
Towards an Inner Peace

by

Venerable Uda Eriyagama Dhammajīva Thero

Sabbadānam dhammadānam jināti.
The gift of Dhamma surpasses all other gifts.

For free distribution.

Copyright © The Sangha, Mitirigala

Mitirigala Nissarana Vanaya, 11742, Sri Lanka.

All commercial rights reserved. Any reproduction, in whole or part, in any form, for sale, profit or material gain is prohibited. Permission to print for free distribution as a gift of Dhamma may be sought from the above address.

This edition published and distributed by Vipassanā Fellowship Ltd with the permission of Ven. Dhammajīva. (version 1.1, corrected June 2009)

www.vipassana.com

Contents & Foreword

Translator's Introduction
About Venerable Uda Eriyagama Dhammajīva

- Chapter 1 Introduction
Establishing the four foundations of mindfulness in practice
Brief instructions for Ānāpānasati meditation
Observing the breath
The qualities of a Samatha yogi and Vipassanā yogi
Observing the Citta
Sensory consciousness
Developing a consciousness unrelated to the senses
- Chapter 2 Impermanence (Aniccānupassanā)
Seeing impermanence in the five aggregates
The characteristics and attributes of impermanence
Observing impermanence during meditation
- Chapter 3 Disillusionment (Virāgānupassanā)
Confronting disillusionment and suffering in meditation
Understanding the truth of suffering
- Chapter 4 Cessation (Nirodhānupassanā)
Non-Self (Anattānupassanā)
- Chapter 5 Abandoning defilements to experience liberation
(Patinissaggānupassanā)

Acknowledgement

The translator is indebted to Mr Kenneth Morris and Ms Barbara Janus of the Saddhamma Foundation, USA, for their suggestions, corrections, inspiration and criticism in reviewing a draft of the original print edition of this book.

Translator's Introduction

Towards an Inner Peace contains translated discourses given by Venerable Dhammajīva on the Ānāpānasati sutta to a group of Melbourne based disciples. The talks were given in the Sinhalese language.

In Towards an Inner Peace, Venerable Dhammajīva instructs yogis to progress their practice by developing continuous mindfulness and deep concentration. He takes yogis through a journey, which progressively leads to the development of vipassanā insights. His discourses provide a glimpse of the path ahead and the challenges to be faced by yogis dedicated to an attainment of final liberation. His step by step instructions provide an invaluable theoretical basis to confront and embrace the challenges along the path and to finally attain a state of path and fruition consciousness.

Throughout the teachings, the master draws on his personal experience and dexterity as a teacher to offer direct instructions to help yogis to avoid the obstacles which so often hinder the practice. Although the Ānāpānasati sutta discusses the four foundations of mindfulness from various perspectives, Venerable Dhammajīva selectively extrapolated the most relevant sections that impart the necessary theoretical foundation for yogis to attain at least the first stage of enlightenment.

Pāli terms appear throughout the text and are included to give a precision of meaning that is not available in English and is only possible in the Buddha's teachings. Pāli terms which are familiar enough to the reader already versed in Buddhist terminology remain in their original form.

(Melbourne, April 2008)

Venerable Uda Eriyagama Dhammajīva

Venerable Uda Eriyagama Dhammajīva has practised as a meditation master for over eleven years and is presently the meditation teacher and Deputy Abbot of the Meetirigala Nissarana Vanaya, a monastery in the strict forest tradition in Sri Lanka. It is one of Sri Lanka's most respected meditation monasteries. It was founded in 1968 and was led under the guidance of the great Venerable Matara Sri Gnānārama Mahāthera.

Venerable Uda Eriyagama Dhammajīva also spent several years of training under Ovadaçāriya Sayadaw U. Panditābhivamsa, a leading Burmese meditation master who follows the lineage of the great Venerable Mahāsi Sayadaw.

Venerable Uda Eriyagama Dhammajīva is fluent in Sinhalese, English and Burmese and has translated many meditation guide books from Burmese to English and to Sinhalese. He is also the author of numerous books in both English and Sinhalese languages.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa
(Homage to the worthy one, the blessed one, fully enlightened one)
Ānāpānasati bikkhave bhāvithā bahulikathā mahappal ānihonti mahānisansā
Ānāpānasati bikkhave bhāvithā bahulikathā cattāro satipatthanā pari poorethi

The Ānāpānasati sutta contains sixteen stages on the in-breath and a further sixteen stages on the out-breath. It is divided according to the four foundations of mindfulness set out in the Satipaṭṭhāna sutta: contemplation of the body (kāyānupassanā); contemplation of feelings (vedanānupassanā); contemplation of the mind and mental formations (cittānupassanā); contemplation of the Dhamma (dhammānupassanā).

Although the Ānāpānasati sutta (MN Sutta No. 118) is linked to the Satipaṭṭhāna sutta (MN Sutta No. 10), the Girimānanda sutta (AN Book of Ten) and the Ānāpānasati samyutta, it is much more descriptive and detailed in its discussion of the unfolding of vipassanā insights in practice. By practising Ānāpānasati meditation, a yogi progressively develops the four foundations of mindfulness and the seven factors of enlightenment (satta bojjhanga). Thus, of all the kammathāna methods, the Buddha has recommended the practice of ānāpānasati meditation because its results for an attainment of path and fruition consciousness are far reaching.

Establishing the four foundations of mindfulness in practice

A contemplation of the four foundations of mindfulness during a session of sitting meditation could be illustrated through the following example. Generally, after a period of sitting meditation, it is natural for bodily pains to arise. This causes mental suffering. Simultaneously, your effort lessens and it becomes difficult to continue meditation amidst the pain. Yet, in spite of our displeasure at the pain, it continues to grow in intensity with each passing moment. The pain that we experience in our lives is also the same. During a session of sitting meditation however, we are able to spread mindfulness upon the pain and experience it knowingly. With continuous mindfulness, we learn to endure pain and continue with our meditation practice.

When we build endurance towards the pain, we can more precisely observe the

beginning, the middle and the end of pain. In this way, we undertake a qualitative analysis of the pain and its sensations as they arise and pass away in our body. For a diligent yogi analysing bodily pleasure and displeasures, a realization can suddenly occur that mentality is separate from physicality. In fact, one sees how the mind was previously caught in identifying bodily sensations as good and bad. This contemplation marks a yogi's progression from a contemplation of the body (kayānupassanā) towards contemplating feelings (vedanānupassanā) and to mental formations (cittānupassanā). We now see how our mind is the forerunner of all our experiences, both good and bad. As we establish strong mindfulness upon the pain during meditation, we also develop the strength to continue with our practice.

Brief instructions on ānāpānasati meditation

The Buddha has suggested that either a forest place (āraṇyagatovā), under a tree (rukhamulagatovā) or any other secluded place (sunyāgāragatovā) is best for meditation. Being in an environment with minimum external distractions helps to keep the mind on the primary object.

During sitting meditation, the yogi must try to sit in the full lotus posture. Alternatively, you can go for the half (sukhāsana) or quarter (virāsana) lotus posture. Nissīdati pallaṅkam means being seated in a cross-legged position. Those who find it difficult to sit in a cross-legged manner may sit in another suitable position.

As you sit in a suitable environment with your upper body erect, you will have the appropriate alignment necessary to establish mindfulness on the object in front of you.

Focus and scan through the whole body to ensure that you are seated comfortably. Simply be with the totality of the body. Do not analyse it. Come to the present moment - here and now. Gradually, the processes of the body and the mind will calm down and the breathing will become prominent.

Breathe naturally, not forcing your breath to ascertain a prominent point of the breath. When breathing continues in its consistency, it is natural.

Observing the breath

Mindfully, you must notice the in-breath and the out-breath as they occur (so

satovā assa sati, satovā passasati). The air draught will touch many places as the breath moves in and out. Note the in-breath as "in" and the out-breath as "out". Noting does not mean verbalising, but simply aligning the mind with the in-breath and the out-breath. Discriminately experience the difference between the two phases.

Although the breathing process stimulates many points, you must discern the most prominent point and focus on it. Once you isolate the most prominent touching point, your focus will gradually converge into a little area of the body - the tip of the nose or the top of the lip.

Two alignments must be established during ānāpānasati meditation. Firstly, you must observe the discriminative experience of the in-breath and out-breath. Secondly, as this happens, you must locate the most prominent point at which stimulation occurs as the breath moves in and out. Sharpen your aim and make sure that the mind is attentive to the entirety of each process. Be aware of the sensations from the very beginning and follow the in-breath and the out-breath, from the beginning, through to the middle and the end. The attention must be continuous. You must have a precise aim to directly meet the experience and the sensations of the air draught.

With continuous mindfulness, you will observe the length of the breath. For example, the in-breath may appear longer than the out-breath or vice versa. When the in-breath and the out-breath are long, you observe them as such. Similarly, when the in-breath and the out-breath are short, you observe them as such. You must experience the touch and the rubbing sensation of the two phases - the in-breath and the out-breath separately.

When the noting mind calms down, the air draught becomes shorter. Gradually, the discrimination between the in-breath and the out-breath will become less apparent. The in-breath and the out-breath will feel similar and there will be less distance between the breath and the noting mind. The phase between the in-breath and the out-breath will become less noticeable. Gradually, the breath becomes inconspicuous, when the touch sensation of the breath disappears.

At this stage, you are instructed to see the breath as the body (sabbakāya). Your attention must be sharpened and you must observe the entirety of each process. Be aware of the very beginning of the in-breath and maintain a steady attention through the middle and the end. Then be aware of the out-breath from the beginning, through the middle, to the end. Such a detailed observation is necessary when the breath becomes subtle. The yogi must catch the breath immediately as it

manifests and see its entire process. You will observe that the in-breath disappears exactly at the point before the out-breath starts. When you continually observe this process and the gap between the two phases, you know that your mind is fully aligned with the breath. When you observe the breath in its totality, you are engrossed in it and you will gradually observe that the beginning, the middle and the end of the in-breath and the out-breath are similar.

The importance of discussing this progression during ānāpānasati meditation with an experienced teacher cannot be stressed. It will be a new experience for the yogi and all mistakes must be recorded and reported to a teacher, who can instruct the yogi to skilfully proceed along the path. Once mistakes are reported and rectified, and instructions for overcoming negative personality traits are received, the yogi will gain the confidence to skilfully and independently progress with the practice.

The qualities of a samatha yogi and a vipassanā yogi

A yogi who is inclined towards concentration meditation (samatha bhāvanā) will enter deep concentration during meditation and sit still for a long time without the slightest inclination to move the body. A samatha yogi can remain in a state of 'one-pointedness' and durable concentration. A vipassanā yogi (a yogi who is inclined towards insight), will experience momentary concentration (kanikā samādhi) and observe the beginning, the middle and the end of the breath as well as the bodily pains that arise. A vipassanā yogi is able to discern and note all phenomena as soon as they arise. With vipassanā samādhi, each object is noted with momentary concentration. Thus, it is a dynamic form of concentration. Correspondingly, the mindfulness that is spread on the object and the resulting observation are both also dynamic.

During meditation, a yogi progresses from an observation of the gross aspects of the mind and body to the more subtle aspects. This is the nature of Dhamma and how it unfolds.

Samatha samādhi is a tranquil form of concentration. With such concentration, a yogi can aim with clarity at an identified target with precision and spread continuous mindfulness upon the object of meditation. In practice, a yogi must first have moral restraint. Then, by developing concentration restraint, a yogi eradicates the five hindrances (nīvarana): sensual desire (kamāccanda); anger (vyāpadā); doubt (vicikicchā); sloth (tīna) and torpor (middha), restlessness (uddhacca) and worry (kukkucca). When the hindrances are gradually teased out, a yogi can focus on the object more clearly. A cleansed mind gives rise to deeper concentration,

which lends towards absorption (jhāna). A yogi will experience vitakka and vicāra at the first jhānic stage. In the second jhānic stage, a yogi experiences rapture, joy and one-pointedness. During the third jhānic stage, which is characterised by joy and one-pointedness, a yogi will experience a state of mind characterised by equanimity. The equanimity and one-pointedness will continue through to the fourth jhānic stage. The equanimity that is developed must also be observed in its gross and subtle form. It is as if you are peeling an onion; layer by layer, all the gross surfaces are peeled off through the sharpness of mindfulness. In the end, you are left with a thin layer of onion. The subtlety experienced by a yogi inclined towards concentration meditation at the fourth jhānic stage is similar to the thin layer of onion that is left behind.

A vipassanā yogi will observe the in-breath and the out-breath clearly and continuously. When vipassanā concentration or momentary concentration unfolds, a yogi will aim at a target that constantly moves. This requires skill and well-aimed concentration. With each changing emotion, whether it is lust or hatred, a vipassanā yogi notes and observes the object as soon as it arises. Skilfully, a vipassanā yogi observes the gap between the in and out breaths clearly. A vipassanā yogi can observe the many thoughts that comprise a chain of thoughts within each moment. With strong and magnetic mindfulness, a vipassanā yogi can progress along a continuum of instant or momentary concentration. It is not a state of mind that a yogi develops, but one that arises due to continuous mindfulness. Instant concentration is dynamic and as it gathers momentum, it continues at great speed. Gradually, as wisdom unfolds, hindrances will be cut-off as they cannot exist in this state of concentration.

Observing the Citta

Citta is our consciousness (viññāṇa). Our consciousness enables us to discern mental and physical processes and separate them. In our daily lives, when we are performing multi-tasks, it is difficult to observe the operation of our consciousness. So, we must become mindful and develop concentration to gradually progress towards a contemplation of the mental aspects during meditation.

When we enter a deep concentration, we observe the discerning ability of our mind - the operation of our consciousness. We also observe how the eye-consciousness operates; and how we give it up to focus on a sound which enters through our ear-consciousness. We observe how the state of our minds determine the perceptions we attribute towards external and internal objects and how our mind is the forerunner of all our deeds.

Sensory consciousness

In our lives, we experience consciousness related to the senses; the eye-consciousness (*chakku viññāṇa*); ear-consciousness (*sota viññāṇa*) and so forth. During meditation, we mindfully observe the sense impingements that cross our consciousness. We have six faculties, but only one consciousness. Each faculty competes for the attention of our consciousness. Mindfully we must observe how our mind moves to the different faculties and sense impressions.

As our focus shifts from the eye to the ear, priority will be given to the hearing that is occurring in the ear consciousness and the eye consciousness will be shut out. Without continuous mindfulness however, we will not observe how the focus shifted from the eye to the ear. With one stream of consciousness and six sense faculties, we experience only one-sixth of the phenomena presented to us in each moment.

Generally, it is impossible for the mind to observe the mind. With galvanized mindfulness however, a yogi can observe the mind and its projections. Thus, mindfulness becomes a mirror upon which mental processes are projected. When your mind is still and focussed, you can observe the operation of consciousness. To do this, you need to focus your consciousness on one object. This is the purpose of meditation. When we pause with mindfulness and enter a deep concentration, we can observe the operation of sensory consciousness, the operation of the mind and mental projections and how consciousness gives rise to all mental projections, thoughts, feelings and intentions. Because consciousness is the origin or cause of all mental formations and projections; to observe it, we need deep concentration and a state of mind that is characterised by equanimity (*upekkhā*) or indifference to phenomena.

Developing a consciousness unrelated to the senses

When the breath becomes finer and the mind settles, we arrive at a consciousness unrelated to the which appears unrelated to the five physical senses. The mind is no longer running after sense impingements. This state of mind cannot discern good and bad or react to pleasure and disappointment. It is a state of mind that stays in the middle. You begin to understand ignorance, which gives way to the arising of wisdom. Although most yogis are able to reach this stage in their practice, very few are able to remain in such a state of mind with ease and patience

and maintain the concentration that has been developed. At this stage, we observe a preliminary or primordial form of consciousness - one that cannot be experienced through the five physical senses such as the eye, ear, nose (etc.). In Pāli, this consciousness is called *anindriya patibatta viññāna*, a state of mind in which the impingements from the five physical senses become inactive. So there is no impingement-contact such as eye-contact or ear-contact, and so on. It is only when this preliminary consciousness connects to the five physical senses that we perceive and experience sense impingements. Just like a turtle that tucks its limbs under its shell for security, the Buddha recommends yogis to withdraw from the senses.

Buddhist scriptures (SN Māra Samyutta - Kassaka sutta) recollect a story during the time of the Buddha to emphasize the benefits of this subtle stage of practice during meditation. Once, the Buddha was seated with a group of yogis, who had progressively developed their mind to a state of one-pointedness free from the hindrances. The māra saw this. Fearing that the yogis had escaped from his control, he decided to interrupt their meditation. He disguised himself as a farmer. Making a lot of noise, with his feet full of soil, he walked towards the Buddha and asked, "Maybe you have seen my oxen, Venerable sir?" Recognising that it was the māra, attempting to disrupt the meditation of the yogis assembled in his presence, the Buddha, very curtly demanded: "What oxen are you referring to māra? What matter concerns you about oxen?" The māra was embarrassed that the Buddha had recognised him. Nevertheless, he boldly demanded "If your eye, the visual objects you see and the resulting eye-consciousness are mine; your ear, what you hear and the ear-consciousness are mine (thus, referring to the senses and sensory-consciousness), then how can you escape from my control over you?" To this the Buddha responded: "Although I agree with you that the eye belongs to you and the objects seen by the eye also belong to you, if a yogi, during meditation enters a state of consciousness devoid of the eye, the form and eye-consciousness or one which appears unrelated to the five physical senses, that yogi escapes from your control. That person is no longer visible to you māra."

During meditation, when the breath becomes subtle and disappears from a yogi's consciousness, a yogi arrives at a state of mind that is unrelated to the five physical senses, a state of mind which is out of the māra's reach. When a yogi reaches this stage during meditation, sensory consciousness does not operate and the māra is unable to influence our existence. But the moment we claim something as "ours" and cling to an object with sensory-consciousness, we fall victim to the māra. If we reach a state of consciousness, apparently unrelated to the senses, we are no longer visible to the māra. Therefore, in our practice, we must stay in this state of consciousness for as long as possible, for hours on end if possible. Time and again, a

yogi must progress towards this stage in practice.

When we reach this stage in practice, we progress along a continuum of uninterrupted mindfulness. A consciousness devoid of sense impingements is like a screen upon which all our projections can be manifested. When the sense impingements are absent, we return to a primordial form of existence. It is only if we reach this stage of consciousness and persist with continuous mindfulness in our practice that we are able to contemplate on the mind and its operations to finally, reach a stage of equanimity from which we directly observe the operation of our consciousness.

Chapter 2 - Impermanence (Aniccānupassanā)

Aniccānupassi assasissāmiti sikkhati
Aniccānupassi passasissāmiti sikkhati

Impermanence is discussed in many religions. Yet, the notion that an understanding of impermanence leads to a realisation of the absence of a self is unique to Buddhism. This is a subtle understanding, gained through well developed meditative practice. Impermanence is the first characteristic of the three characteristics of mental and physical processes explained in Buddhism. (The three characteristics are: impermanence (anicca), suffering (dukkha) and non-self (anattā). A direct confrontation with the truth of impermanence is vital to an understanding and realisation of the Dhamma and marks an important transition in a yogi's meditative life.

To gain an understanding of impermanence, one must:

1. contemplate impermanence in daily activities;
2. realise the truth of impermanence underpinning all existence; and
3. see the impermanent nature of phenomena during meditation

Seeing impermanence in the five aggregates

By contemplating on impermanence (aniccānupassanā), a yogi gradually destroys the false notion of permanence in our existence. This is an important realisation in a yogi's life, although it is not an observation that can be experienced very easily. When a yogi undertakes dhammānupassanā, a yogi is essentially contemplating the impermanent nature of the five khandas: rūpa (matter or corporeality), vedanā (feelings), saññā (perceptions), sankhāra (mental formations) and viññāṇa (consciousness). A yogi must separately contemplate on the five khandas and see their impermanence, suffering and non-self.

Society is built upon the projections of each and every individual. We construct our lives according to our perceptions. Yet, not a single one of our projects in life achieves complete fruition. In spite of this, an essence of our mental constructions linger on to give us a sense of familiarity and permanence. Yet, in the end, we have

death. When we undergo death, there is nothing. None of our projections, memories or feelings matter. Every mathematical equation, when multiplied by zero gives the result "zero". The effect of death is the same. All our creations in life are nullified when multiplied by death. But, to gain an understanding of death, we must contemplate on the five khandas and see their impermanent nature during our lives.

Contemplating the impermanence of consciousness is a rare opportunity and a very disenchanting experience. Only an advanced yogi is able to see the impermanence of viññāṇa. Our mental proliferations and projections (sankhāra) are difficult to catch as our intentions change all the time. Intentions are the forerunners of all our actions. The manner in which we face each and every situation in life depends on our intentions. All our preferences and ideological predilections are constructed according to them and we undertake numerous tasks because intentions drive us to see to their completion with the synthetic concept of "I". The diversity in this world can also be attributed to our intentions. Yet, our intentions are subject to change. Our mental projections are therefore impermanent.

Similarly, our memories and perceptions (saññā) change from one moment to the next. We live through our memories and what we perceive. It is only when we see the impermanence of perceptions that we question our opinions.

The most gross form of contemplation of the four mental khandas is the contemplation of feelings. Generally, we react towards pleasant and unpleasant feelings. Yet, for much of our lives, we experience indifferent feelings. According to the Buddha, all feelings cause suffering. Pleasant feelings change and give rise to unpleasant feelings. Unpleasant feelings are not pleasant to endure. Indifferent feelings change from one moment to the next.

During meditation, the impermanent nature of the five khandas must be observed. This is referred to as aniccānupassanā. Mindfully, we observe the intricate details of each manifestation during meditation. We must focus our attention internally and contemplate on our projections and see the changes within us in each passing moment. We must see the individual and intricate aspects of the in-breath and the out-breath clearly and separately. When we meditate like this, we see the changing nature of all aspects of phenomena. We see a collection of energies and movements. When we see impermanence in all phenomena during meditation and progress towards aniccānupassanā, we undergo a life changing experience in our lives as yogis.

During meditation, we separate the body into component parts and observe their

individual characteristics. We first undertake breath meditation. So we start with an aspect of corporeality (rūpa). We observe the in-breath and the out-breath separately. By taking the vāyo dhātu as the primary object, we commence our meditation. We note the most prominent point of touch of the in-breath and out-breath. We observe the nature of the breath closely and take our mind away from external distractions. Gradually, the breath becomes subtle. You see the totality of the in-breath and the out-breath - the beginning, the middle and end of the in-breath and the same with the out-breath. A yogi can differentiate the beginning from the middle and the middle from the end of each in-breath and out-breath. As you continue with this observation, you will see the component parts of the in-breath and the out-breath. Thus, the impermanent aspects of the in-breath and the out-breath will be revealed.

We must observe the four elements within each breath: āpo dhātu (liquidity), thejo dhātu (temperature) paṭhavi dhātu (solidity) and vāyo dhātu (movement and motion). We see the nature of matter by seeing the attributes of the four elements. When the more subtle aspects of the breath unfold, we see its impermanence. Within each element, there are two opposite characteristics that manifest separately and alternatively from time to time. For example, the water element contains the attributes of liquidity and cohesion; the fire element represents heat and cold; the earth element manifests as heaviness and lightness, coarseness and smoothness, hardness and softness; and the air element has the capacity to bear and to hold as well as representing motion and vibration. Within these manifestations, there are the individual elements and constituent energies which by their true nature arise and pass away. They co-exist, but operate separately. In the in-breath, we see the arising and passing away of the quality of movement, vibration, the heat and coolness, independently and separately, without any tension. They just arise and pass away, to give way to another which in turn will arise and pass away.

Whether we contemplate on the in-breath and the out-breath or not, the world is changing. When we watch a movie, we are not aware that each new episode is separate when it is projected on the screen. There are many images that make up a movie and in between each projection there is darkness. Although we see the movie as a whole when we watch it, in reality it is just a series of separate images. Similarly, our existence is characterised by change and impermanence. Our perception of permanence and of a self is also the same. Although we have a perception of an entity, a being or a self, in reality, that entity consists of numerous impermanent parts.

The characteristics and attributes of impermanence

A yogi must contemplate and observe the attributes of impermanence. Seeing the arising and passing away of an object is to see the attributes of impermanence within it. A yogi must see the beginning of phenomena, its changing and fading nature and how it passes away.

All human beings experience birth, middle age, old age and death. Although the attribute of dissolution is present at the time of our birth, we don't see it until we reach middle age. When we are close to death however, we can experience the dissolution of our bodies and faculties. At this stage, we observe impermanence in all phenomena, including thoughts, pain, discomfort and material components. We begin to observe our fading nature. We observe the dissolution of everything around us. Thus, our experience at death is rather confronting because we leave all our possessions and realise that our possessions are separate from us.

Habitually, we operate through a prism of permanence. We always identify ourselves within a collective framework. We believe that we are part of a nation, a family, a society and so forth. When we collectively see something or identify ourselves with it, we only see permanence and fail to see the arising and passing away of the individual aspects of phenomena, be it society, a nation, family etc. However, if we separate the composition by focusing on its individual aspects, we see its true nature as something which just arises and passes away. As long as we see something collectively as an entity, the truth of impermanence is glossed over by a sense of permanence.

The Buddha instructs us to break this entity into component parts. During insight meditation, with each passing moment, we break all objects into constituent parts. For example, we observe the in-breath and out-breath during meditation separately. We note how the in-breath is different from the out-breath. We see the in-breath as long and the out-breath being short. We are then instructed to observe the whole of the in-breath, in terms of the beginning, the middle and the end with continuous mindfulness. Then we begin to see the changes within each in-breath and out-breath.

A person who operates with a sense of permanence will be struck with fear when all components are broken into pieces during meditation. The tension between our perception of permanence and the impermanence that we observe under our very nose through meditation is something that we have to reconcile during our practice. When we vividly see the intricate aspects of phenomena, their arising and

passing away and break each object into component parts, we see impermanence in detail.

We must also observe change within all phenomena. Although our experiences are continually changing, we assume that there is some synchronicity underlying them. Thus, we see continuity in our experience. We must see the changing nature of all phenomena, independently and individually within each passing moment (*viparinānupassanā*). A yogi who sees the changing and transient nature of phenomena will not discern one object to be better than the other. A realisation that all phenomena is real only for a fleeting moment will dawn when we see phenomena changing from one moment to the next in an incessant manner.

Our lives are driven by praise, fame and achievement. This is because we believe in a self and operate through a sense of permanence. But, when we see the attributes of impermanence in all phenomena, we retreat from this pursuit to achieve and succeed in life. We distance ourselves from those who run after sensual pleasures. We begin to see the limits in our aspirations, investments and pursuits towards material success. The more we possess, the more we become responsible for the disappointments that follow when our possessions disintegrate and separate from us, confirming their true nature and character of impermanence. When we yearn to acquire material pleasures or objects, which by their true nature are impermanent, we fall victim to grief and sorrow. A life consisted of basic necessities can therefore leave us with less room for disappointment.

A stream entrant (a *sotāpanna*), is an heir to all material pleasures and fortunes in this world. Yet, a *sotāpanna* will not partake in material pleasures and will rise above it through an understanding of the impermanence of conditional phenomena. Consumerist and materialistic distractions, although available to a *sotāpanna* will not be claimed under a false premise of materialistic enrichment. A simple life of basic necessities will enable such a person to live with a free mind.

Observing impermanence during meditation

If we perfect our morality, develop mindfulness and concentration, we are able to see the timeless truth of the Buddha's teachings in our lives as yogis. To their eternal credit, the arahants of this world have documented this truth in discourses. The Dhamma is available. It is immediate. As disciples of the Buddha, we must undertake this important task, see the truth of impermanence, suffering and non-self. When we practice with a clear resolve, we are able to see the impermanence in all phenomena, a truth that is common to all existence in this world. We see the

flux within each entity, and the separate and independent existence of energies that continually arise and pass away. We see this truth during ānāpānasati meditation by sharpening our focus and developing deep concentration. We see the impermanence within (apparent) permanence with sharpened insight.

If something continually dissolves, it portrays impermanence. A candle that is alight gives effect to a burning flame only if it continually melts and dissolves. If the candle doesn't melt, then the flame will die out. Impermanence (and dissolution) occurs in one direction. This is the nature of all phenomena of this world. All conditional phenomena, continuously arise and fade away. The utensils we use, the cars we drive, the energies we experience, they all dissolve and fade away. The fading nature of phenomena is something that can be seen during meditation practice.

To observe the fading away of phenomena in meditation, a yogi must have continuous mindfulness and sit continuously for two to three hours at a time. When our precision is accurate and our mindfulness is continuous, we see impermanence in all objects from the moment they arise. Establishing continuous mindfulness towards an object is like viewing an object with a magnifying glass. We begin to see the intricacies of all phenomena when our mindfulness is galvanised with clear comprehension and we develop wisdom to see things as they really are. Take a piece of string for example. It constitutes many individual strands that are held together, which gives the perception of a strong piece of string. Yet, if we pull the string apart, a strand at a time, we see the many individual strings that bring it together. Similarly, a line of ants moving along a straight line could appear like a rod or a long object from afar. Yet, our perception would undoubtedly change when we move closer and realise that the rod was really a line of individual ants.

Where there is continuity, a perception of an entity is created. We don't see its individual aspects. If a yogi does not dissect the individual components of phenomena, it is difficult to see impermanence. A yogi must proceed along a purified state of consciousness (a consciousness unrelated to the senses) for a long period of time to see the flux of impermanence within phenomena. In practice, a yogi will not directly experience the truth of impermanence during the first or second vipassanā insight. The first stage of insight knowledge is nāma-rūpa pariccheda ñāṇa, the knowledge discerning between mental (nāma) and physical (rūpa) phenomena. The second is paccaya pariggaha ñāṇa - the knowledge of causality or knowledge of the law of cause and effect. During these stages, a yogi is still finessing the foundation to experience deeper insights. It is only at the stage of sammāssana ñāṇa that a yogi is really able to gain insight knowledge. Sammāssana ñāṇa can be translated as the knowledge of comprehension of the three

characteristics of mental and physical processes: impermanence, suffering and non-self. At this stage of insight knowledge, all intricacies of phenomena are revealed in a gross manner. A yogi then proceeds towards an understanding of the arising and passing away of mental and physical phenomena.

The fourth insight knowledge gained in practice is *udayabbaya ñāṇa* - the knowledge of arising and passing away of mental and physical phenomena. The mind begins to clearly see the momentary arising and passing away of objects; that is, the very rapid beginning and ending of mental and physical phenomena.

Seeing impermanence during meditation however, can result in uneasiness. It is common for yogis to feel as if they are about to vomit or feel a churning sensation in the stomach, when confronting impermanence or progressing towards its contemplation during meditation. Simultaneously, it is natural to experience a sense of fear when a yogi sees everything arising and passing away within each instant. Of course, a yogi who practices with a clear determination to see an end to *samsāra* and reach the goal of *nibbāna* will be instilled with a great sense of joy when faced with the truth of impermanence. Yet, seeing the transience of everything that was once perceived to be permanent is also accompanied by a deep sense of sorrow. It is not uncommon for yogis to cry when they gain a true understanding of the impermanent nature of phenomena. This is a very fearful experience, as the very essence of our existence, our aspirations and experiences based on a perception of a self is challenged when all objects are broken apart right before our very own eyes.

Observing impermanence in the perpetual vanishing of objects and consciousness removes the wrong view of permanence. By observing the breaking up of objects, a yogi understands the unsatisfactory nature of impermanence. This is followed by a realisation that there is no refuge within objects and that impermanence is frightful. The false view that lasting satisfaction could be attained within impermanence is removed. The illusion of an enduring self that could control the passing away of phenomena is also removed along with the false perception that an inherent essence is present in oneself, mind or matter. Thus, a yogi understands the universality of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and the absence of a self. At no time could any object have existed without the hallmarks of conditionality. A right view dawns when all objects and expressions are viewed through the triple aspects of impermanence, suffering and non-self.

A direct observation of impermanence in all phenomena is an important transition in a yogi's life. As yogis, we begin to realise that our opinions change and that all objects upon which we base our opinions also change. So we pause before

formulating opinions and forming lasting perceptions. By seeing the impermanence in all phenomena, we understand suffering, and that all pleasurable, unpleasant and indifferent feelings are subject to change. We realise the suffering of our existence and all that is around us. Yet, by understanding suffering completely, we experience lasting happiness.

Chapter 3 - Disillusionment (Virāgānupassanā)

Virāgānupassi assasissamīti sikkhati
Virāgānupassi passasissamīti sikkhati

Virāga is the antidote to lust (rāga). When a yogi begins to observe impermanence during meditation, a yogi naturally sees the unsatisfactory nature of all conditional phenomena. Disillusionment is an aspect of the universal truth of suffering, which is one of the three characteristics of the physical and mental processes preached by the Buddha. When a yogi observes the unsatisfactory nature of all phenomena in this world, a yogi's attachment or lust towards the world is substantially tempered. What were once personal preferences break up and fall apart before a yogi's very eyes. What was once material enrichment suddenly becomes a burden - a poison!

At first, this feeling of disenchantment towards the conditioned world could be very frightening. It is imperative that a yogi discusses the disillusionment encountered in practice with an experienced meditation master. Otherwise, the feeling of disillusionment could inhibit a yogi's meditation progress, especially when a yogi begins to experience a sense of disenchantment towards what was once precious and real. It is also useful to listen to Dhamma concerning this stage of development prior to experiencing it in practice.

For aeons, we have travelled through samsāra, grasping and attaching to conditional phenomena. We have developed lust towards many objects. For incalculable existences, we have lived with a deep-seated ignorance towards the true nature of all impermanent phenomena in this world. So, habitually, our minds tend towards praise, fame and material enrichment. Thus, when we see the impermanence and breaking up of phenomena during meditation and experience disillusionment at the unsatisfactory nature of the conditioned world, we undergo a revolutionary transition in our lives as yogis and human beings.

Confronting disillusionment and suffering in meditation practice

A yogi's progression in this sāsana marks a gradual movement away from a wrong view, which gives rise to attachment and lust to an endowment of correct view, characterized by a sense of disillusionment about the conditioned existence in this world. Moving against the inertia is thus a very frightening and disenchanting

experience.

Shapes, colours, form or corporeality are what mostly captures and encourages our attachment towards phenomena. We are blind to the true attributes of the objects we see through our eyes. The perceptions developed through eye consciousness are what activate our minds. It is because of our attachment towards corporeality (rūpa), that we have the operation of mental aspects (nāma). Thus, the Buddha instructs yogis to start meditation on corporeality and gradually move towards an understanding of the more subtle mental aspects, although we experience the reverse when the first vipassanā insight unfolds. During the first stage of vipassanā insight, we observe the mental aspects which precede or control matter.

Although ānāpānasati meditation can be pleasant when it is commenced, proceeding along momentary concentration and developing vipassanā insights to confront the true nature of phenomena can result in increased unpleasantness and disillusionment during meditation practice. Nevertheless, a yogi must patiently endure these experiences with a clear resolve to see and experience the truth of Dhamma.

When we see all matter breaking apart during meditation, our magnetic attraction towards them is significantly lessened. This is replaced by a feeling of disillusionment, characterized by exhaustion, anger, irritation and fear. This is particularly the case when a yogi observes the arising and passing away of phenomena during the third stage of vipassanā insight -sammāssana ñāṇa. During the fourth stage of vipassanā insight (udabbaya ñāṇa), we see the rapid arising and passing away of phenomena. Thus the disenchantment we experience is particularly strong. Following this stage, a yogi is instilled with nibbidhā ñāṇa (the knowledge gained through contemplating dispassion). Once a yogi attains nibbidhā ñāṇa, a yogi's perception towards the world is one characterized by an even deeper sense of disenchantment. Nevertheless, the endowment of right view results in a great sense of joy and a yogi progresses towards the first stage of enlightenment to become a sotāpanna (a stream entrant). The joy experienced by a yogi at this stage is not a normal human experience. It is an unalloyed and inalienable experience, which instils a yogi with a sense of victory, having finally progressed towards an invaluable goal.

Understanding the truth of suffering

A complete understanding of suffering brings it to an end. Thus, yogis who experience disillusionment and see the unsatisfactory nature of phenomena during

meditation, naturally tend their minds towards its cessation. To experience the bliss of nibbāna, the cessation of suffering, a yogi must first confront disillusionment.

In the Dhammacakkapavattahana Sutta (SN Sacca Samyutta), the Buddha explained that birth, illness, old age, death, association with those you dislike, the disassociation with those you like, not obtaining what you wish for; and simply your attachment to the five khandas causes great suffering.

Understanding suffering is a truth that gives rise to lasting happiness. We ourselves are responsible for the suffering we endure and also its cessation. Although we try to blame our suffering on external causes or on others, in reality, we are totally responsible for our own suffering. Suffering can be observed at any time. It is an omnipresent truth. We can see and understand it in our contemporaneous lives. As human beings, this is made possible by our ability to discern the cause for the arising of suffering. We import an "I" to everything we see. Thus, we claim what we see as ours. To claim and attach to things which are impermanent results in suffering. We, ourselves are therefore responsible for our suffering. When we understand the truth of suffering through the development of vipassanā insights however, we pause before pursuing materialistic enrichment. In this way, we can reduce the quantity of suffering that we experience in our lives.

Understanding the truth of suffering is an important transition in our lives as yogis. When we see this truth, we lay down the burden of materialistic enrichment and the pursuit of sensual pleasures. We surrender to the limits of our existence and the true nature of phenomena. We also observe the changing nature of suffering (viparināma dukkha). Then we stop creating unnecessary and additional suffering. Suffering is what invokes our faith in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. If not for suffering, we would not seek refuge in the noble triple gem. The suffering caused by the transience of all phenomena in this world drives us to see to its cessation. Confronting suffering and seeing its true nature turns us towards a realization of nibbāna. When we progress along the path towards a realization of the truth by developing vipassanā insights, we see suffering completely and finally. During meditation, we observe the changing nature of suffering that arises and how it is caused due to the impermanent nature of this world.

When suffering is continuously observed during meditation and in our daily lives, we realize that it is a universal truth that is not unique to one person. It is a truth underlying all existence. Once suffering is confronted completely, you become resilient and will not be faced by the disappointments in this world. When you confront the truth of suffering during meditation, you know the world as it is.

It is only a yogi who sees the truth of impermanence during meditation that can understand the truth of suffering. If a yogi sees the breaking up of objects, the fading away and separation of phenomena and their transience, that yogi will understand the truth of suffering. The knowledge of suffering can only be gained if a yogi confronts the fading nature of all phenomena.

When we develop vipassanā insights during meditation, at each transition towards the development of a deeper insight, we experience enormous suffering or pain. This is how the Dhamma unfolds in practice. So the instructions are for yogis to confront the suffering, endure it and to develop the strength to finally and completely see its cessation. By being mindful of all mental and physical suffering, we develop a resistance towards it. As we develop this endurance and understand the truth of suffering completely and finally, we can see its cessation.

Chapter 4 - Cessation (Nirodhānupassanā)

Nirodhānupassi assasissamīti sikkhati
Nirodhānupassi passasissamīti sikkhati

Nirodhānupassanā involves a contemplation of the cessation of phenomena. Having understood the unsatisfactory nature of phenomena during meditation, a yogi contemplates upon the cessation of all conditioned existence. A yogi will arrive at this stage in practice, after seeing the instant arising and passing away of all phenomena. At this stage of meditation, a yogi will observe the gradual fading away of the breath and also see the many breaths that compose an in-breath and an out-breath and the breaking up of the breath into component parts. Thus, the concept of a 'breath entity' is dismantled.

At this stage, the mind only focuses on endings of all phenomena. Awareness perceives nothing, but cessation everywhere it comes to rest. As insight into cessation matures, a neutral feeling, equanimity, begins to predominate a yogi's mind and body. The yogi's mind can rest, whilst observing the cessation of all mental and physical processes. A yogi will see thoughts breaking apart and observe the individual and independent thoughts comprising a chain of thought. Having seen this, a yogi will no longer be concerned when thoughts arise during meditation. Pains will also be seen in this way. Generally, our tendency is to get rid of painful feelings that arise during meditation. But, at this stage of meditation, a yogi sees the changing and fading nature of pain. The changing nature of pain and its individual and separate manifestations can also be vividly observed. A yogi thus observes how there isn't a single enduring pain that could be classified solely as a "pain".

A yogi realizes that the breath, thoughts and pains are all collective compositions. Thus, their strength and force are reduced when their perception as entities is broken down. When a yogi contemplates on cessation, the focus is on the fading or dissolving nature of phenomena. Through this contemplation, a yogi begins to understand that all phenomena are beyond his or her control. This realization is commonly followed by a defeatist attitude, that life is not what it was thought to be and that there is no permanency in this world.

A yogi will realize the cause of suffering and that much of our suffering is self-inflicted and could be attributed to our mental constructions. Due to our preferences, traditions or opinions, we choose various mental states and material

objects. Thus, the suffering that follows is truly self-inflicted. Due to addiction and habit we continue to acquire and enjoy various things in our lives. But, when we question our preferences, having understood the impermanent and unsatisfactory nature of phenomena and their cessation, we realize that our habits are misconceived. Whatever we choose or acquire, by its nature, it is subject to cessation. This understanding enables us to pause and reflect upon our habits and cycles of addiction.

When we see the component parts and the many sub-activities within all phenomena during each passing moment in meditation, we no longer discern things as good and bad; or as black and white. The liberation we gain through a contemplation of cessation is an internal manifestation. When we understand the true nature of our existence and this world, our perception of all phenomena will change. A yogi who undergoes this transition will no longer react to adversities or disappointments in life. When the cessation of phenomena is observed and understood, a yogi progresses towards the first stage of enlightenment.

Non-self (Anattānupassanā)

Once a yogi contemplates nirodha, the cessation of mental and physical aspects, it is possible to understand the absence of an enduring identity - a self. Without an understanding of impermanence however, it is difficult to understand the notion of non-self.

Habitually, we claim our eyes, ears, thoughts, perceptions and feelings as ours. To see the absence of a self or an entity requires deep penetration through vipassanā insights. It is difficult for us to view pains, desires and feelings that arise within us as not being ours. Our memories, consciousness and mental proliferations are the same. We simply claim them as ours. Everything we see gives rise to sensual desire (kāma thanhā); a desire to live (bhava thanhā) or to annihilate (vibhava thanhā). This leads to disappointment. We believe that our bodies are within our control and that we can change their shape and appearance. Yet, at old age we realize that our bodies are beyond our control.

Before observing the absence of a self within ourselves, we must acknowledge and observe how we have taken our perceptions and memories as being ours. This is the aim of meditation. During vipassanā meditation, our bodies become the engine rooms for a realization of non-self. We separate ourselves from the four mental aspects of the khandas and realize the absence of a self in them. With continuous mindfulness on the primary object (whether it is the breath, thoughts or

perceptions), we see the separation between the object and the noting mind and the contact between the two. If we hear a sound, we must observe the contact between the noting mind and the sound, which then becomes the primary object. A yogi must clearly discern the contact between the noting mind (the subject) and the internal or external object. Similarly, to understand the absence of a self in our eyes, ears, nose and tongue, we must separately observe the noting consciousness and its contact with the external object through the six senses. This is what is observed and understood during the first vipassanā insight (nāma rūpa pariccheda ñāṇa). We observe the contact between matter and the mental formations that precede it.

During ānāpānasati meditation, we clearly note the operation between the breath (the object) and the noting mind (the subject). Experiencing the contact and attaching to it without seeing the separation between the object and the subject, leaves us with the perception of a self. Because we import an "I" to the experiences gained through our contact with sense impingements, we perpetuate a false notion of a self. If we simply observe the process between the noting mind and the breath, we understand the operation between mind and matter. Thus, when we reach the second vipassanā insight- paccaya parigahha ñāṇa, we realize how the mind notes because an object exists. Without an object, the mind will not be activated. Thus, we see the causality between mind and matter. Each time we observe mind and matter, we must ascertain the cause for the arising of mental and physical phenomena. We must clearly understand how mental aspects cause the arising of matter. In this way, a yogi realizes that because of nāma (mental aspects), rūpa (matter) can be formed and vice versa. Similarly, rūpa can be caused by rūpa; and nāma can be caused by nāma.

Generally, we see the coarse aspect of the in-breath and the out-breath. But, before the coarse section (the middle of the breath) there is a beginning, which is subtle. The end of the breath is also subtle. Prior to the inhalation of the in-breath, there is the mental aspect - the intention to inhale. With continuous mindfulness, we see the intention to breathe, the beginning of the breath, the coarseness in the middle and the subtle phasing out at the end. In this way, we observe the operation of mental and physical aspects and the contact between them during ānāpānasati meditation.

By understanding that mental and physical aspects operate separately, a yogi realizes the absence of an enduring personality. A yogi will no longer seek refuge in material or mental objects and will realize that they are simply caused by one and the other. In this independent activity of mind and matter, a self is not present. Understanding the causality of mind and matter is essential before progressing

towards the third vipassanā insight - sammāssana ñāṇa, the stage where a yogi sees the instant arising and passing away of physical and mental formations. Without understanding the operation of mind and matter and the causality in their operation, a yogi will not embrace the impermanence revealed during the third vipassanā insight and will reject what is being directly observed. This is because of our deep-seated and ingrained perception of an enduring identity. Similarly, it is essential for yogis to not claim any developments during meditation as theirs, for this would result in a further perpetuation of a self and may become an obstacle in their practice. If a yogi can mindfully observe the mental and physical processes as an interaction of mind and matter and develop a notion of non-self, both during meditation and in daily activities, it would not be difficult to accept the absence of a self in practice.

Chapter 5 - Abandoning defilements to experience liberation (Patinissaggānupassanā)

Patinissaggānupassi assasissamīti sikkhati
Patinissaggānupassi passasissamīti sikkhati

When the truth of Dhamma unfolds through an understanding of non-self, yogis eradicate all defilements (kilesas) that are within their stream of consciousness. At this stage, yogis accept the true nature of all mental and physical processes and give up all attachments. In the Ānāpānasati sutta, this process is referred to as patinissaggānupassanā. This is a process of internal transformation, characterised by an irreversible understanding of the true nature of phenomena as impermanent, unsatisfactory and devoid of a self. It is this perception which marks the difference between an enlightened and an unenlightened being. From the exterior, it is difficult to discern the difference. But, internally, enlightened beings remain neutral in all material and mental transactions, having realised the conditionality of mind and matter.

In all our mental and physical activities, we give up something to gain something else. This is how our mental and physical transactions and processes operate. Imagine you are watching a movie. If we take our attention away from the visual presentation to the music that is introduced into a scene, as our focus shifts from the eye to the ear, priority is given to the hearing that is occurring in the ear-consciousness and the eye-consciousness will be shut out. Thus, we give up the consciousness gained through our eyes by claiming ear-consciousness. We fail to observe this shift because we are not mindful and are immersed in the projections on the screen and the accompanying sounds. At the end of the movie, our perception is that we watched the whole movie collectively throughout the time that we have been seated. However, in reality, what has occurred is simply the giving up and reclaiming of sense impingements among all the six faculties within each passing moment.

During meditation, when our mindfulness is continuous, we experience a consciousness, uninterrupted by the five hindrances. When we are mindful, we do not classify mental and physical formations as good or bad. We simply exert a choiceless awareness. Sounds are observed as sounds; pain is just pain; thoughts are just thoughts. With the sharpness of mindfulness we dispose of our classifications of good and bad, accumulated throughout our samsāric cycles. The transition

during enlightenment is thus an awakening to the truth, a choiceless and direct observation of the world as it is - an observation devoid of good and bad. Thus, we sacrifice our preferences and qualitative assessments to experience the truth that unfolds during meditation.

Within each moment that we observe and note the in-breath and the out-breath, defilements lose their space of operation in our stream of consciousness. Mental formations will no longer affect us at the stage of patinissagānupassanā as they are not perceived through conceit, desire or self indulgence. Thus, when we experience vipassanā insights and observe the three hallmarks of existence during meditation: impermanence, suffering and non-self, we give up our attachments and cleanse our consciousness of defilements to embark upon a chariot to nibbāna.

www.vipassana.com