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Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta

Discourses



Talks from a course in
Mahā-satipaṭṭhāna Sutta
condensed by Patrick Given-Wilson



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Contents

Introduction	vii
Note on the Pronunciation of Pāli	xiii
DAY ONE	1
The Three Steps	2
<i>Sati</i> —Awareness	5
<i>Pariyatti</i> —Theoretical Knowledge	8
DAY TWO	13
Ānanda	15
Kurū	18
The Opening Words	20
DAY THREE	25
The Four <i>Satipaṭṭhānas</i>	25
<i>Ānāpānāpabbhaṃ</i> —Observation of Respiration	28
<i>Iriyāpathapabbhaṃ</i> —Postures of the Body	34
<i>Sampajānāpabbhaṃ</i> —Constant Understanding of Impermanence	35
DAY FOUR	39
<i>Paṭikūlamanasikārapabbhaṃ</i> —Reflections on Repulsiveness	42
<i>Dhātumanasikārapabbhaṃ</i> —Reflections on Material Elements	44
<i>Navasivathikapabbhaṃ</i> —Nine Cemetery Observations	45

DAY FIVE	51
<i>Vedanānupassanā</i> —Observation of Sensations	52
<i>Cittānupassanā</i> —Observation of Mind	56
<i>Dhammānupassanā</i> —Observation of Mental Contents	59
<i>Nīvaraṇapabbhaṃ</i> —The Hindrances	60
DAY SIX	65
<i>Khandhapabbhaṃ</i> —The Aggregates	65
<i>Āyatanapabbhaṃ</i> —The Sense Doors	68
<i>Bojjhaṅgapabbhaṃ</i> —The Factors of Enlightenment	71
Questions and Answers	76
DAY SEVEN	81
<i>Catusaccapabbhaṃ</i> —The Four Noble Truths	81
<i>Dukkhasaccam</i> —The Truth of Suffering	83
<i>Samudayasaccam</i> —The Truth of Arising of Suffering	85
<i>Nirodhasaccam</i> —The Truth of Cessation of Suffering	89
<i>Maggasaccam</i> —The Truth of the Path	90
<i>Satipaṭṭhānabhāvanānisamso</i> —Results of the Practice	94
Questions and Answers	97
Glossary	107
Pāli Passages Quoted In the Discourses	122
English Translation of Pāli Passages	123
Contact Information for Vipassana Centers	126

DAY FOUR

THE FOURTH DAY of the *Satipaṭṭhāna* course is over. We continue to recite the *Sutta* and to try to understand it in relation to the practice.

We are still in *kāyānupassanā*. You can start with any of the four fields of *kāyānupassanā*, *vedanānupassanā*, *cittānupassanā*, or *dhammānupassanā* and with any section of *kāyānupassanā*, but as you proceed they intermingle. You have to reach certain important stations. You have to feel the body inside (*ajjhataṃ*) and outside (*bahiddhā*), then both inside and outside (*ajjhata-bahiddhā*). You have to experience arising and passing (*samudaya-dhammānupassī viharati*, *vaya-dhammānupassī viharati*) then both together, (*samudaya-vaya-dhammānupassī viharati*). You have to feel the entire body as a mass of vibrations arising and passing with great rapidity, in the stage of *bhaṅga*. Then you reach the stage of body as just body (*Atthi kāyo' ti*), or sensations as just sensations, mind as just mind, or mental contents as just mental contents. There is no identification with it. Then there is the stage of mere awareness (*paṭissati-mattāya*) and mere understanding (*ñāṇa-mattāya*) without any evaluation or reaction.

As you progress and get established in the practice, deep-rooted *saṅkhāras* come on the surface and are eradicated, provided you are *vineyya loke abhijhā-domanassam*, keeping away from craving and aversion towards mind and matter.

In another discourse, the Buddha gave an illustration:

*Sabba kamma jahassa bhikkhuno,
dhunamānassa pure kataṃ rajam.*

The meditator who does not make new *kamma*,
combs out old defilements as they arise.

When a meditator stops generating all *kamma saṅkhāras*, (that is, new actions or reactions), the old impurities—*pure kamaṃ rajam*—are combed out. *Dhunaṃānassa* means combing or carding cotton, separating every fiber, clearing out all the knots and dirt. This can happen at any stage, whenever you don't generate a new *saṅkhāra*, but the very deep-rooted impurities only start coming up after *bhaṅga*. If you keep generating *saṅkhāras*, you keep multiplying your old stock. As long as you refrain from generating any new ones and remain equanimous, layers after layers of *saṅkhāras* are eradicated.

Dhamma is very kind. Initially very crude *saṅkhāras* which would result in a very miserable, low order of new life, surface and get eradicated. You are relieved of them:

uppajjitvā nirujjhanti, tesam vūpasamo sukho

having arisen, when they are extinguished,
their eradication brings happiness.

When all the *saṅkhāras* which would have taken you to a lower field of life are gone, the mind becomes perfectly balanced—fit to transcend the field of mind and matter and gain the first glimpse of *nibbāna*.

This may be for a few moments, seconds or minutes, but on returning to the field of mind and matter the meditator's behavior pattern is totally changed. A *saṅkhāra* of the lower fields cannot now be generated. The clan is changed—*gotrabhū*. The *anariyo* becomes a *sotāpanna*, *ariyo*. Today the word 'aryan' has lost its meaning and is used for a certain race. In the Buddha's day *ariyo* meant a noble person, one who had experienced *nibbāna*. *Sotāpanna* means one who has fallen into the stream, *sota*. Within seven lives at most such a person is bound to keep working to become an *arahant*. No power on earth can stop the process.

The work continues in the same way: *ātāpī sampajāno satimā*. Further deep *saṅkhāras* come on the surface and pass away (*uppajjitvā nirujjhanti*) and a much deeper experience of *nibbāna* results. The meditator returns again to the field of arising and passing, a totally changed person, the stage of *sakadāgāmi* has been reached. Only one more life is possible in the sensual world. Then again the practice is *ātāpī sampajāno satimā*. Finer impurities, but ones which would still give lives of misery, are now eradicated by this equanimity, and the dip in *nibbāna* is again much deeper. The stage of *anāgāmi* is experienced. Now the only possible life is not in the sensual field, but in a very high *Brāhmic* plane. As the meditator continues, the finest *saṅkhāras*—which would give even one life of misery, because they are still within the circle of life and death—are eradicated, and the *nibbāna* of an *arahant* is experienced, total liberation. It can be in this very life or in future lives, but the practice is the same: *ātāpī sampajāno satimā*.

Satimā is with awareness. *Sampajāno* is with wisdom, *paññā*, of arising and passing, direct experience of bodily sensations. Body alone cannot feel sensations and so mind is involved, but in the body is where they are felt. The Buddha gave an illustration: just as different kinds of winds arise in the sky—warm or cold, fast or slow, dirty or clean—so in the body different kinds of sensations arise and pass away.

In another discourse he said:

*Yato ca bhikkhu ātāpī sampajaññam na rincati,
tato so vedanā sabbā pariñānāti paṇḍito.*

Working ardently, without missing *sampajaññam*,
a meditator experiences the entire field of *vedanā* and gains
wisdom.

There are different kinds of *vedanā* whether the *saṅkhāras* are gross, finer or finest. *Sampajaññam* day and night is thus the essence of the whole technique.

*So vedanā pariññāya diṭṭhe dhamme anāsavo,
kāyassa bhedā dhammatṭho saṅkhyamaṃ nopeti vedagū.*

“When the entire field of *vedanā* is transcended, Dhamma is understood. Such a person, without impurities (*anāsava*) fully established in Dhamma (*dhammatṭho*) knows perfectly the entire field of sensations (*vedagu*) and does not after death (*kāyassa bhedā*) return to this field of sensations.”

This summarizes the whole path to liberation. It is achieved with *sampajañña*, the wisdom of arising and passing, equanimity with sensations. *Ātāpī*, working hard, and *satimā*, when it is the awareness of the circus girl, will not alone liberate because *sampajañña* is essential.



It is not necessary to pass through every section of *kāyānupassanā*, because each is complete in itself. Only the starting point differs. You can start with any section and reach the same stations and ultimately the final goal. We start with *Ānāpāna*, and later switch to *vedanānupassanā*. However *sampajañña* is required at every stage. The second and third sections of *kāyānupassanā* are always necessary. We practice in the sitting posture, but at times during the day other postures are necessary. The second section covers all four postures of the body (sitting, standing, lying down, and walking) but it still involves *ātāpī sampajāno satimā*, whatever the position or posture. Then the third section involves *sampajañña* continuously in every physical activity. This is necessary because *sampajañña* must always be present. Thus the first three sections on bodily activities must continue throughout our practice, but not every section of *kāyānupassanā*.

Paṭikūlamanasikārapabbaṃ— Reflections on Repulsiveness

Paṭikūla means “repulsive.” *Manasikāra* means “reflection” or “contemplation.” This will not in itself take you to the