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The LIGHT
of the
DHAMMA

VOL. V

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2502 B.E.

July 1958 C.E.



THE LIGHT OF THE DHAMMA

1. Please regard this not just as a quarterly magazine but as a continuing service for Buddhism.

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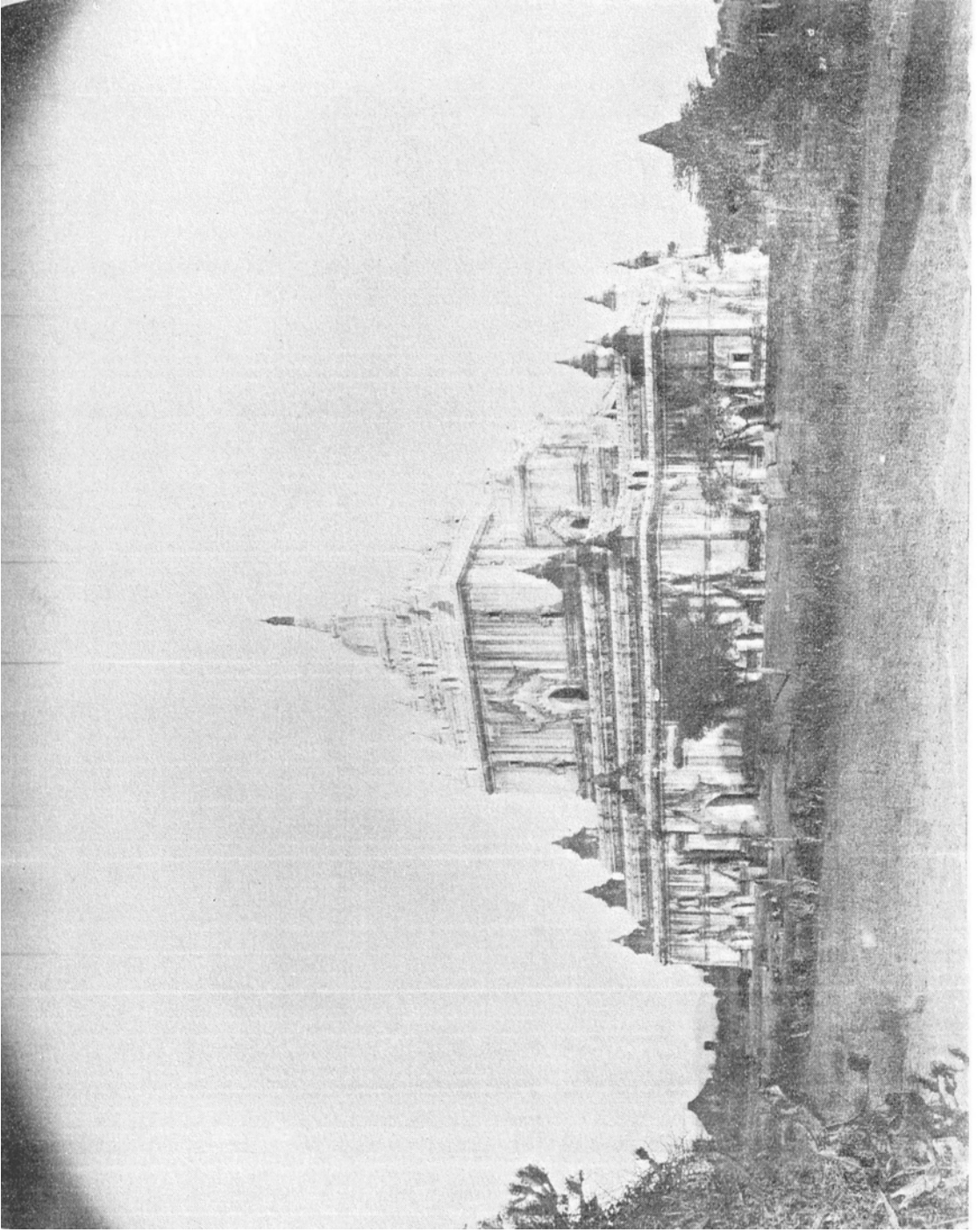
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The Thatbyinnyu Pagoda.

Photo by courtesy—International Institute for advanced Buddhistic studies.

BUDDHIST MEDITATION AND ITS FORTY SUBJECTS

**The Venerable Mahāṣī Sayadaw, Sāsana-dhaja-siri-pavara-dhammācariya,
Agga-mahā-pañña, Chaṭṭha-saṅgiti-pucchaka.**

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the whole world there is now a widespread interest and keen enthusiasm in the practice of Buddhist Meditation, but the proper knowledge of its practice in accordance with the actual teachings of the Buddha is still lacking. The majority of the general intelligent public has only a vague idea of the real purpose of undertaking the practice of Meditation, the correct method of practice, the benefits derived there from and other essential features.

For the sake of clear understanding and appreciation, and at the earnest request of the Union Buddha Sāsana Council, the Ven'ble Mahāṣī Sayadaw, Bhaddanta Sobhana Mahāthera, Sāsana-dhaja-siri-pavara-dhammācariya, Agga-mahā-pañña, Chaṭṭha-saṅgiti-pucchaka, has been kind enough to write a short treatise "Buddhist Meditation and its forty subjects" giving concise information of the fundamentals.

It is translated into English as desired by the Mahāṣī Sayadaw.

U PE THIN, (Translator)

Mahāṣī Yogī.

December 1957.

**Honour to the Exalted One, Arahant,
Buddha Supreme.**

MEDITATION

Its purpose

What is the purpose of carrying out the practice of meditation?

The practice of Meditation is carried out for the purpose of realising *Nibbāna* and thereby escaping from the ills of life: -old age, ill health, death and so forth.

All living beings long to live harmlessly, peacefully, happily and prosperously without suffering old age, ill health, death and other ills of life; yet they always find these hopes to be vain. For in every life there is still to be found old age, ill-health, sorrow and lamentation due to many dangers and evils, physical sufferings and mental griefs. Then after suffering dire pangs and agonies there follows death. Yet there is no end in death. Again there is birth because of attachment to becoming. In this new life too they are the victims of old age and the other ills. In this manner they go round the rebirth-cycle from life to life, suffering all kinds of vicissitudes and without any stop.

On searching for the root cause of this state of affairs it becomes evident that 'because there is birth there follows the chain of old age, ill-health, death and the other ills of life'. So it is essential to prevent birth if the ills of life in old age etc. are to be avoided.

Rebirth can only take place because of the attachment inherent in the present life. The new birth is nothing but the rising of a new consciousness which is the result of grasping a sense object in the dying moment of the previous life. Where there is no attachment there can be no new birth; so every endeavour must be made to free oneself from attachment if no new birth is desired.

This attachment to life can persist for two reasons, firstly because of not perceiving the ills of mind and body, and secondly by not realising that *Nibbāna* is far superior. For example, it is like the case of a person living in a barren and desolate country which abounds with many dangers. He naturally thinks highly of his country and has a great attachment towards it since he has no real knowledge of the defects of his country and of the better condition of another place. If he comes to

know the full facts, his country will no longer attract him and he will readily move to the new country. Similarly, it is essential to try to perceive the ill condition of mind and body which constitutes this life and to personally realise the superiority of *Nibbāna* with a view to removing totally the attachment to life. These knowledges can be acquired through the proper practice of Meditation. Hence, every one who is desirous of escaping from the ills of old age, death etc. and of personally realising *Nibbāna* should carry out the practice of Meditation.

Its divisions

There are two divisions of Meditation: —

(1) *Samatha-kammaṭṭhāna*, and

(2) *Vipassanā-kammaṭṭhāna*.

(1) The practice of *Samatha-kammaṭṭhāna* will develop the mental states of eight *Lokiyasamāpatti* (mundane attainments) consisting of 4 *rūpa-jhānas* and 4 *arūpa-jhānas*. Repeated exercise of these *jhānic* states will bring forth the following: —

(a) *Iddhi-vidha-abhiññā* ... Power to become manifold from being one and from being manifold to become one again. Power to pass without being obstructed through walls and mountains, just as if through the air. Power to walk on water without sinking, just as if on the earth. Power to dive into earth and rise up again, just as if in the water. Power to float cross-legged through the air, just as a winged bird. Power to touch sun and moon with hand.

(b) *Dibba-sota-abhiññā* ... Celestial ear, power to hear sounds both heavenly and human, far and near.

(c) *Ceto-pariya-abhiññā* ... Power to know the mind of others.

(d) *Pubbe-nivāsa-abhiññā* ... Power to recollect the incidents of one's past existences.

(e) *Dibba-cakkhu-abhiññā* ... Celestial eye, power to see all material forms and colours whether afar off or near, whether great or small.

Yet the possession of these attributes will not bring freedom from the ills of life of old

age, death etc. On death with the *jhānic* states remaining in full, intact, a person may be born in the relative plane of Brahma-world where the life span lasts for one world-cycle or two, four, eight etc., as the case may be. At the end of his life span he will die and be reborn either in the *deva* or human world, where he, just as others, suffers the ills of life of old age, death etc. Often owing to unfavourable circumstances he may be reborn in one of the four lower worlds and live in utmost suffering and misery. It is therefore evident that the practice of *Samatha-kammaṭṭhāna* alone will not be a guarantee of absolute freedom from the ills of life.

(2) Through the practice of *Vipassanā-kammaṭṭhāna* one is able to realise *Nibbāna* and thereby win absolute freedom from the ills of life.

Vipassanā-kammaṭṭhāna is again subdivided into (a) *Samatha-yānika*, one who takes up the basic exercise of *Samatha-kammaṭṭhāna* for realising *Nibbāna*, and (b) *Suddha-vipassanā-yānika*, one who directly carries out the practice of *Vipassanā* without the basic exercise of *Samatha-kammaṭṭhāna* for realising *Nibbāna*.

There are forty subjects of Meditation, any one of which may be taken up as a basic Exercise of *Samatha* for carrying out the practice of *Vipassanā*.

They are: —

- (1) 10 *Kasiṇas* (contemplation devices)
- (2) 10 *Asubhas* (impurities)
- (3) 10 *Anussatis* (reflections)
- (4) 4 *Brahma-vihāras* (sublime states)
- (5) 4 *āruppas* (stages of *arūpa-jhāna*)
- (6) 1 *āhāre-paṭikūla-saññā* (reflection on the loathsomeness of food)
- (7) 1 *Catu-dhātu-vavatthāna* (analysis of the four elements)

Here the ten *kasiṇas* are: —

- (1) the earth-*kasiṇa*,
- (2) the water-*kasiṇa*,
- (3) the fire-*kasiṇa*,

- (4) the air-*kaṣiṇa*,
- (5) the dark-blue *kaṣiṇa*,
- (6) the yellow-*kaṣiṇa*,
- (7) the blood-red *kaṣiṇa*,
- (8) the white-*kaṣiṇa*.
- (9) the light-*kaṣiṇa*, and
- (10) the bounded space *kaṣiṇa*.

The ten *Asubhas*¹ are: —

- (1) a bloated corpse,
- (2) a livid corpse,
- (3) a festering corpse,
- (4) a corpse cut in the middle,
- (5) a gnawed corpse,
- (6) a scattered corpse,
- (7) a hacked and scattered corpse,
- (8) a bleeding corpse,
- (9) a worm-infested corpse, and
- (10) a skeleton.

The ten *Anussatis*² are: —

- (1) reflection on the *Buddha*,
- (2) reflection on the *Dhamma*,
- (3) reflection on the *Sangha*,
- (4) reflection on the attributes of one's own *Sīla* (virtue),
- (5) reflection on the attributes of one's own *Cāga* (liberality),
- (6) reflection on one's own possession of *Saddhā* (trustful confidence), *Sīla* (virtue), *Suta* (learning), *Cāga* (liberality), and *paññā* (knowledge) which are the attributes leading to rebirth as *Devas*.
- (7) reflection on *Nibbāna*,
- (8) contemplation on the inevitability of death,
- (9) contemplation on the 32 parts of body, such as, hair, body-hair, nails, teeth, skin, etc, and
- (10) contemplation of in-breathing and out-breathing.

The four *Brahma-vihāras*³ are: -

- (1) *Mettā*: loving-kindness
- (2) *Karuṇā*: compassion,
- (3) *Muditā*: altruistic joy (in the attainments of others),
- (4) *Upekkhā*: perfect equanimity.

‘... resides with a mind full of Loving-kindness pervading first one direction, then a second one, then a third, then the fourth one, just so above, below and all around; and everywhere identifying himself with all, he pervades the whole world with mind full of Loving-kindness, with mind wide, developed, unbounded, free from hate and ill-will ... with a mind full of Compassion ... of altruistic joy (joy in the attainments of others), and of Equanimity...’ (*Jivaka Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya*.)

The four *āruppas* are: —

- (1) *ākāsānañcāyatana*: dwelling on the contemplation of the realm of the infinity of space,
- (2) *Viññāṇaṇcāyatana*: dwelling on the contemplation of the realm of the infinity of consciousness,
- (3) *ākīñcaññāyatana*: dwelling on the contemplation of the realm of nothingness, and
- (4) *Nevaśaṇñā-nāśaṇñāyatana*: dwelling on the contemplation of the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.

Description in brief of Exercise of Samatha-kammaṭṭhāna

A person who of the forty subjects of Meditation chooses the *Pathavī kaṣiṇa* - as his subject of contemplation, should look at a spot of earth on the ground or at a round earth-device and contemplate saying mentally “*pathavī, pathavī, pathavī*” or “earth, earth, earth”. After repeated contemplation for some time the vivid image of the earth-device will appear in the mind as if it were seen by the eye. This appearance of mental image is called ‘*Uggaha-nimitta*’ (acquired image). As soon as this ‘*nimitta*’ becomes fixed and steady in the mind he can go to any place and take up a posture of either sitting, walking, standing, or lying. He should then continue to contemplate

¹ *Asubha*: Impurity; loathsomeness; foulness; ugliness.

² *Anussati*: Reflection; contemplation.

³ *Brahma-vihāra*: Sublime states; also called the 4 Boundless States—Loving-kindness, Compassion, Altruistic Joy; Equanimity.

on the ‘*Uggaha-nimitta*’ by saying mentally: “*pathavī, pathavī*” or “earth, earth”. During the time of this contemplation it may happen that the mind does not remain fixed on its object but often wanders to other objects in the following manner: —

(1) The mind often thinks of desirable objects. This is “*Kāmacchanda nīvaraṇa*” (sensuous lust).

(2) The mind often dwells on thoughts of despair and anger. This is ‘*Vyāpāda-nīvaraṇa*’ (Ill-will).

(3) There is slackness in contemplation and the mind is often dull and foggy. This is ‘*Thina-middha-nīvaraṇa*’ (sloth and torpor).

(4) The mind is often not steady but restless, and the mind is often worried on recollecting past misdeeds in speech and body. This is ‘*Uddhacca-kukkucca-nīvaraṇa*’ (restlessness and worry).

(5) The mind often dwells on the thoughts “whether the contemplation which is being undertaken is a right method, whether it is capable of bringing beneficial results, whether there is any chance to achieve any good results”. This is ‘*Vicikicchā-nīvaraṇa*’ (sceptical doubt).

These 5 ‘*Nīvaraṇas*’ (Hindrances) should be cut off as soon as they occur and the mind should be at once brought back to the object of ‘*Uggaha-Nimitta*’ which should be contemplated as “*pathavī, pathavī*” for instance. If the mind loses its object of *Uggaha-Nimitta* one should go back to the place where the original earth-device is kept and contemplate again: “*pathavī, pathavī*” by looking at the device till ‘*Uggaha-Nimitta*’ is formed again in the mind. Then one should return to the same place and proceed with the contemplation in any posture of sitting, standing, lying and walking.

Carrying on thus the contemplation of the object of *Uggaha-Nimitta* repeatedly for a long time, the object assumes a very brilliant and crystal-like appearance unlike, the original. This is called ‘*Paṭibhāga-nimitta*’ (counterpart-image). At that time the mind is

free from all ‘*Nīvaraṇas*’. It stays as directed on the ‘*Paṭibhāga-nimitta*’. This state of mind is known as ‘*Upacāra-samādhi*’ (neighbourhood-concentration). Now, by continually fixing the mind with this ‘*Upacāra-samādhi*’ on the ‘*Paṭibhāga-nimitta*’ the mind reaches a state as if it sinks into the object and remains fixed in it. This state of fixedness and steadiness of mind is known as ‘*Appanā-samādhi*’ (Attainment-concentration). There are four kinds of this ‘*Appanā-samādhi*’. viz., (a) the first *jhāna*, (b) the second *jhāna*, (c) the third *jhāna* and (d) the fourth *jhāna*.

(a) In the first *jhāna* five distinct constituents are present; they are: —

- (1) *Vitakka* (initial application),
- (2) *Vicāra* (sustained application),
- (3) *Pīti* (rapture),
- (4) *Sukha* (happiness), and
- (5) *Ekaggatā* (one-pointedness).

(b) One who has already attained the stage of first *jhāna*, seeing unsatisfactoriness in the first two constituents of ‘*Vitakka*’ and ‘*Vicāra*’ again proceeds with the contemplation to overcome them and succeeds in attaining the stage of second *jhāna* where there are present the three distinct constituents of ‘*Pīti*’, ‘*Sukha*’ and ‘*Ekaggatā*’.

(c) Again seeing unsatisfactoriness in ‘*Pīti*’ he proceeds with the contemplation to overcome it and succeeds in attaining the stage of third *jhāna* where there are present the two distinct constituents of ‘*Sukha*’ and ‘*Ekaggatā*’.

(d) Again seeing unsatisfactoriness in ‘*Sukha*’ he proceeds with the contemplation to overcome it and succeeds in attaining the stage of fourth *jhāna* where there are present the two distinct constituents of ‘*Upekkhā*’ (equanimity) and ‘*Ekaggatā*’.

This is the brief description of the manner of the contemplation of the ‘*Pathavī-kasiṇa*’ and the development of the stages of four *jhānas*. The same applies to the remaining *Kasiṇas*.

In the case of a person who, of the 40 subjects of Meditation, chooses ‘*Asubha*’ as the subject of contemplation, he should look at a bloated corpse, or a livid corpse, etc. and contemplate by saying mentally “bloated corpse, bloated corpse”, “livid corpse, livid corpse”, etc. He should then carry out the contemplation in the same manner as in the case of ‘*pathavī-kasiṇa*’. The only difference is that the contemplation of these ‘*Asubha*’ subjects will lead only to the stage of first *jhāna*.

The contemplation of 32 parts of the body (*Kāyagatā-sati*) also will lead to the stage of first *jhāna*. The 8 reflections (*Anussati*) consisting of the subjects from ‘*Buddhānussati*’ to ‘*Maraṇānussati*’, reflection on the loathsomeness of food (*āhāre-patikkula-saññā*) and analysis of the four elements. (*Catu-dhātu-vavatthāna*) will lead to the stage of ‘*Upacārasamādhī*’ (Neighbourhood-concentration).

Three *Brahma-Vihāras* of ‘*Mettā*, *Karuṇā* and *Muditā*’ will lead to the stages of three lower *jhānas*, while those who have, through the contemplation of any of these three, already attained the stage of third *jhāna*, will also attain the stage of fourth *jhāna* by carrying out the contemplation of the fourth *Brahma-vihāra* of ‘*Upekkhā*’.

Those who have through the contemplation of the ten *Kasiṇas* attained the stage of 4 *rūpa-jhānas* will attain the respective stages of 4 *arūpa-jhānas* by carrying out in serial order the contemplation of four ‘*āruppas*’.

ĀNĀPĀNA-SATI-KAMMATTHĀNA

One who chooses ‘*ānāpāna-sati*’ as the subject of contemplation, should retire to a quiet place and seat himself cross-legged or in any convenient manner so as to enable him to sit for a long time, with body erect, and then keep his mind fixed on the aperture of nose. He will then come to know in a distinct manner the feeling of touch at the tip of the nose or at the edge of the upper lip, which is caused by the constant flow in and out of

breathing. This flow should be watched at the point of its touching and contemplated by saying mentally: ‘coming, going ‘coming, going’, on every act of in-breathing and out-breathing respectively. The mind should not go along with the flow either on its inward or outward journey, but it should remain at the point of touching.

During this contemplation there will be many hindrances with which the mind wanders. These hindrances should not be followed any longer but attention should be brought back to the point of touching and contemplation carried on as ‘coming, going’, ‘coming, going’.

By this means of continually watching the point of touching and carrying on the contemplation,

- (1) the long in-breathing and out-breathing are clearly noticed when they are long,
- (2) the short in-breathing and out-breathing are clearly noticed when they are short,
- (3) each course of soft in-breathing and out-breathing with its beginning, middle and end is clearly noticed from its touching the tip of the nose to where it leaves the nose, and
- (4) the gradual change from the strong to the gentler form of in-breathing and out-breathing is clearly noticed.

As the in-breathing and out-breathing become more and more gentle it appears that they have vanished altogether. In such case time is generally wasted by trying to look for the objects of in-breathing and out-breathing, by trying to investigate the cause of vanishing, and finally by remaining idle without carrying on the contemplation. There is, however, no need to waste time in this manner: if the mind is fixed attentively either on the tip of the nose or upper lip the gentle form of flow in and out of breathing will again appear and will be perceptible distinctly.

By thus proceeding with the continued contemplation of in-and out-breathing it will be visualised in some peculiar forms or shapes.

The following are those mentioned in the *Visuddhi-magga* (Way of Purity):

To some the in-breathing and out-breathing appears like a star or a cluster of gems or a cluster of pearls, to others with a rough touch like that of a cotton stalk or a peg made of heart wood, to others like a long braided string or a wreath of flowers or a puff of smoke, to others like a stretched-out cobweb or a film of cloud or a lotus flower or a chariot wheel or the moon's disk or the sun's disk. It is said that the variety in the forms or objects is due to the differences in 'saññā' (perception) of the individuals. This peculiar form of objects is 'Paṭibhāga-nimitta'. The 'samādhi' (concentration) which is then developed with the 'Paṭibhāga-nimitta' is called 'Upacārasamādhi'. On continuing the contemplation with the aid of 'Upacārasamādhi' then the stage of 'Appanā-samādhi' of 4 'Rūpa-jhānas' is developed.

This is the brief description of the preliminary practice for 'Samatha' by a 'Samatha-yānika' who chooses 'Samatha-kammaṭṭhāna' as the basis for realising *Nibbāna*.

Those who desire to practise *Vipassanā* should in the first place be equipped with a knowledge, either in brief or *in extenso*, of the facts that living beings consist of the two sole constituents, of body (*rūpa*) and mind (*nāma*), that the body and mind are formed due to cause and effect and that, as they are in a constant state of changing process, they are impermanent, ill and devoid of 'attā'.

A brief description of the practice of Vipassanā

A person with the proper knowledge mentioned above should in the first place induce the *jhānic* state which he has already attained and then contemplate on it. He should then proceed by contemplating continuously the sensations, such as, 'seeing, hearing, smelling, knowing the taste, touching, knowing, etc.' as they occur clearly at any of the six sense-doors. If he feels tired or exhausted by having to carry on continually

the contemplation of these varied objects (*pakiṇṇaka-sankhāras*), he should again induce the *jhānic* state by making strong determination that the *jhānic* state may remain for 15 or 30 minutes. When the *jhānic* state passes away he should then immediately contemplate on that *jhānic* state and afterwards proceed by contemplating continuously the sensations as they occur at any of the six sense-doors. This alternate procedure of inducing *jhānic* state and then proceeding with the contemplation of sensations at the six sense-doors should be carried out repeatedly. When the *Vipassanāsamādhi* is sufficiently strong he will be able to carry on the contemplation continuously day and night without feeling any strain.

At this stage it is distinctly perceived as a matter of course at every moment of contemplation that the body and mind are two separate things which are joined together. It is also perceived that the object and the mind which directly knows the object rise and pass away at the very moment of the contemplation. It is therefore understood that 'they are clearly proved to be 'impermanent', that 'they are ill without any pleasant qualities or reliability', and that 'they are merely a process of arising and passing away of things which do not consist of "attā" (enduring entity or soul). With the full development of the factual knowledge of 'Anicca, dukkha, anattā' there arises the insight of 'Maggā and Phala' and he realises *Nibbāna*.

This is the description in brief of the practise by way of 'Samatha-yānika' for the purpose of realising *Nibbāna*.

Here is the description of the practice by way of "Suddha-vipassanā-yānika".

With the proper knowledge mentioned above one who desires to practise "*Vipassanā*" should retire to a quiet place and seat himself cross-legged or in any convenient manner so as to enable him to sit for a long time, with body erect, and then contemplate by fixing his attention on the physical and mental phenomena which are known as

“*Upādānakkhandhas*” and which are distinctly arising in his body. These phenomena should be continuously contemplated on every occasion of their arising.

“*Upādānakkhandhas*” are those which are distinctly perceived at every moment of seeing hearing, smelling, knowing the taste, feeling the bodily-contacts and thinking of ideas, etc.

At the moment of seeing, both the visual object and the eye, where seeing takes place, are perceived. These two things are of the material group. They are neither pleasant nor “*attā*” nor “person”. Yet those who do not contemplate the very moment of their occurrence do not understand that “they pass away immediately and are not “permanent”, that “they are origination and passing away without any stop and are therefore ill”; that “they are neither *attā* nor living entity but are *anattā* in that they are subject to cause and effect in arising and passing away.” Because the material group forms the objects of wrong attitude and attachment they are called “*Upādānakkhandhas*”.

Eye-consciousness (*cakkhu-viññāṇa*), feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*) of visual object, and exertion to see visual object, mental activities (*sankhāra*) are also distinctly perceived at the moment of seeing. They are merely of the mental group. They are neither pleasant nor “*attā*” nor “person”. Yet those, who do not notice each and every arising of these phenomena (or each and every one of their arising), do not understand that “they are impermanent, ill and *anattā*”. They, therefore, consider these mental elements to be pleasant and are attached to them. They egotistically consider “I am seeing; I am feeling; I am perceiving; I am looking intently”; and are attached to them. These are the very reasons why those mental groups are respectively called “*Viññāṇa-upādāna-kkhandha*”, “*Vedanā-upādāna-kkhandha*” “*Saññā-upādāna-kkhandha*” and

“*Sankhāra-upādāna-kkhandha*”. This is how the five “*upādāna-kkhandhas*” are distinctly perceived at the very moment of seeing the visual object through the eye.

Similarly the five “*Upādāna-kkhandhas*” are perceived distinctly at the very moment of hearing the sound through the ear, smelling the odour through the nose, knowing the taste through the tongue, feeling of the tactile sensations through the body and knowing the mental objects through the mind-base. However in the case of mental objects, there may be both material and mental elements.

Though the material and mental phenomena are arising distinctly at each of the moments of seeing, hearing, etc., in their six spheres, it is not possible for a beginner from the very start of the practice of *Vipassanā* to contemplate them in the serial order of their arising. In *Vipassanā* the practice is started with the contemplation, in particular, of the most outstanding objects present in the body. It is just as in schools where lessons easy to learn, are, as a rule, taught at the beginning of the studies.

Of the two phenomena of matter and mind, the material phenomena being more outstanding should be chosen as the preliminary or prime object of contemplation in *Vipassanā-kammaṭṭhāna*. Again, of the various classes of material phenomena, the bodily contact (*bhūta-rūpa*) which is more outstanding than the objects of sense-doors (*upādā-rūpas*) of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, should be taken up as the preliminary and prime object of the contemplation at the beginning of the practice.

Therefore, with a view to notice the particular outstanding bodily contact, attention should be fixed on the sitting posture of the body and the continuous contemplation, carried out by making a mental note as ‘sitting, sitting’. While thus engaged in the contemplation the distinct feeling of bodily contact on the haunch or leg or any part of the body will be noticed. This particular feeling of

bodily contact should be taken up as an additional object jointly with 'sitting' and continually contemplated as 'contacting, sitting, contacting'. If this manner of contemplation as 'sitting, contacting,' is, however, found to be difficult to begin with, then the attention should be fixed at the contact of the flow-in and flow-out of breathing and the contemplation carried out as 'contacting, contacting'. If it is still found to be difficult to carry out this contemplation of 'contacting' then the contemplation should be carried out by fixing the attention on the bodily motion of the abdomen caused by rising (expanding) and falling (contracting) due to the flow-in and flow-out of breathing.

This is an illustration to show the manner of contemplation. Firstly, attention should be fixed on the abdomen. Then it will be felt that the abdomen is expanding and contracting and there are always present bodily motions in the abdomen. If at the beginning of practice the movement of rising and falling is not clear by the mere act of fixing the attention on the abdomen, one or both hands should be placed on the abdomen. Suspension of breath, and quick or deep breathing should not be done. The natural course of normal breathing should be maintained. As the abdomen is felt rising it should be contemplated by saying mentally 'rising'. Attention should be fixed on the gradual rising step by step of the abdomen from start to finish. As the abdomen is felt falling, it should be contemplated as 'falling'. Attention should be fixed on the gradual falling step by step of the abdomen from start to finish.

For particular attention it may be mentioned here that the words 'rising' and 'falling' should not be repeated by mouth, but they should be repeated mentally. In fact, words are not of real importance. To know the actual movements of the abdomen and the bodily motion present therein is of real importance. However, if the contemplation is carried on by the simple act of mental observation without the act of repeating the words mentally, the contemplation will be

casual and ineffective and with many drawbacks such as that the attention fails to reach closely enough to the object to which it is directed, that the objects are not clearly distinguished and perceived separately and that the necessary energy deteriorates. Hence it is directed that contemplation should be carried out by repeating mentally the necessary words on the respective objects.

While being occupied with the contemplation as 'rising, falling' there may be many occasions when the mind is found wandering to other objects. These wandering mental states should be contemplated as they arise.

For illustration: If it is found that the mind wanders to the objects other than those to which it is directed, it should be contemplated as 'wandering', if the mind intends to do something it should be contemplated as 'intending', if it is reflecting it should be contemplated as 'reflecting', in the case of wanting something it should be contemplated as 'wanting'; in the case of being pleased or angry or disappointed, it should be contemplated as 'pleased', 'angry', 'disappointed', respectively, and in the case of feeling lazy or happy it should be contemplated as 'lazy' or 'happy' as the case may be. The contemplation should be carried out repeatedly until these wavering mental states cease. Then, the contemplation should be reverted to 'rising, falling' of the original objects and carried on continually.

If any disagreeable sensations (*dukkha-vedanā*), such as, being tired in limbs or feeling hot or feeling painful, etc., arise in the body, attention should be fixed on the spot of the sensation and contemplation carried on as 'tired, tired', 'hot, hot'; or 'painful, painful' as the case may be. On the ceasing of the disagreeable sensations the contemplation of 'rising, falling' of the original objects should be reverted to.

But when the painful sensations are so acute that they are unbearable, then the posture of the body and the position of hands and legs

have to be changed to ease the situation. In this case of changing, also, attention should be fixed on the outstanding major movements of the body and limbs and contemplation carried on as 'bending', 'stretching', 'swaying', 'moving', 'raising', 'putting down', etc., in the successive order of the changing process. When the change is completed then the contemplation of 'rising, falling' of the original objects should be reverted to.

At times when anything is being looked at, it should be contemplated as 'looking, seeing'. If anything is seen without being looked at, it should be contemplated as 'seeing, seeing'.

When one happens to be listening to something it should be contemplated as 'listening', 'hearing'. If anything is heard without being listened to, it should be contemplated as 'hearing, hearing'. If a reflecting thought follows then it should be contemplated as 'reflecting, reflecting'. Then the contemplation of 'rising, falling' of the original objects should be reverted to.

In the case of changing from the sitting posture to that of standing and of changing to the lying posture, contemplation should be carried out by fixing the attention on every outstanding major movement of the body and limbs in the successive order of the changing process.

In the case of walking, contemplation should be carried out by fixing the attention on the moving of each step from the moment of lifting the foot up to the moment of putting it down and by making a mental note as 'walking, walking' or 'moving forward, moving forward' or 'lifting, moving forward, putting down'.

In summary, it may be mentioned that the contemplation should be carried out on all actions of body and limbs such as bending stretching, rising, moving, etc.' so as to perceive them in their true form as they occur. The contemplation should be carried out on all physical sensations and mental feelings (*vedanā*) so as to know their true nature as they

arise. The contemplation should be carried out on all thoughts, ideas, reflections, etc. so as to know their true nature as they arise. If there are no outstanding objects of specific nature to be contemplated while remaining quietly in the sitting or lying posture, contemplation should be carried out by always fixing the attention on any of the bodily contacts. Instructions are, therefore, given here to treat or keep the rising and falling movements of the abdomen, which are easy to explain and easy to contemplate, as the primary and main objects in contemplation.

But there are two other cases of contemplation already mentioned above, namely, (i) the contemplation of sitting and contacting and (ii) the contemplation of the impressions of contact in in-breathing and out-breathing, either of which may be chosen, if so desired, as the primary and main objects in the contemplation.

On achieving the high state of contemplation where it is possible to contemplate on any objects as they arise there is no need at all to go back to the primary and main objects. Contemplation should be carried out on every moment of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, knowing the bodily contacts, thinking, ideas, etc. in the order of their arising.

The disciple who has developed, by this means of continuous contemplation, strong enough '*samādhi*' (concentration) and *ñāṇa* (insight) will personally perceive a rising and passing away of the mind for many times in a second. But a disciple who has just begun the practice of contemplation will not be able to perceive such a quick succession. It is just like the case of a person, who at the beginning of his study, cannot read so fast and so well as the one who has already advanced in studies. Nevertheless, a disciple should endeavour to perceive the rising and passing away of the mental states not less than once in every second in the beginning of his practice. (This is the basic summary of the practice of *Vipassanā*).

The development of Vipassanā Samādhi and Vipassanā ñāṇa.

In spite of his endeavour to carry on the contemplation as mentioned above, the disciple will either fail or forget to observe many of the bodily actions and mental activities at the beginning of the practice. As pointed out in the section on ‘*Samatha-kammaṭṭhāna*’ there will be many ‘*Nīvaraṇas*’ which cause the mind to wander to other objects. In the case of ‘*Samatha-kammaṭṭhāna*’ there is no particular need to contemplate on the wandering mental states but they should be cut off and the original object contemplated on continuously, while in the case of ‘*Vipassanā-kammaṭṭhāna*’ the contemplation should be carried out on these wandering mental states also. After the contemplation in this manner, the contemplation should revert to the original objects of ‘rising, falling’. This is one of the points on which the procedure for *samatha-bhāvanā* differs from that for *Vipassanā-bhāvanā* so far as dispelling of *nīvaraṇas* is concerned.

In the case of *Samatha-bhāvanā* one has to contemplate continuously on the original object of *samatha* so as to make one’s mind fixed on that object only. It is not necessary to observe any other mental or physical phenomenon. So it is not necessary to contemplate on such hindrances as wandering mental states which arise occasionally. It is only necessary to dispel them as they arise.

In *Vipassanā-bhāvanā*, however, all physical and mental phenomena that occur at the six sense-doors have to be observed. So if and when such hindrances as the mind contemplating something other than the original object of contemplation or the mind entertaining greed, covetousness etc., they also have to be contemplated upon. If they are not contemplated upon the wrong view and attachment that they are permanent, pleasant and *attā* (self) will arise so merely disregarding them is not enough as in the case of *Samatha*. The objects of *Vipassanā* will be accomplished only if one contemplates on them so as to

know their real nature and characteristics and to be detached from them.

When the wandering mental state is contemplated on repeatedly in this manner for many times there will hardly be any wandering. As soon as it wanders to other objects the mental state is immediately noticed and contemplated on and then it ceases to wander any longer. In some cases it will be found that the contemplation is being carried on without interruption because the mental state is recognised as soon as it begins to arise.

At this level of the contemplation it is found that the mind which is contemplating, and its object always come together closely and fixedly. This fixedness of the mind on its object is ‘*Vipassanā-khaṇika-samādhi*’ (momentary concentration of insight).

The mind is now free from ‘*Kāmacchanda*’ (sensual lust) and other ‘*Nīvaraṇas*’ and it is therefore on the same level as ‘*Upacāra-samādhi*’ (neighbourhood-concentration) mentioned in the section of ‘*Samatha-kammaṭṭhāna*’. As the mind is no longer mixed up with any hindrances, that cause the mind to wander, but is purely composed of contemplation it is called *Citta visuddhi* (Purity of mind).

Then the physical phenomena, such as rising, falling, bending, stretching, etc. which are being contemplated, are perceived at every moment of contemplation in separate forms without being mixed up with the mind contemplating on them or with other material phenomena. The mental phenomena, such as contemplating, thinking, seeing, hearing etc. also are perceived at every moment of contemplating in separate states without being mixed up with either material phenomena or other mental phenomena. At every moment of breathing, the body and the mind which knows the body are perceived distinctly and separately as two. The distinguishing knowledge of physical and mental phenomena as to separate processes is ‘*Nāma-rūpa-pariccheda-ñāṇa*’ (Insight into twofold division of mind and corporeality).

On having developed this ‘*ñāṇa*’ (insight) for a good number of times in the course of continuous contemplation, there arises a clear understanding that ‘there are only mind and corporeality. The body has no faculty of knowing rising, falling, bending, moving; etc. whereas the mind has the faculty of contemplating, thinking, seeing, hearing, etc. Apart from these two factors there is no *attā* or ‘self’. This understanding is called ‘*Diṭṭhi-visuddhi*’ (Purity of View).

On proceeding further with the contemplation it is perceived that the material and mental phenomena are arising in the body as effects of their respective causes.

For illustration: The disciple perceives the fact that, because of the mind intending to bend or stretch or move or change the posture, there arise the actions of bending, stretching, moving or changing; because of the fluctuation in temperature there are always changes in the physical condition either by being cold or hot; and because of the partaking of food there always arises new physical energy. Again, he perceives the fact that, because there are present eye and visual object, ear and sound, etc. there arise seeing, hearing, etc. and because of attention being directed, the mind reaches its object. Again, he perceives the fact that, because of the presence of ‘*Avijjā*’ (ignorance or delusion), which views life as beautiful and happy and of ‘*Taṇhā*’ (craving), all kinds of deeds are thought of and done, and because of the attachment to those deeds that have been done, there arise, in successive series, the new ‘*Viññāṇas*’ (consciousnesses). Again, he perceives the fact that death is nothing but the passing away of the last one in the successive series of this kind of consciousness, and birth is the arising of a new consciousness in the successive series of this kind, dependent on a new corporeal formation. This distinguishing knowledge of Dependent Origination of cause and effect is “*Paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa*” (Insight arising from full comprehension of causes).

On understanding the fact of the Dependent Origination he will come to the conclusion that “life in the past was a formation of corporeality and mind which were dependent on their respective causes and that there will be a similar process of life in the future.” This purity of view is called ‘*Kankhā-vitaraṇa-visuddhi*’ (Purity arising from having overcome doubts.)

Before developing the right knowledge of the fact that ‘life consists of corporeality and mind dependent on their respective causes’ there were many sceptical doubts whether there was I in the past, whether I comes into existence only in the present or whether I will continue to exist in the future” by holding the view that the formation of corporeality and mind are “*attā*” or “self”. Now these sceptical doubts cannot arise as they have been overcome.

On proceeding further with the contemplation it is perceived that the physical and mental phenomena are arising and passing away at every moment of contemplation. This is “*Anicca-sammasana-ñāṇa*” (Insight into impermanent nature of phenomena).

On perceiving the fact that the physical and mental phenomena are constantly arising and passing away, that they are constantly afflicted by “arising and passing away” they are considered to be neither pleasant nor reliable, but terrible ills. This is “*Dukkha-sammasana-ñāṇa*” (Insight into ill condition).

On perceiving the fact that the physical and mental phenomena do not, as a rule, follow the dictates of one’s will but are arising and passing away in accordance with their own nature and relative conditioning, it is realised that they are not ‘*attā*’ or ‘self’. This is “*Anattā-sammasana-ñāṇa*” (Insight into non-*attā* or non-self).

After having reflected on these facts as long as he wishes, the disciple proceeds with the contemplation without any further reflection. He then perceives clearly the beginning of every object of his contemplation. He also

perceives clearly the coming to an end of each object of his contemplation as if it were cut off clearly. At this juncture there generally arise many strange experiences, such as—

- (1) mental visions of brilliant lights,
- (2) rapturous feelings,
- (3) calm feelings,
- (4) devotional feelings towards the *Buddha, Dhamma* and *Sangha*,
- (5) great energy in carrying out the contemplation,
- (6) happiness,
- (7) the quick and clear perceiving of objects,
- (8) the capability in carrying out mindfulness without missing any object,
- (9) automatic contemplation without particular effort,
- (10) feeling of subtle pleasure in the contemplation.

The disciple therefore, is so much elated that he can no longer keep his silence but generally speaks out his experiences. He often considers that he has already attained enlightenment. This is the initial or early stage of “*Udayabbaya-ñāṇa*” (Insight into rising and passing away of phenomena). However it is a wrong “*Magga*” (Path).

Then the disciple decides that the experiences of seeing mental visions and other feelings are not the actual attainment of enlightenment, and that the correct method of contemplation to attain enlightenment is only constant observation of whatever arises. He comes to this decision in accordance with what he has learnt from the text or in accordance with the instructions of his teachers.

This decision is “*Maggāmagga-ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*” (Purity of insight into right and wrong paths).

Having come to this decision and proceeding further with the contemplation, those experiences of seeing mental visions and of other feelings gradually decrease and the perceiving of the objects becomes clearer and clearer. The arising and passing away of

material phenomena at each movement in the course of a single bending or stretching of the arm or the leg or in the course of a single step, fragment by fragment, without reaching from one stage of the movement to another stage thereof, will then be clearly perceived. This is final or mature “*Udayabbaya-ñāṇa*”. It is flawless as it is free from “*Upakkilesas*” (Impurities).

When this “*ñāṇa*” has gained enough strength, the perceiving of the objects is found to be faster. The ending or vanishing of the objects is more clearly perceived than their beginning or arising. The objects of contemplation appear to be vanishing. Forms and shapes of hand, leg, head, body etc. are no longer perceived. Only vanishing of body and mind is perceived at every moment of contemplation. Even the contemplating mind is perceived to be vanishing along with the object of its contemplation at every moment. This knowledge of the process of vanishing, in pairs, of the mind and its object is “*Bhaṅga-ñāṇa*” (Insight into passing away).

On perceiving the process of ever vanishing in pairs of mind and its object there arises the knowledge realising the dreadful nature of things. This is “*Bhaya-ñāṇa*” (Insight into fearful condition).

Then there arises the knowledge realising the faults and defects of material and mental phenomena. This is “*ādīnavañāṇa*” ~ (Insight into unsatisfactory condition).

Then there arises the knowledge realising the unattractive and boring nature of things. This is “*Nibbidā-ñāṇa*” (Insight into wearisome condition).

‘When it is realised that it would be well only if there were no physical and mental phenomena which are constantly coming into being and passing away in this manner, there arises the knowledge looking for an escape from suffering on account of these phenomena. This is “*Muccitu-kamyatā-ñāṇa*” (Insight arising from desire to escape).

On further contemplation with special anxiety for an escape there arises a clear perception of the characteristics of “*Anicca*, *Dukkha*, and *Anattā*,” “with special emphasis on that of “*Dukkha*”. This is “*Paṭisaṅkhā-ñāṇa*” (Insight arising out of further contemplation).

When the “*Paṭisaṅkhā-ñāṇa*” is mature contemplation proceeds automatically like a clock without special effort for perception and knowledge. It proceeds contemplating on objects with equanimity, just to take notice of them without digressing into the pleasantness or unpleasantness. This contemplation is so peaceful and effortless and it proceeds knowing its objects so automatically that it may extend over one hour, two hours or three hours; and even though it may last so long, there will not be tiredness or exhaustion. This perception which arises for a long time realising the real nature of the objects of contemplation automatically and without going into the pleasantness and unpleasantness thereof is “*Saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa*” (Insight arising from equanimity).

Out of this contemplation which proceeds automatically and by its own momentum realising its objects, there arises knowledge which is specially quick and active. This knowledge which rises straightway towards a noble path which is also known as “*Vutthāna*” (elevation) is “*Vutthāna gāminī-vipassanā-ñāṇa*” (Insight leading to elevation).

That special knowledge arises realising that physical and mental phenomena which appear at the six sense-doors at that very moment are impermanent, suffering and not-self. The last of such knowledge is “*Anuloma-ñāṇa*” (Adaptation-knowledge) which consists of the three “*Jāvanas*” (Impulse moments) called “*Parikamma*” (Preparation) “*Upacāra*” (Approach) and “*Anuloma*” (adaptation). This is the ‘*ñāṇa*’ which fits in both with the preceding eight “*Vipassanā-ñāṇa*” and subsequent “*Magga-ñāṇa*” (Path-knowledge).

Insights from the mature ‘*Udayabhava-ñāṇa*’ to the ‘*Anuloma-ñāṇa*’ are collectively known as ‘*Patipadā-ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*’

(Purity by knowledge and insight arising from having followed the course of practice).

After *Anuloma-ñāṇa*, there arises *Gotrabhu-ñāṇa* (Knowledge overmastering kinship) which has *Nibbāna* as its object where the ills and miseries connected with the physical and mental phenomena cease entirely. This is knowledge which cuts the lineage of “*puṭhujjanas*” (worldlings) and enters the lineage of “*Ariyas*” (Noble Ones).

Then there arise the ‘*Sotāpatti Magga* and *Phala ñāṇa*’ (Insight arising from the Noble Path of stream-winning and its fruition) which realise *Nibbāna*. The ‘*Magga-ñāṇa*’ is called ‘*ñāṇa-dassana-visuddhi*’ (Purity of insight).

The moment of arising of the ‘*Magga* and *Phala ñāṇa*’ does not last even for a second. Then there arises reflection of the particular experiences of the ‘*Magga*, *Phala* and *Nibbāna*’. This is ‘*Paccavakkhana-ñāṇa*’ (Insight of retrospection).

One who has acquired this ‘*Paccavakkhana-ñāṇa*’, according to this procedure, is a ‘*Sotāpanna*’ (Stream Winner).

The *Sotāpanna* is free from the following three ‘*Samyojanas*’ (fetters):

(1) The wrong view that the aggregates of physical and mental phenomena are ego or self. *Sakkāya-diṭṭhi* (Personality belief).

(2) Any doubt about the *Buddha*, the *Dhamma*, the *Sangha* and the discipline (*vicikicchā*).

(3) Belief that methods other than that of cultivating the qualities of the eight-fold ‘*Ariya-Magga*’ (Noble Path) and developing insight into the four Noble Truths will bring eternal peace. (*Silabbata-parāmāsa* - Belief in mere rite and ritual).

Furthermore his observation of the five precepts remains pure and absolute, as a matter of course. For these reasons, a ‘*Sotāpanna*’ is well secured from being re-born in the unhappy existence of four lower worlds. He will lead the happy life in the world of human beings and *devas* for seven existences at the

most and during this period he will attain *Arahatship* and *Nibbāna*.

When a *Sotāpanna* carries out the practice of *Vipassanā* with a view to getting to the state of ‘*Phala-sammāpatti*’ (Attainment of Fruition), he will then reach that state and remain in it for the duration of five or ten minutes, or half an hour or an hour. When he is well trained in the practice of getting to the state of ‘*Phala-sammāpatti*’, he will reach it quickly and remain in it for a whole day or a whole night or longer.

If he carries out the contemplation of the ‘*Upādānakkhandhas*’ in the same manner as already mentioned with a view to realising the higher states of ‘*Magga* and ‘*Phala*’ the *Vipassanā-ñāṇa* will be developed from the stage of ‘*Udayabbaya-ñāṇa*’ in the same serial order as before and on full maturity he will realise *Nibbāna* with the insight of ‘*Sakadāgāmi Magga* and ‘*Phala*’ (Path of once-returning and its Fruition) and become a *Sakadāgāmi* (once-returner). He is then free from coarse *Kāma-rāga* (sensuous craving) and coarse ‘*Paṭigha*’ (ill will). He will lead the happy life in the world of human beings and *devas* for two existences at the most and will attain *Arahatship* and *Nibbāna* during this period.

When a *Sakadāgāmi* carries out the practice of *Vipassanā* with a view to getting to the state of ‘*Sakadāgāmi Phala-sammāpatti*’ he will reach that state.

When he carries out the practice with a view to realising the higher state of ‘*Magga* and ‘*Phala*’ the *Vipassanā-ñāṇa* will be developed in the same serial order as before and on full maturity he will realise *Nibbāna* with the insight of ‘*Anāgāmi magga* and ‘*Phala*’ (Path of Never returning and its Fruition) and become an *Anāgāmi* (never-returner). He is then totally free from two more *samyojanas* namely, “*Kāma-rāga*” (sensuous craving) and ‘*Paṭigha*’ (ill-will). He will not be reborn in ‘*Kāma-loka*’ (sensuous world) but will be reborn in “*Rūpa-loka*” (fine material

world) and ‘*Arūpa-loka*’ (Immaterial world) where he will become an *Arahat* and attain *Nibbāna*.

When an *Anāgāmi* carries out the practice of *Vipassanā* with a view to getting to the state of ‘*Anāgāmi Phala-sammāpatti*’ he will then reach that state. When he carries out the practice for the higher state the *Vipassanā-ñāṇa* will be developed in the same serial order and on full maturity will realise *Nibbāna* with the insight of ‘*Arahatta magga* and ‘*Phala*’ (Path of *Arahatship* and its Fruition) become an *Arahat*.

An *Arahat* is free from the remaining five ‘*Samyojanas*’ of —

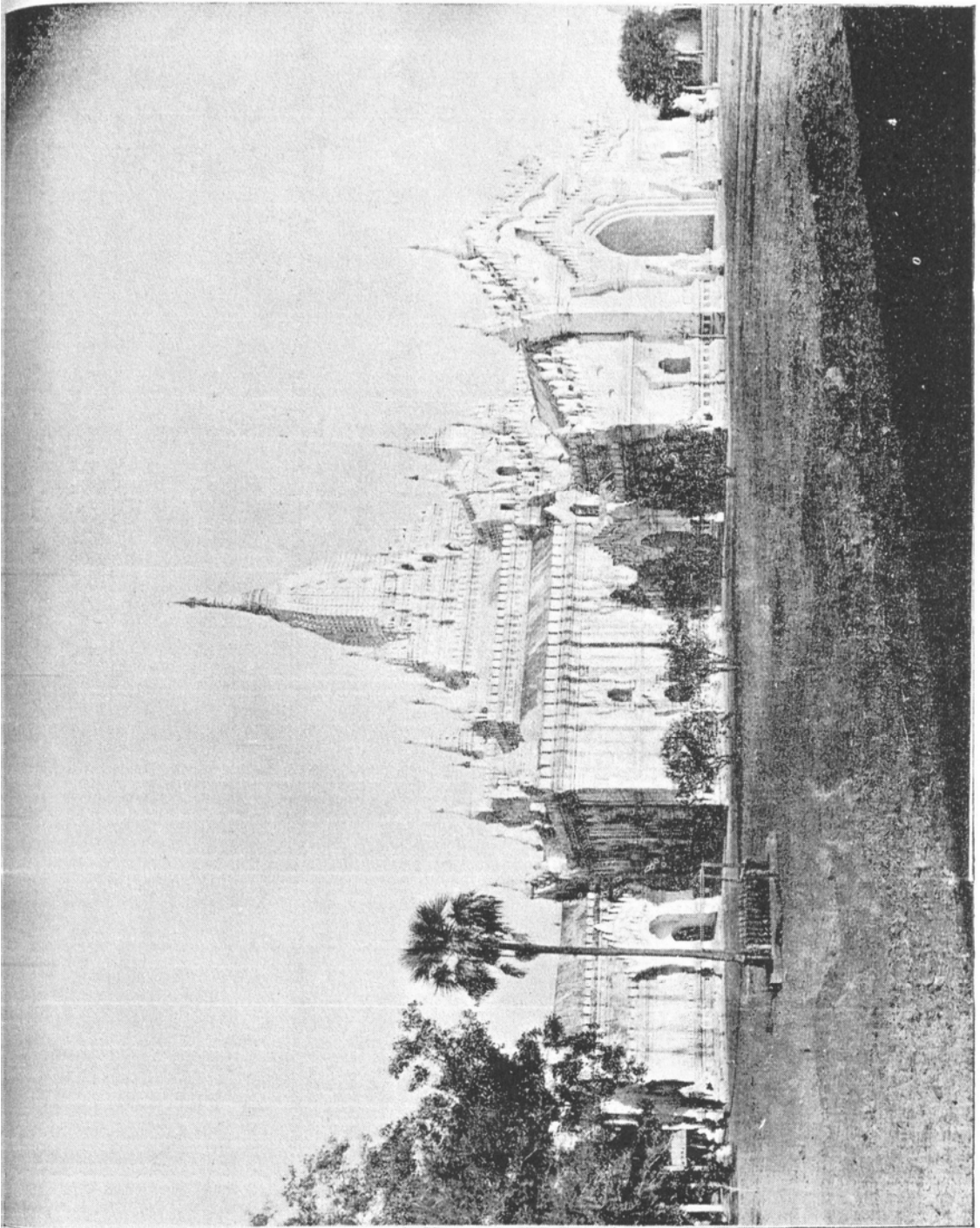
- (1) *Rūpa-rāga* (craving for fine-material existence),
- (2) *Arūpa-rāga* (craving for immaterial existence),
- (3) *Māna* (conceit),
- (4) *Uddhacca* (restlessness), and
- (5) *Avijjā* (ignorance or delusion) together with all ‘*Kilesas*’ (Defilements). At the end of the span of the present life he will enter *Nibbāna*. As there is no more rebirth for him after the *Parinibbāna*, he is absolutely free from suffering the woes of old age, ill health; death etc. It is with a view to this freedom that the question in the beginning of this article:

“What is the purpose of carrying out the practice of Meditation” has been given the following answer: —

“The practice of Meditation is carried out for the purpose of realising *Nibbāna* and thereby escaping from the ills of life in the form of old age, ill-health, death and so forth”.

Therefore all those who earnestly wish to realise *Nibbāna* and thereby gain absolute freedom should carry out the practice of Meditation according to the instructions given here.

May all be able to practise Meditation and attain *Nibbāna*.



The Ānanda Pagoda.

Photo by courtesy—International Institute for advanced Buddhist studies.

WHAT IS NIBBĀNA?

By Myanaung U Tin.

Nibbāna is the ultimate goal cherished by the Buddhists. Whatever good we do, or whenever we do a meritorious deed, each of us say, “By virtue of this good deed, may I attain Nibbāna.” What is Nibbāna? Where is it? Why do we wish to attain it? How shall we attain it? When shall we attain it? What is meant by its attainment? These questions crop up in our minds at one time or other.

We approached our respected lay teachers as well as our revered monks. They very kindly tried to explain to us all pertaining to Nibbāna but we were at first more impressed by their erudition than by their explanations.

Then we read up books we could lay our hands on, or made available to us. Our confusion became worse confounded because we were lost on the high sea of texts, commentaries and sub-commentaries.

We have *saddā* or trustful confidence in the Three Gems: *Buddha*, *Dhamma*, and *Sangha*, and yet we were vexed by sceptical doubts. In short, for a considerable time we were torn between our traditional reverence for our religion, and our own intellect. We might even go to the extent of finding fault with our elders and teachers and pass such remarks as: they were orthodox; they were not scientific in their approach; so on and so forth. And we would quote a relevant passage from the *Kālāma Sutta* whereby the Buddha exhorts us explicitly not to have blind faith in Him, His teachings, our elders and teachers.

However, we failed to do one important thing; we failed to take notice of our own limitations in intellect, mental outlook, spiritual development and sublime experience. By and by, these limitations dawned upon our minds and we began to realise that the fault, dear Brother, is not in our teachers, but in ourselves, that we are worldlings. In *Pāli*, the word for worldling is *Puthujjana*, which means one who is still possessed of all the ten fetters

(*samyojana*) binding to the round of rebirths, and therefore has not yet reached any of the four stages of holiness. Ten fetters of existence and four stages of holiness will be explained later; here, it will suffice to say that worldlings are assailed by sceptical doubts, which constitute one of the ten fetters. Nevertheless, sceptical doubts are not altogether useless; they lead us on to further efforts in our search for truth.

Nibbāna is our cherished goal. What is Nibbāna? Before an attempt is made to answer this question, it may be reminded that the Four Noble Truths are the foundation of the *Buddha-Dhamma*: (1) The Noble Truth of Suffering, (2) the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering, (3) the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering, and (4) the Noble Truth of the Path that leads to the Cessation of Suffering. The fundamental point to note is that the Buddhists recognise the universality of suffering. The opposite of suffering is its cessation, and this cessation or extinction is ordinarily considered to be Nibbāna. But a question arises: ‘is Nibbāna a mere cessation?’ The answer will become clear in due course.

As the Venerable Anuruddha points out in his *Abhidhammatha-Sangaha*, Nibbāna is in its nature single, but for purposes of logical treatment, it is two-fold, namely: (1) the element of Nibbāna, wherewith is yet remaining stuff of life, and (2) the element of Nibbāna without that remainder. One is referred to as *Sa-Upādisesa Nibbāna Dhātu*, and another as *Anupādisesa Nibbāna Dhātu*. That Nibbāna is single is also explained in *Patisambhidā Magga* and *Visuddhi Magga*. In regard to two elements of Nibbāna, the Buddha himself says, in *Itivuttaka* (II, II, VII)⁴.

“There are, O Bhikkhus, two elements of Nibbāna. What two? The element of Nibbāna

⁴ Itivuttaka, Duka Nipāta, Duttiya Vagga, Nibbāna-dhātusutta, 6th synod Ed. Ps. 22o.

with the basis still remaining and that without basis.

“What, O Bhikkhus, is the element of Nibbāna with the basis still remaining? Herein, a Bhikkhu is an *Arahat*, one who has destroyed the defilements, who has lived the holy life, done what was to be done, laid aside the burden, who has attained his goal, who has destroyed the fetters of existence, who rightly understanding is delivered. His five sense organs still remain, and as he is not devoid of them he undergoes the pleasant and the unpleasant, experiences pleasure and pain. That destruction of attachment (greed) hatred and delusion of his, O Bhikkhus, is called the element of Nibbāna with the basis still remaining.

“What, O Bhikkhus, is ‘The element of Nibbāna without the basis?’ Herein, a Bhikkhu is an *Arahat*, one who has destroyed the Defilements, who has lived the holy life, done what was to be done, laid aside the burden, who has attained his goal, who has destroyed the fetters of existence, who rightly understanding is delivered. In this very life, O Bhikkhus, all his sensations will have no delight for him, they will be cooled. This is called, O Bhikkhus, ‘the element of Nibbāna without a basis.’”

This is the meaning:

“These two Nibbāna states are shown by him

Who seeth, who is such and unattached.

One state is that in this same life possessed
With base remaining, tho’ becoming stream
Be cut off. While the state without a base
Belongeth to the future, wherein all
Becomings utterly do come (arise) and
cease.

They who, by knowing this state
uncompounded

Have heart’s release, by cutting off the
stream,

They who have reached the core of the
Dhamma, glad

To end — such people have abandoned all
becomings.” *⁵

From this passage it is clear that there is but one Nibbāna, and two names are given to it according to the way it is experienced before or at the death of an *Arahat*.

In this passage, it will be noticed that the destruction of attachment, hatred and delusion, itself is called Nibbāna. The same definition is also found in *Samyutta Nikaya* (XXXVIII, 1)⁶. What does it mean? It means the extinction of life-affirming will as manifested in greed, hatred and delusion; the extinction of the craving which produces rebirth, accompanied by passionate clinging, welcoming this and that life; the extinction of the craving for sensual pleasures, craving for becoming and craving for annihilation. In *Udāna* (III, x)⁷ the Buddha says, “Craving’s utter ending, utter stopping, is Nibbāna. In short, the destruction of greed, hatred and delusion means the destruction of the cause or origin of suffering.

At this point, it may be asked, “What is the difference between Nibbāna and *Parinibbāna*?” It has been incorrectly supposed that the term *Parinibbāna* refers merely to the dissolution of the constituent five groups of existence at the death of an *Arahat*. *Parinibbāna* is, in fact, used in two senses: (1) *Kilesa Parinibbāna*, destruction of the Defilements, and (2) *Khandha Parinibbāna* dissolution of the constituent five groups of existence at the death of an *Arahat*. *Nibbāna* stresses the experience before and at the death of an *Arahat*, whereas *Parinibbāna* emphasises the fact of destruction of Defilements, before, and dissolution of the physico-mental process of existence at the death of an *Arahat*. *Samyutta-Nikāya* commentary clearly explains *Parinibbāna*. In other words, *Sa-upādisesa*

⁵ The Minor Anthology of the Pāli Canon. Part II, Ps. 144.

⁶ *Samyutta Nikāya*, Saḷāyatana vagga-Samyutta, Jambukhādakasamyutta, Nibbānapaṇha Sutta; 6th synod Ed. Ps. 446.

⁷ *Khuddaka-Nikāya*, Udāna, Nande, Vagga Loka Sutta; 6th synod Ed. P. 116.

Nibbāna Dhātu is experienced with the destruction of the Defilements, and *Anupādisesa Nibbāna Dhātu* is experienced with the dissolution of the physico-mental process of existence. Sometimes both aspects take place at one and the same moment, that is, when one becomes an *Arahat* at the moment of death. *Nibbāna* and *Parinibbāna* appear to be synonymous but, in fact, convey different shades of meaning.

I do not propose to deal with the etymological explanations of *Nibbāna* as they are likely to take us away from the main track. I shall confine myself to the exegetical explanations.

According to the *Abbidhamma*, there are four realities in the ultimate sense: (1) consciousness, (2) Mental progenies, (3) Material qualities and (4) *Nibbāna*. *Nibbāna* is a reality. In *Udāna* (VIII, iii)⁸ the Buddha defines *Nibbāna* as an unborn, a not-become, a not-made, and a not compounded. The *Pāli* word is *Asankhata*. It means unformed, unoriginated, the Beyond of all becoming and conditionality. It is the opposite of *Sankhata* which means the formed, the originated, comprising all phenomena of existence. Again, in *Udāna* (VIII, i)⁹ the Buddha says “*Bhikkhus*, there exists that condition wherein is neither earth nor water nor fire nor air: wherein is neither the sphere of infinite space nor of infinite consciousness nor of nothingness nor of neither consciousness nor unconsciousness; where there is neither this world nor a world beyond nor both together, nor moon-and-sun. Thence, O *Bhikkhus*, I declare is no coming to birth; thither is no going (from life); therein is no duration; thence is no falling; there is no arising. It is not something fixed, it moves not on, it is not based on anything. That indeed is the end of suffering”. From this passage, it can be seen

that *Nibbāna* is the end of suffering and yet it is not a mere cessation of suffering. It is neither annihilation nor a state of nothingness. It is a positive unconditioned state.

In *Udāna* (VIII iii)¹⁰ as well as in *Itivuttaka* (II II vi)¹¹ is found an identical passage wherein the Buddha says:

“O *Bhikkhus*, there is an unborn, a not-become, a not-made, a not-compounded. If that unborn, not-become, not-made, not-compounded were not, there would be apparent no escape from this here that is born, become, made, compounded. But, O *Bhikkhus*, since there is an unborn, a not-become, a not-made, a not-compounded, therefore the escape from this here that is born, become, made, compounded is apparent.”

Surely, if *Nibbāna* were not a reality, there could be no path leading to it. If there were a path, it could lead nowhere. If the path reaches nowhere, *Nibbāna* cannot be the goal. This point will become more clear when we deal with the question: “How shall we attain *Nibbāna*?”

Nibbāna is. But where is it? In the *Milinda Pañha*¹² the Venerable *Nāgasena* answers the question thus: “There is no spot looking East, South, West or North, above, below or beyond, where *Nibbāna* is situate; and yet *Nibbāna* is; and he who orders his life aright, grounded in virtue, and with rational attention, may realise it whether he lives in Greece, China, Alexandria, or in Kosala”. In illustration thereof he says: “Just as fire is not stored up in any particular place but arises when the necessary conditions exist, so *Nibbāna* is not said to be existing in a particular place, but it is attained when the necessary conditions are fulfilled.”

⁸ Khuddaka-Nikāya, Udāna, Pāṭaligāmiyavagga, Tatiya Nibbāna Paṭsaṃyutta sutta, 6th Synod Ed. p. 178. (Minor Anthology of the Pāli Canon II, p. 98)

⁹ Khuddaka-Nikāya, Udāna, Pāṭaligāmiyasutta Paṭhama Nibbāna Paṭsaṃyutta Sutta 6th, Synod Ed. p. 177

¹⁰ Khuddaka-Nikāya, Udāna, Pāṭaligāmiyavagga, Tatiya Nibbāna Paṭsaṃyutta sutta, 6th Synod Ed. p. 178. (Minor Anthology p. 97)

¹¹ Itivuttaka, Dukanipāta, Dutiyavagga, Ajāta sutta. 6th synod Ed. p. 220. (Minor Anthology. p. 142)

¹² Milinda Pañha, Anumānapaṇhā, Vessantaravagga, Nibbāna-sannihitapaṇhā; 6th synod Ed. p. 312.

In the identical passage cited above from *Udāna* and *Itivuttaka*, the Buddha says that Nibbāna has no duration, it means that Nibbāna is Kālavimutti, out of time, or literally, freed from time. Nibbāna is not to be thought of in terms of space either.

It is a remarkable thing that scientific philosophy is turning in the direction of the Buddhist concepts. Einstein's Law of Relativity to a great extent corroborates our notions regarding Nibbāna in so far as it is based upon the recognition that time and space are not the absolute entities.¹³ Einstein says: "Till now it is believed that time and space existed by themselves, even if there was nothing else — no sun, no earth, no stars; while now we know that time and space are not the vessel of the universe, but could not exist at all if there were no contents — namely, no sun, earth and other celestial bodies." Furthermore he says: "In the pre-relativity physics, space and time are separate entities. One spoke of points of space, as of instants of time, as if they were absolute entities ... It is neither the point in space, nor the instant in time, at which something happens that has reality, but only the event itself. There is no absolute (independent of the space of reference) relation in space; and no absolute relation in time between two events, but there is an absolute (independent of the space of reference) relation in space and time. The circumstance that there is no objective rational division of the four-dimensional continuum into a three dimensional space and a one-dimensional time continuum indicates that the law of nature will assume a form which is logically most satisfactory when expressed as laws in the four-dimensional continuum." Since Einstein propounded his theory, those who were used to a three-dimensional world began to think in terms of four dimensions. Only last month (April 1958) Nobel Prize-winner Dr. Hideki Yukawa of Japan announced his new theory of unified field, which suggests a five-

dimensional world. Dr. Yukawa has been working on a theory of unified field in the footsteps of Einstein. In his paper, he urges that in order to unify theories of time and space which are continuous manifolds forming a four-dimensional world, and the requirements of quantum mechanics which deals with discontinuity, a five-dimensional world transcending space-time must be taken into account. Of course we (at least I) don't know what all this new theory means, but it serves our purpose in that it agrees with the concept of Nibbāna transcending space-time. It is, indeed, not an easy matter for those who are confined within three dimensions or even within a four-dimensional world to appreciate this five-dimensional concept. The Buddha says, "Hard is the infinite to see; truth is no easy thing to see." (*Udāna* VIII, ii)¹⁴

Nibbāna is our ultimate goal. Why do we wish to attain it? Because we have learnt from our own experience of life that there is universal suffering. Because we can appreciate what the Buddha teaches, "Birth is suffering; Decay is suffering; Disease is suffering; Death is suffering; to be associated with the unloved is suffering; to be separated from the loved is suffering; not to get what one desires is suffering; in short, the five constituent groups of Existence are suffering. Because we can also appreciate that the cause of suffering is craving; craving for sensual pleasures; craving for becoming; and craving for annihilation.

In respect of the universality of suffering, Sir Edwin Arnold's "*Light of Asia*" contains a most moving passage: Prince Siddhattha cried:

" Oh! Suffering world

Known and unknown of my common flesh,
Caught in this common net of death and
woe,

And life which binds to both! I see, I feel
The vastness of the agony of earth.
The vainness of its joys, the mockery
Of all its best, the anguish of its worst;

¹³ The meaning of Relativity, three lectures given by Prof. Albert Einstein at the Princeton University, U.S.A.

¹⁴ Minor Anthology of the Pāli Canon. Part II, Ps. 97.

Since pleasures end in pain, and youth in -
age,
And love in loss, and life in hateful death,
And death in unknown lives, which will but
yoke

Men to their wheel again to whirl the round
Of false delights and woes that are not
false.

Me too this lure hath cheated, so is seemed
Lovely to live and life a sunlit stream
Forever flowing in a changeless peace;
Whereas the foolish ripple of the flood
Dances so lightly down by bloom and lawn
Only to pour its crystal quicklier
Into the foul salt sea. . The evil is rent
Which blinded me! I am as all these men
Who cry upon their gods and are not heard,
Or are not heeded—yet there must be aid!
For them and me and all there must be
help!

Perchance the gods have need of help
themselves.

Being so feeble that when sad lips cry
They cannot save! I would not let one cry
Whom I could save!

Prince Siddhattha, after enlightenment, became our Buddha, but he is not a saviour in the sense of a deliverer or a redeemer. In the *Dhammapada*, *Maggavagga*, (verse 276), He exhorts us: “You yourselves should make an effort; the Buddhas are only teachers.” He shows us the path to deliverance, but we must make an effort ourselves to obtain deliverance from this suffering world, that is, to attain Nibbāna. How shall we attain it? By walking the path, the Noble Eightfold Path —Right Speech, Right Action and Right livelihood are grouped in *Sīla* (virtue or morality); Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration in *Samādhi* (concentration), and Right Understanding and Right Thoughts in *Paññā* (Wisdom).

Students of *Abbidhamma* will remember that these factors comprising the Noble Eightfold Path signify the mental properties (*cetasikas*) collectively found in the four

classes of transcendental (supramundane) consciousness. *Visuddhi Magga*¹⁵ treats of these eight factors of the Noble Truth of the Path leading to Extinction of Suffering under the above-mentioned three heads, namely, virtue, concentration and wisdom. We can learn all the details relating to the Path in that book as well as in several other authoritative expositions. I would only say that, in my opinion, Right Mindfulness is always necessary.

In the *Dhammapada*, *Buddha vagga*, (verse 183) the teaching of the Buddha is succinctly defined thus:

Not to do any evil,
To cultivate good,
To purify one’s mind
This is the teaching of the Buddhas.”

The first two verses of *Dhammapada* describe the importance of mind. Mind is the forerunner of all evil and all good mental states. Mind is their chief, and they are mind-made. A person holding a balance by the central pivot lifts both scales at the same moment. In the same way, a person, in developing his concentration, becomes virtuous and wise at the same time. *Sīla* enables him to control his tongue and body only. *Samādhi* stands guard over his mind and therefore, over his tongue and body as well. A pure mind or a mind purified will “see things, by perfect wisdom, as in themselves they really are.”

The Buddha’s teachings offer a great variety of methods of mental training and subjects of meditation, suited to the various individual needs, temperaments and capacities, but all of them ultimately converge in “the way of Mindfulness” (*satipaṭṭhānamagga*), called by the Buddha himself “the only way” (*ekāyana-magga*).

Chapter II of the *Dhammapada* (*Appamāda Vagga*) deals with the importance of

¹⁵ English translation. (1) Path of Purity by Prof. Maung Tin. (2) Path of Purification by Bhikkhu Nāmolī.

heedfulness or ever-present mindfulness or watchfulness. “Heedfulness is the path to the deathless (Nibbāna).” There is a wrong supposition that mindfulness is possible only when one is actually meditating at a quiet and secluded place. As a matter of fact, one can be mindful at all ‘places and at all times, except when asleep or unconscious. *Udāna Sutta* provides illustrations to support this statement.

To borrow the words of Edward Conze, the author of “*Buddhist Meditation*”: “Meditational practices constitute the very core of the Buddhist approach to life ... Enlightenment, or the state of Nibbāna, is, of course, the ultimate aim of Buddhist meditations. On the way to Nibbāna, they serve to promote spiritual development, to diminish the impact of suffering, to calm the mind and to reveal the true facts of existence.”

In the *Anguttara Nikāya* (IV, V)¹⁶ the Buddha says, “In this very fathom-long body, along with its perceptions and thoughts, I proclaim the world, the origin of the world, the cessation of the world, and the path leading to the cessation of the world.” Important as is the doctrinal aspect of the Buddha-Dhamma, the practice alone can lead us to Nibbāna. The Buddha’s last exhortation is: “Subject to change are all compounded things. Strive on with diligence.”

We have come across in the Books, the Seven Stages of Purity and Ten Knowledges of Insight. Appalled by the difficulty of their achievement we would often despair. We should however not give way to despair. Let us be watchful of our minds and purity and insight will come by themselves. As the Venerable Nāgasena explained to *Milinda*, when the necessary conditions are fulfilled Nibbāna is attained.

Here, I would draw your attention to a few lines from *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* by the

Venerable Anuruddha. (U Shwe Zan Aung’s *Compendium of Philosophy*, part IX - page 215) The tenth knowledge of Insight is that by which one qualifies oneself for the Path. “After this, the consciousness of the Initiate (*Gotrabhu*) leaning upon Nibbāna occurs, over-mastering kinship with the worldly, and evolving kinship with the *Ariyas*. (The Noble ones.) Immediately after that consciousness, the Path (*Magga ñāṇa*), namely, (consciousness) discerning the Fact of Suffering, expelling the fact of its cause, realizing the fact of its cessation, cultivating the fact of the Way (to cessation,) descends into the ecstatic thought. After that Path-consciousness when two or three flashes of the consciousness of fruition (*Phala ñāṇa*) have taken their course, there comes subsidence into the life-continuum; and then, again, the life-continuum is interrupted and the knowledges concerned with ‘review’ occur (*Paccavekkhanā-ñāṇa*).

These few lines explain Nibbāna as an ultimate reality, and the realization of the four Noble Truths. In the first instance, the consciousness of the Initiate has to lean upon Nibbāna to over-master kinship with the worldly, and evolve kinship with the *Ariyas*. Secondly, Nibbāna is the object of Path-consciousness as well as of Fruition-consciousness.

Suffering; cause of suffering; cessation of suffering; and the path leading to the cessation of suffering — are facts or truths but they are realized only by the Path-consciousness of the *Ariya*. *Putthujjanas* can appreciate them on account of their knowledge based on learning or their knowledge based on thinking or both, but they have not realised them through insight or wisdom. In the *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta*, the Buddha says, “Thus, O Bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom the insight, and the light.” Four truths are realized by the *Ariyas*: hence four Noble Truths.

¹⁶ (1) *Āṅg-Nikāya*, Catukka nipāta, paṭhama-pañṇāsaka, Rohitassavagga, Rohitassa-sutta; 6th synod Ed. p. 357.
(2) *Samyutta Nikāya*, Sagāthā vagga samyutta.

There are four stages of holiness:

1. *Sotāpanna* - stream-winner
2. *Sakadāgami* - once-returner
3. *Anāgāmi* - never-returner
4. *Arahatta* - the Holy one

I do not propose to dwell at length on this point. Suffice it to say that with the realization of the first stage, the Noble One becomes free from (1) self-illusion (personality belief) (2) sceptical doubt and (3) attachment to mere rite and ritual. At the second stage, the Noble One becomes free from (4) coarse sensuous craving and (5) coarse ill-will. It means that he has weakened these two fetters and not yet completely eradicated them. At the third stage the Noble One becomes fully free from the above mentioned five fetters. At the last stage, an *Arahat* breaks asunder the remaining five fetters namely: (6) craving for fine-material existence, (7) craving for immaterial existence, (8) conceit, (9) restlessness (10) ignorance. The *Arahat* gains release from the round of rebirth and attains Nibbāna.

All those who have reached these four stages of holiness are known as Ariyas and they are considered to have attained Nibbāna to the extent they have got rid of some or all fetters of existence.

In the Books, namely, texts, commentaries and sub-commentaries, the word *nibbāna* is used in five senses:

Nibbāna, as an ultimate reality, (1) which makes possible the destruction of Defilements and (2) which makes possible the dissolution of the physico-mental process of existence. Secondly, Nibbāna is used in the sense of (3) the resultant Destruction of Defilement and (4) the resultant dissolution of the physico-mental process of existence. In Pāli, these - four are

- (1) *Paramattha Asankhata Sa-upādisesa Nibbāna*
- (2) *Paramattha Asankhata Anupādisesa Nibbāna*
- (3) *Paññatti Sa-upādisesa Nibbāna*
- (4) *Paññatti Anupādisesa Nibbāna*.

It is, therefore, clear that the latter two are only names, not in the sense of ultimate reality. The former two are one and the same thing, used in the sense of ultimate reality. There is but one single Nibbāna.

In the sub-commentaries, namely, *Visuddhi Magga Mahā Tikā* and *Sārattha Dīpanī Tikā* (5) Nibbāna is used in the sense of Fruition-consciousness. Obviously, it refers to Fruition-consciousness of an *Arahat*. This is the fifth manner in which the word 'Nibbāna' is used. Nibbāna is apparently used here in the figurative or metaphorical sense, the resultant Fruition-consciousness standing for Nibbāna as an ultimate reality, because no Fruition-consciousness is possible without Nibbāna as an object.

Phala-samāpatti (Attainment of Fruition) denotes the moments of supramundane consciousness and, therefore, should not 'be mixed up with *Nirodha-samāpatti* (Attainment - of Extinction) which is the suspension of all consciousness and mental activity in the cases of *Anāgāmi* and *Arahat*. *Phala-samāpatti*, strictly speaking, is not Nibbāna as a reality whereas *Nirodha Samāpatti* is reckoned as Nibbāna itself. We should take note of the nuances of the term Nibbāna to be able to grasp its sense in a particular context.

The next question is "When shall we attain it ?" It has been said: "When necessary conditions are fulfilled, Nibbāna is attained." Nibbāna is attainable here and now or, in other words, in this very life. "Well expounded is the *Dhamma* by the Blessed One; to be self-realised; with immediate fruit; to be but approached to be seen; capable of being entered upon; to be attained by the wise; each for himself." The meaning of the word *Akālīka* with immediate fruit, is quite clear: our efforts can bear fruit immediately, right here and now.

What is meant by the attainment of Nibbāna? It means the end of suffering, and realization of unutterable eternal bliss. Its peaceful state cannot possibly be described in finite terms, but its condition can be appreciated as a contrast to *samsāra* or the

round of rebirth. Saṃsāra is impermanent, miserable and undesirable, whereas Nibbāna is eternal, blissful and desirable. Nevertheless, after this fairly exhaustive discussion of Nibbāna, it must be conceded that nibbāna is not a subject to be grasped by intellect alone; it is something transcendental, and to be reached by one's own intuitive wisdom."

Beginning with His first sermon, *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta*, throughout His life, up to the last sermon *Parinibbāna Sutta*,

the Buddha stresses the fundamental importance of the Destruction of the Defilements. We are, therefore, primarily concerned with their destruction, and with that in view, let us strive on with diligence. Nibbāna is the end. *Dhamma* is the means. Our duty is to make full use of the means while the going is good, with unwavering confidence that the end can be reached in this very life, here and now.

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**AṄGUTTARA-NIKĀYA,
PAÑCAṄGUTTARA, NIRAYA SUTTA**

(Discourse on Hell)

O monks, one who has the following five vices arises in hell as if he were taken and thrown there. What five?

He kills a living being; he takes what is not given; he indulges in sexual misconduct; he tells lies; and he partakes of intoxicants.

O monks, one who has these five vices arises in hell as if he were taken and thrown there.

O monks, one who has the following five virtues arises in heaven as if he were taken and placed there. What five?

He abstains from killing any living being; he abstains from taking what is not given; he abstains from indulging in sexual misconduct; he abstains from telling lies; and he abstains from partaking of intoxicants.

O monks, a lay adherent who has these five virtues arises in heaven as if he were taken and placed there.

**AṄGUTTARA-NIKĀYA, PAÑCAKA-
NIPĀTA CATUTTHA-PAṆṆASĀSAKA,
UPĀSAKA-VAGGA, VISĀRAḌA SUTTA**

(Discourse on Self-confidence)

Thus I have heard. On one occasion the Buddha was staying at Jeta's Grove in the monastery of Anāthapiṇḍika at Sāvattī. There the Buddha addressed the monks, "O monks". "Yes. Revered Sir", answered those monks to the Buddha.

O monks, a lay adherent who has the following five vices lives the home-life without self-confidence. What five?

He takes life; he takes what is not given; he indulges in sexual misconduct; he tells lies; and he partakes of intoxicants.

O monks, a lay adherent who has these five vices lives the home-life without self-confidence.

O monks, a lay adherent who has the following five virtues lives the home-life with self-confidence. What five?

He abstains from killing any living being; he abstains from taking what is not given; he abstains from sexual misconduct; he abstains from telling lies; and he abstains from intoxicants.

O monks, a lay adherent who has these five virtues lives the home-life with confidence.

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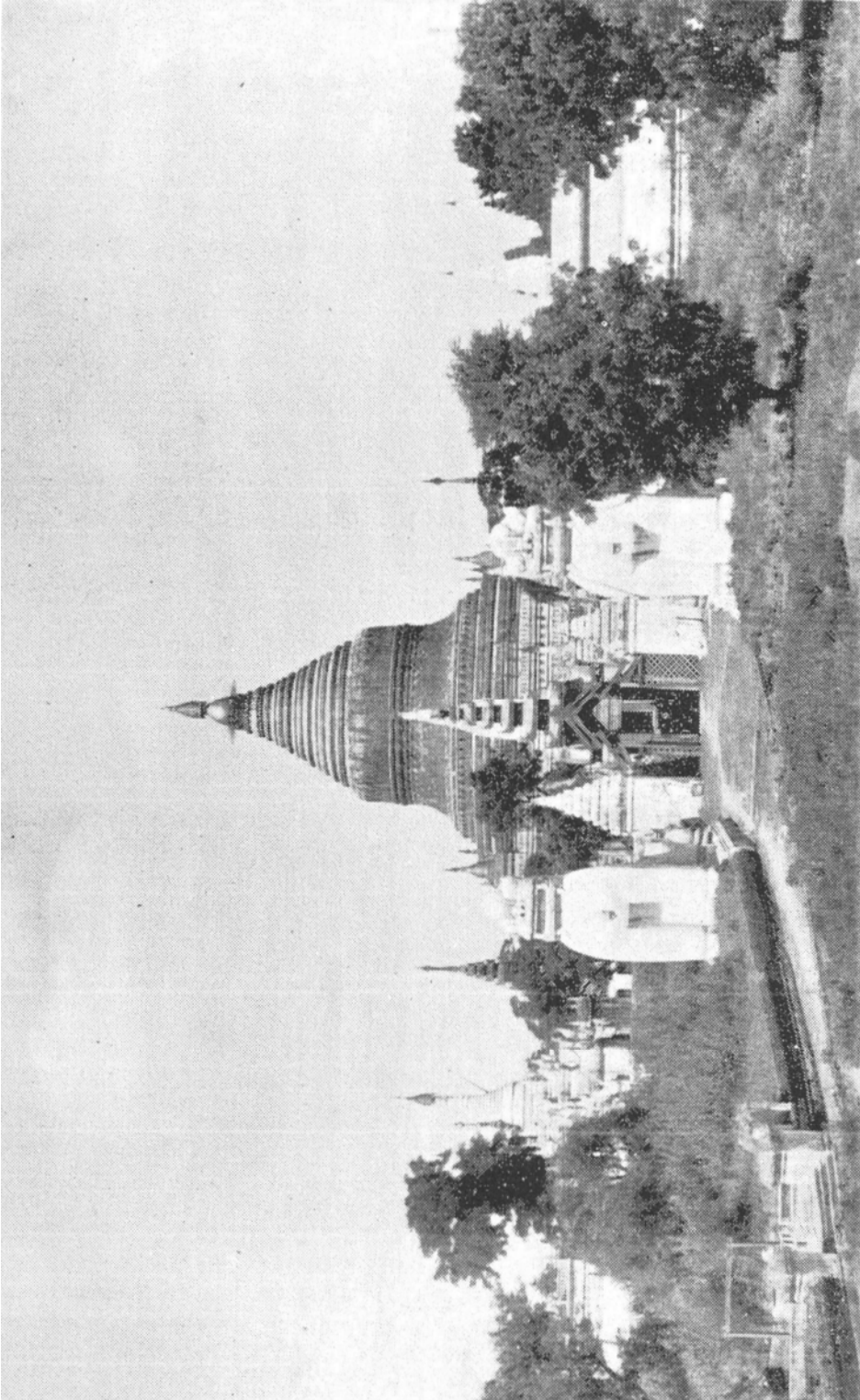
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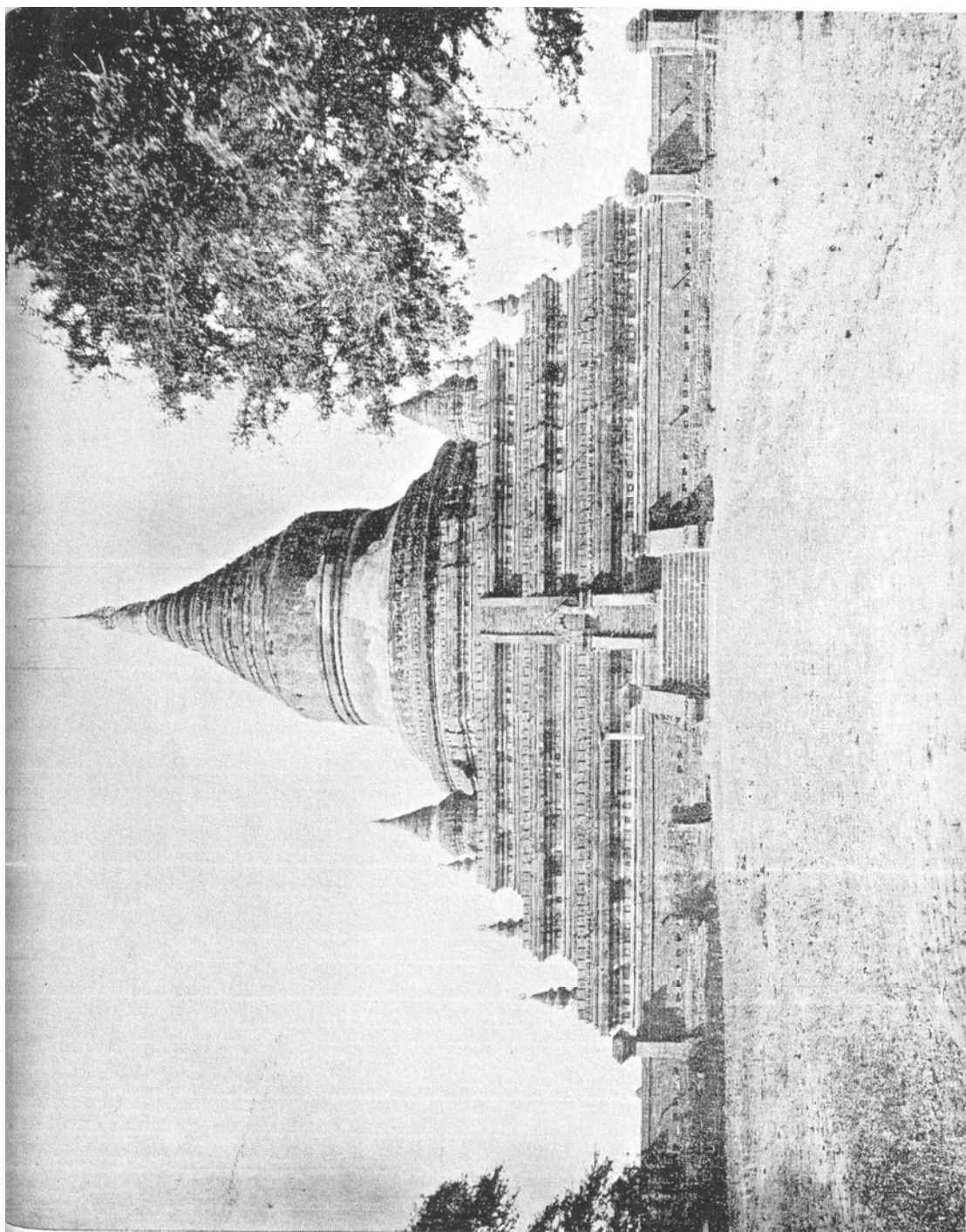
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BURMESE ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Thiripyanchi U Lu Pe Win.

Pagān, traditionally known to be founded in the 9th century C.E., reached the zenith of its political and cultural progress during the dynasty of the “Temple builders” beginning with the rule of Anorahtā (1044-77 C.E.). It owes its prosperity and progress to the new faith, Theravada Buddhism with the Pāli Piṭakas. Before the advent of Theravāda Buddhism the people of Pagān professed Mahāyānism and were under the religious tutelage of the Ari priests of the Tantric sect who practised grossly immoral rites. Anorahtā knew that such a state of affairs was undesirable and he found in Shin Araham, a learned Mon monk, an enthusiastic preceptor of the pure Buddhism, by whose efforts the court and the citizens became convinced converts to Theravāda.

After the conquest of Thaton in 1057 C.E. Anorahtā brought back thirty sets of the Pāli canon and brought also to Pagān the captive king, Manuhā, together with hosts of courtiers, artists and artisans. The people saw their king promoting the new faith and Pāli learning and devoting himself to Pāli studies. They followed suit and gave their whole-hearted cooperation in the noble cause. Buddhism thus moulded the character of the Burmese as a nation. It broadened their outlook and gave them the idea of art and architecture, language and literature. For all their customs and manners, their domestic dealings, their special intercourse and their economic planning, the Burmans got their guidance from the Pāli Piṭakas. Law and order prevailed in the country and the people gained every opportunity to devote their time to produce works of art. With the heightening of his religious zeal Anorahtā built many pagodas of which the golden Shwezigon (left unfinished at his death) is the most famous of all his meritorious achievements. The court and the commoner also vied with each other to erect sacred buildings as a result of which *stūpas*

and temples sprang up in thousands throughout the Pagān period of over two centuries. The magnificent monuments still preserved, and the numerous ruins which stand today, testify to the splendour of the city eight centuries ago.

Though it was Anorahtā who brought the Mon architecture and artists to Pagān it was early during the reign of Kyanzittha (1084 — 1112) that the fine arts of the Mon appeared at their best. As the twelfth and thirteenth centuries progressed, more and more monuments, evolved on purely Burmese aims of architectural designs and decoration, were built by successive kings and the citizens until an area of about sixteen square miles was practically filled with religious edifices.

These structures may be distinctly divided into two main categories, the *stūpa* and the temple. The first is a bell-shaped structure of solid brickwork raised on a series of receding terraces and crowned by a conical finial.

The second is a square hollow structure constructed to contain images of the Buddha, and rising up in gradually diminishing terraces and pyramidal roofs culminating in the curvilinear spire called the “*sikhara*”.

The origin of the *stūpa* lies in the erection of a tumulus over the corporeal remains or the relics of holy personages like the Buddha. Next, the objects which served the use of the Buddha are revered and enshrined in the mound. The shape of the structure gradually changed to an elongated dome until it assumed the likeness of a bell. Then from motives of piety people erect *stūpas* par in memory of the Buddha, by which act the greatest merit can be gained. The Pagodas in Burma are originally derived from the Indian topes but the Burmans evolved their own style of architectural forms and decorations and attained the fully developed stage by the 11th century.

The typical pagoda can be divided into four distinct portions. The first is a square masonry plinth on which are generally placed small pagodas, sometimes miniature ones of the main *stūpa* which they surround. Steps ordinarily lead up to this plinth on the four sides. At the corners are frequently found huge figures of human-headed lions called *manussiha*. The second portion is made up of receding terraces with bold mouldings, and often projecting angles occur at this stage. The third portion is the bell which is the representative of the hemispherical body of the ancient *stūpa*. The fourth is the spire, consisting of a number of diminishing rings, and decorative features. Above the rings is a band of lotus leaves pointing downwards and another with the leaves upturned, the two being intercepted by a bead moulding. The next component of the spire is a cone-designated *āmalaka* in Indian architecture and known in Burmese as *khayaythee*. The whole structure is finally surmounted by a richly gilt iron umbrella. It consists of several rings rising in diminishing stages and the central iron rod, which bears a gilt and bejeweled iron vane, is topped by a "diamond-bud" often made of crystal or genuine precious stone.

At Pagān, the Shwezigon pagoda is a fine example of such solid cylindrical structure. It was built by King Anorahtā, who left it in an unfinished state, and completed by Kyanzittha. Around the terraces of the pagoda, there are set in panels enameled plaques illustrating scenes in the previous lives of the Buddha. It is believed to contain the frontal bone and a tooth of the Buddha and is thus held in great veneration by the Buddhists of the whole of Burma. On each of the four sides of the pagoda is a small temple which enshrines a standing Buddha of the Gupta school of art.

The Shwesandaw is another notable *stūpa* built by the same king. Standing on five receding terraces, it assumes a conical shape in its main outlines, the whole edifice being crowned by a tapering finial.

Three main features of decorative treatment are developed in the pagodas while maintaining their dignity, grace and effect of permanence. Firstly, the sides of the platforms or terraces are outlined with boldly projecting moulding, and the space between these ornamented with bas-reliefs in square terracotta panels to enrich the entire composition and to attract the attention of the devout in the course of their progression around the shrine. Secondly, lotus leaves are carved at the base of the bell and in the upper part of the finial. The rich ornament applied to the bell also consists of pendants and bead festoons held in the mouths of gorgons. The third feature is the addition of small pagodas ranged around the *stūpa* on each angle of the several terraces.

The Mingalazedi indicates the high watermark of the type of architecture because it was constructed a few decades before the subversion of the Pagān Empire by the Mongols. It consists of three stepped terraces and the usual superstructure in fine proportions. The pagoda is noted for its beautiful terracotta tiles with Burmese legends set in the panels round the terraces.

The prime purpose of the temple is to enshrine the image of the Buddha, but in course of time interior arrangements consisting of galleries and corridors were designed for religious ceremonial. The most imposing structure of this type at Pagān is ānandā temple built by Kyanzittha in 1091 C.E. It is in plan a square of two hundred feet to the side, broken on each side by the projection of large gabled vestibules, which convert the plan into a perfect Greek cross. These vestibules are somewhat lower than the main square mass of the building, which elevates itself to a height of thirty-five feet in two tiers of windows. Above this rise successively diminishing terraces, the last of which just affording breadth for the spire which crowns and completes the edifice. The lower half of this spire is in the form of a mitre-like pyramid adapted from the temples of India; the upper half is the same moulded taper pinnacle that

terminates the common bell-shaped pagodas of Pagān. The gilded *hti* (umbrella) caps the whole at a height of 168 feet above the ground.

The interior consists of two vaulted and high but narrow corridors running parallel to each other along the four sides of the temple. They are connected by low and narrow passages in front of the windows by which light is admitted and further intersected by four large corridors into which access is obtained through porticoes. In the centre is an enormous cube, on the four sides of which are deep and high niches enshrining four colossal standing Buddhas of the present world who have appeared and entered Nibbāna. Each of them is 31 feet above the throne, which itself is nearly 8 feet in height above the floor level.

The ānandā stands unique in the whole of Burma for its lavish ornamentation, the most striking feature of which is the crowd of terracotta bas-reliefs and stone sculptures. The basement as well as the terraces are ornamented with glazed terracotta tiles. The plaques of the basement represent the two principle phases of the Buddha's attainment of Omniscience, those on the western half depicting the hosts of Māra assailing the Buddha, and those on the east his glorification by the gods after his victory, each scene being explained by a short legend in Mon. The tiles round the next story illustrate the five hundred and thirty seven shorter Jātakas, each of which is numbered and the title in Pāli given. The upper terraces are ornamented by a series of nearly four hundred bas-reliefs illustrating the last Ten Great Jātakas, there being an average of 38 to 40 plaques to each Jātaka story with a line of explanation in Mon below each scene. In the first corridor along the side of the inner face of the outer wall are two rows of niches containing stone sculptures, nearly four feet high, illustrating the principal events in the Buddha's career until his attainment of supreme wisdom. The whole series contains 80 scenes. But these are not the only sculptures, for the walls of both the corridors are honeycombed with numerous small niches in which are Buddha figures, either seated or

standing, in various attitudes. In each of the four porticoes also are 16 other sculptures, mostly repeating themselves, but among which are a few interesting scenes from the Buddha's life. The western sanctum also enshrines the life-size statues of its founder, Kyanzittha, and the primate, Shin Arahan.

The architectural accomplishment of the ānandā is rivaled by the massive and majestic Thatbyinnyu temple built by Alaungsithū, grandson of Kyanzittha. Standing within the ancient city-walls, some 500 yards to the southwest of the ānandā, the Thatbyinnyu rises to a height of two hundred and one feet above the ground and overtops all the other monuments. Its general plan is similar to the ānandā, but it does not, like the latter, form a symmetrical cross. The eastern porch alone projects considerably from the wall. Narrow stairways built in the thickness of the walls lead to an upper platform above the main mass of structure and 3 diminishing terraces. From this level rises another square cube of greater height which again supports another series of terraces together with the *sikhara* and the finial. Before reaching the upper platform a circumambulatory corridor forming the first floor of the building has to be passed through. Thus the main sanctuary enshrining the biggest Buddha in the temple is contained in the cubicle on the second floor of the structure.

Though different in architectural treatment the *stūpa* and the temple convey the same soaring effect, the former by its gradual attenuation and the latter by the introduction of pointed arches, flamboyant pediments over the doorways and the series of miniature *stūpa* at the corners of the receding terraces.

All these architectural features are purposive. They are dictated by the Burmese conception to make a symbol for something spiritual. The Burmese erect a pagoda over sacred relics and put up an image of the Buddha in a temple, not to worship blindly, but to afford, to the pious followers of the faith, the means of localising their feelings and concentrating their thoughts on the supreme

model. The craftsman's ideas are not confined to mere artistic appeal but imbued with national traditions and religious beliefs. So there is hardly any architectural design or artistic motif in Burmese religious art which does not suggest a spiritual significance.

The *stūpa* itself is designed to convey an aspect of the Buddha's philosophy. Nibbāna, or complete emancipation is the highest goal of the Buddhist and this can only be attained by rising spiritually above this mundane plane. The Buddha having attained Nibbāna is allegorically represented by the spire of the *stūpa* which shoots from the conventionalized lotus flower above the concentric rings. The umbrella signifies sovereignty—in this case, supreme enlightenment. The 3 terraces above the base of the *stūpa* suggest the worlds of men, *devas* and *Brāhmas*. The octagon above is said to stand for *Tusitā* heaven, the abode of the *Bodhisattas*, and the hemispherical dome now transformed into the shape of a bell over a begging bowl represents Nibbāna. Contemporary original inscriptions describe the mouldings of the plinth or base of the Pagān temple to have been modeled to resemble the shape of a lotus vase, and the

sikhara is after all a conventionalized lotus flower, a symbol of purity and nobleness, symbolically associated with the representation of the Buddha. In short, the religious buildings of Burma were evolved to conform to purely Burmese aspirations to express the transcendent nature of religious feelings.

In the 11th—13th century in Burma, whose capital then was Pagān, it was the Theravāda Pāli Buddhism that freed the king from the tutelage of the Tantric priest, and the king in turn, despotic though he was, gave to the people, everybody in his country, every freedom in their devotion to and interpretation of the new faith. It is no wonder to us Buddhists, therefore, though it may be strange to non-Buddhists, that a semi-desert terrain of sixteen square miles of Pagān and her environs are now richly covered with unique works of art and architecture in their various stages of stagnation and decay beyond the scope of state finance for their preservation and maintenance. In Pagān it is, therefore, one discovers and rediscovers the glory that is Burma and Burmese and the art and architecture that is Burmese and Buddhist.

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Conquest engenders hate; the conquered lives in misery. . .
 The slayer gets a slayer in his turn;
 The conqueror gets one who conquers him;
 The abuser wins abuse, the annoyer fret.
 Thus by the evolution of the deed,
 A man who spoils is spoiled in his turn.

Samyutta Nikāya i. 83.

Because of others' welfare howsoever great,
 One's own welfare should not be neglected.
 Well perceiving one's own welfare,
 Be zealous regarding self-interest.

Dhammapada. 166.

Beings imagining wrong in what is not wrong,
 And viewing as not wrong what is wrong,
 Embrace false views and go to a woeful state.

Dhammapada 318.

Hatreds never cease by hatreds in this world. By loving
 kindness alone they cease. This is an ancient law.

Dhammapada 5.

Though he should conquer a million men in battle, yet he is
 the noblest victor who conquers himself.

Dhammapada. 103.

Neither for the sake of self nor the sake of another.

Dhammapada 84.

All tremble at punishment, all fear death. Comparing others
 with oneself, one should neither kill nor cause to kill.

Dhammapada 129.

In the case of a soldier who in battle exerts himself, puts forth effort, he must previously have had this low, mean, perverse idea: ‘Let those, beings be tortured, be bound, be destroyed, be exterminated, so that they may be thought never to have existed’. Then, so exerting himself so putting forth effort, other men torture him and make an end of him. When body breaks up after death he is reborn in Hell.

Saṃyutta Nikāya IV, 308.

What do you think about, this Dhānañjāni? Suppose someone were a non-dhamma farer or an uneven dhamma-farer because of his parents, because of his wife and children, .. because of the Ruler; would they gain anything by saying: ‘It was because of us that he was a non-dhamma farer, an uneven dhamma farer —do not let the guardians of Hell drag him off to hell?.

No good Sāriputta, for the guardians of Hell would hurl him wailing into Hell itself.

Majjhima Nikāya, 11, 186

If anyone were to hit anyone else with his hand or clod or stick or weapon in your presence, there too you should train yourself thus - ‘My mind shall not be perverted; nor shall I utter evil words, I shall abide cherishing good-will and with no hatred in heart’ ... Even if robbers and fellows of vile profession should cut off limb after limb with a two-handled saw, even there, should his mind be corrupted, he is not one who acts according to my teaching.

Majjhima Nikāya, Kakacupama Sutta.

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It will, therefore, help us very much, and help you, if you will give us the fullest possible information as to your life and background and we would suggest that the following be included:

Name in full, sex, married or unmarried, place and date of birth, if parents living their address, your education (school standard or University degree, if any), your profession, religion (if Buddhist state whether Theravāda or Mahayana), extent of Buddhist reading, knowledge of languages, physical health, any other details that might help.

Two references from people of some standing should be sent with the application and a letter of recommendation from the Burmese Embassy, Legation or Consulate concerned should also be attached.

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The following RULES have been framed. During their stay at the Meditation Centre, pupils

- (i) Must observe the Eight Precepts.
- (ii) Must follow unconditionally the instructions given by their preceptor.
- (iii) Apart from six hours of sleep, must spend the rest of the 24 hours in *Vipassanābhāvanā* (Insight-Meditation).
(Reading, writing, purposeless talking and visitors, are to be avoided.)
- (iv) Must undertake to practise for –a minimum of six weeks.

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