

MahaSatipatthana Sutta

The Great Discourse on the Four Fold
Establishment of Mindfulness

Dhammanupassana

*Establishment of Mindfulness
on 5 Hindrances*



A handbook by Bro James Ong

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Dear Reader,

This book is given to you as a Dhamma gift.

The publication costs of this book was borne by the generous contributions of those who wish to share the Buddha Dhamma with you.

Kindly consider handling this book with care; share and make it known; so that these wonderful teachings may continue to touch the lives of many others.

Sabbādanam Dhammadānam jināti
The Gift of Dhamma Excels All Gifts

Sadhu ! Sadhu ! Sadhu !

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Foreword

As a lay-meditator I have often found it challenging to sustain a continuous practice in my life – a life outside of a meditation retreat-centre. I have asked my teacher these questions a long time ago. How can I bring the practice ‘home’ with me? Why is it so difficult? It is obviously impossible to create a retreat environment outside of it, so how can I make the practice constant? His reply to me was – “Dhammanupassana. You are missing out this base in your practice.”

It is indeed true that Dhammanupassana was the missing link and a key to a sustainable and continuous training. I am a slow learner and it took a while for the jigsaw puzzle to come together but when it did, meditation becomes alive for me. Life and meditation is not separate, not a second nature but intertwined so much so that it is life, one’s ‘first nature’ if there is such a word.

What is the best life for a lay meditator and how is a life best lived? His reply to me was, “the Buddha said the life best lived is a life lived with mindfulness. Mindfulness established on the Four Foundations. Without mindfulness it is as if one is dead.” “We are very blessed that the path is still practiced today, clearly expounded. Practise while your conditions are favourable for who knows what tomorrow brings.”

I have been very fortunate to say the least, to have an inspiring teacher, a good friend, a fatherly Dhamma figure for almost my entire spiritual life. I feel deeply grateful to Bro James for

that but words of gratitude do not suffice. It will never equate his gift of Dhamma and Dhamma kinship. Life, can be tough and when it gives you lemons or (should I say...) when it throws durians at you (?), you make lemonade and durian puffs. In my most difficult times, only words of truth, Dhamma – the teachings of the Buddha offer solace. Only upon reflection of Buddha's virtues and faith upon the holy Sangha offers strength and courage. Difficulties strengthen our Paramis. It pushes our practice far beyond our limitations, if only we have the training and guide. This is what I hope this book can offer to you, a guide that lights the way as we navigate life while making Dhamma part of it.

In this book, Bro James explained how to establish mindfulness on these 5 Hindrances and why it is important to do so. Written as if spoken in simple Malaysian English, he continued to draw upon his personal experience to explain and supplement the exposition of the Discourse. Connecting the dots between Text and life, he illustrates it with modern day scenarios enabling us to see how the practice is applied – in both formal practice and daily life today.

I hope you will find this book valuable and precious as I do. Make this handbook your best companion and reference. Let it light up your practice. May your practice progress by leaps and bounds and may you realize the Dhamma in this very life.

*Shymiin Silena C
Kuala Lumpur*

Acknowledgments

A big Sadhu to Silena Shymiin for painstakingly compiling, transcribing, sieve and edit the talks I delivered in the Intermediate classes conducted at Buddhist Maha Vihara, Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur.

This book is a continuation of the first handbook (9-Lessons Beginners Course). Dhammanupassana, the 4th Foundation of Mindfulness is very extensive as there are more sections taught by the Buddha and deeper approach to mindfulness cultivation. It involves knowing the causes of arising, how to prevent the unwholesome and unprofitable mind from arising and when arising how to get rid of it. So that the mind can maintain in calmness, mental balance and tranquillity for the purpose of seeing things as they really are (the true nature – phenomena mind & form).

The first section of Dhammanupassana that the Buddha delivered was the 5 Hindrances. It is very important to direct your attention to establishing mindfulness towards these Hindrances in daily life and daily activities. When mindfulness is built-up and is able to recognise these hindrances as it begins to arise, it can easily be checked and prevented from accumulating and become strong. Otherwise it can cause much mental pain and difficult to suppress or get rid off.

Many meditators assume that meditation is only done in Temple's premises, formal posture of sitting and walking but missed out the mental cultivation in daily activities which occupy most part of our (working) life. It is directly facing not only internal objects that they try to handle by concentration, but also only when they are able to deal with external 5-sense objects as well that make them master of their mind.

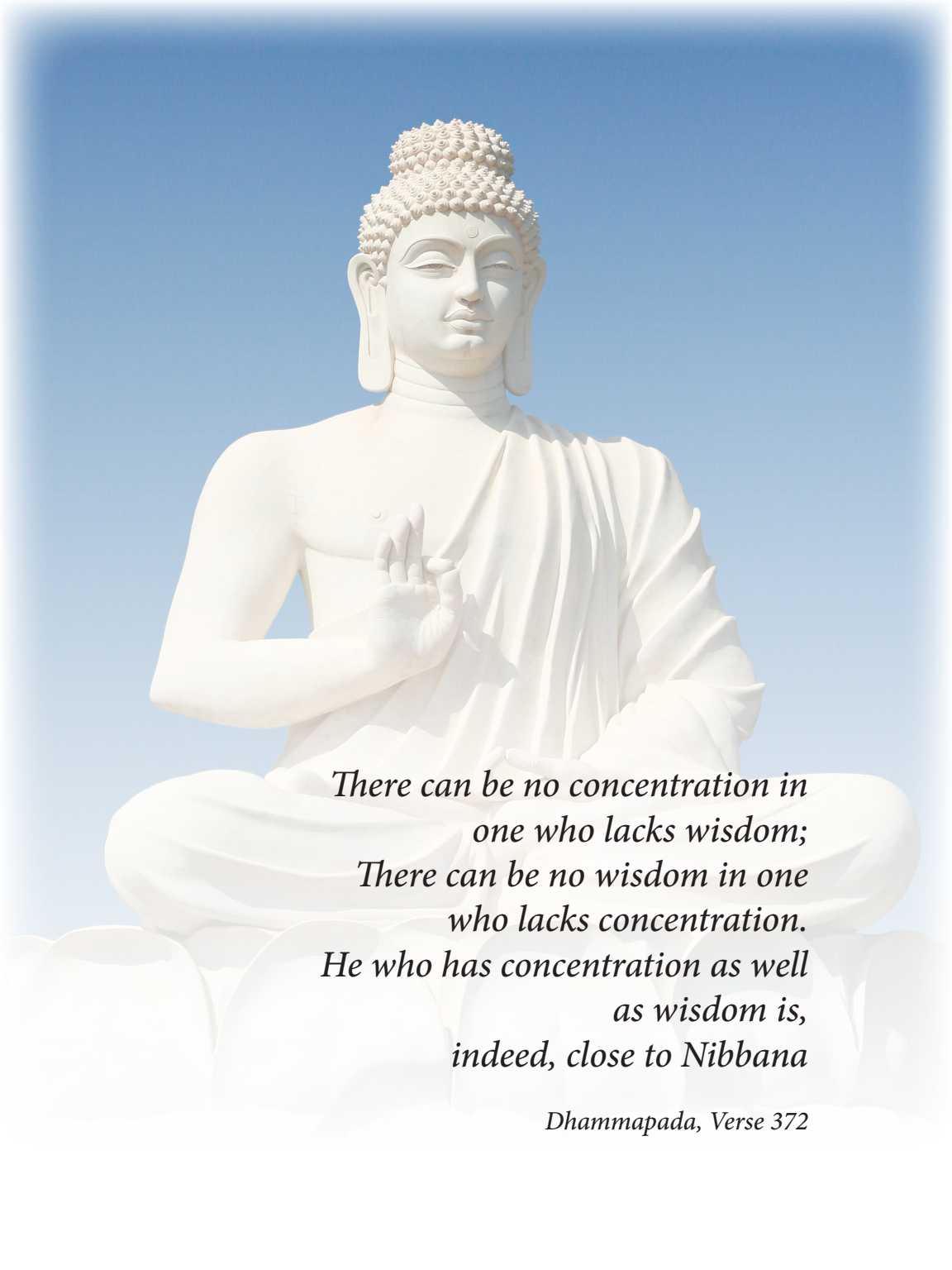
I have tried my best to further explain what the Buddha taught based on my sincerity to share my knowledge and experiences for the benefit of those who are searching for the meditation-path. I acknowledge and take responsibility for any mistake, discrepancies in the explanation of the 5 Hindrances in this book. I hope that readers will find this book useful, profitable and helpful in their spiritual quest.

I take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to all those who, one-way or another were involved in the publication of this second book. I am especially grateful to my many students who have inspired me to complete this second book by their dedication and sincerity, and perseverance in the mindfulness cultivation along with me for many years. Also always remembering and most grateful to many volunteers who provided transport for me, to the meditation class and safely home weekly all these years.

May all those who are involved in the Dhamma-Dana wholesome deed be blessed by the Triple Gems in this very life and future lives. May your journey to final liberation be smooth, easy, fast and free from strong obstacles.

*Sadhu Sadhu Sadhu!
Bro James Ong
Kuala Lumpur*





*There can be no concentration in
one who lacks wisdom;
There can be no wisdom in one
who lacks concentration.
He who has concentration as well
as wisdom is,
indeed, close to Nibbana*

Dhammapada, Verse 372

Dhammanupassana

Mindfulness established on Reality

5 Hindrances *(Nivarana)* *Introduction*



Mindfulness Established on Reality (Dhammanupassana)

5 Hindrances Nivarana

This book is the first part of the Dhammanupassana series.

Introduction

Many meditators complained about not progressing in their practice. There are many reasons for non-progress. It could very possibly be that the meditator failed to practise the fourth part the four foundation of mindfulness namely, Dhammanupassana, which is an important part of the practice.

Dhammanupassana is a deeper practice. It is more than just perceiving, recognising and merely watching the arising and passing away of phenomena. The practice requires the meditator to ‘look deeply’, knowing and understanding the mind, and how it works.

Dhammanupassana is mindfulness established on the foundation of Dhamma. What is Dhamma?

Dhamma means reality and what is that? Reality is, what is real – what exists in mind and form. Some authors have translated this as mental objects or mental contents.

However some Dhammanu objects includes material form, not just mental objects. As such, I prefer to use “reality” rather than mental object.

This fourth foundation covers a wide range of realities that a meditator must be mindful of. This range from overcoming hindrances that blocks the progress to cultivating the factors of enlightenment that might be lacking in a meditator.

As such, a meditator must go through Dhammanupassana and learn which part of it he must brush up.

Manage the Mind

**Recognise &
Cultivate**



Friends

**Recognise &
Overcome**



Foes

I will first go through the five hindrances, the first subject taught under the Dhammanupassana.

What are hindrances, in Pali, Nivarana (not Nibbana)? These are the unwholesome realities that oppose peacefulness, prevent calmness and tranquillity; and block the progress in meditation.

How does it block a meditator's progress?

As a meditator, you will not find progress in your practice when hindrances are present, as the mind will not calm down or be tranquil.

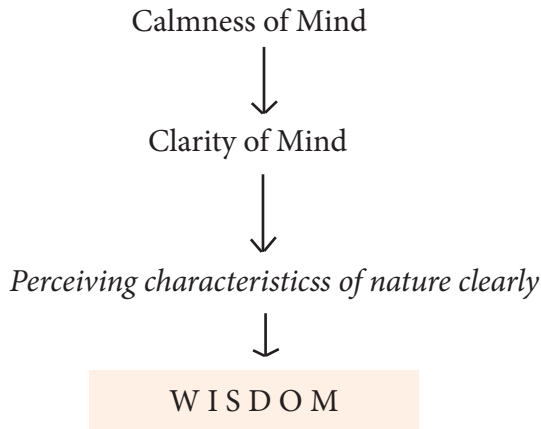
Why is calmness and tranquillity essential for progress?

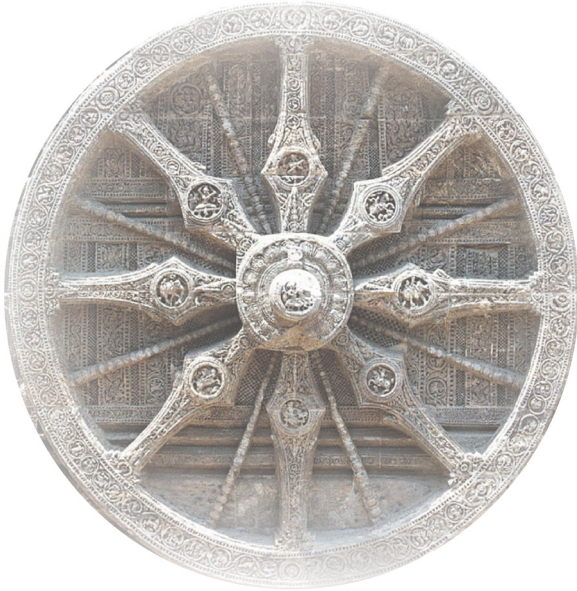
It is essential because the mind becomes clear only when there is calmness and tranquillity.

And why is clarity of mind essential?

Clarity of mind is required to perceive nature namely the characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self.

Unable to perceive the characteristics of nature, wisdom cannot arise. Therefore, hindrances must be known, managed and overcome for the sake of progress.





*Not by a shower of coins can
sensual desires be satiated;
Sensual desires give little pleasure
and are fraught with painful
consequences (dukkha).
Knowing this, the wise who is the
disciple of the Buddha,
does not find delight even in the
pleasures of the devas,
but rejoices in the cessation of
craving (Nibbana).*

Dhammapada, Verse 186 & 187

Lesson One

Sense Desire

(Part 1)

(Kama Chanda)



Lesson One

Sense Desire

(Kama Chanda)

Part 1

The Buddha began this section by:

“When sense desire is present within he knows there is sense desire in me or when absent within, he knows there is no sense desire in me.”

Sense desire arises in the mind very often. It is just that we are not conscious of it. Why are we not conscious of it? It is so because it appears normal to crave for sense-object.

In our conventional world we learn to strive for material gains and measure our success and gains by accomplishments. These attainments are used to measure our (worldly) happiness and so we seek out these things.

*So long as we get what we want,
sense desire is fulfilled. (Object is
available, mind goes for it and
could have it).*

There is no friction in the mind.

In this way the mind hops from pleasant object to pleasant object, from one sense base to another.

Only when the mind is unable to find or obtain the sense-object or unable to enjoy the sense-object, then the mind begins to notice the unpleasant feelings in his mind.

*Feelings of dissatisfaction,
anger, sadness, frustration,
depression, loneliness, etc.*

These are, suffering.

On a day when everything goes the way you want it to be or, enjoying many and various sense-objects – often, you call that, a happy day. Enjoying tasty food, sightseeing, good conversations, listening to pleasant music, nothing annoying or demanding and no deadlines. There is no dissatisfaction. Indeed, it is a happy day.

As such it becomes natural to view craving as normal and not wrong. In fact it is welcome as it gives pleasure.

*However as a meditator, you
should be able to differentiate
between worldly happiness
and spiritual happiness*

A meditator striving for higher happiness and progress, should take appropriate actions to give rise to more spiritual happiness rather than indulge in worldly happiness.

Worldly happiness always comes with encumbrances.

The degree of craving varies. There are many minor cravings that are not strong throughout the day and these go unnoticed mostly. It arises and passes away.

Ordinarily, the middle enjoyment (the pleasurable feeling that arises from this strength) is more recognisable and noticeable to the meditator compared to the minor ones.

The heavy ones are what the mind chases after for example the worldly kind of love. A person in love constantly thinks of his or her beloved and the happiness they enjoyed together. Normally there are millions of such thoughts in a day as this kind of attachment brings great joy to the mind.

*The mind does not see the
pain and suffering this
attachment brings as it sees
only joy it gives.*

*Pain only arises when there is
separation from that pleasant object or
when the object disappears, or is lost.*

Pain comes in two forms – mental pain and pain from the body such as pain related to old age, sickness and death.

The mind does not want sickness, disease, decay or death. The mind finds happiness in youth, beauty and strength so that it could enjoy all the things that come with it.

Due to the natural tendencies of decay the body brings pain. This pain in turn influences the mind.

A meditator should be aware of sensual craving because it is the cause of suffering. It results in suffering.

Intense form of sensual desire leads to clinging, which in turn leads to mental and physical actions.

The drive and actions to fulfil the desires are itself stress. Compounded with disappointments and dissatisfaction that follow is again stressful – that is, a lot of mental suffering.

So, how does a meditator know that there is sense desire in him?

The meditator must first be able to recognise it.

So then, what is sense desire?

Sense desire is a form of greed (Lobha). In the Abhidhamma, Lobha covers all forms of selfish desires, longing, attachment and clinging. Sense desire falls within Lobha.

How can a meditator detect and recognise sense desire?

You can detect its presence by perceiving its characteristics. One must therefore learn what the 'enemy' looks like and its behaviour before one is able to know the presence of an enemy and the havoc it causes.

So, what does it appear like? In other words, what are the characteristics of Lobha or sense desire, attachment, longing and clinging?

The characteristic of Lobha is grasping an object.

You will notice that the mind catches onto an object and holds on to it. The mind refuses to let it go. Every time the object fades away it catches hold of it again. And so the Lobha mind goes after the object, time and time again until it is fulfilled.

It is mind gripping. Sometimes you might even feel the strength of the grip when sense desire is strong. The grip strengthens and intensifies sense desire. This, in turn causes the mind to cling to the object even more tightly and refuses to let it go. This is what makes Rebirth (Samsara).

What does Lobha do?

In other words, what is the function of Lobha?

Its function is sticking. This is what Lobha does – it sticks.

The mind that has sense desire is akin to strong glue. It clings and sticks onto the desirable object. It refuses to accept changes, as it wants the same object again and again for it to give the same pleasure – an unchanging happiness.

It looks for external joy and unchanging happiness by sticking onto the objects through the senses.

*But, alas all things change,
internally and externally.*

The mind with sense desire keep reaching out for something it cannot get (eternal happiness). This causes suffering because it is the nature of object to change.

*It is looking for perfection
in a non-perfect world.*

*This is an impossible
dream.*

How does sense desire manifest or appear?

It manifests or appears as not giving up. You can perceive these manifestations through your thoughts, decisions and when it is strong, through the actions motivated by these thoughts. The mind doggedly pursues the object of desire and does not give up. Wanting, longing, holding on – these are manifestations of sense desire.

It could not see beyond strong desires and wants.

If it cannot obtain through one sense, it will pursue it through other senses.

For example, a lover who is separated from the beloved physically, will seek to pursue her or him through means like video call (seeing sense-base). If that fails (maybe through poor connection?), he would try the audio calls (hearing sense-base). When he fails to fulfil it, he tries again through other means or alternate sense and may even resort to reminiscing (thinking mind-base).

Sometimes if strong mindfulness is present, the mind detaches from the desirable object – cutting off the sense desire very quickly.

When this happens, you could perceive and even feel the relief from the attachment and its grip.

In this case you should note the absence of sense desire. The absence of sense desire is the mind that has mindfulness and detachment. It is peaceful and contented. Sometimes this peacefulness and calmness is so deep - that it feels like an aftermath of a huge storm.

In the absence of sense desire, you could also perceive the absence of disturbances like restlessness that comes with sense desires.

In this way, you should train the mind to be aware of the absence of sense desire and strengthen the detachment factor within the mind through continuous mindfulness.

How is this applied in practice?

Sometimes when you experience thoughts forming non-stop during your meditation then, you must begin to note and look deeply into what is the hindrance that is present and obstructing calmness of mind.

Don't merely note thinking superficially. You must start to identify the hindrance.

Are these thoughts driven by sense desire or other hindrance such as ill will (which I will discuss later)? You should train the mind to check and identify the mind or hindrance by going through the characteristic, function and manifestations.

If it were sense desire, you would see that thoughts formed revolve around the desirable object. If you also realise that despite repeated noting, thoughts about the desirable object would neither stop nor slow down as your mindfulness is weak or, object is strong.

Hence it is a hindrance, since merely noting the mind does not calm it down.

Then, what should you do? What can you do to manage the hindrance? How can you deal with it?

Firstly be aware and detached from the thoughts watching it as merely an object.

Don't merely note thinking as thinking, as it is insufficient in the Dhammanupassana practice. Look deeply, and attentively.

As you look, bear in mind and apply the knowledge of what to look out for so that you could identify the type of mind – the presence of sense desire.

*If you look deeply, you
might also perceive
that it disappears when
there is mindfulness and
detachment.*

*That is the absence of sense
desire.*

And, you also note the sense desire comes back, again and again, or that you could not perceive its passing away at all if mindfulness is weak or object is strong.

The mind would not calm down. It is very disturbed. And there is, a problem.

An obstacle is present. The sense desire is an obstacle to calmness of mind. At this point, you should realise that there is a hindrance in the mind and what kind of hindrance.

Only when you are able to perceive the problem, you could then go on to manage the problem.

In this way (that is, through presence and absence), you train the mind to identify and determine the kind of hindrance (problem) that you need to manage.

The practice of Dhammanupassana does not just stop there. In order to solve the problem effectively, it must be tackled at its causal level.

And the Buddha continued:

“He knows how the arising of a non-arisen sensual desire comes to be.”

So therefore, secondly...

*You must continue to train
the mind to look into its
causal aspect –*

*Why do these thoughts
arise again and again?*

What is it that is driving and fuelling these thoughts? What is it that is causing the attachment to arise so strongly and stick around so stubbornly? What is it that the mind could not or refuse to let go of? What is the object or aspect of it that it is clinging onto?

The meditator must train the mind to look deeply and essentially learn to perceive the cause that gives rise to that attachment.

*This is the deeper training that
is required under the practice of
Dhammanupassana.*

Once you let go of the cause of that hindrance, the problem does not arise anymore or is weakened.

What is the cause of sense desire?

I will briefly explain the causes of sense desire and by understanding it you will be better equipped to identify it. So, what is the cause of sense desire? What did the Buddha teach about the cause of Lobha?

The Buddha taught the proximate cause of Lobha in the Abhidhamma, and that is:

*Seeing enjoyment in things
lead to bondage.*

This means that the mind that has sense desire only sees the happiness (although worldly) side of the object. It sees only the positive sides of things and it wants it or just to enjoy it.

*It fails to see the negatives,
bondage or encumbrances that
comes with the object.*

Why? How come?

It is so because the objects are pleasant or agreeable to the mind. It gives pleasant feeling (of worldly happiness) and is therefore enticing.

Pleasant objects appear on the sense bases owing to one's past wholesome Kamma.

So, should you wish to progress in your meditation, you should now go further to the next step of training in Dhammanupassana with regard to hindrance. This step involves knowing what can you do to loosen the hold of sense desire, temporarily overcome it so to give rise to calmness, clarity of mind and eventually wisdom.

The final step involves knowing by experience, how the hindrance will not arise again. For instance how by tackling the cause, the effect will not arise again, eliminated or is weakened.

In other words, what can you do and how to manage this hindrance at the causal level? I will discuss these parts in the next chapter and will go ahead to answer some questions.



Questions and Answers

Question 1:

Why is it not sufficient to watch body, feelings and mind? Also, it seems similar to watching mind.

Answer to question 1:

Any one base is sufficient by itself for the meditator to get into insights. However lacking in Perfections or Pre-requisites (Paramis) and/or due

to other conditions, the meditator is often disturbed especially juggling with layman's duties.

Therefore, the meditator must extend his practice to other bases including Dhammanupassana.

Question 2:

Why is Samadhi weak even after being a long time meditator?

Answer to question 2

It is weak because there is no effort or training to reduce, contain or manage the five hindrances.

There are many hours besides that one-hour of formal practice where without mindfulness the mind runs amok with defilements.

Hence, meditator should check and manage these hindrances.

Strong Samadhi (concentration) is needed to perceive clearly the three characteristics. Strong Samadhi cannot arise when the undercurrents of five hindrances strongly affect the mind and are not managed.

Continuous mindfulness keeps the Hindrances in check and concentration is built up.

Question 3:

All beings are born with desires and it is part of us – it seems we aren't automatically aware of sensual desire. It also seems so natural.

So why is it bad? Why should we overcome it? Why is there a need to control, manage or eliminate it?

Answer to question 3

Sense desire grips and shakes the mind.

It seems natural because people find great joy in sensual craving.

Although it produces a lot of joy, much pain follows it and many do not see the intense pain that comes along with it.

Most times, the pain is not strong enough for the mind to recognise it. It is a matter of intensity.

The stronger the attachment the more intense is the pain. Strong and sharp mindfulness is needed to recognise the minor craving, sadness, anger, annoyance, and disappointment that follows behind the craving.

Sometimes pain that follows is not spontaneous because it takes time for it to appear in the mind. Sometimes it takes a while to build up in force before the mind could recognise it.

Question 4:

So it is natural to have sense desire?

Answer to question 4


We are born with it.

According to Buddhist's belief, we are born with it because of the attachment root that follows from life to life.

The difference lies in whether one has strong roots, roots of middle strength or minor roots. You can see there are various kinds of people in this world motivated by this root.

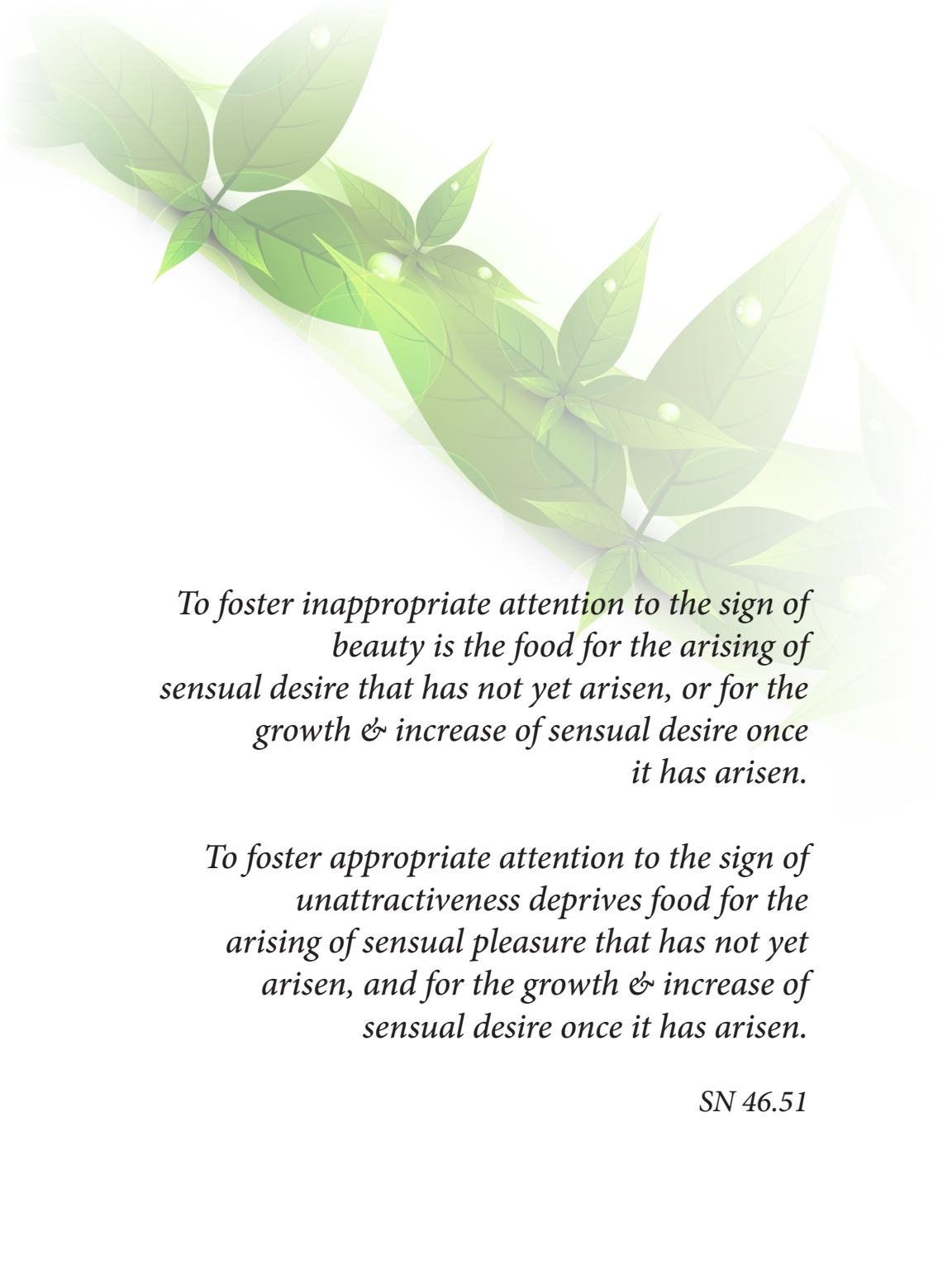
For those who cultivate in this life – such as mindfulness established on Dhammanupassana seriously are restrained in their senses and less inclined to strong craving. You can tell from their character that they have abstinence and well trained in precepts.



A bright sunburst in a blue sky with lens flare effects. The sun is positioned in the upper right quadrant, emitting numerous thin, white rays that spread across the sky. To the left of the sun, there are several overlapping circular lens flare patterns in shades of purple, pink, and white, creating a soft, ethereal glow. The background is a gradient of light blue, transitioning from a deeper blue at the top to a lighter, almost white blue at the bottom.

*Sense objects give little enjoyment,
but much pain and much
despair; the danger in them prevails.*

MN 14



To foster inappropriate attention to the sign of beauty is the food for the arising of sensual desire that has not yet arisen, or for the growth & increase of sensual desire once it has arisen.

To foster appropriate attention to the sign of unattractiveness deprives food for the arising of sensual pleasure that has not yet arisen, and for the growth & increase of sensual desire once it has arisen.

Lesson Two

Sense Desire

(Part 2)

(Kama Chanda)



Lesson Two

Sense Desire

(Kama Chanda)

Part 2

The mind will not settle down if endless stream of thoughts forms regarding a desirable object or if the mind is constantly moving in search for an object to enjoy.

When the mind is built up with cravings of things that you want, the mind becomes very restless. You can't meditate.

In this instance, you should start to take note of it as a hindrance as explained in the earlier chapter. Look deeply into the cause of its arising.

And, the Buddha continued:

*“He knows how the
discarding of an already
arisen sensual desire comes
to be.”*

A meditator must know what to do in order to overcome it so that it will not arise again (at least for that session).

If not, you could be a meditator of many years and make no progress in your practice. How is this possible? It is, because you do not realise there are obstructions in the mind. Let alone know how to deal with it.

So let us consider a few ways that a meditator can use to discard and overcome the sense desire hindrance.

What are the ways of discarding the hindrance of sense desire?

Wise Reflection

Attention to the happiness, benefits and desirable or pleasant aspects of the object nourishes, strengthens and even intensifies sense desire – turning it into strong clinging. This is unwise attention.

Train the mind to perceive the encumbrances that come along with the desirable object.

Immense mental suffering is bound to follow when the mind can no longer obtain or enjoy the object or when object changes or disappears. This is inevitable as all objects change and disappear.

How very foolish and futile it is to hold onto a changing or disappearing object for eternal happiness?

*Clinging only brings
suffering, not happiness*

A meditator should therefore train the mind to see the danger associated with the object.

By directing and training the mind to perceive the encumbrances and suffering aspects of the object in the mind, is wise attention. This will bring out wisdom and acceptance of nature.

Wisely reflect the hardships, difficulties and suffering that you have to endure in exchange for the desirable object or fleeting moment of sensual enjoyment can prevent sense desire from building up.

For example, people often make decision impulsively when shopping because they are blinded by their attraction to the desirable object and so they perceive only the benefits and pleasant aspects. They run into credit debts for spending money they do not have.

When the mind is grasping desirable object, it could not see the encumbrances of these objects such as the burden of monthly instalments.

Another example is if you are strongly attached to your brand new car, fear arises. You might fear that it gets scratched and constantly think or worry if you hadn't parked at safe places.

If you are very attached to someone, you will experience fear, worries or insecurities with regard to that person such as fear of separation.

*Strong attachment
produces strong fear,
insecurity of mind and
worries.*

*This is mental suffering
and a form of bondage.*

*If we do not train the mind to perceive
the disadvantage or the bondage that
comes with all desirable objects, the
mind will keep pursuing it and be
enslaved by more bondages.*

Suffering is bound to follow.

Wise reflection on the suffering that you will have to endure can stop strong desire and restlessness from building up strongly especially in daily life, thereby preventing it from becoming a hindrance to your meditation.

Mindfulness

The meditator should also try to be mindful of the mental state of craving. Mindfulness always arises with detachment mental factor and if mindfulness is present, craving mind ceases.

The intermittent mindfulness interjecting a long (and what appears to be an unbroken) stream of craving minds will loosen the grip of craving.

Concentration

During meditation you may bring out more effort to constantly apply the mind to the meditation object (example, rise and fall movement of the abdomen – body object) and not entertain or give attention to the thoughts of sense desire.

This effort will build up Samadhi (concentration). When Samadhi is built up strongly, it can temporarily inhibit the craving mind and prevent it from getting out of control.

How come and how is this done?

The effort in directing the mind to the meditation object, and constantly and persistently directing the mind back when it strays away builds up the mental factor of ‘initial application of mind’.

When ‘initial application of mind’ is developed, the mind stays on the meditation object with relatively lesser effort. When this happens, it means there is ‘sustained application of mind’.

If you maintained your effort in sustaining your mind on the meditation object, keeping it constant and continuous, then it will give rise to joy and happiness.

These would eventually produce concentration and give rise to calmness of mind. At this point, the mind feels contented. When the mind is contented, sense desire stops for that moment.

*Concentration produces
calmness of mind.*

*In turn, calmness arises with
contentment in the mind.*

Contentment

Contentment that arises through Samadhi (concentration) reduces the intensity of craving.

Even if craving arises (intermitently) it does not get built up in the mind that has relatively much contentment through Samadhi.

In daily life, contentment can be brought about by frequent reflection upon what you have rather than what you lack. You can train the mind to think of 'haves' and not all the 'have-not's'.

Also, train the mind to lessen the expectations with regard to all things. Not only will contentment lessen disappointments and mental suffering, a consequence of not getting what you want or expect, the mind becomes contented and happier with simple things in life.

*Bring out wise attention
and learn to direct the mind
wisely*

Having contentment is conducive for the arising and increase of spiritual joy. It helps to loosen up the grip of the craving mind.

When the mind has spiritual joy it does not require sensual joys and pleasures.

Guard The Sense Doors

A meditator should also try to guard the sense doors by being mindful at the sense bases (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind).

For example, the meditator notes the strong sense desire that has arisen because he smelled food and it is making him want to eat. In this instance, you note smelling – it is just smell. Smell is just an object. Let it go.

If you can't let it go then, move away to avoid contact.

By determining which base the sense desire arises from, you can then restrain that particular base appropriately.

Practising restraint at sense bases can greatly reduce sense desire in daily life.

When sense desire is managed in daily life, you will find that the mind settles into calmness fairly quickly during formal meditation.

Noble friendship

Having friends and companions that walk the same path is a support to your spiritual endeavours in many ways. It is also inspiring to be present with everyone else who is striving energetically. The presence of fellow meditators in class, each making a quiet resolution to be present to practise, rain or shine inspires similar qualities.

Noble friendship encourages and inspires another directly and indirectly to continue with the practice that leads to non-greed, (non-illwill and wisdom).

It is therefore beneficial to build fellowship among meditators.

Friends who are not meditators will not understand the benefits and wholesome nature of meditation. They may even discourage you from meditating and pull you towards sensual enjoyments. Just like a frugal shopping companion will advise you to think twice before spending impulsively whereas a friend without restraint will encourage you to buy even though you do not need.

And so the Buddha continued:

“And he knows how the non-arising in the future of a discarded sensual desire comes to be.”

How or when will sense desire not arise again?

When mindfulness is sustained continuously it builds up concentration and eventuates in clarity of mind. Mindfulness always arises with detachment. Strong continuous mindfulness, together with detachment and with clarity of mind, will enable you to recognise sense desire and detaches from it or let go of it. The mind does not grasp and cling onto it. In this way mindfulness prevents the craving from building up strongly.

Craving is lessen in the second stage of sainthood and is completely eradicated in the fourth and final stage of sainthood (Arahant).

A meditator who practises hindrances in the ways as expounded by the Buddha (as explained here) will experience less mental pain compared to those who do not practise mindfulness on the hindrances.

The hindrance of sense desire grips the mind so tightly that it dictates, motivates and drives one's actions, speech and thoughts with a single purpose of fulfilling that craving.

When the mind could not get the object or enjoy it or when the object changes, it suffers great pain and disappointments.

The more intense is the craving, the greater is the pain.

For those who practise mindfulness the force of craving will never be built up to an intense level.

When there is lesser craving, there is more contentment, peacefulness and happiness from within. You will improve and progress quicker on the path compared to those who let craving take its course.



Questions and Answers

Question 1:

Is it not said as long as we have sensual enjoyment within the five precepts – it would be alright to enjoy as lay-person?

Answer to question 1:

It is alright for a start. Enjoying within the five precepts within legal boundaries, with money rightly earned and without harming oneself or another eliminates gross mental disturbances. It also eliminates worries related to breaking of laws.

However for a higher aim (wisdom) in meditation you need to go beyond the allowable enjoyment. It prevents the mind from going into deep Samadhi when it is searching for the allowable enjoyment whether the sensual craving is of minor, middle or strong degree.

In other words, a more refined practice is required. Just as a rocket that sheds off the excess load as it climbs the heights, similarly, the allowable enjoyment needs to be checked for the mind to go deeper in its practice towards realisation.

Question 2:

Don't you think it is impossible to totally eliminate craving as a lay-person or householder?

Answer to question 2:

The ocean floor does not drop suddenly but slopes gradually.

As you keep on practising the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, with the Four Right Efforts, the mind gradually slopes towards the elimination of sensual craving – towards Nibbana, the highest happiness and freedom from all pain.

Question 3:

Do all beings have sense desire?

Answer to question 3:

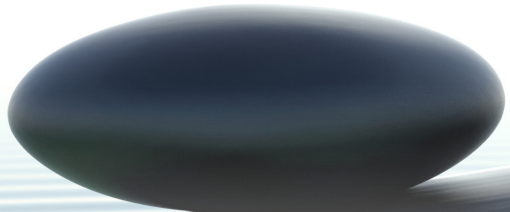
All beings have sense desire – from lowly animals, to humans and other beings in the higher realms. The Arahants, the full-fledged saints have completely overcome sense desire.



Antidote for Greed

*The more I have, the happier I shall be,
thinks the greedy mind.
But the more I have the heavier the burden is.*

*To keep, to love, to cherish,
and hope it would not perish.
I hold, and I hold.
I fear to lose what is dear,
and that would no longer bring me cheer.*




*Can't you see? It is clear.
Fear - Isn't that suffering?*

*In the mind, a lot of flustering
In not having too, is suffering.*

But, contentment with whatever you have is bliss.

This, the Buddha said.





“One has a mind of ill-will and intentions of hate thus: ‘May these beings be slain and slaughtered, may they be cut off, perish, or be annihilated.’...

“One’s mind is without ill-will and one has intentions free of hate thus: ‘May these beings be free from enmity, affliction, and anxiety! May they live happily!’”

Lesson Three

Ill Will

(Part 1)

(Byapada)



Lesson Three

Ill Will *(Byapada)* *Part 1*

The Buddha also began the Great Discourse on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness with regard to this hindrance as follows:

“When ill will is present within he knows there is ill will in me or when absent within, he knows there is no ill will in me”

So do you know when there is or isn't ill will in the mind? “How do I know?” You know only if you have trained the mind to recognise ill will.

What is ill will?

There are many variations in ill will and its intensities. In Pali, ill will is called Dosa Citta, Dosa consciousness or Dosa mind. It is aversion in the mind.

*It turns away from object,
repulsed by it, resists or rejects it.*

Many English words exist to differentiate a variety of ill will for instance: aversion, anger, irritation, annoyance, animosity, frustration, fear, jealousy, stinginess and so on.

*Despite many variations,
the feeling of ill will
is always unpleasant or
painful (Dukkha).*

How can you detect ill will in the mind?

All ill will mental states arise with painful or unpleasant feelings. In that way, it is easy for you to recognise ill will through feelings compared to sensual craving.

Sensual craving can produce much worldly happiness or joy, so can the wholesome mind.

The sight of an ice cream poster could produce much joy to the ice cream craving mind even before you get to taste it. The wholesome mind of giving, listening to Dhamma talks, chanting or meditating, can also arise with much joy (if not, equanimity).

It can therefore be difficult for the indiscriminate meditator to distinguish between the sensual craving mind and wholesome mind if the unskilled meditator were to identify sense desire hindrance through pleasant feelings.

Whereas, ill will only arises with unpleasant feelings and not any type of feelings.

As such it is much easier to recognise ill will if you could recognise the presence of unpleasant feelings.

When ill will is present, you will not be able to perceive any meditation object.

Ill will mind is like a pot of hot boiling water, bubbling and raging away. It is an obstruction to tranquillity, calmness and peacefulness of mind, all of which are essentials to the arising of wisdom or insights.

For the sake of progress, it is therefore important that you learn to recognise and manage the problem so that the mind is relatively tranquil, calm and peaceful even in daily life, not just in formal meditation.

Much like any other problem before you begin to manage it, you need to recognise the problem or that there is a problem. Then, understand what kind of problem it is before applying the solution.

You also need to know what solutions are available for the problem and which is appropriate, effective and timely. All these are part of the Dhammanupassana (Mindfulness on Reality) practice with regard to hindrances.

What other ways can you recognise ill will?

Besides the unpleasant feelings that arise with ill will, you can also recognise ill will mind by perceiving its characteristics, function, manifestation and its proximate cause.

These are the 4 modes the Buddha taught in Abhidhamma.

Through these 4 modes, you will be able to pin point exactly the type of mind that has arisen in a particular moment.

So I will go through each of these, one at a time.

What are the characteristics of ill will?

In other words, what are the markers of ill will and ways to recognise it?

It is fierceness. A person who is angry behaves fiercely and in other words violently, ferociously, brutally, aggressively, viciously. These traits are opposite of the non-ill will mind that has the characteristics of kindness, gentleness and it is caring.

If you recognise the presence of these traits, then you should be aware that there is ill will present within.

When you become aware of it, the mindful mind takes ill will mental state as an object.

In doing so, the mind is diverted from going into the details of the unpleasantness surrounding the object.

In this way, mindfulness cuts off the object of aversion.

For example, when being scolded you become aware of the ill will instead of focussing your attention on the scolding or on the person scolding you. Just by this bare awareness, anger will subside or disappear completely by itself.

That is the power of mindfulness. One needn't do much except to recognise and be aware of the mind. A skilful and diligent meditator will know that this works. Why does it work?

It works when mindfulness is strongly developed in the meditator.

A mind that has mindfulness is wholesome. It brings out as combination in a wholesome mind, other wholesome qualities including detachment, non-ill will, balance of mind and other wholesome qualities.

It does not work in a meditator whose mindfulness is weak or if the object is strong.

In this case, you should know of other ways to overcome or manage this hindrance. These are skills that you as a meditator should cultivate. I shall go through these later.

What is the function of ill will?

The function of ill will is to spread and burn up the support of mind and body, as fire element is also strongly present in the ill will mind.

You could actually feel hot and your face may even turn red, as if one is about to gobble up another person. My teacher used to say when you are angry, take a look at the mirror – there is no difference between a demon and an angry person.

You will notice anger makes the appearance ugly and so, an angry person could try to look at the mirror and anger may begin to subside. Naturally no one wishes to be unattractive.

The increase of fire element upsets the balance of the other elements and hence you can easily fall sick. You could even feel dryness in the throat and indigestion.

What is the manifestation of ill will?

Ill will manifests itself as prosecuting, hurting, harming one self and or others. How come?

The mind with ill will is blinded by ignorance and so an angry person is unable to perceive the bad Kamma created in the mind through anger.

Angry people justify their actions and speech. They argue the rightness in their beliefs, and justify their actions and speech. They defend their right in that regard and condemn the other.

There is no shame. There is no fear – for example shame and fear that their neighbours or another person will come to know of their actions or speech. The ill will mind does not think of such consequences.

The intent to harm and hurt is the manifestation of an ill will mind.

It just wants to harm or hurt.

This, the Buddha said is the nature of the (ill will) mind, Citta Niyama. It is not just your mind that reacts in this way.

Everyone's mind works in the same way because it is the nature, which has its way of operation.

Similarly, there is nature that governs seasons – spring comes before summer, summer before autumn, autumn before winter and winter before spring. Accordingly, the mind that inflicts harm on oneself or another is indisputably an ill will mind.

Ill will as you already know, disturbs the mind. You'll find it difficult to meditate when ill will is present. You may sit for a long time and yet cannot perceive any meditation objects (not even the rising or falling movements of the air element in the abdomen).

When you realise this, then you must then go on to look deeper into how can it be resolved- what can you do to overcome ill will so that the mind calms down? This is part of the Dhammanupassana practice, you go on further and look deeply, not just being aware the ill will mind.

You go on to identify and understand what is the reason for that ill will. What is the cause of the ill will?

As the Buddha continued in the Discourse:

“He knows how the arising of non-arisen ill will comes to be”

The Buddha said in everything that arises (effect), there is a cause behind it. If there is no cause, there is no effect.

If you ‘take away’ the cause, you ‘take away’ the outcome.

If you take away the ill will, there will be no harming of another.

When ill will mind is replaced with loving-kindness then there will be a lot of blessing for oneself and others. It makes oneself and others happy.

What is the cause of ill will?

In the Higher Teaching (Abhidhamma), the Buddha said its near cause or proximate cause (not the exact cause) is ground for annoyance. This means an unpleasant object that you see, hear, smell, taste or touch and think is the ground for annoyance. There are five external objects and one internal (mind object).

*In other words, an unpleasant
internal or external object.*

Some examples, being scolded is ground for ill will to arise.

Having your car smashed is ground for annoyance.

The driver in front of an impatient driver did not move quickly enough upon green light is ground for annoyance.

When you think of old age, or in sickness no one might care about you is ground for ill will. You will feel sad and experience unpleasant feelings with such thoughts.

When you're angry or hateful, harm is directed at another person. What if you're sad or remorseful in which case, there isn't ill will or harm directed at another person but, is there still harm?

Yes there is. It is directed at yourself and that is why people are liable to kill themselves with such ill will mental state especially since when accompanied by unpleasant feelings that are hard to bear. When lacking in loving kindness towards yourself you are likely to hurt yourself. It is therefore important to start recognising kindness in the mind, so that you can cultivate more non ill will mind and develop it.

When mind is strong it gives rise to action. Everything starts in the mind. Everything is mind made, mind controls, mind dictates then comes the bodily actions.

That is why meditation is so important because it deals directly with causes – the very first cause, which has its seedling in the mind.

If you're able to recognise the mind, deal with the mind, then your bodily actions are safe. You will not harm yourself or others.

This might sound strange but it is true that an angry person is capable of harming even their beloved ones. It defies all logic and senses to think that you can be capable of such heinous act. How could you harm your loved ones, parents, spouse or children?

You would think you could never ever harm your loved ones, as that is an insane thought. But the fact is, the mind has become insane, mad and crazy as ill will (Dosa Citta) arises with ignorance.

Enwrapped in ignorance and complete darkness, the mind cannot perceive rightly. It thinks the harmful actions are justified and right. And thus, one who speaks and acts with ill will gives rise to much regret and remorse.

When ill will is strong, its root becomes strong too. Strong – meaning ill will is developed and has taken roots (Hetu).

When ill will root is strong, ill will arises automatically when any object that touches the sense doors.

Sometimes a person is identified as a hateful or bitter person and this is usually characterised by the fact ill will has taken root.

Whatever he sees, he gets angry; whatever he hears, he gets bitter; whatever he smells, he gets annoyed; even when he eats he is not satisfied – he complains. When he thinks, he gets sad or irritated. He thinks of negative things, the unpleasant and worse things in life. He does not see the positive or happier side of life.

So as a meditator you must pay attention so that ill will does not take root, otherwise it would be difficult for you to gain progress or insight.

Insight depends greatly on tranquillity, peacefulness and calmness of mind. When the mind is always shaken, it would be like bubbles rising incessantly in the pot of boiling water. The mind has no calmness. Without calmness, a prerequisite, insight wisdom will never arise. As such, you'll never find wisdom from a hateful person. Wisdom can be found among those who are peaceful, kind and compassionate.

Two kinds of ill will consciousness

What are the two types?

First is ill will accompanied by displeasure associated with aversion unprompted.

The second type is ill will mind arises prompted.

When ill will arises unprompted means, ill will is very strong.

As a meditator you should note that ill will does not belong to you. You should not say that ill will belongs to me or that anger belongs to me. It does not belong to you or another person.

Ill will arises and passes away depending on various conditions. If there is no condition there is no arising. If there are pleasant things for the senses, there is no arising of anger.

If you have pleasant objects like having struck lottery naturally, you would not be angry. Even when scolded, you might even be laughing if you're still thinking of the first prize money as that strong pleasant object overrules the external object of scolding.

If you have strong sadness (a kind of ill will) you will find it hard to enjoy your favourite food no matter how tasty it might be. You are probably not happy even hearing praises, being with good friends or even watching a funny movie. A friend once told me that he was trying to cheer himself by going to the theatre to watch a comedy but he could not laugh or be happy at all because he was so overwhelmed by sadness.

Why is this so?

When mind object is so strong it overrules pleasure. Internal objects can be very strong, so strong that external objects could not influence the mind. Such strong internal objects could be the passing away of a beloved person, losing someone dear or something precious.

Ill will mind arises prompted means it is not as strong as the unprompted or that, it is not strongly developed, as yet.

If you are unaware of this state then the unpleasant object could grow in the mind and it will strengthen the ill will mind.

For example you think “this person has hurt me or betrayed me” and you keep dwelling on such thoughts. As a result, it grows. Minor annoyance or irritation grows to become anger and deep hatred, consequently arising as unprompted thoughts.

Therefore it is especially important for meditators to recognise the presence of ill will, then go on to look deeper into its cause (as part of the Dhammanupassana practice) and know how to remove that cause, so as to remove the problem.

When a problem is tackled from its root cause, the problem (effect) is solved effectively. I will discuss this in the next chapter.



Questions and Answers

Question 1:

Does suffering come from ill will? Is ill will the cause of suffering?

Answer to question 1:

Ill will consciousness (such as depression, anger, annoyance, hatred, jealousy, disappointment) is always accompanied by unpleasant feeling. Unpleasant feelings are hard to bear and that is suffering.

Though it is suffering or can be said to be one of the reasons why you suffer. In truth, it is the attachment that is the cause of suffering. Ill will arises because of attachment. In other words, when you cannot get what you want or you get what you don't want, ill will arises.

Question 2:

Why must I get angry when I know that it is suffering? Why do I hurt myself and sometimes, another when I know that is suffering and is not good for anyone?

Sometimes I can't help it, I still get angry even though I understand that I should not, and even after many reminders. When I am angry I do stupid things and often regret it. Why?

Answer to question 2:

It is because there is no mindfulness or mindfulness is not strong. The object is strong. When the mind that has strongly built up a negative perception of the object it will give rise to an automatic reaction. Ill will when rooted becomes one's habitual tendency. That is why you experience the unprompted angry reaction.

It is the nature of the ill will mind to cause hurt. It doesn't care about hurting oneself or another. There is an absence of caring and compassion in the mind when ill will is present. An ill will mind does not see the wrong in being angry. In fact the mind justifies the anger.

If your mindfulness is not strong or if object is stronger, you should also try to include the cultivation of Metta in your practice. Metta builds up the positive perception around the object. In that way it softens the mind and reconditions its habitual tendency of reacting with ill will.

Question 3

Why do I continuously think of things or recall things that produce mental pain? I know it makes me feel depress, sad, hurt or angry and I still do it.

Answer to question 3:

This behaviour is due to attachment to the object. This attachment can be towards any object be it animate (living being) or inanimate such as money, property or something precious. The mind does not want to let go of the object. It expects it to bring the same joy. Unfortunately this

is impossible because of the nature of change (impermanence). One must learn to perceive this nature and learn acceptance.

For example when separated from someone dear to you, you find it hard to let go of the mental object due to attachment even though it causes pain. You are holding on to that object in the mind. Sometimes you don't even realise you're suffering. Sometimes you are just conscious of the suffering but don't understand why you feel hurt. There is no mindfulness in these instances.





Ill Will

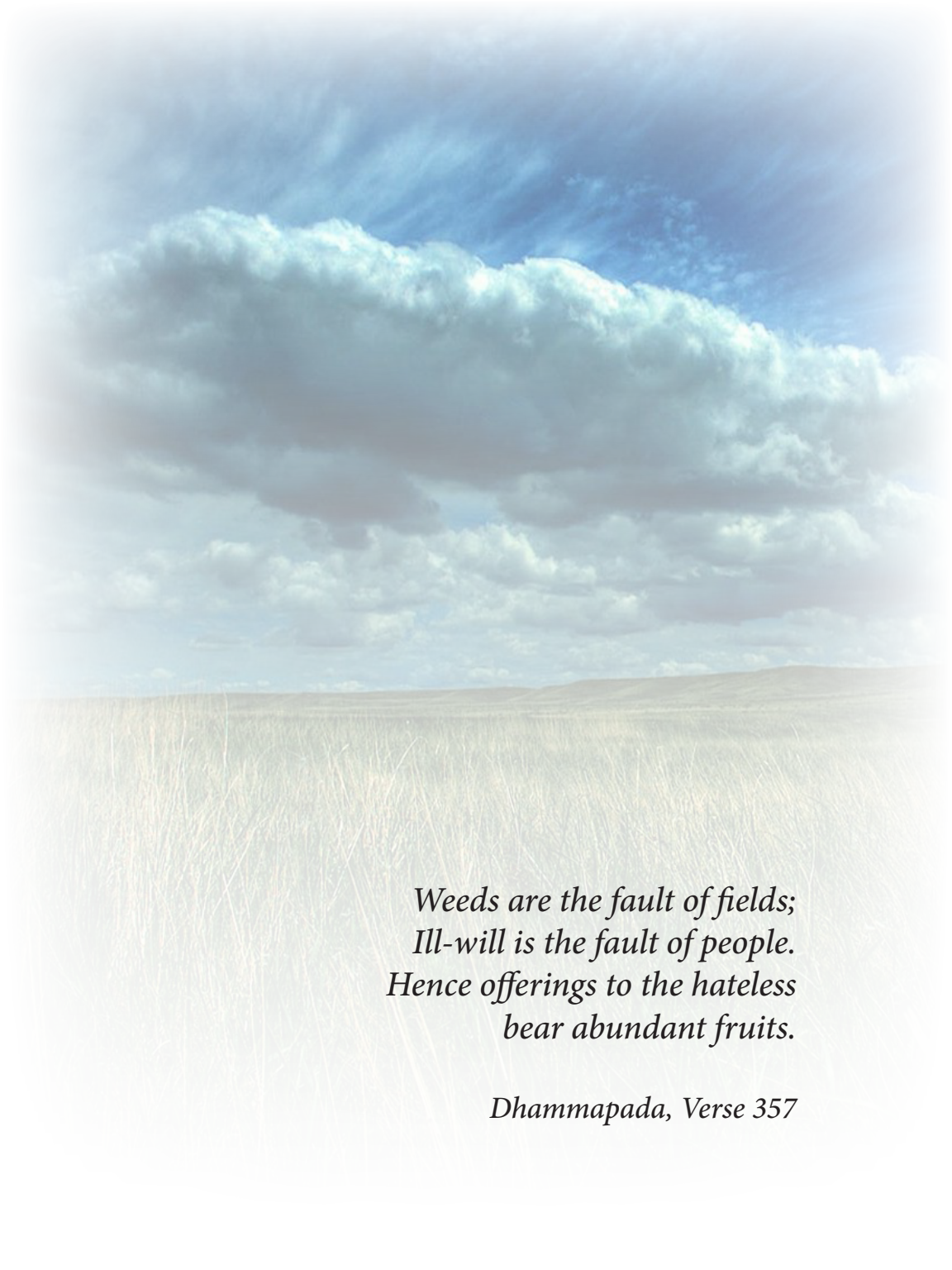
*Ill will is like forest fire
It destroys and burns everything in its path
Like a poisonous snake ready to strike
Causing suffering everywhere with its wrath.*



Antidote for Hatred

*Anger, darkens the sky
As haze covers the eyes
Brings upon miseries, hardship, sickness
and a lot of pain
Nothing good and never gains*

*Forgiveness and kindness
Like cooling rain
A sullen day will clear again
Cleanses the dirt of hate
Living long lives in health and happy state!*



*Weeds are the fault of fields;
Ill-will is the fault of people.
Hence offerings to the hateless
bear abundant fruits.*

Dhammapada, Verse 357

Lesson Four

Ill Will

(Part 2)

(Byapada)



Lesson Four

Ill Will

(Byapada)

Part 2

The hindrance of ill will disturbs the mind, hinders calmness and progress to insight. It is therefore imperative that a meditator goes on to ask what can be done to overcome this ill will?

Buddhism is not pessimistic – the Buddha spoke the truth about (nature; ‘such-ness’) and taught the way out of suffering. In the context of Hindrances, he taught the way to overcome hindrances as well.

The Buddha continued in the Discourse:

*“He knows how the discarding of an
already arisen ill will comes to be”*

Here, the discarding of an already arisen ill will requires the meditator to know how to deal with the problem from its root cause, which I have explained last week. In this chapter, I will share a few ways found in the Buddhist scriptures, which I found effective through my experience.

Strong mindfulness

Most people suffer, not knowing the reason for their pain. They blame the fault on another person seeing the other person is the cause of their pain and suffering. They cannot perceive the real source of their pain and therefore, unable to understand it. It is like looking at a tree - one sees only its leaves and branches but not its roots.

In order to overcome ill will, one must first recognise ill will. A problem must first be recognised and acknowledged as a problem before it can be managed or resolved. Now able to recognise ill will (last week's lesson) and know that it is a hindrance, one should not strengthen it but go on to ask what can be done to weaken it or to overcome it.

Mindfulness has the ability to discontinue ill will in the mind. How can mindfulness do that? Mindfulness that arises with the knowing mind is able to recognise ill will. When a meditator recognises ill will without letting that mental state hold on to the object that produces ill will mind, then what happens is: the angry mind passes away.

Ill will arises dependent on the object of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking. However, if the object (of seeing, for instance) is let go and the meditator is mindful of the mind itself (not the object that gave rise to that ill will), then that ill will mind cannot be prolonged.

*Like a plant - ill will cannot live when it
has been cut off from its roots.*

Ill will, frustration, anger or sadness continues to grow and become stronger because the mind holds on to the (unpleasant) object.

Why is it that a meditator who has been practising meditation for many years diligently unable to overcome the hindrance of ill will with mindfulness? Does the meditator have strong mindfulness after so many years of practice?

Many years of practice does not automatically mean the meditator has developed mindfulness on the Dhammanu base.

Lacking mindfulness training on this base means the meditator may not have the skill necessary to overcome the hindrance.

A meditator could be very familiar with the object of air element (of rising and falling movement in the abdomen) or feelings (arising from the body door) but not trained on Dhammanu. Similarly, a meditator who does not direct his attention to watch his mind will never be familiar with the mind and is unable to recognise the various types of mind. The same goes for the other objects mentioned in the Discourse.

Mindfulness that a meditator develops on one base does not automatically equip the meditator with the necessary skill in overcoming hindrances under the Dhammanu base. Mindfulness established on the object of air element (the rising and falling movement in the abdomen) is different from that established on feelings (such as those arising from the body door for instance: itchiness, numbness) and so on and so forth.

Hence, the Buddha said with regard to each base: “...*just enough for knowledge into reality and just enough for mindfulness...*” This suggests that a meditator needs to continue on to develop mindfulness with regard to the other bases mentioned in the Discourse.

Wise Reflection

If ill will is strong or mindfulness is weak, the meditator may find that it takes a long time before the arisen ill will can be overcome. Sometimes it can be that the ill will is growing in the mind since the meditator is unable to let go of the object (that produces the ill will).

In these instances, the meditator needs to use other methods to manage or overcome that ill will such as wise reflection. Wise reflection is often used in Metta (loving-kindness) meditation. It is an effective strategy of replacing negative thoughts with positive ones.

For instance, when confronted with an angry person, one naturally reacts with annoyance or even anger. It is unwise to argue with an angry person as nothing good comes out of it. But more importantly, a meditator should not feed or prolong the anger or annoyance arose from the encounter. Instead the meditator should try to overcome that ill will that has arisen.

The meditator could reflect and understand that there are conditions for the arising of anger in the other person. This person is angry because of perception – this person perceives that a wrong is done.

Just as a meditator practises mindfulness established internally, now through this reflection, the meditator should try to establish mindfulness externally.

As the meditator realises ill will arises because there are conditions for its arising internally, he would also know (by inference) that external ill will also arises due to conditions.

An example - the other person's anger will cool down as soon as you are out of sight. When there is no longer sense-contact, there is also no more perception by the other. Therefore, ill will has to subside.

While it is easier to disconnect contact from the external sense base objects, one can't say the same with the mind object, which is far more difficult to cut off. One may have walked away from one's enemy but upon hearing about the enemy, memories or thoughts of this enemy brings out mental object in the mind.

Mental object is harder to deal with – the enemy as the mental object. In this instance, what should a meditator do?

For the sake of tranquility, peace and calmness of mind, a meditator should practise forgiveness.

The meditator should reflect that we are all human and to err is human but to forgive is divine. The meditator should reflect thus until the mind feels peaceful and is no longer hurt by that mental object.

This diverts the attention in the mind from the unpleasant mental object to something positive. The meditator superimposes or covers up the unwholesome mind that has arisen with wholesome mind. This does not cut off or does not deal with the root cause or the source of ill will. It does, however, bring back peace and calmness to the mind by counter balancing with positive mental states.

The meditator should take care of his or her peace of mind and not allow ill will to take root otherwise ill will becomes habitual. When it is habitual, it arises automatically (unprompted).

People of this nature are grumpy, unhappy and have little kindness or caring in their mind towards oneself and others. Instead of reacting angrily, one could emphasise or practise compassion, as they are not aware of the harm they are inflicting on themselves. It is unfortunate and is akin to a blind man who keeps falling over because he has no choice. Similarly, many people repeatedly and continuously suffer for the mistakes they make as they have no choice. Why is it they have no choice?

*They have no choice
because they don't know
the way out of those
mistakes (or suffering).*

These two general methods that I have mentioned here, are some ways that I found effective in overcoming ill will. Strong mindfulness counteracts ill will directly at the root cause and the other overcomes ill will indirectly.

After ill will is overcome, a meditator should continue to manage his mind so that ill will is kept at bay for the sake of calmness of mind. Calmness of mind is the prerequisite for perceiving reality clearly. It is a prerequisite for clear comprehension and insight. Hence, to manage future ill will the Buddha continues in the Discourse thus:

“And he knows how the non-arising in the future of a discarded ill will comes to be”

When concentration is strong, defilements (including ill will) becomes weakened.

Concentration produces Samadhi, peacefulness and calmness of mind.

The calm and peaceful mind is not easily agitated.

On the contrary, a weak mind is easily agitated and stressed.

In order to sustain strong concentration in the mind, the meditator has to maintain his meditation practice daily in both formal and informal sessions. A meditator should not be lazy but make time for his formal practice in daily life (for at least 15 to 20 minutes).

Not only does maintaining formal practice in daily life bring about a certain degree of concentration, it also strengthens the mind through peacefulness and calmness. It gives rise to clarity that enables him to make better decisions in life and at work.

When a meditator is able to maintain this aspect in his daily life, he will also experience deeper sense of satisfaction and fulfillment through spiritual joy.

Having acquired the experience in the various ways of overcoming ill will, the meditator will soon become skilled in knowing which method works best in a particular moment. He becomes like a kungfu master who knows the appropriate weapon to use and overcome his opponent. Therefore, tools are important – knowledge and mastery of a variety of ways to overcome ill will are useful. As for selecting the appropriate method it requires experience.

Ill will is completely overcome, eradicated or uprooted when one realises the third stage of sainthood (Anagami) and it does not arise in the minds of the Aarahants and Buddha. As replacement, kindness, compassion and other positive mental states arise in the mind. In this regard, the Buddha has immense compassion and kindness that is unrivalled and incomparable.

“Thus he lives practising, internally, reality-object contemplation in reality-object; or practising, externally reality-object contemplation in reality-object; or practising internally and externally, reality-object contemplation in reality-object”

And that is how the Buddha ended this section - by repeating that the meditator lives practising internally; externally; and internally and externally.

When a meditator lives practising, internally, Dhamma/reality object, he lives practising and watching if there is ill will in the mind. If there is, he looks deeply to perceive its cause, then proceeds to discard that arisen ill will by appropriate means and finally maintaining a strong degree of concentration in his daily life so that ill will is weakened or has no chance to arise.

Meditation is a form of merit or it generates an enormous amount of merits.

For a lay meditator, he should be mindful that his enjoyment is within the limits of his precepts so that no harm is done to oneself or others.

It is even more important to know that maintaining his meditation practice in his daily life is necessary as it is unwise and unprofitable to live a life that centres on enjoyment solely without making merits for his future. If he doesn't plant new seeds there will be no new trees in the future when the current tree dies. One becomes barren when the well of merits depletes.

Hence, a lay meditator continues his lay life without forsaking his spiritual life and does the best he can so that suffering eventually comes to an end.

*Without the spiritual
striving, there will be no
end to suffering.*

In practising externally, the meditator recognises the external ill will mind as an external ill will mind. He does not get confused or become absorbed in the object or react to that external object.

He understands that he still has much work to do within (internally) and hence, does not react to the external ill will, thinking he is above it all – like a pot calling the kettle black. In this way, the meditator remains mindful and detached from the external ill will.

A meditator should also learn to cultivate mindfulness both ways; internally and externally. In this way, he begins to understand that just as there is anger internally, there is also anger externally given the conditions for its arising: when the cause of its arising is taken away, also will its result - ill will.

Similarly, the meditator understands that he himself has not extinguished the anger within, so he learns to forgive.

It is also important for the meditator to note the intensity of ill will and manage it before it gets to a danger point

Anger can be difficult to take care of as we are bound to encounter things that annoy us, such as reading news, receiving criticism, hearing unpleasant things, eating disagreeable food or meeting with people you wish you could avoid to simply having growing old pains.

For the meditator, none of these should be an excuse because it is the reality. The meditator should learn to recognise the mind, the hindrance and deal with it appropriately. The meditator learns to practise the various methods to overcome it so that he can maintain a level of calmness in the mind. This management helps the meditator to sink into deeper Samadhi in his formal practice.

*If the ill will hindrance
is not overcome or is
unmanaged it latches on to
the mind and you could be
irritated for a long time.*

You could be disturbed the whole day or for weeks. It is only when the mind is peaceful it becomes clear and brightens up. Only then, a meditator is able to perceive reality as it is. When you are able to perceive reality, as it really is, the mind is able to let go and accept. It doesn't hold on to that object and even if you are angry you don't stay angry for a long time. Anger, ill will, selfishness or fear disappears fast when mindfulness has become strong.

Now with regard to fear of death and mental pain relating to old age that many people experience, a meditator must understand that whenever there is birth, there is death. Nobody escapes death.

What is death? Death is another birth and a new experience, then, death again. We constantly encounter new experience all the time from birth to middle age right up to old age. Our perception becomes different as we age too, the way we think when we were 20 years old is different from when we are 60 – feelings, concepts or views become different. That is what life is: an accumulation of experiences and learning.

Meditation is a good way to learn because a meditator is trained to see things as they really are.

He starts to understand his inner self – which in the Buddha words “internally” then, he begins to understand another (and in the Buddha’s words “externally”).

The meditator understands both internally and externally as it is the same phenomena. This phenomenon is called the Citta Niyama (phenomenon of the mind). The mind works the same whether one is a westerner or easterner – it arises and passes away. There is nothing else except its arising and passing away. There exists no evil man or angry man. It is just an angry mind (that exists) at a particular moment, and then, that mind passes away. A new mind arises in the next moment, which can be completely opposite to the angry mind. Just because one is nasty one moment does not mean he is always nasty or cruel. It is just this mind the Buddha said. Its arising is due to conditions.

Hindrances obstruct Samadhi. Since Vipassana practice will not progress without Samadhi it is therefore vital for meditators to establish mindfulness on the Hindrances. How does a meditator establish mindfulness on the hindrances? By recognising whether it is present or absent, knowing its cause and overcoming it. This is how a meditator manages the mind with regard to hindrances.

*In order to have Samadhi,
the meditator must take
care of the hindrances
otherwise it can destroy
one's peace of mind.*

This sums up the talk on ill will. Next lesson is about the third hindrance.



Questions and Answers

Question 1:

How is it possible that I don't know it is suffering when I feel the pain?

Answer to question 1:

The mind is capable of blocking out the pain. It sees only happiness or the positive side of things. As such, the mind remains gripped by attachment and doesn't see that it is causing suffering. When being gripped, the mind does not perceive reality. It refuses to accept the change. It doggedly holds on to the object and refuses to acknowledge the suffering.

There is a difference between merely conscious of the pain and being mindful or aware of the pain.

Consciousness plays the function of merely cognising and being conscious of something. That is all. Consciousness does not automatically arise with mindfulness, a specific mental factor that arises only in wholesome mind. Mindfulness signifies presence of mind that attends to the object, with detachment and mental balance. Mindfulness sometimes arises with knowing – the wisdom mental factor.

Therefore without mindfulness and knowing factors, the mind is merely conscious of the object. You actually neither realise nor understand that it is suffering. There is no knowing at that particular point in time. There is no understanding – ignorant. Understanding arises from seeing things clearly. If you really understand it is suffering, you would not want to continue holding on to it. If you know fire burns, you would not jump into the fire.

Question 2:

Which is worse – ill will or attachment?
Which is more destructive?

Answer to question 2:

You can't really compare apple to an orange. Attachment leads to ill will. Without attachment there is no ill will. They are two sides of a coin.

Question 3:

Can ill will be good? Some people said it leads to great things – it gets things done. They said they achieve great things because they feel the need to prove someone wrong. It also motivates people to do what is just. Can this be true?

Answer to question 3:

Ill will by itself can never be good. Its manifestation is to destroy and not to build. Nothing good comes out of ill will. Bad seed cannot produce good fruit. Other types of mind arise that motivates the achievement after the ill will mind passes away – for example it could be greed consciousness.





From time to time someone devoted to the higher training should give attention to three things: concentration, energetic effort, and equanimity.

In giving regular attention to each of these, then one's mind will become pliant, workable, lucid, and wieldy, and it will be well concentrated to overcome the taints (hindrances).

AN 3.42

Lesson Five

Sloth & Torpor
(Part 1)
(Thina & Middha)



Lesson Five

Sloth & Torpor

(Thina & Middha)

Part 1

I will continue with the third hindrance namely, sloth and torpor. The Buddha said that a meditator should know if and when sloth & torpor is present or absent within.

“When sloth & torpor is present within, he knows there is sloth & torpor in me or when absent within, he knows there is no sloth & torpor in me.”

*Do you often struggle
to stay awake during
meditation?*

Some meditators have thought they were meditating after waking from a session of sitting (or slumber?) and feeling rested! What is this hindrance that is making so difficult to stay on the meditation object? What is this heavy and sleepy state of mind?

I shall go through the 4 modes in identifying this hindrance.

What is sloth and torpor?

The Pali word for sloth is Thina and torpor is Middha.

Sloth (Thina) is the sluggishness of mind or dullness of mind. Torpor (Middha) is the morbid state of mind characterised by unwieldiness (inability to work).

While sloth and torpor are two separate mental factors, they arise together and appear rather similar.

Simply put, sloth and torpor also means laziness, sleepiness, sluggishness, unwieldiness and the inactive state of mind that is lacking in mental energy.

The presence of sloth and torpor covers up the mind so thickly that is why you are unable to perceive any meditation objects. The mind feels dull, bored and disinterested. You feel heaviness of the mind and body. Your meditation could come to a stop if this hindrance is present.

There are times when you notice that you could meditate very well – you don't feel sleepy, lazy or lethargic. You are able to perceive the meditation objects clearly. The mind is energetic. Be aware of this state. Note that sloth and torpor are absent within the mind.

This hindrance can still attack the first, second and even the third stage saints (Sotapanna, Sakadagami and Anagami). It affects them during their meditation sometimes and even when not in meditation. Only an Arahant (final stage saint) is completely free from sloth and torpor. What more for a beginner meditator? There is hope yet.

More importantly is, to know what should be done when this hindrance attacks.

But first and foremost, one should be aware of its presence. If the meditator is unaware of it, his meditation comes to a 'stop'.

How does sloth and torpor come to be?

I will go through the characteristics of this hindrance - what it is capable of and how it comes about? This will enable you to pin point exactly the root cause of that problem. Only when the cause is known, a suitable antidote can be applied.

What characterises sloth and torpor?

Sloth and torpor is the mental factor that produces heaviness of mind and body.

The characteristic of sloth is the lack of driving power. The characteristic of torpor is unwieldiness – therefore the mind is unworkable and is impossible to make it work.

In other words, when there is sloth and torpor, the mind feels unmotivated, disinterested, heaviness in mind and body, lazy, lethargic – lacking in mental energy.

What is the function of sloth and torpor?

The function of sloth is to dispel energy.

That means it negates, depletes and kills off energy. The function of torpor is to smother. That is to mean it covers up the mind. No wonder you cannot perceive the meditation object or just blank!

Sloth and torpor is not a figment of imagination. It is real. It exists as a mental state or mental factor.

Mental energy that is a crucial in mental cultivation can be exhausted by this hindrance, thereby bringing meditation to a complete stop. This is therefore a serious hindrance. You should try your utmost best to overcome this enemy.

What is the manifestation of sloth and torpor?

*Sloth manifests as sinking
of the mind.*

The manifestation of torpor is drooping or as nodding. Isn't that what you experience when you feel sleepy? No wonder your posture starts to fall forward. When you note this, you should straighten up.

Now, to where does the mind ‘sink’ into when this hindrance is present? It sinks into Bhavanga. Bhavanga is the life continuum of the mind. The mind must continue to arise after each passing away.

When the mind does not have a present object, or object from the external sense bases (like sight, smell, taste, sound or touch), then it clings to the past life object. This past life object is the object that exists in the last thought moment just before one passes away in one’s previous life.

Occasionally, meditators would report that their mind feels as if it has stopped – there is nothing there and he could not perceive any object. In fact, this is impossible. In reality life-continuum (Bhavanga) is present to take its place in time.

Bhavanga arises and passes away repeatedly even in our waking hours, perhaps a bit more for elderly meditators.

Have you ever been in a conversation where you only grasped half or a portion of what is said? It is as if the other parts of the talk did not get into the mind. This is so because of the arising of the Bhavanga mind. Since Bhavanga mind clings on to the past life object, the mind cannot be present and is therefore incapable of grasping a present object.

Similarly in meditation, the mind sinks into Bhavanga when sloth is present because that is its function.

Not surprising to hear meditators reporting that they are unable to perceive the (present) meditation object. It is probable that the mind has sunken into Bhavanga, as if asleep, feeling heaviness of mind and body. Perhaps in this drowsy state, the meditator might actually fall asleep and begins to dream. Note however, dreams are not Bhavanga.

Where there is dream, the mind no longer experiences Bhavanga. The mind that is experiencing dreams has mental object as its object. This is not from his past life but from the perception (Sanna) that one gathers in his lifetime. Since dreaming is not a Bhavanga state, mental Kamma can be created even in dreams.

An example where if you dream of delicious chocolate cake or something you like to eat, and you were eating and enjoying it in your dreams. That – is craving consciousness that has arisen at that moment.

Or, if you dream of frightful things and begin to run for your life. Ill will consciousness has arisen at that moment. Or if you are confused in your dreams – that would be Moha Citta or the delusion consciousness.

Better yet, if you dream of listening to Dhamma talks or giving alms, then obviously, these are wholesome mental states creating wholesome mental Kamma (even in dreams). Often, we forget our dreams unless it is vivid and strong.

So, what are the causes of sloth and torpor?

The Buddha continued in the Discourse:

“He knows how the arising of the non-arisen sloth & torpor comes to be.”

Why do meditators often feel sleepy when they meditate (or especially during meditation)? What are the causes for sloth & torpor? The causes for sloth and torpor are the same and I will discuss it without distinction.

Unwise attention to an uninteresting object causes dullness and boredom.

Without an interesting object the mind finds it dull, unmotivated and soon, feels sleepy. Just like sitting through a boring classroom lesson in school! You will never feel dull when watching an exciting movie (even though you are sitting) unless you are actually mentally and/or physically tired.

This is where the challenge is for meditators. Meditation objects are neutral. It is not stimulating like TV or like your favourite music, so you will find it easy to slumber off.

Therefore you should find ways to motivate yourself to overcome this initial drag. It is just an initial drag that most meditators must get through.

Finding ways to motivate yourself and to bring out energy to counter this hindrance is part of the Dhammanu practice with regard to this hindrance.

Arousing a strong sense of urgency will give you drive as well. I will discuss these and other methods in the next chapter.

There are also other possible causes and it is your job as a meditator to identify which one is the actual culprit at that moment. Only then, you will know the effective remedy.

Heavy meals. Meditators often report of sleepiness during the afternoons – after lunch. This is especially so if they have woken up earlier than what they are used to.

Sleep deprivation produces tiredness of mind too. Getting good sleep or deep sleep is essential. Good sleep means you are not disturbed by negative thoughts in your sleep or nightmares. You will not feel rested even after a 10 or even 12 hours of sleep if you did not fall into deep sleep in those 10 or 12 hours. You will wake up feeling mentally tired.

Tiredness of mind caused by overthinking leads to drowsiness. A lot of us make a living through thinking (as opposed to physical labour) or some people just think or worry a lot anyway. This causes mental exhaustion. It is difficult to perceive meditation objects when you are mentally tired.

Mental health is important. Mentally unhealthy meaning those who might be suffering from chronic depression or might still be suffering from a recent trauma.

A person who is mentally unhealthy or those with many mental problems, experiences heavy sloth and torpor. Mentally exhausted, they are likely to find themselves needing an unusual amount of sleep.

Physical condition and age! Certainly age and physical health also play a vital role. Sometimes sloth and torpor comes more often with age. The body affects mind, and mind affects the body. As such, when you are physically unwell or sick, you will find yourself lacking in energy. This is when you may not be able to overcome the hindrance immediately. In such instance, you may not have many choices but to focus on getting well before you are able to meditate again.

However, it does not mean that your spiritual cultivation stops. In the meantime, you can still carry on doing what you can to keep the mind wholesome. Do the best you can to stay on the spiritual path. You should never give up thinking or saying that you cannot meditate because of this condition or because of sloth and torpor.

If you are unable to sit, you continue your practice with walking meditation. If you can't walk, you continue cultivating mindfulness in the lying down posture in your waking hours and so on.

A meditator should keep the mental cultivation going for the sake of future. It builds up perfections and mindfulness. Not doing so would mean being trapped in the rounds of suffering, not seeing and not knowing the way to escape this vicious cycle of life and death (Samsara).

These are just a few of many reasons for sloth and torpor. You need to direct the mind to clearly perceive and know its cause (which may be different from the above).

In the Dhammanupassana, once you are able to recognise the enemy and its reasons for arising you should proceed to find ways to overcome it. I will go through the ways to overcome or discarding sloth and torpor in the next chapter.



Questions and Answers

Question 1:

I always feel sleepy when I meditate. How many hours of sleep are sufficient? How many hours of rest do I need so as not to be affected by sloth and torpor?

Answer to question 1:

This depends on the individual's needs. For some people, 6 hours is enough while others require 8 hours. Then there are those who sleep more than 10 hours yet do not feel rested because the mind is disturbed. Sleep rests the body but not the mind. Quality sleep is needed for the mind to feel rested.

Sometimes the external surroundings could affect your sleep – if it is too hot, too cold, the pillow is too hard too soft, noise, light, smell etc. When you are unwell – that too affects the quality of your sleep. When lacking in sleep it

easily gives rise to sloth and torpor. Eating too much solids for dinner might also affect your sleep and in old age, sleep tend to be lighter as well. So check these factors for quality rest.

Question 2

When meditating I cannot perceive the meditation object – is it because sloth and torpor is covering up the object?

Answer to question 2:

It could be sloth and torpor but there are also other possible mental states or scenarios that contribute towards it. When the Vitaka (initial application of mind) is seeking pleasure in pleasant objects instead of meditation object, then the meditation object is obscured. Pleasurable interest (piti) is not established on the meditation object and concentration is not developed.

There is also another possibility where in the presence of Dosa (ill will) the mind is shaken and disturbed. In this instance, meditation object is again obscured.

Finally if Moha Citta (ignorant or dull mind) is strong, the mind just couldn't get it. It just could not perceive anything.

In other words sloth and torpor could arise with Lobha (greed), Dosa (illwill) or Moha (ignorance).

Question 3

Does everybody have sloth and torpor or is it just the beginners?

Answer to question 3:

Sloth and torpor does not differentiate beginners or senior meditators. It arises because there are causes for its arising.

It will constantly attack the mind when the meditator does not learn to overcome it. Meditators need to practise various ways to prevent it from arising or when it has arisen, one must overcome it.

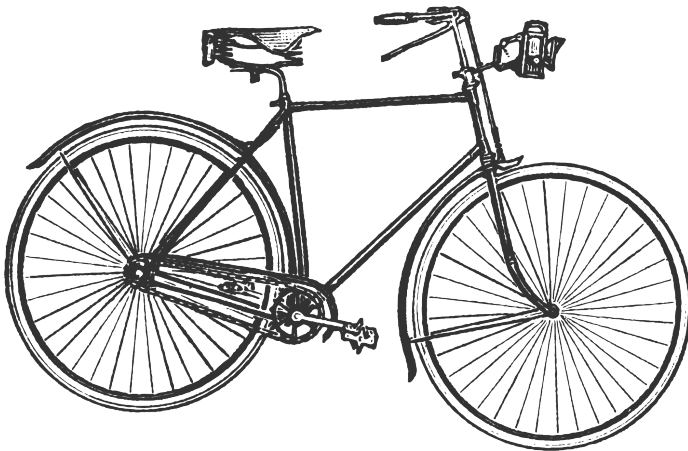
The only difference between the beginners and senior meditators is that the senior is more skilled, therefore knows how to prevent it and takes lesser time to overcome it if it has arisen. If a meditator does not make an effort to overcome it, even the so called senior meditator will constantly be affected.



The Lazy Miss the Path

*Though time to strive, not striving,
while young and strong yet indeed,
weak-minded and irresolute:
one finds not wisdom's way.*

Dhammapada, Verse 280





*If a person eats until the stomach is stuffed
and indulges in the pleasures of sleeping,
lolling, and drowsing, then his or her mind
will not incline to ardor, devotion,
perseverance, and determination. This is a
shackle of the mind.*

MN 16.11

Lesson Six

Sloth & Torpor
(Part 2)
(Thina & Middha)



Lesson Six

Sloth & Torpor

(Thina & Middha)

Part 2

The Buddha continued thus:

*“He knows how the discarding of
an already arisen sloth & torpor
comes to be.”*

Knowing its precise cause enables you to solve the problem at its root. In this chapter I will discuss several ways that you can use to deal with this hindrance.

In time with practice and experience, you will acquire the necessary knowledge and skill to determine the efficacy and suitability of each method. What might be suitable one moment might not work in the next encounter. What did not work before might work in the present encounter. The knowledge (of how the discarded sloth & torpor will not come again – temporarily unless one is an Arahant) requires experience and skill.

How to discard the already arisen sloth and torpor?

What can overcome it? What are the various solutions and actions that you may consider?

- (i) Firstly, through initial application of mind

Initial Application of Mind
(Vitaka)

Vitaka (initial application of mind) is first of the five factors of concentration. It overcomes sloth and torpor.

What is Vitaka or initial application of mind?
How do you apply Vitaka in your practice?

Vitaka or ‘Initial application of mind’ is a mental factor. It is the application of the mind to the object. Like a parent who tells a child to pay attention or a tutor to a student to apply the mind to the studies. Like a person who wants to know what is going on with the current affairs needs to focus or apply their mind to reading the newspapers or online. That mental application of mind on the tasks, studies or whatever one is doing requires one to direct the mind to that object. That is Vitaka.

It has the characteristic of directing the mind onto the object. It leads the mind onto an object – this is the manifestation of Vitaka. Vitaka has the function of striking at and threshing the object.

*How do you bring out the
Vitaka in the mind?*

Firstly you must bring out your intention to meditate and overcome this drowsy state. Next intentionally and with strong effort, direct your attention to the meditation object for example the rising and falling movement of the abdomen. Repeat this continuously, at pace that leaves little gap for the mind to slip away. Don't let the mind linger on the drowsy state. Repeat it so until sloth and torpor finally disappears.

When sloth and torpor is present, Vitaka is absent.

If you bring out the Vitaka it directly opposes and overcome this hindrance by replacement.

Intention is important. Bringing out the intention in the mind will set it to task. In this instance, the task is meditation as opposed to drifting along, allowing the mind to snooze away when it feels lazy. Put it simply, you should treat meditation like serious work, something important rather than a relaxation session. If you have this attitude, the mind does not tend to slack off.

Intention + Vitaka (in meditation, it would be the application of mind to the meditation object) = overcomes sloth & torpor.

(ii) Secondly, Posture...

During sitting, straighten up your back rather than slouch.

An upright posture brings out more energy.

Next, give yourself more ‘work’ to do – meaning to have more objects to note. If you remained seated, then take note of more touching points.

Move the mind to wake it from slumber or stagnation. Note the sitting posture and then move the attention to one touching point and then on to the next touching points staying only briefly to avoid sluggishness passivity as that will result in sleepiness again.

The touching points are found where your legs cross, on the backside where it meets floor or cushion and where there is contact on the body.

In noting touching points – you can note the temperature element (hot / cold) or earth element (hardness / softness) or whatever is prominent there.

What is it you are noting in the sitting posture? Typically, the earth element is perceived as the most prominent object. One feels the mass as a whole, seated, grounded, so you note the mass of hardness of that whole posture.

Here is an example to illustrate the method: sitting, sitting, touching, touching (note one strong touching) touching, touching (note the other strong touching point), then return your attention to note sitting, sitting. Repeat the rotation until the mind brightens up.

*Bring out your intention
and effort as you note.*

Alternatively, you can switch posture completely. Take up walking meditation if sleepiness persists.

*Walking meditation brings out more
energy in the mind.*

You cannot possibly be sleepwalking! This helps if you have a tendency to be lazy or are often attacked by sloth and torpor. For this kind of meditator, it is good to do more walking meditation.

Forest monks do a lot of walking meditation. In fact, three quarter of the time is devoted to walking. Only one quarter to sitting. Within the walking session, they also include the other daily mindfulness activities like dressing, eating, etc. Some of these are embedded in the Vinaya rules (rules for monks).

The point here is to prevent the mind from slipping off to a slumber by rousing more energy through posture and activating the mind with more work.

Bear in mind, arousing strong intention and having a decision (resolution) to carry it through the session helps a great deal.

(iii) Environment: Suitable Places and Time

Meditate in bright places or with lights on. If you sit in dark places you tend to doze off. Meditate in airy or well-ventilated places. Stuffy and poorly ventilated places will deprive the brains of oxygen, which eventually causes sloth and torpor to arise. However, you should be careful and wise in choosing a suitable place. A park may offer fresh air and light but is dangerous. Sitting there with eyes shut might invite mugging and other undesirable consequences.

*Well lit and well ventilated
places are conducive.*

You know best which hour usually works for you although sometimes this might vary from day-to-day, week-to-week depending on your schedule and workload. You need to know the time when your mind works best. Some are early birds and some are not. For some, the mind works in the afternoon, and others are like owls work best at night.

Our class hours are probably not the most ideal – as you may have to rush from your office. Enduring heavy traffic jams and maybe a heavy dinner before you settle in might contribute to the arising of sloth and torpor. On a weekend or for those not bound by office hours, you might have flexibility in choosing a suitable time.

(iv) Freshen up

Wash your face to freshen up. You can try not drying it. Instead note the sensations caused by the water trickling down or while it is drying up.

(v) Directly note sloth & torpor as an object of meditation.

Another good method to overcome sloth & torpor is to confront it.

Take and watch it as a meditation object.
How?

When you become aware of the presence of this sleepy mental state, bring out an intention and energy to note this foggy mental state, its heaviness and other characteristics. Take it as the object of noting. In doing that, you bring out mindfulness and detachment in the mind. Owing to the presence of detachment mental state, you will not be consumed by the foggy and seductive sleepiness.

If you persist in doing so for a period of time and with strong intention, while applying attention (Vitaka) to note it as a meditation object, sleepiness will soon disappear completely.

By doing so, you overcome it moment to moment through mindfulness and detachment until the mind brightens up - when sloth and torpor vanishes completely.

So, what can you note when you take sloth and torpor as an object?

You might notice the heaviness – of the forehead, the droopy posture. You could also note the discomfort, unpleasant feelings that come with sloth and torpor. You might even perceive that it comes in waves or perceive its different intensities, the change in its intensities or its breaking up where you could also note the brighter mind intermittently.

In noting the brighter minds in between the foginess – note and know that is the absence of sloth and torpor. Keep going. Be precise in your noting.

(vi) Last recourse

If you cannot overcome this hindrance try to keep your eyes half open without forcing it. Keep it half opened just for a while and then close it again. If you force your eyes open you will strain your eyes. I don't mean for you to stare at somebody or look around nosily either. Cast your gaze about six feet away just to perceive brightness.

Now, finally if nothing works...and you are completely overcome by this hindrance, you can perhaps take a short rest of about 20 minutes to get over it. If the mind must rest, then let it rest but upon waking up, start noting immediately!

A Sense of Urgency (Samvega)

A perspective to bear in mind is having a sense of urgency (Samvega). Understanding need for meditation and the uncertainty of conditions gives rise to a sense of urgency (Samvega).

*A sense of urgency
(Samvega) can bring out
energy which in turn dispels
sloth & torpor.*

So how do you give rise to Samvega?

Know and understand that if you don't meditate or cultivate mindfulness, there is no purity of mind. Lacking in purity of mind or lacking in wholesome mind, you could forage in the Samsara for a long, long time.

In the opening of the Great Discourse on the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Buddha exhorts that the only way out of this Rounds of Rebirth (Samsaric) suffering is through cultivating mindfulness on the four foundations.

This cultivation leads to insights that release us from Samsara.

When lacking in mindfulness and clear comprehension, the mind cannot perceive things as they really are. Confused, one suffers immense mental pain and distress, even here and now.

Through calmness, built up by continuous mindfulness from moment to moment, you begin to see things as they really are and without clinging on to it. You'll begin to let go - through the detachment mental state, which is built up alongside with the cultivation of mindfulness on the four foundations.

You let go those things that produce a lot of pain. When you do, you will be free from that pain.

Appreciate the value of being born a human, and during a Buddha's period of dispensation (Sasana), with physical and intellectual capacity to understand and practise the Dhamma. This is truly very rare indeed. Such wise reflection can fuel our energy and inspire one to carry on the practice.

*Long is the journey for those who
are tired said the Buddha.*

The journey may be long but one has to go on. Building up mindfulness and gaining concentration, as this is the only way. Hindrances are roadblocks for concentration.

Only when hindrances are overcome, concentration can arise. When there is concentration, calmness of mind, peace of mind and tranquillity will arise. This can be said to be temporary freedom from suffering.

In this state, there is no pain arising in the mind, no fear, no agitation, no boredom, no disturbance – temporarily freedom of mind, a momentary bliss. Every now and then a meditator experiences this happiness.

More importantly, only where there is calmness of mind, you will be able to perceive the true nature of reality, things as they really are.

When such momentary bliss is experienced, faith grows and sometimes in abundance. You will know – this is the way to happiness. You experience the result of what you have cultivated and so, faith grows. When faith becomes strong, your practice becomes stronger. You should continue to direct the mind to the practice especially when you have tasted the fruits of your labour.

The Buddha said, “Oh monks, the four foundations of mindfulness are for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the eradication of pain, for gaining the right way, for the realisation of Nibbana.” These simple words are simple but have profound meaning.

When you begin to experience it, you will also begin to understand what the Buddha meant. What the Buddha taught are not mere words. The Buddha speaks with experience and realisation.

How does a meditator know that sloth and torpor will not arise again?

The Buddha said:

“He knows how the non arising in the future of a discarded sloth & torpor comes to be.”

Sloth (Thina) is sluggishness. Torpor (Midha) is the unwieldiness of the mind – the inability to work. Unwieldiness means not pliant – it is like comparing a stone to plasticine or dough – one can't mould a stone into any shape like the pliable dough.

While sloth and torpor are two distinct mental states with different characteristics they arise together, share the same cause and the methods in overcoming both are the same too.

If the mind is able to overcome it and continue on with meditation, wholesome mind arises in replacement of the unwholesome ones.

Wholesome mind is pliable while the unwholesome mind is not pliable. You can't think in that state of mind and has no depth or clarity in your thought. Sluggish, unpliable, disturbed, distressed, confused, angry, unhappy or sad minds are all unwholesome minds. It is unwieldy, stuck, blocked – all which are characteristics of the unwholesome mind.

The hindrances are basically the three unwholesome roots.

Once you overcome all of it completely, you gain full enlightenment.

The third stage saints are still affected by sloth and torpor. Only the Buddha and the Arahants have totally overcome it. Hence their minds are always bright.

When they do go to sleep, they instantly drop off to sleep and wake up after 4 hours. The mind goes into Bhavanga – the Buddha and Arahants don't have dreams. Their sleep is peaceful as no mental object gets into their mind.

Unlike ordinary people whose mind could still be disturbed during Bhavanga. For example you could be awakened by a loud sound. When external sound is loud enough the vibration stirs you up.

You might even dream of bathroom because your bladder is full. Funny but that is how one is still affected by the body or can be easily affected by object even when asleep. This is the nature of how the mind works and it applies to everybody in the same way.

In the meantime, a meditator can still experience the temporary freedom from hindrances when the mind has Samadhi.

Now, with these perspectives I hope you will continue to strive hard to overcome these hindrances. Strike a sense of urgency to carry on the practice diligently.



Questions and Answers

Question 1:

Why do I feel pleasant when there is sloth and torpor? I hear some meditators welcome sloth and torpor so that they can doze off.

Answer to question 1:

Actually sloth and torpor comes with unpleasant feeling. The delight (enjoying) of it arises with pleasant feeling. The nature of sloth and torpor is actually unpleasant because of its nature of heaviness and rigidity of mind and body.

Question 2:

Why do some people take delight in sloth and torpor or even long sleep?

Answer to question 2:

Sometimes people tend to take unusually long sleep when they are very troubled, sad or disturbed. It is a form of escape – thinking the troubles might go away after their nap.


The problem is one cannot control sleep. During sleep, they are likely to experience nightmares if the mind is disturbed. There is no escape in dreams even by sleeping.





*If a person is energetic, mindful, pure in his
thought, word and deed, and
if he does everything with care & consideration,
restrains his senses, earns his living according to
the Law (Dhamma)
and is not unheedful,
then, the fame and fortune of that mindful
person steadily increase.*

Dhammapada, Verse 24

A soft, ethereal photograph of a forest scene. Sunlight filters through the dense green foliage, creating a hazy, dreamlike atmosphere. In the background, a waterfall cascades down. In the foreground, several people are sitting on large, mossy rocks. One person is holding a red umbrella. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

*Frequently giving unwise attention to a
restless mind nourishes restlessness &
remorse that is occurring and which
has not yet occurred.*

SN 46.51

*Frequently giving wise attention to a still
mind depletes restlessness and remorse that is
occurring and which has not yet occurred*

SN 46.51

Lesson Seven

Restlessness & Worries

(Part 1)

(Uddaccha & Kukkucha)



Lesson Seven

Restlessness & Worries

(Uddaccha & Kukkucha)

Part 1

The Buddha began this section in the same way and he said:

“When restlessness & worries are present within, he knows there are restlessness & worries in me or when absent within, he knows there is no restlessness & worries in me.”

Restlessness and worries are the fourth set of 5 hindrances.

Can you remember what are hindrances and what do hindrances hinder?

Hindrances are the obstacles that block our concentration and prevent the mind from getting into peace, tranquillity and thereby wisdom could not arise under these circumstances. Knowing what these hindrances are, learning to recognise it, knowing how it comes about are important as when the cause is known, it makes tackling the problem at its roots easier. When problems are tackled at its roots, the problems do not arise again or if it does it is weakened at that time.

*You might ask why is
concentration, peacefulness
of mind and tranquility
necessary?*

It is necessary for clarity of mind to arise. Wisdom can only arise if and when the mind is clear. Wisdom is the right path to overcome our pain, sorrow, lamentation, grief and despair.

What is restlessness and worry and how do you recognise it?

Uddaccha and Kukkuha (meaning restlessness and worries) are grouped together as a set of hindrance, but each is however, a distinct mental factor on its own.

Uddaccha (restlessness) is anchored on the ignorance consciousness while Kukkuha (worry) is rooted in ill-will consciousness.

Ignorance is completely eradicated only at the final attainment of Arahantship. An ignorant mind is always searching (for objects). Consequently, it is always moving. It is not 'still' unlike the Arahant's mind. Though not an Arahant yet, the mind that is in concentration is still.

I will first go through Restlessness.

Uddaccha: Restlessness

How do you know when the mind is restless?
How do you recognise its presence? You know it by
recognising its characteristics.

What are the characteristics of restlessness?

*The characteristic
of restlessness is
disquietness of mind.*

Here when the mind is chattering, running or scattering all over the place – this is ‘disquietness of mind’. When you try to note: “rising”, your mind does not stay at rising, it goes off to another object. You try to note: “falling” it goes away again. This is a typical example of restlessness hindrance being present in the mind. The mind just would not stay. It moves. The mind is disturbed.

When restlessness is strong the mind moves even quicker. This means a highly disturbed mind. These are times when the mind thinks non-stop until you can't eat or sleep (insomnia) because of the highly disturbed mental state. The restless mind has so much energy that it pushes at all directions but not really staying put in any – just pushing. These are the characteristics of restlessness.

The restless mind is mainly rooted in ignorance and is moving all the time.

It certainly moves fast when it is attracted to objects. The restless mind that is prompted by desire will keep moving like a snake finding its prey. This type of restless mind moves and pushes at every direction until it hits an object. Then it moves again. That is why the mind is constantly searching for something, anything – inanimate and animate. Even in dreams it searches.

The restless mind is always searching (for objects).

In the absence of restlessness during meditation, you could experience the quietness of mind.

Where there is quietness of mind, the mind feels serene, peaceful and quiet. There are no chatters and it stays put on the meditation object.

These are the opposite traits of restlessness.

You may not experience this for the entire session. But even so 40% or 50% of that duration is still good enough for you to taste the sweet fruit of meditation. When you have tasted this, you know you are reaching it (calmness of mind). The problem is you can't sustain it. You may have caught yourself wanting to cling on to it. You must realise that it disappears the moment you cling on to it. Therefore wanting and clinging is not the way to sustain it.

*Calmness of mind,
peacefulness and
tranquility are born out of
detachment - the opposite
of clinging*

*Only when the mind stops
moving and settles down onto the
meditation object, the mind gets
into concentration.*

Concentration gives rise to calmness and tranquillity. Unless we cultivate or practise concentration, restlessness is present in all the unwholesome minds. It will continue to search for and want to hold onto something. When it catches hold of an unpleasant object, the mind rejects it as it is repulsive and that is what pain is.

In the practice of wisdom meditation, if you patiently establish and re-establish the attention on the meditation object, the mind will eventually sink into quietness.

When it does, it becomes watchful of the arising and disappearing of the object. The deeper the concentration the quieter is the mind.

What is the function of restlessness?

Restlessness functions to make the mind unstable and unsteady just like the wind that causes ripples in a lake.

If the wind is strong, it causes bigger waves. Of course you cannot see restlessness with your eyes (material form) but it is real and exists in the mind. So what could perceive the mind?

Mind perceives mind.

In meditation you train the mind to perceive the mind. Eye can only perceive form (material) but it cannot perceive what is immaterial. The mind can perceive immaterial, restlessness (mind).

There are days when the mind is quiet. In these sessions, you can see the mind very clearly. When it is tranquil you can even perceive joy arising in the mind.

Where does this joy come from? It comes from calmness of mind. When the mind is pure joy arises by itself. This joy does not arise through enjoyment of object. It comes by way of non-enjoyment.

There are two types of joy: one from enjoyment of object and the other from non-enjoyment of object. One is unwholesome and the other is wholesome.

There are 3 types of feelings: pleasant, unpleasant and neutral. There are 3 wholesome ones and there are 3 unwholesome ones.

A meditator should learn to recognise the wholesome joyful (pleasant) feeling through meditation and to cultivate more of it. This skill is about knowing the various types of mind and understanding how the mind works. Only when you understand how the mind works will you know how to handle it - know which ones to cultivate (wholesome ones which are beneficial and profitable) and the ones to abandon (those which are unwholesome and unprofitable).

*Without understanding,
the mind just goes on by
itself like an autopilot and is
direction-less.*

*It just grasps objects -
whatever, arises.*

It goes on and on. Sometimes this autopilot knocks against the wall and will result in painful feeling. If it is a hard knock, it gives rise to even greater pain – a lot of mental pain, fear, suffering, dissatisfaction and so on. All these can only be understood through meditation.

In Dhammanupassana you will go deeper into watching and understanding the mind, not only noting the mind arising and disappearing or feelings arising from the body door. You learn the skills to manage the mind.

How does restlessness manifest?

You can also know restlessness through recognising its manifestation.

It manifests as turmoil and disturbances in the mind.

You can easily spot this. There are people whose restlessness is so strong in their mind they cannot sit still. When highly disturbed, you could lose appetite and sleep. You can therefore deduce that restlessness is present through bodily manifestations.

Actions reflect what is in the mind as body actions are like the puppet moved by the mind. The mind is like the hand that manipulates the puppet.

The understanding you gained from looking inward will also enable you to understand the behaviour of others. You know by first hand experience that, to know and manage the mind is not an easy feat to accomplish.

So, when dealing with disturbing or annoying persons you could bring out compassion and kindness in your thoughts rather than reacting angrily.

If you make meditation your habitual routine, you can find peace and happiness in the quiet mind.

Now that you know how to recognise restlessness and the havoc it causes, let us go on to learn about overcoming it. But before you go on to tackle the problem you must first understand its cause. As mentioned in previous chapters, knowing its cause will enable you to remove it precisely. When the precise cause is removed, the effect will not arise again.

*Restlessness is only
completely eradicated
at the 4th (final) stage of
sainthood.*

What is the cause of the arising of restlessness?

The cause is unwise attention to mental disquiet.

What does this mean?

The untrained, ignorant mind that constantly searches and grasps at delightful sensual-objects causes the growth of restlessness.

Mindfulness, with right attention to restrain the senses, results in the calming of the mind.

Before I go through to explain worries in the next chapter, I would like to repeat the importance of concentration for wisdom meditation and explain how concentration is developed in the wisdom meditation practice?

Hindrances obstruct concentration.

Concentration is essential, as clarity of mind cannot arise when the mind is chattering or, in turmoil.

*Only when there is clarity
of mind, there is clear
comprehension of - mind and
body (Sati Sampajanna),
which eventuates in
understanding and wisdom.*

This is why concentration is essential for wisdom meditation.

The opposite of that is the presence of hindrances. Hindrances shake up the mind like muddy waters. You can't see through muddy water or what is in the water. Only when the mud and sediment settle down to the bottom, the water becomes clear.

In the same way, you see the true nature of object clearly (impermanence, suffering and non-substantial nature) when the mind is clear.

Are we practising wisdom meditation or concentration? How does concentration arise in this wisdom meditation?

*Concentration arises when,
the mind is established and is sustained on,
the four foundations of mindfulness objects,
from moment to moment,
object by object.*

I will discuss a few suitable ways that you may consider to overcome restlessness in the next chapter. Failure to manage any hindrance will completely stop our cultivation. This is the only way to overcome our pain and suffering as there is no one else who can undertake the practice on our behalf or walk the path for us.



Questions and Answers

Question 1:

What motivates the restless mind?

Answer to question 1:

Often restless mind is motivated by desire. It searches for an answer or something, looking for the (right) solutions to problems, planning in business attachments to material or worldly gains. Restless mind could also be motivated by hatred – plotting the (right) words to hurt back or revenge.

Uddaccha (restlessness) is basically a Moha mind without the motivation of Lobha (attachment) or Dosa (ill-will). Uddaccha is always moving, searching, unstable, un-balanced and shaken by object that touches the mind. These objects could be external object (objects of the 5 external senses) or internal object (mind object).

Of course Uddaccha is seldom recognised when it is subtle. Normally it is hard to recognise restlessness when it is not strong especially when mindfulness is weak. When it is subtle you are not greatly affected by it, as the mental pain is not strong.

In contrast it is easily recognised when strong greed or hatred is present. This is when the mind becomes highly disturbed, shaken and it keeps moving. Some meditators could even perceive the shaking of the mind and even so, the shaking of the body.

Question 2:

Can you ever stop worrying?

Answer to question 2:

You cannot completely stop worrying.

Restlessness is a type of ignorant consciousness and only the third stage saints would have completely eradicated ill will (including worries).

In the meantime, you can minimise it along the way as you undertake the mindfulness meditation.

When mindfulness is strong, the mind will not be affected by subtle worries.

As such it stops the grosser ones from building up. If you do not manage the subtle worries, it could build up gathering strength and giving rise to great mental pain. It could even produce physical pain and sicknesses.

Question 3:

Do you mean the mind is worried and restless all the time?

Answer to question 3:

Restlessness (Uddaccha) is present in all unwholesome minds in varying intensities. Worry (Kukuccha) is not always present in unwholesome minds.

For instance, the craving mind is unwholesome – it arises with restlessness but not worry.

Worry has its root in ill will. Not all ill-will mind arises with worry, as there are many types of ill will.

For example a jealousy or angry mind has root in ill will but it does not arise with worry.



*Health is the greatest gift,
Contentment is the greatest wealth,
A trusted friend is the best relative,
Nibbana is the greatest bliss.*

Dhammapada, Verse 204





When one does not cling, one is not agitated.

MN 140.22

Lesson Eight

Restlessness & Worries

(Part 2)

(Uddaccha & Kukkucha)



Lesson Eight

Restlessness & Worries

(Uddaccha & Kukkucha)

Part 2

In the previous chapter, I explained what restlessness is and what causes it. This chapter explains worries, its causes and how to overcome both restlessness & worries.

Kukkucha: Worries & Remorse

Kukkucha (pali) is worries and remorse.

These are thoughts of wrong doings. Having done what shouldn't have been done produce remorse. Not doing things that ought to have been done produce worries.

For example, worries arise when lacking in money where one should have saved some for old age or rainy days rather than spent it all. But now, it is too late and remorse arises.

Often, there are worries in our mind. It is a question of whether these worries are slight or intense.

How do you know or gauge the intensity of worry? When it is not intense, you either don't notice it or if you note it you can let it go. When it is strong it disturbs the mind, cause sleeplessness, loss of appetite and other problems.

Worry does not overcome worry.

It just adds on: Worry + Worry = More worries! When worries is magnified it becomes a strong hindrance to meditation. Often when you have intense worries you will find it difficult to meditate. Even if you try, thoughts of worries will keep popping up.

So, what can you do? Are you to stop meditation altogether? Of course not! You have to deal with the worries and how?

First, you must recognise that “these” are just worries (mental objects) in the mind. Recognising the problem is essential. If not it can be hard to find the right solution to a problem that is not clearly defined.

So, how can you recognise it?

Recognise it from the markers. What are the markers of worries? Characteristics (features), how it appears (manifestation), what it does when it is present (function) – these are markers that a meditator can use to recognise the mind. So let us go through the characteristic.

What is the characteristic of worry?

*The characteristic of worry
is regret.*

Regret arises with worries – what should have been done is not done and now is too late – this is regret.

Things shouldn't be done but you did and now it is too late to undo it, remorse arises in the mind.

What is the manifestation of worry?

How else can you recognise worry? In other words, how does the mind appear when there is worry?

*State of remorse
is the manifestation of worry.*

State of remorse – guilt, is the manifestation of worry. How come? Because it is too late to do what should have been done, but undone; and to undo those that shouldn't have been done.

What is the function of worry?

*Worry's function is to
give rise to sorrow.*

Whenever there is worry, there is always unhappiness.

Although you cannot turn back time, often there are somethings that you can do. If you can, try to rectify the problem. If not, then do something to contain or mitigate the damage. Do what you can, leave what you can't.

Most importantly, deal with worries at its roots cause to reduce or eliminate it. In the Discourse the Buddha continued thus:

*“He knows how the arising of a
non-arisen restlessness & worry
comes to be.”*

This means, a meditator should know the cause of the worries.

So then, what is the cause of worry?

The cause is having done what shouldn't be done or not doing what ought to be done.

For example, your child is sick and there is not enough money for the hospital bills. You worry. Why? Really, why is that you will worry about your child but not somebody else's child? You may empathise if it was someone else's child, but that is not worry. You worry (about your child) because of attachment.

There is attachment between parents and their child. There is no attachment between a parent and someone else's child.

*Strong attachment is the
root cause of worry.*

It is unpredictable what tomorrow, and the future brings. Saving for something that no one foresees is difficult. Sometimes even with the best intentions and plans to save for rainy days, one couldn't do so, as they don't even have enough to live day-to-day. What is left to save for tomorrow?

So, you can only deal with problems as best you can at that present moment. There is no point regretting about the past or worrying about tomorrow. One must cut his coat according to his cloth.

What are we attached to normally that produce worries?

Children, family, loved ones, livelihood, property and health. If you have children, you are bound to worry about them. If you have business you bound to worry about sustainability, employees' wages and clients. If you have a job you will worry about deadlines, boss and performance. If you are married you worry whether it will last or if the other will stray or about their safety, their health, and so on and so forth. If you are single you worry if you will ever find a partner.

Most of us worry about loneliness, old age, sickness and death. We worry if we, our loved ones (and everything we are attached to) will be alright tomorrow. Is tomorrow going to be the same? We are worried because of our attachment to these people and things.

All of these are subject to the constant nature of changing (impermanence) and this causes worry.

Acceptance is therefore, of utmost importance.

One must learn to accept nature.

There are things the mind must learn to accept and there are things we don't need to accept for instance anger, fear, anxiety – these are unwholesome minds that must be overcome. But nature (like death and old age) one must learn to accept. Is there anyone in the world who can live forever? No. It is impossible.

*Once the mind learns
acceptance, worry and
fear cease.*

Sorrow disappears.

Acceptance arises with cultivation of impermanence, which is the universal characteristic of nature. Where there is wisdom, negative mental state like anger, frustrations and worry do not arise in the mind.

Many meditators ask if meditation is all about rising and falling? Is that all to it? Is – arising and passing away all to it? What comes after?

Well, no. That is not all or the end. The meditator must persist and carry on.

Wisdom will arise by itself but first one must get into Samadhi (calmness and tranquillity). When there is calmness and tranquillity, defilements subside, mind becomes clear. Wisdom arises only when the mind becomes clear – and is able to perceive nature clearly, internally and externally.

Internally – in one’s mind internally.
Externally – external objects that influence the mind. The meditator begins to perceive this phenomena clearly, one after another.

This may not sound exciting like watching a movie or striking a lottery. But the joy that you experience when wisdom begins to unfold is much more superior compared to the sensual joy. It is not the same joy from enjoying a movie or any other senses. It is the joy of perceiving or understanding reality or realisation of it.

*The Buddha said the joy of
attaining path & fruition
(Magga Phala) or realisation
produces great joy.*

It is the greatest joy of all joys.

Sensual pleasure will never match or equal to spiritual joy.

*Spiritual joy is limitless and
incomparable.*

While spiritual joy is limitless, sensual joy on the other hand, is limited.

Here is an example to illustrate that -

One loves fried chicken very much. He eats one and enjoys it very much. He may still find the second piece delightful and maybe, even a third one. But perhaps at his fourth or fifth piece, he might begin to feel sick or might even vomit. One cannot over eat, as there is a limit to the sense enjoyment.

Another illustration -

You might like a song very much and then, the radio plays it non-stop. Guess what happens next if you hear it again. You say “Overplayed!” and feel disgusted. Perhaps you feel like breaking the player too!

Senses have limitations – the sense consciousness form is limited. One can only live up to 80, 100 or 120 years, the most. Therefore sensual enjoyment has its limits.

Sometimes with certain experience (such as when insight/wisdom arise) it feels like seeing 'light at the end of the tunnel'. It explains certain phenomena but expanded a thousand times. You will intuitively know that "this is it" but there is more to come of course.

The mind needs confidence (faith) that this practice is the way and there is no other way but this practice, which is the right way. With such experiences, confidence arises in the mind. You can perceive wisdom when it arises. Wisdom arises associated with joy.

*You don't forget wisdom that
arises from experience.*

Wisdom arising from meditation (experience) is not the same wisdom gained from reading or intellectual reasoning or from listening or debate.

You will not denounce the practice when confidence is developed through this kind of wisdom.

This wisdom is the yardstick that measures your practice. You may think you have strong faith but, faith is weak without this kind of wisdom. One could even stop practice or give it up completely without such wisdom.

You can perceive all of these phenomena in your mind as you practise. However there must first be tranquillity and calmness in the mind before the mind can perceive clearly in order for wisdom to arise. Hindrances obstruct tranquillity and calmness. Therefore, it blocks the progress of a meditator.

The Buddha continued thus:

*“He knows how the discarding of
an already arisen restlessness &
worry comes to be.”*

*“He knows how the non arising
in the future of a discarded
restlessness & worry comes to be.”*

That is to say, in addition to knowing the cause of the worries, the meditator should go on to know how to overcome it, and know how when it is dealt with, will not arise again. So how can a meditator overcome this hindrance?

Wise Reflection

Firstly recognise the cause of worries.

Live the best you can. If you can't have the best, then second or next best is still good enough. There are many things we want in life and in truth, you can't have it all.

*There is no end to wanting.
We can't have it all.*

Learn to be contented. So you should learn to cut your shirt according to the cloth you have. Learn to accept and live with what you have.

Once you have accepted this there is lesser attachment and lesser worries.

Feelings from seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking are different from each other.

If you have a tummy ache, does that mean that you cannot enjoy hearing or seeing or pleasant feelings from other senses? You can still enjoy unless the ache is overwhelming. The point is, there are other sources of happiness you can turn to for your enjoyment.

If one is blind, it does not mean that the blind person is an unhappy person or that he or she is in suffering for the rest of his or her life. They could still experience joy through other senses - hearing, smelling, etc... It is very likely that this blind person becomes more sensitive to these other senses.

If you don't have much money, it doesn't mean you can't enjoy good food. Food can be cheap and good. If you have no car, it doesn't mean you cannot go anywhere. Take the bus or train.

If you are old, it does not mean there is no more happiness. If you could put your hands on your abdomen, you can still get to meditate, and perceive the meditation object of rise and fall. Perhaps the mind stays more on the object better than the younger ones as their mind is often on enjoyment and ambition. These can strongly move the mind.

*There are many sources where
happiness can be found.*

In Dhammanupassana practice, the meditator is trained to be aware of the source that produces feelings. The meditator is aware if the mind is disturbed from that sensory contact or not. One notes the source where feeling arises.

There are many sources where happiness can arise. But if you were to just cling on to one source of happiness then you can be unhappy for a long while. You should not close off other sources and allow your mind to sink into depression.

A meditator should know there are other sources of happiness and learn to manage the mind so that it does not fall too low. Don't trap the mind in one source.

What about thoughts of old age, sickness and death?

One deals with old age and sickness when it comes. Cross the bridge when you get there. If you take care of the present, future will take care of itself.

If you do wholesome things today and everyday, surely it begets a wholesome result in this and future life. This is the universal law of cause and effect.

Use positive thinking and wise reflection to deal with such worries. Anchor the mind to the present moment. Present moment can give a lot of joy to the mind if only you train the mind to stay at present. "Right now, there is food in my fridge (there is no need to worry about hunger). Right now, I am healthy; I can sit, walk, stand and lie down. Right now, there is no one disturbing me."

*Joyful is right now. Right now,
is perfect.*

On the contrary, if the mind thinks too far ahead, leaping into the future is like the horse that outruns the cart. When it does, it loses the cart. The horse must pull one step at a time.

*Future is uncertain and the
mind that goes too far into
uncertainty will feel very
disturbed.*

But if you were to stop right here, right now, you will see that everything is alright. A meditator must train the mind to anchor at the present moment.

Spiritual Happiness & Contentment

Train the mind and direct it with mindfulness to the meditation objects (be it body, feeling, mind or Dhammanu-reality) in formal practice. Throughout the day (informal), train the mind to stay on the meditation objects as well.

How to do it?

By anchoring the mind to bodily movements or elements whichever is strong and obvious at the present moment.

Why do it?

When the mind is sustained on the meditation objects in formal and informal sessions for a long period of time, it gives rise to joy and happiness.

Where there is happiness, there is contentment. The mind is at ease. This happiness is conducive for deep concentration as it is contented and does not wander. Deep concentration produces clarity of mind, a prerequisite for wisdom.

Wisdom is recognising reality. The mind could still get a lot of happiness – worldly as well as spiritual. If you were to seek for worldly joy do make sure you don't break your precepts. Enjoy moderately and don't harm any beings while doing so.

Continue to plant wholesome seeds, like meditation, for the future. Otherwise, you might 'use up all your good Kamma and have no more money left for the future'. Just like some people who have to work very hard just to earn a living.

Why is it so?

They have spent it all and there is no more 'savings' (good Kamma) left in their 'bank'. You should invest by spending your time in doing what is good (planting good Kamma for the future). And so life goes on.

Meditation is not just for one life. It is for future as well. This good seed that you plant today will continue to grow in your next life.

Make an aspiration after each wholesome deed (including meditation) that you will not fall

away from the path, and that you will meet with only the wise, not fools, so to ensure you would still come into contact with the meditation path in your next life – until the great happiness of Magga Phala is realised.

In these ways, the meditator tries to manage the hindrance of restlessness and worries. These are completely eradicated at the final stage of enlightenment (Arahant).



Question and Answer

Question:

What mental state overcomes restlessness and worry?

Answer:

Contentment – spiritual happiness (Sukkha) overcomes restlessness and worry.



Restlessness and Worries

*There are things ought to be accepted.
And, what are these things?
Ageing, decay, sickness and death.
Having been born who can escape?
Learning to accept, lessens the pain of nature's affliction.
Acceptance; one perceives nature's ways.
Acceptance; balances the mind.
And stops the mind from falling,
into sadness and pain.
So said the wise.*

*There are things that shouldn't be accepted,
because they can be prevented - like,
restlessness and worries.*

*It has its cause of origins.
Attachment is the chief cause.
It brings about fear of loss -
Of what has been gained.
It brings about pain,
when the desired -
cannot be acquired.*

*Spiritual happiness is the key.
Born of mindfulness, concentration and detachment.
Antidote for restlessness and worries.*

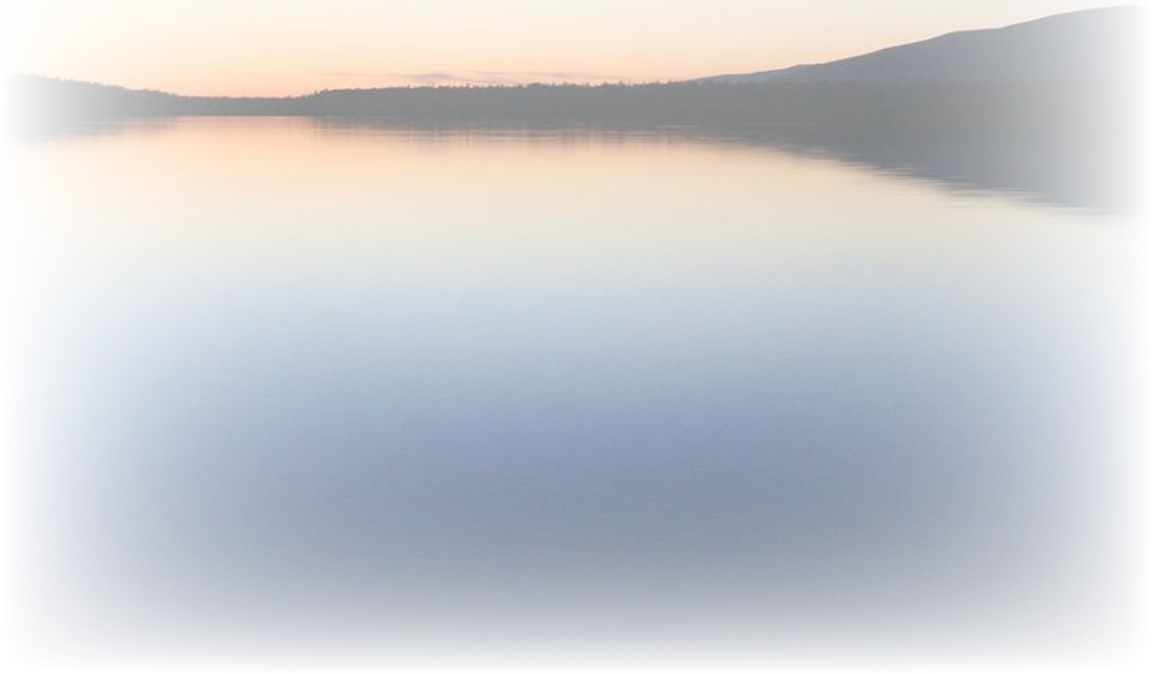
*“Of all things good,
Always begins, with right efforts.
Of a thousand mile journey
Always begins, with the very first step.”*



If there is a pot of water which is turbid, stirred up and muddy, and this pot is put into a dark place, then a person with normal eyesight would not recognize and see his or her own image reflected in the water.

In the same way, when one's mind is possessed by doubt, overpowered by doubt, then one cannot properly see the escape from doubt which has arisen; then one does not properly understand one's own welfare, nor that of another, nor that of both.

SN 46.55



Lesson Nine

Doubts
(Part 1)
(Vicikiccha)



Lesson Nine

Doubts

(Vicikiccha)

Part 1

Doubt is a potent hindrance. Like dew collects slowly on the leaf, doubt builds up slowly in the mind. When doubt accumulates enough it has the potency to stop you in your tracks. Many doubtful meditators give up their practice and even on the Dhamma.

In the discourse, the Buddha told the meditators to be aware of doubts.

*“When doubt is present within,
he knows there is doubt in me or
when absent within, he knows
there is no doubt in me.”*

*The problem is, often times,
meditators do not recognise
doubts.*

The failure to recognise doubts stems from the lack of knowledge in identifying it. So, as usual, I will now go through the 4 modes to enable you to recognise and identify doubts when it is present.

So what are doubts? What does a meditator doubt about?

*It is scepticism about the Buddha,
Dhamma and Sangha.*

Doubt as a hindrance in the practice of meditation refers to spiritual doubts. It boils down to the inability to place confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

What does doubting the Buddha mean?

Some people have strong faith in the Buddha naturally. This is probably due to past practice or influenced by their surroundings or upbringing.

*Faith, alone can
weaken doubt.*

Sometimes faith arises with wisdom and sometimes not.

The doubtful thinks the Buddha was just a human, not a god. Therefore, they think he can neither save them from the fires of hell nor bring them to heaven upon death.

But in truth, Buddha was not a mere human being. He is more, and higher than that. His compassion is great. His wisdom is great and profound.

*When there is an appearance of the
Buddha, all beings pay homage to the
Buddha – all Devas, Brahmas and humans.*

In the absence of the Buddha, beings pay homage to the Brahmas but when there is an appearance of the Buddha even the Brahmas pay homage to the Buddha.

The Buddha is supreme.

The Buddha has the significance and is the embodiment of the highest attainment, perfect enlightenment, abandoned and overcome all defilements and possesses Paramis (perfections) qualities that are unrivalled by anyone else in the universe.

He is perfect. He is the highest.

Therefore, faith in the Buddha is wholesome as the Buddha said – He is, the highest.

*Those with faith in the Buddha
gain the highest merits.*

For those who are Buddhist in name only and those who have not cultivated meditation, their mind lacks concentration and calmness. Lacking

in these, the mind can easily be influenced. They could easily change faith.

Why does this happen?

This is possible when the mind is gripped by fear. Doubt arises when one is unsure of where he would be going after death. Given only two choices either eternal burning in eternal hell or eternal happiness in eternal heaven, naturally one will decide to go with the faith that guarantees the latter. This is an internal Mara – our own weakness that is fear. It arises due to not having cultivated strong Samadhi.

Where there is concentration, the mind is strong and can't be influenced. It is not by mere belief that one goes to heaven. There are many ways to the heavenly realms.

The Buddha said keeping precepts (Sila) is a sure way to the heavenly door.

Another way, is by purity of mind through meditation.

Doubt about the Dhamma

Dhamma refers to the teachings of the Buddha. Doubting the Dhamma signify doubts about the teachings - whether this is the way out of suffering.

It is common for such doubt to arise along the way. As you practise, you will have different types of experience and proper guidance is required to clear your questions and doubts. There are instances where meditators think they have attained when they have certain experience but in fact it is not an attainment. Owing to their craving and the desire to achieve they think it is an attainment. This is wrong understanding and gives rise to many problems while building up strong ego.

Doubt about the Sangha

Sangha refers to one who has attained and escaped from suffering. There are many who doubt if this practice of four foundations of mindfulness would lead to holiness. They doubt if there is anyone in this day and age who are truly a Sangha – the one who has realised Nibbana.

*They doubt the existence
of the holy Sangha in this
day and age.*

It is common for doubts to arise along the way. The danger lies in not knowing that doubts have arisen and the inability to recognise the different guises of doubts.

*In Dhammanupassana, a
meditator trains the mind
to be aware of doubts.*

If not, such doubting thoughts will obstruct the practice. It might even bring the practice to a complete stop.

Therefore understanding the nature of doubts is essential as it enables the meditator to recognise that such and such thoughts that have arisen are doubts. When such sceptical doubts have ceased or absent, you should also know.

There are times when you experience faith instead. You know that you are on the right path in the absence of sceptical doubts – you know you just need to keep on going. These too you should train the mind to recognise – the absence of doubt.

What is the function of doubt?

What does doubt do to the mind?

Doubt wavers the mind. It is like a boat that merely drifts and goes nowhere.

In the same way, doubt stops your practice – the mind loses its focus and does not aim towards the target. It is doubtful. Doubt makes the mind uncertain. The doubting mind cannot ascertain anything and so it flips from side to side.

Wavering destabilises the mind.

How else do you know that your thoughts are doubts? You can know it by perceiving its manifestation.

What is the manifestation of doubt?

Doubt makes the mind indecisive.

When the mind has no decision, it cannot take any action, as it does not know what to do.

The doubtful mind is flippant, uncertain, unsure, not knowing.

Not only can doubts hinder your spiritual efforts but also in the material world – you cannot get anything out of life when doubts overpower you. When doubtful you give up on your endeavours in the material world. Similarly when doubtful, you give up your spiritual striving – the journey that goes inward, deep within where one gets peacefulness, tranquillity and satisfaction.

Meditation is an inward journey where you start to look inward and begin to perceive the mind. As you practise, you should constantly check if you are getting more at ease, is your practice getting deeper or is there still much restlessness, disturbing thoughts and dreams?

If so, you are still scratching the surface and have not gone deep enough yet. Underlying it there are doubts.

And, so in the Discourse, the Buddha continued thus:

“He knows how the arising of a non-arisen doubt comes to be.”

What causes doubt to arise?

The proximate cause for doubt is unwise attention to something complicated or something beyond our understanding or which is too deep for you to comprehend – these cause doubt to arise.

Now, with regard to the practice – when will

a meditator become sceptical?

Typically when there is fear. Sometimes doubts can easily arise when instigated by others especially when thinking about death and not know what comes after. Uncertain of the future, unable to see beyond the present, one fears, and questions if he's practising the right way or wrong way or is he going to be alright after he dies since he does not believe in a saviour.

So with fear and the desire to be saved from the undesirable or the desire to be in heaven, influences a doubting mind.

There are 5 types of spritual obstructions (Maras) and one of which is the internal defilement. In this instance, the culprit fear is the internal Mara.

If the meditator's practice is not strong and he is unable to perceive clearly then he can easily succumb to such influence. Another type of Mara can sometimes refer to beings that cause obstructions to the path in the practice of mental cultivation. Beings can be human beings (whether friend, stranger, relative etc.) or even Deva.

Greed is another culprit. There are those who meditate because they want psychic power. So he doubts, maybe this is not the right practice.

Thoughts of doubts can also be disguised in the following forms:

“How are the benefits of meditation applicable to me?”

“How are these benefits or the practice of meditation be of value to me?”

“Will I get anything out of this meditation? If not, why meditate?”

“What do I get out of it?”

“What is the use of this?”

“What is the value of this?”

Some even said: “I understand the benefits but not see the value”.

These thoughts of doubts are prompted by greed for returns.

Clouded mind produces doubt. When we try to understand something we cannot comprehend at that moment such as Nibbana or about non-self then, it sounds incredible, fantastic and abstract. Consequently, doubt arises in the mind.

Doubts arise along the way of meditation. You will begin to experience a lot of things you have not encountered before. When that occurs, you will naturally have questions about whether you are doing the right thing or not: “Is this experience an insight or imagination?” Doubt arises.

It is therefore good to ask the teacher, a skilled and proper teacher. What do I mean by proper teacher? You cannot get the appropriate answer from a tranquillity meditation teacher about a wisdom meditation question. You could also not get the proper guidance from a Samatha meditation teacher about Vipassana practice or seek meditation guidance from one who has only book-knowledge.

If you actually practise diligently and seriously, you will actually encounter many different experiences that require guidance.

The questions that I often ask the meditator and which the meditator should ask as a form of self-check are:

“Are you watching body? Are you watching feelings, mind and Dhamma? If you are on the 4 foundations then, you are safe. So you should keep going. If you are not, then you should seek help.”

A wisdom meditator must return to the four foundations of mindfulness again and again as that is the basic foundations where you build up the path to enlightenment. This is the practice or the path where wisdom appears. A wisdom meditator must know that.



Question and Answer

Question 1:

How do we know if a thought is a kind of doubt or not?

Answer to question 1:

The degree of intensity in doubts varies. Obviously the gross form of doubts is easily recognised. What are the gross doubts? These are doubts about the Buddha; the way out of suffering – if there is really a way of escape from suffering by oneself without depending on a saviour; and those who have realised it. These basic gross doubts have its root in ignorance. Unfortunately, it prevents the overcoming of doubts itself.

The subtle doubts often arise only after you have undertaken the practice. These are thoughts like doubting yourself, your ability, character and whether you are able to carry on the practice as you find it so difficult. It gives rise to other thoughts that justify the importance of other activities in replacement of meditation. Doubts whether you are doing the right thing or practising the right method or whether the guide or teacher is qualified to teach. Also along

the way in meditation when you have new or certain experiences you don't understand you don't know how to deal with it or proceed with the practice. So these are the subtler doubts.

Many drop off along the way when doubts are overwhelming. The thoughts that justify that decision to give up can be convincing and (un)'reasonable'. These reasons that I have come across include "I am too young for meditation, I should focus on studies." Those from middle age often say, "I should focus on career." "I am busy" "I am too restless and cannot sit still." "Meditation is meant for those retired or those with nothing better to do." Many in old age have said, "I lack the mental strength to meditate. I cannot sit. I doze off too soon." Let me put it back to you – when is the right time?

Doubts come in infinite forms and intensities. It attacks in many ways. Doubts are latent when mind is obsessed with a lot of 'wants', desires,

worldly matters or problems. When doubts become strong undercurrents (latent tendencies) it prevents the mind from knowing what is important as important. It mistaken the unimportant for important trapped by the made-belief importance.

A meditator must learn to recognise the gross and subtle doubts. Be aware of it. There are some questions that are irrelevant to the practice and there are some that are relevant. Questions that are relevant, it is necessary seek the answer and clarification. Questions that do not lead to any progress on the path of liberation, let it go and continue to practise.

Three levels of wisdom (Panna) could overcome doubts, namely:

(1) Learning or knowledge from reading or discussions (learning) –

Pariyatti

(2) Knowledge gained from undertaking the meditation practice

(direct knowledge) – Patipatti

(3) *Wisdom / Insight knowledge that arises from the meditation practice (penetrative insights/nana) - Pativedha*

Doubts lessen as the meditator's practice progresses towards the attainment of the first stage of sainthood.

Question 2:

How to deal with doubts?

Answer to question 2:

In the learning stage, analytical knowledge needs to be balanced with practice. Too much reading (theoretical knowledge – based on learning and theorising alone) produces 'sophisticated' 'subtle' 'deep' unanswered questions such as, "Is there a beginning or end? Is there a beginning but no end? Is there no beginning and no ending?" Such questions cannot be answered or by deduction from the analytical mind.

These questions are some examples where it does not contribute to the understanding or clarification of the practice. Therefore these are unnecessary questions. Let it go. Worse still such questions could produce more confusion or abundance of pride, thinking one thinks and knows deeply. It is capable of stopping you from meditation because of confusion or assumption that you have known it all or what is known is absolute.

Question 3:

What is nana, insights or wisdom that is sometimes spoken about by meditators and what are the various levels of insights?

Answer to question 3:

These insights are stated in the Visudhimagga – the various levels of insights wisdom. The meditators should not overemphasise on it lest he will capture only mere words and not the experience.

For instance, after reading about the insight of impermanence, the meditator might go in search of ‘impermanence’ during meditation in a way described by the book. The meditator superimposes the concept on the object and finally coming to a conclusion that they have arrived at insights of impermanence (Anicca). Some may even become conceited, overbearing and self consumed with inflated ego thinking they are of a higher level than their peers and people who are not meditators. These are obstacles to meditation.



*This training and maturing the mind
involves going against the grain.*

*One has to be willing to counter the
unwholesome habitual tendencies of the mind,
ready to endure and put forth effort.*



Doubts

*Is there life in the past, if there is, what am I?
Was I rich or poor, smart or foolish?
Was I good looking or just plain, happy or sad,
A human being or something else?
It's all so confusing when there is doubt
in unclear and doubtful matters.*

*Is there life after here I ponder
Is there a future if that's a possibility?
And if there is, what will I be I wonder.*

*Can we still have food we like to eat,
good friends & our loved ones?
Do we have a warm place to call a home?
Are we to have a brand new start-
begin all over again –
and will I be happy or sad?*

*What about the present?
Am I really living here and now?
What a question to ask myself,
as if doubting my existence.
Then again am I really living in the present moment
or am I just imagining I am?*

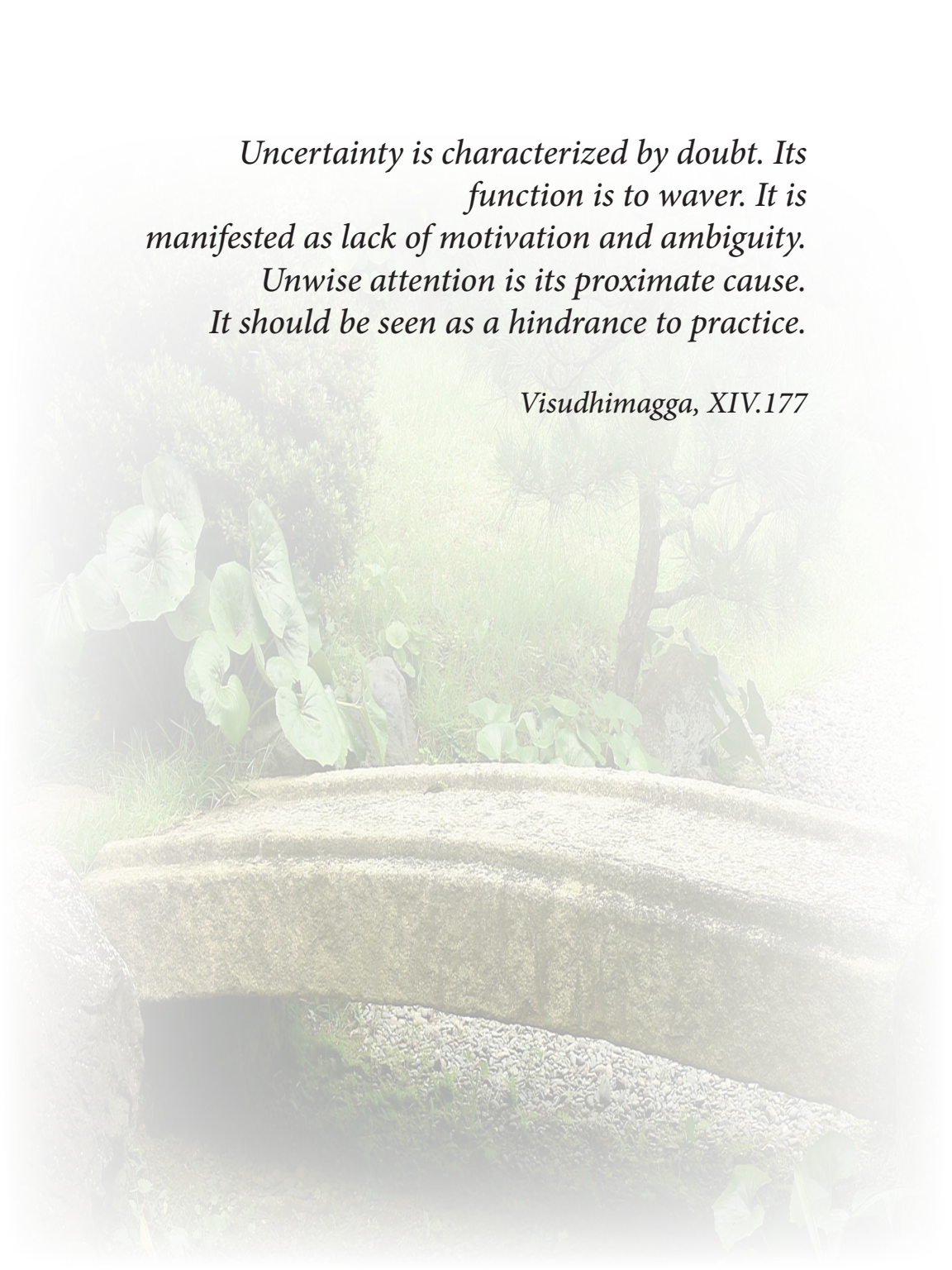
*Am I aware of feelings, mind, body and reality
happening inside and outside,
in the present moment?
There're millions of questions but very little answers.
Will I ever know, what is the meaning of life?*

*Said the Blessed One,
the Knower of the past, present and future:
the answer is shrouded like a hailstorm
like a dark, dark night,
like water weed fully cover up the clear blue pond.*

*Follow the Noble Eight Fold Path
and the truth unfolds like the break of dawn,
Bright lights shine through
when doubts are dispelled
and wisdom blossoms,
No more doubts & wrong views
causing apprehensions and fears, rites and rituals.
The mind lives with comfort & ease
when troubling mind ceases,
What needs to be done is done.*

*Uncertainty is characterized by doubt. Its
function is to waver. It is
manifested as lack of motivation and ambiguity.
Unwise attention is its proximate cause.
It should be seen as a hindrance to practice.*

Visudhimagga, XIV.177



Lesson Ten

Doubts
(Part 2)
(Vicikiccha)



Lesson Ten

Doubts

(Vicikiccha)

Part 2

When there are doubts about the Buddha, the progress of your practice becomes sluggish. Faith plays a big part in meditation. Faith in the Buddha makes practice strong – knowing that the Buddha is really enlightened.

The Buddha is not a mere human. He is no ordinary human being. He is a super human. He is supreme and has perfected his Paramis (perfections) in his last birth.

Knowledge and faith in the Dhamma (teachings of the Buddha) and faith in the Sangha (those who have attained and there are four stages of sainthood) also strengthen our practice.

Many people doubt this and they asked, are there saints in the worlds today? Are there those who really practised until they have attained? Is it possible in this day and age? Does this practice really lead towards enlightenment?

There are those who meditate for reasons other than enlightenment. Some people meditate not for enlightenment but for peace of mind. Some took it up to overcome insomnia and sickness. Some took it up so that they could de-stress. There are also those who meditate to make better business decisions and for many other reasons.

Then there are those sincere meditators who have practised for a long time but they don't find enlightenment so they begin to doubt.

One must understand that just because he took up meditation in this life one cannot assume that enlightenment will be attained in this life. Paramis must first be built up without which there is no enlightenment.

“He knows how the discarding of an already arisen doubt comes to be.”

How to overcome doubt?

Doubts is difficult to get rid off and will constantly arise along the way. Doubts are completely overcome by attainment of wisdom at the first stage of sainthood.

But in the meantime, strong faith alone can keep the doubts away and enable you to continue practising until you ‘see light at the end of the tunnel’ (not literally). Therefore it is important for the sincere meditator to develop faith.

Faith is essential to keep doubts away so that it does not stop you from the practice.

How can a meditator develop faith?

A meditator should do a self-check every now and then. Are you watching the body? Are you watching feelings? Are you watching mind? Are you watching reality? Are you peaceful? Is your mind calm? Is your mind getting less disturbed?

If you have been practising properly, you would have begun to notice that the mind is now relatively calmer.

Sometimes you can even see the contrast between the disturbed mind on the days you missed a practice and the calm mind on days where you kept up your meditation.

When you reflect on these, you should note that these are some of the many positive changes and benefits meditation can bring. Had you not taken up meditation, you would not even realised how mentally disturbed you were. Even if you were conscious of the mental turmoil, you don't know how to handle the mind as it overwhelms you.

Upon reflection, you will know and realise that these are the positive changes and benefits brought about by the practice and method taught by the Buddha. While you reflect thus, you should let faith develop within you – the faith in the Buddha, his teachings and have faith that those who have practised it have realised fully all the benefits of the practice.

The Buddha said for as long as there are those who practise the Noble Eight Fold Path (within the Four Foundations of Mindfulness), the world will not be void of saints

Even if you do not attain in this life you should not give up the practice. For so long as you are on the four foundations, you will definitely arrive, for this is the only path that takes you to liberation from suffering. This is said in the concluding chapter of the Discourse.

For as long as you are still practising, you're accumulating Paramis and merits. These are absolutely necessary. Merits are important, as it is our support.

*Merits create favourable
conditions for us to
continue our practice.*

If you don't begin the practice or start building up the Paramis in this life, you still have to do so at some point in your next or the following lives. This is provided that you have a chance to come into contact with the Buddha's Dhamma, provided you have the right teacher, learnt the right path and is able to follow the right path to get the results.

You may decide to delay your practice but that would be foolish, as you would not know if your conditions would be favourable for practice tomorrow. What then is the guarantee for next life? The future has a lot of 'ifs' (uncertainties).

It is therefore good that when you have the opportunity in this very moment, in this very life, you should seize it and do what you can.

Strike while the iron is hot.

A meditator once told me that he does not “look back” he needs only to follow what the teacher said and just go on with it. No, that is not a wise thing to do.

One must reflect and compare as a form of assessment. How far have you come on this journey? What changes have you seen in yourself? How were you like when you began? What are you like now after taking up meditation? Can you handle difficult situations better? If not, how else or what else must you work on? What is lacking in your practice? Are you more peaceful? Are you more able to let go? Are you on the right path – four foundations of mindfulness?

In looking back and you would realise all the positive changes in yourself brought about through your practice. Faith will grow in your mind.

Therefore you should not just keep going without looking back and not realising how much progress you made. If you do so, faith does not have a chance to grow in you. Without faith you are likely to get lost and drop out from the practice. One who doesn't look back, does not train the mind to reflect wisely.

*Wise reflection is
important especially
when you have no teacher
or a good teacher whom
you can consult with.*

The Buddha said be a lamp unto yourself – the Four Foundations is your guide and so, I rely on that. I have seen improvements in myself, great improvements – the mind has become stronger, more peaceful and able to let go.

So similarly upon looking back you will realise these changes within you. You know you are on the right path then you keep going.

One day you will ‘see the light at the end of the tunnel’ and doubts will not arise again. You are sure that this practice is the way to end suffering. You have gone through the entire journey – you know how to get there, you have seen the landmarks, you have done it, you know it.

The Buddha continued:

“He knows how the non-arising in the future of the discarded doubt comes to be.”

So, how will doubt not arise again?

Wisdom gets rid of doubt

As you keep practising, you’ll find your answers from the wisdom that arises. When insights or wisdom arises, doubts are weakened and lessened. As you perceive things clearly and deeply, you will begin to perceive impermanence and you will cling less tightly.

We cling and expect it to give us the same happiness again and again but sadly this is not possible. Object changes, contact changes, mind changes. Change is the law of nature.

*When we cling, it produces
mental pain.*

If you wish for sensual happiness you must also learn to accept pain that comes with it. The more you push away pain the more it becomes painful because of non-acceptance.

*Wisdom brings about
mental acceptance.*

Most people don't understand the law of suffering and think happiness is their birth-right. When one is born into this world there is bound to be pain as that is the flipside of sensual happiness. That is the law. No one can bear that pain on anybody's behalf.

For instance, the body gives much pleasure it also gives much pain. In growing old, the body decays and it becomes conducive for past bad Kamma to take result like, one could become very sick. If you were trained, you would know how to be mindful of the feelings. You could note the painful feeling, watch feeling as an object and practise detachment of mind.

If detachment mind is strong, the pain arising from the body does not trouble the mind.

Mind maintains its peacefulness and is happy. Meditation cannot stop bodily pain but it stops mental pain. A meditator who has experienced this will know how it is done and his faith or confidence in the practice will grow.

While a skilful and experienced meditator might find impermanence (Anicca) and suffering (Dukkha) relatively easy to perceive and understand, he might still find it difficult to perceive or understand the last part of this wisdom

meditation practice – (Anatta) emptiness or non-substantiality.

But once insights go deep, the wisdom of Anatta will unfold. When the mind experiences Anatta the mind lets go. Otherwise attachment to anything internal and external remains very strong.

If you persist on the practice you will find that your attachments become lessen in intensity.

For example, you might find it acceptable whether you have or haven't got the desirable or pleasant object. You can live without it. You cling less to your opinions or views because you perceive the nature of impermanence, suffering and non-substantiality.

*Wisdom is perceiving, and
deeply knowing the nature
of all things: impermanence,
suffering and non-self.*

As you go deeper the mind becomes more peaceful and there is a deep sense of contentment in the mind.

*Doubts and fear too,
disappear.*

You know you are on the right path that is the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. You will realise the Dhamma and when you do, you really understand and know you are on the right path. There is no doubt about it because you have perceived it clearly by then – not merely knowing or understanding it by words or in theory.

People who have never practised wisdom meditation just believe it and their understanding of it is superficial – mere words. They use thinking and analysis. Doubts are therefore strong, as they have not experienced the real thing. These people tend to argue about what is right and wrong, as they have never experienced this inward journey.

I am often asked this question, “how do I know if I am enlightened?”

You will know it because along the way you can perceive it very clearly. If you don’t know it, you have not attained it.

Tallying your experience with books written by famous teachers or confirmations by teachers does not make you a saint.

Attainment neither requires any confirmation, declaration, and certification nor need any external person or institution to make you a saint. You know if you are one. Nobody can give that.

Conversely no one can take away or steal the sainthood or the wisdom that you have attained since wisdom is not given. It is cultivated through toil and ‘sweat’.

*The Buddha said:
“Ekayano”*

That means there are no other ways but just this one way, and that is the Four Foundations of mindfulness.

So, don't give it up even if you have not reached enlightenment in this life. Keep going to your last breath – watch body, feelings, mind and reality. Everything that is accumulated is never wasted but will be brought forward to continue on in your journey next life.



Question and Answer

Question 1:

Why do meditators drop off especially beginners?

Answer to question 1:

In the beginning many drop out and mainly because they have not experienced joy and peacefulness from the practice. Beginners also tend to find it difficult because they are not used to the vigour and great effort required for the application of mind to perceive and feel the object in the beginning. They find little or no pleasure in meditation or it does not help them solve their problems. Peace of mind can be experienced for those who are well cultivated, not by superficial beginner-meditators. Beginners must therefore manage their expectations, as attainment within a short period of time is difficult.

There are some who are looking and not know what they are looking for. They find that the practice does not fulfil their goal even though they do not know what they want. There are some meditators who are looking to heal some diseases. Self-healing is not within

the purview of this practice although it might have some effect when deep Samadhi is experienced. There are those who are looking for psychic powers or to become a better medium. They are even meditators who come to the practice so that they could look into their past lives. These are not within the scope and goals of the practice.

Question 2:

What about the meditators who have practised for a long time and suddenly gave up?

Answer to question 2:

It could be that they have not acquired the deep Samadhi or insights even after long practice. Sufficient Paramis developed in their past lives are required for the experience of insights. If not, it must be built up and accumulated in this life. There are many reasons for the lack of insights

besides the lack in Paramis. It could also be the lack of effort, knowledge, deeper understanding of the practice (for instance Dhammanupassana) and other factors.

So these meditators gave up because they lose interest especially when they do not see result especially if they used attainment of insight levels as their yardsticks.

Sometimes they just become complacent and lethargic when life is going smoothly (lacking in sense of urgency, Samvega). Other times it is simply due to the mind that is searching for enjoyment where after a long period of suppression of hindrances and being denied the pleasure. The defilements bounce back to seek pleasurable objects. If such defilements are strong, the meditators tend not to return to the practice altogether.

A meditator should understand that the ocean slopes gently and should adjust

their practice according to their own capacity.

In the Path of Purification (Visudhimagga scripture) there is explanation on the various stages of insight-knowledges. Basically, it describes the insights of 3 Universal Characteristic of Nature.

Insight-wisdom is, when mindfulness has become strong and arises continuously with concentration and detachment mental states (alobha cetasika). The 3 signs of Impermanence, Suffering and Non-ego, often appears as part of perception (Sanna) when mental object arises in the mind. Clearly seen, is the impermanent nature of mind and form, as it constantly arises and disappears like running water in a stream. So, can there be security and true happiness in grasping things that are so unstable and uncertain? There is an awareness with clear understanding of the dangers of dependence which result in mental-fear and confusion.

*Mind, then gradually let go of cravings,
which purifies the mind.*

*Mental purification is that process
towards purification of views when
insight-wisdom matures and deepens.
And with right efforts, the fetters
are eliminated. This results in the
attainment of the 4 stages of Sainthood
(Magga-Phala).*

Question 3:

Is insight easily attainable? Is it attainable in this very life? How long before a meditator can acquire or experience insights?

Answer to question 3:

Firstly, each meditator is different from another. Therefore time cannot be used as a yardstick to compare or like a pair of shoe with universal size that fits all.

Insights are not easily attainable for those who lack Paramis, proper

and deep knowledge, guidance in the practice and proper teacher. It is even more difficult for those who have much obstructions or obstacles in life such as failing health, financial woes or simply lacking the mental and physical energy.

Those who begin practice in the old age find themselves having lesser energy and are constantly attacked by sloth and torpor. For those who start meditation at a young age have the benefit of energy and health but most often found themselves caught up by their ambitions and pursuits of sensual desires will find it difficult to gain insights.

There are those who can get deep insights within a short period of time and even the Buddha said there are those who can be enlightened in 7 days, 7 months etc. These are the ones who are born with wisdom roots and having acquired Paramis in their past lives. These are the ones with lesser roots of defilement such as sensual enjoyment,

deep hatred and delusion. They will find it easy to attain insights.

If the meditator meets with the correct teacher who teaches the right Dhamma and clearly explains the way of practice or technique, and if that meditator possesses strong faith (Saddha), then attainment of insights here and now is possible if he applies great effort in his practice.





Antidote for doubt

*It is good to doubt in doubtful matters
One should investigate -
Is it good for oneself and others?
If so, such wholesome deeds should be done
And be done again*

*The Noble Eight Fold Path is the best path
Wisdom gained eradicates all doubts*

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