S.N. Goenka

Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta
Discourses

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

Vipassana Research Publications • Seattle
Contents

Introduction ................................................................................................. vii
Note on the Pronunciation of Pāli .............................................................. xiii

DAY ONE ................................................................................................. 1
  The Three Steps ....................................................................................... 2
  Sati—Awareness ..................................................................................... 5
  Pariyatti—Theoretical Knowledge ............................................................ 8

DAY TWO ............................................................................................... 13
  Ānanda ..................................................................................................... 15
  Kurū ......................................................................................................... 18
  The Opening Words ................................................................................ 20

DAY THREE .......................................................................................... 25
  The Four Satipāṭhānas ........................................................................... 25
  Ānāpānapabbam—Observation of Respiration ........................................ 28
  Iriyāpathapabbam—Postures of the Body .............................................. 34
  Sampajānapabbam—Constant Understanding of Impermanence .......... 35

DAY FOUR .............................................................................................. 39
  Patikilamanasikārapabbam—Reflections on Repulsiveness .................. 42
  Dhātumanasikārapabbam—Reflections on Material Elements ............... 44
  Navasivathikapabbam—Nine Cemetery Observations ......................... 45
DAY FOUR

THE FOURTH DAY of the Satipatthāna 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 (ajjhattam) and outside (babiddhā), then both inside and outside (ajjhatta-babiddhā). You have to experience arising and passing (samudaya-dhammānupassi vibarati, vaya-dhammānupassi vibarati) then both together, (samudaya-vaya-dhammānupassi vibarati). 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 (paññissati-mattāya) and mere understanding (ñāṇa-mattāya) without any evaluation or reaction.

As you progress and get established in the practice, deep-rooted sankhāras come on the surface and are eradicated, provided you are vineyya loke abbijhā-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 katam rajam.
The meditator who does not make new kamma, combs out old defilements as they arise.

When a meditator stops generating all kamma sankhāras, (that is, new actions or reactions), the old impurities—pure katan rajam—are combed out. Dhunamānassa 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 sankhāra, but the very deep-rooted impurities only start coming up after bhaṅga. If you keep generating sankhāras, you keep multiplying your old stock. As long as you refrain from generating any new ones and remain equanimous, layers after layers of sankhāras are eradicated.

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

\[\text{uppayjītvā nirujjhanti, tesam vūpasamo sukho}\]

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

When all the sankhāras 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 sankhāra of the lower fields cannot now be generated. The clan is changed—gotrabhū. The anariyo becomes a sotāpanna, ariyo. Today the word ‘āryan’ 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: ātāpi sampajāno satimā. Further deep saṅkhras 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 ātāpi 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 saṅkhras—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: ātāpi 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 ātāpi sampajaññam na rincati, tato so vedanā sabbā pariñāṇati paññito.

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

There are different kinds of vedanā whether the saṅkhras are gross, finer or finest. Sampajaññam day and night is thus the essence of the whole technique.
So vedanā pariññāya dīṭhe dhamme anāsavvo, kāyassa bhedā dhammattho saṅkhyaṁ nopeṭi vedagū.

“When the entire field of vedanā is transcended, Dhamma is understood. Such a person, without impurities (anāsavā) fully established in Dhamma (dhammattho) knows perfectly the entire field of sensations (vedagū) 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. Ātāpi, 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 ātāpi 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.

Paṭikūlamanasikārapabbaṁ—
Reflections on Repulsiveness

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