

Knowing and Seeing

(Fourth Revised Edition)



Talks and Questions&Answers
at a Meditation Retreat in Taiwan

by
the Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw

A G I F T – N O T F O R S A L E

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Questions in Q&A

1: How You Develop Mindfulness-of-Breathing to Absorption

Questions and Answers 1.....

Question 1.1

How do we, in the four stages of an·apana·sati (mindfulness of breathing), decide when to go from one stage to another?

Question 1.2

Is it necessary, in meditation, to have a nimitta?

Question 1.3

Some say that while practising an·apana·sati (mindfulness of breathing) their soul goes out of the body. Is that true, or are they on the wrong path?

Question 1.4

Where does the [an·apana] nimitta come from? What makes it appear?

Question 1.5

What are the seven stages of purification and sixteen vipassana knowledges?

2: How You Develop Absorption on Other Subjects

Questions and Answers 2.....

Question 2.1

- How should beginners balance the faculties (indriya) of concentration and wisdom?
- How should they practise wisdom in an·apana·sati (mindfulness-of-breathing)?

Question 2.2

Why don't we, after attaining the fourth jhana, go straight to discern the five aggregates, their nature of impermanence, suffering, and non-self, and attain Nibbana?

Why do we before attaining Nibbana need to practise meditation on the thirty-two parts of body, skeleton, white kasina, four elements, materiality, mentality, dependent origination, and vipassana?

Question 2.3

- Why, after having discerned materiality and mentality, must one practise the first and fifth methods of dependent origination (paticca-samuppada)?
- What are the first and fifth methods?

3: How You Develop the Sublime Abidings and Protective Meditations

Questions and Answers 3.

Question 3.1

- In an-apanasati (mindfulness-of-breathing), there are the parikamma-nimitta, the uggaha-nimitta, and the patibhaganimitta.
- What is the parikamma-nimitta?
- Is the parikamma-nimitta always grey?
- What is the difference between the parikamma-nimitta and the uggaha-nimitta?

Question 3.2

What is the difference between access concentration and absorption concentration?

Question 3.3

Under what conditions, or in what state, can we say that a meditation experience is access concentration or absorption concentration?

Question 3.4

Is there access concentration, as well as absorption concentration at each of the four jhanas? What are their characteristics?

Question 3.5

Under what conditions does a yogi drop or regress from absorption to access concentration? Under what conditions does a yogi in access concentration attain absorption concentration?

Question 3.6

When a person dies, a kamma-nimitta may arise because of past wholesome or unwholesome kamma. Is this phenomenon similar to that which occurs during meditation, when images of past events, which the yogi had forgotten, appear?

Question 3.7

While meditating, images of events from more than thirty years back, which the yogi had forgotten, appear. Is this due to lack of mindfulness, which lets the mind leave the object?

Question 3.8

If, when dying, a person has strong mindfulness, can he prevent a kamma sign (kamma-nimitta) of previous unwholesome or wholesome kamma from arising?

Question 3.9

Is it necessary when discerning the twelve characteristics in four elements meditation, to start with hardness, roughness, and heaviness in that sequence?

Can one choose to start with any one of the characteristics?

Question 3.10

Practising four-elements meditation enables one to balance the four elements in the body. One may at some time get sick because the four elements are out of balance. When one is sick, can one practise four elements meditation with strong mindfulness to cure the sickness?

Question 3.11

Before we attain the fourth jhana, and eradicate ignorance (avijja), many unwholesome thoughts still arise due to bad habits. For example, in our daily life (outside a meditation retreat) we know that greed or hatred arises.

Can we use foulness meditation (asubha) or loving-kindness meditation (metta-bhavana) to remove them? Or should we ignore them and just concentrate on our meditation subject, and let them disappear automatically?

Question 3.12

How does the bhavanga function in the sensual sphere planes, fine-material sphere planes, immaterial sphere planes and supramundane sphere planes? Would the Sayadaw please explain with examples?

Question 3.13

What is the difference between mundane jhanas (lokiya-jhana) and supramundane jhanas (lokuttara-jhana)?

4: How You Discern Materiality

Questions and Answers 4.

Question 4.1

Is a Bodhisatta, including Arimetteyya Bodhisatta, an ordinary person (puthu-jjana)? If Arimetteyya Bodhisatta is an ordinary person like us, then at the time for him to come down to become Metteyya Buddha, what is the difference between the conditions for him to become a Buddha and for us?

Question 4.2

After finishing the meditation course, can a yogi attain Path (Maggā-Ñāna) and Fruition Knowledges (Phala-Ñāna) and? If not, why not?

Question 4.3

A yogi who has finished the meditation course, but not yet attained the Path Knowledge (Maggā-Ñāna) and Fruition Knowledge (Phala-

·Ñāna), if his concentration drops, will his vipassana knowledge also drop?

Can he be reborn in a woeful state (apaya)?

Question 4.4

Can a yogi who has finished the course, but not yet attained Nibbana, attain the Knowledge Standing on Phenomena (Dhamma-tthiti-·Ñāna)? If so, can it regress?

Question 4.5

Can one attain supramundane states with only access concentration?

Question 4.6

Can one with only momentary concentration (khanika-samadhi), practise mindfulness of feeling (vedan-anupassana sati-patthana) to attain supramundane states?

Question 4.7

The Buddha was a great Arahant. What was the difference between Him, and disciples like the Venerables Sariputta and Mahamoggallana who were also Arahants?

Question 4.8

What is the 'intermediate life' (antara-bhava)?

Question 4.9

Are the methods for an-apanā-sati (mindfulness-of-breathing) and four-elements meditation the same?

Why must we practise four- elements meditation only after an-apanā-sati?

Question 4.10

Could the Sayadaw please explain the light experienced in meditation scientifically?

Question 4.11 Can those who have discerned the thirty-two parts of the body see them in someone else, with their eyes open?

5: How You Discern Mentality

Questions and Answers 5.

Question 5.1

The eight attainments (samapatti) make it possible to attain the Mentality-Materiality Definition Knowledge (Nama-Rupa-Pariccheda-Ñāna), and to see their subtle arising and perishing, so as to become disgusted with them, and attain the Path Knowledge (Magga-Ñāna). Are there, apart from this, other benefits to the eight attainments?

Question 5.2

Which is easiest and quickest for the attainment of Nibbana: using theory to perceive impermanence, suffering, and non-self, or using concentration to discern ultimate phenomena (paramattha-dhamma)?

Question 5.3

The round of rebirths (samsara) is without beginning or end. Beings are also infinite in number, so those who have been our mother are infinite too. How can we develop loving-kindness by contemplating that all beings have been our mother? Can we attain loving-kindness jhana (metta jhana) by contemplating that all beings have been our mother?

Question 5.4

(The following questions are all covered by the same answer.)

- Was there a Bodhisatta during The Buddha's time? If so, did he attain a Path or was he just an ordinary person (puthu-jjana)?
- Why can a Noble One (Ariya) not become a Bodhisatta?
- Can a disciple (savaka) change to become a Bodhisatta? If not, why not?
- When by following the Sayadaw's teaching one is able to attain the
- Path and Fruition Knowledges of Stream-Entry (Sot-Apatti-Magga-Ñāna/Sot-Apatti-Phala-Ñāna), can one

choose to not do so, because of a desire and vow to practise the Bodhisatta path?

Question 5.5

Is it possible to practise the path to liberation (vimutti-magga) and the path of Bodhisatta [path to Buddhahood]³⁴⁴ at the same time? If so, what is the method?

Question 5.6

Is this method [of meditation] for liberation only, or is it also for the Bodhisatta path?

Question 5.7

Do all the good and bad kammās of an Arahant mature prior to his Parinibbāna?

Question 5.8

After His enlightenment, did The Buddha say, 'Originally all beings have the Tathagata's wisdom and other qualities'?

Question 5.9

Is the Arahant's perception of voidness (suññata) in his own five aggregates the same as his perception of voidness in outside inanimate things? Is Nibbāna the same as entering voidness?

6: How You See the Links of Dependent Origination

Questions and Answers 6.

Question 6.1

How should a yogi who practises an-āpāna-sati (mindfulness of breathing), but who cannot see a nimitta, check himself physically and mentally, so that he can improve and enter jhāna? In other words, what are the conditions needed to have a nimitta?

Question 6.2

Does the sitting posture affect the ability for beginners to concentrate,

and enter jhana? There are many yogis who sit on a small stool to meditate; can they enter jhana?

Question 6.3

What is the object of the fourth an·apana jhana? If there is no breath in the fourth jhana, how can there be a nimitta?

Question 6.4

Can one enter an immaterial jhana-attainment (arupa·jhana·samapatti), or practise loving-kindness meditation directly from an·apana·sati (mindfulness-of-breathing)?

Question 6.5

How can one decide when to die, that is, choose the time of one's death?

Question 6.6

If one day we were to die in an accident, for example in an air crash, could our mind at that time 'leave' so that we would not have any bodily pain? How?

Can one, depending on the power of one's meditation, be without fear at that time, and be liberated? What degree of concentration is required?'

Question 6.7

After attaining the Path and Fruition, a Noble One (Ariya) does not regress to become an ordinary person (puthu·jjana), this is a natural fixed law (sammatta niyama). Similarly, one who has received a definite prophecy cannot abandon his Bodhisatta practice. This too is a natural fixed law. But The Buddha declared that everything is impermanent. Are these fixed laws in accordance with the law of impermanence?

Question 6.8

When an ordinary disciple has practised samatha-vipassana up to the Cause-Apprehending Knowledge, the Arise&Perish Knowledge, or the Formations-Equanimity Knowledge, he will not be reborn in any of the four woeful realms. Even if he loses his samatha-vipassana due to negligence, the kamma of having practised samatha-vipassana still

exists. The ‘Sotanugata’ sutta says also that he will attain Nibbana quickly. So, why did the Sayadaw, in the Question & Answer session of June 2nd, say that a Bodhisatta who has received a definite prophecy from a Buddha can (even if he has practised meditation up to the Formations-Equanimity Knowledge) be reborn in a woeful state? In which sutta is this mentioned?

Question 6.9

An Arahant can also give a definite prophecy; what is the definition of definite prophecy here? In which sutta or other source can this information be found?

Question 6.10

Can one practise vipassana while in the base of neither perception nor non-perception attainment (neva·sañña·n·asaññ·ayatana samapatti)? In which sutta or other source can the answer be found?

Question 6.11

Can a person who is mentally abnormal, hears voices, has schizophrenia, a brain disease, stroke or malfunction of the brain and nerves, practise this type of meditation? If he can, what kinds of precaution should he take?

Question 6.12

If a person, who does not have good human relations, succeeds in attaining the fourth jhana, will this improve his skill in communicating with others? Can attaining jhana correct such problems?

7: How You Develop the Vipassana Knowledges to See Nibbana

Questions and Answers 7.....

Question 7.1

What is the difference between perception (sañña) and the perception aggregate (sañña-kkhandha), and between feeling (vedana) and the feeling aggregate (vedana-kkhandha)?

Question 7.2

To which associated mental factors do memory, inference and creativity belong? They are part of the five aggregates, but how do they become suffering (dukkha)?

Question 7.3

Which associated mental factor does 'Taking an object' involve?

Question 7.4

Does work for the Sangha affect one's meditation? Does it depend on the individual, or can one achieve a certain degree of concentration, after which work has no effect?

Question 7.5

- Can a person who develops the jhanas with evil intent benefit from attaining them?
- And how about a person who has, for example, spent the money of a Sangha for his personal use and does not think it is wrong.
- When he attains jhana up to the fourth jhana, does his mind or view change?

Question 7.6

What is the difference between rupa-kalapas and ultimate materiality (paramattha-rupa)?

Question 7.7

When a yogi is able to see rupa-kalapas or ultimate materiality, will his mind (citta) and views (ditthi) change?

Question 7.8

- How does concentration purify consciousness (citta-visuddhi)?
- What kinds of defilement (kilesa) are removed by concentration?

Question 7.9

How does vipassana purify views ((ditthi-visuddhi))? What kinds of defilement (kilesa) are removed by vipassana?

Question 7.10

What is the difference between citta and ditthi?

Question 7.11

How should a yogi practise wise attention (yoniso manasikara) in his daily life, and how in his samatha-vipassana practice?

Question 7.12

What is the difference between attention (manasikara) and practising the seven enlightenment factors (bojjhanga)?

Question 7.13

Could the Sayadaw please explain the diagram? Is it necessary, in this system of meditation, to practise the more than thirty types of meditation subject (kammattana)? What are the benefits in doing so?

Question 7.14

Can a hating mind produce many generations of temperature-born octad-kalapas (utuja oj-atthamaka-kalapa), and make the eyes flash?

Question 7.15

Is the seeing mind that sees mentality-materiality itself included in mentality-materiality? Is it included in wisdom?

Question 7.16

How to overcome the uninterested and bored mind state that occurs during long periods of meditation, or staying alone in the forest?
Is this kind of mind state an unwholesome dhamma?

Question 7.17

Could the Sayadaw please give an example of a wish that is not associated with ignorance (avijja), craving (tanha) and clinging (upadana)?

Question 7.18

If the five aggregates are non-self, then who, Sayadaw, is giving a Dhamma talk? In other words, if the five aggregates are non-self, no Sayadaw is giving a Dhamma talk. So is there a relationship between the five aggregates and the self?

Question 7.19

The Buddha taught the 'Snake Mantra' to bhikkhus.

Is chanting the 'Snake Mantra' the same as loving-kindness?

Is chanting a mantra a Brahmanic tradition brought into Buddhism?

These questions are extracted from the book [Knowing and Seeing by Pa Auk Sayadaw](#). To read the full content of the book, visit:

www.dhammatalks.net

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS 1

Question 1.1 How do we, in the four stages of *ān·āpāna·sati* (mindfulness-of-breathing), decide when to go from one stage to another?

Answer 1.1 The Buddha taught *ān·āpāna·sati* step by step: long breath, short breath, whole breath and subtle breath, only for easy understanding. At the time of actual practice, all four stages may occur at the same time.

Then, if you can concentrate on the whole long breath, and the whole short breath for about one hour, then (as your concentration improves) the breath will automatically become subtle, and you can change to concentrate on the subtle breath. When the subtle breath is long, you should try to know the whole, long, subtle breath; when the subtle breath is short, you should try to know the whole, short, subtle breath.

If the breath does not become subtle by itself, you should concentrate on it (attention (*manāsikāra*)) with the decision that it should be subtle.¹¹⁹ That way it will become subtle, but you must not make the breath subtle on purpose, nor make it long or short on purpose; just decide that it should be tranquil. In this way, long breath, short breath, whole breath and subtle breath, all the four stages, are included in a single stage.

At the early part of the fourth stage, the breath becomes only very subtle. It does not cease entirely. The breath ceases entirely only at the fourth *jhāna*. This is the subtlest stage.

Question 1.2 Is it necessary, in meditation, to have a nimitta?

Answer 1.2 In some meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*) like *ān·āpāna·sati* (mindfulness-of-breathing), *kaṣiṇa* meditation and repulsiveness meditation (*asubha*), a nimitta is necessary. If one wants to attain *jhāna* in other meditation subjects, like Buddha Recollection (*Buddh·Ānussati*), a nimitta is not possible. In loving-kindness meditation (*mettā·bhāvanā*), breaking down the barriers is called the nimitta.¹²⁰

Question 1.3 Some say that while practising *ān·āpāna·sati* (mindfulness-of-breathing) their soul goes out of the body. Is that true, or are they on the wrong path?

Answer 1.3 A concentrated mind can usually create a nimitta. When concentration is deep, strong, and powerful, then because of different perceptions, different nimittas appear. For example, if you want the nimitta to be long, it will be long; if you want it to be short, it will be short; if you want it to be round, it will be round; if you want it to be red, it will be red. So, various perceptions may arise while practising *ān·āpāna·sati*. You may

¹¹⁹ For more details about tranquillizing the breath, see p.35.

¹²⁰ Only a name, for it is in fact not a nimitta.

perceive yourself as outside the body. It is simply a mental creation, not because of a soul. It is not a problem. Just ignore it, and return to being mindful of your breath.

Only when you discern ultimate mentality-materiality (*paramattha-nāma-rūpa*) internally and externally, can you solve the problem of a soul: you will not find a soul anywhere. So, you need to break down the compactness (*ghana*) of mentality and materiality, and realize ultimate mentality and materiality.

Nānādhātuyo vinibbhujitvā ghanavinibbhoge kate anattalakkhaṇaṃ yāthāvasarasato upaṭṭhāti.

When compactness is broken down with the breaking down into different elements, the non-self characteristic (*an-atta-lakkhaṇa*) in its true nature will arise.¹²¹

It is because of the perception of compactness, that the perception of a soul arises.

In the case of materiality, there are three types of compactness (*ghana*):¹²²

- 1) Continuity compactness (*santati-ghana*): because materiality seems to be one compact continuity, a continuous whole, one may think one's body and limbs have actual existence. And one may think the same self 'migrates' from life to life, taking different forms. To overcome this delusion, we need to resolve the seeming compactness of the body. We need to see that the body comprises *rūpa kalāpas* that arise and perish. That way, we see that a *kalāpa* has no continuity; as soon as it arises, it perishes. There is no time for a *kalāpa* to go anywhere, not from life to life, not even from second to second.
- 2) Synthesis compactness (*samūha-ghana*): because materiality seems to be a synthetic whole, one may think the *kalāpas* are ultimate materiality. And one may think they are one's self. To overcome this delusion, we need to resolve the seeming compactness of the individual type of *kalāpa*: we need to analyse the individual type of *kalāpa*. That way, we see that a *kalāpa* comprises elements: earth element, water element, fire element, wind element, colour, odour, flavour,

¹²¹ VsM.xxi.739 '*Upakkilesa-Vimutta-Udaya-Bbaya-Ñāṇa-Kathā*' ('Imperfections-Free Arise&Peris Knowledge Discussion') PP.xxi.4

¹²² In VsM.xi.306 '*Catu-Dhātu-Vavatthāna-Bhāvanā-Vaṇṇanā*' ('Description of the Four-Elements Definition Meditation') PP.xi.30, reference is made to the Buddha's simile of the butcher who has killed a cow and cut it into pieces: in D.ii.9 '*Mahā-Sati-Paṭṭhāna-Suttaṃ*' ('The Great Mindfulness-Foundation Sutta'), and M.I.i.10 '*Sati-Paṭṭhāna-Suttaṃ*' ('The Mindfulness-Foundation Sutta'). The Subcommentaries to these texts explain how this involves resolving the three kinds of compactness.

nutritive-essence, life faculty, etc. There is no synthetic whole anywhere.

- 3) Function compactness (*kicca-ghana*): because of insufficient understanding about ultimate materiality, one may think the elements rest upon a self, like seeds and plants rest upon earth. To overcome this delusion, we need to see that each element has its own characteristic (*lak-khaṇa*), function (*rasa*), manifestation (*paccupaṭṭhāna*), and proximate cause (*padaṭṭhāna*): it does not depend on any external thing such as a self.

How do you break down the compactness of materiality? You must first discern the rūpa-kalāpas (small particles). Then you must analyse the different rūpa-kalāpas, and see that they comprise different types of materiality, which are at least eight in each rūpa-kalāpa. And then you need to analyse each type of materiality. Without doing this the perception of a soul will not disappear.

Similarly, without breaking down the compactness of mentality, the perception of a soul will not disappear. For example, when your mind wanders, you may think that the wandering mind is your soul.

There are four types of compactness in such a mental process that need to be broken down by vipassanā knowledge:¹²³

- 1) Continuity compactness (*santati-ghana*): because mentality seems to be one compact continuity, a continuous whole, one may think it is the same ‘mind’ that cognizes objects through the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. And one may think it is the same self, the same ‘mind’, the same ‘pure consciousness’, etc., that ‘migrates’ from life to life, entering different bodies. And in this life, one may think one’s mind wanders outside the body. To overcome this delusion, we need to resolve the seeming compactness of the mind. We need to see that cognition takes place by way of mental processes that arise and perish. That way, we see that the mind has no continuity; as soon as it arises, it perishes. There is no time for consciousness to go anywhere, not from life to life, not even from second to second.
- 2) Synthesis compactness (*samūha-ghana*): because mentality seems to be a synthetic whole, one may think it is pure consciousness that cognizes the object. And one may think it is one’s self. To overcome this delusion, we need to resolve the seeming compactness of the individual type of consciousness: we need to analyse the individual type of consciousness in each type of mental process. That way, we

¹²³ VsMT.xxi.739 ‘*Upakkilesa-Vimutta-Udaya-Bhaya-Ñāṇa-Kathā-Vaṇṇanā*’ (‘Description of Explanation of the Corruption-Freed Arise&Perish Knowledge’)

see that a consciousness comprises consciousness and a given number mental factors, such as feeling, perception, and volition, and application, and sustainment, or hatred, delusion, wrong view, conceit, and scepticism, or non-greed, non-hatred, non-delusion, happiness, mindfulness, faith and Right View. There is no synthetic whole anywhere.

- 3) Function compactness (*kicca-ghana*): because of insufficient understanding about ultimate mentality, one may think the elements rest upon a self, like seeds and plants rest upon earth. To overcome this delusion, we need to see that each consciousness and mental factor has its own characteristic, function, manifestation, and proximate cause: it does not depend on any external thing such as a self.
- 4) Subject compactness (*ārammaṇa-ghana*): having penetrated the previous three compactnesses, one may think, for example, ‘I saw ultimate materiality and mentality’, or, “‘the knowing self’ saw ultimate materiality and mentality.”¹²⁴ To overcome this delusion, we need to resolve the three types of compactness in the vipassanā mental-processes that penetrated the three types of compactness, with subsequent vipassanā knowledge. We need to see that the mentality that is the object of our vipassanā knowledge was also the subject of vipassanā knowledge: it penetrated the three types of compactness of mentality that also was a subject with an object.

And how do you break down the compactness of mentality? Take, for example a mind-door process of access concentration that has the *ān-āpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta* as object.

Such a mental process has one mind-door adverting consciousness and seven impulsion consciousnesses (*javana*). In the mind-door adverting consciousness moment there are twelve mental formations, and in each impulsion moment there are thirty-four mental formations.

If you break down the four types of compactness of mentality this way, you will see only the rapid arising and perishing of consciousnesses and their associated mental factors.

With that perception of impermanence, one can no longer think one’s consciousness is one’s soul, because with the perception of impermanence comes the perception of non-self. As said by The Buddha, in the ‘*Meghiya*’ sutta:¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Other variations of this delusion would be, for example, ‘the knower knows’, ‘the doer knows’, ‘that which knows knows’, etc. One may also think ‘ultimate materiality and mentality change, but “the knowing mind” does not change’.

¹²⁵ U.iv.1 (also A.IX.I.i.3)

Anicca-saññino meghiya an-atta-saññā saṇṭhāti.

For those who have powerful vipassanā knowledge of impermanence, vipassanā knowledge of non-self will also appear clearly.

Question 1.4 Where does the [*ān-āpāna*] nimitta come from? What makes it appear?

Answer 1.4 Most mind states that arise dependent upon the heart base produce breathing. A real *ān-āpāna-nimitta* comes from the breath. But not every mind state produces a nimitta. Only a deeply concentrated mind produces a nimitta. Therefore, the breath produced by a deep and concentrated mind makes an *ān-āpāna-nimitta* appear. If the nimitta is far from the nostrils, it is not a real nimitta. A nimitta may appear because of concentration, but not necessarily the real *ān-āpāna-nimitta*. If the nimitta produces jhāna, we call it an *ān-āpāna-nimitta*. But if it does not produce jhāna, it is not the real *ān-āpāna-nimitta*. If you concentrate on that nimitta, jhāna will not arise. Usually the concentration cannot become strong and powerful. If you meditate on that nimitta, it will very soon disappear.

Question 1.5 What are the seven stages of purification and sixteen vipassanā knowledges?

Answer 1.5 The seven stages of purification are:

- 1) Morality Purification (*Sīla-Visuddhi*)
- 2) Consciousness Purification (*Citta-Visuddhi*)
- 3) View Purification (*Diṭṭhi-Visuddhi*)
- 4) Doubt-Overcoming Purification (*Kaṅkhā-Vitaraṇa-Visuddhi*)
- 5) Path&Non-Path Knowledge&Vision Purification (*Magg-Āmagga-Ñāṇa-Dassana-Visuddhi*)
- 6) Practice Knowledge&Vision Purification (*Paṭipadā-Ñāṇa-Dassana-Visuddhi*)
- 7) Knowledge&Vision Purification (*Ñāṇa-Dassana-Visuddhi*)

And the sixteen vipassanā knowledges are:

- 1) Mentality-Materiality Definition Knowledge (*Nāma-Rūpa-Pariccheda-Ñāṇa*)
- 2) Cause-Apprehending Knowledge (*Paccaya-Pariggaha-Ñāṇa*)
- 3) Comprehension Knowledge (*Sammasana-Ñāṇa*)
- 4) Arise&Perish Knowledge (*Udaya-bbaya-Ñāṇa*)
- 5) Dissolution Knowledge (*Bhaṅga-Ñāṇa*)
- 6) Fearsomeness Knowledge (*Bhaya-Ñāṇa*)
- 7) Danger Knowledge (*Ādīnava-Ñāṇa*)
- 8) Disenchantment Knowledge (*Nibbidā-Ñāṇa*)
- 9) Liberation-Longing Knowledge (*Muñcitu-kamyatā-Ñāṇa*)
- 10) Reflection Knowledge (*Paṭisaṅkhā-Ñāṇa*)
- 11) Formations-Equanimity Knowledge (*Saṅkhār-upekkhā-Ñāṇa*)

- 12) Conformity Knowledge (*Anuloma-Ñāṇa*)
- 13) Change-of-Lineage Knowledge (*Gotrabhu-Ñāṇa*)
- 14) Path Knowledge (*Magga-Ñāṇa*)
- 15) Fruition Knowledge (*Phala-Ñāṇa*)
- 16) Reviewing Knowledge (*Paccavekkhaṇa-Ñāṇa*)

Now you know the names of the vipassanā knowledges: have you experienced them? No. That is why to have only theoretical knowledge is not enough; you must practise with great effort to also realize them.

[At the end of this talk the Most Venerable Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw added the following comment on the five hindrances.]

Now let us discuss briefly the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*):

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1) sensual desire (<i>kāma-cchanda</i>) | 4) restlessness&remorse (<i>uddhacca-kukkucca</i>) |
| 2) ill-will..... (<i>byāpāda</i>) | 5) doubt..... (<i>vicikicchā</i>) |
| 3) sloth&torpor..... (<i>thina-middha</i>) | |

The first hindrance, sensual desire (*kāma-cchanda*), is attachment to property or people. It is the desire for sense objects. For example, you may get attached to your *kuṭi*¹²⁶ or room. While meditating you may think, ‘Oh, it would be good if my *kuṭi* were beautiful.’ Or you may think, ‘Oh, it would be good if the whole room belonged to me!’ If you are overwhelmed by sensual desire, you will not be able to concentrate well on your meditation object. You must exert strong mindfulness and make effort to stop the arising of sensual desire.

The second hindrance is ill-will (*byāpāda*). It is hatred for or dissatisfaction with people or things. For example, if the yogi sitting next to you, while sitting down, makes a noise with his robes, you may become angry and think, ‘Oh, why is he making so much noise!!’ If your mind is overwhelmed by hatred or dissatisfaction, you will not be able to concentrate well on your meditation object either.

The third hindrance is sloth and torpor (*thina-middha*). If the mind is weak, or not interested in the meditation object, sloth and torpor can occur. Sometimes, however, sleepiness may be due to tiredness, illness, or lack of rest.

The fourth hindrance is restlessness and remorse (*uddhacca-kukkucca*). If your mind is restless, it will be like a heap of ashes hit by a stone, flying about and scattering. The mind is scattered. While meditating, you must not relax the mind, and let it leave your meditation object. If you do, restlessness will occur. Remorse is to regret bad deeds done, and good deeds

¹²⁶ A *kuṭi* is a monastic dwelling for one, a cell or lodge.

not done in the past. Here too, you must exert strong mindfulness, and make great effort to stop the arising of restlessness and remorse.

The fifth hindrance is doubt (*vicikicchā*). It is having doubts about eight things:

- 1) The Buddha
- 2) The Dhamma
- 3) The Saṅgha
- 4) The three trainings: morality, concentration, and wisdom.
- 5) The past five aggregates (*khandhā*), which is past lives.
- 6) The future five aggregates, which is future lives.
- 7) Both the past and future five aggregates, which is past and future lives.
- 8) Dependent Origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), which includes the present five aggregates.

If you have doubts about the training in concentration, you cannot meditate well. For example, you may think: ‘Is it possible to attain jhāna through *ān-āpāna-sati* (mindfulness-of-breathing)? Can jhāna be attained by concentrating on the *ān-āpāna-nimitta*?’

The five hindrances are opposite jhāna concentration.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS 2

Question 2.1 How should beginners balance the faculties (*indriya*) of concentration and wisdom? How should they practise wisdom in *ān-āpāna-sati* (mindfulness-of-breathing)?

Answer 2.1 We already talked about balancing the five controlling faculties in the very first talk, but we can summarize what was said. It is not so important for beginners to balance concentration and wisdom. This is because they are only beginners, and their five controlling faculties are not yet developed. In the beginning of meditation, there is usually much restlessness in the mind. So the faculties are not yet strong and powerful. Only when they are strong and powerful is it necessary to balance them. But if beginners are able to balance the faculties already at the beginning stage, that is of course also good.

For example, you are now practising *ān-āpāna-sati*; *ān-āpāna-sati* is mindfulness-of-breathing. Knowing the breath is wisdom (*paññā*). Being mindful of the breath is mindfulness (*sati*). One-pointedness of mind on the breath is concentration (*samādhi*). The effort to know the breath clearly is effort (*vīriya*). Having faith that *ān-āpāna-sati* can lead to jhāna is faith (*saddhā*).

Beginners must try to develop strong and powerful controlling faculties. Their faith in *ān-āpāna-sati* must be strong enough. Their effort to know the breath clearly must be strong enough. Their mindfulness of the breath must be strong enough. Their concentration on the breath must be strong enough. They must see the breath clearly. They must try to make their five controlling faculties strong and powerful, as well as try to balance them. If one is excessive, the others cannot function properly.

For example, if faith is too strong and powerful, it produces emotion. This means that the effort faculty cannot maintain associated mental formations on the breath; mindfulness cannot become established on the breath; the concentration faculty too, cannot concentrate deeply on the breath; and wisdom cannot know the breath clearly.

When, for example, effort is excessive, it makes the mind restless, so the other controlling faculties become again weak, and cannot function properly. When mindfulness is weak, you cannot do anything, because you cannot concentrate on the breath, will make little or no effort to discern the breath, and may have no faith.

Now you are practising samatha. In samatha meditation, strong and powerful concentration is good, but excessive concentration produces laziness. With laziness, the other faculties become again very weak, and cannot function properly.

At this stage wisdom is very dull or inferior. It knows only the natural breath. So for the beginner who is practising samatha meditation, it is enough just to know the breath clearly. When the uggaha or *paṭibhāga-nimitta* appears, wisdom knows the uggaha or *paṭibhāga-nimitta*. Too much general knowledge apart from this is not good, as you may always be discussing and criticizing. If a yogi discusses and criticizes *ān-āpāna-sati* too much, we can say his wisdom is excessive, which also makes the other controlling faculties weak, and unable to function properly.

So, even though it is not yet very important, it is still good for a beginner to balance his five controlling faculties. How to balance them? We must practise with strong and powerful mindfulness and effort to know the breath clearly, and concentrate on the breath with faith.

Question 2.2 Why don't we, after attaining the fourth jhāna, go straight to discern the five aggregates, their nature of impermanence, suffering, and non-self, and attain Nibbāna? Why do we before attaining Nibbāna need to practise meditation on the thirty-two parts of body, skeleton, white kasiṇa, four elements, materiality, mentality, dependent origination, and vipassanā?

Answer 2.2 The Buddha taught the five-aggregates method of practising vipassanā to three types of person: those who have sharp wisdom, those whose vipassanā knowledge of mentality is not clear, and those who prefer to practise vipassanā in the brief way.

What are the five aggregates? What is the difference between the five aggregates and mentality-materiality? Do you know the answer?

Before answering your second question, let us discuss mentality-materiality and the five aggregates. There are four ultimate realities (*paramattha sacca*): consciousnesses (*cittā*), associated mental factors (*cetasikā*), materiality (*rūpa*), and Nibbāna.

To attain Nibbāna, the fourth ultimate reality, we must see the impermanent, suffering and non-self nature of the other three, that is, we must see:¹⁴⁰

- 1) Eighty-nine types of consciousness (*viññāṇa*)
- 2) Fifty-two types of associated mental factors (*cetasika*)
- 3) Twenty-eight types of materiality (*rūpa*)¹⁴¹

The eighty-nine types of consciousness are called the consciousness aggregate (*viññāṇa-kkhandha*). Of the fifty-two associated mental factors, feeling

¹⁴⁰ The Most Venerable Sayadaw is here making only a general statement: see 'Knowing and Seeing The First Noble Truth', p.9.

¹⁴¹ For a full list, see table '2a: The Twenty-Eight Types of Materiality', p.137.

is the feeling aggregate (*vedanā-kkhandha*); perception is the perception aggregate (*saññā-kkhandha*); and the remaining fifty associated mental factors are the formations-aggregate (*saṅkhāra-kkhandha*). Sometimes the consciousnesses (*cittā*) and associated mental factors (*cetasikā*) together are called mentality (*nāma*). Sometimes they are seen as four aggregates, the feeling aggregate, the perception aggregate, the formations aggregate and the consciousness aggregate, which together are the mentality-aggregate (*nāma-kkhandha*). The materiality aggregate (*rūpa-kkhandha*) is the twenty-eight types of materiality. The consciousnesses, associated mental factors and materiality together are called ‘mentality-materiality’ (*nāma-rūpa*). They are sometimes also called the five aggregates: materiality, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness. Their causes are also only mentality-materiality.

These five clinging-aggregates are *Dukkha-Sacca-dhammā*: dhammas of the Noble Truth of Suffering. They need to be understood as such.

In the ‘*Mahā-Nidāna*’ sutta of the *Dīgha-Nikāya*, The Buddha explains:

This dependent origination is profound, Ānanda, and profound it appears. And, Ānanda, it is through not knowing, through not penetrating this Dhamma, that this generation has become a tangled skein, a knotted ball of thread, matted as the roots in a bed of reeds, and finds no way out of the round of rebirths with its states of loss, unhappy destinations...perdition.¹⁴²

With regard to this statement, the commentaries explain:

There is no one, even in a dream, who has got out of the fearful round of rebirths, which is ever destroying [beings] like a thunderbolt, unless he has severed with the knife of knowledge, well whetted on the stone of sublime concentration, this Wheel of Existence [Dependent Origination], which offers no footing owing to its great profundity and is hard to get by owing to the maze of many methods.¹⁴³

This means that the yogi who does not know, and has not penetrated Dependent Origination by the different stages of vipassanā knowledge, cannot escape from the round of rebirths.

And in the ‘*Tiṭṭh-Āyatana*’ sutta of the *Aṅguttara-Nikāya*, this was said by The Buddha:¹⁴⁴

And what, bhikkhus, is the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering (*Dukkha-Samudayaṃ Ariya-Saccaṃ*)?

- [1] **Because of ignorance (*avijjā*), formations [arise] (*saṅkhārā*);**
- [2] **because of formations, consciousness (*viññāṇa*);**
- [3] **because of consciousness, mentality-materiality (*nāma-rūpa*);**

¹⁴² D.ii.2 ‘*Mahā-Nidāna-Suttaṃ*’ (‘The Great Causation Sutta’)

¹⁴³ VbhA.vi.1 ‘*Suttanta-Bhājanīya-Vaṇṇanā*’ (‘Sutta-Classification Description’).

VsM.xvii.661 ‘*Bhava-Cakka-Kathā*’ (‘The Wheel of Existence Discussion’) PP.xvii.344

¹⁴⁴ A.III.II.ii.1 ‘*Tiṭṭh-Āyatana-Suttaṃ*’ (‘The Sectarian-Doctrines Sutta’)

- [4] **because of mentality-materiality, the six bases** (*saḷ-āyatana*);
- [5] **because of the six bases, contact** (*phassa*);
- [6] **because of contact, feeling** (*vedanā*);
- [7] **because of feeling, craving** (*taṇhā*);
- [8] **because of craving, clinging** (*upādāna*);
- [9] **because of clinging, existence** (*bhava*);
- [10] **because of existence, birth** (*jāti*);
- [11] **because of birth,**
- [12] **ageing&death** (*jarā-maraṇa*), **sorrow** (*soka*), **lamentation** (*parideva*), **pain** (*dukkha*), **grief** (*domanassa*) and **despair** (*upāyāsā*) **arise.**

Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering.

This is called, bhikkhus, the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering (*Idaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, Dukkha-Samudayaṃ Ariya-Saccaṃ*).

This is also called dependent origination. And The Buddha says dependent origination is the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering (*Samudaya Sacca*).

The Noble Truth of Suffering, which is the five clinging aggregates, and the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering, which is dependent origination, are called formations (*saṅkhārā*). They are the object of vipassanā, vipassanā knowledge. At the different stages of vipassanā knowledge you comprehend these formations as impermanence (*anicca*), as suffering (*dukkha*), and as non-self (*an-atta*). Without knowing and penetrating them, how can you comprehend them that they are impermanent etc.? That is why we teach vipassanā systematically.

To know ultimate materiality, the materiality clinging-aggregate, you must practise four-elements meditation till you see that materiality consists of small particles that we call *rūpa-kalāpas*, and you need to see the four elements in those small particles.¹⁴⁵ And you need to discern both the base and its object together.¹⁴⁶ Without discerning materiality this way, you cannot discern mentality, the four mental clinging-aggregates. That is why we teach vipassanā stage by stage.

Now your second question. According to the Theravāda tradition, there are two types of meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*): *pārihāriya-kammaṭṭhāna* and *sabbatthaka-kammaṭṭhāna*. *Pārihāriya-kammaṭṭhāna* is the meditation subject by which the individual yogi develops concentration to be used for vipassanā. The yogi must always use that meditation subject as his foundation. *Sabbatthaka-kammaṭṭhāna*, on the other hand, is the medi-

¹⁴⁵ See further 'Introduction', p.107.

¹⁴⁶ See further quotation, p.5.

tation subjects to be developed by all yogis alike.¹⁴⁷ They are the four protective meditations:

- 1) Loving-kindness meditation (*mettā-bhāvanā*)
- 2) Buddha Recollection (*Buddh-Ānussati*)
- 3) Death recollection (*marañ-ānussati*)
- 4) Foulness meditation (*asubha-bhāvanā*)

So although a yogi uses *ān-āpāna-sati* (mindfulness-of-breathing) as his *pārihāriya-kammaṭṭhāna*, he must practise the four protective meditations before going on to vipassanā. This is the orthodox procedure.

To develop loving-kindness meditation up to jhāna, it is better if the yogi has already developed the white-kasiṇa meditation up to the fourth jhāna. An example of this is the five hundred bhikkhus to whom The Buddha taught the '*Karaṇīya-Mettā*' sutta.¹⁴⁸ Those bhikkhus were expert in the ten kasiṇas and eight attainments (*samāpatti*), had practised vipassanā up to the Arise&Perish Knowledge (*Udaya-Bbaya-Ñāṇa*), and had gone to the forest to meditate further. But they returned to the Buddha, because the devas resident in the forest had become annoyed and had frightened the bhikkhus. The Buddha taught the bhikkhus the '*Karaṇīya-Mettā*' sutta both as a meditation subject and as a protective chant (*paritta*). As a meditation subject it is for those who have already attained loving-kindness jhāna (*mettā jhāna*), and have broken down the barriers between the different types of person.¹⁴⁹ The '*Karaṇīya-Mettā*' sutta is a more specialized practice of loving-kindness, in which one practises up to the third jhāna by extending loving-kindness to eleven categories of beings with the thought: '*Sukhino vā khemino hontu, sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittatā*' (May all beings be happy and secure etc.). The Texts say The Buddha knew those five hundred bhikkhus would very easily be able to do this, because they were already expert in the ten kasiṇas. And how is loving-kindness jhāna made easier by kasiṇa meditation?

In the *Aṅguttara-Nikāya*, The Buddha taught that of the four colour kasiṇas, the white kasiṇa is best.¹⁵⁰ The white kasiṇa makes the yogi's mind clear and bright. A clear and tranquil mind is superior and powerful. If a yogi practises loving-kindness meditation with a clear mind, free

¹⁴⁷ For how and why you must protect your meditation, see p.14; for details, see Talk 3 'How You Develop the Sublime Abidings and Protective Meditations'.

¹⁴⁸ Su.N.i.8 '*Karaṇīya-Mettā-Suttaṃ*' ('To-Be-Done Loving-Kindness Sutta'), also called '*Mettā-Suttaṃ*' ('Loving-Kindness Sutta').

¹⁴⁹ For details about loving-kindness jhāna, see 'How You Develop Loving-Kindness', p.81.

¹⁵⁰ A.X.I.iii.9 '*Paṭhama-Kosala-Suttaṃ*' ('The First Kosala Sutta')

from defilements, he usually attains loving-kindness jhāna within one sitting. So if one enters the fourth white-kasiṇa jhāna, and after emerging from it, practises loving-kindness jhāna, it is very easy to succeed.

In order to attain the fourth white-kasiṇa jhāna, a yogi should first practise skeleton meditation internally and externally, because this makes the white-kasiṇa meditation very easy. Therefore, after the fourth *ān-āpāna* jhāna we usually teach yogis to do the thirty-two parts of the body, skeleton meditation and white-kasiṇa meditation. In our experience, most yogis say that the fourth white-kasiṇa jhāna is better than the fourth *ān-āpāna* jhāna, because it produces a clearer, brighter and more tranquil mind, which is also very helpful for practising other meditation subjects. So we usually teach white-kasiṇa meditation before loving-kindness meditation.

There is also a problem common to beginners. You may have practised loving-kindness meditation. Did you attain jhāna? In practice, if a yogi wants to extend loving-kindness to someone of the same sex, he should first take the smiling face of that person as object, and then develop loving-kindness towards him with: ‘May this good person be free from mental suffering, etc.’ With a beginner that smiling face very soon disappears. He cannot continue his loving-kindness meditation, because there is no object, and so he cannot attain loving-kindness jhāna or anything.

If he uses the fourth white-kasiṇa jhāna, it is different. He emerges from the jhāna, and when he develops loving-kindness, then, because of the preceding concentration, the smiling face will not fade away. He is able to concentrate deeply on that image, and able to attain up to the third loving-kindness jhāna within one sitting. If he practises systematically up to the breaking down of barriers between the different types of person, he can even practise the eleven ways of the ‘*Karaṇīya-Mettā*’ sutta, and five hundred and twenty-eight ways mentioned in the *Paṭisambhidā-Magga* Pali Text.¹⁵¹ For this reason too, we usually teach the white-kasiṇa meditation before loving-kindness meditation.

You may also have practised Buddha Recollection (*Buddh-Ānussati*). Did you attain access concentration? When those who have succeeded in loving-kindness jhāna practise Buddha Recollection, they are able to reach access concentration within one sitting, again because of the preceding concentration. Foulness meditation (*asubha*) too becomes easy. If a yogi practises foulness meditation up to the first jhāna, and then death recollection (*marañ-ānussati*), he is able to succeed within one sitting.

¹⁵¹ Ps.M.II.iv ‘*Mettā-Kathā*’ (‘Loving-Kindness Discussion’)

That is why we teach the white-kasīṇa meditation before the four protective meditations. If, however, a yogi wants to go straight to vipassanā, without practising the four protective meditations, he can do so: no problem.

Question 2.3 Why, after having discerned materiality and mentality, must one practise the first and fifth methods of dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*)? What are the first and fifth methods?¹⁵²

Answer 2.3 There are, according to the Theravāda tradition, seven stages of purification (*visuddhi*). The first five are:

- 1) Morality Purification (*Sīla-Visuddhi*): that is morality (*sīla*) of four types:¹⁵³
 - i) Pātimokkha restraint (*pātimokkhā-saṃvara-sīla*)
 - ii) Sense restraint (*indriya-saṃvara-sīla*)
 - iii) Livelihood purification (*ājīva-pārisuddhi-sīla*)
 - iv) With regard to requisites (*paccaya-sannissita-sīla*)
- 2) Consciousness Purification (*Citta-Visuddhi*): that is access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*) and the eight attainments (*samāpatti*): absorption concentration (*appanā-samādhi*).¹⁵⁴
- 3) View Purification (*Dīṭṭhi-Visuddhi*): that is Mentality-Materiality Definition Knowledge (*Nāma-Rūpa-Pariccheda-Ñāṇa*).
- 4) Doubt-Overcoming Purification (*Kaṅkhā-Vitarāṇa-Visuddhi*): that is Cause-Apprehending Knowledge (*Paccaya-Pariggaha-Ñāṇa*), in other words, seeing dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*).
- 5) Path&Non-Path Knowledge&Vision Purification (*Magg-Āmagga-Ñāṇa-Dassana-Visuddhi*): that is Comprehension Knowledge (*Sammasana-Ñāṇa*) and Arise&Perish Knowledge (*Udaya-Bhaya-Ñāṇa*), which is the beginning of vipassanā.

So before vipassanā there are four purifications. Why? Vipassanā is to comprehend the impermanence, suffering, and non-self nature of mentality-materiality and their causes. Without knowing mentality-materiality and their causes, how can we comprehend that they are impermanent, suffering, and non-self? How can we practise vipassanā? It is only after we have thoroughly discerned mentality-materiality and their causes, that we can practise vipassanā meditation.

¹⁵² For details about how you practise the first and fifth methods of dependent origination, see 'The Fifth Method', p.183ff.

¹⁵³ VsM.i.13ff 'Sīla-Ppabheda-Kathā' ('Morality-Classification Discussion') PP.i.42 for details.

¹⁵⁴ Vis.xviii.662 'Dīṭṭhi-Visuddhi Niddesa' ('Description of View-Purification') PP.xviii.1

Mentality-materiality and their causes are called ‘formations’ (*saṅkhārā*). They perish as soon as they arise, which is why they are impermanent; they are subject to constant arising and perishing, which is why they are suffering; they have no self (*atta*), or stable and indestructible essence, which is why they are non-self.

Comprehending impermanence, suffering, and non-self in this way is real vipassanā. So before vipassanā, we teach yogis to discern mentality, materiality and dependent origination. The commentaries explain it as, ‘*aniccanti pañca-kkhandhā*’,¹⁵⁵ and ‘*aniccanti khandha pañcakam*’.¹⁵⁶ That means, ‘impermanence is the five aggregates.’ The five aggregates are, in other words, mentality-materiality and their causes. So, real vipassanā requires that you know the five aggregates, and their causes and effects.

The Buddha taught according to the character of his listeners, and taught four methods for discerning dependent origination. In the *Paṭisambhidā-Magga*, there is yet another method.¹⁵⁷ Altogether there are five methods. The first of the methods taught by The Buddha is to discern dependent origination in forward order:

Avijjā-paccayā saṅkhārā, saṅkhārā-paccayā viññāṇam, viññāṇa-paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ, [etc.]

Because of ignorance (*avijjā*), **formations** (*saṅkhārā*) [arise]; **because of formations, consciousness** (*viññāṇam*); **because of consciousness, mentality-materiality** (*nāma-rūpa*), [etc.]

The first method is popular in Theravāda Buddhism, but may be very difficult for those who have no Abhidhamma knowledge. Even yogis with good Abhidhamma knowledge may have many difficulties.

The fifth method taught by the Venerable Sāriputta, and recorded in the *Paṭisambhidā-Magga* Pali Text, is easy for beginners. It is to discern that five past causes have produced five present effects, and that five present causes will produce five future effects. This is the main principle in the fifth method. If you want to know it with direct experience, you should practise up to this stage.

After practising the fifth method systematically, you will not have much difficulty in practising the first method. For this reason we teach the fifth

¹⁵⁵ VsM.viii.236 ‘*Ān-Āpāna-Sati-Kathā*’ (Mindfulness-of-Breathing Discussion)

PP.viii.234. VsM.xxi.740 ‘*Upakkilesa-Vimutta-Udaya-Bbaya-Ñāṇa-Kathā*’ (‘Imperfections-Free Arise&Perish Knowledge Discussion’) PP.xxi.6

¹⁵⁶ VbhA.ii.1 ‘*Suttanta-Bhājanīya-Vaṇṇanā*’ (‘Sutta-Classification Description’)

¹⁵⁷ PsM.I.i.4 *Dhamma-Ṭṭhiti-Ñāṇa-Niddeso* (‘Standing-on-Phenomena Knowledge Description’)

method before the first method. We teach all five methods to those who have time, and want to practise further. But although The Buddha taught dependent origination according to the character of his listeners, one method is enough to attain Nibbāna. Even so, because the first method is popular in Theravāda Buddhism, we teach both the fifth and first methods.

One day, the Venerable Ānanda practised dependent origination in all four ways. In the evening, he went to The Buddha and said: It is wonderful, Venerable Sir, it is marvellous how profound this dependent origination is, and how profound it appears! And yet it appears to me as clear as clear!

The Buddha replied:¹⁵⁸

Do not say so, Ānanda! Do not say so, Ānanda!

This dependent origination is profound (*gambhīro*), and appears profound (*gambhīrāvabhāso*).

It is through not understanding (*an-anubodhā*), not penetrating this truth (*a-ppaṭivedhā*), that the world has become like a tangled skein, matted like a bird's nest, tangled like reeds, unable to pass beyond the states of woe, the woeful destination, ruin, and the round of rebirths.

This means that without knowing dependent origination, with the *Anubodha-Ñāṇa* and the *Paṭivedha-Ñāṇa*, one cannot escape the round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*), and four woeful realms (*apāya*). The *Anubodha-Ñāṇa* is the Mentality-Materiality Definition Knowledge (*Nāma-Rūpa-Pariccheda-Ñāṇa*), and Cause-Apprehending Knowledge (*Paccaya-Pariggaha-Ñāṇa*). The *Paṭivedha-Ñāṇa* is all the vipassanā knowledges (*Vipassanā-Ñāṇa*). So without knowing dependent origination with the *Anubodha-Ñāṇa* and *Paṭivedha-Ñāṇa*, one cannot attain Nibbāna. With this quotation, the commentary says that without knowing dependent origination, no one can escape from the round of rebirths, even in a dream.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ D.ii.2 'Mahā-Nidāna-Suttaṃ' (Great Causation Sutta')

¹⁵⁹ See quotation p.25.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS 3

Question 3.1 In *ān-āpāna-sati* (mindfulness-of-breathing), there are the *parikamma-nimitta*, the *uggaha-nimitta*, and the *paṭibhāga-nimitta*. What is the *parikamma-nimitta*? Is the *parikamma-nimitta* always grey? What is the difference between the *parikamma-nimitta* and the *uggaha-nimitta*?

Answer 3.1 In *ān-āpāna-sati*, there are three types of nimitta, three types of concentration (*samādhi*) and three types of meditation (*bhāvanā*).

The three types of nimitta are:

- 1) The *parikamma-nimitta* (preparatory sign)
- 2) The *uggaha-nimitta* (taken-up sign)
- 3) The *paṭibhāga-nimitta* (counterpart sign)

The three types of concentration are:

- 1) Preparatory concentration (*parikamma-samādhi*): it is sometimes called momentary concentration (*khaṇika-samādhi*).
- 2) Access concentration (*upacāra-samādhi*)
- 3) Absorption concentration (*appanā-samādhi*): it is also called jhāna concentration: the eight attainments.¹⁷²

The three types of meditation are:

- 1) Preparatory meditation (*parikamma-bhāvanā*)
- 2) Access meditation (*upacāra-bhāvanā*)
- 3) Absorption meditation (*appanā-bhāvanā*)

The object of preparatory concentration can be the *parikamma-nimitta*, the *uggaha-nimitta*, and occasionally the *paṭibhāga-nimitta*. Preparatory meditation is the same as preparatory concentration.

Real access concentration, and real access meditation are very close to absorption concentration (jhāna); this is why they are called ‘access’. But sometimes deep and strong concentration before absorption concentration, with the *paṭibhāga-nimitta* as object, is as a metaphor also called ‘access concentration’ or ‘access meditation’.¹⁷³ When preparatory concentration, or momentary concentration, is fully developed it leads to access concentration. When access concentration is fully developed, it leads to absorption concentration (jhāna).

We already discussed the nimitta in previous talks. There are, as mentioned, three types of nimitta: the *parikamma-nimitta*, the *uggaha-nimitta*, and the *paṭibhāga-nimitta*.

¹⁷² eight attainments: the four material jhānas, and four immaterial jhānas.

¹⁷³ In this connection, see also Q&A 4.6, p.149.

- 1) The *parikamma-nimitta* (preparatory sign): the natural breath is a nimitta. The touching point is also a nimitta. Here the nimitta is the object of concentration. The commentary says the nostril nimitta (*nāsika-nimitta*), and upper-lip nimitta (*mukha-nimitta*) are the *parikamma-nimitta* for beginners. When the concentration is a little stronger, a smoky grey usually appears around the nostrils. This smoky grey is also the *parikamma-nimitta*. It may have another colour too. The concentration and meditation at the *parikamma-nimitta* stage are preparatory.
- 2) The *uggaha-nimitta* (taken-up sign): when the preparatory concentration increases in strength and power, the smoky grey usually changes to white: white like cotton wool. But it may become another colour, owing to a change in perception.¹⁷⁴ When the perception changes, the colour and shape of the nimitta may also change. If the colour and shape change very often, the concentration will gradually decrease. This is because whenever yogi's perception changes, his object thereby also changes, which means he has different objects. So the yogi should ignore the colour and shape of the nimitta. He should concentrate on it only as an *ān-āpāna-nimitta*. The concentration and meditation on the *uggaha-nimitta* are also preparatory.
- 3) The *paṭibhāga-nimitta* (counterpart sign): when the concentration has become even stronger and more powerful, the *uggaha-nimitta* changes to the *paṭibhāga-nimitta*. Usually the *paṭibhāga-nimitta* is clear, bright and radiant, like the morning star. In this case too, if the perception changes, the nimitta may also change. If, when the concentration is strong and powerful, the yogi wants the nimitta to be long it will become long; if he wants it to be short it will become short; if he wants it to be ruby red, it will become ruby red. The *Visuddhi-Magga* says one should not do so.¹⁷⁵ If one does, then even though the concentration is deep, it will gradually decrease. This is because one has different perceptions, and thereby different objects. So a yogi should not play with the nimitta. If he plays with it he cannot attain jhāna.

The beginning stage of concentration and meditation on the *paṭibhāga-nimitta* are also preparatory. But close to jhāna they are access concentration, and access meditation. When absorption arises, the nimitta is still

¹⁷⁴ For further details on the relationship between the nimitta and perception, see p.38.

¹⁷⁵ VsM.iii.47 'Cattālīsa-Kammaṭṭhāna-Vaṇṇanā' ('Forty Meditations-Subjects Description') PP.iii.113

the *paṭibhāga-nimitta*, but the concentration is now absorption concentration, and the meditation is absorption meditation.

Question 3.2 What is the difference between access concentration and absorption concentration?

Answer 3.2 When the *paṭibhāga-nimitta* appears, the concentration is powerful. But at this stage, which is the stage of access concentration, the *jhāna* factors are not fully developed, and *bhavaṅgas* (life-continuum consciousnesses) still occur; one falls into *bhavaṅga*. The yogi will say that everything stopped, or may think it is *Nibbāna*, and say: ‘I knew nothing then.’ If one practises in this way, one can eventually stay in *bhavaṅga* for a long time.

In any kind of practice, be it good or bad, one will achieve one’s aim, if one practises again and again. ‘Practice makes perfect.’ In this case too, if one practises again and again, in the same way, one may fall into *bhavaṅga* for a long time. Why does one say one knew nothing? Because the object of the *bhavaṅga* is the object of the near-death consciousness in the past life. That object may be *kamma*, a *kamma* sign (*kamma-nimitta*) or a destination sign (*gati-nimitta*). But one cannot see this unless one has discerned dependent origination. It is only once one has discerned dependent origination that one sees that the *bhavaṅga* took one of those objects.¹⁷⁶

If one thinks it is *Nibbāna*, this idea is a very big ‘rock’ blocking the way to *Nibbāna*. If one does not remove this big ‘rock’, one cannot attain *Nibbāna*. Why does this idea occur? Many yogis think that a disciple (*sāvaka*) cannot know mentality-materiality as taught by The Buddha. So they think it is not necessary to develop sufficiently deep concentration in order to discern mentality-materiality and their causes as taught by The Buddha. Thus their concentration is only weak, and *bhavaṅgas* still occur, because the *jhāna* factors too are weak. Their concentration cannot be maintained for long. If one purposely practises to fall into *bhavaṅga*, one will achieve one’s aim, but it is not *Nibbāna*. To attain *Nibbāna* one must practise the seven stages of purification step by step; without knowing ultimate mentality, ultimate materiality, and their causes, one cannot attain *Nibbāna*.

The problem of thinking that the attainment of knowing nothing is *Nibbāna* needs perhaps to be explained further.

Nibbāna is *vi-saṅkhāra*: that is, ‘without formations’. Formations (*saṅkhārā*) are mentality-materiality and their causes, and *Nibbāna* is without either of them. The mind that knows *Nibbāna* is called *vi-saṅkhāra-gata-*

¹⁷⁶ For details, see Table 1d ‘Death and Rebirth’, p.188.

·citta. But it is not itself *vi-saṅkhāra*: the act of seeing Nibbāna requires the formation of consciousness.

The consciousness that is formed when, for example, a Buddha or Arahant enters the Fruition Attainment, and sees Nibbāna, is the Arahant Fruition-Consciousness (*Arahatta-Phala-Citta*), together with its associated mental factors. If the Arahant Fruition-Consciousness is entered upon from the first jhāna, and is thus a first-jhāna Arahant Fruition-Consciousness, there are thirty-seven mental formations. This principle applies in all the other Path and Fruition Knowledges. Together with their associated mental factors, they all take Nibbāna as object; and Nibbāna has the characteristic of peaceful bliss.

Whenever a Noble One (*Ariya*) enters the Fruition Attainment, she or he knows Nibbāna, and with the Fruition Knowledge enjoys the peaceful bliss that is Nibbāna.

It is therefore, impossible to enter one of the Fruition attainments and say about it: ‘Everything stopped: I knew nothing then.’ Before entering a Fruition Attainment, one determines how long it will last, for example one or two hours. And for the duration of that period, Nibbāna is known continuously as the peaceful bliss it is (*santi-sukha*).

It is therefore clear that when one knows nothing, it is not because one has attained Nibbāna; it is because one’s concentration is still weak.

When the *ān-āpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta* appears, the yogi’s mind may fall into bhavaṅga, because the jhāna factors are not yet strong. Just like, when learning to walk, a small child who is too weak to stand by himself, will fall down again and again. In the same way, at the access concentration stage, the jhāna factors are still not fully developed, and one may fall into bhavaṅga: it is not Nibbāna.

To avoid falling into bhavaṅga, and to develop concentration further, you need the help of the five controlling faculties: faith (*saddhā*), effort (*vīriya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), to push the mind and fix it on the *paṭibhāga-nimitta*. It takes effort to make the mind know the *paṭibhāga-nimitta* again and again, mindfulness to not forget it, and wisdom to know it.

At the absorption-jhāna stage, the jhāna factors are fully developed. Just like a strong and powerful man can stand up straight the whole day, a yogi can, taking the *paṭibhāga-nimitta* as object, stay in absorption jhāna for a long time without falling into bhavaṅga. Complete and uninterrupted absorption may continue for one, two, three hours, or more. At that time one does not hear a sound. One’s mind does not go to other objects. Apart from the *paṭibhāga-nimitta*, one knows nothing.

Question 3.3 Under what conditions, or in what state, can we say that a meditation experience is access concentration or absorption concentration?

Answer 3.3 If many bhavaṅgas occur during concentration, one can say that it is access concentration. But the nimitta must be the *paṭibhāga-nimitta*. Only if one is able to stay in complete absorption for a long time, without interruption, with also the *paṭibhāga-nimitta* as object, can one say it is absorption concentration.

How does a yogi know his mind is falling into bhavaṅga? When he notices that he has very often been unaware of the *paṭibhāga-nimitta*, he knows there were bhavaṅgas. His mind may also for brief moments have thought of an object other than the *paṭibhāga-nimitta*. This does not happen in absorption concentration. In absorption concentration there is only complete absorption without interruption.

Question 3.4 Is there access concentration, as well as absorption concentration at each of the four jhānas? What are their characteristics?

Answer 3.4 Let us take the example of the *ān-āpāna* jhānas, which take the *ān-āpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta* as object. There are four levels of access concentration, and four levels of absorption concentration. At each level there is access jhāna first, and then absorption jhāna. Both take the same *ān-āpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta* as object. So it is the level of concentration that is different.

In the first, second, and third access-jhāna, there are five jhāna factors. But in the fourth access-jhāna, there is no bliss (*sukha*), only application (*vitakka*), sustainment (*vicāra*), equanimity (*upekkhā*) and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*). Although they take the same nimitta as object, the jhāna factors become increasingly powerful at each access-jhāna.

The jhāna factors at the first access-jhāna suppress physical pain (*kāyika-dukkha-vedanā*); at the second, mental suffering (*domanassa-vedanā*); at the third, physical pleasant feeling (*kāyika-sukha-vedanā*); and at the fourth, mental pleasant feeling or happiness (*somanassa-vedanā*). This is how we distinguish between the different levels of access concentration, especially the fourth. At that level, the breath is the subtlest, and has nearly stopped. It stops completely at the fourth absorption-jhāna.

We distinguish between the absorption-jhānas also by looking at the jhāna factors. In the first absorption jhāna, five jhāna factors are present: application, sustainment, joy, bliss and one-pointedness; in the second, three: joy, bliss and one-pointedness; in the third, two: bliss and one-pointedness; and in the fourth, also two: equanimity and one-pointedness. By looking at the jhāna factors, we can say, ‘This is the first absorption

jhāna’, ‘This is the second absorption jhāna’, etc. Also, here the concentration increases level by level. Fourth-jhāna concentration is the highest. How is it the highest? You should try for yourself. Many yogis report that the fourth jhāna is the best and the quietest.

Question 3.5 Under what conditions does a yogi drop or regress from absorption to access concentration? Under what conditions does a yogi in access concentration attain absorption concentration?

Answer 3.5 If the yogi does not respect his meditation practice, but respects objects other than the *paṭibhāga-nimitta*, many hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) will arise. Many thoughts of greed and hatred will arise. They arise due to unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*). Those objects reduce the concentration, because wholesome dhammas and unwholesome dhammas are always in opposition. When wholesome dhammas are strong and powerful, unwholesome dhammas are far away, and when (because of unwise attention) unwholesome dhammas are strong and powerful, wholesome dhammas are far away. Wholesome and unwholesome dhammas cannot arise simultaneously in one consciousness moment or mental process.

Here we need to understand wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) and unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*). When a yogi practises *ān-āpāna-sati* (mindfulness-of-breathing), and concentrates on the natural breath, his attention is wise attention. When the *uggaha-nimitta* or *paṭibhāga-nimitta* appears, and the yogi concentrates on it, his attention is still wise attention. If, in vipassanā meditation, a yogi sees: ‘This is materiality’, ‘This is mentality’, ‘This is cause’, ‘This is effect’, ‘This is impermanence’, ‘This is suffering’, or ‘This is non-self’, his attention is also wise attention.

But if he sees: ‘This is a man, a woman, a son, a daughter, a father, a mother, a deity, a brahmā, an animal, etc.’; ‘This is gold, money, etc.’ then his attention is unwise attention. Generally speaking, we can say that because of wise attention many wholesome dhammas arise, and because of unwise attention many unwholesome dhammas arise. If, while you are practising meditation, unwise attention arises, then hindrances or defilements will certainly follow; they are unwholesome dhammas. Those unwholesome dhammas reduce the concentration, or cause it to regress and drop.

If you look at your meditation object with wise attention, again and again, then wholesome dhammas will arise and increase. Jhāna wholesome dhammas, for example, are among those wholesome dhammas. So, if you concentrate on the nimitta, such as the *ān-āpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta*, again and again, it is wise attention. If you develop this wise attention to

full strength, then from access concentration you will attain absorption concentration.

Question 3.6 When a person dies, a *kamma-nimitta* may arise because of past wholesome or unwholesome kamma. Is this phenomenon similar to that which occurs during meditation, when images of past events, which the yogi had forgotten, appear?

Answer 3.6 There may be some similarity, but only in some cases. It may be similar to the arising of a *kamma-nimitta* in those whose death took place quickly.

Question 3.7 While meditating, images of events from more than thirty years back, which the yogi had forgotten, appear. Is this due to lack of mindfulness, which lets the mind leave the object?

Answer 3.7 It could be. But it could also be because of attention (*manasikāra*). Many yogis do not know about attention. Only once they have practised meditation on mentality do they understand it. Mental processes occur very quickly, so they do not understand that these images appear because of attention. But no formation occurs by itself, without a cause. This is because all formations are conditioned.

Question 3.8 If, when dying, a person has strong mindfulness, can he prevent a kamma sign (*kamma-nimitta*) of previous unwholesome or wholesome kamma from arising?¹⁷⁷

Answer 3.8 Strong, powerful mindfulness can prevent such nimittas from arising; but what is strong, powerful mindfulness? If a yogi enters jhāna, and keeps it completely stable right up to the time of death, you can say that the mindfulness of that jhāna is strong and powerful. That type of mindfulness can prevent an unwholesome sign or sensual-sphere wholesome sign from arising. It takes only the jhāna object, for example, an *ān-āpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta* or white-kasiṇa *paṭibhāga-nimitta*.

Another type of strong, powerful mindfulness is the mindfulness associated with vipassanā knowledge. If a yogi's vipassanā knowledge is the Formations-Equanimity Knowledge (*Saṅkhār-Upekkhā-Ñāṇa*), and if he practises vipassanā up to the near-death moment, then his near-death impulsion is vipassanā knowledge associated with strong and powerful mindfulness. That type of mindfulness can also prevent unwholesome signs from appearing, as well as prevent other wholesome signs from replacing his vipassanā sign. The vipassanā sign is the impermanent, suffering, or non-self nature of a chosen formation. He may die with such a sign as the object of his near-death impulsion (*maraṇ-āsanna-javana*). It can produce a

¹⁷⁷ For details in this regard, see Table 1d 'Death and Rebirth', p.188.

deva rebirth-linking consciousness (*paṭisandhi-citta*), so that he is spontaneously reborn as a deva.

Concerning the benefits that this type of yogi may get in his future life as a deva, The Buddha says in the ‘*Sotānugata*’ sutta of the *Āṅguttara Nikāya*, ‘*Catukka Nipāta*’.¹⁷⁸

*So mutṭhassati*¹⁷⁹ *kālaṃ kurumāno aññataraṃ devanikāyaṃ upapajjati. Tassa tattha sukhino dhammapadā plavanti. Dandho bhikkhave satuppādo, atha so satto khippameva visesagāmī hoti.*

Bhikkhus, an ordinary person (*puthujjana*) who has heard the Teachings, often repeated them, reflected upon them, and thoroughly penetrated them with vipassanā knowledge, if he dies, he may be reborn in one of the deva realms, where all formations appear clearly in his mind. He may be slow to reflect on the Dhamma or to do vipassanā, but he attains Nibbāna very quickly.

Why do formations appear clearly in his mind? Because the near-death impulsion consciousness of the previous human life, and the bhavaṅga consciousness of the following deva life take the same object, in this case the impermanent, suffering, or non-self nature of formations. The host, the bhavaṅga that is, already knows the vipassanā object, which is why vipassanā knowledge can easily be developed. So according to that sutta, strong mindfulness associated with vipassanā knowledge can prevent unwholesome signs from appearing, as well as other wholesome signs that may replace his vipassanā sign. You should try to possess this type of mindfulness before death takes place.

An example of this is the ‘*Sakka-Pañha*’ sutta, about three bhikkhus who practised samatha and vipassanā.¹⁸⁰ They had good morality and good concentration, but their minds inclined towards life as male *gandhabbas*.¹⁸¹ When they died they went to the deva realm. They were reborn as very beautiful and radiant *gandhabbas*, who looked sixteen years old. During their lives as bhikkhus, the three bhikkhus had gone to a lay-woman’s house every day for almsfood, and had taught her Dhamma. She had become a Stream-Enterer, and when she died, she was reborn as Gopaka, the son of Sakka. The three *gandhabbas* performed for the son of Sakka, and he saw that they were very beautiful and radiant. He thought: ‘They are very beautiful and radiant. What was their kamma?’

¹⁷⁸ A.IV.IV.v.1 ‘*Sotānugata-Suttaṃ*’ (‘The One-Who-Has-Heard Sutta’), mentioned also p.147.

¹⁷⁹ *Mutṭhassati* means ‘muddled mindfulness’, but in this context, The Buddha means that he is reborn as an ordinary person (*puthujjana*) and not a Noble One (*Ariya*).

¹⁸⁰ D.ii.8 ‘*Sakka-Pañha-Suttaṃ*’ (‘The Sakka’s Questions Sutta’)

¹⁸¹ Musicians and dancers in the deva realm.

He saw they were the three bhikkhus who had come to his house when he was a laywoman. He knew that their virtue, concentration and wisdom had been very good. So he reminded them of their past life. He said: ‘When you listened to the teachings and practised the Dhamma, what were your eyes and ears directed at?’ Two of the gandhabbas remembered their past lives and were ashamed. They developed samatha and vipassanā again, quickly attained the Non-Returning Path and Fruition, and died. They were reborn in the realm of *Brahma-Parohitā* (Brahma’s Ministers),¹⁸² and attained Arahantship there. The third bhikkhu was not ashamed, and remained a *gandhabba*.

So, it is not necessary to contact a life insurance company. This type of mindfulness is the best insurance.

Question 3.9 Is it necessary when discerning the twelve characteristics in four-elements meditation, to start with hardness, roughness, and heaviness in that sequence? Can one choose to start with any one of the characteristics?

Answer 3.9 In the beginning we can start with a characteristic that is easy to discern. But once we can discern all the characteristics easily and clearly, we must follow the sequence given by The Buddha: earth element (*pathavī-dhātu*), water element (*āpo-dhātu*), fire element (*tejo-dhātu*), and wind element (*vāyo-dhātu*). This is because that sequence produces strong, powerful concentration. When we see the rūpa-kalāpas, and are able to easily discern the four elements in each one, the sequence is not important; what is very important then is to discern them simultaneously.

Why? The life span of a rūpa-kalāpa is very short. It may be less than a billionth of a second. When discerning the four elements in a rūpa-kalāpa there is not enough time to recite ‘earth, water, fire, wind’, so we must discern them simultaneously.

Question 3.10 Practising four-elements meditation enables one to balance the four elements in the body. One may at some time get sick because the four elements are out of balance. When one is sick, can one practise four-elements meditation with strong mindfulness to cure the sickness?

Answer 3.10 There are many types of affliction. Some afflictions are due to previous kamma, such as The Buddha’s back pain. Some afflictions are due to unbalanced elements. The afflictions born of previous kamma cannot be cured by balancing the four elements. But some of the afflictions that occur because of unbalanced elements may disappear when the yogi tries to balance them.

¹⁸² DA-II-8 ‘*Sakka-Pañha-Suttam*’ (‘The Sakka’s Questions Sutta’)

There are also afflictions that occur because of food, temperature (*utu*) or the mind (*citta*). If an affliction arises because of the mind, and we can cure the mind, the affliction may disappear; if the affliction arises because of temperature, fire element, as with cancer, malaria, etc., it can be cured only by taking medicine, not by balancing the elements. This is the same for afflictions born of unsuitable food.

Question 3.11 Before we attain the fourth jhāna, and eradicate¹⁸³ ignorance (*avijjā*), many unwholesome thoughts still arise due to bad habits. For example, in our daily life (outside a meditation retreat) we know that greed or hatred arises. Can we use foulness meditation (*asubha*) or loving-kindness meditation (*mettā-bhāvanā*) to remove them? Or should we ignore them and just concentrate on our meditation subject, and let them disappear automatically?

Answer 3.11 Unwholesome kamma has ignorance (*avijjā*) as a latent cause, and unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*) as the proximate cause. Unwise attention is very harmful. If you are able to replace unwise attention with wise attention, the greed or hatred will disappear for a while, or maybe forever if the wise attention is very strong and powerful. We already discussed wise and unwise attention in a previous question.

You can use foulness meditation or loving-kindness meditation to remove greed and hatred. These meditations are also wise attention. But vipassanā is the best weapon to destroy defilements. It is the best wise attention.

Question 3.12 How does the bhavaṅga function in the sensual sphere planes, fine-material sphere planes, immaterial sphere planes and supramundane sphere planes? Would the Sayadaw please explain with examples?¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ The fourth jhāna does not eradicate ignorance; it only suppresses ignorance. See further Q&As 7.7, 7.8 and 7.9 p.232ff.

¹⁸⁴ bhavaṅga: This does not correspond to the subconscious/unconscious as hypothesized in Freudian psychology: two consciousnesses cannot arise at the same time. The life-continuum consciousness is a flow of resultant consciousnesses, maintained by the kamma that matured at the time of death in the previous life. It maintains the continuum of mentality between mental processes. It functions also as the mind door (*mano-dvāra*). Once the kamma that produces this life comes to an end, the life-continuum consciousness of this life stops. In the non-Arahant, a new life-continuum consciousness, with a new object, arises after the first consciousness of the new life, i.e. after the rebirth-linking consciousness there arise sixteen life-continuum consciousnesses. Being produced by the same kamma as the kamma that produces the rebirth-linking consciousness, the new life-continuum consciousness takes the same object (see Table 1d, 'Death and Rebirth', p.188). Hence, the life-continuum is not a 'subconscious undercurrent' operating 'below' the mental processes of the six doors. As can be seen in table '1c: The Five-Door Process', (p.168), prior to the arising of a five-door process, the flow of life-continuum consciousnesses is

(Please see further next page.)

Answer 3.12 The function of the bhavaṅga is the same on the first three types of plane.¹⁸⁵ It arises so the consciousness moments in a life do not stop; it maintains the mentality, which is the life-continuum. This is because the kamma that produces this life has not yet been exhausted. Since there is materiality-mentality (*nāma-rūpa*) in the sensual and fine-material sphere planes, and mentality in the immaterial sphere planes, there is also a bhavaṅga there.

In the sensual sphere planes (*kām-āvacara-bhūmi*), the bhavaṅga may have as object a kamma, kamma sign (*kamma-nimitta*) or rebirth sign (*gati-nimitta*). For example, one being's bhavaṅga may have as object the Kyaikhtiyo Pagoda, while another's may have as object the Shwedagon Pagoda:¹⁸⁶ these objects are concepts.

In the fine-material sphere plane (*rūp-āvacara-bhūmi*), the bhavaṅga has as object only a kamma sign: no kamma and no rebirth sign. The bhavaṅga of one on a fine-material sphere plane is called the fine-material sphere resultant jhāna (*rūp-āvacara-vipāka-jhāna*), because it is the result of the jhāna-attainment at death in the foregoing life. Since the object of the bhavaṅga is thus the same as the object of the jhāna attainment, the object of the bhavaṅga will depend upon the jhāna. For example, the bhavaṅga of one who has reached a fine material sphere plane due to *ān-āpāna* jhāna will have as object the *ān-āpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta*, while the one who is there due to mettā-jhāna will have as object all beings in the infinite universe: both these objects are concepts.

In the immaterial sphere planes (*a-rūp-āvacara-bhūmi*), the bhavaṅga has as object only kamma or a kamma sign: no rebirth sign. For example, on the plane of the base of boundless space one's bhavaṅga will have as object boundless space, and on the plane of the base of nothingness, it will have as object the absence of the base-of-boundless-space consciousness: both these objects are concepts.

On the plane of the base of boundless consciousness, one's bhavaṅga will have as object the consciousness of the base of boundless space, and on the plane of the base of neither perception nor non-perception, it will

arrested. And it is resumed once the mental process is complete (see also table '1b: The Mind-Door Process', p.164). The life-continuum cognizes always the same object, which is independent of the objects that enter the six doors: that is why it is called process-separate (*vīthi-mutta*). See also explanation, p.159.

¹⁸⁵ The three spheres: 1) The sensuous sphere (*kām-āvacara*), which includes the human world, the animal-, ghost-, and asura worlds, the hells and the deva-worlds. 2) The fine-material sphere (*rūp-āvacara*), which includes the Brahma worlds, where the materiality is very subtle. 3) The immaterial sphere (*a-rūp-āvacara*), where there is only mentality.

¹⁸⁶ The two most famous pagodas in Myanmar.

have as object the consciousness of the Base of Nothingness: being consciousnesses, these objects are kamma.

When we say ‘sensual sphere planes’, ‘fine-material sphere planes’ and ‘immaterial sphere planes’, we are referring to planes of existence that exist, places that exist. But when we say ‘supramundane plane’ (*lokuttara-bhūmi*), the word ‘plane’ is only a metaphor. It is, in fact, not a place at all. When we say ‘supramundane plane’ we mean only the four Paths, four Fruitions, and Nibbāna; not a place. Hence, there is no bhavaṅga in the supramundane plane. There is none in the four Path and four Fruition consciousnesses, and since there is no mentality-materiality (*nāma-rūpa*) in Nibbāna, there is no mentality for the bhavaṅga to maintain, which means there cannot be any bhavaṅga in Nibbāna.

Question 3.13 What is the difference between mundane jhānas (*lokiya-jhāna*) and supramundane jhānas (*lokuttara-jhāna*)?

Answer 3.13 The mundane jhānas are the four fine-material sphere jhānas and four immaterial-sphere jhānas (*a-rūp-āvacara-jhāna*), that is, the eight attainments (*samāpatti*). The supramundane jhānas are the jhāna factors associated with the Path and Fruition Knowledges. When you discern the mental formations of, for example, the mundane fine-material sphere first jhāna as impermanence, suffering or non-self, and if you see Nibbāna, your Path Knowledge is the first jhāna. This is a supramundane jhāna.

Why? In the mundane fine-material sphere first jhāna, which was the object of vipassanā, there are the five jhāna factors: application, sustainment, joy, bliss and one-pointedness. In the supramundane first jhāna there are the same five. This is how the Path and Fruition can be the first jhāna Path, and first jhāna Fruition. The other jhānas can in the same way be (the conditions for their respective) supramundane (jhānas).

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS 4

Question 4.1 Is a Bodhisatta, including Arimetteyya Bodhisatta, an ordinary person (*puthujjana*)? If Arimetteyya Bodhisatta is an ordinary person like us, then at the time for him to come down to become Metteyya Buddha, what is the difference between the conditions for him to become a Buddha and for us?²⁵⁸

Answer 4.1 The difference is that his *pāramī* have matured, as they had for our Sakyamuni Buddha as the Bodhisatta Prince Siddhattha. Such Bodhisattas will for many lives have been cultivating their *pāramī*. There are ten *pāramī*:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) Generosity.....(<i>dāna</i>) | 6) Patience.....(<i>khaṇṭī</i>) |
| 2) Virtue.....(<i>sīla</i>) | 7) Truthfulness.....(<i>sacca</i>) |
| 3) Renunciation.....(<i>nekkhamma</i>) | 8) Resolution.....(<i>adhiṭṭhāna</i>) |
| 4) Wisdom.....(<i>paññā</i>) | 9) Loving-kindness.....(<i>mettā</i>) |
| 5) Energy.....(<i>vīriya</i>) | 10) Equanimity.....(<i>upekkhā</i>) |

When these ten *pāramī* are mature, they push the Bodhisatta to renounce the world, even though he is enjoying sensual pleasures. In his last life, a Bodhisatta marries and has a son; this is a law of nature. We forget the names of Metteyya Bodhisatta's wife and son. According to the Theravāda *Tipiṭaka*, it is his last life, because no Arahant, including The Buddha, is reborn after his Parinibbāna. His Parinibbāna is the end of his round of rebirths. He will not be reborn anywhere.²⁵⁹

Take our Sakyamuni Bodhisatta: in his last life, before his enlightenment, he was an ordinary person. How? When he was sixteen years old, he became Prince Siddhattha and married princess Yasodharā. They had a son. He enjoyed sensual pleasures for more than thirteen years. He did not have five hundred female deities on his left, and five hundred female deities on his right, but was surrounded by twenty thousand princesses. This is *kāma-sukhallik-anuyogo*: devotion to sensual pleasures.

After he had renounced those sensual pleasures, he practised self-mortification in the Uruvela forest. After six years of that futile practice, he abandoned it, practised the middle way, and before long attained enlightenment. After His enlightenment, in His first sermon, the '*Dhamma-Cakka-Pavattana*' sutta, He declared:²⁶⁰

Kāmesu kāma-sukhallik-anuyogo hīno, gammo, puthujjaniko, an-ariyo, an-at-

²⁵⁸ The Most Venerable Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw's audience was almost only Buddhists of the Mahāyana tradition, for whom the goal is not Arahantship but Buddhahood.

²⁵⁹ See also The Buddha's words quoted Q&A, 5.4, p.178.

²⁶⁰ S.V.XII.ii.1 'The Dhamma-Wheel Setting-in-Motion Sutta'

tha-saṁhito.

This enjoyment of sensual pleasures is inferior (*hīno*), the practice of villagers (*gammo*), the practice of ordinary persons (*puthujjaniko*). It is the practice of unenlightened ones (*an.ariyo*). It is unbeneficial (*an-attha-saṁhito*).

This means that the enjoyment of sensual pleasures is not the practice of enlightened ones. And sensual pleasures are unbeneficial because although they provide mundane benefit such as human happiness, deva happiness and brahma happiness, they do not provide the supramundane benefit that is Nibbāna happiness, which can be enjoyed only by Path- and Fruition Knowledge.

So, in His first sermon The Buddha declared that anyone who enjoys sensual pleasures is a ordinary person. When he was still a Bodhisatta, he too had enjoyed sensual pleasures, that is, with Yasodharā in the palace. At that time, he too was a ordinary person, because enjoyment of sensual pleasures is the practice of a ordinary person.

This is not only for our Bodhisatta, but for every Bodhisatta. There may be many Bodhisattas here among the present audience. You should consider this carefully: are the Bodhisattas here ordinary persons (*puthujjana*) or Noble Ones (*Ariya*)? We think you may know the answer.

Question 4.2 After finishing the meditation course, can a yogi attain Path (*Magga-Ñāṇa*) and Fruition Knowledges (*Phala-Ñāṇa*) and? If not, why not?

Answer 4.2 Maybe he can; it depends on his *pāramī*. Take, for example, the case of Bāhiya Dārucīriya.²⁶¹ He practised samatha-vipassanā up to the Formations-Equanimity Knowledge (*Saṅkhār-Upekkhā-Ñāṇa*) in the time of Kassapa Buddha's dispensation. He had about twenty thousand years of practice, but did not attain any Path and Fruition Knowledges, because he had received a definite prophecy from Padumuttara Buddha. It was that he was to be the *hipp-ābhiñña*, the quickest to attain Arahantship in Sakyamuni's dispensation. Hence, his *pāramī* would mature only then.²⁶² In the same way, other disciples (*sāvaka*), who attained the Four Analytical Knowledges (*Paṭisambhidā-Ñāṇa*) in this Sakyamuni Buddha's dispensation, had also practised samatha-vipassanā up to the Formations-Equanimity Knowledge in the dispensation of previous Buddhas; this is a law of nature. The four analytical knowledges they attained are:

- 1) The Analytical Knowledge of Meaning (*Attha-Paṭisambhidā-Ñāṇa*): this is the vipassanā knowledge of effect, the Noble Truth of Suffering.

²⁶¹ Ap.II.iv.6 (&A.) 'Bāhiya-Thera-Apadāna' ('The Elder Bāhiya's Heroic Deed')

²⁶² AA.IXIV.iii.216 'Bāhiya-Dārucīriya-Thera-Vatthu' ('The Case of the Elder Bāhiya Dārucīriya')

- 2) The Analytical Knowledge of Dhamma (*Dhamma-Paṭisambhidā-Ñāṇa*): this is the vipassanā knowledge of cause: the Noble Truth of the Cause for Suffering.
- 3) The Analytical Knowledge of Enunciation of Language (*Nirutti-Paṭisambhidā-Ñāṇa*): this is knowledge of grammar, especially Pali grammar.
- 4) The Analytical Knowledge of the Kinds of Knowledge (*Paṭibhāna-Paṭisambhidā-Ñāṇa*): this is the vipassanā knowledge that knows the previous three analytical knowledges.

There are five causes (*pāramī*) for attaining these four analytical knowledges:²⁶³

- 1) Achievement (*adhigama*): this is the attainment of the Arahant Path and Fruition, or any other Path and Fruition.
- 2) Mastery of scriptures (*pariyatti*): this is learning the Dhamma scriptures.
- 3) Hearing (*savana*): this is listening to Dhamma explanations attentively and respectfully.
- 4) Inquiry (*paripucchā*): this is discussing the difficult passages and explanations in the texts and commentaries.
- 5) Prior effort (*pubbayoga*): this is the practice of samatha-vipassanā up to the Formations-Equanimity Knowledge (*Sanṅkhār-Upekkhā-Ñāṇa*) during the dispensations of former Buddhas.

If those who practise in this dispensation do not attain Nibbāna, it is because their *pāramī* have not yet matured. The reason may also be that they have received a definite prophecy from a previous Buddha, or have made an aspiration to escape from the round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*) in a future dispensation such as Arimetteyya Buddha's. For example, there were two thousand bhikkhunīs, all ordinary Arahants, who attained Parinibbāna on the same day as Yasodharā. They had, during Dīpaṅkara Buddha's time, made an aspiration to escape from the round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*) in the dispensation of Sakyamuni Buddha, which would be four incalculables and one hundred thousand aeons later. To become an ordinary Arahant does not require that one cultivate one's *pāramī* for that long, but these two thousand bhikkhunīs had remained in the round of rebirths for that long period because of their aspiration only, not because of a definite prophecy.

Question 4.3 A yogi who has finished the meditation course, but not yet attained the Path Knowledge (*Magga-Ñāṇa*) and Fruition Knowledge (*Phala-*

²⁶³ VsM.xiv.429 'Paññā-Pabheda-Kathā' ('How Many Kinds of Understanding Are There? [title in PP]' PP.xiv.28)

·Ñāṇa), if his concentration drops, will his vipassanā knowledge also drop? Can he be reborn in a woeful state (*apāya*)?

Answer 4.3 Maybe his vipassanā knowledge will also drop, but it is very rare. If he does not practise for a long time, his samatha-vipassanā may slowly weaken. The potency of kamma, however, remains.

There is an example of this in the Pali Texts.²⁶⁴ It takes place in Sri Lanka. Some thirty bhikkhus and novices (*sāmaṇeras*) had paid homage at the Great Shrine at Kalyāṇī, and as they were coming down the forest track on to the main road, they saw a man coming in the opposite direction. He had been working in a charcoal burner's field beside the road; his body was smeared with ashes, and the single yellow loin-cloth he wore hitched up was also smeared with ashes, so that he seemed like a charcoal stump. Having done his day's work, he had picked up a bundle of half-burnt wood and was coming along a by-path with his hair hanging down his back; and he stood facing the bhikkhus.

The novices, when they saw him, joked with each other, saying, 'That is your father, that is your grandfather, your uncle!' and laughed as they went along. Then they asked 'What is your name, lay follower?' On being asked his name, the man was remorseful and, putting down his bundle of wood and arranging his clothes, he did obeisance to the Mahāthera in order to detain him for a while.

The bhikkhus waited, but the novices came up and laughed even in front of the Mahāthera. The man said to the Mahāthera: 'Bhante, you laugh on seeing me. You think you fulfill the bhikkhu's life just on account of your robes. But you have not attained so much as mental one-pointedness.

'I was once a recluse like you, and I was mighty with the psychic powers and powerful in this dispensation. I treated the air like the earth and the earth like the air; I treated the far like the near and the near like the far. I penetrated in a moment the one hundred thousand worlds systems. You see my hands now? Now they are like the hands of a monkey'.

Then pointing to a tree, he said further, 'Sitting under that tree I would touch with these very hands the moon and the sun. I would sit with the moon and the sun as the ground on which to rub these very feet. Such were my psychic powers, but they vanished through negligence. Do not be negligent. Through negligence people reach ruin such as this. But those who live strenuously make an end of birth, old age and death.

²⁶⁴ VbhA.viii.1 'Suttanta-Bhājanīya-Vaṇṇanā' ('Sutta-Classification Description')

Therefore, take me as an example, and do not neglect practising samatha-vipassanā wholesome dhammas. Be strenuous, Venerable Sirs.’

Thus, he admonished and warned them. Impelled by the urgency of his words, standing in that place, thirty Bhikkhus practised samatha-vipassanā and attained Arahantship. So samatha-vipassanā may drop temporarily because of negligence (*pamāda*), but the potency of kamma remains.

There are four types of person who attain Nibbāna. The first type is a Paccekabuddha, which we shall not discuss. The remaining three types are: 1) a Bodhisatta, 2) a chief disciple (*agga-sāvaka*) or great disciple (*mahā-sāvaka*), and 3) an ordinary disciple (*pakati-sāvaka*).

- 1) Our Bodhisatta had the eight attainments (*samāpatti*) and five mundane psychic powers during Dīpaṅkara Buddha’s time. He had in past lives also practised samatha-vipassanā up to the Formations-Equanimity Knowledge (*Saṅkhār-Upekkhā-Ñāṇa*). Had he really wanted to attain Nibbāna, he could have attained it quickly, by listening to a short stanza by Dīpaṅkara Buddha about the Four Noble Truths. But he did not want only to attain Nibbāna, so he made an aspiration to be a Buddha in the future, after which he received a definite prophecy from Dīpaṅkara Buddha.

During the four incalculables (*a-saṅkhyeyya*) and one hundred thousand aeons (*kappa*) which followed, that is from Dīpaṅkara Buddha’s time to Kassapa Buddha’s time, our Bodhisatta was ordained as a bhikkhu in nine lives, each time under the guidance of a Buddha. In each life as a bhikkhu, our Bodhisatta’s training included seven practices:²⁶⁵

- i) Study of the Three Piṭakas by recitation²⁶⁶ (*tipiṭakam Buddha-vacanam uggamhitvā*)
- ii) Purification in the four types of morality²⁶⁷ (*catu pārisuddhi sīle supati-tthāya*)
- iii) The thirteen ascetic practices (*terasa dhutaṅgāni samādāya*)

²⁶⁵ MA.II.iv.1 ‘*Ghaṭikāra-Suttaṃ*’ (‘The Ghaṭikāra Sutta’). This text lists only 1, 2, 3 and 4, with a fifth being: *gata-paccāgata-vattam pūrayamānā samanadhammanī karontā* (practising the ‘going & going-back duty recluse practice’), which refers to full-time meditation (samatha and vipassanā), also when going out for alms, and going back to the dwelling from alms. From sources that explain the Bodhisatta’s practice, this fifth one may be understood specifically to be 5, 6 & 7. In other contexts, however, *samaṇa dhamma* (ascetic practices) refers to all these seven practices.

²⁶⁶ This is *gantha-dhura* (book burden/obligation), which is also called *pariyatti* (learning), and 2-7 are *vipassanā-dhura* (Vipassanā burden/obligation), which is also called *paṭipatti* (practice). See p.278.

²⁶⁷ For the four types of morality purification, see Q&A 2.3, p.77.

- iv) Always the forest-dweller ascetic practice²⁶⁸ (*araññam pavisitvā*)
- v) The eight attainments (*aṭṭha samāpattiyo*)
- vi) The five mundane psychic powers (*pañca abhinnā*)
- vii) Vipassanā meditation up to (*vipassanaṃ vaḍḍhatvā*) the Conformity Knowledge²⁶⁹ (*yāva anuloma-ñānāṃ*)

These *pāramī* must be fulfilled for the attainment of Omniscient Knowledge (*Sabbaññuta-Ñāṇa*). But before his *pāramī* had matured, that is, from the time of his definite prophecy till his birth as Prince Siddhattha, our Bodhisatta was sometimes reborn in the animal kingdom because of previous unwholesome kamma. The lives as a bhikkhu and the lives as an animal, however, were very far apart. This is the nature of a Bodhisatta.

- 2) Some Chief Disciples will also have received a definite prophecy; for example, the Venerables Sāriputta and Mahāmoggallāna had received one from Anomadassī Buddha. Also great disciples will sometimes have received a definite prophecy; the Venerable Kassapa and The Venerable Ānanda had received one from Padumuttara Buddha. In our Buddha's time, all these disciples became Arahants possessed of the Four Analytical Knowledges.²⁷⁰ This type of Arahants will also have been skilful in samatha-vipassanā up to the Formations-Equanimity Knowledge (*Sankhār-Upekkhā-Ñāṇa*), in times of many previous Buddhas; this is a law of nature. Even so, from the time of their definite prophecy till the time of our Buddha, some of them were sometimes reborn in one of the four woeful states, because of unwholesome kamma, sometimes together with our Bodhisatta. This is the nature of a chief or great disciple.²⁷¹
- 3) As for ordinary disciples, if they have practised samatha-vipassanā thoroughly up to the Cause-Apprehending Knowledge (*Paccaya-Pariggaha-Ñāṇa*) or the Arise&Perish Knowledge (*Udaya-Bbaya-Ñāṇa*), or the Formations-Equanimity Knowledge (*Sankhār-Upekkhā-Ñāṇa*), they will not be reborn in one of the four woeful realms (*apāya*) after death, even though they may not have attained Path and Fruition in this life. This is explained in the *Visuddhi-Magga* as:

²⁶⁸ Although the forest-dweller practice is included in the thirteen ascetic practices, the Commentary mentions it separately for emphasis.

²⁶⁹ This is the Formations-Equanimity Knowledge (*Sankhār-Upekkhā-Ñāṇa*).

²⁷⁰ For the Four Analytical Knowledges, see Q&A 4.2, p.142.

²⁷¹ VsM.xiv.429 'Paññā-Pabhedā-Kathā' ('How Many Kinds of Understanding Are There? [title in PP]' PP.xiv.28)

...laddhassāso laddhapatiṭṭho niyatagatiko cūḷa-sotāpanno nāma hoti
 ...he has found relief in the Buddha's Dispensation, he has found a secure place, he has a
 sure, good destination, so he is called a Lesser Stream-Enterer (*Cūḷa Sot-Āpanna*).

Lesser Stream-Enterers may thus be reborn in the deva realm, and then there are four things that can happen. In the '*Sotānugata*' sutta, The Buddha taught which four:²⁷²

- 1) If, as soon as he attains rebirth in the deva realm, the Lesser Stream-Enterer reflects on the Dhamma, it will be clear to his vipassanā knowledge, and he can attain Nibbāna quickly.
- 2) If he does not attain Nibbāna by reflecting on the Dhamma with vipassanā knowledge, he can attain Nibbāna by listening to a bhikkhu who has psychic powers, and has come to the deva realm to teach the Dhamma.
- 3) If he does not get the opportunity to listen to the Dhamma from a bhikkhu, he may get the opportunity to listen to it from Dhamma-teaching devas (*Dhamma-kathika-deva*), like Sanaṅkumāra Brahmā, etc. and attain Nibbāna by listening to them.
- 4) If he does not get the chance to listen to the Dhamma from Dhamma-teaching devas, he may get the chance to meet friends who were fellow yogis in his past human life in a dispensation. Those fellow yogis may say, for example: 'Oh friend, please remember this and that Dhamma which we practised in the human world.' He may then remember the Dhamma, and if he practises vipassanā, he can attain Nibbāna very quickly.

An example of a Lesser Stream-Enterer who was reborn in the deva realm, and who attained Nibbāna very quickly afterwards, is the Venerable Samaṇa-Devaputta.²⁷³ He was a bhikkhu who practised samatha-vipassanā earnestly. He died while practising, and was reborn in the deva realm. He did not know he had died, and continued meditating in his mansion in the deva realm. When the female devas in his mansion saw him, they realized he must have been a bhikkhu in his previous life, so they put a mirror in front of him and made a noise. He opened his eyes, and saw his image in the mirror. He was very disappointed, because he did not want to be a deva; he wanted only Nibbāna.

²⁷² A.IV.IV.v.1 '*Sotānugata-Suttaṃ*' ('The One Who Has Heard Sutta'), mentioned also p.102.

²⁷³ The case of Samaṇa-Devaputta is described in the commentary to S.I.I.vi.6 '*Accharā-Suttaṃ*' ('The Nymph Sutta').

So immediately he went down to The Buddha to listen to the Dhamma. The Buddha was teaching Dhamma about the Four Noble Truths. After listening to the Dhamma, Samaṇa-devaputta attained the Stream-Entry Path Knowledge (*Sot-Āpatti-Magga-Ñāṇa*) and Stream-Entry Fruition Knowledge (*Sot-Āpatti-Phala-Ñāṇa*).²⁷⁴

Thus, when an ordinary disciple practises samatha and vipassanā very hard, and even attains the Cause-Apprehending Knowledge, the Arise-&-Perish Knowledge, or the Formations-Equanimity Knowledge, although he may not attain a Path and Fruition in this life, the practice he has done does mean that he will very likely attain them in one of his future lives. At the time of death, a yogi may not have strong samatha or vipassanā, but because of the powerful samatha-vipassanā meditation wholesome kamma, a good nimitta appears at his mind door. Death may take place with that good nimitta as object, and because of this wholesome kamma, he will definitely reach a good place, and can there attain Nibbāna.

If, however, he practises vipassanā up to the moments of the near-death impulsion (*marañ-āsanna-javana*), he will be of the first type of person mentioned in the ‘*Sotānugata*’ sutta, which we just discussed.

Question 4.4 Can a yogi who has finished the course, but not yet attained Nibbāna, attain the Knowledge Standing on Phenomena (*Dhamma-Ṭṭhiti-Ñāṇa*)? If so, can it regress?

Answer 4.4 Yes, he can attain that knowledge.

Pubbe kho Susīma dhamma-ṭṭhitiñāṇaṃ pacchā Nibbāne ñāṇaṃ.

The Knowledge Standing on Phenomena (*Dhamma-Ṭṭhiti-Ñāṇa*) comes first, the [Path] Knowledge that takes Nibbāna as object comes next.

This was The Buddha’s explanation to Susīma.²⁷⁵ Susīma was a wanderer (*paribbājaka*), who ordained to ‘steal’ the Dhamma. But The Buddha saw that he would attain Nibbāna within a few days, so He accepted him.

Susīma had heard that many Arahants went to The Buddha and reported that they had attained Arahantship. So Susīma asked them whether they had the eight attainments and five psychic powers. They answered ‘No’. ‘If you do not have the eight attainments and five psychic powers, how did you attain Arahantship?’ Then they answered ‘*Paññā-vimuttā kho mayam āvuso Susīma*’: ‘Oh, friend Susīma, we are free from defilements, and attained Arahantship by the pure-vipassanā vehicle (*suddha-vipassanā yānika*).’ He did not understand, so he asked The Buddha the same question. The Buddha said:

²⁷⁴ S.II.v.6 ‘*Accharā-Suttam*’ (‘The Deva Sutta’) & SA.ibid.

²⁷⁵ S.II.vii.10 ‘*Susīma-Suttam*’ (‘The Susīma Sutta’)

Pubbe kho Susīma dhamma-ṭṭhitiñāṇaṃ pacchā Nibbāne ñāṇaṃ.

The Knowledge Standing on Phenomena comes first; the [Path] Knowledge that takes Nibbāna as object comes next.

What does this mean? The Path Knowledge is not the result of the eight attainments and five psychic powers; it is the result of vipassanā knowledges. So the Path Knowledge can occur only after the vipassanā knowledges have occurred. In the ‘*Susīma*’ sutta, all vipassanā knowledges are referred to as the Knowledge Standing on Phenomena. The Knowledge Standing on Phenomena is the vipassanā knowledge of the impermanent, suffering and non-self nature of all formations, conditioned things (*sankhāra-dhamma*), that is, mentality, materiality, and their causes. This is how the Knowledge Standing on Phenomena comes first, and the Path Knowledge that takes Nibbāna as object comes next.

Afterwards, The Buddha gave a Teaching on the Three Rounds²⁷⁶ (*teparivaṭṭa Dhamma-desanā*), which is like the ‘*An-Atta-Lakkhaṇa*’ sutta (‘Non-self-Characteristic Sutta’).²⁷⁷ When the teaching was finished, Susīma attained Arahantship, even though he did not have the eight attainments or five psychic powers. He too became a pure-vipassanā-vehicle person. At that time he understood clearly the meaning of The Buddha’s discourse.

If a yogi attains the Knowledge Standing on Phenomena, then although he does not attain Nibbāna in this life, his vipassanā knowledge will not decrease. His vipassanā kammic potency is still powerful. If he is an ordinary disciple, he may attain Nibbāna in his next life.

Question 4.5 Can one attain supramundane states²⁷⁸ with only access concentration?²⁷⁹

Answer 4.5 Yes, one can. At access concentration there is also bright, brilliant and radiant light. With that light, one can discern the rūpa-kalāpas, materiality, ultimate mentality, and their causes. One can then continue with vipassanā meditation stage by stage.

Question 4.6 Can one with only momentary concentration (*khaṇika-samādhi*), practise mindfulness of feeling (*vedānānupassanā sati-paṭṭhāna*) to attain supramundane states?²⁷⁹

Answer 4.6 Here we need to define momentary concentration. What is momentary concentration? There are two types of momentary concentration:

²⁷⁶ Here, the three rounds refer to the three characteristics: impermanence, suffering, and non-self.

²⁷⁷ S.III.I.II.i.7, quoted ‘Introduction’ p.26.

²⁷⁸ This would be a Path&Fruition attainment.

²⁷⁹ For a discussion of the different types of concentration, see also Q&A 3.1, p.95.

- 1) Momentary concentration in samatha meditation
- 2) Momentary concentration in vipassanā meditation

In samatha meditation there are three types of concentration:

- 1) Momentary concentration (a type of preparatory concentration)
- 2) Access concentration
- 3) Absorption concentration

The momentary concentration in samatha refers in particular to the concentration that takes a *paṭibhāga-nimitta* as object, like the *ān-āpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta*. It is the concentration before access concentration. This is for a samatha vehicle person (*samatha-yānika*).

There is another type of momentary concentration for a pure-vipassanā vehicle yogi (*suddha-vipassanā-yānika*). A pure-vipassanā-vehicle yogi must usually begin with four-elements meditation in order to attain access concentration or momentary concentration, and see the rūpa-kalāpas, and the four elements in one kalāpa. The *Visuddhi-Magga* says that is access concentration. But the sub-commentary to the *Visuddhi-Magga* says it is only a metaphor, not real access concentration, because real access concentration is close to jhāna concentration.²⁸⁰

Jhāna cannot, however, be attained with four-elements meditation. When one is able to see the four elements in individual rūpa-kalāpas there is deep concentration, and there is bright, brilliant and radiant light. Even so, one cannot attain jhāna using them as object. There are two reasons for this:

- 1) To see the four elements in individual rūpa-kalāpas is to see ultimate materiality (*paramattha-rūpa*), and to see ultimate materiality is deep and profound. One cannot attain jhāna with ultimate reality as object.²⁸¹
- 2) Even though one's concentration while analysing the rūpa-kalāpas is deep, it cannot become as deep as jhāna concentration. Why? Because the rūpa-kalāpas perish as soon as they arise. That means the

²⁸⁰ Access concentration is the three impulsion consciousnesses that follow the mind-door adverting consciousness and precede the Change-of-Lineage to the jhāna process. See table '1a: The Absorption-Process', p.44, and notes.

²⁸¹ VsM.xi.308 '*Catu-Dhātu Vavatthāna Bhāvanā*' ('Four-Elements Definition Meditation') PP.xi.42 explains that since four-elements meditation has as object phenomena with natural characteristics (*sa-bhāva-dhamm-ārammaṇattā*), one reaches only access-concentration: not absorption (jhāna). VsT then explains that this it is called access-concentration only according to popular speech (*ruḥi-vasena*). VsM.viii.177 '*Maraṇa-Ssati-Kathā*' ('Discussion of Death-Mindfulness') PP.viii.40 explains, however, that because of the preceding practice leading up to the supramundane- and second- and fourth immaterial attainments, then even though their object is also a phenomenon with natural characteristics, their concentration is nonetheless absorption concentration, jhāna. See also footnote 385, p.204.

object is always changing. One cannot attain jhāna with an object that is always changing.

Thus, since four-elements meditation does not produce jhāna, we may understand that the access concentration which takes the four elements in individual rūpa kalāpas as object is not real access concentration, but momentary concentration. Then let us discuss the momentary concentration in vipassanā. It is discussed in the section on *ān-āpāna-sati* (mindfulness-of-breathing) of the *Visuddhi-Magga*.²⁸²

Here you should know that vipassanā momentary concentration is seeing thoroughly the impermanent, suffering, and non-self nature of ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes. Without seeing ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes, how can there be vipassanā momentary concentration? It is impossible.

When a samatha-vehicle yogi wants to practise vipassanā, he enters the first jhāna, for example, the first *ān-āpāna* jhāna. This is samatha. He emerges from it, and discerns the thirty-four mental formations of the first jhāna, and then impermanence, suffering or non-self by seeing the arising and perishing nature of those jhāna formations (*jhāna dhamma*). He does the same with the second jhāna, etc.

At the time of discerning there is still concentration. He concentrates on the impermanent, suffering, or non-self nature of those jhāna formations. His concentration is at that time deep and profound, and does not go to other objects. This is momentary concentration, because the object is momentary; as soon as it arises, it passes away.

In the same way, when a yogi is practising vipassanā to see either the impermanent, suffering, or non-self nature of ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes, then usually his mind does not leave the object. His mind has sunk into one of the characteristics. This is also called momentary concentration.

If a yogi can see ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes thoroughly and clearly, without having done any samatha meditation, it is of course not necessary for him to practise samatha meditation. If not, he should cultivate one of the samatha meditation subjects, and develop sufficient concentration so as to be able to see ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes.

²⁸² VsM.viii.235 '*Ān-Āpāna-Sati-Kathā*' ('Mindfulness-of-Breathing Discussion') PP.viii.232

But in the ‘*Samādhi*’ sutta of the ‘*Khandha Saṃyutta*’ The Buddha says:²⁸³

Samādhim, bhikkhave, bhāvētha. Samāhito, bhikkhave, bhikkhu yathā-bhūtaṃ pajānāti.

Develop concentration, bhikkhus (*Samādhim, bhikkhave, bhāvētha*). **Concentrated, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu according to reality understands** (*yathā-bhūtaṃ pajānāti*).

So, you should cultivate concentration to know the five aggregates, their causes and cessation; you should cultivate concentration to know their nature of impermanence, suffering, and non-self. Their cessation you will be able to see at the time of the Arahant Path and Parinibbāna.

Also in the ‘*Samādhi*’ sutta of the *Sacca Saṃyutta*, The Buddha says one should cultivate concentration to know the Four Noble Truths.²⁸⁴

Now, if a yogi wants to contemplate only feeling, he should be aware of the following facts explained by The Buddha:

Sabbam, bhikkhave, an-abhijānaṃ a-parijānaṃ a-virājayaṃ a-ppajahaṃ a-bhabbo dukkha-kkhaṃyāya ...

Sabbañca kho, bhikkhave, abhijānaṃ parijānaṃ virājayaṃ pajahaṃ bhabbo dukkha-kkhaṃyāya.

The all, bhikkhus, not knowing directly (*sabbaṃ an-abhijānaṃ*), **not fully understanding** (*a-parijānaṃ*), **not having dispassion for** (*a-virājayaṃ*), **not abandoning** (*a-ppajahaṃ*), **it is impossible to destroy suffering** (*abhabbo dukkha-kkhaṃyāya*).

But, bhikkhus, the all knowing directly, fully understanding, having dispassion for, and abandoning, it is possible to destroy suffering (*bhabbo dukkha-kkhaṃyāya*).

This is from the first ‘*Aparijānana*’ sutta in the ‘*Saḷāyatana-Vagga*’ of the *Saṃyutta-Nikāya*.²⁸⁵ What is the all? It is all mentality and materiality and their causes.²⁸⁶ Unless one knows the all with the three types of full understanding (*pariññā*), one cannot attain Nibbāna. Only those who know the all with those three types of full knowledge can attain Nibbāna.

²⁸³ ‘*Samādhi-Suttaṃ*’ (‘The Concentration Sutta’) of the ‘*Khandha Saṃyutta*’ (‘Section on the Aggregates’) S.III.1, quoted, p.23.

²⁸⁴ ‘*Samādhi-Suttaṃ*’ (‘The Concentration Sutta’) of the ‘*Sacca Saṃyutta*’ (‘Section on the Truths’) S.V.XII quoted, p.12. See also related quotation, footnote 45, p.14.

²⁸⁵ S.IV.I.iii.4 ‘*Paṭhama-Aparijānana-Suttaṃ*’ (‘The First Non-Understanding Sutta’)

²⁸⁶ In the sutta, The Buddha explains the all as: the eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body-, and mind base; the sight-, sound-, odour-, flavour-, tangible- and dhamma base; the six types of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) that arise when those bases meet: eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body-, and mind consciousness respectively; the six types of contact (*phassa*) that arise with the six types of consciousness: eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body-, and mind contact respectively; and the feelings (*vedanā*) that arise with the six types of contact: pleasant feelings, painful feelings, and neither painful nor pleasant feelings, that arise because of eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body-, and mind contact.

In the same way, The Buddha says in the ‘*Kūṭāgāra*’ sutta of the ‘*Sacca-Vagga*’ that, without knowing the Four Noble Truths with vipassanā knowledge and Path Knowledge, one cannot reach the end of the round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*).²⁸⁷ So if a yogi wants to attain Nibbāna, he must try to know all mentality, materiality, and their causes with the three types of full understanding.

What are the three types of full understanding? They are:

- 1) Full Understanding as the Known (*ñāta-pariññā*): this is the Mentality-Materiality Definition Knowledge (*Nāma-Rūpa-Pariccheda-Ñāṇa*), and Cause-Apprehending Knowledge (*Paccaya-Pariggaha-Ñāṇa*). They are the vipassanā knowledges that know all ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes.
- 2) Full Understanding as Investigation (*tīraṇa-pariññā*): this is the Comprehension Knowledge (*Sammasana-Ñāṇa*), and Arise&Perish Knowledge (*Udaya-bbaya-Ñāṇa*). These two vipassanā knowledges comprehend clearly the impermanent, suffering, and non-self nature of ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes.
- 3) Full Understanding as Abandoning (*pahāna-pariññā*): this is the higher vipassanā knowledges from the Dissolution Knowledge (*Bhaṅga-Ñāṇa*) to the Path Knowledge (*Magga-Ñāṇa*).

The teaching in those two suttas, the ‘*Paṭhama Apariṇānana*’ sutta, and ‘*Kūṭāgāra*’ sutta, is very important. So, if a yogi wants to practise vipassanā beginning with mindfulness of feeling, he should remember the following:

- He must have discerned ultimate materiality.
- Discerning feeling alone is not enough: he must also discern the mental formations associated with feeling in the six-door processes.

Nevertheless, it is in fact possible to become enlightened by discerning only one dhamma, but that is only so long as all the other dhammas have been discerned before: either in this life or in a past life. Take for, example, the Venerable Sāriputta. When he heard the Venerable Assaji utter one sentence of Dhamma, he became a Stream-Enterer. Then he became a bhikkhu and practised meditation. In the ‘*Anupada*’ sutta,²⁸⁸ The Buddha describes how the Venerable Sāriputta was very skilled in discerning the individual mental formations of his jhāna attainments consecutive-

²⁸⁷ S.V.XII.v.4 ‘The Peaked House Sutta’, quoted ‘Introduction’ p.2.

²⁸⁸ M.III.ii.1 ‘*Anupada-Suttaṃ*’ (‘The Consecutive Sutta’)

ly.²⁸⁹ But even though the Venerable Sāriputta meditated hard, he did not attain Arahantship.

Then one day, The Buddha taught the ‘*Dīghanakha*’ sutta to the Venerable Sāriputta’s nephew, explaining one dhamma: feeling (*vedanā*).²⁹⁰ At this time, the Venerable Sāriputta was standing behind The Buddha fanning Him, and listening to the teaching. At the end of the teaching, the Venerable Sāriputta attained Arahantship, and his nephew attained Stream-Entry. He attained Arahantship by contemplating only one dhamma, but that was because he had meditated on all five aggregates beforehand.²⁹¹

We shall repeat: The Buddha said that if a bhikkhu does not know all mentality-materiality and their causes with the three types of full-understanding, he cannot attain Nibbāna. It is, therefore, not enough if a yogi tries to discern feeling alone, such as unpleasant feeling, and does not discern ultimate mentality-materiality thoroughly. Here ‘it is not enough’ means he will not attain Nibbāna.

Question 4.7 The Buddha was a great Arahant. What was the difference between Him, and disciples like the Venerables Sāriputta and Mahāmoggallāna who were also Arahants?

Answer 4.7 A Buddha’s Arahant Path is always associated with Omniscient Knowledge (*Sabbāññuta-Ñāṇa*), but the Arahant Path of disciples is not. The Arahant Path of disciples comprises the enlightenment (*bodhi*) of the three types of disciples:

- 1) Chief Disciple Enlightenment (*agga-sāvaka bodhi*)
- 2) Great Disciple Enlightenment (*mahā-sāvaka bodhi*)
- 3) Ordinary Disciple Enlightenment (*pakati-sāvaka bodhi*)

The Arahant Path of disciples is sometimes associated with the Four Analytical Knowledges (*Paṭisambhidā-Ñāṇa*);²⁹² sometimes with the Six Direct Knowledges (*Abhiññā*);²⁹³ sometimes with the three Direct Knowledges (*te-vijja*);²⁹⁴ or is sometimes a pure Arahant Path: either Both Ways Liber-

²⁸⁹ For details about how to discern the individual mental formations of one’s jhāna attainments, see ‘How You Discern Jhāna Mental-Processes’, p.161.

²⁹⁰ M.II.iii.4 ‘*Dīghanakha-Suttaṃ*’ (‘The Dīghanakha Sutta’)

²⁹¹ For details regarding the past practice of those who attain, see Q&A 4.3, p.143, and Q&A 5.2, p.176.

²⁹² For the Four Analytical Knowledges, see Q&A 4.2, p.142.

²⁹³ 1) various kinds of supernormal power (*iddhi-vidhā*), 2) divine ear (*dibba-sota*), 3) knowledge of the minds of others (*parassa ceto-pari-ñāṇa*), 4) divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*), 5) recollection of past lives (*pubbe-nivās-ānussati*), 6) destruction of the taints (*āsava-kkhaya*).

²⁹⁴ Nos. 4, 5, and 6 of the Direct Knowledges just mentioned.

ated (*Ubato-bhāga-Vimutta*),²⁹⁵ or Wisdom Liberated (*Paññā-Vvimutta*).²⁹⁶ But it is never associated with Omniscient Knowledge (*Sabbāññuta-Ñāṇa*). Thus, for example, the Venerables Sāriputta's and Mahāmoggallāna's Arahant Paths were not associated with Omniscient Knowledge. A Buddha's Arahant Path, on the other hand, is not only associated with Omniscient Knowledge, but also all the other knowledges, as well as all special qualities of a Buddha.

Another thing is that Buddhas have (because of their matured *pāramī*) attained the Path, Fruition, and Omniscient Knowledges by themselves without a teacher. But a disciple can only attain the Path and Fruition Knowledges by listening to Dhamma related to the Four Noble Truths from a Buddha, or a Buddha's disciple. They cannot practise by themselves, without a teacher. These are the differences.

Question 4.8 What is the 'intermediate life' (*antara-bhava*)?

Answer 4.8 According to the Theravāda Piṭaka there is no such thing as an intermediate life (*antara-bhava*). Between a decease consciousness (*cūti citta*) and its subsequent rebirth-linking consciousness (*paṭisandhi-citta*), there are no consciousness moments, or anything resembling an intermediate life.²⁹⁷ If a person were to reach the deva world after death, then between his decease consciousness and the deva's rebirth-linking consciousness, there would be no consciousness moment or anything like an intermediate life. As soon as death takes place, the deva rebirth-linking consciousness arises. In the same way, if a person were to reach hell after death, then between his decease consciousness and the rebirth-linking consciousness in hell, there would be no such thing as an intermediate life. He would go to hell directly after death.

The idea of an intermediate life usually arises when someone dies, inhabits the *peta* world for a short time, and is then reborn as a human being again. He may think his *peta* life was something like an intermediate life, even though it was, in fact, nothing like an intermediate life. What really happened is this: after the human decease consciousness had passed, the *peta* rebirth-linking consciousness arose; after the *peta* decease consciousness had passed, a human rebirth-linking consciousness arose again. The person suffered in the *peta* world because of his unwholesome kamma. The kammic potency of that unwholesome kamma

²⁹⁵ Both Ways Liberated (*ubhato-bhāga-vimutta*): this refers to those who escape first from the material sphere with the attainment of the immaterial jhānas, and second, escape also from the immaterial sphere with the attainment of Arahantship.

²⁹⁶ Wisdom Liberated (*paññā-vimutta*): this refers to pure-vipassanā Arahants.

²⁹⁷ For details in this regard, see Table 1d 'Death and Rebirth', (and footnote 360) p.188.

finished after only a short time, and he took a human rebirth-linking consciousness again, because of wholesome kamma that had matured.

The short life in the *peta* world is mistaken for an intermediate life by those who cannot see the reality of the round of rebirths or dependent origination. If they could discern dependent origination with vipassanā knowledge, then this misbelief would disappear. So we should like to suggest that you discern dependent origination with your own vipassanā knowledge. Then the question about an intermediate life will disappear from your mind.

Question 4.9 Are the methods for *ān-āpāna-sati* (mindfulness-of-breathing) and four-elements meditation the same? Why must we practise four-elements meditation only after *ān-āpāna-sati*?

Answer 4.9 No, the methods are not the same. In vipassanā you must discern materiality and mentality, and their causes, which is why there are two types of meditation: discernment of materiality and discernment of mentality.

When The Buddha taught discernment of materiality, he always taught four-elements meditation, either in brief or in detail. So if you want to discern materiality, you must practise according to The Buddha's instructions. It is better to practise four-elements meditation with deep concentration like the fourth *ān-āpāna* jhāna, because it helps us see ultimate materiality, ultimate mentality, and their causes clearly.

But if you do not want to practise samatha meditation like *ān-āpāna-sati*, you can practise the four-elements meditation directly: no problem. We discussed this in a previous question.

Question 4.10 Could the Sayadaw please explain the light experienced in meditation scientifically?

Answer 4.10 What is the light seen in meditation? Every consciousness (*citta*), except rebirth-linking consciousnesses, which arises dependent upon the heart base (*hadaya-vatthu*), produces consciousness-born materiality (*cittaja-rūpa*): consciousness-born nutritive-essence octad-kalāpas (*cittaja-oj-aṭṭhamaka-kalāpa*).²⁹⁸ One consciousness produces many consciousness-born rūpa-kalāpas. Of the heart-base-dependent consciousnesses, samatha-meditation consciousnesses (*samatha-bhāvanā-citta*) and vipassanā-meditation consciousnesses (*vipassanā-bhāvanā-citta*) are very strong and powerful; they produce very many rūpa-kalāpas. When we analyse those rūpa-kalāpas, we see the eight types of materiality. They are: the earth, water, fire, and wind elements, colour, odour, flavour, and nutritive essence. The materiality of

²⁹⁸ See further 'Consciousness-Born Materiality', p.112.

colour is bright. The more powerful the samatha and vipassanā-meditation consciousnesses are, the brighter is the colour. Since, rūpa-kalāpās arise simultaneously as well as successively, the colour of one rūpa-kalāpa and the colour of another rūpa-kalāpa arise closely together like in an electric bulb: that is why light appears.

Again, in each rūpa-kalāpa born of samatha and vipassanā-meditation consciousnesses, there is the fire element, which also produces many new rūpa-kalāpās. They are called temperature-born materiality, because they are produced by the fire element, which is temperature (*utu*). This occurs externally as well as internally. When we analyse these rūpa-kalāpās we see the same eight types of materiality: earth-, water-, fire-, and wind element, colour, odour, flavour, and nutritive essence. Colour is again one of them. Because of the power of the samatha and vipassanā-meditation consciousnesses that colour too is bright. So the brightness of one colour and the brightness of another colour arise closely together, like in an electric bulb.

The light of consciousness-born materiality and temperature-born materiality appear simultaneously. Consciousness-born colour materiality arises internally only, but temperature-born colour materiality arises both internally and externally and spreads in all directions up to the whole world system or universe (*cakkavāḷa*) or farther, depending on the power of the samatha and vipassanā-meditation consciousnesses. A Buddha's Mentality-Materiality Definition Knowledge produces light in up to ten thousand world systems. The Venerable Anuruddha's divine-eye consciousness (*dibba-cakkhu-citta*) produced light in up to one thousand world systems. Other disciples' vipassanā knowledge produces light going up to one league (*yojana*), two leagues, etc. in every direction depending on the power of their samatha and vipassanā-meditation consciousnesses.

Usually many yogis realize that this light is a group of rūpa-kalāpās when they have reached the Arise&Perish Knowledge. While practising samatha meditation, they do not yet understand that it is a group of rūpa-kalāpās, because the rūpa-kalāpās are very subtle. It is not easy to understand and see the rūpa-kalāpās when practising only samatha meditation. If you want to know with certainty, you should try to acquire the Arise&Perish Knowledge. That is the most scientific way to understand the light experienced in meditation.

Question 4.11 Can those who have discerned the thirty-two parts of the body see them in someone else, with their eyes open?

Answer 4.11 It depends. Beginners can with their eyes open see only the external parts. They can see the internal parts only with their vipassanā

knowledge eyes. If you want to know this scientifically, please try to see it yourself with your vipassanā knowledge.

A Mahāthera, however, may, because of previous practice, be able to see another's skeleton with his eyes open, like the Venerable Mahā-Tissa, who was an expert in skeleton meditation. He always practised internal skeleton meditation as repulsiveness up to the first jhāna, and then vipassanā. He discerned mentality-materiality, their causes, and nature of impermanence, suffering, and non-self. This was his usual practice.

One day he went for alms (*piṇḍapāta*), from Anuradhapura to Mahāgāma village. On the way, he met a woman who tried to attract his attention with loud laughter. When he heard the sound, he looked her way, saw only her teeth, and then used them for skeleton meditation. Because of his previous constant practice he saw her as a skeleton, and not as a woman. He saw only a skeleton. Then he concentrated on his own skeleton, attained the first jhāna, and practised vipassanā quickly. He attained the Arahant Path standing in the road.

The woman had quarrelled with her husband, and had left home to go to her parents' house. Her husband followed her, and also met Mahā Tissa Mahāthera. He asked him, 'Bhante, did you see a woman go this way?' The Mahāthera answered, 'Oh, lay-supporter (*dāyaka*), I saw neither man nor woman, I saw only a skeleton going this way.' This story is mentioned in the *Visuddhi-Magga* in the 'Morality Chapter'.²⁹⁹

This is an example of how someone who has, like Mahā Tissa Mahāthera, practised skeleton meditation thoroughly may be able to see another's skeleton with his eyes open.

²⁹⁹ VsM.i.15 'Indriya-Samvara-Sīlāṃ' ('Sense Restraint Morality') PP.i.55

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS 5

Question 5.1 The eight attainments (*samāpatti*)³²⁸ make it possible to attain the Mentality-Materiality Definition Knowledge (*Nāma-Rūpa-Pariccheda-Ñāṇa*), and to see their subtle arising and perishing, so as to become disgusted with them, and attain the Path Knowledge (*Magga-Ñāṇa*). Are there, apart from this, other benefits to the eight attainments?

Answer 5.1 There are five benefits to jhāna concentration:³²⁹

The first benefit of jhāna concentration is a present blissful abiding (*diṭṭha-dhamma-sukha-vihāra*): enjoying jhāna happiness in this very life. This refers to Arahants. Even though pure vipassanā Arahants naturally possess the supramundane jhānas (*lokuttāra-jhāna*), they may still want to develop the mundane jhānas (*lokiya-jhāna*), because they want to enjoy the blissful abiding of jhāna. Since they are Arahants, with all defilements removed by Path Knowledge (which means also their hindrances have been removed), it is very easy for them to develop jhāna. Another reason why they will usually develop jhāna is that they want to attain cessation (*nirodh-ānisaṃsa*): it requires mastery of the eight attainments.

A bhikkhu's duty is to learn the scriptures (*pariyatti*), to practise samatha-vipassanā meditation (*paṭipatti*), and to attain the four Paths and four Fruitions (*paṭivedha*). That is what Arahants have done, so there is no more work for them to do. They practise jhāna concentration for no reason other than the enjoyment of jhāna bliss (*jhāna-sukha*) in this very life.

The second benefit of jhāna concentration is the benefit of vipassanā (*vipassan-ānisaṃsa*).³³⁰ Jhāna concentration is a support for vipassanā knowledge, because with jhāna, one can see ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes clearly, and can discern their impermanent, suffering, and non-self nature.

When a yogi has practised vipassanā thoroughly, especially up to the Path Knowledge (*Magga-Ñāṇa*) and Fruition Knowledge (*Phala-Ñāṇa*), or the Formations-Equanimity Knowledge (*Saṅkhār-Upekkhā-Ñāṇa*), jhānas are usu-

³²⁸ The four mundane jhānas, and four immaterial jhānas.

³²⁹ Vis.xi.362 '*Samādhi-Ānisaṃsa-Kathā*' ('Discussion of the Concentration-Benefits') PP.xi.120ff.

³³⁰ This is called vipassanā-basis jhāna (*vipassanā-pāḍaka-jjhāna*). VsM. *ibid.* explains: 'When ordinary people and Trainees [non-Arahant Noble Ones] develop it [concentration], thinking "After emerging we shall exercise vipassanā with concentrated consciousness," the development of absorption concentration provides them with the benefit of vipassanā by serving as the proximate cause for vipassanā, and so too does access concentration.' This is followed by a quotation from S.III.I.5 '*Samādhi-Suttaṃ*' ('The Concentration Sutta'): see p.23. See also quotation, footnote 37, p.12.

ally stable. They make the vipassanā knowledge clear, bright, strong and powerful. That strong and powerful vipassanā knowledge, in its turn, also protects the jhānas from falling down.

Then again, when a yogi has been practising vipassanā for a long time, tiredness may occur. Then he should go into jhāna for long, to rest the mind. Refreshed he can then switch back to vipassanā. When it happens again he can again rest in jhāna.³³¹

So, because of concentration, vipassanā is clear, bright, strong and powerful, and well protected. vipassanā in its turn destroys the defilements that hinder concentration, and keeps it stable. samatha protects vipassanā and vice-versa.

Furthermore, the concentration of the eight attainments is not only a support for the discernment of mentality-materiality and their causes, because those eight attainments are themselves mentality, and included in the discernment of mentality.³³² One enters into, for example, the first jhāna, emerges, and then contemplates the formations (*saṅkhāra*) associated with that jhāna as impermanence, suffering, and non-self. Then one enters the second jhāna, and does the same. And one can do this with all eight attainments, up to the fourth immaterial jhāna. It is called samatha and vipassanā yoked together (*yuganaddha*), like two bullocks pulling one cart: pulling one towards Path, Fruition and Nibbāna.³³³ If one practises vipassanā up to the Formations-Equanimity Knowledge (*Saṅkhār-Upekkhā-Ñāṇa*), one can also keep one's discernment of the jhāna formations to only one of the jhānas. With such strong and powerful samatha yoked with strong and powerful vipassanā, one may attain Path and Fruition, up to Arahantship.

The third benefit of jhāna concentration is psychic powers (*abhiññāṇi-saṃsa*): If one wants to master the mundane psychic powers, like the recollection of past lives (*pubbe-nivās-ānussati abhiññā*), the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*), the divine ear (*dibba-sota*), knowing the consciousness of others (*para-citta vijānana*), and the supernormal powers (*iddhi-vidha*), flying, walking on water, etc., one must develop the ten kasiṇas and eight attainments (*samāpatti*) in fourteen ways.³³⁴

The fourth benefit of jhāna concentration is what is called 'a specific existence' (*bhava-vīśavah-ānisamsa*). That is, if one wants rebirth in a brahma

³³¹ For a more detailed explanation, see p.123.

³³² See p.161ff.

³³³ This is explained in A.IV.IV.iv.10 'Yuganaddha-Suttaṃ' ('The Yoked Sutta').

³³⁴ For details, see VsM.xii 'Iddhi-Vidha-Niddesa' ('Description of Direct Knowledge').

realm at death, one must develop concentration such as the ten kasiṇa-, ān-āpānā-, or loving-kindness jhāna. But to be sure of rebirth in a brahma realm means the jhāna must be maintained up to the moment of death.

The fifth benefit of jhāna concentration is cessation (*nirodh-ānisamsa*): the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*), which is the temporary cessation of consciousness (*citta*), associated mental factors (*cetasika*) and consciousness-born materiality (*cittaja-rūpa*). ‘Temporary’ means usually for a day up to seven days, depending on one’s prior determination (*adhīṭṭhāna*).

Only Non-Returners (*Anāgāmi*) and Arahants can attain cessation. And for Arahants, apart from when they are asleep, and apart from when they pay attention to concepts, they never stop seeing the arising and perishing, or just the perishing of mentality-materiality and their causes: all day, all night, for days, months, and years.³³⁵ Sometimes they get disenchanted and ‘bored’, and just do not want to see those ‘phenomena of perishing’ (*bhaṅga-dhamma*) anymore. But, because their life span is not over, it is not yet time for their Parinibbāna. Therefore, to stop seeing those phenomena of perishing, they enter cessation.

Why do they never stop seeing those phenomena? Because, with Arahantship, they have destroyed all defilements (including the hindrances), and have therefore concentration. The concentrated mind sees ultimate phenomena (*paramattha-dhamma*) as they really are, so it sees always ultimate mentality-materiality as they really are, which are the ‘phenomena of perishing’. When one enters cessation, let’s say for seven days, one does not see the phenomena of perishing, because (for as long as the attainment lasts) the consciousness and associated mental factors that would have known those phenomena have ceased.

Although Arahants are able to abide in Nibbāna-attainment, they may still prefer to abide in cessation, because although the Nibbāna-attainment takes the Unformed as object, there remains the mental formation of feeling. But in the attainment of cessation the only formation that remains is the material formation of kamma-, temperature- and nutriment-born materiality: no consciousness-born materiality, and no consciousness.

To enter cessation, one must establish the first jhāna, emerge from it, and discern the first-jhāna dhammas as impermanence, suffering, or non-self. One must do the same progressively up to the base of boundless consciousness, which is the second immaterial jhāna (*viññāṇaṇc-āyatana-jhāna*).

³³⁵ For related details, see ‘How You Develop the Arise&Perish Knowledge’ p.216ff. Details regarding the path to Arahantship, and thence the Arahant’s ‘permanent dwelling’ (seeing only the continuous rising and perishing of formations) are described by The Buddha in S.III.I.vi.5 ‘*Satta-Ṭṭhāna-Suttaṃ*’ (‘The Seven Cases Sutta’).

Then one must enter the base of nothingness, the third immaterial jhāna (*ākāṅkhaṇīya-āyatana-jhāna*), emerge from it and make four determinations:

- 1) To reflect on the limit of one's life-span, and then within that to determine a period for the attainment of cessation (for example, seven days), at the end of which one will emerge from the attainment.
- 2) To emerge from the attainment of cessation should one be wanted by a Buddha.
- 3) To emerge from the attainment of cessation should one be wanted by the Saṅgha.
- 4) That the property in one's immediate surroundings not be destroyed by, for example, fire or water. One's robes and the seat one is sitting on is protected by the attainment itself. But the furniture in the room one is in, or the room itself or the building will be protected only if one makes this fourth determination.

Then one enters the base of neither perception nor non-perception, the fourth immaterial jhāna (*neva-saññā-n-āsaññā-āyatana-jhāna*). After only one or two consciousness moments in that attainment, one enters cessation for the determined period, for example, seven days. One does not see anything while in the attainment, because all consciousness and associated mental factors have ceased.³³⁶

Question 5.2 Which is easiest and quickest for the attainment of Nibbāna: using theory to perceive impermanence, suffering, and non-self, or using concentration to discern ultimate phenomena (*paramattha-dhamma*)?

Answer 5.2 What is impermanence? Impermanence is the five aggregates.³³⁷ This definition is mentioned in many commentaries. If a yogi sees the five aggregates clearly, he can see impermanence, suffering, and non-self: no problem. But without seeing the five aggregates, how can he see impermanence, suffering and non-self? If he tries to do so without seeing the five aggregates, his vipassanā will be only reciting vipassanā; not true vipassanā. Only true vipassanā produces the Path and Fruition Knowledges.

What are the five aggregates? They are the materiality aggregate, the feeling aggregate, the perception aggregate, the formations aggregate and the consciousness aggregate, of past, future, present, internal and external, gross and subtle, inferior and superior, far and near. The materiality

³³⁶ VsM.xxiii.879 'Nirodha-Samāpatti-Kathā' ('Cessation-Attainment Discussion') PP.xxii.43

³³⁷ *Aniccanti khandapañcakam... Pañcakkhandhā aniccanti.* (VbhA.ii.1 'Suttanta-bhājanīya-Vaṇṇanā' ('Sutta-Classification Description')). Quoted also Q&A 2.3, p.77.

aggregate is the twenty-eight types of materiality (*rūpa*). The feeling-, perception- and formations aggregate are the fifty-two associated mental factors (*cetasika*). The consciousness aggregate is the eighty-nine types of consciousness (*citta*). The twenty-eight types of materiality are what is called materiality, and the fifty-two associated mental factors and eighty-nine types of consciousness are what is called mentality. So, the five aggregates and mentality-materiality are one and the same thing.

These are all ultimate mentality-materiality. If a yogi sees these ultimate mentality-materiality, he can practise vipassanā, and see the impermanent, suffering, and non-self nature of these mentality-materiality. But if he cannot see ultimate mentality-materiality, how can he practise vipassanā, since they and their causes are the necessary objects of vipassanā knowledge? This is true vipassanā. Only true vipassanā produces the Path and Fruition Knowledges.

In the '*Mahā-Sati-Paṭṭhāna*' sutta,³³⁸ The Buddha taught that to attain Nibbāna there is only one way (*ek-āyana*): no other way. What is the way? The Buddha said to practise concentration first, because a concentrated mind can give rise to the seeing of ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes. Again, a concentrated mind can give rise to the seeing of impermanence, suffering, and non-self nature of ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes.³³⁹ But we cannot say which is the quickest way to attain Nibbāna: it depends on one's *pāramī*.

For example, the Venerable Sāriputta needed about two weeks' hard work to attain the Arahant Path and Fruition, whereas the Venerable Mahāmoggallāna needed only seven days. And, Bāhiya Dārucīriya needed only to listen to a very short discourse: *Diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ.... 'In the seen, the seen merely will be....'*³⁴⁰ The speed with which they each attained Arahantship was because of their individual *pāramī*.

The Venerable Sāriputta and the Venerable Mahāmoggallāna had developed their *pāramī* for one incalculable (*a-saṅkhyeyya*) and a hundred thousand aeons (*kappa*), and Bāhiya Dārucīriya for about one hundred thousand aeons. The Venerable Sāriputta and the Venerable Mahāmoggallāna's Arahant Paths were associated with the Chief Disciple's Enlightenment Knowledge (*Agga-Sāvaka-Bodhi-Nāṇa*), whereas Bāhiya Dārucīriya's Arahant-Path was associated with only the Great Disciple's Enlightenment Know-

³³⁸ D.ii.9 'The Great Mindfulness-Foundation Sutta'

³³⁹ See quotation, footnote 45, p.14.

³⁴⁰ U.i.10 '*Bāhiya-Suttam*' ('The Bāhiya Sutta')

ledge (*Mahā-Sāvaka-Bodhi-Ñāṇa*). The Chief Disciple's Enlightenment Knowledge is higher than the Great Disciple's Enlightenment Knowledge.³⁴¹

Since there is only one way to attain Nibbāna, these disciples did not attain Arahantship because of a wish: they attained Arahantship through present effort supported by their past effort, their *pāramī*.

Question 5.3 The round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*) is without beginning or end. Beings are also infinite in number, so those who have been our mother are infinite too. How can we develop loving-kindness by contemplating that all beings have been our mother? Can we attain loving-kindness *jhāna* (*mettā jhāna*) by contemplating that all beings have been our mother?

Answer 5.3 Loving-kindness meditation does not concern the past and future. It concerns only the present. Only an object of the present can produce loving-kindness *jhāna* (*mettā-jhāna*), not one of the past or future: we cannot attain *jhāna* by extending loving-kindness to the dead. In the endless round of rebirths (*saṃsāra*), there may very well be no one who has not been our father or mother, but loving-kindness meditation is not concerned with the endless round of rebirths. It is not necessary to consider that this was our mother, this our father.

In the '*Karaṇīya-Mettā*' sutta, The Buddha said:

Mātā yathā niyaṃputtamāyusā ekaputtamanurakkhe; evampi sabbabhūtesu, mānasam bhāvaye aparimāṇam.

This means that just as a mother with an only son would give up even her life for him, so a bhikkhu should extend loving-kindness to all beings. This is The Buddha's instruction. But the attitude of a mother cannot alone lead to *jhāna*. If we extend loving-kindness with the thought, 'May this person be well and happy' it will produce *jhāna*.

Question 5.4 (The following questions are all covered by the same answer.)

- Was there a Bodhisatta during The Buddha's time? If so, did he attain a Path or was he just an ordinary person (*puthu-jjana*)?
- Why can a Noble One (*Ariya*) not become a Bodhisatta?
- Can a disciple (*sāvaka*) change to become a Bodhisatta? If not, why not?
- When by following the Sayadaw's teaching one is able to attain the Path and Fruition Knowledges of Stream-Entry (*Sot-Āpatti-Magga-Ñāṇa*/ *Sot-Āpatti-Phala-Ñāṇa*), can one choose to not do so, because of a desire and vow to practise the Bodhisatta path?

³⁴¹ For the four types of person who attains Nibbāna, see Q&A 4.3, p.143; for the four types of Arahant path, see Q&A 4.7, p.154.

Answer 5.4 One can change one's mind before attaining a Path or Fruition, but not afterwards. In many suttas, The Buddha taught that the Path occurs according to a law of nature (*sammatta-niyāma*). The law of nature says:

- 1) The Stream-Entry Path (*Sot-Āpatti-Magga*) produces the Stream-Entry Fruition (*Sot-Āpatti-Phala*), after which one can progress to the Once-Returner (*Sakad-Āgāmi*) stage, but one cannot regress to the ordinary person (*puthu-jjana*) stage.
- 2) A Once-Returner can progress to the Non-Returner (*An-Āgāmi*) stage, but cannot regress to the Stream-Enterer or ordinary person stages.
- 3) A Non-Returner can progress to Arahantship, but cannot regress to the Once-Returner, Stream-Enterer or ordinary person stages.
- 4) An Arahant attains Parinibbāna at death, and cannot regress to the lower noble stages, the ordinary person stage, or any other stage.

Arahantship is the end. This is a law of nature (*sammatta-niyāma*). Referring to Arahantship, The Buddha said many times:³⁴²

Ayamantimā jāti, natthidāni punabbhavoti.

This is the last rebirth, now there is no new rebirth.

This means that one cannot change one's mind, and decide to become a Bodhisatta after having attained a Path or Fruition. Moreover, one cannot change one's mind after having received a definite prophecy from a Buddha or Arahant. But one may wish to wait, and become an Arahant some time in the future, and then change one's mind, and attain Arahantship in this life.

The *Visuddhi-Magga* gives an example of a Mahāthera, the Venerable Mahāsaṅgharakkhita, who did this.³⁴³ He was expert in the four foundations of mindfulness, had practised samatha-vipassanā up to the Formations-Equanimity Knowledge, and had never performed a bodily or verbal action without mindfulness. And he had developed sufficient samatha-vipassanā *pāramī* to be able to attain Arahantship if he wanted to. But, because he wanted to see Arimetteyya Buddha, he had decided to wait, and become an Arahant only in that dispensation. According to the law of nature we just mentioned, he would not be able to see Arimetteyya Buddha, if he attained Arahantship now.

But, at the time near his death, a large number of people gathered, because they thought he was an Arahant, and thought he was going to attain Parinibbāna, although he was in fact still a ordinary person. When his disciple told him many people had gathered, because they thought he was

³⁴² For example, D.iii.6 '*Pāsādika-Suttam*' ('The Pleasing Sutta')

³⁴³ VsM.i.20 '*Paṭhama-Sīla-Pañcakam*' ('First Morality Pentad') PP.i.135

going to attain Parinibbāna, the Mahāthera said, ‘Oh, I had wanted to see Arimetteyya Buddha. But if there is a large assembly, then let me meditate.’ And he practised vipassanā. Now that he had changed his mind, and because he had in his past lives not received a definite prophecy, he very soon attained Arahantship.

During The Buddha’s time there was no mention of a definite prophecy to a Bodhisatta except for Arimetteyya Bodhisatta, who was a bhikkhu named Ajita. The Tipiṭaka does not say either when the next Buddha after Arimetteyya Buddha will arise, so we cannot say how many Bodhisattas there were during The Buddha’s time.

Question 5.5 Is it possible to practise the path to liberation (*vimutti-magga*) and the path of Bodhisatta [path to Buddhahood]³⁴⁴ at the same time? If so, what is the method?

Answer 5.5 Liberation (*vimutti*) means escape from defilements or the round of rebirths. When a Bodhisatta becomes a Buddha, he escapes from the round of rebirths at his Parinibbāna. If you, as a disciple (*sāvaka*), try to attain Arahantship and succeed, you will also escape from the round of rebirth at your Parinibbāna. A person cannot become a Buddha as well as a disciple. He must choose either one or the other, but they both escape from the round of rebirths when they attain Arahantship. The way to attain the Arahant Path is the final path to liberation (*vimutti-magga*).

Question 5.6 Is this method [of meditation] for liberation only, or is it also for the Bodhisatta path?

Answer 5.6 It is for both. In a previous talk, we mentioned that Sakyamuni Buddha was a bhikkhu in nine of his past lives as a Bodhisatta.³⁴⁵ If we look at his practice in those nine lives, we see the three trainings: morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*). The Bodhisatta was able to practise the eight attainments, five mundane psychic powers, and vipassanā up to the Formations-Equanimity Knowledge.

Now you too are developing samatha-vipassanā meditation based on morality. When you have practised the three trainings up to the Formations-Equanimity Knowledge, you can choose either way. If you want liberation you can choose to go to Nibbāna; if you want to become a Bodhisatta you can choose the Bodhisatta way: no problem.

³⁴⁴ The Most Venerable Pa-Auk Sayadaw’s audience was almost only Buddhists of the Mahāyana tradition, for whom the path is not towards Arahantship (liberation) but the Bodhisatta path towards Buddhahood (saving all beings).

³⁴⁵ See Q&A 4.3, p.143.

Question 5.7 Do all the good and bad kammās of an Arahant mature prior to his Parinibbāna?

Answer 5.7 Not all. Some good and bad kamma may mature and produce their results. If they do not mature they do not produce a result, and are lapsed kamma (*ahosi-kamma*), kamma that no longer produce any result. For example, the unwholesome kamma of one of the Venerable Mahāmoggallāna's past lives produced its results just before his Parinibbāna. In one of his past lives he had tried unsuccessfully to kill his blind parents. Due to that unwholesome kamma, he suffered in hell for many thousands of years, and when he escaped from hell, he was killed in about two hundred lives. In each of those lives his skull was crushed. In his last life too, every bone in his body was crushed, including his skull. Why? The unwholesome kamma had matured. Unless unwholesome and wholesome kammās have matured, they do not produce any results. They are kamma by name only.

Question 5.8 After His enlightenment, did The Buddha say, 'Originally all beings have the Tathāgata's wisdom and other qualities'?

Answer 5.8 Now you have accepted that Sakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment. You should consider whether the Tathāgata's qualities of enlightenment are present in all beings, especially in yourself. Do you possess any of the Tathāgata's qualities?

Question 5.9 Is the Arahant's perception of voidness (*suññatā*) in his own five aggregates the same as his perception of voidness in outside inanimate things? Is Nibbāna the same as entering voidness?

Answer 5.9 The perception of voidness in one's five aggregates and in outside inanimate things is the same.

Nibbāna was given the name voidness (*suññatā*) because of the Path. When a yogi knows formations (*saṅkhāra-dhamma*) as non-self, and if at that time he sees Nibbāna, his Path Knowledge is called the void liberation (*suññatā-vimokkha*). Just like the Path is called the void liberation, so is the object of the Path, which is Nibbāna, also called voidness. Here the void liberation means the escape from defilements by seeing the non-self nature of formations.³⁴⁶

Question 5.10 Are all suttas taught by The Buddha only?

Answer 5.10 Most of the suttas in the Tipiṭaka are taught by The Buddha. A few suttas are said to be taught by disciples like the Venerable Sāriputta, the Venerable Mahākaccāyana, and the Venerable Ānanda. But the suttas

³⁴⁶ Further to Nibbāna as the perception of voidness, see also p.27, and the three entrances to Nibbāna, p.58.

taught by disciples have the same meaning as had they been taught by The Buddha. This is evident when The Buddha in some of the suttas gives his approval by uttering, **It is good** (*sādhū*), for example, in the ‘*Mahākaccāyana-Bhadd-Eka-Ratta*’ sutta, of the *Majjhima-Nikāya*, which was taught by the Venerable Mahākaccāyana.³⁴⁷

Question 5.11 Since we cannot see The Buddha while in concentration, can we see Him by psychic powers to discuss Dhamma with Him?³⁴⁸

Answer 5.11 No, you cannot. One of the psychic powers is called recollection of past lives (*pubbe-nivas-ānussati*). If a yogi possesses this psychic power, and met a Buddha in one of his past lives, he can see that as a past experience only, not as a new experience. If Dhamma was discussed, there will be only old questions and answers; there cannot be new questions and answers.

³⁴⁷ M.III.iv.3 ‘*Mahākaccāyana-Bhadd-Eka-Ratta-Suttaṃ*’ (‘The Mahākaccāyana One-Excellent-Night Sutta’)

³⁴⁸ See further the end of ‘How You Develop Buddha Recollection’, p.91.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS 6

Question 6.1 How should a yogi who practises *ān-āpāna-sati* (mindfulness-of-breathing), but who cannot see a nimitta, check himself physically and mentally, so that he can improve and enter jhāna? In other words, what are the conditions needed to have a nimitta?

Answer 6.1 Constant practice is necessary in all types of meditation. In *ān-āpāna-sati* you should be mindful of the breath in every bodily posture, and be so with respect. Walking, standing or sitting, take no objects apart from the breath: you should watch only the breath. Try to stop thinking; try to stop talking. If you try continuously in this way, your concentration will slowly improve. Only deep, strong and powerful concentration can produce a nimitta. Without a nimitta, especially the *paṭibhāga-nimitta*, one cannot attain jhāna, because the *ān-āpāna* jhāna's object is the *ān-āpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta*.

Question 6.2 Does the sitting posture affect the ability for beginners to concentrate, and enter jhāna? There are many yogis who sit on a small stool to meditate; can they enter jhāna?

Answer 6.2 The sitting posture is best for beginners. But those who have enough *pāramī* in *ān-āpāna-sati* (mindfulness-of-breathing) can enter jhāna in any posture. A skilled yogi too can enter jhāna in any posture. So they can go into jhāna sitting on a stool or chair.

The Venerable Sāriputta and the Venerable Subhūti are examples of this. The Venerable Sāriputta was expert in the attainment of cessation (*nirodha-samāpatti*).³⁷⁰ When he went for alms in the village, he always entered the attainment of cessation at every house, before accepting their offerings. He accepted the offerings only after having emerged from the attainment of cessation. That was his nature. The Venerable Subhūti was expert in loving-kindness meditation. He entered the loving-kindness jhāna also at every house before accepting the offerings. After emerging from the loving-kindness jhāna he accepted the offerings. Why did they do this? They wanted the donor to get the maximum benefit. They knew that if they did this, immeasurable and superior wholesome kamma would occur in the donor's mental process. They had such loving-kindness for the donors to want to do this. Thus they were able to enter an attainment while in the standing posture. You should think about *ān-āpāna* jhāna in the same way.

Question 6.3 What is the object of the fourth *ān-āpāna* jhāna? If there is no breath in the fourth jhāna, how can there be a nimitta?

³⁷⁰ For details regarding this attainment, see Q&A 5.1, p.173.

Answer 6.3 There is still a *paṭibhāga-nimitta* in the fourth *ān-āpāna* jhāna, although there is no in&out-breath. That *ān-āpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta* arose from the ordinary, natural breath. This is why the object is still the in&out-breath (*assāsa-passāsa*). It is explained in the *Visuddhi-Magga* sub-commentary.³⁷¹

Question 6.4 Can one enter an immaterial jhāna-attainment (*arūpa-jhāna-samāpatti*), or practise loving-kindness meditation directly from *ān-āpāna-sati* (mindfulness-of-breathing)?

Answer 6.4 One cannot enter an immaterial jhāna-attainment directly from the fourth *ān-āpāna* jhāna. Why not? Immaterial jhānas, especially the base of boundless-space jhāna (*ākāśānañc-āyatana jhāna*), are attained by removing a kasiṇa object. After removing the kasiṇa object and concentrating on the space (*ākāsa*) left behind, the object of the base of boundless-space jhāna will appear. When one sees the space, one must extend it gradually, and when it extends in every direction, the kasiṇa object will have disappeared. One must extend the space further out to the boundless universe. That is the object of the base of boundless-space jhāna, which in its turn is the object of the base of boundless consciousness jhāna (*viññāṇaṇc-āyatana jhāna*). The absence of the base of boundless-space jhāna is the object of the base of nothingness jhāna (*ākīñcaṇṇ-āyatana jhāna*), which is finally the object of the base of neither perception nor non-perception jhāna (*neva-saññā-nā-saññ-āyatana jhāna*). So the four immaterial jhānas are based on a fourth kasiṇa jhāna, and its object. Without removing the kasiṇa one cannot go to the immaterial jhānas. So if a yogi practises *ān-āpāna-sati* up to the fourth jhāna, and then wants to go to immaterial jhānas, he should first practise the one of the kasiṇas (except the space kasiṇa)³⁷² up to the fourth jhāna. Only then can he go on to the immaterial jhāna.³⁷³

If he wants to practise loving-kindness meditation (*mettā-bhāvanā*) from the fourth *ān-āpāna* jhāna he can do so; no problem. He must see the person who is the object of loving-kindness with the light of the fourth *ān-āpāna* jhāna. If his light is not strong enough it may be a little bit problematic. But that is exceptional. If after the fourth kasiṇa jhāna, especially the fourth white kasiṇa jhāna, he practises loving-kindness he may succeed

³⁷¹ In this case, the *ān-āpāna-nimitta* which arises depending on the ordinary, natural breath is also said to be as *assāsa-passāsa* (in-and-out breath). (*Assāsa-passāsa nissāya uppannamittampettha assāsa-passāsa sāmaññameva vuttaṃ.*) (VsMT.viii.215 'Ān-Āpāna-Sati-Kathā' 'Mindfulness-of-Breathing Discussion').

³⁷² See in this connection footnote 138, p.67.

³⁷³ For details regarding how you develop the immaterial jhānas, see p.66ff.

quickly. That is why we teach white kasiṇa meditation before loving-kindness meditation.³⁷⁴

Question 6.5 How can one decide when to die, that is, choose the time of one's death?

Answer 6.5 If you have practised *ān-āpāna-sati* (mindfulness-of-breathing) up to the Arahant Path, you can know the exact time of your Parinibbāna. The *Visuddhi-Magga* mentions a Mahāthera who attained Parinibbāna while walking.³⁷⁵ First he drew a line on his walking path, and then told his fellow-bhikkhus that he would attain Parinibbāna when reaching that line, and it happened exactly as he had said. Those who are not Arahants can also know their life span if they have practised dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), the relationship between causes and effects of the past, present and future, but not exactly like the Mahāthera just mentioned. They do not know the exact time, maybe only the period in which they will die.

But these people do not die and attain Parinibbāna according to their own wish: it is according to the law of kamma. There is a stanza uttered by the Venerable Sāriputta:³⁷⁶

N-ābhinandāmi jīvitaṃ, n-ābhinandāmi maraṇaṃ; kālañ-ca paṭikaṅkhāmi, nibbisāṃ bhatako yathā.

I do not delight in life, I do not delight in death; I await the time [of Parinibbāna], like a government servant [waits for] his wages.

To die when one has desired to do so is called 'death by desire' (*adhimutti-marana*). This can usually be done by matured Bodhisattas only. Why do they do so? When they are reborn in the celestial realms, where there is no opportunity to develop their *pāramī*, they do not want to waste time, so sometimes they decide to die, and take rebirth in the human world, to develop their *pāramī*.

Question 6.6 If one day we were to die in an accident, for example in an air crash, could our mind at that time 'leave' so that we would not have any bodily pain? How? Can one, depending on the power of one's meditation, be without fear at that time, and be liberated? What degree of concentration is required?

Answer 6.6 The degree of concentration required is that of the psychic power of supernormal powers (*iddhividha-abhiññā*). With those powers you

³⁷⁴ For details in this regard, see Q&A 2.2., p.72.

³⁷⁵ VsM.viii.238 '*Ān-Āpāna-Sati-Kathā*' 'Mindfulness-of-Breathing Discussion' PP.viii.244

³⁷⁶ TG.XVII.2 (v.1002) '*Sāriputta-Thera-Gāthā*' ('The Elder Sāriputta's Verses')

can escape from danger, but not if you have a matured unwholesome kamma ready to produce its result. You should remember the case of Venerable Mahāmoggallāna. He was expert in psychic powers, but on the day when his unwholesome kamma matured he could not enter jhāna. This was not because of defilements or hindrances: it was only because of his matured unwholesome kamma. That is why the bandits were able to crush his bones to the size of rice grains.³⁷⁷ Thinking he was dead, the bandits left, and only then could he enter jhāna again, and regain his psychic powers. He made a determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*) that his body should become whole again, and then went to request The Buddha for permission to attain Parinibbāna. Then he returned to his Kalasīla Monastery, and attained Parinibbāna there. His matured unwholesome kamma first produced its result, after which it lost its power, and only then could he regain his psychic powers.

Thus, if you have no unwholesome kamma about to mature, and have psychic powers, you can escape from an air crash. But ordinary jhāna concentration and vipassanā knowledge, cannot save you from such danger. We can in fact say that the reason why one meets with this type of accident in the first place may be that one's unwholesome kamma is about to mature.

The mind cannot leave the body, because the mind arises dependent upon one of the six bases. The six bases are the eye base, the ear base, the nose base, the tongue base, the body base and the heart base. These six bases are your body. A mind cannot arise in this human world without a base. That is why the mind cannot leave the body.³⁷⁸

We can, however, suggest that if you have jhāna, you should at the time of danger quickly enter jhāna. That means you need to have fully developed the mastery of entering jhāna. If you enter jhāna at the time of danger, then that wholesome kamma may save you, but we cannot say for sure. If you are in jhāna at the moment of death, you may go up to one of the brahma realms.

If you are skilled at vipassanā, then you should practise it at the time of danger. You should discern the impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*an-atta*) nature of formations (*saṅkhāra-dhamma*). If you can practise vipassanā thoroughly before death takes place, you may attain one of the Paths (*Magga*) and Fruitions (*Phala*), and reach a happy realm after death. But if you attain Arahantship, you attain Parinibbāna. Should you, how-

³⁷⁷ For details, see Q&A 5.7, p.181.

³⁷⁸ For the dependence between mind and body (mentality-materiality), see also p.5.

ever, not have psychic powers, nor jhāna, nor be able to practise vipas-sanā, you may still escape, due to good kamma alone. If you have good enough kamma, which ensures a long life, there may also be a chance to escape from this danger, just like Mahājanaka Bodhisatta. He was the only person to survive a shipwreck. After swimming for seven days and seven nights, he was eventually saved by a deva.

Question 6.7 After attaining the Path and Fruition, a Noble One (*Ariya*) does not regress to become an ordinary person (*puthujjana*), this is a natural fixed law (*sammatta niyāma*). Similarly, one who has received a definite prophecy cannot abandon his Bodhisatta practice. This too is a natural fixed law. But The Buddha declared that everything is impermanent³⁷⁹. Are these fixed laws in accordance with the law of impermanence?

Answer 6.7 Here you should understand what is fixed and what is permanent. The law of kamma says unwholesome kammās (*akusala-kamma*) produce bad results, and wholesome kammās (*kusala-kamma*) produce good results. This is the natural law of kamma (*kamma-niyāma*). Does that mean that the wholesome and unwholesome kammās are permanent (*nicca*)? Please think about it.

If the wholesome kammās are permanent then consider this: Now you are listening to Dhamma concerning The Buddha's Abhidhamma. This is called wholesome kamma of listening to Dhamma (*Dhamma-sāvana kusala-kamma*). Is it permanent? Please think about it.

If it were permanent, then during your whole life you would have only this kamma, no other. Do you understand? Wholesome kammās produce good results and unwholesome kammās produce bad results. This is a natural law, but it does not mean that the kammās are permanent. Wholesome volition (*kusala-cetanā*) and unwholesome volition (*akusala-cetanā*) are kamma. As soon as they arise they perish; they are impermanent. That is their nature. But the potency of kamma, the capacity to produce the results of kammās, still exists in the mentality-materiality process.

Suppose there is a mango tree. Now there is no fruit on the tree, but it is certain that one day it will bear fruit. This is a natural law. You could say the capacity to produce fruit exists in the tree. What is that capacity? If we study the leaves, branches, bark and stems we cannot see it, but that does not mean it does not exist, because one day that tree will produce fruit. In the same way we do not say wholesome and unwholesome kammās are permanent. We say the potency of kamma exists in the mentality-

³⁷⁹ The Buddha did not say: 'Everything is impermanent'; He said: 'All formations are impermanent.' (DhP.xx.5 '*Magga-Vagga*' ('Path Chapter'))

materiality process as a capacity, and that one day, when the potency matures, it produces its result.

Let us now discuss the natural fixed law (*sammatta niyāma*). We say Path and Fruition dhammas are dhammas of a fixed natural law, but we do not say they are permanent (*nicca*). They are also impermanent (*anicca*), but the potency of Path Knowledge exists in the mentality-materiality process of those who have attained a Path, Fruition, and Nibbāna. That potency exists because of a natural fixed law, and has a natural result. For example, the potency of the Stream-Entry Path (*Sot-Āpatti-Magga*) results in the Stream-Entry Fruition (*Sot-Āpatti-Phala*), and is a contributing cause for higher and higher Fruitions. But it cannot result in lower Fruitions. This is also a law of nature.

Here you should think about this: to attain Arahantship is not easy. You have to practise with great effort: strong and powerful perseverance is necessary. For example, in his last life our Sakyamuni Bodhisatta practised very hard (for over six years) to attain Arahantship associated with Omniscient Knowledge (*Sabbāññuta-Ñāṇa*). You can imagine how hard it was. So if after attaining Arahantship with enormous difficulty, he became an ordinary person (*puṭhu-jjana*) again, what would be the fruit of the practice? You should think about this carefully.

In this connection, let us look at when a Bodhisatta can receive a definite prophecy.³⁸⁰

*Manussattaṃ liṅga-sampatti, hetu satthāra-dassanaṃ;
pabbājīja guṇa-sampatti, adhikāro ca chandataḥ;
Aṭṭha-dhamma-samodhānā abhinīhāro samijjhati.*

He can receive a definite prophecy when the following eight conditions are fulfilled:

- 1) *Manussattaṃ*: he is a human being.
- 2) *Liṅga-Sampatti*: he is a male.
- 3) *Hetu* (cause or root): he has sufficient *pāramī* to attain Arahantship while listening to a Buddha utter a short stanza related to the Four Noble Truths. That means, he must have practised vipassanā thoroughly up to the Formations-Equanimity Knowledge (*Sanikhār-Upekkhā-Ñāṇa*).
- 4) *Satthāra-dassanaṃ* (sight of the Master): he meets a Buddha.
- 5) *Pabbājīja* (going forth): he has gone forth as a hermit or bhikkhu, and has strong and firm faith in the law of kamma.

³⁸⁰ *Buddha-Vaṃsa*.ii.59 ‘*Sumedha-Patthanā-Kathā*’ (*Chronicle of Buddhas*: ‘Sumedha’s Aspirations Discussion’)

- 6) *Guṇa-sampatti* (achievement of qualities): he has acquired the eight attainments (*samāpatti*) and five mundane psychic powers (*abhiññāṇa*).
- 7) *Adhikāro* (aspiration): he has sufficient *pāramī* to receive a definite prophecy from a Buddha. That means he must in previous lives have practised the *pāramī* necessary for attaining Omniscient Knowledge (*Sabbaññuta-Ñāṇa*). In other words, he must have sowed the seeds of knowledge (*vijjā*) and conduct (*caraṇa*) for Omniscient Knowledge in a previous Buddha's dispensation. According to the '*Yasodharā Apadāna*', the future prince Siddhattha had made the wish to attain (and the future princess Yasodharā had made the wish for him to attain) Omniscient Knowledge in the presence of many billions of Buddhas, and had developed all the *pāramī* under their guidance. And one way in which he developed his *pāramī* was to make a bridge of himself for Dīpaṅkara Buddha and a hundred thousand bhikkhus to cross, knowing that this act would cost him his life.
- 8) *Chandata* (desire): he has a sufficiently strong desire to attain Omniscient Knowledge. How strong is that desire? Suppose the whole world system were burning charcoal. If someone told him that he would attain Omniscient Knowledge by crossing the burning charcoal from one end to the other, he would go across the burning charcoal without hesitation. Here we ask you: Would you go across that burning charcoal? If not the whole world system, then if just from Taiwan to Pa-Auk it were all burning charcoal, would you go across it? If it were certain that one could attain Omniscient Knowledge that way, the Bodhisatta would go across that burning charcoal. That is the strength of his desire for Omniscient Knowledge.

If these eight factors are present in a Bodhisatta he will certainly receive a definite prophecy from a Buddha. They were present in our Sakyamuni Bodhisatta, when he was the hermit Sumedha, at the time of Dīpaṅkara Buddha. That is why he received a definite prophecy from Dīpaṅkara Buddha with the words:³⁸¹

You shall attain Omniscient Knowledge after four incalculables (*a-saṅkhyeyya*) and a hundred thousand aeons (*kappa*), and shall bear the name of Gotama.

Now, what does it mean that the prophecy is 'definite'? It is definite because it cannot be changed. That does not mean it is permanent. Dīpaṅkara Buddha's mentality-materiality were impermanent. Sumedha's mentality-materiality were also impermanent. This is a fact, but the potency of kamma, especially the kammic potency of his *pāramī*, could not perish

³⁸¹ *ibid.*

so long as he has not attained Omniscient Knowledge. Dīpaṅkara Buddha's words, that is the definite prophecy, also could not be changed, and could not be false. If those words were changed so that the definite prophecy was not true, then there would be another problem, namely that a Buddha would have uttered false speech. A Buddha gives a definite prophecy only when he sees that the previously mentioned eight conditions have been fulfilled. For example, if a skilful farmer saw a banana tree that was under the right conditions, he would be able to tell you that the tree was going to bear fruit in four months. Why? Because he was skilled in agriculture, and he saw flowers and small leaves growing out from the tree. In the same way, when someone has fulfilled the eight conditions, a Buddha can see that he will attain the Fruition of Omniscient Knowledge, which is why he makes a definite prophecy.

At the time of Dīpaṅkara Buddha, our Sakyamuni Bodhisatta was the hermit Sumedha, an ordinary person (*puṭhujjana*). As Prince Siddhattha, before attaining enlightenment he was still a ordinary person. Only after his enlightenment did he become Sakyamuni Buddha. After attaining the Arahant Path associated with Omniscient Knowledge, he could not change his Arahant Path; this is a natural fixed law (*sammatta-niyāma*). Here fixed law means that the result of that Arahant Path cannot change. This does not mean that the Arahant Path is permanent. It means that its result comes because of a potency of kamma that cannot change. What does this mean exactly? It means that it is certain the Arahant Path will produce Arahant Fruition, and certain that it will destroy all the defilements, all the unwholesome kamma and all the wholesome kamma, which would otherwise have produced their result after the Parinibbāna. This law of kamma is called a natural fixed law and cannot be changed. So a natural fixed law and a definite prophecy are not contrary to the law of impermanence.

Here again, a further comment is necessary. Making an aspiration or wish alone is not enough to attain Omniscient Knowledge. When Bodhisattas receive a definite prophecy, the eight conditions must already be fulfilled. Moreover, a definite prophecy alone cannot produce Buddhahood. Even after the definite prophecy, they must continue to develop the ten *pāramī* on the three levels:

- 1) The ten basic *pāramī* (*pāramī*):³⁸² that is offering their sons, daughters, wives and external property.

³⁸² For a list of the ten *pāramī*, see Q&A 4.1, p.141.

- 2) The ten medium *pāramī* (*upa-pāramī*): that is offering their limbs and organs, such as eyes and hands.
- 3) The ten superior *pāramī* (*paramattha-pāramī*): that is offering their life.

Altogether there are thirty *pāramī*. If we summarize them, we have just:

- 1) Offering (*dāna*)
- 2) Morality (*sīla*)
- 3) Meditation (*bhāvanā*): samatha and vipassanā.

They are superior wholesome kammās. Bodhisattas must perfect them by giving up animate and inanimate property, their limbs, and their lives. If you believe you are a Bodhisatta, can you and will you perfect these *pāramī*? If you can, and if you also have received a definite prophecy from a Buddha, then you shall one day attain Omniscient Knowledge. But according to the Theravāda teachings, only one Buddha can appear at one given time. And for how long must they perfect their *pāramī*? After he had received his definite prophecy, our Sakyamuni Bodhisatta developed the *pāramī* for four incalculables and a hundred thousand aeons. This is the shortest time. But we cannot say exactly how long it takes prior to the definite prophecy. So you should remember: making an aspiration or wish alone is not enough to become a Buddha.

Question 6.8 When an ordinary disciple has practised samatha-vipassanā up to the Cause-Apprehending Knowledge, the Arise&Perish Knowledge, or the Formations-Equanimity Knowledge, he will not be reborn in any of the four woeful realms. Even if he loses his samatha-vipassanā due to negligence, the kamma of having practised samatha-vipassanā still exists. The ‘*Sotānugata*’ sutta says also that he will attain Nibbāna quickly.³⁸³ So, why did the Sayadaw, in the Question&Answer session of June 2nd, say that a Bodhisatta who has received a definite prophecy from a Buddha can (even if he has practised meditation up to the Formations-Equanimity Knowledge) be reborn in a woeful state?³⁸⁴ In which sutta is this mentioned?

Answer 6.8 This is because the Bodhisatta way and ordinary disciple way are not the same. You can find this in The *Buddha-Vamsa* and *Cariya-Piṭaka* Pali Texts.

How are the two ways different? Although a Bodhisatta has received a definite prophecy from a Buddha, his *pāramī* have at that time not yet matured for him to attain Omniscient Knowledge. He must cultivate his

³⁸³ A.IV.IV.v.1 ‘*Sotānugata-Suttam*’ (‘The One Who Has Heard Sutta’). Mentioned p.102 and 147.

³⁸⁴ See Q&A 4.3, p.143.

pāramī further. For example, after receiving the definite prophecy from Dīpaṅkara Buddha, our Sakyamuni Bodhisatta had to continue cultivating his *pāramī* for four incalculables and a hundred thousand aeons. Between the definite prophecy and the penultimate life, a Bodhisatta is sometimes reborn in the animal kingdom, because of previous unwholesome kamma. At this time he is still unable to totally destroy that unwholesome kammic potency. So when those unwholesome kammās mature, he cannot escape their results. This is a law of nature.

But ordinary disciples, who have attained the Cause-Apprehending Knowledge, the Arise&Perish Knowledge, or the Formations-Equanimity Knowledge, have *pāramī* mature enough to attain the Path Knowledge and Fruition Knowledge. For this reason, they attain Path and Fruition, that is, see Nibbāna, in this life or in their subsequent future life. This is also a law of nature.

Question 6.9 An Arahant can also give a definite prophecy; what is the definition of definite prophecy here? In which sutta or other source can this information be found?

Answer 6.9 For that please refer to *The Buddha-Vaṃsa-Pāḷi (Chronicle of Buddhas)* and *Apadāna-Pāḷi (Valorous Deeds)*. But only Arahants who possess particularly the Knowledge of the Future (*Anāgataṃsa-Nāṇa*), a power secondary to the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*), can give a definite prophecy. And they can see only a limited number of lives into the future, and not many incalculables (*a-saṅkhyeyya*), or aeons (*kappa*), as can a Buddha.

Question 6.10 Can one practise vipassanā while in the base of neither perception nor non-perception attainment (*neva-saññā-n-āsaññ-āyatana samāpatti*)? In which sutta or other source can the answer be found?

Answer 6.10 One cannot practise vipassanā while in any jhāna attainment, and the base of neither perception nor non-perception is a jhāna. Why? Because in developing vipassanā, we usually do not use the same objects as we use for developing jhāna.³⁸⁵ Also, jhāna we develop by concentrating on one and the same object (e.g. the *ān-āpāna*-, or kasiṇa-nimitta), whereas vipassanā we develop by examining different objects. For example, the object of the *ān-āpāna* jhānas is the *ān-āpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta*: a concept, not ultimate reality. But the object of vipassanā is not a concept; it is ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes, including the jhāna dhammas (e.g. the thirty-four mental formations of the first jhāna,

³⁸⁵ Exceptions are, for example, the second and fourth immaterial jhānas, when you concentrate on the preceding immaterial jhāna's consciousness, which is not a concept but an ultimate reality: see footnote 281, p.150. See also 'The Four Immaterial Jhānas', p.66.

the thirty-two mental formations of the second jhāna, the thirty-one mental formations of the third, fourth and immaterial jhanās).³⁸⁶

Only after having emerged from the jhāna can one practise vipassanā meditation on, for example, the jhāna consciousness and its associated mental factors, in this case the thirty-one mental formations. It is mentioned in the ‘*Anupada*’ sutta in the *Majjhima-Nikāya*.³⁸⁷ There The Buddha describes in detail the Venerable Sāriputta’s meditation in the fifteen days after he had attained Stream-Entry.

The Venerable Sāriputta entered, for example, the first jhāna. He emerged from it, and discerned the thirty-four first-jhāna mental formations, one by one, as impermanence, suffering, and non-self, by seeing their arising-, static- and perishing stages. He discerned in this manner up to the base of nothingness jhāna. This is vipassanā of consecutive dhammas (*anupada-dhamma-vipassanā*), in which the mental formations are discerned one by one. But when he reached the base of neither perception nor non-perception, he could discern only the mental formations as a group. This is vipassanā of Comprehension in Groups (*Kalāpa-Sammasana-Vipassanā*). Only a Buddha can discern the mental formations of the base of neither perception nor non-perception one by one. Because they are extremely subtle, even a Chief Disciple like the Venerable Sāriputta cannot discern them one by one.³⁸⁸

Question 6.11 Can a person who is mentally abnormal, hears voices, has schizophrenia, a brain disease, stroke or malfunction of the brain and nerves, practise this type of meditation? If he can, what kinds of precaution should he take?

Answer 6.11 Such people can practise this type of meditation, but usually they do not succeed, because they cannot concentrate long enough. By ‘long enough’ is meant that when one’s concentration is strong and powerful, it must be maintained for many hours, and many sittings. Usually, such people’s concentration is inconstant. This is a problem. They may succeed, if they can maintain their concentration over many successive sittings, over many days or many months.

There is a famous example: the case of Paṭācārā. Her husband, two children, parents, and brothers all died on the same day. She went mad with grief, and wandered about with no clothes on. One day she came to

³⁸⁶ For how you discern jhāna-processes, see p.161.

³⁸⁷ M.III.ii.1 ‘*Anupada-Suttaṃ*’ (‘The Consecutive Sutta’), mentioned also in connection with vipassanā into only feeling, Q&A 4.6, p.149.

³⁸⁸ *ibid.*A.

the Jetavana monastery in Sāvatti where The Buddha was teaching Dhamma. Her *pāramī* of previous lives were ready to mature. Due to this, as well as to the loving-kindness and compassion of The Buddha, she was able to listen to the Dhamma with respect.

Slowly her mind became quiet, and she understood the Dhamma. Very soon she became a Stream-Enterer (*Sot-Āpanna*). She ordained as a bhikkh-unī, and continued her meditation. She could maintain her concentration and vipassanā knowledge, and one day her meditation matured. She became an Arahant with the five mundane psychic powers, and Four Analytical Knowledges.³⁸⁹ Of the bhikkhunīs who were expert in the monastic rule, she was first. She observed the rule very strictly, and learnt it by heart, including the commentaries.

She had been developing her *pāramī* from Padumuttara Buddha's dispensation till Kassapa Buddha's dispensation, and particularly during Kassapa Buddha's dispensation. At that time she was the daughter of a King Kikī. She practised *komāri-brahma-cariya* for twenty thousand years. *Komāri-brahma-cariya* is to observe the five precepts, but in place of the ordinary precept of abstinence from sexual misconduct, complete chastity is observed. She cultivated the three trainings, morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), as a lay devotee, for twenty-thousand years. Those *pāramī* matured in Gotama Buddha's dispensation. So, although she had gone mad, she was able to regain her mind, practise the three trainings well, and became an Arahant.

When they practise meditation, such people need *kalyāṇa-mitta*, which is good teachers, good friends, and spiritual friends. Proper medicine and proper food also helps. From our experience, we know that most of them cannot maintain their concentration for a long time. Usually they do not succeed.

Question 6.12 If a person, who does not have good human relations, succeeds in attaining the fourth jhāna, will this improve his skill in communicating with others? Can attaining jhāna correct such problems?

Answer 6.12 These problems occur usually because of hatred (*dosa*). It is one of the hindrances. As long as a person is unable to change this attitude, he cannot attain jhāna. But if he can remove this attitude, he can attain not only jhāna, but also the Paths and Fruitions up to Arahantship. A famous example is the Venerable Channa Thera. He was born on the same day as our Bodhisatta, in the palace of King Suddhodana in Kapilavatthu. He was the son of one of King Suddhodana's female slaves. He became one

³⁸⁹ For the Four Analytical Knowledges, see Q&A 4.2, p.142.

of the Bodhisatta prince Siddhattha's playmates, when they were young. This gave later rise to much conceit in him. He thought things like: 'This is my King; The Buddha was my playmate; the Dhamma is our Dhamma; when he renounced the world, I followed him up to the bank of the Anomā River. No one else did. Sāriputta and Mahāmoggallāna etc. are flowers that blossomed later, etc.' Because of this, he always used harsh language. He did not show respect to Mahātheras like the Venerable Sāriputta, the Venerable Mahāmoggallāna and others. So no one had friendly relations with him. He could not attain jhāna or Path and Fruition in The Buddha's lifetime, because he was unable to remove his conceit and hatred.

On the night of The Buddha's Parinibbāna, The Buddha told the Venerable Ānanda to mete out the noble punishment (*brahma-daṇḍa*) on the Venerable Channa. It means that no one was to talk to the Venerable Channa, even if he wanted to. When nobody talked with the Venerable Channa, his conceit and hatred disappeared. This act of the Saṅgha (*saṅgha-kamma*) took place in the Ghositārāma monastery in Kosambī, five months after The Buddha's Parinibbāna. The Venerable left Ghositārāma, and went to the Isipatana monastery in the deer park near Benares. He worked hard on meditation but was, in spite of great effort, not successful. So one day, he went to the Venerable Ānanda and asked him to help him. Why was he not successful? He discerned the impermanent, suffering, and non-self nature of the five aggregates, without discerning dependent origination (*paṭicca-samuppāda*). So the Venerable Ānanda taught him how to discern dependent origination, and taught him the 'Kaccānagotta' sutta.³⁹⁰ After listening to the Venerable Ānanda's Dhamma talk, the Venerable Channa attained Stream-Entry. He continued his practice and very soon became an Arahant. So if a person can change his bad character, and practise samatha-vipassanā in the right way, he can attain jhāna, Path and Fruition.

³⁹⁰ S.II.Ii.5 'Kaccānagotta-Suttaṃ' ('The Kaccānagotta Sutta') & S.III.I.ix.8 'Channa-Suttaṃ' ('The Channa Sutta')

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS 7

Question 7.1 What is the difference between perception (*saññā*) and the perception aggregate (*saññā-kkhandha*), and between feeling (*vedāna*) and the feeling aggregate (*vedāna-kkhandha*)?

Answer 7.1 The eleven categories of perception (*saññā*) together are called the perception aggregate (*saññā-kkhandha*). The eleven categories of feeling (*vedāna*) together are called the feeling aggregate (*vedāna-kkhandha*). What are the eleven? Past, present, future, internal, external, gross, subtle, inferior, superior, near, and far. All five aggregates should be understood in the same way. Please refer to the ‘*Khandha*’ sutta⁴³⁵ of the ‘*Khandha-Vagga*’ in the *Saṃyutta-Nikāya* for the explanation.

Question 7.2 To which associated mental factors do memory, inference and creativity belong? They are part of the five aggregates, but how do they become suffering (*dukkha*)?

Answer 7.2 What is memory? If you remember samatha meditation- objects, such as a kasiṇa- or *ān-āpāna nimitta* is Right Mindfulness (*Sammā-Sati*). If you can see past, present, and future ultimate mentality-materiality (*param-attha-nāma-rūpa*) and their causes, and see them as impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and non-self (*an-atta*), this is also Right Mindfulness (*Sammā-Sati*); the mindfulness associated with vipassanā knowledge. This mindfulness is associated with thirty-three mental formations, which together are the four mentality aggregates (*nāma-kkhandha*). Remembering The Buddha, the Dhamma, the Saṅgha, and offerings made in the past is also Right Mindfulness (*Sammā-Sati*). When the remembering of actions produces wholesome dhammas (*kusala-dhammā*), it is also Right Mindfulness, but not when it produces unwholesome dhammas (*akusala-dhammā*). These are unwholesome perceptions (*akusala-saññā*), perceptions associated with unwholesome dhammas; they are also the four mentality aggregates.

The wholesome and unwholesome mentality aggregates are impermanent. As soon as they arise, they perish; they are subject to constant arising and perishing, which is why they are suffering.

Question 7.3 Which associated mental factor does ‘Taking an object’ involve?

Answer 7.3 All consciousnesses (*citta*) and associated mental factors (*cetasika*) take an object. Without an object they cannot occur. Consciousness and associated mental factors are the subject. The subject, *ārammaṇika-dhamma*, cannot arise without an object (*ārammaṇa*). *Ārammaṇika* is the dhamma or phenomenon that takes an object. In other words, the dhamma

⁴³⁵ ‘*Khandha-Suttaṃ*’ (‘The Aggregates Sutta’) quoted p.4.

that knows an object. If there is no object to be known, then there is no dhamma that knows. Different groups of consciousness and associated mental factors take different objects. There are eighty-nine types of consciousness (*citta*), and fifty-two types of associated mental factor (*cetasika*); they all take their respective object. For example, the Path and Fruition consciousnesses and associated mental factors (*Magga-citta-cetasika*) and (*Phala-citta-cetasika*) take only one object, Nibbāna; an *ān-āpāna* jhāna consciousness and associated mental factors take only one object, the *ān-āpāna paṭibhāga-nimitta*; the earth-kasiṇa jhāna takes only the earth-kasiṇa *paṭibhāga-nimitta* as object. They are supramundane and fine-material sphere consciousnesses. But a sensual-sphere consciousness (*kām-āvacara-citta*) takes different objects, good or bad. If you want to know in detail, you should study the Abhidhamma; more exactly the *Ārammaṇa* section of the *Abhidhammattha-Saṅgaha*.⁴³⁶

Question 7.4 Does work for the Saṅgha affect one's meditation? Does it depend on the individual, or can one achieve a certain degree of concentration, after which work has no effect?

Answer 7.4 In many suttas The Buddha criticizes bhikkhus who practise the following:

- Pleasure in working (*kammā-rāmatā*)
- Pleasure in talking (*bhassā-rāmatā*)
- Pleasure in sleeping (*niddā-rāmatā*)
- Pleasure in company (*saṅghaṇikā-rāmatā*)
- Not controlling the faculties (*indriyesu a-guttadvārātā*)
- Not knowing the proper amount of food to take (*bhojāne a-mattaññutā*)
- Not devoted to vigilance (*jāgariye an-anuyuttā*): to practise samatha-vipassanā with only moderate sleep.
- Laziness (*kusita* [or] *kosajja*): not practising samatha-vipassanā diligently.

So if there is any work you have to do for the Saṅgha or yourself, try to do it as quickly as possible, and then return to your meditation with a peaceful mind.

If you enjoy working too much, it is a hindrance to meditation, because strong and powerful mindfulness on the meditation object can then not be attained: enjoying work does not produce good concentration.

Question 7.5 Can a person who develops the jhānas with evil intent benefit from attaining them? And how about a person who has, for example, spent the money of a Saṅgha⁴³⁷ for his personal use and does not think it

⁴³⁶ e.g. *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*, Ed. Bhikkhu Bodhi, BPS

⁴³⁷ The Buddha made it a serious offence against the monastic rule (*Vinaya*) for a monk to
(Please see further next page.)

is wrong. When he attains jhāna up to the fourth jhāna, does his mind or view change?

Answer 7.5 In this case you should distinguish between a layman and a bhikkhu. If a bhikkhu has committed an offence (*āpatti*), it is a hindrance to attain jhāna. For example, if he has appropriated an allowable requisite of a Saṅgha for his personal use, it is not easy for him to attain jhāna, unless he corrects that offence (*āpatti*).⁴³⁸ That means he must pay it back with requisites of equal value to the allowable requisites he used. Then he should confess his offence in front of the Saṅgha, or to another bhikkhu. That means he should do a confession of offence (*āpatti-paṭidesanā*). After correcting his fault, if he practises samatha-vipassanā, he can attain jhāna, Path, and Fruition. If, without correcting his fault he really did attain jhāna, then maybe he is not a real bhikkhu, and so the offence was in fact not an offence.

For lay-people, purification of conduct is also necessary, and it is better if they purify their conduct before meditating, that is, if they undertake either the five or eight precepts. That way, while meditating, their conduct is pure, and they can attain jhāna, although they were evil before meditation. For example, in the *Dhamma-Pada Commentary*, there is a story about the servant Khujjuttarā.⁴³⁹ She was a servant of King Udena's wife Queen Sāmāvatī. Every day King Udena gave her eight coins to buy flowers for the queen, and every day Khujjuttarā put four of the coins into her pocket, and bought flowers with only the other four. One day, The Buddha came with the Saṅgha for almsfood at the florist's house. Khujjuttarā helped the florist give the almsfood. After the meal The Buddha gave a Dhamma-talk, during which Khujjuttarā developed shame at having stolen the money, and decided not to steal any more. Her decision is an example of morality purified while listening to the Dhamma. With meditation, Khujjuttarā became a Stream-Enterer (*Sot-Āpanna*). On that day

accept, receive, possess, or handle money under any form. This prohibition is observed and taught by the Most Venerable Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw.

⁴³⁸ This question involves two offences. One is the use of property belonging to the Saṅgha (money cannot be handled by the Saṅgha, but may be held in custody and handled by a layperson, although he may not be appointed to do so by the Saṅgha). The other offence is using and handling money. The first offence cannot be rectified by again committing the offence of using money. The first offence can be rectified only by allowable means, which is to compensate the Saṅgha with allowable requisites (money is not an allowable requisite) that have been obtained in an allowable way (not purchased by a bhikkhu). Hence, in his answer, the Most Venerable Sayadaw discusses rectification of the offence only in terms of 'allowable requisites'.

⁴³⁹ DhPA.I.ii.1 'Sāmāvatī-Vatthu' ('The Sāmāvatī Case')

she did not put four coins in her pocket, but bought flowers for all eight coins. When she gave the flowers to Queen Sāmāvātī, the queen was surprised because there were more flowers than usual. Then Khujjuttarā confessed.

Consider also the case of the Venerable Aṅgulimāla. Before he became a bhikkhu, he was a notorious murderer. But as a bhikkhu, he purified his conduct and strove hard in meditation. So he was able to attain Arahantship.

Consider also this fact: in the round of rebirths everybody has done good and bad actions. There is no one who is free from bad actions.⁴⁴⁰ But if they purify their conduct while meditating, then previous bad actions cannot prevent them from attaining jhāna. That is, however, only as long as those previous bad actions are not any of the five unintervenable kammās (*an-antariya-kamma*).⁴⁴¹

The five unintervenable kammās are:

- 1) Killing one's mother,
- 2) Killing one's father,
- 3) Killing an Arahant,
- 4) With evil intention shedding the blood of a Buddha,
- 5) Causing a schism in the Saṅgha.

If any of these evil actions has been done one cannot attain jhāna, Path, and Fruition, just like King Ajātasattu. King Ajātasattu had enough *pāramī* to become a Stream-Enterer (*Sot-Āpanna*) after listening to the '*Sāmañña-Phala*' sutta.⁴⁴² But because he had killed his own father, King Bimbisāra, it did not happen.

You asked whether after attaining jhāna, such people's mind or view changes. Jhāna can remove the hindrances for a long time. 'A long time' means, if they enter jhāna for about an hour, then within that hour the hindrances do not occur. When they emerge from jhāna, the hindrances may recur because of unwise attention. So we cannot say for certain whether such a person's mind will change with jhāna. We can say only that so long as he is in jhāna, the hindrances do not occur.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴⁰ In other words, if bad actions in the past made it impossible for one to attain jhāna, no one would be able to attain jhāna.

⁴⁴¹ See e.g. A.V.ix.3 '*Parikuppa-Suttaṃ*' ('The "Festering" Sutta'). These five kammās are called 'immediate', because they will definitely ripen in the present life, and give rise to rebirth in the big hell of Avīci, or one of its minor hells, as was the case for King Ajātasattu.

⁴⁴² D.2 'The Fruits of Asceticism Sutta'

⁴⁴³ Regarding jhāna and vipassanā and views, see also Q&As 7.7 and 7.9, p.232.

There are exceptions, as for example, with the Venerable Mahāthera Mahānāga.⁴⁴⁴ Although he had practised samatha and vipassanā meditation for more than sixty years, he was still an ordinary person (*puṭhu-jjana*). Even so, because of his strong, powerful samatha and vipassanā practices, no defilements appeared in those sixty years. Due to this, he thought he was an Arahant. But one of his disciples, the Arahant Dhammadinna, knew he was still a ordinary person, and helped him realize indirectly that this was so. When Mahānāga Mahāthera discovered that he was still a ordinary person, he practised vipassanā, and within a few minutes attained Arahantship. But this is a most exceptional case.

You should remember another thing too: he was expert in the scriptures (*pariyatti*) as well as practice (*paṭipatti*). He was also a meditation teacher (*kammaṭṭhān-ācariya*), and there were many Arahants who, like Dhammadinna, were his disciples. Although he was expert in samatha and vipassanā, sometimes misunderstandings occurred in his mind because of a similarity in experiences. So if you think to yourself, ‘I have attained the first jhāna, etc.’, you should examine your experience thoroughly over many days and many months. Why? If it is real jhāna and real vipassanā, then they are beneficial to you, as they can help you attain real Nibbāna, which is the ‘Pureland’⁴⁴⁵ of Theravāda Buddhism. But artificial jhāna and artificial vipassanā cannot give rise to this benefit. Do you want the real benefit or the artificial benefit? You should ask yourself this question.

So we should like to suggest, that you do not say to others, ‘I have attained the first jhāna, etc.’ too soon, because there may be someone who does not believe you. It could be that your experience is genuine, but it could also be false like with Mahānāga Mahāthera. You should be aware of this problem.

Question 7.6 What is the difference between rūpa-kalāpas and ultimate materiality (*paramattha-rūpa*)?⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴⁴ VsM.xx.733 ‘*Vipassan-Upakkilesa-Kathā*’ (‘Vipassanā Imperfection Discussion’ PP.xx.110-113)

⁴⁴⁵ Pureland: The so-called ‘Western Land’, ‘Land of Ultimate Bliss’ in Mahāyāna teaching, where a Buddha called Amitabbha Buddha is waiting. Rebirth there is obtained by reciting his name. The aim in the Mahāyāna tradition is, on the whole, rebirth in Pureland, as all who go there will become Buddhas, and then go and save all beings of all world systems. The Most Venerable Pa-Auk Tawya Sayadaw speaks here of ‘the “Pureland” of Theravāda Buddhism’ only as a metaphor for Nibbāna that will suit his Mahāyāna audience: he is not suggesting that Nibbāna is a place, or in any way to be compared with the ‘Western Land’ etc. See ‘supramundane plane’ (*lokuttara-bhūmi*) explained Q&A 3.12, p.104.

⁴⁴⁶ For details between rūpa-kalāpas and ultimate materiality, see further p.124.

Answer 7.6 Rūpa-kalāpas are small particles. When a yogi analyses those little particles, he sees ultimate materiality (*paramattha-rūpa*). In a rūpa-kalāpa, there are at least eight types of materiality: earth, water, fire, wind, colour, odour, flavour, and nutritive essence. These eight types of materiality are ultimate materiality. In some rūpa-kalāpas there is a ninth too: life-faculty materiality (*jīvita-rūpa*); and in others a tenth: sex-materiality (*bhāva-rūpa*) or translucent materiality (*pasāda-rūpa*). These eight, nine or ten types of materiality are all ultimate materiality.

Question 7.7 When a yogi is able to see rūpa-kalāpas or ultimate materiality, will his mind (*citta*) and views (*diṭṭhi*) change?

Answer 7.7 When he with vipassanā knowledge sees ultimate materiality in each rūpa-kalāpa, his mind and views change, but only temporarily, because vipassanā knowledge removes wrong views and other defilements only temporarily. It is the Noble Path (*Ariya-Magga*) that stage by stage destroys wrong views and other defilements totally.⁴⁴⁷

Question 7.8 How does concentration purify consciousness (*citta-visuddhi*)? What kinds of defilement (*kilesa*) are removed by concentration?

Answer 7.8 Concentration practice is directly opposite the five hindrances. Access- and first-jhāna concentration remove the five hindrances for a long time. Second-jhāna concentration removes application (*vitakka*) and sustainment (*vicāra*). Third-jhāna concentration removes (*piṭi*). Fourth-jhāna concentration removes bliss (*sukha*). That is how consciousness is purified by concentration, and that is called consciousness purification (*citta-visuddhi*).⁴⁴⁸

Question 7.9 How does vipassanā purify views (*diṭṭhi-visuddhi*)? What kinds of defilement (*kilesa*) are removed by vipassanā?

Answer 7.9 Before seeing ultimate mentality-materiality, their causes, and nature of impermanence, suffering, and non-self, a yogi may have wrong views or wrong perceptions, such as, ‘This is a man, a woman, a mother, a father, a self, etc.’ But when he sees ultimate mentality-materiality, their causes, and nature of impermanence, suffering, and non-self clearly, this wrong view is removed temporarily. Why is it removed? He sees that there are only ultimate mentality-materiality and their causes. He sees also that as soon as they arise, they perish, which is their nature of impermanence. They are always subject to arising and perishing, which is their nature of suffering. There is no self in these mentality-materiality and causes, which is their nature of non-self. This is vipassanā knowledge

⁴⁴⁷ Regarding jhāna and vipassanā and views, see also Q&A 7.5, and Q&A 7.9.

⁴⁴⁸ For details regarding the different jhānas, see ‘How You Attain Jhāna’, p.43ff.

(vipassanā-ñāṇa). It is Right View (*Sammā-Diṭṭhi*), and removes wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*). Vipassanā knowledge also removes defilements such as attachment and conceit, which are ‘partners’ to wrong view. So while a yogi is practising vipassanā, Right View is present. But it is only temporary, because when he stops meditating, wrong view recurs because of unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*). He again perceives: ‘this is a man, a woman, a mother, a father, a self, etc.,’ and the associated defilements such as attachment, conceit, and anger, will also recur. But, when he goes back to vipassanā meditation, this wrong view again disappears. So vipassanā knowledge removes wrong views and other defilements only temporarily. When he reaches the Path and Fruition, however, his Path Knowledge (*Magga-Ñāṇa*) will destroy those wrong views and other defilements completely, stage by stage.⁴⁴⁹

Question 7.10 What is the difference between *citta* and *diṭṭhi*?

Answer 7.10 *Citta* means consciousness or mind, but in *citta-visuddhi* (consciousness purification), it refers especially to a consciousness: an access-concentration consciousness (*upacāra-samādhi-citta*) or absorption-jhāna consciousness (*appanā-jhāna citta*).⁴⁵⁰ *Diṭṭhi* means wrong view, and is an associated mental factor (*cetasika*). It arises together with the four consciousnesses rooted in greed. A consciousness rooted in greed (*lobha-mūla-citta*) is associated with either wrong view or conceit.

One wrong view is the perception of self (*atta-saññā*). There are two types of perception of self.

- 1) The world’s general perception of self (*loka-samañña-attavāda*): this is wrong view because of convention: the perception that there is a man, woman, father, mother, etc.
- 2) Wrong view of self (*atta-diṭṭhi*): this is wrong view because of craving (*taṇhā*): the perception of an indestructible self (*atta*), which may include the perception that the indestructible self is created by a creator (*paramatta*).

In the thirty-one realms there is no self, only mentality-materiality and their causes. They are always impermanent, suffering, and non-self. Outside the thirty-one realms there is no self either. This vipassanā knowledge is Vipassanā Right View (*Vipassanā-Sammā-Diṭṭhi*). It destroys wrong view (*micchā diṭṭhi*) temporarily, including wrong view of self. But the Path Knowledge (*Magga-Ñāṇa*), which is Path Right View (*Magga-Sammā-Diṭṭhi*), de-

⁴⁴⁹ Regarding jhāna and vipassanā and views, see also Q&A 7.5, and Q&A 7.7.

⁴⁵⁰ Regarding the different kinds of concentration etc., see Q&A 3.1, p.95.

stroys wrong view completely. So what we have is in fact three types of view:

- 1) Wrong view (*micchā-diṭṭhi*)
- 2) Vipassanā Right View (*Vipassanā-Sammā-Diṭṭhi*), which is mundane (*lokiya*).
- 3) Path Right View (*Magga-Sammā-Diṭṭhi*), which is supramundane (*lokuttara*).

In the ‘*Brahmajāla*’ sutta, all sixty-two types of wrong view that exist are discussed.⁴⁵¹ They all go under wrong view of self, which is also called ‘personality wrong view’ (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*). Personality (*sakkāya*) is the five aggregates, so personality wrong view is to see the five aggregates as self. There are also many types of Right View, such as the Right Views called ‘Right Views about the Four Noble Truths’ (*Catu-Sacca-Sammā-Diṭṭhi*):

- Jhāna Right View (*Jhāna-Sammā-Diṭṭhi*): jhāna knowledge associated with the jhāna factors.
- Mentality-Materiality Apprehending (*Nāma-Rūpa-Pariggaha*) Right View (*Sammā-Diṭṭhi*): the Mentality-Materiality Definition Knowledge.
- Kamma-Ownership Right View (*Kamma-Ssakatā-Sammā-Diṭṭhi*): the Cause-Apprehending Knowledge.
- Vipassanā Right View (*Vipassanā-Sammā-Diṭṭhi*): vipassanā knowledge of the impermanent, suffering, and non-self nature of mentality-materiality and their causes.
- Path Right View (*Magga-Sammā-Diṭṭhi*): knowledge of Nibbāna.
- Fruition Right View (*Phala-Sammā-Diṭṭhi*): knowledge of Nibbāna.

Question 7.11 How should a yogi practise wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) in his daily life, and how in his samatha-vipassanā practice?⁴⁵²

Answer 7.11 The best wise attention is vipassanā. If you practise up to the vipassanā level, you will have the truly best wise attention. If you then practise vipassanā in your daily life, it will produce good results, such as Path and Fruition that see Nibbāna. But if you cannot practise up to the vipassanā level, you should consider the fact that all formations are impermanent (*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*). This is also wise attention, but very weak, and only second-hand.

You can also practise the four sublime abidings (*brahma-vihāra*), and especially the sublime abiding of equanimity (*upekkhā-brahma-vihāra*). That is superior wise attention, because to practise the sublime abiding of equanimity is to see beings with regard to the law of kamma: ‘*Sabbe sattā kamma-ssakā*’: ‘All beings are the owners of their kamma’. You can also some-

⁴⁵¹ D.i.1 ‘*Brahma-Jāla-Suttaṃ*’ (‘The Supreme Net Sutta’)

⁴⁵² For details regarding wise/unwise attention, see also ‘Wise and Unwise Attention’, p.165.

times reflect on the effects of unwise attention. Unwise attention causes many unwholesome kammās to come one by one. These unwholesome kammās will produce much suffering in the four woeful realms (*apāya*). To know this is wise attention. You should practise it in your daily life.

Question 7.12 What is the difference between attention (*manasikāra*) and practising the seven enlightenment factors (*bojjh-aṅga*)?

Answer 7.12 When you practise the seven enlightenment factors, they are usually at the head of thirty-four mental formations that include attention. Sometimes the thirty-four mental formations are called ‘vipassanā knowledge’, because the thirty-fourth mental-formation, wisdom (*paññā*) is the main factor.

In this connection, you should know the three types of attention:

- 1) Attention as the basic cause for the object (*ārammaṇa paṭipādaka manasikāra*): that is the associated mental factor of attention. Its function is to make the object clear to the yogi’s mind.
- 2) Attention as the basic cause for the mental process (*vīthi paṭipādaka manasikāra*): that is the five-door adverting consciousness (*pañca-dvār-āvajjana*) in the five-door process (*pañca-dvāra-vīthi*). Its function is to enable all five-door processes to take their respective object.
- 3) Attention as the basic cause for the impulsion (*javana-paṭipādaka manasikāra*): that is the mind-door adverting consciousness (*mano-dvār-āvajjana*) in the mind-door process (*mano-dvāra vīthi*), and determining consciousness (*voṭṭhapana*) in the five-door process. It is either wise attention or unwise attention. Its function is to make the impulsion (*javana*) occur. If it is wise attention, the impulsion (*javana*) is for ordinary persons (*puthu-jjana*) and learners (*sekha*) wholesome, and for Arahants only functional (*kiriya*). When it is unwise attention, the impulsion is always unwholesome, and cannot occur in Arahants.

Question 7.13 Could the Sayadaw please explain the diagram?⁴⁵³ Is it necessary, in this system of meditation, to practise the more than thirty types of meditation subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*)? What are the benefits in doing so?

Answer 7.13 We are not interested in diagrams. It is based on a diagram drawn by a school teacher, who is very interested in diagrams.

In Pa-Auk we teach many types of samatha meditation to those who want to practise them. If they do not want to practise all of them, but only one, such as *ān-āpāna-sati* (mindfulness-of-breathing), then we teach only that samatha meditation. When they have jhāna, we take them straight to vipassanā, systematically, stage by stage.

⁴⁵³ This is a diagram that is supposed to describe the practice taught at Pa-Auk.

While practising samatha-vipassanā, there may sometimes be hindrances such as lust (*rāga*), anger (*dosa*), and discursive thought (*vitakka*), which will disturb their concentration and vipassanā meditation. The following meditation subjects are the best weapons to remove those hindrances.

The Buddha gives them in the ‘Meghiya’ sutta:⁴⁵⁴

- *Asubhā bhāvetabbā rāgassa pahānāya.*

You should practise repulsiveness meditation (*asubha-bhāvanā*) to remove lust (*rāga*).

- *Mettā bhāvetabbā byāpādassa pahānāya.*

You should practise loving-kindness meditation (*mettā-bhāvanā*) to remove ill-will (*byāpāda*).

- *Ān-āpāna-sati bhāvetabbā vitakk-upacchedāya.*

You should practise *ān-āpāna-sati* [mindfulness-of-breathing] to remove discursive thought (*vitakka*).

Furthermore, a concentrated mind can see ultimate dhammas (*paramattha-dhamma*) as they really are.⁴⁵⁵ Of the concentration practices, the eight attainments (*samāpatti*) are very high and powerful; so to those who want to practise the eight attainments thoroughly, we teach kasiṇa meditation too. If you want to understand the diagram thoroughly, you need to practise samatha-vipassanā up to the Path and Fruition Knowledges. Only then will you fully understand the diagram.

Why are we not interested in diagrams? Because it is not enough to show the whole system on one page. We have explained the whole system in more than three thousand six hundred pages in Burmese: one page is not enough.

Question 7.14 Can a hating mind produce many generations of temperature-born octad-kalāpas (*utuja oj-aṭṭhamaka-kalāpa*), and make the eyes flash?

Answer 7.14 To say ‘a consciousness produces light’ is only a metaphor, because in fact, apart from the rebirth-linking consciousness (*paṭisandhi-citta*), all consciousnesses that arise dependent upon the heart base (*hadaya-vatthu*) produce consciousness-born rūpa-kalāpas (*cittaja-kalāpa*).⁴⁵⁶ Among these rūpa-kalāpas there is always colour (*vaṇṇa*). It is brighter if the consciousness is a samatha-, or vipassanā consciousness. This is discussed in the Pali Texts, Commentaries, and Sub-commentaries. But it does not say

⁴⁵⁴ U.IV.1 and A.IX.I.3 ‘The Meghiya Sutta’

⁴⁵⁵ These, The Buddha’s words, are quoted p.12, and p.23.

⁴⁵⁶ For a discussion of consciousness-born materiality, see p.112, and in relation to the light produced by samatha and vipassanā consciousnesses, see also Q&A 4.10, p.156.

that consciousness-born materiality born of a hating mind also produces light.

Question 7.15 Is the seeing mind that sees mentality-materiality itself included in mentality-materiality? Is it included in wisdom?

Answer 7.15 Yes, it is.⁴⁵⁷ You can see it at all the stages of vipassanā, especially at the stage of Dissolution Knowledge (*Bhaṅga-Ñāṇa*). It says in the *Visuddhi-Magga*:⁴⁵⁸

Ñātañca ñāṇañca ubhoṇi vipassati.

We must practise vipassanā on both the known (*ñāta*) and the knowledge (*ñāṇa*).

‘The known’ means the five aggregates and their causes, which should be known with vipassanā knowledge. ‘The knowledge’ means the vipassanā knowledge that knows the impermanent, suffering, and non-self nature of the five aggregates and their causes, which are all formations (*saṅkhāra dhamma*). Vipassanā knowledge is wisdom, Vipassanā Right View. Usually, Vipassanā Right View arises together with thirty-three or thirty-two mental formations, which gives thirty-four or thirty-three mental formations respectively. They are called ‘vipassanā knowledge’. They are mentality dhammas, because they incline towards the object of the impermanent, suffering or non-self nature of formations.

Why do you need to see the vipassanā knowledge itself as impermanence, suffering, and non-self? Because some yogis may ask, or think about whether vipassanā knowledge itself is permanent or impermanent, happiness or suffering, self or non-self. To answer this question, you need to see the vipassanā-process itself as impermanence, suffering, and non-self, especially the thirty-four mental formations in each impulsion moment, headed by that vipassanā knowledge. Furthermore, some yogis may become attached to their vipassanā knowledge. They may become proud, because they can practise vipassanā well and successfully. It is also to remove and prevent these defilements that you need to see the vipassanā knowledge, or vipassanā-process itself as impermanence, suffering, and non-self.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁷ For details in this regard, see ‘The Seven Ways for Mentality’, p.214ff, and ‘How You Develop the Dissolution Knowledge’, p.223f.

⁴⁵⁸ VsM.xxi.742 ‘*Bhaṅg-Ānupassanā-Ñāṇa-Kathā*’ (‘Dissolution-Contemplation Knowledge Discussion’) PP.xxi.13

⁴⁵⁹ This procedure is explained by The Buddha in S.II.Iv.4 ‘*Dutiya-Ñāṇa-Vatthu-Suttaṃ*’ (‘The Second Knowledge-Subject Sutta’). There, He explains how there is knowledge of each of the factors of dependent origination as operating in accordance with the Dhamma in the present, the past, and the future. And: ‘And also that knowledge of the fixity of the Dhamma (*Dhamma-ttithi-ñāṇaṃ*), that too is a destructible thing (*khaya-dhammaṃ*), perishable (Please see further next page.)’

Question 7.16 How to overcome the uninterested and bored mind state that occurs during long periods of meditation, or staying alone in the forest? Is this kind of mind state an unwholesome dhamma?

Answer 7.16 This type of mind state is called indolence (*kosajja*), and is usually a weak unwholesome dhamma associated with greed or hatred, etc. This type of mind state occurs because of unwise attention. If a person's unwise attention is changed to and replaced with wise attention, then he may succeed in his meditation.

To overcome this mind state you should sometimes recall that our Sakyamuni Bodhisatta's success was due to his perseverance. You should also recall the stories of Arahants who had striven hard and with great difficulty to succeed in their meditation, to eventually attain Arahantship. No one can have great success without striving. It is necessary especially in meditation to persevere. Wise attention too is very important. You should try to pay attention to the nature of impermanence, suffering, and non-self in conditioned things. If you do like this, you may one day succeed.

Question 7.17 Could the Sayadaw please give an example of a wish that is not associated with ignorance (*avijjā*), craving (*taṇhā*) and clinging (*upādāna*)?

Answer 7.17 If you practise when performing wholesome karmas, and also see the impermanence, suffering, or non-self nature of those wholesome karmas, then ignorance (*avijjā*), craving (*taṇhā*) and clinging (*upādāna*) do not arise. If you cannot practise vipassanā, then make the following wish: '*Idaṃ me puññaṃ Nibbānassa paccayo hotu*': 'May this merit be a contributing cause for realization of Nibbāna.'

Question 7.18 If the five aggregates are non-self, then who, Sayadaw, is giving a Dhamma talk? In other words, if the five aggregates are non-self, no Sayadaw is giving a Dhamma talk. So is there a relationship between the five aggregates and the self?

Answer 7.18 There are two types of truth: conventional truth (*sammuti-sacca*) and ultimate truth (*paramattha-sacca*).

You should differentiate clearly between these two types of truth. According to conventional truth there is a Buddha, a Sayadaw, a father, a mother, etc. But according to ultimate truth, there is no Buddha, no Sayadaw, no father, no mother, etc. This you can see if you have strong enough vipassanā knowledge. If you look at The Buddha with vipassanā knowledge, you see ultimate mentality-materiality, which are the five

thing (*vaya-dhammaṃ*), a fading thing (*virāga-dhammaṃ*), and ceasing thing (*nirodha-dhammaṃ*).⁷ SA describes this as counter-insight (*vipassanā-paṭi-vipassanā*).

aggregates. They are impermanent, suffering, and non-self. There is no self. In the same way if you look at me, or at a father, or mother etc. with vipassanā knowledge, you see only ultimate mentality-materiality, the five aggregates, which are impermanent, suffering, and non-self. There is no self. In other words, there is no Buddha, Sayadaw, father, mother, etc. The five aggregates and their causes are called formations. So, formations are talking about formations, sometimes about Nibbāna. There is no self at all. So how can we speak of a relationship?

For example, if someone were to ask you, ‘Are rabbit horns long or short?’ how should you answer? Or if they asked, ‘Is the body hair on a tortoise black or white?’ how should you answer? If the self does not exist at all, we cannot speak of a relationship between it and the five aggregates. Even The Buddha did not answer this type of question. Why? Suppose you said rabbit horns are long; that would mean you accept that rabbits have horns. And if you said rabbit horns are short; that too would mean you accept that they have horns. Again, if you said a tortoise has black body hair, that would mean you accept that a tortoise has hair. If you said tortoise hair is white, that too would mean you accept it has hair. In the same way, if The Buddha said the five aggregates and the self are related, it would mean he accepted that there is a self. And if he said the five aggregates and the self are not related, it would also mean he accepted that there is a self. That is why The Buddha did not answer this type of question. So we should like to suggest that you try to practise meditation up to the vipassanā level. Only then can you remove this view of self.

Question 7.19 The Buddha taught the ‘Snake Mantra’ to bhikkhus. Is chanting the ‘Snake Mantra’ the same as loving-kindness? Is chanting a mantra a Brahmanic tradition brought into Buddhism?

Answer 7.19: What is a mantra? What is the ‘Snake Mantra’? We do not know whether mantras have been handed down from Hinduism. But in the Theravāda Texts there is a protective sutta (*paritta-sutta*) called the ‘*Khandha-Paritta*’.⁴⁶⁰ The Buddha taught this protective sutta for bhikkhus to recite every day. There is a disciplinary rule (*Vinaya*) which says that if a forest-dwelling bhikkhu or bhikkhunī fails to recite this pro-

⁴⁶⁰ A.IV.II.ii.7 ‘*Ahi-Rāja-Suttam*’ (‘The Snake Kings Sutta’), called the *Khandha* (Group) *Paritta* (Protective Chant) because *mettā* is extended to all beings in groups: the four types of snake, beings with no legs (fish, leeches, worms, etc.), with two legs (birds, devas, human beings), with four legs (elephants, dogs, lizards etc.), and with many legs (ants, centipedes, mosquitoes, scorpions, spiders etc.).

tective sutta at least once a day, he or she will have committed an offence.

Once, in The Buddha's time, a bhikkhu was dwelling in the forest when a venomous snake bit him. He died. Because of this, The Buddha taught the '*Khandha-Paritta*'. The purpose of this protective sutta is similar to loving-kindness meditation. In that sutta there are different ways of extending loving-kindness to different types of snake or dragon. There is also an assertion of truth concerning the Triple Gem, and the qualities of The Buddha and Arahants. We shall recite this protective sutta tonight. It is very powerful. You may call it the 'Snake Mantra'. The name is not important. You can call it whatever you like. Some bhikkhus in Myanmar use this protective sutta for those who have been bitten by a venomous snake. It is effective. When they chant this protective sutta many times, and when the victims drink the protective water, the venom slowly decreases in them. Usually they recover. But the effect is not the same in every case. The Buddha taught this protective sutta to prevent bhikkhus from being bitten by venomous snakes. If a bhikkhu recites this protective sutta with respect, and extends loving-kindness to all beings, including snakes, he will meet with no danger. Usually, if he also observes the monastic code, no harm will come to him.