



**What Vipassana Is  
And  
Simple Vipassana**

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## Foreword

For more than two decades, Tharmanay Kyaw has been teaching meditation to local and foreign meditators, expounding his profound knowledge of the Pali texts and utilizing his own meditation experiences as well. He has written 67 books on several themes, mostly on vipassana meditation. Thus, he is one of the few monks who is highly respected at home and abroad.

“What Vipassana Is” is his compilation of the subtle and delicate points about vipassana practice. He has widely selected and compiled the best masterpiece written by Mahasi Sayadaw, one of the greatest masters of the twentieth century. So, you will find that each and every passage in this book brings profound and priceless knowledge of what is gained from vipassana practice. Certainly, you will enjoy and benefit from it.

U Hla Myint (Translator)

## 1. The Definition of Vipassana:

Vipassana means seeing psycho-physical phenomena in a special way, that is seeing the impermanence of things and so on. There are ten stages of vipassana beginning with *sammāsana* (the insight that discerns impermanence, etc.) and culminating in conformity insight (*anuloma* – the insight previous to *magga-phala* enlightenment). Two foundational insights, *nama-rupa-pariccheda* and *pacceya-pariggaha*, respectively, discern mentality and physicality and discern the conditionality of these phenomena, but not their impermanence and so on. Thus these two are not considered as vipassana insights.

Actually, these two insights can also be considered Vipassana in the figurative sense of leading to that end (*phalupacara*), as they are the basis for the attainment result in all the ten stages of insights. The discernment of mentality and physically and the discernment of conditionality can also be considered vipassana in accord with the definition given by the Pali text called *Petako-padesa*, “Here, *vi* is just a decorative prefix, having no meaning, and *passana* means to see psycho-physical phenomena.” In this way, all the insights including these two initial ones can be called vipassana because they all see psycho-physical phenomena in terms of their characteristics, function, manifestation or approximate cause. So, vipassana can mean seeing or the insight that sees, observation or the insight that observe.

(Vipassana Guideline)

## 2. Concepts Conductive to The Practice:

Names or terms used in the vipassana practice such as ‘seeing,’ etc. – although they are terms that indicate objects that really are (*tajja-pannatti*) – are likely to draw your attention to the conceptual names before the practice matures. At the beginning of practice,

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however, your mind can concentrate accurately on an object only when it is labeled properly. When concentration becomes stronger, the meditator can directly experience the true nature of mind and body, and penetrate into the unbroken process of psycho-physical phenomena until you see them arising and passing away moment by moment. When your practice gains momentum, every time you note an object, you can go beyond the conceptual names to directly experience psycho-physical phenomena.

(How to Practice Vipassana V-1)

### 3. Concept and Reality

Before our practice is mature, there is the tendency to perceive the conceptual form of shape of an object when we note seeing, hearing, or touching. However, once the practice is mature, we can go beyond form and observe psycho-physical phenomena directly. Conceptual forms will be seen only if we want to see them, otherwise, we will find absolute reality or *paramattha*, which simply refers to phenomena that can be directly experienced. At this point, our own experience proves the truth of the saying, “Where there is a concept, there is no reality; where there is reality, there is no concept.”

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### 4. Even the Buddha-to-be

Even the Buddha-to-be was not assured of his wholesome rebirth although he had previously attained insight into equanimity towards formations (*sankhar-upekkha-nama*), which is much higher than the purification through removal of skeptical doubt (*kankha-vitarana-visuddhi*). Let alone those who have obtained just *kankha-vitarana-visuddhi*, in which the mental faculties of faith, energy and so on are much weaker than in *sankhar-upekkha-nama*.

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(How to Practice Vipassana V-2)

### 5. Not Just For Chanting

The practice of noting the three characteristics of phenomena does not refer to simply chanting or intellectualizing, i.e., just saying or thinking “impermanence, suffering and nonself.” As a matter of fact, ‘noting’ refers to directly experiencing the psycho-physical phenomena as impermanent, suffering and egoless by observing them the moment they take place (*paccakkha*). Based on one’s own experience one can then infer the truth of these characteristics (*anumana*).

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### 6. Only Omniscience

No one but the Omniscient Buddha can know exactly how many (*cakkhudasakas*) there are in each moment of seeing and how many (*kaya-dasakas*) there are in each moment of touching.

(How to Practice Vipassana V-2)

### 7. To See the Passing Away

Most meditators clearly see the rapid arising and passing away of psycho-physical phenomena at the stage of insight referred to as *udaya-bbaya-nana*. However, those whose spiritual faculties are not yet strong, this may be experienced only at the higher level of the insight. For those with more mature spiritual abilities, they may begin to experience this even at the lower level of insight that discerns impermanence, etc (*sammasana-nana*).

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### 8. The Bright Light

(At the early state of *udaya-bbaya-nana*, many practitioners experience bright lights.) Sometimes, you may see things even at night as clearly as in daylight, depending on the range of the light. You

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may experience the light clearly and remarkably in the daytime, too. Through this light, you may even see things that are covered or far away as if they were right under your nose.

Here, one might ask, “Does one see the bright light with the naked eye or in one’s mind’s eye?” According to the Maha-tika, the light is seen in the mind’s eye, which can be compared to the divine eye. However, you may also be able to see it with the naked eye at times. In any case, you can decide this based on your own experience.

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## 9. Blackout Intervals

(A yogi is likely to experience blackout intervals, that is, somewhat like being unconscious.) You may experience it for a few moments while the practice is in a favorable condition especially during the states of *bhaga* and higher insights. After this interval, the practice continues on again as usual. It should be explained as *piti* (spiritual ecstasy or rapture) that results from powerful insights. Moreover, powerful tranquility (*passaddhi*) can also lead to such interval of blackout, (which involves neither thinking nor observing, but somewhat like being unconscious). When you awake, you will find your practice continuing on as good as usual. *Tatra-majjhata-upekkha* (spiritual equanimity) also tends to result in such blackout intervals at times when the practice is going easily and smoothly.

Sometimes, the practice is going smoothly, but meditative objects and moments of noting consciousness become more and more subtle until they all fade away. From time to time, it may result in a long state of sleepiness. After one awakes, however, the practice continues on again without any drowsiness. This state should be attributed to sloth and torpor that take place when your energy gets low and

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concentration is still strong. You can overcome these states of blackout, which are caused by rapture, tranquility, equanimity or sloth and torpor, by noting more objects, or by noting more attentively.

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## 10. Insight into Dissolution

When you can continually see the noted objects and noting minds themselves passing away one by one, you are said to have obtained the insight called *Bhanga-nana*. Here, dissolution means ceasing or disappearing, not breaking into pieces.

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## 11. To Feel

(At the stage of *Bhanga-nana*,) a terror of sorts becomes evident, unlike the two lower insights of *udaya-bbaya* and *bhanga* enthusiasm predominates. Here, the fearful feeling is not really due to fear, but simply from being fed up with phenomena, once you realize their nature.

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## 12. Three Similar Insights

The three insights *bhaya*, *adinava*, and *nibbida* all see the defects of phenomena, but differ in terms of their level of maturity, being low, medium, and high respectively. That is why if you reach *bhaya*, the other two will soon follow. Alternatively, you may find only one or two of them to be evident in your experience.

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## 13. The Difference

At the stage of the insight called *patisankha-nana*, you can experience a particular unpleasant sensation segment by segment every time you note it. This is not yet possible at *sammasana-nana*, and

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that is the difference between the two insights.

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#### 14. One Insight Of Two Stages

The insight *Udaya-bbaya-nana* is of two stages, immature and mature, which occur before and after the insight is purified of the ten kinds of interference, respectively. In the same way, at the early stage of this *Patisanha-nana*, you may feel dissatisfied with your practice, due to the evidence of unpleasant sensations, but later, in the more mature stage, the practice will go smoothly with no unpleasant sensations, and feel satisfactory. *Bhanga-nana* is likewise of two stages, immature and mature.

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#### 15. The Same Insight, Called by Three Names

The three insights *muncitu-kamyata-nana*, *patisankha-nana* and *sankhar-upekkha-nana*, differ in terms of their maturity, being low, medium, and high, respectively. Actually, they are the same in terms of realization that objects and awareness of these objects are all just conditioned phenomena. That is why it is said in the Pali text *Patisambhidamagga*:

“Being the same in terms of their characteristic, the insight called *sankhar-upekkha-nana* can be achieved shortly after the other two, *muncitu-kamyata-nana* and *patisankha-nana*.”

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#### 16. Impermanence

Impermanence cannot be known just by seeing phenomena arising or coming into existence. You may, however, reflect on the fact that whatever arises will vanish. So, at the moment of arising or the moment of existing, impermanence is not obvious. It is only when one

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can see the phenomena passing away, that impermanence becomes obvious. That is why the commentary says that the impermanence reaches to its peak at the moment of disappearing.

Without experiencing psycho-physical phenomena in terms of their individual characteristics, you just see conceptual manner of impermanence, and your seeing cannot be said to be *anicca-nupassana* (insight into impermanence). As a matter of fact, only the insight into the true characteristics of mind and body, together with the discernment of mentality and physicality passing away, can be honored as the real insight into impermanence (*anicca-nupassana*.)

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#### 17. Three Types of Seeing:

*Anupassana* means to see mind and body in terms of their individual characteristics. However, two initial insights, *nama-rupa-pariccheda* and *paccya-pariggaha*, cannot be called *anicca-nupassana*, etc., because they just see only mind and body, but not their impermanence, suffering and egolessness. Only at the stages of *sammasana* and higher insights, you can see psycho-physical phenomena to be impermanent, suffering and egoless. Thus, if you see them passing away, it is *anicca-nupassana*; distressing, *dukkha-nupassana*, and following nobody's will, *anatta-nupassana*. Each *anupassana* cannot be called by the names of the other two.

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#### 18. To be Experienced; to be realized

Psycho-physical phenomena which – which are impermanent, suffering and egoless – are to be experienced (*nata-parinna*). The manner of impermanence, suffering, and egolessness are to be realized (*tirana-parinna*).

## 19. Unbroken Process

*Santati-ghana* refers to the unbroken process of mind and body, which is flowing so incessantly that it seems to be an everlasting continuity. Before a person has practiced deeply, this *santati-ghana*, this apparent continuity, conceals the arising and passing away of mind and body. As long as this *santati-ghana* conceals *anicca*, mind and body appear to be permanent. One can overcome this illusion only by being mindful of the psycho-physical process, which is arising and passing away from moment to moment.

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## 20. Empirical Knowledge

Simply chanting, “*anicca, dukkha* and *anatta*,” or reflecting on these characteristics, will not work. What really matters is the discernment of mind and body arising and passing away, which occurs through noting these phenomena the moment they take place. If you try to understand *anicca*, etc., by chanting the words or reflecting on the concepts, it may well result in conceptual knowledge (*sanna*), which you may then confuse with empirical awareness (*panna*).

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## 21. Real Insight Into Impermanence

Seeing phenomena arising and passing away destroys the illusory sense of permanent solidity, *santati-ghana*. When you overcome this illusion, impermanence (*anicca*) becomes spontaneously obvious in one of two ways: either by seeing phenomena arising, existing, and passing away; or by seeing them passing away immediately after arising. Seeing *anicca* this way, realizing mind and body to be impermanent, is true *anicca-nupassana* (the insight into impermanence).

## 22. The Defilements Overcome By Vipassana

(The insight into impermanence helps to overcome the delusory sense of permanence, and its constituent defilements. Here one might ask which defilements are to be overcome: present, past or future.) If you fail to see psycho-physical phenomena arising and passing away at the six sense doors, it will result in the illusion of permanence, along with its constituent mental defilements. These defilements are not past, as they never took place; nor are they future, as their future occurrence is uncertain; nor are they evidenced anywhere in the present. Actually, they are just potential, and cannot be described temporally.

Potential defilements, belonging to nonpractitioners and those in training, are of two kinds. The first kind lies dormant in the mental process (*santana-nusaya*), and the second type lies in sense-objects (*arammana-nusaya*). The first kind can become active any time conditions are favorable, having not yet been eradicated by the path consciousness of enlightenment. The second, lying dormant in sense-objects that are unobserved, can become activated any time the objects are recalled. This second one is also called *arammana-ghiggahit-uppanna*, which is the kind of defilement that the vipassana can overcome.

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## 23. If You See Real Anicca

If you correctly see phenomena arising and passing away, you will have no more illusion that any phenomena is pleasant or belongs to a self.

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## 24. Conceptual Insights

Breaking of an earthen pot, for example, is not *anicca* impermanence because it is concerned with the conceptual form of the pot (*pannatti*), and has nothing to do with mental or physical phenomena that can be directly experienced (*paramattha*). So it is just conceptual or artificial *anicca*. The same thing is true of a person's death. Non-practitioners cannot be said to experience suffering in the ultimate sense when they suffer a thorn in their flesh or an ulcer, for instance. This is because their experience of suffering is tied up with the concept of a person, 'I feel pain'. At such times, the suffering experienced is not that related to ultimate psycho-physical phenomena, which can only be experienced by means of *vipassana* insight. So, the suffering experienced is not *dukkha* in the ultimate sense, but rather a conceptual kind of *dukkha*. That is why intellectuals at the Buddha's time such as Sarabhangha and his contemporaries, having investigated only this conceptual type of *anicca* and *dukkha*, could not realize real *anatta*.

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## 26. Inferential Knowledge

Seeing a present object passing away is empirical knowledge of *anicca* (*paccakkha anicca-nupassana*). This may be followed by inferential knowledge (*anumana anicca-nupassana*) when you realize intellectually that any phenomena that arise in the universe, whether past, future, or external, are impermanent.

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## 27. No Other

There should be no doubt that only the four establishments of mindfulness – on the body, sensation, mind, and mental objects – can

properly be called the practice of four noble truths (*catu-sacca-kammattana*), the development of insight (*vipassana-bhavana*), or the practice preliminary to the noble path (*pubba-bhaga-magga*). No other practice can lead to *nibbana*.

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## 28. Momentary Concentration

When faith, effort, mindfulness, concentration, and knowledge progress in balance with each other, you will be able to observe objects continuously, without any hindrance. The mind becomes concentrated on every object you note, moment to moment. This concentration is called *khanika samadhi*, or momentary concentration.

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## 29. Concentration and Enlightenment

One using the tranquility vehicle, *samatha-yanika*, must develop preliminary concentration or jhanic concentration to reach the *magga-phala* enlightenments. Otherwise, no enlightenment can take place. For one using bare insight as the vehicle, *vipassana-yanika*, momentary concentration is requisite in order for enlightenment. Development of the three *anupassanas* (the insight into impermanence, etc.), on the other hand, is necessary on both of these paths, for without these insights there is no way that the *magga-phala* enlightenment can occur.

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## 30. Vipassana Insight of Three Levels

Advanced insights start from insight into dissolution, *bhanga-nana*. This insight is accompanied by a high level of *khanika-samadhi* (momentary concentration). The intermediate level of this concentration begins with the insight into arising and passing

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(*udaya-bbaya-nana*), and the foundational level from the insight discerning mentality and physicality (*nama-rupa-pariccheda-nana*).

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### **31. Every Observation is Wholesome**

When you observe walking, for example, this observation involves the insight into psycho-physical phenomenon, and arouses wholesome mental states such as faith, non-attachment, non-aversion, and so on. These are meritorious and wholesome. Therefore, every observation results in vipassana wholesomeness. In the same way, when you practice *samatha* (transcendental meditation) by contemplating on soil or earth, for instance, every moment of contemplating develops wholesomeness.

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### **32. Illusion and Insight**

Although you may be practicing awareness, what comes first is often illusion, or illusion-related wholesomeness; the kind of insight that dispells illusion often comes only later. Thus, in the beginning of the practice, although there may be awareness of objects, they are likely to be seen in the regular way, that is, in the delusory sense rather than in ultimate sense. You may find it difficult at first to overcome the concepts. (encouragement, please)

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### **33. Ana-pana**

Paying attention to the form or shape of the breath is *samatha* (transcendental meditation); *vipassana* is paying attention to the sensation or motion of the breath, whether or not you have attained *jhana*.

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### **35. One Nature At a Time**

In given moment of observing a particular object, you may experience one of its four natures: characteristic, function, manifestation or approximate cause. It is not possible to directly experience two, or three, or four of these natures in a single moment of awareness. It is sufficient to be aware of one of these four natures of the object at any given time.

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### **36. Five Ropes Tied Together**

In experiencing *phassa* (sensation), one might become spontaneously of its constituents such as feeling tone, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. This may be compared to five ropes that are tied together. If you can catch one of them, the rest become obvious.

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### **37. Three Parinnas**

The insight into mind and body (*nama-rupa-pariccheda-nana*), and the insight into their causes (*paccaya-pariggaha-nana*), are called *nata-parinna*, as they see mind and body in terms of their individual characteristics. Two other vipassana insights, (*sammasana-nana* and *udaya-bbaya-nana*), are called *tirana-parinna*, as they see mind and body in terms of their impermanence, suffering, and non-self nature. The rest of the vipassana insights and magga-enlightenments are called *pahana-parinna*, as they abandon particular mental defilements.

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### **38. Subconsciousness Intervals**

When vipassana insights get mature, you are likely to find intervals between preceding and succeeding awareness. For example, when

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you bend your hand, you may find bending process segment by segment, with intervals between them. It will become obvious then that the awareness is discontinuous, and it may come mature, however, you will be able to see the intention to move and its resultant movement process arising and passing away moment after moment. Thus, pure *vipassana* takes place.

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### 41. Names are not that Important

Some think that only Pali terms like *rupa, nama, pathavi-dhatu*, etc., are to represent ultimate reality. That is wrong. What matters most is to be aware of psycho-physical phenomena as they really are. Names are not that important.

(How to Practice Vipassana V-1)

### 42. Upekkha

The neutral feeling (*upekkha*) starts to be experienced at the insight into dissolution called *bhanga-nana*, and reaches its peak at the stage of equanimity towards formations, *sankhar-upekkha-nana*.

(How to Practice Vipassana V-1)

### 43. Two Present Phenomena

At the early stage of the insight called *udaya-bbaya-nana*, you can see the various processes of experience presently arising and passing away (*santati paccuppanna*). When this insight matures, you can see them arising and passing away moment to moment (*khanika paccuppanna*).

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### 44. Process by Process

At the early stage of *udaya-bbaya-nana* insight, you will find stiffness, for example, arising and passing away as a whole, although it

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is [actually] constituted of many moments of stiffness, from beginning to end. Thus, you can experience the stiffness as a *santati paccuppanna* (present phenomenal process).

(How to Practice Vipassana V-2)

### 45. Moment to Moment

A single process of stiffness can be experienced several times, the stiffness experienced first is different from the second one; the second from the third, and so on.

Thus, you can see the single process of stiffness arising and passing away, moment to moment.

(How to Practice Vipassana V-2)

### 46. Vivid Past

To the Venerable Sariputto, who had just exited *jhana* absorption, the *jhanic* factors were still vivid enough that they could be observed as if they were currently arising, existing, and passing away. Likewise, in moments of the insights called *udaya-bbaya-nana* and *bhanga-nana*, immediately preceding phenomena may be vivid enough to be observed as if they were currently arising, existing, and passing away.

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### 47. Two kinds Of Concentration

In the case of *samatha*, your mind must be concentrated on a particular object, without shifting to any other object. This concentration cannot help you to see any psycho-physical phenomenon arising and passing away. For *vipassana*, your mind must be concentrated on one new object after another. In this way, you can experience the object in terms of mental and physical phenomena, and in due course of time, in terms of impermanence, etc. That is the difference between two kinds of concentration.

## 48. Samatha and Vipassana

When you practice samatha, you just contemplate on a single particular object so that the concentration can be developed. You should observe no other mental or physical phenomena. When mental hindrances interfere with the practice, therefore, you should simply stop them; you do not need to note them.

In the case of vipassana, you should observe mental or physical phenomena that are arising through the six senses. When you forget to note, and think of other things, arousing thoughts of sensual pleasure, etc., you should note the thoughts themselves. Otherwise, you will mistake them for something permanent, pleasurable, or belonging to someone. That is why you should not simply go back to one particular object, ignoring others, as in the case of samatha. It is very important to note [whatever arises] so that you can see these objects in terms of their individual characteristics and common characteristic, i.e. impermanence, etc., overcome attachment, and accomplish vipassana.

(The Purpose Of Vipassana)

## 49. To Overcome Unpleasant Sensations

It should be noted that for enlightened persons (*ariya*), the unpleasant sensation can be overcome by means of both vipassana insights and phala-absorption, whereas for ordinary meditators just by means of vipassana insights.

(A Talk On Vipassana At The Yangon University)

## 50. Vipassana and Rebirth

It is true that the wholesome deed of vipassana results [finally] in the cessation of rebirth. It does that in a particular way,

however: through seeing objects being impermanent, distressing, and following nobody's will, thereby leaving no room for the delusory sense of permanence, pleasure, and person connected to these objects. This is how vipassana overcomes the potential sense-related defilements, defilement-generated karmas, and their resultant rebirths.

[If the potential for rebirth is not yet completely eradicated], however, the karma involved in the deed of vipassana itself would result in following rebirths being wholesome ones. So, in the Abhi-shamma Pali text (the higher doctrine), the deed of vipassana is described as one of the *acaya* (the phenomenon that can build up rebirths).

(The Discourse On Sila-vanta Sutta)

## 51. How To Practice Vipassana

To practice vipassana means to observe the psycho-physical phenomena that are arising through the six senses so that you can empirically see them in terms of their true characteristics of impermanence, etc.

(The Discourse On Sakka-panha Sutta)

## 52. Vipassana and Jhana

Vipassana can be compared to jhana in terms of the factors involved. The development of vipassana from the time practice goes smooth until *sammāsana-nāna*, (the insight that examines the mental and physical phenomena and their impermanence, etc.), obviously involves five factors that are comparable to the first jhana: *vitakka* (directing the mind to an object), *vicāra* (considering the object), *pīti* (rapture), *sukha* (happiness), and *samāthi* (concentration).

At the stage of *udaya-bbaya-nāna*, being aware of objects without

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*vitakka* and *vicara*, you will find yourself having rapture and happiness, and feel comfortable in remarkable way. Your mind also becomes well concentrated on the object, and is free of wandering thoughts. This insight is thus comparable to the second jhana.

When you are able to overcome the ten kinds of vipassana obstacles and see objects arising and passing away, you will reach the mature level of this *udaya-bbaya-nana*. At this point, you will experience no more rapture (*piti*), but happiness (*sukha*) and concentration. Thus, this insight level is similar to the third jhana.

At the stage of *bhanga* and higher insights, only two factors can be experienced, tranquility and concentration. You will find only these two factors prevailing during these insights, whatever objects you observe. This stage of insights thus parallels the fourth jhana.

Sometimes, you may lose the sense of body and other physical phenomena, and feel as if you were floating in the air. This can be compared to the *jhana* called *akasananca-yatana*. At other times, you may find nothing but knowing mind to note; this is comparable to *vinnaca-yatana*. Sometimes, you may experience only emptiness to note; this is likened to *akincanna-yatana*. Other times, you may find your mind so subtle that consciousness seems to be gone; this state bears a resemblance to *nevasamma-nasanna-yatana*.

### 53. Learning Step by Step

*Yatha-pakatam vipassanabhiniveso*. (Maha-tika) vipassana starts with the awareness of whatever is obvious.

As suggested in this passage, we start vipassana with the awareness of what is obvious or easy to note, in order to make faster progress in the practice, just like learning in school. Learning should begin from subjects easy and comprehensible to the students. If we

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start with higher-level subjects, the students will find it difficult to learn. In the same way, one should start vipassana by noting easy and obvious objects. That is why the Buddha instructs us to observe as easy objects as the four physical postures.

### 54. Vipassana Practice

The practice of vipassana means to make effort to be aware of mental and physical phenomena – occurring through the six senses – as they really are.

(The Introductory Talk On How To Practice)

### 55. More Important

In practicing vipassana, it is more important to be aware of phenomena as they really are than to name an object literally. Actually, naming alone does not work.

(The Introductory Talk On How To Practice)

### 56. Without Naming

Of course, it is possible to be aware of an object without naming it. Initially, however, it can be difficult to be aware of an object precisely and accurately without naming it properly. Thus, you are suggested to note an object by naming it suitably.

(25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Talk)

### 57. Daily Language

According to Maha-sati-patthana Sutta, the best way to note an object in daily language. When awalking, for instance, note it as going, or right step and left step, of lifting, moving and dropping. You can note your posture respectively as standing, sitting, reclining, and so one. The same is true with beinding, stretching, moving, rising and falling, etc.

### 58. Without Right Awareness

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Those who were out of reach of the Buddha's teaching – even though they had achieved jhana – could not gain enlightenment. This is because they were not directly observing mental and physical processes involved in their actions like going, standing, sitting, seeing, hearing and so on.

### **59. Just Learning**

Without having developed concentration, you cannot bring about such vipassana insights as *nama-rupa-pariccheda*, etc., even though you may be literally reciting *anicca* (impermanence), *dukkha* (suffering), and *anatta* (selflessness). That is just learning by heart.

(25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Talk)

### **60. Vipassana Insight**

Vipassana refers the insights that see mental and physical phenomena in terms of impermanence, suffering, selflessness (*anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*). However, rather than the state of impermanence, suffering, and egolessness, one should observe the present phenomena in order to see their own characteristics arising and passing away.

(Discourse on Hema-vata Sutta)

### **61. Vipassana Practice**

Vipassana practice means to be aware of whatever occurs through the six senses.

(Discourse on Hema-vata Sutta)

### **62. Don't Underestimate Tranquility**

You should not look down upon samatha (tranquility meditation) because it can help you obtain vipassana insights and magga-phala enlightenments if you practice vipassana based on the jhana-absorption. If you just focus your mind on the samatha object

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without observing present psycho-physical phenomena, however, you merely enjoy the tranquility.

(Discourse on Hema-vata Sutta)

### **63. Process by Process**

When you note rising and falling of the abdomen, you can clearly see the initial arising and final ending of each of these processes. That means you see impermanence in each process, and empirically realized phenomena to be in constant change. Thus real insight into impermanence (*anicca-nupassana*) takes place, followed naturally by the insight into suffering and egolessness (*dukkha-nupassana*, and *anatta-nupassana*).

(Discourse on Hema-vata Sutta)

### **64. Moment-to-Moment**

In due course of time, you will come to see the moment to moment process of each rising or falling. In other words, you will see each object arising and passing away segment by segment. This means you see moment-to-moment impermanence.

(Discourse on Hema-vata Sutta)

### **65. The Forty Vipassana**

“The Forty Vipassana” refers to the ten expressions of impermanence, the twenty-five of suffering, and the fifteen of egolessness. The stronger your scriptural knowledge or spiritual aptitude, the more expressions are evident in experiencing insight. In general, they occur more clearly with the vipassana insight that directly leads with the vipassana insight that directly leads to the higher magga enlightenments.

(How to Practice Vipassana V-2)

### **66. View of Self**

## What Vipassana Is

Only when vipassana is practiced can you overcome the illusory sense of ego (attaditthi).

(The Discourse on Bhara Sutta)

## 67. When Conditions are Favorable

If you have practiced vipassana correctly, even if you do not obtain enlightenment in this very life, you may be enlightened within a few lifetimes when favorable conditions arise, such as the chance to listen to the noble dhamma.

(The Discourse on Bhara Sutta)

## 68. Vipassana Conductive to Faith

If you practice vipassana strongly, firm faith will come to your heart.

It will lead you to the sublime realms, as if you led by the hand.

## 69. Any Time

With firm faith in practice, with insight into impermanence, whatever posture you are in, going, standing, or reclining, whatever task you're doing, eating, chewing, or tasting, if you keep on observing, you can be enlightened any time.

(The Discourse on Malukya-Putta Sutta)

## 70. What a Pity!

It would be a great loss if you do not manage to practice vipassana while you have the rare opportunity to meet the living tradition of awakening as a human being. The chance to give charity, to observe moral conduct, or to develop tranquility of mind is available even when the Buddha's teachings are no longer available. Receiving the practice of vipassana, however, is possible only if the Buddha's teachings are at hand.

(The Discourse on Sallekha Sutta)

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## 71. Different Insights

You will see psycho-physical phenomena in terms of individual characteristics, functions, and manifestation at the stage of the insight called *Nama-rupa-pariccheda-nana*, and in terms of their approximate cause at the level of *Paccaya-pariggaha-nana*. At the stage of the *Sammāsana-nana*, *Udaya-bbhaya-nana* and higher insights, you can see preceding and succeeding phenomena arising and passing away separately, and realize their impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, and insubstantiality or egolessness.

(Vipassana Guideline)

## 72. Current Seeing Process

The mental process of seeing consists of fourteen mind-moments from the examining moment (*avajjana*) to the follow-up moment (*tada-rammana*). However, the whole process can be experienced as a single seeing consciousness.

As vipassana practice develops, noting observation begins to arise in the very next moment of full consciousness that follows the seeing process after few moments of subconsciousness. At such times, you can be clearly aware of the seeing process as if it were currently arising and passing away. This is what the Pali texts mean by observing present objects.

(Basic Vipassana)

## 73. Not on Credit

You can purchase something on credit, intending to pay the debt later, but it is impossible to practice vipassana on credit, intending to pay attention later. You must observe each object the moment it takes place, so that no room is left for attachment.

(Basic Vipassana)

## 74. Take one Step Ahead

To observe immediately means to observe a seeing consciousness, for instance, right after it takes place. To be precise, this seeing mind should be observed before it is followed up by any other proliferating mental processes, *tadanuvattaka-manodvaravithi*.

(Basic Vipassana)

## 75. Four Mental Processes (move consecutive to 72)

(The seeing consciousness is normally followed by four proliferating processes called *tadanuvattaka-manodvara-vithi*.) With the first process, you perceive the same present color (*vanna*) as the one seen with the seeing mind itself. With the second, you perceive the same color, however this time it is past. Both processes perceive *paramattha* color (the color that can be directly experienced), although the objects differ in terms of time. Through the third and fourth processes, the sense of conceptual form and that of name, respectively, take place.

(Basic Vipassana)

## 76. Ordinary Wholesomeness

Without personal experience, by merely reflecting that objects are impermanent as they disappear, real vipassana can not take place because currently arising and passing objects are not really known. That would just be reciting words. By reflecting on impermanence, you can bring about ordinary wholesome states, but not vipassana insight.

(Basic Vipassana)

## 77. Real Vipassana

Real vipassana insight is the realization of impermanence through observing mental and physical phenomena just as they are arising and

passing away.

(Basic Vipassana)

## 78. Without Observation

If you observe phenomena the moment they take place, you can experience them in terms of their individual characteristics, functions, manifestations, or immediate causes although you may not describe your experience this way if you have little scriptural knowledge. On the other hand, no matter how profound your scriptural knowledge about mental and physical phenomena, without observing them just as they arise, you can only perceive them in a conceptual sense, not in the ultimate sense.

(Vipassana Guideline)

## 79. Using *Tajja-pannatti*

In vipassana practice, no kind of conceptual terminology is important; accurate awareness of psycho-physical phenomena is what matters most. In the beginning of practice, however, we have to use colloquial or scriptural *tajja-pannatti* (terms that refer to phenomena that can be directly experienced) because it is very difficult to effectively observe an object without their help. In due course of time, your vipassana insight can develop enough maturity to directly experience *paramattha* without using those *tajja-pannatti*.

(Vipassana Guideline)

## 80. *Sabhava, Sankhata and Samanna*

Without experience of the individual characteristics of mental and physical phenomena (*Sabhava-lakkhana*), you cannot really see their initial appearance, existence, or disappearance (*Sankhata-lakkhana*). Without this awareness it is impossible to penetrate the appearance and solidity of these processes, let alone to empirically observe their

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universal characteristics: impermanence, suffering, and egolessness (*Samanna-lakkhana*). Thus, it should be clearly understood that unless you see this *samanna-lakkhana*, you can bring about only conceptual knowledge.

(Vipassana Guideline)

### 81. Empirical and Inferential Vipassana

Empirical vipassana insight (*paccakkha-vipassana*) arises when you see mental and physical phenomena in terms of their individual characteristics and impermanence, etc., by observing them the moment they take place. Based on that empirical insight, although they may not be directly experienced, one realizes that all phenomena past or future are similarly impermanent, suffering, and egoless. This is *sanmana-vipassana*.

(Basic Vipassana)

### 82. Functional wholesomeness

Wholesome acts such as vipassana meditation, if performed by an Arahant, are called functional (*kriya*). They are not referred to as fruitful wholesome acts (*kusala*) because an Arahant has eradicated mental defilements, which allow the results of actions to come to fruition.

(Discourse On Nibbana)

### 83. Three Moments

At the stage of *Sammasana-nana*, three moments of an object obvious: beginning, middle and end, or initial arising, existing, and passing away. At the stage of *Udaya-bbaya-nana*, two moments are obvious: initial arising and passing away. At the stage of *Bhanga-nana*, only one moment is obvious, passing away. Before the stage of *Sammasana-nana*, you cannot see either an object's initially arising or

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its passing away; instead the object appears to be lasting continuously.

(Discourse On Nibbana)

### 84. Vipassana Formula

What should be observed in order to bring about vipassana?

The five aggregates – which are subject to attachment – should be observed.

For what purpose should they be observed?

The aggregates should be observed moment to moment in order not to be attached to them.

Failure to observe them moment to moment results in attachment, And in the delusory sense of permanence, pleasure and itself.

By noting whatever arises, attachment is overcome,

Resulting in the realization of impermanence, suffering, and nonself.

Detachment brings about the path insights leading to Nibbana.

This Vipassana Formula can be very helpful to bear in mind.

(Basic Vipassana)

### 85. Momentary Freedom

Vipassana brings temporary freedom (*tadanga-pahana*) from mental defilements. Sense-objects, if observed, they are liable to generate mental pollution.

(Discourse on Sallekha Sutta)

### 86. Fifty Billions

It is said the Pali texts that as many as one trillion mind-moments arise and pass away, one after another, within the blinking of an eye. (A physical phenomenon is said to last seventeen times as long as a mental phenomenon). Thus, during that same blink of the eye, fifty billion moments of physicality arise and pass away, one by one. In

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modern times, scientists have found that an atom can last only a split second. Such finding really accord with such Pali texts.

(Discourse on Sallekha Sutta)

### 87. Vipassana Sati

The mindfulness that brings insight (*vipassana-sati*) refers to awareness of mental and physical phenomena.

(Discourse on Sallekha Sutta)

### 88. Limited and Unlimited

*Jhana* concentration can be developed by focusing on a single object, but not otherwise. One might concentrate solely on the nostrils, for instance, in *jhana* practice. Any object arising in one's direct experience can be an object of insight meditation; the attention is not limited to any specific object.

(Discourse on Sallekha Sutta)

### 89. A Mistaken Notion

Without observing current phenomena one cannot experience their impermanence. If you observe them moment to moment, you can experience current phenomena for yourself. Enlightenment is not inaccessible to you. Some are under the mistaken impression that it is not possible to gain enlightenment any longer, such notions arise simply because people have not tried practicing.

(Discourse on Sallekha Sutta)

### 90. Moment to Moment

For vipassana insights, there is no particular object to concentrate on or to be aware of. In accord with the word of the Buddha "*sabbam parinneyyam* – whatever occurs is to be perceived," one should observe whatever object arises through the six sense doors. The same is true with the development of vipassana concentration; one

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should focus the mind on whatever object is occurring, moment to moment. One might think that such a momentary focus would weaken the concentration. Actually, with this method, concentration improves moment by moment until it becomes strong enough to bring about vipassana insights.

(Discourse on Sila-vanta Sutta)

### 91. Samatha to Vipassana

It is true that the Buddha taught us *samatha* meditations, such as contemplation on the virtues of the Buddha. For vipassana meditation, however, these tranquility practices can only serve as a foundation. By no means can *magga-phala* enlightenment be attained without insight practice. When one's mind is purified of mental hindrances by virtue of *samatha* concentration, one can practice *vipassana* by observing the tranquil mental state itself, or any other phenomena. Only when can you empirically see phenomena arising and passing away moment to moment; thus one can develop vipassana insights one by one until the *magga-phala* enlightenments.

(Discourse on Sila-vanta Sutta)

### 92. Vipassana vs. Sickness

The Buddha spent his last rain retreat in a village called Veluva. During that time, he contracted a sickness that was serious enough for his demise. By practicing vipassana intensively, however, the Buddha was able overcome that sickness.

(Discourse on Sila-vanta Sutta)

### 93. Unless Successful

Unless successful in practicing vipassana, one is liable to continue on and on through *samsara* (the cycle of rebirths) suffering old-age, sickness, and death.

#### 94. Vipassana Ditthi

Through the right view of insight (*vipassana samma-ditthi*), you can realize that there is nothing but mind and body and their interconnection, and that these all subject to impermanence, suffering and egolessness. This understanding eradicates delusory sense of soul (*atta-ditthi*), that of eternal soul (*sassata-ditthi*), and that of non-eternal soul (*uccheda-ditthi*). Here, eradicating means leaving no room for wrong views simply by replacing them with right views.

(Discourse on Sila-vanta Sutta)

#### 95. Vipassana of the Noble Ones

Ariyas (those have obtained *magga-phala* enlightenments) reenter the practice at the stage of *udaya-bbaya-nana* (the third insight, into phenomena arising and passing away).

(Discourse on Sila-vanta Sutta)

#### 96. For Sure

It should be noted for sure that all mental and physical phenomena, which are currently arising and passing away through the six sense-doors, are called *Upadana-kkhandha* (the aggregates liable to be attached to), and qualified as vipassana objects.

(Discourse on Sila-vanta Sutta)

#### 97. Arahat

Arahat means a fully-enlightened person, one who has successfully developed vipassana insights by observing phenomena occurring through the six sense-doors and thus attained the highest *magga-phala*, eradicating all mental defilements.

(Discourse On Nibbana)

#### 98. The Buddha's Teaching

If you wish to obtain *magga-phala* enlightenment in this very life, you must practice vipassana. This advice accords with the Buddha's teaching.

(Discourse On Nibbana)

#### 99. Very Difficult

Without vipassana practice, it is very difficult to stop seeing from being followed by thoughts, and the same is true with hearing, smelling, tasting or touching. It is even more difficult to stop an arisen thought process from further proliferation.

(Discourse On Nibbana)

#### 100. Mental Purification

When your mind is concentrated on meditative objects moment to moment without thinking of any other senseobjects, then the mind is pure of such mental hindrances as thoughts of sensual pleasure, etc. This mental purification results in *vipassana khanika-samadhi* (momentary concentration brought about by vipassana practice) which is as powerful as *upacara-samadhi* (preliminary concentration generated by samatha practice). Such momentary concentration serves in a role analogous to the mental purity of *jhana*, a purified meditative state free of interference from outside thoughts.

(Discourse On Nibbana)

#### 101. The Awareness of Touching

The sensation of touching is very widespread, and almost always evident, too. That is why a vipassana meditator can start his or her practice with the awareness of touching sensation. Touching is, in the ultimate sense, the sensation of either the earth element, that of fire, or of air. In the Maha-satipatthana Sutta, in passages such as "know going when going," the Buddha instructed us to be aware of this

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touching sensation in terms of the stiffness, motion, and so on involved in going about and other actions.

(Discourse On Nibbana)

### **102. Nearest to Nibbana**

Out of the many kinds of wholesomeness, vipassana is the nearest to Nibbana.

(Discourse On Nibbana)

### **103. Difficult to Persuade**

There are few people who can carry out vipassana wholesomeness. Very often, we find it hard to persuade people to practice vipassana. Even to listen to a vipassana dhamma talk is difficult for some. Even certain people with good potential for achieving magga-phala enlightenment are difficult to convince to practice vipassana.

(Discourse On Nibbana)

### **104. Thirty-Eight Meditations**

The Visuddhi-magga and Abhi-dhammattha-sangaha list forty types of meditation. The *kasinas* of light and of space, *aloka-kasina* and *akasa-kasina*, are the only additions to the list of thirty-eight mentioned explicitly in the Pali texts.

(Discourse On Nibbana)

### **105. Samatha Leading to Nibbana**

Just as a great body of water is accessible to anyone from any direction, so also any of the thirty-eight kinds of meditation can lead you towards Nibbana, *Samstha jhana* cannot do that alone, however, such tranquility can serve as a basis for practicing vipassana until the attainment of Nibbana.

(Discourse On Nibbana)

### **106. Hidden**

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The nature of impermanence is hidden by the unbroken process of mind and body (*santati*), the nature of suffering by changing bodily posture (*iriya-patha*), and the nature of non-self by conceptual solidity (*ghana*).

(Discourse on Sila-vanta Sutta)

### **107. The Domain of Wisdom**

If you fail to observe your bodily behaviors or actions that arise in your experience, you will mistake them for something permanent, pleasurable, and belonging someone. Thus arises the delusory sense of permanence, pleasure, and self, resulting in several other mental defilements.

In this way, unless observed, phenomena become a domain for mental defilements (*kilesa*); if observed, phenomena become a domain for wisdom. Thus, vipassana turns the domain of defilements into the domain of wisdom.

(Myanmar Translation of Satipathana Sutta)

### **108. Immediately After Arising**

Sensation such as seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking should be observed the moment they take place. Actually, you can be only aware of them immediately after they have taken place, not at the very moment of their occurrence. However, they can be experienced very vividly as if they were still at present. That is why the Pali texts say that phenomena are to be observed in the present.

(Discourse on Sila-vanta Sutta)

# Simple Vipassana

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## Preface

This booklet contains questions and answers regarding Vipassana practice. The answers are passages extracted from “How to practice Vipassana, Volume-II,” the classic work of Late Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw. The questions here have been created using the context of these passages. I arranged it this way for those who have requested a simple and practical way understanding the Vipassana practice.

Q-1: what are we supposed to do when we practice Vipassana?

A-1: Focus your mind on the abdomen. You will find it rising and falling with every breath. If this is not clear, then you may feel it by using your palm for while. When you clearly find the rising and falling of the abdomen, note “rising, falling” accordingly. Both the rising and falling should be perceived precisely and accurately.

Q-2: By observing rising and falling of the abdomen, are we not merely perceiving its conceptual form?

A-2: In the beginning of the practice, it is almost impossible to overcome the concept. Actually, the concept helps concentration, mindfulness and insight mature. When mature, however, you will come to experience the *paramattha* (the ultimate truth) beyond the conceptual form.

Q-3: The Practice of Vipassana means the moment-to-moment awareness of mind and body, which can be experienced through the six senses. Then, why did Mahasi Sayadaw instruct us to observe the rising and falling as a main object?

A-3: The true Vipassana practice is to observe mental and physical phenomena from moment to moment, which can be experienced through the six sense. In the beginning of the practice, however, your mindfulness and concentration are not strong enough to be aware of all kinds of phenomena moment to moment. As a beginner, you are very likely to waste your time by thinking about what and how to observe. For these reasons, you are instructed to observe the rising and falling as the primary object, which is both simple and obvious to observe.

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Q-4: Is it necessary to note the object verbally, and to breathe vigorously?

A-4: You should note an object mentally, but not verbally. Neither should you breathe vigorously with the purpose to make the object obvious, nor slow it down or speed it up for any reason. By doing so, you may get tired after a while and cannot keep on noting. So, breathe normally and regularly, and note the rising and falling concurrently.

Q-5: What should we do with wandering thoughts that often interfere with the awareness?

A-5: Note the thoughts in normal language. For example, when daydreaming, note it as daydreaming; when thinking, note it as thinking; when planning, note it as planning; when reflecting, note it as reflecting; when wandering, note it as wandering; when reaching somewhere, note it as reaching; when thinking of meeting someone, note it as meeting; when thinking of seeing something, note it as seeing repeatedly until it disappears; when thinking of speaking with somebody, note it as speaking. Right after the noting, you should go back to the main object, rising and falling of the abdomen.

Q-6: What to do with unbearable stiffness somewhere in the body?

A-6: Focus your mind on the stiffness, and note it as stiffness steadily and constantly. You may find it fade away, or become unbearable.

Q-7: What to do if the stiffness is unbearable, and requires us to change the posture?

A-7: If you want to change your posture because of unbearable stiffness, first of all note the desire to change, and all the physical behaviors involved in the changing process. For example, if you desire to lift

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your limbs, note it as wanting to lift. Note every single movement involved. When stretching your limbs, note it as stretching; when bending them, note it as dropping them down, note it as dropping. You should change the posture slowly and steadily. When they touch somewhere, note "touching". If the stiffness fades away or disappears while noting, you should go back to the rising and falling.

Q-8: What to do with heat that becomes obvious somewhere in the body?

A-8: Pay your attention to the heat, and note it moment to moment, steadily and constantly: "heat, heat." If it fades away, go back to the rising and falling.

Q-9: What to do if the heat is unbearable, and requires us to change posture?

A-9: If the heat becomes unbearable, and you wish to change your posture, you should note your wish to change, and then every single movement involved in the changing process in the same way as mentioned above. Then go back to the rising and falling. There should not be a break in the notings between the movements.

Q-10: What to do with itchiness if it appears in any part of the body?

A-10: If the itchiness takes place in some part of the body, focus on it, observe it 'itchy, itchy,' steadily and constantly, from moment to moment. When it fades away, go back to the observation of rising and falling.

Q-11: What to do if the itchiness becomes unbearable, and requires us to scratch it?

A-11: When the itchiness becomes unbearable and you want to get rid of it,

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note it as wanting to get rid of it, or wanting to scratch. When want to lift your hand to scratch it, note it as wanting to lift. When actually lifting, note it as lifting. You should lift slowly and steadily. When it touched the itchy spot, note it as touching. When you are getting rid of it, note every scratch, 'scratching, scratching.' When you want to stop scratching, note it as wanting to stop. When you want to let your hand down, note it as wanting to let it down. When you actually let it down, note it as letting down. When it touches on the floor, go back to the rising and falling.

Q-12:What to do when unpleasant sensations take place, and become unbearable in other parts of the body? What is its tendency?

A-12:If any kind of unpleasant sensation like pain, etc., takes place, focus your mind on it, and note it in common language steadily and constantly, from moment to moment. If it's pain, for example, note it as pain; if numb, note it as numb; if ache, note it as ache; if tired, note it as tired; if giddy, note it as giddy, and so on. Sometimes, the sensation disappears, but sometimes, it increases. Most of the time, however, it tends to disappear if you keep on noting it with persistence.

Q-13:To some people, severe pain occurs when concentration gains momentum. Is this a warning sign of disease? How should we deal with this?

A-13:Some people tend to experience severe pain when concentration gains momentum. For instance, they may experience it somewhat like a big bubble of wind bumping into the chest, or like a piercing pain as if being stabbed with a dagger, or like heat throughout the body, or like sitting as if pierced by needles, or like thingling as if insects were

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crawling all over the body, or excessive heat or cold. If you feel frightened, and stop noting, but tends to disappear immediately. It may reappear when the concentration becomes strong again.

There is no need to worry about this. It's not a warning sign of a disease, but just an ordinary sensation that once was hazy and lost among the other sense objects. It manifests now due to your strong concentration. If you fail in continuous noting, just keep on noting it until it disappears. There is nothing wrong with you. However, the same problem will recur every time your concentration gains momentum. On the other hand, if you continue to note with patience and perseverance, it tends to suddenly disappear, once and for all.

Q-14:How should we note general activities, for example, when thirst requires us to get up from sitting, and go to where there is drinking water?

A-14:If you are thirsty, note it as thirsty. When you intend to get up, note it as wanting to get up. Using common language, note all the movement involved in arranging the limbs to go. For example, note "rising, rising" contemplating on the body that is rising and gradually getting lighter and lighter. When you are standing straight, note it as standing. When you look and see something, note it as looking, seeing. When you intend to move, note it as wanting to move.

While going, note every step as stepping, or right step, left step. Try to follow the step from the moment it is lifted until it is dropped down. When you take a can kama<sup>1</sup> walk, you may note two objects in one step:"lifting, moving, or lifting, dropping, or moving, dropping."

When you see a pot (bottle) of water, note it as looking, seeing.

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When standing, note it as standing. When reaching for a glass, note it as reaching, when touching the glass, note it as touching; when holding it, note it as holding; when take the glass of water to the mouth, note it as taking; when the glass touches the lip, note it as touching; when cold on the lip, note it as cold; when drinking or swallowing, note it as drinking or swallowing; when cold in the throat, note it as cold; when putting the glass down, note it as putting; when dropping your hand down, note it as dropping; when the hand touches the body, note it as touching, and so on.

1. Can kama is a Pali word, which means waking to and fro in a place.

Q-15:What to note when going back to sitting?

A-15:when you want to turn back, note it as wanting to turn back; when really turning, note it as turning; when taking steps, note it as usual; when you want to stand for long, you can note three objects:rising, falling and standing. When you intend to sit down, note it as wanting to sit down; when actually sitting down, focus on the body that is getting down heavier and heavier, and note it as sitting, sitting. You should do slowly and steadily. When you arrange your limbs to sit down, note each and every behaviors involved, as usual. If there is no other object obvious, note rising and falling continuously.

Q-16:What to observe when reclining?

A-16:When you want to lie down, note it as wanting to lie down. And all physical behaviors involved in reclining process should be noted accordingly, such as lifting or stretching your hands, resting them on the floor, and so on. When you actually lie down, note: 'lying down, lying down.' When your head touches the pillow and bed, note it as

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touching. You should arrange your limbs slowly and mindfully in the beginning of lying down. When there is no other objects obvious, note continuously the rising and falling.

Q-17:What to observe when we are about to fall asleep?

A-17:If sleepy, note it as sleepy, if heavy-eyed, note it as heavy-eyed.

When the practice is mature, it tends to make you alert and clear again. Then, note it as clear, and go back to the main object, as usual. Although asleep, you should not stop observing. You should keep on practicing as if you were not going to sleep. If you are really tired, you will spontaneously fall asleep.

Q-18:Is it possible to observe during a sleep?

A-18:According to Pali texts, sleeping means a long process of particular mental state, called "bhavanga"<sup>1</sup>, which is similar to the first and last mind-moment in a life. This mental state is so subtle that we cannot even know its sense-object. It necessarily occupies every interval between the full consciousnesses, such as seeing, hearing, thinking and so on. Such interval is too brief to be known. During sleeping, however, it is obviously long, and known to us. Even then, we cannot know what it takes as its sense-object. That is why we cannot observe anything during a sleep.

<sup>1</sup> Bhavanga is literally translated as life continuum. It should be possibly compared to sub-consciousness.

Q-19:What to note when awaking from sleep?

A-19:when you wake up, note the awaking state of mind: 'awaking, awaking.' However, to catch such awaking state is quite difficult for

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you in the beginning of the practice. So, you can start noting whatever is first obvious to you. For example, if you find yourself thinking, note it as thinking. And then go to rising and falling, right away. If a sound awakens you, start noting, "hearing, hearing," and then go on noting rising and falling, right away.

If there is no other object obvious, you should keep on noting rising and falling of the abdomen as usual. The physical behaviors like turning your body aside, bending or stretching your limbs should be noted in common language. You should do everything slowly and mindfully. If you find yourself thinking about the time, note it as thinking. If you want to get up, note it as wanting to get up. Note all physical behaviors involved in the process of getting out of bed. When you are rising from the bed, note it as rising; when sitting up, note it as sitting. Right afterward, go back to the rising and falling as usual.

Q-20:What to note during meals?

A-20:During meals, if you look at something on the table, note it as looking, seeing. When you arrange your fingers to take food, note it as arranging; when you bring the food to the mouth, note it as bringing; when you bend your head down, note it as bending; when the fingers or spoon touch the mouth, note it as touching; when you open the mouth, note it as opening; when you close the mouth, note it as closing; when putting the hand down, note it as putting down; when it touches the plate, note it as touching; when you raise your hand, note it as raising. And then, every moment of chewing should be noted as chewing. When you enjoy the taste of the food, note it as enjoying; when swallowing it, note it as swallowing; when the food goes down

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through the throat, note it as touching. In this way, you should note in detail every activity involved in having food.

Q-21:What type of attitude should we keep to be able to note more objects?

A-21:In the beginning of the practice, you will miss many objects.

Moreover, you will find it difficult to catch the intention that motivated physical behaviors. In any case, you should not become disappointed. Later, you will be able to note from moment to moment. When your insight gets mature, you can note even more than what has been mentioned above.

Q-22:What to note if a gap or pause is found between rising and falling?

A-22:After a day, or a night, you may find a gap or pause between rising and falling. Then, filling the gap with observation of the body being seated, you may note three objects concurrently thus: "rising, falling, sitting." During lying, also note three objects thus: "rising, falling, lying." If you still find a gap, fill it with observation of touching somewhere in the body, and note four objects concurrently: "rising, falling, sitting, touching." Or you may find it easier to put sitting two times thus: "rising, sitting, falling, sitting." During lying down, you can note four objects: "rising, falling, lying, touching." Or you may put lying twice: "rising, lying, falling, lying."

Q-23:Are we supposed to note seeing, hearing, etc., while noting internal objects like rising, falling and so on?

A-23:When we are noting the internal objects such as rising, falling and so on, you do not need to note general objects like seeing, hearing, etc.

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With the thorough observation of primary objects such as seeing, hearing, etc. can be accomplished spontaneously.

Q-24:What to note when we see or hear obviously?

A-24:When you happen to look at something or someone, you should note it as looking, seeing, and go back to the rising and falling. When you happen to see a man or a woman distinctively, note "seeing, seeing," two or three times, right before going back to rising and falling. In the same way, when you listen to a sound, note:"listening, listening, or hearing, hearing." When you happen to hear obviously of a bird or dog, note it as hearing, two or three times. Right afterward, go back to the primary object.

Q-25:What if we fail to observe seeing and hearing that obviously occur to us?

A-25:If we fail to observe seeing and hearing that obviously occur to us, it may affect the awareness of the primary object, giving way to wandering thoughts or mental defilements. In this case, you should note it as thinking. And then go back to rising and falling.

Q-26:What to do if we forget to note physical behaviors and thoughts?

A-26:If we forget to note physical behaviors and thoughts, note "forgetting," before going back to the rising and falling.

Q-27:What should we note if the breath becomes so subtle that rising and falling is no longer clear?

A-27:If the breath becomes so subtle that rising and falling is no longer clear, you can note sitting, touching or lying down. Regarding the touching,

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you can note three or four touching points alternatively.

Q-28:What is the best time for practice?

A-28:The best time for practice is every moment from the time you wake up until the late night you fall asleep spontaneously.

Q-29:What about sleeping time?

A-29:Initially, you should keep on noting as if you were not to sleep at all although you fall asleep spontaneously in due course of time. There can be times when your insight becomes mature, and keeps you awake for the whole night.

Q-30:Some brief advice on how to practice?

A-30:Whether wholesome or unwholesome, any thought should be noted. Whether big or small, any physical behavior should be noted. Whether pleasant or unpleasant, any feeling or sensation should be noted. Whether good or bad, any mental object should be noted. If there is not any other obvious, you should concurrently and continuously note rising and falling of the abdomen during sitting, and lifting, moving and dropping while walking.

