
3. Having strong diarrhea, or diarrhea and dysentery.
4. The head is nodding to the front or to the back.
5. Feeling as if you are being pushed, and falling to the front or back.
6. Feeling as if the head is being held and spun around.
7. Feeling the mouth opening and closing.
8. Feeling vibrating, shaking, rolling, and swaying of the body as if you are a tree being blown around.
9. The body feels like it is getting a fever (hot and cold).
10. The body feels as if it falls down and then gets back up.
11. The body moves, hands or feet lift.
12. The body feels like it is lying down to the front or to the back.
13. Seeing the color of cream, or cream mixed with other colors.
14. The hands feel as if they turn over. For example, if the hands are facing upwards they turn down and vice versa.

15. While sitting, it feels like the body is shaking as if reed grasses are being blown.

E. Pharanâpiti: This is suffusing rapture, its characteristics are as follows:-

1. Feeling coldness infiltrating all over body.
2. Feeling of momentary calm.
3. Feeling of itchiness all over the body.
4. Feeling of sleepiness and not being able to open one's eyes.
5. Feeling not able to move the body.
6. Feeling a tingling from feet to the head or from the head to the feet.
7. Feeling cold as if taking a shower or touching ice.
8. Feeling light itching as if small insects are crawling on one's face.
9. Indigo or a green and strong green light is seen by itself, or mixed with other colors.
10. Feeling like not wanting to move the body.
11. Feeling that one does not want to open one's eyes.

F. Passaddhi<sup>12</sup>: This is tranquility both physically and mentally; the body becomes light, not coarse, and free from both physical suffering and mental suffering. It is a peaceful mind, a light mind, a gentle mind, an adaptable mind and a relaxed mind; one is enjoying gladness more than any ordinary man has ever experienced.

G. Sukha: This is happiness originated by insight knowledge. It is a profound happiness, infiltrating all parts of the body. It is experienced as unique, plentiful and as an indescribable happiness which is more superb than ordinary happiness. There is no other happiness to be compared to the happiness originating from insight meditation. If the meditator does not

---

<sup>12</sup> Bhaddanta Âsabhathera Dhammâcariya, **Vipassana Sub-commentary** (in Thai), pp. 100-105

contemplate it well, he will misunderstand it and think, “I have attained supreme virtue (become enlightened).”

H. Adhimokkha: This is a determination (Saddhâ) that happens throughout the mind during the practice of meditation, it is a belief of absolute power which is the foundation of inordinate or overzealous belief in the mind and its mental factors (Cetasika). It is because of this extreme and powerful belief that the meditator thinks in exaggerated ways. He may think of some beloved persons and wish them to practice insight meditation, thinking zealously “I am grateful to Buddhism, because I have found such a profound Dhamma and happiness, and have a good teacher who could introduce me to the right way. Before this I was confused by the teachings of Buddhism, but nowadays, I confidently believe in Buddhism. From now on, if I make some merit, I will only cultivate it with Vipassanâ Meditation, because it is really great merit. When I get success in practicing meditation, I will establish a practice center for teaching meditation to all people.”

Thinking pleasantly of such great merit generated through this powerful and extreme belief, the meditator is not mindful of the objects of meditation. Even if the extreme belief is a superb thing, because it arises in the pure mind, and cannot be found in an ordinary man who has never practiced insight meditation, it is regarded as defilement of insight because it is a belief causing lack of mindfulness of the objects of meditation.

I. Paggaha: This is energy (Viriya) that occurs strangely through the mind during the practicing of insight meditation. The meditator intensively practices insight meditation without tiredness, and it is different from previous times. Even if the teacher encouraged him gently, he had been bored with the practice of meditation. But now such a

thought has disappeared, and there is only diligence. This energy causes the meditator to believe that he himself has attained the Path, Fruit and Nibbana, and that is he has become an arahat, a holy one, an enlightened one. This is regarded as a defilement of insight.

J. Upatthâna: This is mindfulness that can observe objects of meditation in miraculous ways. Formerly, the objects of meditation have always been observed with difficulty, but now the meditator observes various objects of meditation easily, and he is surprised that the mindfulness in every position is of very good quality. In every moment his mindfulness is alert, easy and the body is very still. The stability of mindfulness causes the meditator to misunderstand that he himself attained superior virtue. This is regarded as a defilement of insight.

K. Upekkhâ: This is supreme equanimity that occurs to the mind during the practice of insight meditation. It is the equanimity of compounded objects, and the meditator will ignore everything as if he is a man without defilements. Even if he is confronted with liking and disliking, he will not be shaken. The meditator is surprised by the supreme equanimity and it causes him to misunderstand. He believes that he himself has become the Holy One. This is regarded as a defilement of insight.

L. Nikanti: This is desire, satisfaction, enjoyment or attachment to the nine superb virtues as mentioned above.

In brief, in Udayabbaya-ñâna, the defilements of insight have arisen in surprising ways and the meditator has understood them in different ways. Here it should be noted that quick-arising and quick-passing away are specific characteristics of the fourth insight knowledge, Udayabbaya-ñâna.

These defilements of insight occur because of the power of concentration that the meditator has developed. The mind is of good quality, and it becomes pure. This pure mind causes him to discover the defilements of insight and he attaches to them. He thinks, "It is superb virtue," is pleased, and does not put further effort into making a note of them in order to attain higher insight knowledge. Therefore his Vipassana Meditation is wrong, and the satisfaction, enjoyment or attachment to the nine kinds of defilement of insight is the cause of Papanca-dhamma (desire, conceit and dogmatism) which distracts him from the practice of Vipassanâ.

For instance, when effulgence of light arises in the meditator, he has a wrong view (ditthi) of it. He feels that it is because he has attained higher virtue, so such a view is a cause leading to conceit (mâna), and causes him to think that he is really lucky to find what the other people cannot find. This leads to desire (tanhâ); he is pleased and thinks "May the effulgence of light remain forever"; that it is ditthi or dogmatism. Actually effulgence of light is good, because it has been noted. However, it has become a defilement of insight, because it is the cause of distraction by the defilements of insight in the practice of meditation. If it is noted; it is only an object of meditation that can lead the meditator to cessation of suffering.

5. Bhanga-ñâna: This is the insight knowledge of dissolution.

When Rûpa (physicality) and Nâma (mentality) are observed clearly, the three characteristics have appeared well, and the Udayabbaya-ñâna has developed itself into a higher quality. The making a note of objects of insight meditation is quick and stable as well as automatic and the compounded things that are the objects of meditation appear quickly. So, now the meditator's mind is not just focused on the appearing moment (Upadi) and static moment (Thîti), and passing away (Bhanga) but also on the sequence of the rise of Rûpa (physicality) and Nâma (mentality) "which one arises first, and which one arises later." In the past, formed (conditioned) objects were a sign seen as hands and feet moving at every moment. Now there is no shape of the hands and feet



moving to be observed as objects of meditation. There will arise insight knowledge of dissolution “Rûpa (physicality) and Nâma (mentality) have disappeared.” This is called Bhanga-ñâna<sup>13</sup>.

Again, a meditation master knows that meditator has attained fifth insight knowledge from the meditator himself, who comes to give him a meditation report: “It is difficult for me to observe the objects of meditation, because there are no symptoms of appearance of compounded things to be observed. I feel bored by just noting, and my Samâdhi (concentration) also has not been developed. I am merely sitting to observe nothing.” This has shown that the meditator has attained Bhanga-ñâna. For some time, the meditator has been observing objects of insight meditation continuously, but now he cannot continue to observe them. Even if sensation and various signs have all disappeared, legs, knees and body have gradually become white light and disappeared as if they are all air; and he feels that this body is nothing but extinction.<sup>14</sup>

There are two kinds of extinction as follows:-

- A. Upâdanirodha: This is the extinction where the arising of the object is seen, and nothing beyond that.
- B. Anuppâdanirodha: This is the extinction in Magganirodha (Extinction in Path).

6. Bhaya-ñâna: This is the insight knowledge of the appearance of terror.

When the meditator has attained Bhanga-ñâna, and puts more effort into practice, state of ñâna (knowledge) is developed to a higher level, and Rûpa (physicality) and Nâma (mentality) appear to have run away. Rarely is he afraid, but fright arises in him now from making a note of the objects of meditation as he is observing them. The fear arises in him, for example, because he is afraid of becoming deranged, and does

---

<sup>13</sup> Sobhanamahathera, Aggamahapandit (mahasi syadaw), **Principle of Practice of Insight**

**Meditation** (in Thai version translated from Burmese version by Chamroon Dhammada), pp.160-161

<sup>14</sup> Bhaddanta Asabhathera Dhammacariya, **Vipassana Sub-commentary** (in Thai), pp. 110-112

not know what he fears, but he feels fear. If the meditator has experienced such symptoms, it should be known that he has attained Bhaya-ñâna<sup>15</sup>.

7. Ādînava-ñâna: This is the insight knowledge of contemplation of disadvantages.

When the meditator has attained Bhaya-ñâna, and puts more effort regularly into developing the controlling faculty (indrîya), the state of Ñâna (knowledge) is also developed into higher stage along with realization of the disadvantages of Rûpa (physicality) and Nâma (mentality). Whatever is observed by the meditator, he finds only disliking and ugliness as well as Rûpa (physicality) and Nâma (mentality) and that they are full of suffering. Now there is no distraction in the mind at all, there is only concentration of the mind, and he does not feel happy with his meditational experience. There is only sleepiness which is an indication of non-interest in the practice because of the realization of disadvantages of the Rûpa (physicality) and Nâma (mentality). It is as if a man who likes his friend very much comes to know the bad qualities of his friend, so he finds that his friend is really only an ugly person. The meditator had earlier found that Rûpa (physicality) and Nâma (mentality) were a lovely thing, and took them as his refuge, but now he finds that they are without substance and cannot be taken as a refuge at all.<sup>16</sup>

8. Nibbidâ-ñâna: it is the insight knowledge of dispassion.

When the meditator has attained the Ādînava-ñâna, he has dispassion or disinterest in both body and mind, so much so that he doesn't desire to meet anybody or be mindful of the objects of meditation. He knows it is his duty to continue noting, but he is bored. It is as if he were a free man and has so much dispassion in observing things that he will give it up in order to be free. In Nibbidâ-ñâna, he still

---

<sup>15</sup> Ibid pp.113-114

<sup>16</sup> Ibid p. 115

continues to be mindful of the Rûpa (physicality) and Nâma (mentality) without being forced, even though he himself is extremely bored.

When the meditator has found himself in such a mental condition, if he is without a good teacher who can advise him, he cannot be freed from this tortured state. Insight meditation which is his own duty to develop cannot be developed perfectly, the controlling faculties (indrîya) are not in balance, and insight knowledge is not progressing as well as it could. If a meditation master comes to encourage him to put more effort into his practice, it can soothe him from this state of dispassion, and then he can continue his practice.<sup>17</sup>

9. Muncitukamyatâ-ñâna: This is the ninth knowledge of insight meditation. It is the desire for deliverance.

When the meditator has attained this ñâna, he will have various symptoms as follows<sup>18</sup>:

A. After the meditator gets serious painful sensations in the third ñâna, he faces strong painful sensations again in the ninth ñâna, but they are not so strong. However, this can still make trouble for him. He might experience an itchy sensation on his body as if parasites have burrowed into his body. The sensation of tingling may occur and spread out over the body, there are feelings of pain and itching in his ears. Sometimes it feels like insects are moving over his body, but they are not seen. Even though these sensations are not so strong, they still give the meditator trouble. When he observes them, they often disappear, but sometimes they do not. The meditator's mindfulness is alert and quite excellent because it has been cultivated for such a long time.

For example, when the itchy sensation occurs to him, and he intends to scratch it, he has to observe his intention to scratch by saying

---

<sup>17</sup> Phrabrohmamoli (Vilas Ñanavaro) **Vipassanadipani** (in Thai ) Bangkok: Dokya Press,2537 pp.216-221

<sup>18</sup> Bhaddanta Asabhathera Dhammacariya, **Vipassana Sub-commentary** (in Thai), pp. 118-119

in his mind, “intending to scratch, intending to scratch, intending to scratch ...” He pays attention to his hand, and mindfully lifts his hand by saying in his mind “lifting, lifting, lifting...” until he starts to scratch. He does it slowly by saying in his mind “scratching, scratching, scratching...” Because of this process of scratching, it takes more time. In short, even though the sensations are not so strong, they trouble him a great deal, and his mind is not calm. He wants to escape from the terrible sensations very badly, but he cannot.

B. Mental feelings occur to him that he wants to renounce the Wheel of Life, doesn't want Rûpa (physicality) and Nâma (mentality), and desires to escape from the five aggregates that is to say, he wishes to reach Nibbâna.

Here, the meditator desires to escape from Rûpa (physicality) and Nâma (mentality). It can be compared to the feelings of animals and man as follows:-<sup>19</sup>

- Fishes caught with a net.
- A frog in the mouth of a snake.
- A wild fowl imprisoned in a cage.
- A deer caught with a lasso.
- A snake in the hands of a snake charmer.
- An elephant in a quagmire.
- The King of Nagas in an eagle's beak.
- The military besieged by enemies.

10. Patisankhâ-ñâna: This is the insight knowledge of reflective contemplation.

The meditator, having attained Patisankhâ-ñâna, has clear insight knowledge of the Three Characteristics e.g. impermanence, state of suffering and state of being non-self. He confronts painful sensations, even if it is a strong pain, but it does not make him discouraged to practice meditation, and because his concentration is in this state of high

---

<sup>19</sup> Phrabrohmmamoli (Vilas Ñanavaro), Vipassanadipani (in Thai), p.227

quality, he comes to see the excellence of practice clearly. In this stage of ñâna (knowledge), there is no lack of confidence in the mind for him<sup>20</sup>.

Specific characteristics of the Patisankhâ-ñâna should be known as follows:

A. The meditator finds painful sensations again, it has occurred in a small spot on his body such as a spot under his bottom where he observes “touching”. It is such a strong pain, that wherever the spot is painful, it occurs for a long time. Even though it was observed and it disappeared, it re-occurs again. Sometimes he feels stiff all over his body, feels numb or heavy on his feet until he doesn’t want to move anywhere.

B. To observe the objects of meditation is not so easy. The meditator has to try to continue to practice even though he feels great fatigue. And even though he wants to become enlightened, his mindfulness is not in the present moment and he is exhausted in body and mind. This specific characteristic of the Patisankhâ-ñâna can be seen from the meditator if he has put even more effort than before into noting. He can make a note of the object of meditation.<sup>21</sup>

Here the Rûpa (physicality) and Nâma (mentality) are compared to an out-of-control bull whose owner tries to push and pull it. The animal doesn’t get up to walk; it just lies down and looks at its owner. If the bull gets up and walks, it just simply walks a few steps, and then it lies down again. The owner tries to push and pull it to walk along the path, but the animal is tired. Now the meditator might misunderstand “I have no luck; I am full of defilements, and I may have no hope of attaining the Path and Fruit”.<sup>22</sup>

11. Sankhârupekkhâ-ñâna: This is the insight knowledge of equanimity regarding all formations.

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid p. 250

<sup>21</sup> Bhaddanta Âsabhathera Dhammacariya, **Vipassana Sub-commentary** (in Thai), pp. 119-120

<sup>22</sup> Phrabrohmamoli (Vilas Ñanavaro), **Vipassanadipani** (in Thai), p. 224

This is an important stage of the ñâna (knowledge), because it is the highest level of worldly knowledge (lokiya). In this stage of the eleventh ñâna (knowledge), the meditator doesn't put any more effort into making a note of the objects of meditation, he just observes easily but without care, and the painful sensations have disappeared. His mind is peaceful, he doesn't desire to get up, he can sit as long as he wishes, and the objects of meditation are refined and detailed.

The specific characteristic of this ñâna (knowledge) is a peaceful mind, not having painful sensations and experiencing easy observation. It is different from the observation in the Patisankhâ-ñâna in which meditational objects were observed with difficulty.<sup>23</sup> Now the meditator can practice by himself, even if there is no one coming to scold or encourage him. He desires to practice without tiredness because he has peace of mind, and his controlling faculties (indrîya) are in balance. Sankhârupekkhâ-ñâna is gradually developed, and then the state of this ñâna (knowledge) appears. Below are the six qualifying factors of this ñâna:

A. There is no fear, there is no liking or disliking; the meditation objects are observed easily and regularly.

B. There are no pleasurable or unpleasant mental feelings; there is only mindfulness of the objects of meditation.

C. There is equanimity regarding all meditational objects. Easiness of observing meditational objects is compared to a driver who drives a cart which is yoked to clever and healthy bulls along a smooth road; he is not worried, and he drives it easily.

D. The meditator's concentration is free from hindrances, and he can practice for a long time. He can observe meditational objects for long periods without the need of getting up.

---

<sup>23</sup> Bhaddanta Âsabhatthera Dhammacariya, **Vipassana Sub-commentary** (in Thai), p. 121

E. The meditator is more mindful of the meditational objects for days at a time, and the Rûpa (physicality) and Nâma (mentality) that are being observed are more subtle. They appear to him without clarity, however he can observe them easily. It is as if a housewife is winnowing raw rice so that small pieces of stone appear, and then she can take them out. If it is done over and over again, the raw rice becomes cleaner. This is the specific characteristic of Sankhârupekkhâ-ñâna.

F. While the meditator is observing the objects of meditation, his restless mind reduces, and outside objects come to distract his mind less. Observation is not done attentively; just the noting of the abdomen rising-falling is enough to make his mind calm. Now his meditation becomes more focused and narrow as if a rubber band is stretched, and the width shrinks by itself.

The state of Sankhârupekkhâ-ñâna appears as such, because the mind has been developed by contemplating the Rûpa (physicality) and Nâma (mentality) repeatedly, so that ultimate reality appears clearly. It doesn't attach to the advantages and disadvantages of Rûpa (physicality) and Nâma (mentality), but it ignores them, and lets them appear without feelings or involvement. Mental peacefulness and mental happiness arise without him clinging. The painful sensation of suffering has disappeared; the observation of the meditational objects is easier for the meditator. When insight knowledge has been developed up to the Sankhârupekkhâ-ñâna, the state of ñâna (knowledge) is developed to a higher level. This is the aim of the practice of insight meditation.<sup>24</sup>

However, higher ñâna (knowledge) attained by the meditator may take more or less time depending on keeping the controlling faculties in balance. If they are not in balance, or if he attaches to the doctrine of what he has studied before (the Dhamma), it makes him think that he himself is going to attain the Path and Fruit soon. Such thinking causes him to stare at the condition of ñâna (knowledge) by thinking, "How does

---

<sup>24</sup> Phrabrohmamoli (Vilas Ñanavaro), **Vipassanadipani** (in Thai), pp. 258-268

the Path and the Fruit arise to me?” This is a cause of distractedness in the practice of Vipassanâ in this ñâna (knowledge). However, if he practices so that the controlling faculties are in balance, the state of knowledge is developed to a higher degree. If he attaches to them again, the state of ñâna (knowledge) goes down to a lower state. In this case, it can be compared to a crow looking for the coast. (See below)

When the Sankhârupekkhâ-ñâna is adequately developed, the meditator sees Nibbâna, and abandons formed objects of meditation completely, and assumes Nibbâna as the object of meditation. If he does not see Nibbâna, he will return to the stage of Sankhârupekkhâ-ñâna again. It is as if, in ancient times, a sea-merchant sails a ship into the vast ocean. If he cannot see the coast, and loses his sense of direction, he cannot sail his ship any further. He then frees a crow into the sky so that he can sail his ship following the crow to the coast. If the crow can see the coast, it will fly towards it, but if it cannot, it will fly back to the merchant’s ship again.

On the other hand, even if the practitioner’s insight knowledge is proficient in the six qualified factors as mentioned above, he has to return to formed objects as the objects of meditation again and again. This is confirmation for him in knowing that the teachings of the Buddha are marvelous and true, and cannot be opposed by anyone. It becomes impossible to do a Weighty Action (an action of extremely serious effect) (garukamma), which blocks the attainment of the Path, Fruition and Nibbâna. If he does a Weighty Action, he cannot pass beyond this insight knowledge to Nibbâna.

An example of Weighty Action (garukamma) is if the meditator were to kill (or even to scold, beat, or torture, but not necessarily kill) his own parent(s). This will prevent him from realizing Nibbâna, and cause him not to pass beyond the Sankhârupekkhâ-ñâna. However, there is a solution to this problem: he must sincerely apologize to his parent(s). When he comes to know that he has committed this Weighty Action, he must go and apologize in front of them. Or if they are not alive, he must go to their grave or to a place where their ashes are kept to apologize. If



there is nothing remaining of the parent(s), then he must take a Buddha statue in front of him as his witness, and apologize conscientiously to his parent(s). Then he can go back to practicing insight meditation again. If there are no other bad actions blocking his practice, he can pass beyond the Sankhârupekkhâ-ñâna.

If he looks down upon his teacher who is higher in virtue than the meditator himself, it will not allow him to pass the Sankhârupekkhâ-ñâna. The solution to this situation is that he must sincerely apologize to the teacher for his error.

There are also some other unwholesome deeds that will prevent the meditator from passing beyond the Sankhârupekkhâ-ñâna. For example, if he believes that he will actually become a Buddha in the near future, it will prevent him from further development. So he should have a meditation master, as a good friend, warn him to be mindful of this error, so that he can let go of the wish for becoming a Buddha. Then his state of ñana (knowledge) can be developed to a higher level.

12. Anuloma-ñâna: This is the insight knowledge of adaptation.

If there is not any obstacle to further development of practice, the meditator can enter the next important stage, that is, genuine extinction (nirodha). He may misunderstand the extinction he experienced before, because it can be falsely caused by many of the following things:<sup>25</sup>

- a. The extinction caused by power of the rapture (Pîti).
- b. The extinction caused by power of calmness (Passaddhi).
- c. The extinction caused by power of concentration (Samâdhi).
- d. The extinction caused by power of sloth and torpor (Thinamiddha).
- e. The extinction caused by power of equanimity (Upekkha).

---

<sup>25</sup> Bhaddanta Asabhathera, Dhammacariya, **Vipassana Sub-commentary** (in Thai), pp. 125-126

These extinctions are brought about by different causes that are not real, and that mostly arise in the Udayabbaya-ñâna, the Muncitukamyata-ñâna and the Sankharupekkha-ñâna stages.

The real extinction here is the extinction caused by the Path. When the Sankhârupekkhâ-ñâna is complete in development, the formed object is refined and detailed. Rising and passing away may be seen as appearing gradually, and if it does, then Nâma-Rûpa is observed. If it arises quickly it cannot be observed. Sometimes the rising and passing away of the formed object becomes slow and then quick again. It is as if the crow looks for the coast but cannot see it. The bird has to come back to the mast of the sea-merchant's ship, because it has no other place to land. However, if it can see the coast, the crow will fly to the coast without worry, and not come back to the mast of the sea-merchant again.

When the meditator has attained the Anuloma-ñâna, he has experienced no conflict with basic insight knowledge, e.g. from the fourth Udayabbaya-ñâna up to the higher insight knowledge, e.g. the eleventh Sankhârupekkhâ-ñâna. Thus it is called Anuloma-ñâna (the insight knowledge of conformity).<sup>26</sup>

13. Gotrabhuû-ñâna: This is insight knowledge at the moment of the change of lineage.

When the meditator has attained the Gotrabhuû-ñâna, and has taken Nibbâna as the object of meditation, he has broken with the lineage of ordinary people, and this change causes the lineage of the holy ones to arise. That is to say the sensual mind has broken from the practice which made him observe formed objects of meditation. This has ended only in the Anuloma-ñâna; he has to leave the formed objects of meditation and takes Nibbâna as the object of meditation. Therefore the thirteenth insight knowledge is the border between ordinary people and the holy one(s) (arahat), and it is very near to Magga-ñâna. Even so, the

---

26 U Jankabhivamsa, Kammathtanacariya, Dhamma Lecture on Meditation (in Thai version translated and compiled by Kesini Chalermtirakul) , Bangkok: Sahadhammic Limited , 2537 B.E., p.153

Gotrabhû-ñâna is still worldly wisdom, because it cannot eradicate delusion (moha).<sup>27</sup>

14. Magga-ñâna: This is the insight knowledge of the path.

After the meditator has passed the Gotrabhu-ñâna, he enters the Magga-ñâna whose characteristic is extinction (nirodha) as mentioned in the Gotrabhû-ñâna, but the extinctions in the Magga-ñâna are different from each other as follows:<sup>28</sup>

A. The meditator whose saddhindrîya (controlling faculty of confidence) is well developed realizes impermanence very clearly, and it is very powerful, so the insight of reaching the Path causes the meditator to realize the impermanence of Rupa (corporeality) and Nâma (mentality) profoundly, and lastly the realization of impermanence passes away. This is called “attainment of the Path through Aniccam (impermanence);” it is liberation through signlessness.

B. The meditator whose sadghindrîya (controlling faculty of concentration) is well developed, realizes the state of suffering very clearly, and it is very powerful. The insight of reaching the Path causes the meditator to realize the state of suffering sharply and clearly. For example, he has colicky pain in the chest up to the throat, and then it passes away. This is called “attainment of the Path through the Dukkha (suffering);” it is liberation through the Dukkha (suffering).

C. The meditator whose pannindrîya (controlling faculty of wisdom) is well developed, realizes the state of not-self very clearly, and it is powerful. The insight of reaching the Path causes the

---

27 Bhaddanta Asabhathera, Dhammacariya, Vipassana Sub-commentary (in Thai ), pp.128-129

28 Phrabrohmamoli (Vilas Ñanavaro), **Vipassanadipani** (in Thai),pp.193-302

meditator to realize the state of not-self very clearly and profoundly (however the state of not-self is not demonstrated by the meditator in any specific way to the outside world but only to the meditator himself), and then Nâma-Rupa gradually becomes smaller and smaller, and it passes away. This is called “attainment of the Path through the Anattâ (not-self).”

Again, to reach the area of the Gotrabu-ñâna in which the insight knowledge is ripening, the Magga-ñâna is waiting for the meditator who has the controlling faculties (indrîyas) perfectly balanced. When he enters the vicinity of the Magga-ñâna, he suddenly becomes a holy one. With this knowledge, the meditator realizes within himself the Four Noble Truths, e.g. Dukkha (suffering) Samudaya (cause of suffering) Nirodha (cessation of suffering) and Magga (the path leading to cessation of suffering).<sup>29</sup> This is just as it happened with the Buddha himself.

Achieving the Magga-ñâna, must be attained through the meditator observing and noting the three characteristics fully, according to his developed perfections (pâramitâ) which have been cultivated in this and in previous lifetimes. Either impermanence, suffering, or no-self determine the specific way the Magga-ñâna is realized. There is no other way apart from the three characteristics to attain the level of the holy ones.

15. Phala-ñâna: This is the insight knowledge of fruition.

When the Magga-ñâna has arisen, the Phala-ñâna arises after that immediately. This is an effect of the Magga-ñâna arising; there is no gap between Magga and Phala, because the insight knowledge of the Path remains only for a moment and it arises only one time. Even the higher states of insight knowledge of the Path behave the same way. Having arisen, it eradicates the fetters according to the different levels of power of each Magga.

---

<sup>29</sup> U Jankabhivamsa, Kammattanacariya, **Dhamma Lecture on Meditation** (in Thai version translated and compiled by Kesini Chalermtirakul) , pp.155-156

Now let us talk about the practice of insight meditation at the first level, which is called “Pathama-magga (first Path) or Sotapatti-magga (the path of Stream-Entrance, or first level of enlightenment). This state arises and eradicates completely the first three of the initial five fetters:<sup>30</sup>

- 1) Sakkaya-ditthi (personality-view)
- 2) Vicikicchâ (doubt)
- 3) Sîlabbataparamâsa (adherence to rules and rituals)
- 4) Kâmaraga (sensual craving)
- 5) Patigha (ill-will)

Sakadâgâmi, the second level of enlightenment, reduces or weakens sensual craving and ill-will. The Anâgâmi, the third level of enlightenment, eliminates sensual lust and ill-will entirely. It should be noted that there are ten fetters in all, which are eliminated by the fully enlightened being (Arahat).

As has been mentioned, the first, or preliminary, Path (Pathama-magga- that of the one who has just entered this level), arises only one time; after that the insight knowledge of fruition (Phala-ñâna) arises closely thereafter. This is its effect which lasts forever. The Phala-ñâna differs between beings according to the different kinds of meditators as follows:<sup>31</sup>

1. Mandapuggala: This is a person who has a little wisdom which is not well developed. Phala-ñâna (insight knowledge of fruition) arises in this moment two times; it means that he reaches the Magga (Path) and Phala (Fruition) slowly, because at the first moment he has to have parikamma (preparation).

2. Tikkhapuggala: This is a person who has more wisdom that is better developed. Phala-ñâna (insight knowledge of fruition) arises three times. This means that he reaches the Magga (Path) and Phala (Fruition)

---

<sup>30</sup> Bhaddanta Asabhathera, Dhammacariya, **Vipassana Sub-commentary** (in Thai ), pp.134-135

<sup>31</sup> Phrabrohmamoli (Vilas Ñanavaro), **Vipassanadipani** (in Thai), pp. 303-312

quickly without parikamma (preparation). Next, there is bhavanga (the passive state of mind) to block, and then the Paccavekkhana-ñâna (insight knowledge of reviewing) arises. This is the final stage of the sixteen insight knowledges to be fully attained.

The Phala-ñâna (insight knowledge of fruition) is experienced in meditators who have passed all obstructions to the practice of meditation, and have at last reached the supramundane area, and have Nibbâna as the object of meditation.

#### 16. Paccavekkhana-ñâna: it is insight knowledge of reviewing.

When the meditator has reached the extinction of being conscious of oneself, he asks “what is happening to me? How is it happening to me?” So he comes to do a review of his own practice in the past, and to examine the strange signs and symptoms that he had not seen before. Therefore the Paccavekkhana-ñâna is a review of various states which are the effect of practicing insight meditation; a looking back at the novel events and experiences that had not occurred previously.<sup>32</sup>

Insight knowledge is now mature, and this knowledge has been gained by the mental development which arises from the right practice of insight meditation. He has not been taught by any teacher that he must first acquire book knowledge and understanding of the Dhamma, and only put it into practice afterwards. Indeed, if he practices correctly, insight knowledge will certainly arise to him.

Insight knowledge is a full realization of the physical and mental nature of the characteristics of impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha) and not-self (anatta). It is said by the Most Venerable P.A. Payutto in his book, *Buddhadhamma*, page 54, “the insight knowledge is the top most knowledge and important success of mankind; it is either mundane knowledge or supramundane knowledge, it puts forward to cause the progress in civilization of mankind.” When the realization is

---

<sup>32</sup> Bhaddanta Asabhathera, *Dhammacariya, Vipassana Sub-commentary* (in Thai ), p. 136

accumulated more and more, the meditator's opinions of the world are permanently changed. Lastly the defilements which cause attachment and sufferings are completely eradicated (by eliminating greed, hatred and delusion completely), and supreme happiness is achieved [sic]."