

# AWARENESS IN BUDDHIST MEDITATION



HENRI VAN ZEYST



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# From the publisher

Henry Van Zeyst, well known for his invaluable contributions to the recent Buddhist literature, needs no introduction. About two years before his demise—15th September 1988—the manuscripts of this publication and another, titled: ‘Of Matter and Mind’, were handed over to me personally, in my office, along with a copy of his last will. His request was to have the documents kept in safe custody in the Office of the Public Trustee; and the manuscripts posthumously published utilizing the funds available in his investments.

Van Zeyst spent his final years meditating at the Meditation Centre at Nilambe in Kandy, giving instructions to those who came to him for his guidance on meditation. These publications, which are his last writings, should undoubtedly be of immense benefit to those in search of the Dhamma; particularly to the Buddhists practising insight meditation.

I consider it my good fortune to be able to associate myself with the publication of this priceless gift of Dhamma. And I am glad that I was able to accomplish this task on his 1st death anniversary.

U. Mapa, Public Trustee of Sri Lanka  
15th September 1989  
Office of the Public Trustee  
No. 2, Bullers Lane, Colombo 7, Sri Lanka.



# Introduction

The poverty of language is often such, that words are misleading as much as they are revealing. Thus, ‘soullessness’ (*anatta*), as a negation of ‘self’-entity, could possibly be misunderstood as describing the state of a person without ‘soul’ as having no individuality, as having no backbone! And so, ‘mindfulness’ could be construed as a mind being full to overflowing with ideas and ideals. Then, Satipaṭṭhāna, mindfulness, would be a method to obtain such fullness.

Nothing could be more misleading. Hence I have preferred to speak of awareness. Here, no method is required; and Satipaṭṭhāna then would be the application of awareness.

Awareness is not a method. It is just to be aware that the mind is full. But that is not easy, because the mind, like nature, abhors a vacuum, and to empty the mind is something to be afraid of. An empty mind is supposed to be a stupid mind. When the mind is blank, there is indecision, a lack of mental activity, of determination, of perplexity. How can such a state of mind be a meditative mind?

These are some of the problems we are going to deal with, not methodically, but with understanding which is insight. And insight is that kind of meditation which is not concentration aimed at tranquillity (*samatha bhāvanā*), but contemplation (*vipassanā*) which alone can tell us the nature of mind and its components, the nature of our emotions, ambitions, desires, the nature of that which forms

the 'ego', for the maintenance of which all religious methods seem to aspire.

In the turmoil of daily life with its increasing material activity and mental unrest the need for peace and calm is felt more and more. Peace is sought to replace the unceasing conflict caused by ambition and competition. Meditation classes and meditation centres can now be found in many parts of the world, in the 'mystic east' as well as in the materialistic west. And with those institutions there are naturally to be found many self-styled meditation-masters who have acquired some book-knowledge on the subject and now cater to the demand for tranquillity, just what the doctor would prescribe for a patient on the brink of a nervous break-down. A searching mind will seek repose in its agitation, a pacification in its conflict, a calming down in its passion, a sense of security in its doubts. Tranquillity is the object of search, and this search may cover many activities and many methods. There are tranquillisers in the form of pills and drugs which transport the restless mind into a haven of hallucination, only to return with an increased aftermath of dissatisfaction, unrest and conflict. There are spiritual tranquilisers which take the mind away from its problems by focussing on spiritual values. These are found in all religions, which have their own methods, ways and objects, to reach their individual goals by different means. But the search is the same: a search for peace in security, safety for continued existence of a 'self'.

Such search is motivated as an escape from unrest, insecurity and conflict and is therefore conditioned by choice, by volition with obvious distortions to suit individual needs and tastes. It is the striving for self-protection and self-projection which distorts, disturbs and disfigures the present moment with its actual need for developing into a psychological greed for continued existence.

It is the awareness of such tendencies which can prevent the building-up of further resistance. This awareness (*sati*) is mentioned in Buddhist literature in very many connections, as attention, mind-

fulness, meditation, application of mind, and we shall consider their various functions and aspects, as a mental factor, as a recollection, as a step on the path, as a factor of enlightenment, culminating in contemplation with application to transcendence even of ‘divine states’ (*brahmavihāra*). There is first of all that step (*aṅga*) on the noble eightfold path (*ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga*) usually referred to as right mindfulness (*sammāsati*). Then the term sati is found among the facets of insight (*sambojjhaṅga*), heading the list of seven.

As alertness sati is one of the 25 ‘lofty mental factors’ (*sobhana sādharmaṇa cetasikā*), always skilful (*kusala*), in the composition of a morally good thought.

Further, we meet with sati as a controlling faculty (*indriya*) and as a moral force (*bala*).

And again as representative cognition or memory in the various forms of remembrance in concentration (*anussati-bhāvanā*).

We shall have to go into all these details to discover what it is to be aware, and in that process perhaps become awake.

The chief source of information is, of course, the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, the Discourse on the Application of Awareness, as it is found in the Majjhima Nikāya <sup>1</sup>.

According to the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism<sup>2</sup>, ‘awareness is mindfulness (*sati*) of things and events as they occur. It is not purposeful, not discriminative, not descriptive, but just alertness, watchfulness; fact-finding, but not fault-finding . . . Such a watchful alertness will note the arising of a new state of mind without trying to suppress it. In such awareness a new state of mind will not have the opportunity of taking subconscious roots, as the motive will stand revealed even before the completion of the thought.’

Such awareness, if complete, is a state of being awake, a supreme comprehension of the nature of all experience with its three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*) and

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<sup>1</sup>no. 10

<sup>2</sup>II, p. 468

insubstantiality (*anatta*). The lack of awareness is then a lack of understanding which is basic ignorance (*avijja*) rooted in delusion (*moha*). The overcoming of ignorance through a realisation of truth, which is to know and see things as they really are (*yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa-dassana*), is then truly an awakening from a state of delusion.

To be awake then, is to rise from the slumber of ignorance and delusion, to perceive, to understand, to comprehend, to realise, to be enlightened (*bodhi*).

It is this process of awakening, which is the ‘application of mindfulness’ (*Satipaṭṭhāna*), and which requires an intense state of alertness and attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) to the actuality of experience, an awareness of mental states as they arise, rather than paying attention to states which have arisen.

Thus, ‘inhaling a deep breath, he is aware: I inhale a deep breath’ (*dāgharī assasāmi’ ti pajānāmi*<sup>3</sup>). To be awake is seeing the act in action, that is, the actual reaction in the mind. Whether the breath is long or short is immaterial in itself, except perhaps for a lung specialist looking for symptoms. But the awareness of the mental state which produces this quality of action is an awareness of the reactionary ‘self’ which is being expressed. What follows after the diagnosis is of interest perhaps to a psychiatrist, who can analyse a symptom, tracing it through memory. That too, is mindfulness (*sati*) as recollection (*anussati*) or memory, but not awareness of the present reaction, which reveals the prevailing motive or volition (*cetanā*), which is the activity (*kamma*) which makes the ‘I’.

Attention is often the result of selection, which is volition, which is the ‘self’ in action. For, attention is an activity of the mind which precludes distraction. Whereas alertness is choiceless and is as much interested in the distraction, if that is the reaction, as in the pre-selected focus of the attentive mind. The reaction, which is an after-event, is of much more interest, because it shows the actual state of the mind reacting to experience. The experience itself is not impor-

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<sup>3</sup>M. I, 56

tant (breathing, concentration, tranquillity, trance, ecstasy, etc.), but the reaction thereto when being experienced is the revealing factor of actuality at work. And that is the 'method' (*paṭṭhāna*) of being aware, the 'application of awareness' (*Satipaṭṭhāna*).

It is not anger arising in a deluded mind, it is not the cause of anger providing the opportunity for the arising of anger, but the reaction thereto in actuality, which can reveal the present process of selection or rejection, which is the birth of a 'self' in projection in desire, in search of continuance, resistance in existence, the essence of conflict. Awareness is an alertness which is not found in attention. It is a neutral state without selection, a readiness which is fully active in seeing a reaction a reaction without comparison, without absorption, without denial. Then there is no creation of opposition, of conflict, of 'self', which is always appropriation, the process which makes the 'self' grow. Thus, awareness is a ready receptivity in which there is no prejudice, and hence a neutrality without selection.





# Awareness, the Beginning of Enlightenment

## Awakening Begins with Awareness

The world in which we move live and think is indeed but a world of actuality, in which we react to the environment as mechanically and unintelligently as in a dream. Here too, our actions are conditioned by reflexes, subject to the influence of the past, of memory, of attachment and repulsion, of love and hate, of the senses and their contacts, tradition and education, hopes and fears. In short, it is the world of 'self', in which we move with self as aim, in which we live with self as the centre, in which we think with self as the subject, the thinker. This world of actuality is then only a world of reaction, for it is seen only with reference to the 'self'.

In this reaction there is constant comparing, judging, selecting, choosing, willing, retaining, absorbing, prospecting projecting, which has only one reference, the 'self'. It is in this context that love so easily turns to hate, that memories are cherished as ideals building up the future. And all this reaction is necessary to maintain the illusion of a self as separate from its activity.

Awakening in the true sense begins with an awareness of this delusion-centred activity, which is the beginning of awareness which sees and understands things and people and events as they are, and not merely as instruments and means of fulfilling an ego-centric life of reaction. The mere seeing of life as a reaction to 'self', and the understanding of that 'self' as a reaction to life will halt this delusion, this living dream. And in that awakening there is new life, a new sight, a new world with new dimensions which 'self' has no place, in which there is no conflict, but only an approach of learning, of loving with deep sympathy, in which there is no more striving and becoming; and in which there is an immediate response in direct action. And that alone is truth.

It is not enough to be aware of a certain event. It is far more important to see the entire set-up in which the event takes place, its conditioning, its reactivity, its background, its aim and objectivity. Thus, awareness is the beginning of self-understanding. The problem is not a choice as between smoking and non-smoking, for which we know all the arguments and answers. The problem is why we want a solution, which is an escape, which actively supports the 'self' in our choice through identification with the answer. The intelligent understanding of this new problem or challenge will automatically (not methodically) dissolve all questions, all problems, without choice, without conflict. That is the work of awareness. Awareness is a passive approach without choice, which gives the problem quite a different significance. An active approach means a method which the mind has adopted. Methods are stereo-typed approaches of memory, advocated by sages and saints, accepted on their authority in one's search for a solution, safety, security. In an active approach there is a goal, and the method becomes all-important in the search for finding a solution, which is a striving for the attainment of a goal. A method is a memory of the past, while the living problem is vital in the present. Now can the dead past solve a present problem, when the method of solving has become

more important than the understanding of the problem? A method has already chosen the approach without seeing the significance of the problem, the actuality of the challenge. A method is aimed at finding a solution to do away with the problem; and hence it is a form of escape.

## The Passive Approach

But in a passive approach of awareness there is only the seeing of the problem without judgement. Thus there is no identification, no colouring of the problem as good or evil, as mine or not mine. Then the problem can present itself in its own form and thus reveal its content. Without interpretation and identification there is no choice, no desire for a solution, for an answer, for a revolt. Then the challenge is not met with an old pattern which is of the memory, of ideals, of 'self'. In the absence of self-awareness there is only awareness of the challenge which is always new. Such awareness will show that we are not passively interested, but that we are related to the problem with self-interest, with prejudice, with desire for an answer, with the image of an ideal solution.

Now, what does awareness do? It not only sees my nervous reactions which drop when 'caught in action', but it sees the entire building up of the mental system which has produced those reactions. For reactions are not only of the nerves, they are also the unconscious layers of thought, to which the 'I' so readily reacts as the easiest way out of a problem. Conformity to fashion, social customs, cultural ties, national flag-waving, religious adherence to rituals, which one may laugh at privately and yet cling to in public to avoid 'difficulties', are some of the expressions of that inner fear of standing alone while losing the support of the mass. Awareness will not only expose the childlike immaturity of conformity, but also the basic fear underlying it. Exposure of fear does not make one brave, but shows the emptiness of conformity, but also the basic

fear underlying it. Exposure of fear does not make one brave, but shows the emptiness of the mind in fear. When the mind is truly empty, thought as reaction ceases, and in that silence an altogether new relationship of understanding can establish itself from moment to moment without attachment, without fear, without conflict.

To be aware of something is not just a vague acquaintance with something in the background: a baby crying in a house down the lane. To be aware means to be fully involved. It is an experiencing, as to be hungry, which gathers in all the senses; even sight gets blurred, hearing indistinct, because hunger is a challenge to the entire system. We may read of people dying of starvation, and feel pity; but we are not involved in the same way, as long as there is a mere recording, a comparison with an image in the memory.

But when I am hungry, I am so totally involved that I am hunger itself; that is, I am the immediate response to that experience. There is no escape possible through thought, memory, sublimation, sacrifice. Whatever I do or not do, I am experiencing hunger to the exclusion of everything else. I cannot bring in another unrelated element, such as prayer, submission, distraction; for, the experiencing of hunger is all-pervading. I can temporarily avoid the issue and escape in a dreamland of plenty for the moment, by artificial means, prayers or drugs, concentration or activity, but I am still hungry. I am that hunger.

In that awareness there is an immediate experiencing which produces immediate action. If the hunger is purely physical, I do something about it; if the need is extreme, I may even steal and disregard all consequences, because the awareness is not on the outcome, but on the need.

Psychological hunger, which is the desire of the mind to continue in its search for self-satisfaction, will likewise disregard all consequences in its search for continued existence of the 'self'. But if there is awareness, seeing the reactionary activity of thought which seeks

continuance in impermanence, conflict in its contradictory search, then that awareness will also see the void of both search and conflict.

## Awareness is not Concentration

Concentration (*samādhi*) on something is not awareness (*sati*). Concentration is deliberate focussing of the mind on some particular object, and is therefore, an act of the will. The object is selected, in preference to some other object, whereby it becomes a chosen condition or ideal; and all mental energy is then concentrated exclusively on that selected object of thought. It is not awareness (*sati*), but recollection (*anussati*). The deliberation, the selection, the preference, the exclusiveness of the mental choice, the chosen frontiers within which the wandering thoughts are controlled, require great mental effort, so much, that greater effort is exercised in the controlling of thought than on the focussing of the mental eye on the single object chosen for concentration. The means become more important than the goal; and the entire activity is a wilful exercise, a purposeful direction, an intentional restriction of energy to be channelled with pre-selection, with purpose of attainment, of gain, of making become something which was not there before.

Concentration, mindfulness or even mere watchfulness on breathing (*ānāpāna-sati*) may cause one to notice a change in the rhythm of the breath, a quickening of its tempo, betraying the interference of some external thought of love or anger. Then, it is not important to follow up the breath from the nostrils filling the lungs, but rather the interference.

When an angry thought arises, it is not the breath which should be followed in concentration; it is not even the anger which should be attended to, for that can be done without meditation, by either suppression or substitution, or even by sublimation. What is needed most of all is the understanding of that anger. Further, it is not so much the knowledge of the immediate cause of my anger, which may

be insufficient sleep last night, followed up by a breakfast with cold coffee and burnt toast. But what does that anger represent? What does it try to express? Aren't the coffee and the toast instruments rather than the causes of my anger, through which a hurt feeling of 'self' tries to unburden itself? Is not that 'self' trying to assert itself, and in a feeling of frustration taking it out on somebody or something else?

Thus, the particular must be seen in whole; and when the whole is seen and understood, the detail has lost its significance. Then anger is seen and understood as wounded pride of an 'I' which itself is a mere conditioned reflex grown out of a conditioning past, cherished memories, wilful projections, a bubble which has been pricked and is no more. This cannot be done by concentration of one-pointedness of mind (*ekaggatā*), which focusses all attention as a spot-light on one particular, leaving the entirety of the process in shadow and darkness. Awareness, on the other hand, has no pre-selection and no re-active purpose. It has no particular relationship to individual conditions, and there are no methods and means for its passive activity. Its action is not intentionally directed, but is passively aware of any change of conditions that may occur. It is watchfulness over the motives of action without itself moving in any direction. Thus there is no goal to be attained, no 'self' to be satisfied, no knowledge to be acquired. The particular is not chosen as an object outstanding in selective comparison, but the particular is seen as an aspect of the entire movement of the idealisation process of the 'self' in action, to continue, to become to project, to expand. In such total awareness the mind does not contribute its thoughts of memory or of ideal; and in this intelligent passivity of contemplation there is no action of 'self', and thus there is no conflict in opposition.

## Awareness is not Consciousness

Awareness is not the same as consciousness. Thought which is conscious thinking is a logical deduction from previously obtained data; and as such it depends on previous experiences which have been stored up by memory. It is, of course, not an actual experience which has been or even which can be stored up. At most it is mental reaction on the verbal level, in which a keyword has been inserted for reference.

What is the difference between consciousness and awareness? Consciousness is thought; and thought is the result of thinking, which is a process of application of the mind with logic and memory, with volition and determination, with judgement and selection, with prejudice and ideals, with fear and hope. Consciousness, in other words, is the 'I' in action which is reaction, because all thinking is the conditioned result of the entire past, not only of the individual past, but the accumulation throughout the ages of the struggles for survival, the interminable wars for emergence, the endless conflicts with the ideas of the mind controlling the weapons of the pen and the sword. Consciousness is the past trying to become the future, without understanding the past, without knowing the future. Thus, consciousness or thinking is always in conflict; it cannot solve any problem, because it does not try to understand. But awareness is not thinking, is not the memory of the past, is not desire, is not the longing for the future. It is just to be open and receptive to whatever is or happens. There is no approach to the present; the present is here already and we are facing it directly without fear of the past, without hope for the future. Awareness is seeing what is as it is, with openness and directness, without expectation of results, without fear of consequences, without reflection as to a 'self' judging in prejudice. It is an immediate experiencing, in which there is no reference to 'self', and hence no thought, no conscious reaction.

Unconditioned, there is no conflict, no opposition, no 'self'. And where there is no 'self', there is no problem.

In consciousness I am conscious of 'self' as a past reaction in awareness there is no thought of 'self', there is no discursive process, there is no return to memory, but just awareness of what is being experienced. And that awareness dissolves all bonds of the past. Then there is freedom here and now.

It is, therefore, the consciousness of thought which is blinding with its volition, which makes it dependent on the authority of the past and which projects it into a desire for continuance to find a security which is not to be found in the present. In being aware of this activity of thought, all volition and projection will stop; and with craving and clinging become impossible. Thus, consciousness of thinking can only lead to a continuation of a delusion of 'self', whereas awareness of the void of such projection will bring this process to an end.

Can the 'self' become 'no-self'? Such question is obviously formulated in ignorance, for it is still the 'self' that wants to become its ideal. Only in stilling all consciousness there can be awareness in which there is no striving for attainment of an ideal. And consciousness is still, when there is awareness of what is.

To be aware at a conscious level of the movements of thought, that is of the arising of fear, of pleasure, of desire, is to be aware of the contents of consciousness, of the incidents and accidents. There is no consciousness apart from its contents, for consciousness is not a mirror in which these movements are reflected. It is what thought has made it, in attachment and dislike, ambition and frustration, impulse and desire, hope and fear, knowledge and belief. It is with that total of contents that further impressions are absorbed, which modify or strengthen one's loves and hates.

The awakening of this intelligent awareness is the freedom from all stages of capturing in reception, perception and conception (*pañc'upādānakkhandha*) which is the deliverance of insight.



## When there is no Awareness

We are not aware continuously. There are long periods during which we are inattentive. When we are aware, there is no desire, no choice, no division, because there is no thinking about it, but just being aware. But, when we are inattentive, we say things which are not true, we are nervous in our reactions, we feel insecure, we lose our temper, we are in conflict and feel all the things which divide. We do not want those things to happen, and therefore we are trying to be aware to become aware all the time. But trying to achieve total awareness in resistance to inattention is not awareness at all.

A thinker, who believes himself to be aware of his thought, is only aware of his reactions which have adopted thoughts as his thoughts, an identification, which involves memory, a registration which aims at projection into a future, without awareness of the present. To be aware of the fact of inattention is awareness. And in that, all striving ceases, all nervous reactions stop, the quest for security has come to an end. For, the moment one becomes aware of inattention, it is over. And thus there is no need to strive and struggle to become aware all the time.

When one is aware of one's inattention, the conflict is finished. In the awareness of inattention the whole movement of thinking changes. In non-awareness, thought brings up the memory of and thereby establishes a thinker causing division and conflict. But the moment there is awareness of this inattention to what is, the whole manufacturing process of self-consciousness comes to a stop, without division, without thinker, without conflict. For the truth which sees and understands the false as false is a direct awareness without goal or prejudice. And in that truth there is freedom, emancipation, deliverance, because it holds no conflict and no thought of 'self'.

When the mind is silent and not disturbed by thinking about a technique of searching for an object one does not know, in that silent awareness there is a direct understanding of what is, of the

futility of an 'I' searching for the truth of 'non-I', of the stripping of all the paraphernalia used in dressing up a void.

That understanding, that meditation of insight (*vipassanā*) is the truth which has no objective ideal, which is no subjective achievement, but which is an actual experiencing without comparing, classifying, or retaining, which has no memory of the past, no ideal for the future, and no 'self' in the present.

When silence of the mind comes as quiet as the morning mist over the fields, as gentle as distant rain comes over the hills, as natural as the falling of the night—then there is no effort in being open to a blessing.

It is only concentration which requires effort and desire to become virtuous. But in silence there is no denial or acceptance, for in contemplation there is no concentration. Then there is no purpose, no memory, no continuity of an ideal.

There is awareness of the environment, but in this silent attention there is no influence and no response which is reaction. There is no thought in the silence of the mind, but a wonderful peace of independence and freedom of being alone and yet not in opposition.

In such awareness, every act of experiencing is a new creation, which has not been brought about, which is not a picture brought up from the past, or projected for continuation in the future. Just because the mind is silent without thought, it is open to see and receive and understand without prejudice or conditioning. And because there is no 'self' in that unconditional awareness, there is the intelligence to understand what is, without opposition, without searching, without conflict.

Without purpose, without object, without thought, there is the need to let go, not in abandon which has gratification of the senses as its goal, but the need of tired eye-lids to close over tired eyes (Tagore). When the mind is tired of its chattering thoughts, of its rushing for security, of its clinging to possessions of the body and of the heart, it becomes silent in its non-exertion. This silence does

not come through exertion, does not arise from failure, is not the outcome of exhaustion, but is the complete understanding of insight which comes through awareness.

The mind, therefore, must give up its searching for an answer. This, of course, cannot be done by the mind itself, by a 'tour de force', turning against itself. But when it is seen that the mind is the memory which searches and distracts from the challenge, then the thought-process will become silent and watchful. Not knowing how to deal with the challenge, but only knowing that the past cannot deal with the present, there is an acute alertness watching the challenge which is now not a disturbance of the mind which is quiet.

Struggling to be aware is just another form of trying to become reformed, which is the main cause of confusion and conflict in which the 'I' projects itself in continuance of existence. But, when the 'I' cannot become aware, the mind can watch itself yielding to stupid conventions, keeping up pretensions, putting up a brave show, and so on. Then, without trying to become different, this mere watching the activities of the body has made the mind alert. Seeing the implications of these concessions to society, their meaninglessness and harmfulness, I cannot in all sincerity continue with them. Thus I simply drop them, or I am a hypocrite in my own eyes. Awareness of hypocrisy is not a thing anyone can live with; and so, awareness of my unguarded actions gives that mental alertness which was missing a few moments earlier.

When I am aware of my actions being only reactions, I stop doing many obviously stupid things. And there is no problem. But the moment this awareness eases off, I am again at it, not only with nervous reactions, but also yielding to the many commands of society and tradition which form the background of the 'I', which I am so keenly watching at times, and want to get rid of.

When an angry throughout arises, it is not merely that anger which should be attended to, for that can be done by either sup-

pression of substitution, or even sublimation. What is needed most of all is the understanding of that anger. It is not so much the knowledge of the immediate cause of my anger, which may be insufficient sleep last night, followed up by a breakfast with cold coffee and burnt toast. But what does that anger represent? What does it try to express? Are the coffee and the toast not instruments rather than the causes of my anger through which a hurt feeling of 'self' tries to unburden itself? Is not that 'self' trying to assert itself, and trying to take it out on something or someone else in a feeling of frustration?

In awareness there is neither thinker nor thought, no reference to memory. In that awareness the mind is silent. There is no flash back into some past experience, no reliance on some method of control, no clinging to the authority of faith or tradition. In that awareness there is no purpose of attainment, no aspiration of a goal, no projection towards awareness there is no self, no analysis of approval or no introduction nor exclusion of what should or should not be done.

But in awareness there is the silent meeting with what is. Without judgement and without conclusion, without desire and without fear, there is a direct contact in this unprepared meeting with what is. Without acceptance of the beautiful, without rejection of the ugly, there is a simple awareness in the total innocence of detachment. Without striving, without escaping, there is the full attention which is now free from distraction. And in that complete awareness without the frame of the colour of ideal, there is a direct understanding which is totally empty of all thought of 'self'.

# Mindfulness as Recollection

However, before dealing with awareness and its application to the bodily functions and the activities of the mind in sensations, in thought and mental states, we have to speak of a group of ten applications in the Workshop (*kammaṭṭhāna*) of the mind, which are rather the functions of recollection (*anussati*), which is a kind of memory (Sanskrit: *smṛti*) or a flash-back only remotely connected with awareness in actuality.

This group of recollections is part of a total of forty methods of concentration, as they are found together in the Visuddhimagga and disjunctively in several of the older Suttas. They are recollections, for they throw the mind back on a specially selected object for concentration.

The ten are<sup>4</sup>:

- 1.) Recollection of the Buddha and his nine good qualities (*Buddhānussati*)
- 2.) Recollection of the teaching of the Buddha and the good qualities thereof (*Dhammānussati*)

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<sup>4</sup>D.III, 250; A. III, 284)

- 3.) Recollection of the Order of Buddhist monks in so far as they have attained the four stages of sainthood and the fruits thereof (*Saṅghānussati*)
- 4.) Reflection on one's own virtue and morality (*sīlānussati*)
- 5.) Reflection on one's own degree of detachment (*cāgānussati*)
- 6.) Reflection on the reward in celestial spheres following a life of virtue (*devatānussati*)

To these six another four are frequently added, which, however, are not strictly speaking forms of recollection (*anussati*), but forms of awareness (*sati*) as they are being discussed here at present. They are:

- 7.) Mindfulness of death (*marañāsati*)
- 8.) Mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*)
- 9.) Mindfulness on breathing (*ānāpānasati*)
- 10.) Contemplation on peace (*upasamānussati*) which leads to the fading away of defilements<sup>5</sup>.

For the sake of completeness we shall now slightly expand on each of these ten 'recollections', which are mentioned among the forty recommendations or objects for concentration (*kammaṭṭhāna*), although they are not all equally effective<sup>6</sup>.

## Recollection of the Buddha

Recollection of the Buddha (*Buddhānussati*) and his nine good qualities is found very often in the Suttas as a stanza of praise, in which

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<sup>5</sup>A.I, 30

<sup>6</sup>Ency. Bsm. I, 778

the Buddha is seen as the perfect one (*Arahant*) who has no defilements, who has perceived for himself the reality, unconditioned by memory and tradition, and who has been able to awaken in others that flame of intelligence which lies dormant and forgotten in everything that is. Thus he is fully awake (*sammā-sambuddha*), where others are asleep in ignorance or groping for truth in delusion. He is perfect in wisdom and conduct (*vijjā-carana-sampanno*), for in kindling the flame of intelligence he does not cause the fires of lust and desire to burn and consume. His going is good (*sugato*) as he has opened up the way to understanding, a way that does not lead to a goal of achievement in some distant future. Indeed, he has understood the world and sees it for what it is (*lokavidū*). Seeing its value in the light of impermanence and conflict, there is no selfish desire; and so he is free. With this supreme intelligence and awakening to the truth, he is indeed a matchless guide, compared to a charioteer and tamer of the human heart, who can guide and steer to final victory (*anuttaro purisa-dhamma-sārathi*), a teacher of life in nature and super-nature (*sattha devamanussānari*). He is truly a Buddha, an enlightened one, a shining light for everyone to see, yet not to blindly follow and adore. He is no God, and can bring no salvation; but free from all creation, from all beliefs, from all aspirations and desires, unconditioned by traditions and ritualistic acts of worship, he shows the way to be enlightened, each one for himself. In that light of understanding there is the freedom of deliverance, the awakening from a dream, an awareness that all conflict is due to selfish aspiration, that all striving is self-projection, and therefore, that there is freedom and deliverance in the understanding of the void of conflict, when conflict is experienced in impermanence.

## Recollection of the Buddha's Teaching

Recollection of the Buddha's teaching (*dhammānussati*) is an awareness that his teaching is not asking for adherence to a set of dogmas,

although it is well-proclaimed (*svākhāto Bhagavatā-dhammo*). It is appealing to the intellect rather than to the emotional feelings of one's inner desires. It speaks for itself and is directly observable (*sanditṭhiko*) without revelation, without concession through miracles, without dependence on promises. It is not through grace or through fear, or in desire for results that one accepts his teaching, but because it is self-evident, when the obstacles to viewing are cleared away, obstacles of faith, tradition, attachment to customs, rituals, education, environment. Only when the mind is totally free, it can see the truth as it is. And this vision is not to be cultivated: but it can be seen immediately (*akāliko*) without the preparation of prayers and sacrifices, without the accumulation of virtue, without the expectation of reward or fear of punishment. It is timeless in the sense that there can be no striving to become, for the truth is always here and now.

Thus it is as an open invitation: come and see (*ehiṇassiko*) without prejudice, without desire, without expectation, in readiness to receive whatever comes without distortion, without rejection, without selection. When the false is seen as false, there is the truth self-revealed. In that openness there is an immediate leading-on (*opanayiko*), not with a goal in view, not with striving for a purpose, not with a desire for attainment, but a leading-on which is a leading-out, away from the night-mare of becoming, from the dream of being, from the delusion of existence which is resistance. No more-becoming (*bhava-nirodha*) in no-more conflict (*dukkha*). Such is the deliverance into which the teaching of the Buddha leads on, clearly to be seen by everyone, as long as he is prepared to see without distortion, with intelligent awareness (*paccattariṇ veditabbo vinnññūhi*).

## Recollection of the Brotherhood

What does the brotherhood stand for? This brotherhood of the disciples of the Buddha (*bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho*) is well-behaved



with good conduct, for they are essentially the disciples who, having entered on the path of perfection, are now progressing towards the final deliverance of arahantship. This path of perfection has four stages during which the disciple progressively disburdens himself from the ten fetters (*dasa saṃyojana*).

The ten fetters are overcome in the lower stages of sainthood:

- 1.) The initial impediments of misconception of individuality (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*), of perplexity (*vicikicchā*) and of attachment to ritualism (*sīlabbata-paramāsa*), which prevent a disciple even to enter the path of holiness, and the overcoming of which, therefore, make him a stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*), the stream of sanctity, which without fail carries him down to the ocean of deliverance, where all wrong views of 'self' are submerged for ever in Nibbāna.
- 2.) The overcoming of sensual pleasure (*kāmacchanda*) and of aversion (*vyāpāda*), of attachment and of repulsion, constitutes the second stage in which the fetters of love and hate are loosened, and the disciple is assured that at most only once more he will return to this life and world of conflict (*sakadāgāmin*), and then in perfect awareness make himself free from those carnal bonds.
- 3.) The more subtle craving for forms of beauty (*rūparāga*) and the clinging to the formless speculations of philosophy (*arūparāga*) are the sublimation of carnal desires. They too form fetters which have to be set aside. And when that stage is reached, there no more return (*anāgāmin*) to any form of life can occur. In that life he will make the supreme effort to break away from all that binds.
- 4.) The final stage of arahantship is when the last three impediments are shaken off, conceit (*māna*), agitation (*uddhacca*) and ignorance (*avijja*).

These four stages of spiritual progress have each their path of approach (*magga*) and the fruition of attainment (*phala*). And so, the brotherhood of the disciples of the Buddha consists of four groups of two (*cattāri purisa-yugani*), making eight individuals (*aṭṭha purisapuggala*), only distinct in their degrees of holiness and insight. Indeed, they are worthy of our veneration (*āhuneyya*) and respect with folded hands, worthy of our support in their spiritual effort, worthy of our following their noble example, in attaining that unsurpassed domain of bliss supreme (*anuttara puññakkhetta*).

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The following three recollections (*anussati*) are introspective reflections, which may provide much satisfaction at a time when one's morale is low, when doubts prevail, when physical and mental sufferings are overwhelming.

## Reflection of one's own Virtue and Morality

The reflection of one's own virtue and morality (*sīlānussati*) is often recommended when physical strength is at its lowest. In Buddhism there is no place for so-called 'death-bed repentance'. Repentance itself is an unskilful thought which misses the opportunity of the present moment. It is rather the remembrance of good deeds done in the past which can lift up the mind in spiritual joy and revival, and thus produce a skilful effect (*kusala vipāka*) which can assist a pacing thought to bridge over the gap into a life to come and thus provide a good start in a new life.

## Reflection on one's own Degree of Detachment

Reflection on one's own degree of detachment (*cāgānussati*) is another method of freeing the mind from selfish desires. It is the

understanding of the degree of detachment achieved so far, which may act as a spur to further action which is not of achievement, but of letting-go of renunciation, of liberality, which is the degree of being free.

## Reflection on the Reward in Celestial Spheres

Reflection on the reward in celestial spheres (*devatānussati*) naturally leads the mind to thoughts of reward in celestial spheres following a life of virtue. It may be difficult to dissociate the mind in action from the result of reaction. And hence a glimpse of a life in which the struggle and conflict are not in evidence may sometimes support a failing thought.

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These three reflections are like a flash-back which lights up the road ahead and are thus rightly called remembrances or recollections (*anussati*), a faint reflection of mindfulness (*sati*) which is focussed on the present. It is with these six recollections that mindfulness is usually presented in the Suttas, but subsequent ‘reflections’ have added another four which are not recollections (*anussati*) in any sense, but which are pure mindfulness or awareness (*sati*) with ‘bare attention’ (*yoniso manasikāra*), a term used very aptly by Nyanaponika Thera in ‘The Heart of Buddhist Meditation’.

## Awareness of Death

Awareness of Death (*maraṇasati*) cannot be a form or method of recollection. One hears of cases of remembrance of previous lives with some kind of authenticity; but it is always a remembrance of life, never of death. Awareness of death is then not a type of

recollection. Awareness (*sati*) in the true and full sense must be an awareness of what is, without memory, without projection.

Then, if death is not to be remembered in the past and not be imagined in the future, it must be seen and understood in the present. Then death means dying, living with death. Then to understand death, one must understand life; one must see life as death, in order to see dying as living. And as we are not accustomed to live with death, we can only begin to live with living.

What is life? What is it to be born, to originate, to evolve? Birth is not a creation; it is not something originating from nothing. Physically, the body is born from an interaction between a male sperm attaching itself to a female ovum. That action was the response to a stimulus; it was the reaction to a challenge, the answer to a demand. The stimulus, the challenge, the demand, was itself a reaction to an intrinsic need to survive, which was the answer to the greed for existence, for continued existence, for revival, resurrection, rebirth, transmigration, and so on. The need is born out of greed; and greed becomes necessary in a struggle for existence, which must continue in order to exist at all.

It is then not only physical life which is born from pre-existing physical organisms, but the living organs as much as the psychological urge for living are occasioned, conditioned, produced by and evolved from conditions which were struggling for existence, which resisted the ending of existence in order to continue, which is the only way from existence to evolve, to be.

Continuance, then, the outcome of the greed to exist; and existence is resistance, a refusal to cease. In cessation there is no existence, and thus life resists death. Life separates itself from death, opposes death, refuses to see death and understand death as it really is.

Life which is seen in delusion as continued existence is, however, also experienced as subject to change, decay and death. But this change which is death is not seen as cessation in formation, but only

as change in evolution. And to secure its continuance in evolution there takes shape the concept of an underlying substance supporting the phenomena a soul or spiritual entity which can defy the change which is cessation, and which therefore can continue underneath all change. And so, one accepts both life and death as separate concepts, without seeing life in death, that is, change without duration.

Have we ever experienced death? We may have seen dead bodies, dying people, but that was not an experience of death. We may have the slowing down of breath and the stopping thereof almost imperceptibly; and then a sudden relaxing of all tension. That is all we know of death. Medical men know more, and so they can speak of clinical death, when a person has died according to their text book, or when he can still be revived artificially.

For most of us it means the end of a life, not only the end of the functions of the organism, the heart, the blood-circulation, the lungs; but much more than that. It is the end of a life in constant travail, in search of something which seems so near and yet is never attained; a life of strife and striving to become more and better, to continue its search, to survive in order to exist.

But we have not understood life; we do not know what living is; we only hope and fear, hope for the best and fear for worst. And between these two there is living, a reflection of one, and projection of the other. Is that living now? Or isn't that rather death, which ignores the present in abuse and exploitation, in self-love and hate for others, in ignorance preferred to understanding in clinging to memory and craving for an ideal? Is that living?

What is life; and what is death? The two are not separate as entities or as opposing states. Life is not existence, for even a rock exists; and so, death is not non-existence. Life is rather a process of dying. Life as living must be new every moment, just as a river must go on flowing. As soon as the river-flow stagnates there is no river any more, but there is a lake in the making. Similarly, life must be always a process of living which is new every moment

with a fresh meeting of a new challenge in an open mind. When that meeting is not there, or when the mind is not open, there is no living either. The physical process may continue, but even that process must proceed and renew itself all the time, renewing the body's tissues and blood cells. When that process of renewal of the tissues and the blood cells there must be a discarding of the old ones. Thus, renewal which is life can take place only when there is a discarding which is death.

And so, death is a refusal to be born, to be alive in as alertness from moment to moment. It is the incapacity to let go, by clinging to dead memories, traditions, dogmas, hopes and fears, the incapacity to let go of a 'self' which is but a concept, a projection from the past on the screen of the future, based on clinging to what is dead. And so, the same way as living is a process of dying, so death or dying is the only sane and healthy way of living, intelligent living, creative living, living with understanding and with love.

But for most, life is action; life is striving to become more and better, safe and secure in property and virtue, in means to continue and to progress. For without striving, life has no purpose; and without purpose one feels lost. Thus life has become ambition, desire, lust, self-projection. Without this self-concept there is no incentive, no progress, no goal. But that goal and the progressive means to that goal are mere ideals, which are projections of that same 'self' drawing empty circles of action and desire around that imaginary 'self', which has no existence but in its fleeting action.

There is no continuity in the fleeting experience of the moment, and so the mind has given it a label, whereby it can be recognised in memory. This storing-up process with its selection and rejection has been going on for many centuries. Our entire civilisation with its political and religious set-up is the product of that process in history; and the 'I' is the conditioned outcome thereof, living and continuing in memory. Thus, searching for the meaning of death, we are not even aware that we are already dead, psychologically. In

our craving for continuity, this has naturally created a conflict. And in that movement of opposition we feel to be alive.

But when thought tries to get hold of the thinker whom it has created, it finds it impossible to penetrate this mystery of life and death. This is the moment of truth, when thought cannot function, when thought is silent, when memory is closed, when there is no 'I' as observer. For, in that moment there is death to all the past, and there is possibility of a new and living experiencing of what is. It is thus that life comes out of death.

To realise the nature of this 'self' it is necessary to quieten the thought which makes the 'self'. What is the position when this concept is no more active? Without ambition, without desire, without craving for the future, without clinging to the past, without protection, without memory, there is no opposition, no conflict, no fear, no death. But there is the living in the present moment, which is always new, which is full of life and love and understanding, freedom from fear and freedom from death, life without lust.

Can we die today, now? We only think of death as something, which is still far away in the future. We accept the unavailability of death, because we have seen death coming to all, young and old, at the end of a life-span when the works have run down, or in the midst of the full force of living, through sudden illness or accident, or in violence. But our preparation for that certainly exists, perhaps, in the making of a will, in providing compensation through insurance, in making provisions in cash or in property, which are preparations for security, not for death.

How can we ever understand death, unless we invite death, instead of pushing it away in fear and ignorance? We rather think of immortality, of supernatural bliss, of eternal existence, even though all that is still and always will be mere thought. To find out what death is, it must be brought close, so that we can live with it, as a mother with her child. Others may think of her child as deformed, but the mother knows it as her child; and thus she cares for it, looks

after it, loves it as herself. Well, death is myself; death is my child, because I live in death, in isolation, in opposition, in sorrow, in conflict, all my own creations, the children of my dreams. But do I recognise them as my creations? Do I really look at them and know them for what they are? Only then can I know and understand what death is; only then can I be free from fear. For, then I can see and understand and love death every moment; for in death there is a falling away of all that thought has made. But that is not a loss; and I cannot be a loser, if I truly die today, now.

## Contemplation of the body

Contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*) is described variously in the texts and the commentaries. In the Sati-paṭṭhāna Sutta <sup>7</sup> the body is made the object of meditation through ‘bare attention’, i.e. by viewing the body, bare of the labels of emotions and concepts, which are the mental contents thereof. This contemplation is one of the four forms of awareness of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), of sensations (*vedanānupassanā*), of the state of the mind (*cittānupassanā*) and of the contents of thought (*dharmānupassanā*).

In the Visuddhimagga, by the great commentator Buddhaghosa, attention to the body (*kāyāgatāsati*) is brought about by analysis of the body in its 32 parts, a form of concentration rather than contemplation, leading the mind to tranquillity (*samatha-bhāvanā*). The analysis of the body in 32 parts is as follows: Hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin, muscles, sinews, bones, marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, membranes, spleen, lungs, intestines, intestinal tract, stomach, excrement, brain, bile, digestive juices, blood, grease, fat, tears, sweat, spittle, snot, fluid of the joints and urine. Each of these parts is then considered in itself as regards its location in the body, colour, shape, delimitation, function. Such analytical

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<sup>7</sup>Majjhima Nikāya 10 and Dīgha Nikāya 22



observation leads to a feeling of disgust and hence detachment. This detachment further leads to the overcoming of passions and hence to tranquillity, which is the object and purpose of this exercise in mental concentration (*samatha-bhāvanā*).

Here, therefore, we have a twofold approach, using the same instrument, the body (*kāya*), as an object of concentration and as an object of contemplation.

Concentration has in view the attainment of the states of absorption (*jhāna*) as a means to pacifying the mind in its passions and subduing the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) through developing the fivefold ecstasy (*jhāna*). Progress is measured by the degree of removal of those obstacles. The five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) are an urge of the senses (*kāmacchanda*), aversion (*vyāpada*), indolence (*thīna-middha*), agitation (*uddhacca*) and perplexity (*vicikicchā*). The five stages of mental absorption (*jhāna*) are discursive thought (*vitakka*), sustained application (*vicāra*), ecstatic joy (*pīti*), the ease of well-being (*sukha*) and one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*). How these five ecstasies cancel out the five hindrances is the method of meditation, which in concentration leads to tranquillity. Hence they are the subject of enquiry in respect of mental culture of peace (*samatha-bhāvanā*). The analysis and synchronisation thereof have been expanded in the present author's booklet, entitled 'Agony & Ecstasy' (1978). The analysis of the body in its 32 parts is only one aspect of the concentration on the body (*kāyāgatāsati*), and has as its direct aim the tranquillity of thought (*samatha*). The fact that this analysis of and concentration on the 32 parts of the physical body has found a place (original or interpolated, it is difficult to say after so many centuries) in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta of the Nikāyas should not distract us from the fact that the Sutta method is one of contemplation (*vipassanā*), 'the only way that leads to the attainment of purity, to the overcoming of grief, to the ending of conflict, to the entrance on to the right path, and the realisation of Nibbāna'. Whereas the method of concentration by means of analysis has as

its avowed aim ‘the pacification of the mind’ (*samatha*), a method expanded in full only in the commentaries, especially in the Visud-dhimagga, said to be compiled by Buddhaghosa more than 1000 years after the Buddha’s parinibbāna, the contemplation of insight (*vipassanā*) is exclusively Buddhist, based on the essential characteristics (*lakkhana*) of the Buddha’s teaching: change, conflict and non-entity (*anicca, dukkha, anatta*). The concentration exercises (*kammaṭṭhāna*) adopted by the commentators, are far from being exclusively Buddhist, as several of these exercise were practised already by the Bodhisatta, and were ultimately discarded by him, as they could only lead him to peace of mind, but not to emancipation and deliverance.

The contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*) is not a form of concentration with analysis, which is thought in purposeful action, but is the awareness (*sati*) as mentioned in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, namely the four applications of mindfulness of the body (*kāyānussati*), of sensations (*vedanānussati*), of the mind (*cittānussati*) and of phenomenal reactions (*dhammānussati*), as explained by the Buddha<sup>8</sup>, as the four foundations of mindfulness (*sati-upaṭṭhāna*). It is with these four applications in mind that we shall now first speak of awareness of the body (*kāyānupassanā*), with special attention to the process of breathing (*ānāpāna-sati*).

The awareness of the foundation of mindfulness is not an exercise in concentration, therefore, but the observing (=contemplation) of the nature and functioning of the body, its sense-actions, its mental concepts and the reactions thereto. Concentration through analysis is as a surgical operation on living organisms, in order to determine whether there is life behind all that, only to be left with a multitude of lifeless parts which, even when put back together, would leave the surgeon with the remnants of a corpse. Awareness, on the other hand, does not act like a surgeon, but is rather the work of a physician who observes the pulse beat, the colour of the skin, the lustre

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<sup>8</sup>A. i, 21, 27; D. 22; M. 10

of the eye, the flexibility of the muscles, who sees in them all the symptoms of malfunctioning.

Here one observes the postures, i.e., the ways of movement (*iriyāpatha*), going, standing, sitting, lying. One observes and is aware of how these movements are the expressions of one's mental attitude: aggressive in walking, or maybe escaping; defeated in lying down, or perhaps inviting; standing in perplexity or expectation; sitting in satisfaction or in fear; the quick change in unrest, the refusal to change in a desire for security, the neatness of movement in the desire to please and to acquire, the roughness of movement in anger and defeat, the lack of movement in doubt and fear, the slowness of movement in planned anticipation, the quick movement in eagerness to possess.

It is not the 'I' which goes and stands still. It is not the 'I' which changes with the movements. But it is the 'I' which IS the movement. I do not have a walk as an object of possession, but I AM walking; it is the 'I', the concept of a subject which now makes the object and calls it 'mine', whereas in truth they cannot be separated; when walking ceases there is no 'I' left behind. It is the action which changes and ceases, but there is no 'I' without these changes.

It is the 'I' that constitutes the resistance to change, as in change there can be no abiding entity. It is thus resistance which is the essence of existence, which is mere change and impermanence. Thus, I do not HAVE anger, but I AM anger; it is the anger which has made the 'self' in opposition, in conflict. I am hurt by aversive opinion of others, because the 'self'-opinionated concept of my 'self' has been blown to pieces as a deflated balloon, as a bubble bursting in a pool of rain water. 'I' am hurt, because the concept cannot find its prototype. 'The disciple understands that there is no living being, no real ego, that walks, stands, etc., but it is a mere figure of speech that we say: I go, I stand, etc. (Commentary).

That is contemplation, which is awareness in seeing things as they are. That is insight (*vipassanā*) which is not interested in

an object except as a symptom which reveals the real conflict of mental disease. Concentration on the 32 parts may at most produce the ecstatic first stage of mental absorption (*jhāna*) and thus find partial and temporary satisfaction in achieving and conceiving a mental disgust for worldly pleasures. But the essence of conflict is not laid bare until the mind in quiet contemplation is silent and does not move in search and expectation. As long as 'I' am the movement, 'I' am the source of motion and its goal; then there can be no solution of the conflict which is the separation and opposition of subject and object in actuality.

## Awareness of breathing

Why should this exercise on inhaling and exhaling have become so popular? There is, of course, frequent mention in the Suttas and commentaries of the way of mindfulness through attention to the process of breathing. Even before the Buddha gave his advice in this regard, there was among the Hindu sadhus and ascetics (and there still is) great emphasis laid on this exercise as a means to acquiring mental absorption. For them it was a real exercise, for breaths had not only to be observed, but regulated and controlled, till finally breathing was stopped, or at least became imperceptible. And as the mind cannot concentrate without an image or a concept, this controlled breathing became a means for mind-control. The stilling of the passions was acquired through the stilling of the breathing process; and when this breathing process was taken as the object of the thought process, thought would cease with the cessation of breathing. But the Bodhisatta soon found the flaw in this reasoning, when with the cessation of breathing there was a falling off of the supply to the brain of physical blood carrying oxygen. And when the mind faints because of the irregularity in physical functioning, there is no cessation of the passions, not even a cessation of the thought process, but only cessation of awareness, of intelligent

awareness. When consciousness ceases there is no solution of any problem. There is rather the addition of another problem: What can the mind do, when thought stops? Just as suicide is no cure for a head-ache (even though the physical ache ceases), so unconsciousness cannot provide an answer and a cure for the passions of love and hate, jealousy and spite, craving and clinging, retention and projection. The senses can be stilled and the responses dulled under the influence of drugs and liquor. By excluding the operating mind, man can still continue to exist and labour as a machine, only to become mentally and physically exhausted. Factories can save on production costs by employing sub-standard machinery. Likewise, by employing sub-standard forms of energy through drugs, work will continue, and mind will continue its thinking, but at what cost?

Thinking, then, is a mere reproductive act, based on memory and experiment. There is no creative activity, but only the reproductive activity of the conveyor-belt. In thinking the mind relies on memory, and with the ideas thus conceived it projects its ideal into the future. This thinking must cease. But if the mind applies its energy to the stilling of thought, that effort is still directed towards the achievement of an ideal: the quiet mind, which again is an object for a striving mind. Thought must stop but it cannot be made to stop.

The first step is not directed towards a slowing down even, but to just understanding the process which has become a problem. Any vision of the process involves an image which is a further thought, a concept, a memory or an ideal. It is at this point that inhaling and exhaling of breath provides the answer, for breath itself is colourless, shapeless, weightless, without taste or smell; it cannot be seen or stored; it can only be felt in passing, when the breath passes along the entrance of the nose, being an inhalation or an exhalation. It is not the breath which is felt, but the contact of the flow of air with the nostrils. Without controlling, without guiding, without accelerating, without stopping, it can be watched in a pass-

ing contact. There is nothing to get hold of, to appreciate or to reject; there is just the experiencing of contact. There is no room for imagination, for idealisation, for retention, for identification, for it is essentially the movement of air which can only be experienced in contact. Thus, there is no desire and no disgust. It can be experienced in total relaxation, observed only through the sense of contact, leaving no room for served only through the sense of contact, leaving no room for the conception of ideas and ideals. Just breathing! With a bare minimum of attention there is awareness: this is an incoming breath, this is an outgoing breath. There is not even a following of the breath through the windpipe into the lungs, no observation of the lungs compressing to return the breath after extracting the oxygen. Here is just the contact of a breath with the nostrils, and nothing more, nothing beyond. Here is no work for the image-making mind and hence there is no food for thought. Even likes and dislikes cannot find a footing, because there is just a breath, and another breath, and another. One, two, three, four, five ... just counting in the beginning with small numbers, not more than ten (which would complicate), not less than five (which would require too frequent starts in counting). Counting is not essential, but initially it keeps the mind without distraction on the breaths only, with 'bare attention'. One, two, three, four, five...

Now what happens?

There is no retention of breath, as it is done in Yogic system of 'prāṇayāma'. Without strain or effort a short breath is noticed as short, a long breath as long. And in this pure and simple observation, all agitation in breathing, which is a symptom of mental commotion and disturbance, will gently subside into a natural and rhythmic process, the physical sign of mental health. This is not objective purpose of the form of concentration, but it will naturally produce a state of tranquillity (*samādhi*) with the accompanying feeling of well-being. Just as we do not know or appreciate physical health, till we lose it in sickness, so this mental health is not some-

thing to be talked about as an achievement. It is the natural state of mental health, the absence of which is felt in flurry, worry, agitation, hope and fear. The advantage of this method, which is not a form of procedure but rather an orderliness of regular habits, lies in its always ready availability. In the midst of social company with its hollow activity and empty conversation, it is possible to tranquillise the mind by just a few seconds of this 'bare attention' on the invisible breathing, leaving one refreshed and detached without intentional withdraw and isolation. It is not an exercise of isolation or retirement, but of practical observation and non-involvement. Breathing, inhaling and exhaling, is a function of the body which takes place with or without interference of thought, and thereby it provides a wonderful opportunity of watching its function and any change thereof, due to control or lack of control, due to interference of thought. The mere observation of the rhythmic rise and fall, entrance and exit, of simple breathing provides an awareness, which an intentional search could never induce.

Yet, all this is still concentration, though the object is so evanescent. This vagueness, however, opens the mind in awareness, when concentration becomes contemplation. Then the process of thought will silence with the abandoning of the counts of breath. Now breathing as such is no longer a method or a means. And in the absence of change there is the equilibrium which only a tranquil mind can experience. Now the conflict arising from resistance to a disturbance has no ground, and in the experiencing of non-individuality the three characteristics (*anicca-dukkha-anatta*) are realised in direct awareness, which is the perfect mindfulness (*sammāsati*) of the noble eightfold path.

## Contemplation on peace

Contemplation on peace (*upasamānussati*) is that which leads to the fading away of all defilements (*āsava* *akkhaya*: A.I.30). Peace is

something we all want, and what the world just now needs more than anything else. Man has fought global wars to achieve peace. With an atom bomb which killed and maimed millions, a war was ended, but peace was not established. Progress towards peace was sought through further invention of nuclear weapons, the hydrogen bomb, a thousand times more deadly, the neutron ray which can kill human lives, while preserving their property undamaged! Can peace be made in a laboratory, through science, by control, by treaty, by thought? Do we know what peace is? Peace is something like health, which we all want when we do not have it. That is, we only know disease and disharmony and conflict. And as these disturbances can only provide insecurity we seek their opposites: ease, harmony and love. But not knowing what they are, as we are always in conflict, our striving for peace is a mere attempt at approaching an ideal, a concept, an image of the mind which tries to escape from the horror of conflict, without knowing what conflict is, without knowing what peace is. It is the same mind which produced war, which now seeks peace, a mind which runs away from the past and wants to build a future with the same material, mind which, in seeking peace, is only seeking the security of continuation and the safety of 'self'.

In this seeking of an ideal there is only the projection of a mind in conflict; for, if there were no conflict, there would not be this search for peace. It is the search itself which cannot understand the present, because, in searching, the mind gathers the experience of the past and idealises the future. If peace is the end of conflict, then there must be an ending of striving which is competition, opposition, exploitation. Then there will be a new relationship based on mutual understanding of need without greed, which is love and peace.

Thus, to know peace, we must first understand conflict. And that understanding cannot come through an attempt at escaping from conflict. Understanding of conflict can only come through awareness of conflict. To understand conflict one must experience conflict, live with it, see that life is conflict, and that my search for



an escape is only more conflict. It is the search for an escape which separates, which divides, which opposes and therefore IS conflict.

Then, if peace is the absence of conflict, there must be an end to searching.

Now, awareness is exactly that. To be aware is to see what is, and not to search for what may be. Awareness sees that all striving for attainment (and that includes the attainment of peace) is a striving which is conflict between what actuality is and the ideal which is not. Thus awareness sees conflict as non-real, and striving as idealistic, which also is non-real.

Peace is then a condition of existence, unknown to a searching mind. It is a condition of existence, which is only known as a term, an ideal, a thought, as the absence of chaos, of conflict. This absence is not known in itself, but there is the experience of chaos, of confusion, of conflict, which is not conducive to the sense of security and safety required for undisturbed continuance and expansion. Without continuance there is no existence thinkable; and expansion is the first defence for continuance.

What is known then is not peace, not even the absence of peace, but an expanding activity of self-assertion, which is necessary for continued existence. The continued existence, if self is not known of course because it is still an unborn ideal, hoped for in some future. This hope for the future carries with it its own doubts and fears of discontinuance, and is made up from reflected images and memories, which thought has rescued in the past, and without which there would not even be an ideal to look forward to.

All this together is the conditioning from which the mind tries to free itself in its search for peace. But, peace itself being but an ideal, that is, a thought produced by the mind, and that in turmoil, can never be achieved by the striving of the mind to become peaceful. Mind can exclude some troublesome thoughts by concentrating on some more delectable objects. That is the work of escapism through drugs, or prayers, or external and social activity, etc. But such

activity is not peace, because in escape there is still the opposition, chaos, confusion and conflict. Now, if we do not know what peace is, we can at least consider with an unprejudiced mind what the nature of this sense of security, which seems to be the very foundation of all fear and conflict, is.

There is no security without permanence; there is no permanence in becoming; and so, striving to become can only lead to conflict, just as possession leads to fear. But possessing and becoming are the activity of thought searching for an ideal projection, only to find an increasingly greater confusion. It is the ideal trying to become the real, the 'self' trying to absorb the 'non-self', a war to make peace!

When thinking as memory and as ideal has ceased, things can be seen with 'bare attention' as they are, without conditioning, without idealising, without projecting, without attachments, hopes or fears. And in the absence of such 'self' there is no more conflict. When thought ceases to cling to memory and to grasp for continuance, then there are no more ideals. Then there is an intelligent awareness without conflict, without opposition, without an observer. And that is peace, which the 'self' can never know.

# Applications of Awareness

## Awareness of the body

Four applications of mindfulness are named as awareness of the body (*kāyānupassanā*) together with awareness of the bodily postures (*iriyāpatha*), the 32 parts of the body and awareness of the process of breathing (*ānāpāna-sati*) which we have discussed so far. There now remain the other three applications of mindfulness as awareness of the body's sensations (*vedanānupassanā*), of the functions of the mind (*cittānupassanā*) and of the mind's objects (*dhammānupassanā*). Together they constitute the four foundations of awareness (*sati-upatthāna*) according to the Suttas<sup>9</sup>.

## Awareness of Sensations

Awareness of the body's sensations (*vedanānupassanā*) requires an understanding of the nature of sensation, which is very often mistranslated as 'feeling'. Feeling is a sensation, no doubt, but there is much more to sensation than mere feeling. Feeling is basically the physical sensation of touch; and touch (*phassa*) is only one of the five sensations of the body. The five physical sensations of the body are the seeing of sight, the hearing of sound, the smelling of odour, the tasting of flavour and the touching of contact, all of which are

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<sup>9</sup>A. i, 21, 27; D. 22; M. 10

covered by the term ‘physical sensation’ (*kāya-vedanā*). Apart from physical sensation there is still its mental counterpart, when the mind as the sixth sense experiences the mental sensation of thought in its many forms of perception, ideation, consciousness, which will be dealt with hereafter. Thus we shall adhere to the term ‘sensation’, being the function of all the senses, whereas ‘feeling’ is taken as the experience of touch only. Even contact is of as many kinds as there are senses and sensations. In fact, there must be contact (*phassa*) before a sensation (*vedanā*) can become a perception (*saññā*), an idea (*sañkhāra*) and a conscious thought (*viññāṇa*). About these latter ones, again later, for here we are dealing with awareness of sensation (*vedanānupassanā*).

A sensation (*vedanā*) then arises in the senses, when there is a contact of the outer world with the inner senses. Such contact (*phassa*) is of the nature of the sense-organ; and thus physical contact need not be only that of touch. Sight, for instance, is not a physical of a distant mountain with the eye-ball; but a reflection is formed on the retina at the back of the eye-ball. It is then the light penetrating the lens of the eye, and projecting a picture of the object. This picture is received as in a photographic camera, inverted while the light rays pass through the lens. This picture is now received by the organ and passed on by the optical nerve to that particular section of the brain, where it is perceived as a visible object. Then the brain takes over and proceeds to construct an image (now upside up) as a concept thereof.

Reception, perception and conception are then the stages through which the sensation passes to become a thought, recognition, memory, with all the nuances of attraction, repulsion, storing, rejecting, appropriation, opposition, which from the structure and function of the ‘I’-concept. Now, the awareness of this process of reception in the senses becoming a sensation can take place only in ‘bare attention’, seeing sensation ‘only as sensation’. What does that mean?

Here is a sensation which is conditioned and influenced by, and originating from contact which is partially physical in its action and mental in its reaction. There is nothing right and there is nothing wrong in such reaction, as long as it is only seen as a reaction. A bell swings and a sound is heard. The same bell may be announcing a wedding or a funeral. Bare attention will not go beyond the sound and its immediate cause. These are wedding-bells, this is a death-knell; one is matrimonial announcement, the other is an obituary notice. And what do they signify? The beginning of a new life and the ending of a life-span.

Is that anything new or special? Life is beginning always, life is ever-new, life is always ending, there is no life which is static. Thus it is not the sound of the bell I now bear, but I listen to the announcement of either life or death. And that is not 'bare attention'; that is not seeing sensation as sensation, hearing sound as sound; that is interpretation. Now I can proceed once I recognize interpretation as such, but that is not awareness of sensation. It is awareness of a reaction, which will be dealt with further on, when speaking of awareness of the mind's reaction to contact and sense-activity (*dhammānupassanā*). In bare attention to sense-reaction to contact, there is no further thought of: for whom the bell tolls; for that involves the mind in deeper relationship, affinity, opposition, love and hate. In awareness of sensation there is no involvement, and hence no self-connection. Here is sound or sight, or smell, or taste, or touch, but it is not 'my' sound. The thought of 'self' does not arise even if there is the qualification of pleasant or disagreeable, for that too does not belong to 'me'.

Thus, imperceptibly we have passed on from reception (*vedanā*) to perception (*saññā*) when awareness of sensation (*vedanānupassanā*) develops into awareness of thought about sensation, which is perception.

## Awareness of Perceptions

Perception is the reaction to the contact of sensation; and it is awareness of this thought (*cittānupassanā*) which now forms the next step in awareness.

Just as sensation (*vedanā*) is the reaction to contact (*phassa*), so perception (*saññā*) is the reaction to sensation (*phassa-paccayā vedanā, vedanā-paccayā taṇhā*). Perception is a thought (*citta*) in formation, a thought being conditioned, composed, when ideas are formed, when there is a directive of a 'self' in formation. Not all sensation must lead to craving, for sensation is not a cause, but only a condition (*paccaya*) to the arising of such thought, which is a reaction.

Now it is awareness to the arising of such thought in formation, when it is still perception, which can prevent perception (*saññā*) becoming a mental formation (*saṅkhāra*) with greed and hate and delusion, with action and reaction, with will and purpose. It is awareness of the nature of thought which perceives the formative process, and sees perception as perception, and thereby ends the process. 'The object of observation is here the condition and the level of mind or consciousness, in general, as it presents itself at the given moment'<sup>10</sup>.

Thus, this contemplation of the process of minding is a most effective way of 'self'-examination, for in it is exposed not the nature of 'self', but its absence in reality. The 'self' is there only in thought formation, as a reaction to an immediate state of awareness. Thus are bared all selfish motives hidden in the unconscious. It is clear that in this contemplation there must be a perfect degree of openness, a readiness to discover, a vulnerability to disclose, to expose and thus reveal the actual process of self-projection. That such revelation may reveal the actual process of self-projection. That such revelation may reveal the total absence of any permanent entity

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<sup>10</sup>Nyanaponika Thera: *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation*, 1962, p. 71

as a soul to carry and to carry-over the desire for continuance of sensation (*vedanā*) into craving (*taṇhā*) is not a deprivation of the joys of living, but rather opens up a pure delight without motive of self-projection and continuance.

The Buddha has been accused of teaching a doctrine of annihilation, to which he replied that his teaching was only leading to the annihilation of conflict (*dukkha-nirodha*). It is in the understanding of this conflict as being caused by misconception of an individuality-view (*sakkāya-ditṭhi*) which can dissolve both conflict and misunderstanding. Thereby it opens up a contemplation of deliverance which alone can give pure delight without motive, in seeing the working of the mind, the reaction of delusion, and the freedom from desire, which is 'self'-projection, the perception that conflict too is impermanent and void (*dukkha-anatta-saññā*).

## Contemplation of Mind-objects

Contemplation of mind-objects (*dhammānupassanā*) is the last of the four applications or foundations of mindfulness. The term 'dhammā' has several connotations: the natural constitution of all things, the norm, the doctrine, the law, righteousness, right quality, phenomena. Here is indicated the mind-object. And so, anything which presents itself to the mind is a mind-object (*dhamma*). This at once presents an interesting observation, namely, that this contemplation is not a concentration on an external object, such as various devices (*kaṣiṇa*) to bring the mind to one-pointedness, but a contemplation of the mental reactions which constitute the activities of the mind. Thus, any of the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) and the awareness of its presence, its arising, its causation, its prevention, is a mind-object of contemplation. Likewise, the nature, functioning, grouping, arising and dissolution of any of the five aggregates of existence (*pañcakkhandha*), whether of body (*rūpa*) or of mind (*nāma*); the twelve bases (*āyatana*) of mental activity through the

six senses, namely the six organs and their six objects; the ten fetters (*saṃyojana*) which prevent progress on the path to deliverance, their origination, functioning and prevention thereof; the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*), their arising, presence and development; the four noble truths (*ariya sacca*) of conflict (*dukkha*), its origin (*samudaya*), its cessation (*nirodha*) and the path to cessation (*magga*)—each and all are mind-objects, separately and comprehensively dealt with by the present author in several monographs as follows: The five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), which prevent the absorption of the mind, and the overcoming thereof are fully dealt with in ‘Agony and Ecstasy’ (1978).

### The five Hindrances

The five hindrances are those mental qualities which obstruct mental vision of insight, namely, sensuous desire (*kāmacchanda*), ill-will (*vyāpāda*), sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*), agitation and worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*) and sceptical doubt (*vicikicchā*). These hindrances are disturbing the placid waters of reflection which make clear perception impossible. The five stages of mental absorption (*jhāna*) calm the mind and make pure awareness possible. These stages are concentration of thought through logical application (*vitakka*), sustained discursive thinking (*vicāra*), spiritual rapture (*pīti*) and delight of well-being (*sukha*) leading to one-pointedness of thought (*citt’ekaggatā*). This method of concentration (*samādhi*) is the spiritual detachment which can overcome the obstruction of the hindrances.

### The five Aggregates

The five aggregates of clinging (*pañc’ūpādānakkhandha*) are the aggregates of physical and mental existence, which form the basis of all clinging (*upādāna*). They are the physical body (*rūpa*) and the mental ‘body’ consisting of sensations (*vedanā*), perceptions



(*saññā*) ideations or mental formations (*sañkhāra*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). They are fully dealt with in detail in the present author's book 'Of Matter and Mind' (1983) which provides a comprehensive study of the 28 phenomena of matter and the 52 mental phenomena (*cetasikā*) which constitute an individual's set-up. It is in the understanding of the functioning of body and mind, that understanding can be achieved of individuality, analysed in physical and mental phenomena, leaving no place for an entity as substance or as soul to arise, to subsist, to support these phenomena which, neither singly nor collectively, constitute any real ego-entity or personality. This awareness of the individual process in body and mind leads to awareness of any illusion or delusion in this regard. When an illusion is seen as an illusion, the mind cannot be further deluded.

Awareness, not in physical or psychological analysis, but in contemplative attention, can only see the impersonality (*anatta*) and the void (*suññatā*) of the process with its conditioned arising and passing, and thus experience the freedom from all self-delusion. Thus the 'self' is seen as bubble in the river, floating on the surface for a moment, then bursting and disappearing, while the flow of the river continues (Samy. xxii, 95). The nature of the bubble cannot be known through analysis, but can be understood in direct awareness.

## The twelve Bases

The twelve bases (*āyatana*) of mental activity through the six senses and their organs comprise the five physical sense-organs: the eye, ear, nose, tongue and the entire body with their five visible, audible, olfactory, gustatory and tactile objects; together with consciousness or mind-base (*māno*) and its mental objects (*dhamma*). Under visible objects are counted the phenomena of colour and light, audible objects are considered as sounds, olfactory objects have smells at their phenomena, gustatory objects produce various tastes, and tactile objects produce various tastes, and tactile objects are discerned

through touch, which include contact of three-dimensional physical things.

All this can be found in full detail in the present author's book 'Of Matter and Mind' (1983).

The mental objectives of the mind-base (*manāyatana*), which are called the mind-objects (*dhammāyatana*), are a collective term for all consciousness, i.e., for the functions of the process of cognition (*viññāṇa-kicca*). These functions include the movement of thought from the moment of rebirth, which is called the re-linking consciousness (*paṭisandhi-viññāṇa*), as it links up and is conditioned by the last thought of the immediately preceding existence.

Then follow the flow of the unconscious (*bhavaṅga-sota*), its being disturbed (*cālana*) by contact in other senses, till the impression is strong enough to call up an advertence (*āvajjana*) of contact without further discrimination. When discrimination sets in, there is reception (*sampañicchana*), investigation (*santīraṇa*), determining (*vothāpana*), seven moments of impulse (*javana*), completed by registration (*tad-ārammaṇa*), after which the thought-process is immersed (*cūti*) in the stream of the unconscious.

This mind-conscious process (*mano-viññāṇa*) can take place without the participation of the five physical senses, in which case the object presenting itself at the mind-door and calling for advertence (*manodvārāvajjana*), is a thought or idea or concept of a previous experience which is memory.

Awareness, which is without interference with this process, merely watches the evolution, of a thought as a phenomenon of reaction to conditioning factors. The application of awareness, or contemplation of the functioning of this thought-process, views the mental contents as its object and is free from it, free from the conventional terminology, necessary to put ideas into words, free from belief in an abiding personality which supports and maintains this process, free from analysis and synthesis which treat the object as

an entity, free from the opposition of a ‘self’-subject against the sense-object, and free from conflict caused by such opposition.

But theoretical knowledge of these conditions is hardly a beginning of the process of emancipation. Even the wish for understanding and deliverance is a binding factor, which too must become an object of awareness to be freed from it.

## The ten Fetters

The ten fetters (*saṁyojana*) which prevent progress on the path are therefore also mentioned as mental objects for awareness (*dhammānupassanā*). The study of these ten fetters in full can be found in the present author’s monograph ‘Fetters’ (1946) under his religious name, Bhikkhu Dhammapāla.

The ten fetters are grouped according to the four stages of sainthood, and the release from those fetters accords with the gradual realisation of arahantship.

The first group according to the four stages of sainthood, and the release from those fetters, the overcoming of which marks the entrance on to the path of holiness (*sotāpanna*), consists of three fetters: misconception of individuality (*sakkāya-dit̥ṭhi*), sceptical doubt (*vicikicchā*) and attachment to rules and rites (*sīlabbata-paramāsa*).

There are twenty kinds of misconception of individuality (*sakkāya-dit̥ṭhi*). They are the beliefs that there is a permanent entity which is identical with any of the five groups (*pañcakkhandha*) of the body-mind combine, namely the physical body (*rūpa*), sensations (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), ideations (*saṅkhāra*) or consciousness (*viññāṇa*); or the five kinds of belief that the individual as an entity is contained in any of those five groups of matter and mind; or the five kinds of belief that the individual as an entity is independent of those five groups; or the five kinds of belief that the individual entity is the owner on those five groups. How does consciousness become ‘self’ delusion (*sakkāya-dit̥ṭhi*)? For, it is not

enough to see that there are twenty kinds of ‘self’-delusion, if one does not know how and why this ‘self’-consciousness has arisen in the first place. Consciousness is a reaction to the action of experience. Experience can be recognised in any of the five senses and in any of the aggregates of existence, in matter and mind. It is recognition, which is the reaction to pure cognition in a purposeful attention. This recognition is the way cognition is stored in memory. It is this storing of experience which in selection and registration can classify the objects of contact in the senses, which preserves the thought of experience which in selection and registration can classify the objects of contact in the senses, which preserves the thought of experience as a record to be played back at will. It is this stored experience which forms the ‘I’-concept, the store-keeper, the experiencer, as separate from the experience. And so, the misconception of a ‘self’-entity arises and endures, thus providing the security of continuation, which is so essential to possession and ‘self’-expression, which makes the subject, live in the object, and which thereby becomes the owner of the object.

Sceptical doubt (*vicikicchā*) is the second fetter (*samyojana*). It is the lack of desire to think things out, and therefore distinct from doubt which searches for a solution to conflict according to the Buddha’s teaching (*dhamma-vicaya*) and which hence is a factor of insight (*sambojjhaṅga*) which is investigation.

Perplexity arises from not facing the problem wholly; it is a lack of awareness which is reflection (*vicikicchati*) and contemplation. The problem is that the ‘self’ is in conflict through the fission of an object of experience being separated from and opposed to the subject of an experiencer. Thus, perplexity is based on ‘self’-delusion, and with the cessation of that delusion, all perplexity will also cease, naturally. In perplexity there is a tendency to escaping from the cause. But ‘self’ cannot escape, for escaping is still the reaction of that same ‘self’ in search of ‘non-self’.

Attachment to rules and rites (*sīlabbata-paramāsa*) is the third of the ten fetters. It is the holding on to the view that purification of the mind and emancipation can be obtained through mere rules and rituals. The delusion that good suffices not only makes of virtue an instrument towards self-improvement, but it is moral corruption which affects the very roots of true living. Without breaking this fetter, not even a beginning can be made to enter that stream of life's perfection (*sotāpatti*) which flows out into the ocean of deliverance.

In the overcoming of these three initial fetters the road to progress is opened and the entrant on this path (*sotāpanna*) is now assured of reaching deliverance, although there are still many obstacles on the way in the form of hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) and fetters (*samyojana*), impurities of mind and defilements (*kilesa*). Still, due to the elimination of these three initial fetters, there is an unshakable confidence in the described as one with only seven more rebirths at the utmost, (*sattakhattu-paramā*), at the end of which he will put an end to all conflict.

The second group of fetters is linked with the second stage of sainthood. They are two fetters: sensuous craving (*kāma-rāga*) and ill-will (*vyāpāda*), carnal love and hate. Together with the earlier three they constitute the lower (*orambhāgiya*) fetters, as they bind the disciple to the world of sense. Even when these latter two are not completely severed in their grosser form, there will be but one return to the worlds of sense, whence this stage of attainment is called that of the 'once-returner' (*sakadāgāmin*). The roots of evil are not completely overcome at this stage and a return will be indicated, unless in this life itself the next stage is attained.

Although love and hate are always presented as opposites, they are not really so, for there is always selection based on 'self' and emotion in both; and as the basic emotion is always 'self'-satisfaction, 'self'-seeking, either through attraction or in rejection, there is always a strengthening of the 'I'-concept which is a delusion. It is in the overcoming of these two binding fetters that the third stage of

the path is reached, when there is no more return to the world of sense, in a sublimation of desire. Then the noble disciple is called a non-returner (*anāgāmin*). The final group of five fetters are linked with the fourth and final stage on the path of sainthood, the attainment of arahantship. The five fetters involved are: craving for material existence in the spheres of pure form (*rūpa-rāga*), craving for immaterial existence in the formless world (*arūpa-rāga*), conceit (*māna*), agitation (*uddhacca*) and ignorance (*avijja*). They are called collectively the higher fetters (*uddhambhāgiya*) as they still bind to the higher forms of existence. Even when all craving, the pleasures of the senses (*kāmacchanda*), has been overcome, striving does not cease thereby, but is sublimated and transposed to a higher sphere, where the gross carnal joys have been replaced by the more refined sense of delight in form and beauty. Attachment to the world of form (*rūpa-rāga*) will be experienced even in mental absorption during concentration (*samādhi*), the state of ‘rūpa-jhāna’, when the fivefold sense-activity is fully suspended, but the mind finds delight in mental abstractions of beauty.

Attachment to the world of the formless (*arūpa-rāga*) is to be found in still deeper abstractions of geometrical and philosophical truths. Then, unbounded space is attempted as the goal for a bounded mind. When thought is concentrated on such infinitudes, the result may be a state of formless concentration and absorption (*arūpa-jhāna*), but none the less a delusion, for how can a finite mind ever encompass the infinite? The delusion will prevail in greater craving for an infinite consciousness (*viññāṇa*) and even for attainment of the sphere of nothingness (*akiñcana*). When ‘nothing’ is taken as the goal of thought, there will be a suspension of thought, and in that absorption there will be perception so subtle that it will be practically imperceptible (*n’eva-saññā-n’āsaññā*), when the mind becomes incapable of effective functioning with reason and logic. Disappointed by forms, there is attraction for the mind to the formless, but that too is an escape from unskilful desires. Even truth

is thus made an object for striving, as an aspiration for Nibbāna. Only a deluded mind can think: 'May I attain'. It is the search for the ideal of a 'self' free from limitations, in a mental creation of a sphere of infinite bliss. Whatever name is given to that bliss, it is still a form of thought in the formless, and hence a delusion, producing conflict.

Conceit (*māna*), the pride of 'self' (*asmi-māna*), has survived till now, even though the delusion of individuality (*sakkāya-ditthi*) was overcome when entering the path of holiness (*sotāpatti*). It is found in a superiority-complex (*atimāna*) with the pride of attainment reached thus far; and its opposite, the inferiority-complex (*omāna*). Only through full penetration of the basis of all pride, which is the delusion of 'self', can there be an ending to all opposition and conflict, of all agitation and delusion.

Conceit is an idealisation of the subject, which sees its primitive instincts and fundamental needs not as defects but in need of sublimation in higher perfection. This is an escape, a way out, by which the claims of nature can be conceded without having to be repressed on account of their imperfection. It is seeing the 'self' in an ideal light, and measuring everything by the standard of that ideal.

The sublimation and idealisation of 'self', without projecting it in some form of existence, establishes the concept of a soul in a super-relationship to others, and holds on so tenaciously, that only the perfectly holy ones are completely free from this fetter. Agitation (*uddhacca*) is a sign of fickleness, lack of mental balance between elation and depression. It is therefore more emotional than intellectual, an eagerness to succeed, and attempt to lead one's life according to one's planning. This brings to the foreground an intentional purposefulness which is the main-spring of 'self' activity. In the following-up of a concept of a goal, there is a search for satisfaction of greed, rather than the response to a need; and that is a 'self'-assertion which becomes a driving force to which many people submit in fear of being left behind. And so, agitation stands in

direct opposition to awareness in which the mind is at rest. It is living in the future, rather than living in the present.

Ignorance (*avijja*) is not a lack of knowledge, but of understanding, which is due to a conditioned way of thinking. It is not the absence of knowledge, but the presence of delusion. How can a deluded mind find the truth? The transition from ignorance to understanding, which is comprehensive insight, is as the opening of a curtain, which allows one to see from within his darkness. Thus the overcoming of delusion is a revelation, an emancipation, an enlightenment. Here is no logical deduction, no mathematical equation, no acquisition of information, but here is a direct seeing that which is, even if that is a delusion. For when a delusion is seen as such, it ceases to be a delusion. To see the false as false, that is truth. How to see and learn to see the truth, is a foolish question, which is the outcome from a desire to acquire knowledge. And that shows the foolishness of a search in the darkness of ignorance. Understanding through insight (*vipassanā*) arises from direct perception and ‘bare attention’, which we have called here ‘awareness’ (*sati*). It is in awareness of whatever is or happens, that the light of insight can dispel the ignorance of delusion, and therewith open the mind to see and understand things as they are (*yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa-dassana*) without attachment and prejudice, without repulsion of traditional objection.

## The seven Facets of Insight

The next group spoken of in the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta as objects of the mind (*dhamma*) with reference to awareness of mental reactions (*dhammānupassanā*) is the group of seven factors of wisdom (*satta sambojjhaṅga*) or the ‘seven facets of insight’ (see the present author’s monograph of this title (1979)).

Concerning the mind-objects or awareness of mental reactions (*dhammānupassanā*), the disciple who practices this way of awareness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*) is aware not only of the harmful states of



mind, such as the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) and the ten fetters (*saṃyojana*), but also of those factors which in seven aspects lead to enlightenment (*sambojjhaṅga*). They are enumerated as follows: mindfulness (*sati*), investigation of phenomena (*dharmavicaya*), energy (*virīya*), rapturous joy (*pīti*), tranquillity (*passaddhi*), concentration (*samādhi*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*). As facets of insight-meditation (*vipassanā*) they lead to and are hence called the seven factors of enlightenment<sup>11</sup>. They are also named as means for attaining threefold wisdom<sup>12</sup>, namely remembrance of former existences, clairvoyance, and the extinction of all cankers (*āsava*), which is the attainment of arahantship.

Dealing briefly here with these seven facets as mind objects of contemplation through awareness, we meet immediately with an apparently strange situation, namely, that mindfulness as a factor of enlightenment (*sati-sambojjhaṅga*) is a mind-object (*dharmā*) in this way of awareness (*Satipaṭṭhāna*). Putting it tersely: mindfulness is an object of awareness. Awareness is being aware of the presence of this factor of mindfulness. They are not two kinds of awareness or mindfulness, but here is shown insight (*anupassanā*) into the arising, functioning, passing away of this state of mind. Just as the mind can be aware of the presence of a particular thought, not through analysis which is just another thought but through insight, so 'bare attention' can be aware of the mental state of mindfulness. It is the body that death or illness of the body is experienced. So it is bare attention which is aware of the presence of mindfulness. Then, the body (*rūpa*), the sensation (*vedanā*), the perception (*saññā*), the mental reaction of formation (*saṅkhāra*) is reflected in the attentiveness of the mind (*viññāṇa*). Such attentiveness is not a mere point of view, but the actual experiencing of awareness. It is the realisation of the manner in which a hindrance, a fetter, a factor of enlightenment has arisen. It is, therefore, a contemplation of a state

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<sup>11</sup> *satta sambojjhaṅga*: Samy. xlv, 5

<sup>12</sup> *tevijja*: A. x, 102

of mind, a bare attention to mental qualities, whether they are to be abandoned as hindrances and fetters, or to be cultivated as factors of insight and stages on the holy path. It is thus awareness of the contents of a mental state.

The list of seven facets of insight is then headed by awareness (*sati*) as the most indispensable factor and foundation, without which none of the others could develop. It is entirely an alertness of the present moment without any foothold in the past or grasping towards the future. There is no condemnation because there is no comparison which involves memory. There is no striving for perfection, because there is no goal of achievement. Awareness leads to insight, and is insight, because it is awareness of the true nature of an action. Without assertion, without denial, without acceptance which are all expressions of the reflecting 'self', it is awareness and perception of the reactions of that imaginary 'self' to an environment of chosen activity. Thus, there is awareness of delusion and ignorance, and in that awareness there is freedom from thought-projection. In that insight there is no problem and hence no conflict.

Investigation (*dhamma-vicaya*) is the second factor of enlightenment. Although this factor is very often and almost always interpreted as investigation of the teaching, it is here really an investigation into the nature of mental phenomena<sup>13</sup>, which is the meaning of the term 'dhamma' as we are considering now in 'awareness of mental phenomena' (*dhammānupassanā*). Thus, it is not an analysis of the Buddha's doctrine, but rather an opening of the mind's eye to see the nature of its contents.

Investigation, therefore, is indeed an important part or aspect of awareness, of seeing rather than a research. Where research is a planned action to discover a hidden secret, it is obviously motivated by the 'actor' of an action. But when the mind is open without prejudice, without expectation, without method for achieving, without striving for a goal, then there is the occasion for a revelation to oc-

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<sup>13</sup>See Nyanatiloka Thera's Buddhist Dictionary, 1980, under Bojjhaṅga

cur, a revelation not through divine grace, but through removal of the obstacles, fetters, hindrances to direct seeing which is insight.

Then investigation is a natural discovery of what was there all the time, discovery of the delusion which prevented one to see falsehood. To see the deluded 'self' as 'no-self' (*anatta*) is the greatest discovery possible in the field of mind and mental action. To see that there is no self-entity, no identify of an ego apart from action, from thinking, from investigating, that is freedom of insight, freedom of direct understanding, which is enlightenment.

Energy (*virīya*) is always mental<sup>14</sup> and therefore does not arise through any of the five bodily senses. It is the capacity of acting, which is often denied in the process of reaction which is thought and memory conditioned by desire and impulse, an impelling condition which urges on to a predestined goal.

As a factor of enlightenment (*virīya-sambojjhaṅga*) it is not the power to overcome obstacles, but rather the strength of culture, of evolution, which only requires the proper environment in order to blossom and bring forth its fruit which is enlightenment. If there is any effort, it can only be directed to the removal of darkness. But darkness is not something to be set aside. There is no darkness, but there may be the absence of light. Similarly, there is no ignorance, but only the absence of understanding. When, therefore, there arises insight (*bodhi*), there, is also the aspect (*aṅga*) of energy (*virīya*) which comes from within, as mere seeing, perceiving and being aware without the effort of building up. The energy of insight is not the will to acquire, but the courage to destroy the false, to face the fear of destruction, the readiness to let go all that is meaningless, the non-attachment to what is now seen as a dream, as an illusion, as will to become what is not.

The energy to be what one is, to see the phenomena at work in arising and in ceasing, that is the energy which sets the mind free from thought. The next factor or facet of insight is the exuberant joy

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<sup>14</sup>Atthasālinī i. iv. 2

which is a mental exultation (*pīti*), but which can never be an object of thought. The memory of joy may provide a pleasant memory of an experience in the past, but that is not joy, that is not delight. Why should a memory be called back to provide satisfaction in the present? It is clear that in such memory there is no experiencing, but only a desire for gratification. It is the thought of 'self'-gratification which makes thought delve into the archives of memory for the purpose of filling in a blank in the present. Just because here is no joy, one recalls a joyous experience. Thus the experience has become the property of an experiencer who is now craving for an clinging to what has been experienced, idealised, stored away and now brought back to fill the vacuum of the present moment. That means, the present moment had no experience to satisfy the 'self' and now the 'I' goes back into the past, having separated itself from the experience and brings back a dead memory. Thus, the experiencer had no experience in the present. But if there was no experience in the present, there could have been an experiencer either.

It is this separation of the actor from his action which sets up an opposition of conflict: the 'I' which is the experiencer, the thinker, the actor, wants to possess the experience as 'mine', to call it back from memory, so that the 'I' can live again in that experience. But the memory, of an experience is never an experience, and thus there cannot be an experiencer holding on to the past, to memory, to property. Such holding in is the present. 'I' am just that: a memory, a reflection, a projection, a 'clinger' to what is not! That is the work of awareness, to make free, to be free. And that is joy!

Delight as a facet of insight (*bojjhaṅga*) is a living experience which has no duration and therefore is only experiencing without comparison, without memory, without a past. In this actual experiencing there is no thought about it, so that it cannot become a memory as there is no reflection of an 'I' who wants to retain, to possess, to recall, to store. Such joy (*pīti*) is beyond logical thought (*vitakka*) and sustained application of mind (*vicāra*). It has no aim

of achieving, but just melts away in well-being (*sukha*), that is, in experiencing the absence of opposition and conflict, in the absence of ‘self’ as a delusion as a possessor, as an actor. Such joy can only be lived now in the present moment which is the moment of truth, of emancipation, of deliverance. Such is the facet of insight (*bojjhaṅga*).

Tranquillity (*passaddhi*) is the obvious state resulting from an experience of freedom which is selfless joy. It is a serenity free from the disturbances of defilements (*kilesa*). It is the calming down of a searching mind, a repose in agitation, a cooling down of passionate desires. From the zest of delight (*pīti*) the tranquil mind passes on to concentration and equanimity.

In tranquillity of this nature there is no motivation and no conditioning. Thus it is the perfect setting for awareness through which one is now able to see and understand without choice without distortion. It is the proper atmosphere, in which there can be direct perception which is insight. It is this direct perception which is the mental object (*dhamma*) of awareness without effort, without purpose, without interpretation, without comparison, without distortion, which is the light which gives sight, which is insight and realisation, a true factor of enlightenment (*sambojjhaṅga*).

Concentration (*samādhi*) is not the end, but it may be a means towards the end, for it is a recollection (*anussati*) which prepares for awareness (*sati*). In fact, mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) and right concentration (*sammā-samādhi*) are mentioned as it were in one breath in many groupings, especially in the noble eightfold path. Being a faculty of focussing (*samannāhāra*), it is essentially a constituent of consciousness, without which there may be a mental reception, but no perception, no conception; and that means, no thought.

But concentration is selective and intentional as a culture of the mind (*bhāvanā*) with its many methods (*kammaṭṭhāna*) and spiritual exercises. It has virtue (*sīla*) as its basic preparation, and insight (*paññā*) as its goal. And thus it is the link between virtuous

conduct and enlightenment. Still, as long as concentration is seen and used as a method, it may lead to equanimity (*upekkhā*), the next and final link and aspect of wisdom (*bojjhaṅga*), but it does not reach the grade of insight which is emancipation and enlightenment.

As a method in itself, concentration is not important, because it can give the rapture of ecstasy (*jhāna*), the suspension of the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), but it cannot provide the solution of the problem, the dissolution of conflict.

However, when there is full awareness (*sati*) of concentration (*samādhi*), the method of striving for a goal loses its importance. And that is the insight through 'bare attention' which sees concentration and understands its function to focus on a 'centre'. But when there is insight and understanding that this 'centre' is a mere projection, all concentration together with its ecstasies and attainments can be abandoned. When that is seen and understood through awareness of concentration, then it will be seen and understood that this 'I' is only a creation of thought to maintain its existence and continuance. Then there is awareness that this concentration may lead to exclusion, isolation, opposition. But when in awareness this basis of conflict has been laid bare, that will be the end of concentration, the end which is the ending and abandonment of all thought-formations which have created this 'I'-concept. Thus, awareness of concentration gives insight into the mind objects, and gives freedom even to meditation.

Equanimity (*upekkhā*) as a factor of wisdom (*bojjhaṅga*) is the ultimate of understanding. There can be a pursuit of knowledge, but as long as there is striving, such knowledge can never satisfy, for there is no even-mindedness. Even-mindedness is a balance of mind which is at rest (*tatra-majjhataṭṭhā*), which comes naturally when all search ceases. As long as there is concentration to arrive at one-pointedness of mind (*citt'ekaggatā*), there is a striving for the attainment of an ideal. When equanimity is seen as an ideal, there is no even-mindedness, but only effort to overcome the disturbances

which prevent the mind to be at rest. Equanimity is an evenness or balance of mind which has ceased searching for an ideal. Whatever the ideal may be, it is still a concept or a thought; and striving for a concept is not leading to a mind at rest. The mind is at rest only when there is no thought-conception, for thoughts are conceived to promote and to attain the ideal which ultimately is the individual 'self', even if that concept is enlarged into a super-self, a soul, a permanent entity, God.

Equanimity, therefore, is the absence of striving, the cessation of becoming (*bhava-nirodha*), which cannot be produced or created (*akata*), for it is not conditioned (*asankhata*). One cannot become of even mind through concentration on a single object of thought. That may be one-pointed news which may produce the ultimate absorption and ecstasy (*jhāna*), but that is not equanimity.

Equanimity is a mind without thought, without concept, without ideal, without striving, craving or clinging. It is a silent mind without an object.

What is the state of a silent mind? It is a mind not in pursuit, but fully aware in 'bare attention'. In that silence, which is as a lake unruffled, there is only reflection. But reflection does not disturb. Here is just reception and perception without conception. And because there is no conception, there is no birth of action which craves for reaction. Such reflection is total awareness, which sees and does not judge, which accepts and does not cling, which does not escape because there is nothing to escape into. Seeing that there is no escaping, no becoming, no striving, there is immediate perception which is intuitive insight. There is no fight for victory, there is no attempt at conquest, there is no search for solution, there is no striving for acquisition, there is no desire for achievement.

In this direct perception, all thought has ceased; and the mind, alert, aware, and fully awake, does not resist, does not react, but is free. That is emancipation and enlightenment, the awakening to the truth, which ever is.

## The four Noble Truths

Of all mental phenomena (*dhamma*) the most outstanding one is the mind's reaction to conflict (*dukkha*). The religious attitude to conflict has been expressed in many ways. It is shown as the constant fight between the spirit and the flesh, as temptation, as sin, as the struggle for life, evolution in existence, sorrow, grief, loss, suffering—all expressing an internal opposition, a constant striving to overcome, to outgrow, a desire for a new start in a new life through salvation, grace, transmigration or rebirth.

The stress is always on escape, on renewal, on reward in a better life for those who won the battle. The mind and the heart are so much preoccupied with this battle that few ever think of what this conflict is. No system of religion or philosophy has been able to solve this problem satisfactorily, because the search is always one for a solution rather than a dissolution. Thus the search itself ends in delusion, because it has begun in ignorance.

What is conflict? Are we aware of conflict? Or are we just feeling the unpleasant effects, the undesirable outcome of being in conflict? And are we not concentrating exclusively on the cause and effects thereof? When facing conflict within ourselves, what is our attitude? Is it not an attitude of repelling, of opposition, of escaping, of conquest? What is it that we want in this life of strife? To be free from conflict. And we have given many names to that freedom: Eternal bliss, beatific vision, the supreme good, divine love, union with God, emancipation, deliverance, Nirvāṇa. But do we know the meaning of those words; they are not even concepts, because they are beyond thought. They are ideals, mere ideas of a supreme escape from sorrow, from loss, from conflict. We know the effect of loss, the loneliness, the desolation, the lack of support, the fear of standing alone. But that is not conflict; that is the effect of conflict, and we are fighting to get rid of those consequences.

But what is conflict? This is the ultimate question of a mind with full awareness. Conflict must be seen as a phenomenon with



bare attention, not with the intention to overcome but with the need to understand. Without understanding conflict, there can be only a desire to run away from conflict, and many are the ways and methods of escape. Self-indulgence in food, in comfort, in sex, in drugs can make one forget that there was conflict, but the very search for such an escape shows that conflict is still there. Self-denial in sacrifice, in prayer, in renunciation, in abstinence of what others indulge in, can focus the mind on a sublime ideal, and thus by sublimation forget there was a conflict to cause the escape. But none of those methods give a solution. Conflict is still with us.

What is the problem? There is conflict everywhere, between nations, between races, between ideologies, between religions, between families, between individuals ...; there is conflict within the individual. It is not so much between the haves and the have-nots, because even the haves have their problems and their conflicts. With all demands satisfied, there still remains the conflict of finding security for the endurance of satisfaction. With all comfort and ease there still remains the discomfort of disease and also the final and only certainty that this does not last. It is the conflict between the desire for permanent security and the knowledge of impermanence.

This very knowledge of impermanence has made man to seek his security elsewhere. Many seek it as an everlasting life hereafter, and they are prepared to surrender the joys of their present life as a sacrifice and a payment of guarantee for a better life hereafter.

Many others seek it in the perpetuation of their name for future generations and they pay for it with the labour of their lives to leave behind a name which will be remembered for ages to come, a name of honour and achievement.

But the actual conflict remains in the present between the desire for permanence and the actual fact of impermanence.

Why this search for security and continuance? There is obviously, lurking in the background of the unconscious the spectre of fear of insecurity, which becomes all the more menacing in

view of the apparent impossibility to build up a fortress of safety. Within living memory we have been through two devastating world wars, several unprecedented economic world-crises, revolutions and catastrophes of earthquakes and famine. And notwithstanding all those eliminating factors, the human world-population is bursting its bonds at an alarming rate, completely disproportionate to the supply of foods required for its maintenance. And we continue our search for happiness.

It is clear that this search is but an escape from the problem of insecurity. All striving, and that means all progress, is an indication of this uneasiness, which is the driving force of action, of all effort to achieve. Thus we chase and are being chased round and round in a circle, because we have not paused to investigate the actual problem. A search for happiness is an escape from sorrow; and a continued search indicates that the goal has not been reached.

What is that goal of happiness, the goal of all striving? The feeling and the knowledge of satisfaction and ease are so short-lived that they contain in themselves a source of unease. In the very moment of satisfaction there is the fear of its discontinuance and of the insecurity of the next moment. And so the most intensive effort is not directed to the satisfaction of the moment, but to the continuation of that satisfaction.

Now, can continuation be achieved? There is obviously one way to enjoy the continuation of happiness, and that is by the continuation of my 'self'. And thus, all striving and effort are directed towards the extension and the projection of the ego. Without the ego there can be no lasting satisfaction. But with the strengthening of that ego there arises the conflict with other egos, with other interests. Thus, the problem of conflict lies within the 'self'; the problem lies in the approach. Any positive approach is idealistic. Any kind of striving has an end in view; and because it is viewed idealistically even before an attempt is made, the goal remains within the 'self', which is the source of the conflict. Thus, the very attempt

of a search for happiness contains the seed of its failure, because it continues the very cause of the conflict within the ego.

Dukkha, therefore, which is frequently translated as sorrow or suffering, is actually much more than that, as it forms one of the three chief characteristics found in everything that is a composition (*sankhāra*) or a conditioned event. The intrinsic unrest, imbalance, disharmony of whatever state that is dependent on conditions for its arising, continuation and cessation, is the inherent conflict, innate in every complex. This applies most of all to the psychological complex which forms an individual. Every complex is a conflict (*sabbe sankhārā dukkhā*).

In the natural stream of life where everything is impermanent, the misconception of continued activity gives rise to the thought of a continued 'self'-entity, underlying this activity as a substance or a soul. This misconception of a 'self' as a permanent ego obviously places the natural impermanence of the total process of life in direct opposition. This opposition between an illusory 'self' (which in a struggle for survival must oppose all that is impermanent) and the actual process of life and thought constitutes the conflict which thereby forms an essential part of every complex.

The conflict, therefore, is natural and even essential, so long as this opposition is maintained, the opposition between the actual impermanence of all that is, and the ideal permanence which is the object of all strife and striving. An ideal, however noble and sublime, finds its source in the human mind itself as an idea or concept, and can, therefore, never surpass its limitations and can never become actual.

It is this constant frustration of the limitations of the impermanent process of life and thought, endeavouring to surpass those boundaries in a fruitless attempt to surpass itself into a self-created ideal world, it is that frustration which constitutes the problem of conflict, the first Noble Truth, which must be seen and lived to be understood. Truth not only appears sometimes, but actually is so

ridiculously simple, that one can hardly expect anybody believing it. And that is a fact. People do not believe in truth; they can only believe in their own images or imaginings, which are the images of themselves. People in general only believe in themselves!

A refusal to recognize the truth of conflict merely leads to an attempt at escaping, which can only create a further conflict. The minimum requirement for the solution of a psychological problem is the direct recognition thereof. And that can come only through direct awareness. In awareness of the real nature of the conflict lies also the solution thereof. But this is also the most difficult part of the problem, because the self-created concept not only refuses to, but even cannot recognise the core of the problem which is itself, just as nobody can cure himself through self-analysis.

This is the blind alley-from which there is no escape. And until the mind becomes aware of the impossibility of escape, it will continue in its attempt, for in continuance lies its only salvation. The ego cannot sacrifice itself. But in increased activity (of which our modern restlessness is so typical) it will explore new avenues of search as well as of escape. Politics, business, social service, religion, are not essentially different from the more crude escapes of carnal pleasures. For many it will be a struggle for survival through many lives, till one day, one moment, the perspective will change completely, when it will be seen that the very effort to escape constitutes the problem, that the search for peace is the cause of war, the search for 'self' is the cause of conflict. That is the second noble truth, when it will be understood that the fight against conflict is a mere dream, because the conflict itself is only mind-made.

There is no permanent 'self', substance, soul, ego, for whatever constitutes that delusion is but a desire for continuation, for stability and security in that universal stream of impermanence. But once, when it is understood (not just intellectually, not only emotionally, but in a complete experience) that this very impermanence of evolution is the real life of a constantly new birth, in which ev-

ery experience is fresh, in which every event is a new discovery, in which every occurrence is a challenge for immediate action, then at that same moment the mind will be free and unfettered, free from the burden of psychological memories which prevent one from seeing things direct as they are, free to approach with the innocence of a new mind the apparent problem, which is no problem anymore, because there is no conflict, no 'self', no opposition, no burden of the past, no worry for the future. That is the realisation of the third noble truth, the truth of the ending of conflict.

Such discovery can come only to a mind which is calm without thought, which has ceased to agitate, to be disturbed by desires of achievement and attainment. For, only a mind which is calm can be aware, can see things as they are, can act freely and honestly without being influenced. Only such a mind can see that there is no problem where there is no conflict, where there is no opposition, where there is no 'self'.

In that peace of mind there is no restlessness, no search for happiness and satisfaction, but the peace of completeness which has solved all problems in the realisation that there is no conflict. In that realisation there cannot arise further desires and thus there will be no more becoming, no more escaping, bhava nirodha, which is Nibbāna. Such are the noble truths of the nature of conflict, its arising and cessation. Does the mind still ask for a method to overcome conflict? The question does not arise in a mind which has realised that there is no conflict.

Still, there is a path that leads nowhere:

It is the path that shows not how: But Why?

It is the path the bird flies in the sky.

It is the path that stars go in the night.

It is the path the thought goes in its flight.

It is the path the wind lists when it blows.

But on that path no walker ever goes.

And that is the noble path which leads to the ending of conflict, a conflict which exists only in a deluded mind. It is path of understanding (*sammā-dit̥ṭhi*) and of seeing things in the right perspective (*sammā-saṅkappa*). It is a path of action (*sammā-kammanta*) which does not want results, but which has truth for speech (*sammā-vāca*), and love for living (*sammā-ājīva*), and effort without desire (*sammā-vāyāma*). With right awareness (*sammā-sati*) and right meditation (*sammā-samādhi*) the path, the walker, action and actor are all one. Just as 'I' am the conflict, so 'I' am the path, and with the cessation of that 'I' there is the end of the path.

It is a lonely road of living in the world and yet not of the world. It is in relationship with others that the 'I' can find and discover its reactions. Right action (*sammā-kammanta*) is that action which must act because it understands the need of action at the moment. Such action is as the bursting of the seed in fertile soil, when all conditions call for a response to a challenge, when there is no greed but only understanding of a need. That is the time when understanding becomes action, when understanding is insight, when the path (*magga*) becomes the fruit (*phala*), not in progress but from inner necessity. Then, right speech (*sammā-vāca*), the right word at the right time, is the opening up, not of the mouth, but of right thinking (*sammā-dit̥ṭhi*) and right perspective (*sammā-saṅkappa*), when right living (*sammā-ājīva*) is right association and right relationship, when there is no 'I' to exploit the other, the 'non-I'. Then, with right effort (*sammā-vāyāma*) there is a perfect balance in living together.

All this cannot be brought about through purposeful striving with desire for success, but when thought is silent in tranquillity and contemplation (*sammā-samādhi*) without conflict. Only a silent mind can be aware of action and reaction, of thought and volition, of purpose and aiming. In that silent reflection of awareness (*sammā-sati*) there is the whole path revealed, and there is no walker on that path. Such is the negation of all that clings to existence, of all

that craves for continuance, of all that clings to existence, of all that craves for continuance, of all that must resist in order to exist, the supreme negation of becoming (*bhava nirodha*) which is Nibbāna.

It is the negation of conflict (*dukkha*), of individuality (*sakkāya*), of the round of rebirth (*samsāra*), which is the revelation of emancipation, when action is free from purpose, when need is free from greed, when thought is free from the word, when the mind is free from thought. It is the silence of awareness which is intuition, insight, contemplation. And in that silent freedom there is deliverance. That is when the road ends, and the burden is laid low, the burden which was a delusion, and is now no more.





# Awareness in Psychology

## Mental Formations

It is worth pointing out that in one entire terminology of Buddhist philosophy, psychology and ethics there is probably not a single concept so frequently used as *sati*, awareness, mindfulness, reflection, recollection.

## Mental Factors

It is a mental factor (*cetasikā*), one of the seven which constitute together any thought, whether that thought is morally good or evil, or a-moral. The term is also used in a specified sense as morally good and beautiful (*sobhana*), when it is one of the 25 factors which make up a morally good thought (*kusala*).

In either class it does not stand alone, and is therefore a constituent of thought (*citta*), either in a general way (*sādhāraṇa*) or a specified skilful way (*sobhana*). As one of the seven factors which are found in any thought, it links up with sensation (*vedanā*) and perception (*saññā*), together with the following, which form the complex of ideation (*saṅkhāra*): mental impression (*phassa*) volition (*cetanā*), vitality (*jīvita*), concentration (*samādhi*) and advertence (*manasikāra*).

Originally, in the early suttas, we find only three stages of the unconscious, namely, sensation, perception and volition. This last one, volition (*cetanā*), was first analysed into contact, which precedes even sensation and perception, with the addition of vitality, concentration and advertence. It is this last factor of advertence (*manasikāra*) which is the essential factor of awareness (*sati*) without any moral or immoral qualification.

## Attention to the sense-doors

Attention (*manasikāra*) then is the mental advertence which is inseparately associated with all states of consciousness. It is, as it were, the mind's first 'confrontation with an object' (Nyanatiloka: Buddhist Dictionary). It also binds the associated mental factors to the object. Thus, we see advertence in a double function as attention at the five physical sense-doors (*pañcadvārāvajjana*), and as attention to the mind-door, watching the mental reactions (*manodvārāvajjana*). It is the opening up of the unconscious (*bhavaṅga*) which forms the first stage of the process of perception.

Thus it is attention and reflection, frequently called, 'wise or reasoned attention' or methodical reflection (*yoniso manasikāra*). It's opposite, 'unwise attention' (*ayoniso manasikāra*), is a condition which is conducive to the arising of the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) and of the four taints or moral corruptions (*āsavā*) of sense-desire, desire for continued existence, wrong views and ignorance. As he in whom those cankerous taints have been destroyed (*khīṇāsavā*) is free from all biases (*āsavakkhaya*), the term is equivalent to the attainment of arahantship.

In this last function of awareness of the mental reactions, it is that state of consciousness which is bare attention, leading to insight (*vipassanā*). Thus, awareness (*sati*) is also counted as a factor of enlightenment (*sati-sambojjhaṅga*).

But, whereas attention (*manasikāra*) is essential to the arising of any thought (*sabbe-citta*), watchful awareness (*sati*) is one of the 19 which are mentally bright, morally good and hence beautiful (*sobhana*) in their skilful application. They brighten the mind, just as their opposites becloud an unskilful mind (*akusala citta*). They raise the mind to nobler and higher planes.

Awareness is completeness in mind-application, not in the process of reasoned thinking (*vitakka-vicāra*), but as complete alertness to anything which may present itself as an object of thought.

Thus, the body itself (*kāya*) with its physical conditions, postures and composing elements; or sensations (*vedanā*) which may find their origin in body as well as in thought; or the various thought-processes (*citta*) which arise and pass; or any event (*dhamma*) which comes across the path of life, may become worthy of the fullest attention, as mental reactions. For all material and mental phenomena are ultimately known to the individual mind only as reflections in one's own thought-process. What is usually called individuality is nothing but the world as experienced. It is the reaction in sensation, perception, and mental formation, which is the object of the mind. It is such reaction, or group of reactions (*sankhāra*), which determine the nature of a thought. And it is the function of awareness (*sati*) to be alert and alive to those reactions, as they arise, how they function, and when they cease.

## Alertness to Reaction

Awareness, then, is alertness to those reactions. And, therefore, there is no method of how to be aware, how to meditate, how to control the mind. Such search for a method itself is an object of awareness. The search is now a mental object (*dhamma*) which must be understood to be seen in its arising, in its projection and in its passing. Awareness refuses to be drawn aside. If there is conflict in the mind, no search can find a solution, because the mind itself is

the conflict, and conflict is mind-made. Only in seeing the conflict as mind-made there is awareness of the meaning, the making, the ceasing of conflict. And in that awareness is the ending of delusion.

Awareness is then an awakening which recognises the delusive nature of the reactions of a 'self'. It is in awareness that ignorance ceases, as awakening is the end of the dream.

Ignorance (*avijjā*) is conditioned by lack of mindfulness (*sati*). Through improper attention the mind is blinded as to the real nature of conflict; it does not penetrate to discover the source of this conflict; and thus it is opposed to taking the necessary steps for the removal thereof. And so, in direct awareness it is possible to see the 'self' as the cause of this conflict between the actual 'self' and the ideal 'self'. The ideal is discarded by the actual, and the actual is seen as impermanent, that is, without identity or entity. Thus, in awareness there is also discarded the root of delusion, the root of ignorance, which is always present in a mind full of greed and full of hate.

Agitation (*uddhacca*) and worry (*kukkucca*) arise in a mind which searches for satisfaction in security. Thus, seeing the characteristics of a searching mind, there is rest in awareness which does not know the excitement of the achievement of a goal, nor the depression of disappointment.

## Counterbalance to Delusion

Awareness is then the moral counterbalance to delusion (*moha*). As mental alertness it prevents forgetfulness, which is psychologically a form of protest, a subconscious expression of a suppressed dislike. It thereby discards all distorted views (*vipallāsa*), and sees directly the body as impure (*asubha*), sensations as conflicting (*dukkha*), perceptions as fleeting (*anicca*) and all things as 'base'-less (*anatta*). Awareness (*sati*) is often closely aligned with memory (*smṛti*).

But memory is a process of grasping the past (*atītaggahaṇa*), yet it does not grasp it as such: it does not recognise the link with the past, but sees the past when being brought forward as part of the present. Hence follows attachment. Awareness, on the other hand, sees the past as past, attachment as clinging, and thereby recognises the past as representative cognition. The past does not exist in awareness, but awareness recognises the past as a reaction, whereas memory makes the past live again in the present, which is delusion.

And so, while memory is a kind of imagination, a kind of image forming, a kind of dream, awareness sees that process as the past, and is free from it, and awake. Awareness is even more than being awake, for in awareness is seen not only the action, but also the action in reaction. And it is that understanding which not only awakens but also enlightens. Perception must become full conscious awareness, before it can grow into insight. The knowledge born from perception (*saññā*) is based on sense-impressions. It is the knowledge of the empiricist, who only relies on his physical experiments. But this kind of knowledge has only some relative value, useful maybe, but not ultimate.

Then there is knowledge which is born from reflection, which is consciousness (*viññāṇa*), based on reasoning. It is the knowledge of the philosopher, who works with definitions, abstractions and concepts, who builds up an idealised doctrine with systematised speculations. While science is experimenting with life, playing with life, philosophy is arguing about life, talking about life. Each has its methods and its own end in view. And that end is now for them more important than the problem of life which is conflict.

Intuition is the synthesis of both, sensuous in perception and conscious in reflection. Thus, intuition (*paññā*) is a unique experience, which cannot be produced, cannot be staged, cannot be repeated; for, he who sees just sees and no delusion can becloud his

mind again. ‘What is felt is perceived, and there is consciousness of what is perceived’<sup>15</sup>.

Methodical thinking (*yoniso manasikāra*) by itself cannot produce the right outlook (*sammā-dit̥thi*). Striving for a solution can only lead to a search for an escape. That was discovered by Siddhartha the prince, by Siddhartha the hermit, who in discarding all search for ‘self’ found the solution in ‘no-self’ (*anatta*) in bare attention, in direct awareness of the basic problem which caused the conflict.

Just as a violet can never become a rose, but a violet can be a perfect flower in itself, so the uncertainty of a search can never give that freedom from fear with its many false ideas of discipline and concentration. Only in awareness of the motive of a search, of the image of an ideal, of the concept of self-entity, can arise that intuition which is perfect freedom from all experiments, as it is a living experience of being awake.

It should not be thought that perception (*saññā*) is hallucination because it does not perceive the sense-object as it is in itself. If perception is sought for the purpose of acquiring knowledge of the object, it will not reach the desired goal, because the ultimates of sense-objects cannot be perceived by the sense-organs, but they can be seen in their reactions. And to see physical activity as a mental reaction is not the knowledge of physics (*ñāṇa*), but it is not hallucination either, as long as the reactivity of the mind is the object of perception, which is a much deeper kind of understanding (*saññā*), and which in its perfection can give insight (*paññā*) into the workings of the mind, the composition of sense-mind activity.

Such clear-sightedness is not what is usually understood as clairvoyance and telepathy, the ‘divine eye’ (*dibba-cakkhu*). It is super-intellectual, but not supernatural. It is not seeing things which are normally hidden from natural eye-sight. But it is seeing things in

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<sup>15</sup>(*yaṃ vedeti taṃ sañjānāti, yaṃ sañjānāti taṃ vijānāti, Majjh. Nik. 43, Mahā Vedalla Sutta*)

a different perspective. When the normal and natural eye-sight responds to colours and shapes, one understands that this response reacts only within the few degrees of the colour-spectrum. Infra-red and ultra-violet remain beyond the faculty of eye-sight, and yet they can be used in the therapeutics and photography, in X-rays and radar. But what science cannot see is the constitution of matter, not only as radio-active waves, but as energy of resistance which is solidity, of attraction which is cohesion, as molecular movement which is vibration, of movement and momentum which is friction, the elements which push and pull, and churn and burn. It is in awareness that matter is thus seen as reaction, it is in awareness that reaction is seen in the functioning of the mind-organ, the contents of thought. This clear-sightedness does not aim at penetrating matter to discover its essence, but is right mindfulness (*sammā-sati*) which penetrates with insight the functions of the mind, the object and purpose of thought, the reflections of memory, the projections of volition, the will to continue.

This awareness (*sati*) is the first factor of enlightenment (*sambojjhaṅga*); it has its proper place in the noble eightfold path (*ariya-aṭṭhaṅgika magga*). It is also a force (*bala*) and a faculty (*indriya*). Awareness is mentioned as the third of the five powers (*pañca-bala*) which indicate a group of five forces of both temporal and spiritual character. This group of five is confidence (*saddhā*), energy (*virīya*), mindfulness (*sati*), concentration (*samādhi*) and insight (*paññā*); and awareness has derived its strength from all of them; and gives in return firmness to the five spiritual faculties (*pañca-indriya*). It is the power of mindfulness which cannot be shaken even in forgetfulness (*pamāda*).

‘In mindfulness one minds and reminds oneself of things done and said long ago’<sup>16</sup>. And this has sometimes led to think of mindfulness (*sati*) as memory (*smṛti*). But its strength lies in its action as a controlling factor, a faculty which prevents distraction, a

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<sup>16</sup>Ang. Nik. IV, 3-4

counter-balance to delusion (*moha*), superficiality and forgetfulness. Forgetting must be seen as a form of protest, an unconscious expression of dislike which is suppressed. It is indeed in the unconscious mind that our likes and dislikes are hidden; it is here that karma grows out of those tendencies. As long, however, as those likes and dislikes do not become associated with full consciousness (*viññāṇa*), there is no fruit-bearing reaction (*vipāka*). There may be action, but inhibited as regards its effects (*ahosī kamma*), just as the seeds of an unripe fruit will not grow up, but remain unproductive.

But, as it is in the unconscious mind (*abhisāṅkhara-viññāṇa*) that our potentialities are accumulating with each fresh volitional activity, it will be here that we have to learn to understand our own character and its complexes, latent and repressed, but ready to show themselves whenever an opportunity is given. Psychic influences are never lacking. Thus, according to Sigmund Freud in his psychopathology, ‘mistaken actions express either a subconscious desire, or represent a repetition of a previously erroneously carried-out action.’

An unintentionally wrong action shows that the act was performed against the order of the intellect (*citta*). Yet, it could not have been performed without consciousness (*viññāṇa*). However, there was not present the full discriminating mind, and hence, the natural tendencies and characteristic inclinations (*saṅkhāra*) repressed the order issued by the intellect, which made manifest the actual like or dislike. ‘The forgetting in all cases is proved to be founded on a motive of displeasure’ (Freud *ibid.*). The unconscious mind may expect unpleasant consequences from the recording of a name, and will therefore keep that name back, hidden in the storing consciousness (*abhisāṅkhara viññāṇa*). The result will be that one cannot remember such a name. Several other names may be suggested, but every time consciousness will reject the substitute as false, proving all the more that the true name is not really forgotten, but only hidden. As soon as the true name would be mentioned, the



conscious mind will at once recognise it as such. Forgetting, therefore, is a kind of protest. Though forgetfulness is sometimes given as an excuse for lack of attention, this does not explain why the thing was forgotten, or why the act was a mistake. Forgetfulness is purposeful; it is intentional, a motivated expression of a subconsciously suppressed dislike.

It is the work of awareness (*sati*) not just to remember what appears to have been forgotten, but rather to see why there was forgotten, by rather to see why there was forgetfulness. And that is not memory, but insight.

## Spiritual Faculty

Sometimes, the power of mindfulness (*sati-bala*) is made identical with the spiritual faculty of mindfulness<sup>17</sup>, but on other occasions the powers and the faculties are treated as separate. Then the powers (*bala*) are identified with the path that leads to the non-composite Nibbāna<sup>18</sup>, whereas the five faculties (*indriya*) can destroy the five fetters (*sarīyोजना*) which prevent deliverance of mind (*cetovimutti*). And as four of the five powers are to be understood as steps on the noble eightfold path (*virīya=sammā-vāyāma; sati=sammā-sati; samādhi=sammā-samādhi; and paññā=sammā-ditthi*), one who is possessed of these powers is then identified with one who has realised Nibbāna. The Buddha possesses these powers, and so do all the Arahants. They are, therefore, obviously the powers of intelligence (*nāṇa-bala*) as distinct from physical strength (*kāya-bala*). It is not the power of knowledge which produces release; for, one might be able to know the various stages of trance (*jhāna*) and explain the psychic powers (*iddhi*) without being able to make use of them. One may even know the path, but yet not

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<sup>17</sup> *sat 'indriya*: S. II. 12

<sup>18</sup> *asaṅkhatagāmi-magga*: S.IV.361

be able to get rid of the depravities <sup>19</sup>. So it will become clear that, unless the power of mindfulness (*sati-bala*) and the faculty of awareness (*sat-indrīya*) are developed as steps on the noble eightfold path, they might provide supernormal clairvoyance, transformation, bilocation, mental creation and other psychic phenomena, but these will not lead on to emancipation through insight.

## Mental Balance

Yet, there is a very close connection. E.g., the first formless sphere of thought in ecstatic concentration (*arūpa jhāna*) is a state of mental absorption in which ‘infinite space’ (*ākāsa*) is the object of attainment. In this state all discursive thought (*vitakka-vicāra*), and even joy (*pīti*) and the bliss of well-being (*sukha*) have been put away. ‘This mental state takes its rise in mindfulness (*sati*) with disinterestedness (*upekkhā*) as its chief characteristic’. Thus, awareness and mental balance go easily hand in hand, as neither has any positive object for striving. Without desire for attainment, without hope for achievement, without fear of loss, awareness and equilibrium have much in common.

Still, awareness is not just equilibrium, for equilibrium is one-pointedness of mind (*citt’ekaggatā*) and awareness does not point or focus at all. It is alert without aiming, equipoised without poise, balanced without suspension.

Awareness is intrinsically linked with patience, devotion, foresight, sensitivity, perceptivity, mental concentration, all mental factors which in themselves are essential, thought neutral, for they can be turned for good or for evil. Awareness, attention, mindfulness, is indeed a great power, when it is seen that practically nothing can be achieved without attention, without diligent awareness, without constant mindfulness. It is therefore not just one among the five

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<sup>19</sup>MA.II.31

powers, but it is certainly the most powerful, necessary for success in any undertaking, whether it be good or bad. Even a pick-pocket to achieve his goal must be fully alert when exercising his craft with nimble fingers. Any misplaced pressure will give him away; any unforeseen interruption may spell disaster. Great sensitivity has to be exercised in seeing, hearing and feeling to ensure that no action, no movement is misplaced. Thus, awareness is never hasty, never precipitous, never anxious. Thus it is a moral strength, just as preparedness is an advantage in any situation. It is not possible to be prepared for any emergency; yet, while the mind is calm and attentive, it cannot be taken by surprise. Indecision is an unbalance, but no-decision prevents the mind to be prejudiced. These are two moral extremes, one a wavering uncertainty, the other a stubborn determination. In awareness there is preparedness for action in dependence on understanding. And when there is right understanding there will be right action when there is right awareness.

## Steps on the Path

Thus, they all meet in the noble eightfold path, where insight (*ditṭhi*) and perspective (*saṅkappa*) are kept on the alert (*sati*) in concentration (*samādhi*), which can result in the right kind of relationship in living (*ājīva*) with just the right effort (*vāyāma*) in speech (*vāca*) and action (*kammanta*).



# Awareness in Reaction

## Methods

How can one be aware?

This question can be a good starting point, as long as it does not involve a question about a methodical approach. The search for a method of approach presumes a general knowledge of the outcome of the search. Even a search for truth, or a search for God involves some idea of what truth is, some concept of God. Such knowledge may be extremely vague, as that of the man who fell in love with the most beautiful woman in the world. He had never left his country and he had certainly not met all the women in the world to compare and suit his requirements. But he would have had some concept of feminine beauty in the abstract, classical features, shapely contours, colour of hair, deportment. All such abstractions, however, exist only in the mind, and in an individual concept. It would, therefore, be only his own concept that he had fallen in love with. He was in love with himself.

Now the question: 'How to be aware?', may be such a search for the ideal of awareness, an ideal one has formed after hearing much what has been said about the value of awareness in Buddhist meditation, the value of insight meditation, of contemplation, of seeing things as they are. And the mind begins a search for this kind of meditation in order to achieve awareness, in order to acquire

insight, in order to become enlightened. This kind of search, then, is only for an ideal, that is an idea, a concept, a thought, which is only the reaction of a desire for acquisition, a reaction to hearsay, a reaction to the experiences of others. This reaction is, then, only a further desire, however noble and lofty, a wish to achieve, to acquire, to possess, to become that which is up to now only a thought-projection of the 'I' How can I become aware?

A straightforward answer to this question would be: by being aware of the implications of this question. That would not be a search for a hidden treasure, but a simple observation of facts. The facts are all within the question 'How can I become aware?'

There is the first point of the question: How? It is an enquiry about method, a scheme of classification. It presupposes an objective goal. It also presupposes a subject who is striving towards that goal, and who now enquires for a method. In other words, an observation has been made and a thought has been formulated which means identification and registration, the work of memory. It is the breaking up of an experience into an objective goal apart from a subjective observer.

Now, the goal in the abstract (for there is no experiencing as yet) is not the object (which is still being sought, and therefore not known), but the satisfaction and the preservation of the searcher, the 'I'. The fact is that there is no 'awareness' in itself, and therefore 'awareness' cannot be the object of a search. Hence, a division between subject and object is impossible, a method through which the subject can obtain the object is equally impossible. There is no object apart from the subject; and a question: 'How can I become aware?' is then unanswerable.

If this is seen and understood, the question 'How?' cannot arise anymore. There cannot be a method, if there is no search, if there is no object for a search. The desire to obtain, if there is no object for a search. The desire to obtain, to attain, to become to get rid

of, will be there. But that is not the object of the search: How to become aware?

When it is realised in simple and direct observation that there is no point in this question, the mind can only cease its search. That means, thought stops, the search has ended in no more searching.

But the mind is not satisfied without a solution to its problem. Then, what is the problem? It may be that there is no method in solving, but the problem persists when there is no solution. The problem now is not in the search for a solution, but in the conflict which sees the opposition, which wants to get rid of the conflict, and which cannot ask now anymore: How to set about it?

There is a conflict: I have a problem and I do not want it.

Here again the answer is in the question. There are two terms which recur in this conflict: It is the 'I' which has a problem, and there is the 'I' which does not want it. There is the problem as a fact, and there is the problem which is not wanted. So, we have the 'I' and we have the 'problem'. And the two are in conflict. They are joined and they do not want to be joined. One is a fact, the other is an ideal.

But is it a fact that the two are joined? Is it true that I have a problem? Here are two ideas: the 'I' which has and does not want to have; and the problem which is and is not wanted. Is that the fact? Is there an 'I' which wants, which has, which observes which can separate itself as an entity, separate from its action of wanting, of willing, of observing, of not willing? Can the actor ever be separated from his action? If a separation were possible (just for the sake of a logical argument), there would be an actor who does not act, a thinker who does not think, etc.; and there would be a thought without a thinker, without a mind. It is the action which makes the actor, it is a thought which makes a thinker. The act of willing, the desire for becoming, the wish to observe and to be aware are then both subject. It is not 'I' who has a problem, but it is the 'I' that is the problem.

As long as the conflict is experienced between the 'I' who wants or does not want, and the state of mind which has been visualised, projected, idealised as a desirable object, such conflict will always remain a problem. The problem is very actual, but the conflict is ideal, existing only as an idea, a concept, a thought. That thought must persist, as long as 'I' is seen as having an ideal. But, the moment it is seen that 'I' am the ideal, it will also be seen that 'I' do not have a problem, but that 'I' am the problem. It is the 'I' which separate the thinker and the thought, and which it must do so in order to survive as a thinker, even when thought ceases.

Thus, this 'I' is a concept without existence in itself. There is no runner, once the race is over. There is no racing without a runner. How then does this 'I'-concept arise, how is it maintained, and how does it cease?

In direct awareness there is no reference to a past experience, no comparison with other experiences, no projection of ideal experiences. And so, in this universe of change and impermanence (*anicca*), there is nothing of an abiding nature. There is no 'no-un' or substance supporting the phenomena, there is no entity supporting the essence, no soul to preserve the action of existence, no eternal being to receive and to revive this process of becoming. Yet, the natural resistance in matter and in mind against the impermanence in nature wants the continuance of its action to relish the fruits of its labour, to perpetuate the reaction of its action, to build up a system of security against the fear of dissolution. Fear of non-being has created the concept of continuation, without which all action in the present is meaningless, purposeless, senseless. It is fear that has created the concept of endurance and resistance, which is the 'I'. And that image was created from the remembered experiences in which the past was gathered as memory, as the ideal, as the continuation of passing actions in a permanent 'self' as the actor. Without projection into the future, the present has no endurance, and the present cannot be projected without the memory of the



past. Clinging to the past has formed the image, the concept of a 'self', to be projected with craving for continuance into the future. And so, the past becomes the future, though neither has any real existence in the present. The 'I' then has no existence in itself; it is but a reaction to fear of non-existence. And so existence has become resistance; life has become a struggle; a complex has become a conflict (*sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā*). Having no existence in itself, the 'I' does not have a conflict, but it is conflict. The concept of opposition and resistance has created the concept of an enduring 'self', without which there cannot be a projection into continuance. The desire, the greed for becoming is born from the need to continue a delusion (*avijjā paccayā saṅkhārā*).

The need to continue is indeed a delusion, a distortion of the fact of impermanence (*anicca*), which cannot understand and which does not want to understand the fact that there is no 'self', no substance, no entity (*anatta*). In the impermanent flow of changing life there is no permanent 'self', or soul, except through memory which is past and dead. Who am I? And who are you, and what is the world of events in relationship to that 'I'? Whatever I know of myself is an accumulation of memories of past experiences, of selections thereof which were pleasurable and satisfactory, helpful in the building-up of, and in strengthening that 'I'-concept; helpful in building up that image of isolation which is the strength of opposition. It is that same I in isolation which now meets another in opposition, in exploitation, but never in relationship of understanding. A relationship based on fear and hope is a relationship in conflict. And 'I' am that conflict!

To see that 'I' am the conflict also dissolves the question: How to become aware, or how to solve the problem of conflict. Seeing this is being aware. Seeing that this 'I'-concept is but a reaction to the desire for continuance, for permanency, for duration in time, for stability in space, there cannot arise a further action which keeps the actor alive through memory, through craving, through delusion.

If there is violence, 'I' am the conflict, the opposition, the struggle. It is the 'I'-concept which resists, and which must resist in order to exist. It is the search for security, the search for the ideal of continuance which has created this isolation, this opposition, this conflict. And the understanding of this projection makes the concept of memory cease. In the absence of an object in itself, there can be subject in reaction.

Thus, in awareness of this process of becoming lies the cessation of the conflict.

## Escapes

From delusion there are no escapes. Is that fatalism? Fatalism would be a submission to a higher power in acknowledgement of one's impotence. But there still remains the wish to escape, if that were possible. What is involved in escaping? Escape is the mind's reaction to become free from conflict. This conflict has many forms which pose as outlets for an escape from fear. Conflict is the struggle for becoming what I am not, and is expressed in social work, study, religion, political activity, drink, drugs, sex, all various forms in which the 'self' tries to forget, and thus to escape from, its own pettiness and emptiness. In trying to become a holy man, a social reformer, I merely try to change the actual fact into an ideal. This endeavour, this effort, this search, however, is an escape from what I believe to be unholiness, sin, etc. To escape from what I am, I condition myself to become the opposite; and that causes confusion and conflict. I am painfully aware of this contradiction within myself; but whatever I try to do about it, it only increases the conflict of which I am afraid and from which I want to escape.

An escape from conflict is attempted by attaching oneself to an ideal. Thus one escapes through work, through pleasure, through religious observances, through renunciation, even through pain. But, whether attachment is to gross sense-satisfaction, to subtle sense-

denial or to a spiritual ideal, it is still attachment which makes the 'I' grow. And so the 'I' is conditioned in thinking in terms of ideals, which abstractions and projections. Thus, thought itself becomes a way of escape. Thought is the great escape into memory. For, it is thought which prevents understanding of what is through simple perception (*saññā*) in bare attention (*manasikāra*). Thought prevents understanding in its process of identification and classification by retention in memory, by projection of desire into the future, by comparison, rejection or approval, all of which are forms (*saṅkhāra*) of an ideal 'I', created by the mind as a safe refuge, an escape from conflict.

Escape is sought in fear of the unknown, of the image; and as the image is made by mind, there is no escape from fear. There is fear of what will happen if I lose my job, fear of being alone when I lose my wife and children, fear of not being recognised, if I do not belong to a certain group in society which gives me status, a group of politics which gives me influence, a group in religion which gives me spiritual power. And to get away from that fear of uncertainty and insecurity, I escape into companionship, into forgetfulness, into self of fulfilment. The escape into companionship is a relationship of exploitation, even if I call it love: I need my wife because I am afraid to be alone; and thus, I am dependent on her, I use her, I exploit her to fight off loneliness. The escape into forgetfulness through drinks, drugs, excitement on various levels, is a very superficial means of getting away from my doubts and worries, for I am still there as soon as the excitement wears off. The escape into self-fulfilment through action, social, political, religious, is more subtle, but equally stupid and more dangerous, because the motive is so superior and unselfish, apparently. Yet, I am only identifying myself with the poor I am helping, with the party I am supporting to save the country, with the rituals and practices in which I believe and which I expect will bring me in touch with the supernatural.

The escape is attempted from fear of discovering what I am: stupid in my ambitions, hollow in my achievement, dead in my tradition, a shadow in the past, a phantom in the future, and so very, very lonely in the present, that I do not know what to do with myself. And so I try to escape. But if I am truly aware of all that, I shall still be that loneliness; and wherever I turn and whatever I think, I am still that loneliness, an empty memory, a vain projection.

But, in that direct perception of loneliness seeking an escape there is no perceiver of that loneliness; there is just the perception of being alone, the awareness of experiencing loneliness, in which there is no desire for action which is a reaction to that loneliness. In direct communion, which is experiencing what is, there is no desire for escape. In that utter loneliness there is no opposition, no conflict, no thought of escape. And that is peace. As soon as thought comes to disturb that peace, which is not an ideal anymore but an actual experience, there is the understanding of the nature of that thought as a desire for escaping. And thus, in the understanding of escape, of its origin, its motive, its reaction with hope and with fear, there is the ending of reaction.

Thought can try to escape sorrow, but it can never end it, for thought is never free. It may try to become free, but then it is bound to its ideal. And in that bondage there is sorrow which is conflict. The ending of sorrow, the ending of conflict, lies in the ending of thought, not in the creation of a new thought, a new ideal into which to escape. The concept of freedom is the idea of becoming free; it is the incentive which conditions the mind to strive to become free. The idea has become the ideal, the concept has become the goal. Now one tries to escape from that concept, from the idea, the thought of conflict. But as thought has created the conflict, thought cannot escape.

Only when the mind is free from thought in direct awareness, only then is there a freedom from the illusion of the ideal, freedom from attachment, freedom from a search, freedom from memory.

When the mind is totally open and vulnerable, there is the freedom to see that the ideal has gone, that there is no fear, no need for escape, because there is no conflict and no opposition, when there is no projection of a 'self'.

If the urge to break away is experienced as a necessity, as the need to fly out as a young bird attempting to use its wings, then all methods of escape will fail to allure. To be free then is a need of living free, which has no further purpose and which, therefore, is not an escape. There may be experienced the difficulty of breaking with tradition, with one's family, one's job, but that is not a search for escape. It is the need to be free, whatever may be the cost. Only understanding which comes through full awareness can give the courage to break away from all make-belief which conditions our every action, the strength to be oneself, even if that means complete stripping of all beliefs, traditions, customs, authority, attachments, prejudices, all of which form and condition the 'I' in its existence, support it in its resistance.

This is not an escape from the thought or the ideal of 'self'. It is a complete destruction of all conditioning influences. There is no 'self'-ideal which is to be set free; but the awareness that all ideals are binding can give that freedom which is insight without fear and without conflict. And that is freedom through awareness.

## Fear

Awareness of fear is the end of fear. For, fear is always of the unknown. And so, as soon as fear is known for what it is, there is no more fear. A child is afraid in the dark, not of darkness itself, but of the danger which may be lurking in the dark. Then there will be fear of the images of things, which may be there, unseen, unknown by the physical senses, but imagined and conceived by the mind, fear of the devil, of the vampire, fear of being kidnapped. Fear is

not of the knowing mind, but of the mental images which are all focussed on the 'self'.

Why does fear arise in the unknowing mind? The mind's function is to understand; it collects information, stores it up in memory, classifies it from reference, all of which are actions providing security of continuance, through savings, through insurance, through investments. It is the feeling of insecurity which causes fear. It is only in security that the mind feels safe and at rest, away from conflict, away from worry and agitation, away from strife and striving. Such security is to be found only in continued existence; and it is the uncertainty of continued existence, always in the future, that produces fear in the present. If there is no continuation in the future, then existence in the present becomes meaningless, baseless, useless. We do not live for the moment, but for tomorrow. All our actions are directed towards a result, which is tomorrow, the future, which is the continuation of 'self.' And as long as that future is uncertain, unsafe, insecure, there is fear which is conflict. The future is uncertain, because it is unknown. And, therefore, we people the future with our imaginings, and we are afraid of our own concepts.

Can we be aware of this process? It is possible, if the present is seen only as the present moment. But when the present is made use of to secure the future, then there is no awareness but craving for continuance of an imaginary 'self'.

Is the 'self' imaginary, when it is so powerful to create and fill life with fear? What is this 'self' but a reaction to an accumulation of the past? My 'self' is my name, my education, my family-connection, my race, my money, my properties, all of them 'mine' making me the owner, the actor, even the observer of my actions.

And what is there beyond these properties, beyond those qualities? Is there a proprietor, an owner? What happens to the owner if the qualities are not there? Can there be a proprietor without property? Can there be an actor without acting? A walker who does not walk? A sleeper who is awake? A watcher who is asleep? What

happens to a watcher who is found asleep while on duty? He will be sacked because he was not a watcher. Likewise in all respects, there is no actor apart from his action. It is the action which makes the actor, just as a child makes one a father. This relationship between subject and object, between cause and effect, is only a mental separation which has no actual existence, for when one ceases, the other is not there either. The actor does not produce his act, and the act cannot continue apart from the actor. There is only acting, the verb which joins in itself both subject and object. Taking the two apart, there is no acting, and hence neither actor nor act; apart from actual thinking, there is neither a thinker nor his thought.

Yet, this separation is made necessary by a mind which wants to continue in security and which cannot continue in action. Action, whether walking or talking, thinking or anything else cannot continue unchanged. There is movement in action which cannot cease without causing the cessation of the act. In action there is no continuity, only proceeding in change, in renewal; but in renewal, in change, there is no identity or entity. And so, the mind has invented an entity to remain constant while his action changes. Thus the owner remains even while his property has gone! Such is the absurdity the mind is forced into by its greed to continue. And then seeing the contradiction in this conflict, there is fear. Fear of darkness is still there, even though a light is kept burning all night. There may be no darkness, but the fear of darkness remains as long as there is insecurity in the mind.

Such fear, therefore, has no real existence, although it is an actual experience. Awareness of the state of mind will not provide a substitute for fear. The thought of a guardian-angel watching over you is a sublimation of that fear, just as a lamp burning during the night. Fear remains as long as fear is not understood, as long as fear is not seen as a search for security, as long as security is not understood as a desire for continuity as a separation of an actor and his act.

It is this fear which is a search for security, which makes one collect ideas and things, to build a wall of self-protection, mentally and physically. It is the fear to be alone, without the support of the convictions of a political party, without the support of the beliefs of a religious organisation, without the proof of identity of a passport, belonging to a recognised nation or race. Being aware of the nature of this wall of self-protection, the isolation ceased to be meaningful, the opposition fades, the conflict is no more. And so, fear ceases in awareness, fear which is seen as the reaction to the demands of 'self'. Fear, then, is an escape from what is today into the uncertainty of tomorrow. Does that not seem absurd? The present is the only certainty one has, the only moment of which one can be aware. But the mind develops fear in the knowledge of its discontinuance; and so the uncertainty of tomorrow becomes the obsessing thought of fear, and it causes one to escape from what is. It is this fear which is the basis of all conflict. The fact of today is simple. There may be pain, there may be hunger, there may be fatigue and exhaustion. But they are not a cause of worry and fear. They are unsatisfactory conditions, no doubt. But they are here, and hence no cause of fear.

Fear is about the future, the unborn, the mental image, the incapacity of reaching the goal of the ideal. It is this fear in all its complexity, which forms the conflict. To be free from tomorrow, from the image, from the ideal, all of which are based on the memory of yesterday. To be thus free must be awareness of the present moment in which fear has arisen. But, instead of being aware of this moment, aware of the arising of fear, aware of the cause of such fear, there is an escape from the present in search of continuity of what was yesterday's. That is the creation of the 'self', as the bearer, the soul, the substance of the fleeting moment. That is the endeavour of continuation of the object in the subject. The experience gathered becomes the store of memories, tradition, attachment, religion, views, country, all of which are centred in that 'self'-concept: my religion, my country, my family, my experience. These ideas are



now projected into the future as ideals, hopes and desires, ambitions, schemes, concepts of rebirth and re-incarnation, heavens and hells, eternity, God. They all try to cover up the intrinsic fear of non-continuance, when the past is not certain to continue into the future. What do we have in present? Pain, hunger, short-lived joys remembered sorrows, unfulfilled desires, striving for escape into an ideal with fears of non-attainment, fear of loss and insecurity of hope. Instead of that, we want pleasure and satisfaction, gratification and fulfilment, achievement and security. And as none of these can be found in the present moment, there is fear that even in the future they may not be attainable. Thus we go back into the past from which we have called up some memories of love and peace. And now we want to transplant those into the future. But the future will always remain unknown; and thus there is fear. That fear is now, not in the past, not in the future. And thus it is possible to be aware of that constant fear which gnaws at every experience of the moment. This fear twists our ideas, colours our thoughts, distorts our actions, sets up barriers of mistrust between people, creates opposition, destroys all love, prevents all understanding. Reputation, social position, stability in a job, economic security, even health, friends and relations, all are forms in which the 'self' tries to endure, but in the possession of which arises the fear of losing them. To live without fear is to live without expectations, to act without 'self'-projecting purpose. To live without fear is to live without the framework of protective memories and ideals. To live without fear is to live free from all identification. In understanding the baselessness of fear in the absence of a 'self', there arises a direct and spontaneous relationship, which gives joy in surrender without purpose, in giving without expectation, in loving without 'self'.

In the understanding of a need, there is no fear of failure, because there is no 'beyond' in understanding, and hence no thought of gain or loss. But when action reaches out beyond need, and thus becomes greed, there is the birth of fear.

## Hate

Hate is not a word we use easily, as its connotations are too strong. We do not mention hate, as we do not mention cancer, for we think of it as something incurable. We rather speak of aversion, of having a grudge. Yet, basically they are all the same: a resistance in opposition. How to be aware of hate, when we even avoid the name thereof?

Hate is like an internally festering wound, a cankerous growth, which slowly poisons the entire system, all thought and action. It is a resistance which is building up when there is a no understanding, no intelligent approach, no awareness. When a problem arises and is approached only with emotional feelings (*vedanā*) without perception (*saññā*), there is a growth, a complex (*sañkhāra*) which is a conflict (*sabbe sañkhārā dukkhā*). A partial approach to a problem with one's emotions is naturally one of opposition. Thus one meets others with a feeling of self-defence, either in the repulsion, of non-acceptance of the unknown, or in the greedy attraction of usefulness. It is always measured by the standard of 'self'.

For hate there is no cure. No amount of loving thoughts can dismiss that stance of opposition which has soured the very approach and initial contact. There may be physical diseases and deformities which repulse, but at the same time call out for compassion and help. But, hate is an aversion, a turning away, an opposing force a destructive tendency. It leaves no room for understanding, for compassion and love. It is probably the strongest passion in man, always lurking to flare up at any moment of frustration, of contradiction, of abstraction. There is no particular remedy for this disease. It has to be uprooted from the soil in which it grows.

What is that soil? And what is hate? From what does it turn away in aversion, in opposition, in conflict? What is the object of hate? It cannot be the harmful object, the man who has stolen my wife, who has been slinging mud on my name, who looted my

property, who set fire to my house. I may not even know him or his name. But the hate I carry is the burning thought and memory of the harm done to 'me'. And that hate will keep burning, as long as the thought of 'self' remains.

What I hate is the damage done to 'me', the ideal 'self', the 'ego', which persists and which pervades all my property, all that I call 'mine', all in which the 'I' lives and grows, expands, is rooted and is made safe. Whatever goes against that 'I' the 'I' must hate, for it destroys the ideal, the only thing which is the 'I'. In hate, the 'I' keeps itself alive in a struggle for life. The 'I' must hate to be alive, for it can only exist in resistance, in opposition. Hate is opposition and resistance, and I am that resistance in my clinging to being, in my craving for becoming, in my desire for stability, in my greed for security.

Only when there is no 'I' concept at work, there is no opposition, and no hate. Such is the work of awareness, seeing 'hate' at work without opposing what is only a mistaken mental attitude. There is no hate, there is only the wrong view of 'self'.

## Thought

Thought is a mental reaction to an experience, which is a challenge calling for a response. The response of thought is a flashback to memory where all answers are stored, and where this new challenge will be stored with its appropriate answer. Those answers may have come from personal experiments or from those of others written down in books on psychology or religion, economics or philosophy. Whatever their origin, they are there stored up to constitute that marvellous reference library of memory, without which there would be no individuality. For those memories are carefully selected for that purpose: to make and to strengthen the 'self'-conscious 'ego' thought has made this 'I' the centre of its action, and thought cannot move it or remove it without destroying itself. Can thought

then see the impossibility of the situation? Can thought silence itself? If thought is conditioned how can it produce an unconditioned response to a challenge?

Obviously, thought cannot do so, for every action is one of furthering the purpose of its existence: the growth of the 'I'. But there is a possible intelligence which does not come from thought, not through will or desire, but which is simple awareness, a perception of the incapacity of thought. When this perception takes over, there is no logical deduction, no verbalisation, no purposeful striving, no image-making projection, no falling back on memory, no groping for security and gratification—all of which belong to thought. Intelligence sees the process, and in perceiving thought in action, and thought not finding an escape, thought falls silent. How there is no conflict of division between memory and ideal, past and future, fear and desire. In that present moment of perceiving, which has not been brought about, and which is therefore unconditioned, there is that moment of truth which gives freedom to act as an intelligent response to the challenge.

As an act of deliberate, concentrated thinking, thought is an act of reference to some previous experience, accumulated knowledge and memory of the past, all of which is engraved, engraved in the brain-cells as on a recording tape. Therefore, thought is a response to the past and not a response to a challenge in the immediate present. When one has to respond to an unknown experience, the first reaction is that of thumbing through a dictionary to find a many-lettered word to fit the clue of a cross-word puzzle. But all that is knowledge of the past which is being recalled to fit the present situation. And so, all thought is thoroughly conditioned and functions only in the field of the known, of the past, dependent in its arising and cessation on factors which are equally conditioned (*saṅkhārā paccayā viññāṇaṃ*).

Is it possible to bring this conditioning to an end? For, in that state there would be an immediate confrontation with an actual

experience. When no answer is sought in a live experience, there will be no reference to the past, no thinking about it. But there will be the direct awareness of reality and the immediate unconditioned response thereto. Such unconditioned action (*asaṅkhata*) is a realisation of what is (*yathā-bhūta-ñāṇa-dassana*).

Thought is never free because it is always bound to and conditioned by time and space, that is, by memory and projection. Thought cannot go beyond its own bondage. However sublime a thought may be, however measureless its concept of infinite space or infinite consciousness, however subtle the thought of no-thingness, or of imperceptible perception, as in the states of mental concentration on the formless (*arūpa jhāna*), they are still products of thought, ideas conceived by the mind, thoughts of sublimation, ideals of attainment, projections of the thinker.

Thought is never free from the concept of the thinker. And the thinker is never free from conflict, for he is the subject opposing the object. Whatever the thought may try, all its endeavour cannot escape the bonds made by itself, bonds to protect the thinker, to continue its thinking and feeling, to bring back the past and make it live again into a future of security for the 'self'.

Without thought there is no thinking; without thinking there is no thinker. And yet, thought has created a thinker who can look back, reflect, look forward and idealise, as if he were separate from thought. How can there be a thinker when there is a no thought? It is the action that makes the actor, and apart from action there is none. But if there is no separate actor apart from action, there is no continuance. And if there is no continuance the past is no more and the mind is free.

It is thought that binds the mind in delusion and in craving, for without this binding thought there is no past and there is no future.

In the present there is no thought, but only a direct experiencing, of which thought is a reflection which tries to preserve the experience, to make it into an experiencer who can remember, who can

continue, who can project, who can live in the future and become the ideal, which, too, is but a concept of that same delusion, which is thought.

Thought is not thinking; a thought is a concept, a word, an idea, a fixed point from which there is sensation, judging, comparing, selecting, willing, retaining, projecting. Thought is always about something from the centre, the observer, who has already the experiences of earlier thoughts, gathered and preserved in memory, to be into a continuance, a series of events, which then make up the individual, the 'self'.

When there is no thought of comparison and selection, then there cannot be any memory and hence no 'self'. That can only be when there is no thought. It is not possible to stop thought, for the very effort of wanting to stop is another thought with a motive, following a pattern. But, seeing that thought is only memory and reaction, the mind can refuse to react to memory, by merely seeing what is, which is awareness of reactions as they set in. This is not concentration on an ideal, trying to see as one would like it to be, which is comparison and judgement, which is a thought of the past, trying to project itself into the future as an ideal. To see what is, means allowing all else to drop away as not actual. To see with memory or with ideals is not seeing and experiencing at all. It is a calling back of the past under the influence of education, of tradition, of faith, of customs, of public opinion. All these influences condition the seeing in the present, which is living in the present.

Without living in the present there is no freedom from the bondage of the past; and without freedom, all vision is distorted, all action is conflict, being a reaction of thought.

But there is no method to make thought cease; that too would be an ideal. The mind will stop thinking when it is understood (not merely intellectually with reasoned brain-work) with deep insight in experiencing, that thought in its accumulation is the 'I', the fixing of fixation of an idea in duration. When that fixation is gone,

there is freedom to see, to understand, to act, to live lovingly and truthfully. Thought is an action of the mind, but that does not make of the mind an organ which produces thought as a record produces music. The mind works through physical organ which is the brain, but that does not give it an independent existence. Speech is performed through the vocal organs, but that does not provide an independent existence for speech. To consider mind as the sum-total and content of all thought is also a dangerous way of looking at things, for, the mind is neither a producer of thoughts, nor their container. In fact, there is no mind apart from its action which is being intelligently aware, in a way as there is no thought apart from the act of thinking. Thus, actually, mind does not exist at all as an entity, but it is a process of mental activity, something like a flame being a process of burning, of combustion. Apart from that actual process there is no abiding entity, whether one calls it substance or soul, self or God. While thought is a process of grasping through memory or ideal, by means of comparing the past with the present, or projecting the present into the future, the intelligent awareness of the present is not conditioned by thought, does not choose its object and is, therefore, not attached to its outcome. Open and unattached, the mind in intelligent awareness of the present moment is unconditioned and hence free to understand without being fed by the clinging of remembrance, or by the craving for projection and protection in security.

While thought is self-reflective thinking, mental awareness is an opening up to new experiencing without choice, but with understanding which is insight. Awareness of an open and unconditioned mind does not compare or register, does not relate experiences to a 'self', but is the undivided experiencing in which a challenge is met with an immediate response, which is not a reaction through memory, but a pure action of insight, an understanding of need without greed.

## Habits

The formation of habits is not something to be controlled if they are thought to be habits, neither to be encouraged if they are considered good habits. Habits are never good, and thus a substitution of a bad habit by a good one is no solution. Habits are repeated actions, actions going in grooves, which make work so much easier and safer. One does not have to learn playing music which is piped out from a tape-recorder or cassette. One does not have to steer an engine which goes on rails. One does not have to make long and complicated calculations when there is a computer to do the job much quicker and more efficient.

But there is more to a habit than sheer ease, comfort or laziness. There is the sensation of security in following the lines of routine, following millions of others, endlessly repeating the nine good qualities of the Buddha, or the salutation of Mary by the angel, of the mantra of initiation by a guru, or praising the uniqueness of God and the greatness of his prophet five times a day.

There are the common actions necessary in commercial life, starting to work together as the cog-wheels in a machine, co-operation between the various branches of organisations, without which social life would grind to a halt within hours. And there are also the individual actions, initially controlled and intended, which have become habits without our knowing it, nervous habits and reactions which have become characteristics.

Thus, the question arises: Why should I develop a habit? It does not matter what that habit is: biting one's nails, smoking, listening with my mouth open, fiddling with my fingers, and 1001 nervous actions and reactions which have no meaning and yet have become habits, to which the specialists have given beautiful Greek names. The specialist will analyse the habit and perhaps discover a hidden source or factor in my childhood. But those are interpretations, whereas I want to understand what a habit, any habit, reveals;



what it is, and not where it comes from. Now, if we do not seek an interpretation or an explanation of the past, there can be a direct observation without judgement, which is the immediate reaction in awareness, in the awareness of the reaction. Then it may be observed that a certain action has become a habit, because I have become dependent on that action. This dependence is now a mechanical reaction, a groove, in which my engine has to run, if it wants to run smoothly. That means that neither the movement of the engine, of thought, of action, etc. is important, nor the means by which I make it move, as long as it moves smoothly, as long as it relaxes my nerves, as long as it gives me satisfaction, as long as it helps me to feel, that I am what, I want to be, as long as I can forget that I am no that at all, but just a bundle of silly nerves kept together by the habit of a smoke, the habit of ten minutes' withdrawal in concentration, the habit of being together in communal prayer, etc. And I continue that habit, because it keeps me in good company. I want that, I need that, because I am afraid to be alone, to be myself. Do I want to know myself? Perhaps I could learn from my habits.

Habits provide security. Even though habits are binding, one prefers the security thereof, rather than the freedom of insecurity. And yet, habits are destructive to real living, because they destroy sensitivity, they prevent awareness, they cause the panic of fear in the freedom of insecurity and independence. Thus, the mind does not want to be free; it wants to be dependent so as to be secure. But there is no security in impermanence; there is only the desire for security, for only then can there be the continuance of hope for a better and ideal living. Habits are therefore a form of escape in which the mind can go to sleep and need not be on the alert all the time. But, without awareness of what is, of my reaction to what is, awareness of what this 'I' is apart from those reactions and habits, there is only a denial of living, a denial of sensitivity, of affections and of love. Habit is thus a denial of love and of life. Yet, one is afraid to abandon one's habits, for they are one's dress and make-

up. Without our habits and memories, our hopes and fears, our reactions to desire, which are the conditioning of the mind, which can produce only thoughts which are habit-forming mental drugs, without all that cunning and evading, there is nothing to cling to, a dress on a cloth-hanger inside a wardrobe.

But, when there is nothing to cling to, there is total freedom in which there is direct experiencing, unconditioned by habits, independent of memories. But in that total freedom from fear, there is an immediate response of insight which is always new, not hemmed in by routine, not regulated by a sense of duty, not propelled by motives, but sensitive and fully alert in understanding, truly alive, aware and awake.

# Awareness in Meditation

## Stillness of the Mind

Meditation is the stillness of the mind without the entanglement of the past and without the agitation towards the future. Thus it is not an action of the mind, limited to a certain time of the day, but a watchfulness without thought of the watcher. And so it is not purposeful; it is not a method for quieting the mind; it is not an exercise in concentration.

The mind can concentrate its thoughts on anyone of the forty methods and objects of concentration, from a disc of clay to a corpse, from the glories of the gods to the impurities of the body, from subtle breathing to the gross food needed for sustenance. But all such concentration radiates from the centre of the mind, searching for an object to hold thought in thrall. The bond may be compassion and sympathy, but it is always the thought of the ideal which is both the impulse and the focus, the means and the end, of thought in action.

Meditation, which is contemplation, is not thought in action; it is the ending of thought, thought being the accumulated experiences in memory, classified and projected into an image of the future, to the ideal of striving, the desire of the goal. Concentration of thought is always self-centred, because thought is of 'self'. But contemplation is mere awareness, watchfulness of this process,

without becoming entangled in it, because there is no meditator who attempts to achieve an end of perfection.

When the mind is merely watching the entire process without taking part in it, it is quiet without anticipation and without fear. There is neither striving to attain, nor desiring to escape, for there is no thought of 'self'. Without goal or purpose, in mere watchfulness, there is no conflict, no entanglement, no agitation. And in that quiet peace there is a new revelation which is free from idealistic colouring. It is the stillness of understanding and love. That is meditation without thought and without 'self'.

Meditation is of a mind that is not focused on an object of its own selection; it is not concentrated on an exclusive object of its own choice; it is not a channelling of thought with a fixed purpose in view. In meditation the mind is very quiet, the process of thinking is at a standstill; the surroundings are observed, but do not influence; and thus, the mind, while awake and alert, remains unconditioned. Although the perceived forms part of its perception, it is not stored up in memory and as part of the mind. Perception in meditation, which is contemplation, is free and unattached; it has no desire for the possession of the perceived, and thus it is not stored up in memory and is not used in that extraordinary composition, where the past and selected experiences are collected to form that unit of existence which can continue only in desire, in projection, in an ideal which is the future, the 'I', the 'self', the embodiment of security.

For the sake of that security the 'I' stores up whatever may strengthen the building, the isolation, the opposition against that 'self', which is the conflict in the basic struggle for existence between to be what is, and to become what is wanted.

Meditation is not a search for power, for quiet, for achievement, but is the simple watchfulness of what is, in the beauty of a flower, in the squalor of the mind in search of power, in the striving for spiritual attainment. In that simple watchfulness and awareness there is immediate contact with actuality, not with the ideal of the

future, based on a dead memory. And with the cessation of this striving there is also the cessation of the imaginary 'self', which in striving and in projecting isolates and opposes and is the cause, the structure, the existence, the endurance of the conflict, which prevents seeing things as they are, but which idealises them as they are wanted, and thereby create chaos instead of peace.

## Freedom of the Mind

As long as the mind is guided by principles, is being enticed by a goal, is used as an instrument to become, to attain, to acquire, there is no meditation but concentration which focusses all its energy on one centre, in order to achieve its objective. When the object of concentration is the freedom of the mind, it is only an ideal, which is a thought. And thought is only a reflex of memory. One knows bondage of body and of mind; and as bondage hampers movement at will, its opposite becomes the goal of striving through concentrated effort. But it all remains, nevertheless, within the field of thought, which is a reaction of the mind in bondage. Discipline and control of thought is not meditation, remains thought and striving for an ideal. Speculations are also ideals based on thought, and cannot provide freedom to the mind.

Can the mind perceive without the operation of thought? If so, what happens? In simple awareness of observation without giving direction, without choice or selection, there is an attentiveness of which is not of thought. There is no comparing with other mental states, which is the work of memory. There is no manipulation for purposes of exploitation, acquisition, continuation, which is the work of idealisation, the work of thought prospecting. There is no responding to any action through feeling or concept; no distortion through memory, no pressurising through ideology. Perception, which is neither acceptance of justification, nor rejection of condem-

nation, is then not a repetition of the past, nor does it act according to a pattern. It is free.

In that observing of what is, thought does not enter at all. There is no thought of a thinker or an observer; there is no division, no opposition; and thus no conflict, no distortion, no bondage, no desire to become, no past and no future.

Listening, seeing, being aware of what is, is learning the truth that is; it is to be free from memory, free from ideals, free from any bondage, from the delusion of 'self'.

## Emptying the Mind

Meditation is the emptying of the mind of all conditioning, so that there is no distortion or delusion.

Delusion begins with the feeling that one must be something; and it is this idealistic attitude which is the basis of all self-deception and hypocrisy. The feeling that one must be something is, of course, the implicit acknowledgement that one is not what one should be. That acknowledgement is the outcome of the mind's activity of measuring, comparing, judging, all of which require an ideal measure of what is good or bad. This measuring rod is the ideal formed by thought from past experiences, and preserved in memory after careful selection and registration, 'good' being that which preserves the image of 'self', makes it grow and continue, provides security and gratification, 'bad' being the opposite of all that. Thus, thought is conditioned by the ideal, the ideal being conditioned by selective thought, neither having an independent foundation. In hope and fear the ideal is sustained in distortion and delusion. Even the very desire for the overcoming of delusion is a distorted ideal in which the 'self' hopes to continue, away from conflict. Delusion is not something to be got rid of, for that would be just another identification of the 'self' with some new achievement. Delusion is the measuring of 'self', with the ideal. When there is no measuring,

neither the 'self', nor the ideal have any meaning of their own. This freedom from measuring, from comparison, from judging is not an achievement, an acquisition, a virtue; it is there when there is no identification, no desire for achieving, no will for becoming. And that is the act of meditation in which the mind empties itself of all conditioning, of all desires, hopes and fears, in which the mind does not concentrate on a pre-chosen object or state, but just watches with direct awareness what is. Without focussing on what should be the ideal, without relying on memory as the foundation for such an ideal, but by direct perception of what is without judgement, there is an emptying the mind of all conditioning, of all distortion, delusion, conflict, of all 'self' deception and hypocrisy. This meditation is contemplation when thought is silent. It is not silence which has a starting point in a centre; and it has no focus in the distance. It just is, without movement, without quality, without purpose. It does not come from somewhere; it cannot be produced, it cannot be felt, it cannot be remembered. It does not go inward or outward, it is just all-pervading, and there is no awareness of a 'self' being involved. It does not resist and it does not reject; it does not disturb and cannot be disturbed.

There is no feeling of happiness or joy or well-being; it is far above and beyond all that is puny and ego-centric. There is no centre, and there is no thought. There is no concentration, no focus, no pointedness. It is just all and complete, with tenderness and subtleness, always fresh and new, without memory and without clinging, without hope and without fear, without projection in time and space and without craving for continuance. There is no 'I' to think, to cling, to become, to continue. It is just there, unborn, unconditioned, independent. It does not involve the 'I', it does not embrace the 'I', it does not absorb the 'I'. There just is no 'I' no 'self', no other, no feeling, no sensation, no perception, no concept, no image, no ideal.

There is just stillness, peace, release, freedom. And in that complete stillness there is a great tenderness; in that utter peace there is great love; in that total freedom there is a direct understanding which is the wisdom of insight. And there is no room for anything else.

## Negation of Thought

Meditation, which is contemplation, is negation, because it is not the outcome, or the result, or the reaction of effort, or of intention, or of desire. Meditation comes in total denial of thought, of memory, of system. Contemplation is not impelled by desire for success or achievement; there is no thought of experience which would be a thought of 'self'; it does not aim at a goal, at an ideal, at continuance, at being, or becoming. But in total negation of all that is past or future, there is only the present moment, not to mould or to shape, but to watch. In watching the present moment without introducing a thought about it, there will arise a reaction which is the 'self'. Meditation is to understand that reaction, to see in that reaction the 'self' as it is, as it works, as it schemes, exploits, hides and influences, distorts and manipulates, with a purpose to absorb, to become, to continue, to expand.

There is no need to concentrate on a chosen object, when the observation of the working of thought exposes the cunning of the mind in reaction to obtain stability, to acquire security, to spread its influence and power. When awareness thus sees the reaction of thought in action, the mind will become quiet, as there is no escape or ideal presenting itself in negation of thought as memory or desire. Without object is no thought for concentration, but whatever is present is seen as it is in itself, not as useful to the mind or to 'self' in approval or rejection. Then, effort will be seen as an escape to become; and effort will cease. With the cessation of becoming there is just the fact of seeing what is: false as false, and that is



truth; becoming as 'self', and that is the truth; desire as escape, and that is the truth. And in seeing the truth there is no falsehood, no 'self'-delusion, no more escape. And that is the end of conflict.

To think of something and concentrate one's thoughts on that, is not meditation, is not contemplation. In concentration there is the introduction of an object of thought, an idea, a concept, which may be a very lofty thought, a very abstract idea, a very noble concept, but it is still a thought which was introduced, that is, selected and chosen in preference to other ideas. Concentration then becomes an exercise of exclusion, in which thought is centred and focussed on a noble idea, in which the mind gets lost in sublime feelings and thoughts, in which the hindrances to noble living are by-passed, in which perhaps even trancelike visions are experienced. But it is still thought, exclusive thought, sublime thought, thoughts of love and compassion, thoughts of infinity and boundless space; but it is still thought, concentrated thought, wilful thought, thought in isolation and hence in opposition. This may for a moment, that is, for a duration in time, by-pass the conflict within and without, but it has not solved the problem of the conflict of opposition, which is the conflict of 'self'.

Meditation is aware of that. It sees things as they are, without trying to make as they should be. Thus, meditation does not introduce thoughts, but sees, contemplates and understands them as they arise, as they continue, as they struggle to survive, as they fight for supremacy, as they cease to make way for others. In that awareness there is no reference to standards of nobility, but just silent contemplation of those thoughts, of their nature of exclusion and opposition, of their assertion and motivation. In this insight of the nature of things and events there is understanding of the voidness of their effort to become, to maintain, to expand. And in the understanding of that void there is freedom, there is the cessation of striving, the end of desire to become, the stilling of thought. Thus,

without motive and without goal, there is the ending of conflict in the cessation of becoming, of thought, memory, of ideal.

And so, awareness in Buddhist meditation has no method, no motive. It is not concentration of thought on a chosen object, but mindfulness which is contemplation. The object of such contemplation is not chosen, but observed without selection. And what is observed is not a physical object such as a dead body, but the mental reaction to seeing, to coming face to face with death. Likewise, thoughts of the past, are the lingering memories, associated with selected events. Such selection is obviously based on valuation, and is therefore conditioned in its outlook and purpose. Awareness is then not an attentive concentration on those thoughts of the past, but is an observation of mindfulness, seeing the fact, the cause, the purpose of such selection now. It is the choice of that selection that can be seen the present tendency of the mind, seeking its strength in memories, filling its void with thoughts of 'self', escaping the fear of being 'no-self'. Thoughts about the future are the projected ideals with which the mind tries to stabilize and continue its activity. It is therefore not the objective ideal which is to be observed, but the actual conditions which make the mind project its thoughts in expectations, in ideals, in desires for continuance and security. And so, the 'search' itself, that is, the actual process of searching, is now the object of awareness.

Contemplation thus is the actual awareness of the present state of mind, whether that is seen as lofty or lowly. It is in concentration on an ideal that unworthy thoughts are pushed aside and a more noble thought is introduced to fix the mind and purify its activity. But that thought which is introduced in concentration is also an ideal with a goal of purity and perfection. In doing so, the mind avoids dealing with actual problem of the moment, which is a thought seen as imperfect, distracted, impure, selfish, full of craving and clinging. But mindfulness, which is an observation of the actual state of the imperfect mind, will be aware of a tendency or a desire

to become perfect. Awareness does not follow up such thought of ideal perfection, but sees and observes the thought of desire which is actual. The desire is here, is actual; because I do not like the fact of being imperfect; and my reaching out for that ideal is thus an attempted escape. In the awareness of this attempt can also be seen the futility of reaching out for an ideal, which after all is made by the same mind, the ideal of escaping from what I am, to become what I am not. In this awareness thought ceases, as the ideal becomes meaningless and void. In the cessation of thought, of striving, of escaping, of becoming, there is the freedom from all conditioning.



# Awareness in Contemplation

I wish to conclude these observations on awareness in Buddhist meditation with some special observations on what are usually thought of as the most sublime states (*brahma-vihāra*) of mental concentration, the sublime states of the mind dwelling in universal love (*mettā*), with boundless compassion (*karuṇā*) and sympathetic joy (*muditā*), rising into the most sublime state of equanimity (*upekkhā*). But they will be observations with a difference. Here they are not presented as the highest peaks of virtue, and hence not as a goal striving for perfection. Such may be the road mapped out for a Bodhisatta, a being striving for enlightenment to make others enlightened too. As such they could be classified with the ten perfections (*dasa pāramitā*) on the purifying way with the illuminating truth towards a unifying life. It is an old doctrine, the doctrine of fulfilment in perfection, the doctrine of gradual attainment, of striving, of progress, and of achievement. The Way, the Truth and the Life (via, veritas et vita).

Here is given the instantaneous realisation which comes through insight. When the truth is seen, there is no need of development. When the false is seen as false, there is no need to explain the truth. The fool, who knows that he is a fool, is a wise man. Thus it is with instantaneous insight. Once the curtain is drawn aside, there

is the wide vista for all to see. Then loving kindness (*mettā*) is not a divine state to be cultivated. Compassion (*karuṇā*) is no longer a ray of light sent out in the darkness of passion. Then, spiritual joy (*muditā*) is so much more than a sharing of delight. And even-mindedness (*upekkhā*) in bearing up with patience and equanimity, is seen as the perfect balance, not of opposing forces, but as the absence of attraction and repulsion, which can only be experienced in the absence of 'self'.

Then, virtue is not an acquisition, not a goal of attainment, not an aim of perfection, but it is perfect just because there is nothing to acquire, nothing to be attained, nothing to be aimed at. When there is effort there is imperfection, when there is striving there is an ideal, when there is an ideal there is a concept, an image of perfection produced by thought, and hence a projection of desire.

This cannot be reached by concentrated effort; and in contemplation which is insight the object just evaporates, and is no more but a concept. Such is the work of awareness, which is attention, which is contemplation, which is meditative insight.

There are many kinds of virtue, such as the moral excellence of patience shown in time of oppression, the cardinal virtues of justice, prudence, temperance and fortitude; the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. They are all good qualities resulting from a sense of duty, inherent power, strength of character. But, there are four virtues which are sacred in their special 'devotion'; superlative because of their highest degree above beyond the usual; excellent, super-eminent and hence divine: It is not that they are super-human, but they are so exalted that they only reflect the divine qualities in man. Hence they are called the divine abodes (*brahma-vihāra*). The Ven. Piyadassi Mahā Thera in his 'Buddhist Meditation' (p.79) has referred to these four sublime states as 'excellent, lofty, noble states of living', 'the art of noble living'. They are referred to as boundless, as without limitation (*appamaññā*), because their objects are not restricted; they enclose and embrace

all beings without distinction of race and creed, even those who appear to oppose us on variety of grounds, often more emotional than reasonable. These states are truly dispassionate and sublime over the feelings of attachment and aversion, which are experienced not only in the human heart and in those less fortunate beings struggling upwards on their path of evolution, but even in some spheres of light and bliss, the heavens of those who reap the fruits of their earlier good deeds. We call them the spheres of light (*deva-loka*), because we (here below!) experience still so much of darkness in our partial understanding. But, even their light and bliss are far from enlightenment and emancipation. And thus, these boundless states of lofty living are compared to life in the Brahma-lokas, where the senses of material satisfaction have been transcended, and where the mind dwells in spheres of abstraction and of formless beauty with glimpses of truth.

For, just as the ‘brahmas’ are gods of the highest spheres beyond experience of the senses, where the mind dwells in regions of form (*rūpa-loka*), such as logic, joy, adequacy and one-pointedness (*vitakka-vicāra, pīti, sukha, ekaggatā*), and in formless spheres (*arūpa-loka*), where abstract thought dwells on the infinity of space and consciousness, on the no-thingness of all and the imperceptibility of perception—so these sacred virtues are considered as divine dwellings (*brahma-vihāra*) of the mind, because they are not found in human emotions. Love (*mettā*) is not charity; compassion (*karuṇā*) is not pity; sympathy (*muditā*) is not sentiment; equanimity (*upekkhā*) is not resignation or evenness in temper. It is of these four lofty virtues that we shall speak, or dwell on them in meditation which is contemplation rather than concentration, and which through insight can lead to deliverance. These four ‘divine’ virtues are also called ‘immeasurable’ (*appamaññā*) because they bring about happiness and tranquillity beyond thought and reason in various degrees of mental absorption (*jhāna*). They replace the desires of the senses by abstract thoughts of good-will, beauty and

truth in spheres where sense-pleasures have lost their meaning and importance. They too have to be transcended, not in an effort of striving for attainment which involves concentration, but in the removal of the limitations through contemplation which is insight (*vipassanā*). Then those lofty states will be truly immeasurable (*appamaññā*).

The four sections of the Sutta Piṭaka (that is the division containing the sayings of discourses) all have their references to these lofty states, when a monk is advised 'to let his mind pervade one quarter of the world with thoughts of benevolence (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*) and mental poise (*upekkhā*), ... and so the second, third and fourth quarter, and thus the whole world, above, below, around and everywhere ... with heart free from anger and ill-will'<sup>20</sup>, yet a detailed explanation is lacking.

In the Abhidhamma Piṭaka (that is the division dealing with matters more philosophically and systematically), a brief analysis is found in the Dhammasaṅgaṇī<sup>21</sup>, connecting these divine states with the four mental absorptions (*jhāna*). The first three states of absorption, characterised by discursive thought (*vitakka vicāra*), spiritual joy (*pīti*) and an experience of well-being (*sukha*) which is far above sense-satisfaction, are accompanied by good-will (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*) and sympathy (*muditā*); while only in the fourth trance (*jhāna*) which is characterised by one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*), all four sublime states including equanimity (*upekkhā*) are found.

Details of practice are given only in Buddhaghosa's commentaries to the Dhammasaṅgaṇī and in his Visuddhimagga. But, the practice of this kind of concentration (*samatha-bhāvanā*), as that of most concentration practices (*kammaṭṭhāna*), appears to be pre-Buddhistic in origin, for the two bodhisattas, Makhadeva and Sud-

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<sup>20</sup>D. i. 250; iii. 223; M. i. 38; ii. 76; III. 146; S. iv. 296; A. v. 299 and elsewhere.

<sup>21</sup>Dhs. 53



dhassana, as kings in a world long before the Buddha, practised this form of concentration, which deserved them a rebirth in the spheres among the Brahmas<sup>22</sup>. Even wandering ascetics of other religious sects went through this practice, resulting after their death in being united with Brahma<sup>23</sup>.

But, although probably of non-Buddhistic origin, this practice of concentration was not only adopted by, but also assimilated in the context of the Buddha's doctrine whenever the difference is shown<sup>24</sup>. Whereas the practice of the ascetics could result in rebirth in the Brahma-world, the culture according to the Buddha-doctrine includes the cultivation of 'freedom of mind' (*ceto-vimutti*), which is said to lead to the transcendent state of a non-returner (*anāgāmin*), the penultimate stage towards full emancipation of arahantship<sup>25</sup>.

This freedom of mind (*ceto-vimutti*) is not the deliverance of Nibbāna, but a freedom from thought in the direct experiencing of the four formless spheres of mental absorption (*arūpa-jhāna*), with beauty (*subha*) as the limit of the first sphere through benevolence (*mettā*); infinity of space (*ākāsānañca*) through compassion (*karuṇā*); infinity of consciousness (*viññāṇa*) through sympathetic joy (*muditā*); and the sphere of nothingness (*ākāṅkamaññā*) through mental poise (*upekkhā*)<sup>26</sup>. It is because of the infinities of the formless that these sublime states are called divine (*brahma-vihāra*) and immeasurable (*appamaññā*).

They are in their immeasurableness not states of concentration; for what can be the object of thought when thought itself has been absorbed in the ecstasy of boundless space, of infinite consciousness, of being nothing, of imperceptible perception? They are the experiences in contemplation (*vipassanā*), when no thought can refer to 'self', no concept can conceive the infinite, no ideal can replace what

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<sup>22</sup>M. ii. 76; D. ii. 196

<sup>23</sup>D. i. 250; M. ii. 195.

<sup>24</sup>S. v. 115.

<sup>25</sup>A. v. 300.

<sup>26</sup>S. v. 115

has no entity, no conflict can disturb what is beyond perception. It is only in the insight (*vipassanā*) of contemplation that the four sublime states can be seen as truly 'buddhic', in the sense of awakening to reality.

In the mental culture of contemplation (*vipassanā bhāvanā*) the incursions of detrimental distractions are excluded, not by suppression, but by understanding the search for the pleasurable as a mental reaction with the projection of the 'I'-concept. In the comprehension of such reactions as they arise with their causes and their aims, there is revealed the true state of the mind at the moment. The cultivation of loving kindness (*mettā*) by a mind which is inflamed by passion and anger might suppress and even sublimate such unbecoming feelings. That is the work of meditation which concentrates on the goal of attaining tranquillity of mind (*samatha bhāvanā*). But that does not alter the structure of one's character which is inclined to passion, which is ambitious to attain virtue, which is still selfish in its very essence. Similarly, the concentration on sublime spheres may lead to rebirth as a Brahma, but not to the deathless emancipation of Nibbāna, in which there is no more becoming, no more birth, and no more death. Concentration may provide an escape as sought by the bodhisatta and his teachers in his last life. But as an escape from mundane conflicts, they cannot provide a solution. And that is the difference between the pre-Buddhistic practices of concentration and the exclusively Buddhist approach of insight through contemplation. The states of mental absorption (*jhāna*) to which the practice of sublime virtues leads towards the overcoming of the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) cannot provide to the mind more rest than sleep gives to the body. Contemplation gives insight and maturity, whence right action follows as its fruit. Then, loving kindness is love, which has neither subject nor object, and which knows no bounds and no source; a love which is truly immeasurable.

These four 'divine' virtues are also called immeasurable (*apamaññā*), because they bring about happiness and tranquillity be-

yond thought and reason in various degrees of mental absorption (*jhāna*). There they replace the desires of the senses by abstract thoughts of good-will, beauty and truth in the spheres of form (*rūpa-loka*) where sense-pleasures have lost their importance and meaning. They too have to be transcended, not in an effort of striving for attainment which is concentrated effort, but in the removal for the obstacles which limit the view of contemplation which is insight and understanding of the mind its mental states as they arise and appear. Then those 'sacred abodes of Brahma' will be truly immeasurable.

## Loving Kindness

Where all religions speak of love and then criticize one another that their own brand of love is quite superior to the other, it is not easy to find a common base of understanding. To say that God is Love (both with capital letters!) is not very helpful when one does not know what is god and what is love. At best they are concepts, that is, they are ideas of a mind with desires for attainment, with thoughts of escape from the profane, with hopes of achievement in the future and fears of failure in the present. They are ideas of self-projection, which find their supreme expression in 'I am That' (both with capitals letters!).

It is not only hate which restricts both heart and mind; but also love which is affection and attachment. In these meditations, to be truly sublime, and divine, there must be a transcendence, which is not by one 'self', but in which the very thought of 'self' will be transcended. That alone is sublime; and that is the love of a compassionate heart, the sympathy and equanimity of an understanding mind.

The following thoughts, therefore, will not throw new light on the ancient lore of love, but there will be a new approach to the problem of hate which has divided mankind for millions of years notwithstanding the exhortations of so many religious leaders. We

all know what is right; and yet we do wrong. It is obviously not enough to repeat the ancient truth that 'hatred cannot be overcome by hatred, but by the love alone'. Perhaps we do not know what love is. And so we repeat the word without understanding it. We pursue love without knowing love; we do not know love because we seek happiness. And in our search for happiness we seek ourselves, while in that search for 'self' we create opposition which is hate.

It is a new way of looking which has to begin with overlooking much we have learned before. Without rejection (which is also opposition and hate) we must open our mind and heart, clean out the dustiness adhering to dead words and thoughts (Rabindranath Tagore), and make a fresh start with ... nothing!

Of course, there is love, a love which is not an abstraction, but which is a loving relationship, 'a force linking heart with heart to heal and unite in true companionship'<sup>27</sup>. But is that a love which can be developed? And can love be developed through thinking out the evils of hate, and the advantages of non-hate? Can love be developed through study and an appreciation of the benefits of love? Can love be developed and made to grow, cultured in meditation (*bhāvanā*) which is concentration aimed at creating a bond of affection, ultimately to encompass all living beings? How can meditation blossom, if the mind is controlled, conditioned, suppressed, corrupted in ambition, searching for success, hoping in despair? There is no meditation in the effort of building defences of a 'self' in isolation, in putting up resistance in opposition, in conflict, in rejection which is choice, which is 'self'. There is no meditation in systems, in practice, in patterns of conformity, for there is no freedom when there is desire.

And when there is desire, there is no love.

Love, as we know it, as we read about it in novels, as we see it portrayed in films, is either selfish possessiveness or emotional sentimentality. As long as love is exclusive affection, it is based on

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<sup>27</sup>Piyadassi Thera: Buddhist Meditation, p. 82.

selfish possessiveness; the beloved is the property of the lover; and when the ownership is disputed, love turns easily into hate. Such love is self-love and the object is only a projected image of the ideal of 'self'. Without such possession the lover feels lost; and then means are sought to perpetuate and legalise that ownership in marriage, as if a contract based on selfishness can sanctify such bond. From such exclusive possession arise jealousy, fear, enmity, all signs that there was no true love as foundation.

Emotional sentimentality is a mere sensation which has not even the basis of understanding. It is a mere desire for satisfaction and gratification of the senses, and cannot last beyond such momentary gratification. Such self-satisfaction is merely a form of self-expansion, and has no thought, no understanding, no feeling beyond 'self'. When such sentiments are not reciprocated, emotions can easily turn into hate and cruelty. Devotion for religious objects is only a form of sentimental emotion, in which the object, a relic, a picture, an image, takes the place of the ideal which is a thought-projection. Such devotion has often led to persecution, torture, slaughter and warfare.

Love, as it is misunderstood, is pleasure and desire. To get that, one depends on someone else, a wife, a husband, to satisfy that desire together with a sense of security in the possession of a mate, legally bound by marriage. The slightest deviation from this right of property (a mere look may suffice) leads to frustration, anger, and the divorce court sometimes. So much for love! And as regards the dependence on this pleasure and desire, it is so great that frequently within a year after separation in court or by death a second marriage is contemplated! This psychological dependence on someone else for the satisfaction of one's pleasure and desire is only a symptom of one's own unhappiness, frustration and loneliness. It is there, then, that one has to look for the cause of the failure in love. One seeks comfort in companionship with the thought of pleasure centred on oneself. With this image in mind there is no meeting in

true relationship, as all contact is with the mind's picture and the satisfaction of 'self'.

Love is not pleasure; but when we make it a pleasure as when we make love, then pain is not very far away, the pain of separation, of isolation, of opposition, of conflict. It is thought about love which gives pleasure in remembering an experience. But that is not love. That memory, however pleasurable, is not love. Thought which is memory gives continuity; and that gives pleasure the moment after the experience is past. And because we want continuity, we employ memory to provide us that pleasure. But, what is a product of desire is not love. For, desire is based on choice which is conflict, which must lead to confusion and pain. In desire there is opposition and separation, there is the 'I'-concept wanting to achieve, to obtain, to possess.

In possessiveness there is no love, no understanding, but callousness and exploitation. We can make pleasure, but love must come to us. And it cannot come, when mind is seeking satisfaction, when memory is selecting and rejecting, when the heart is full of attachment to 'self'. But, when thought is still and does not produce the images of tradition, of romance, of memory, of desire, then there will be calm without the agitation of selection, there will open receptivity without expectation, there will be an experiencing of love without naming it, love without a lover.

To find out what is love, religion, or anything at all, one has first to remove the obstacles which prevent one seeing clearly. One cannot see what is happening outside as long as one looks through a window with dirty or painted glass. To have a direct perception and experience of love, one has to understand that as long as there is a motive, an incentive, a desire for oneself, there is no love. If there is a feeling of hurt when one's love is not returned or appreciated, then there is no love at all. Friendship, generosity, sympathy, which expect a response of like nature is self-centred and cannot be love. When there is hope and expectation, there is also fear in idealism;

and that is not love. But when the heart is full of love, there is no thought of possessing the beloved, there is no emotional satisfaction of the senses, there is no ideal of continuation in that state; for all that is thought of self-love which desires to be secure in its emotions.

Love cannot be defined; for, words are the expressions of concepts; and thinking about love is not love. Love can only be experienced; and while experiencing, there is no thought of love, no ideal of loving to be attained, no division in a lover and a beloved, or between the lover and loving. In love, there is no lover, no thought of love, no memory of love, no desire for love.

Thus, whenever one perceives desire in emotion, clinging in perception, memory in experience, there is no love. Desire, memory, projection are always self-centred; and can never be love. Knowing thus what love cannot be, there is nothing to strive for, in order to become loving. But when the heart has been completely voided of all that is self, when the mind does not reflect or project, there is the openness to give and take, to be free all clinging and opposition, from all selection and conflict. Then only can there be the experiencing of love.

When one thinks of love, it is not love anymore. The person or the object of our love has become in our memory the symbol of pleasant sensations. But it is only an image made by the mind in order to prolong the sensation, in order to possess it and to identify oneself with it and live through it. Thus the memory of love becomes a means to sustaining our self-satisfaction. The 'self' cannot do without this satisfaction, for it is this satisfaction. Without sensation, without memory, without thought there is no 'self'. In creating this 'self' as the thinker, the lover, the subject, there is also created the memory, the loved object, which is 'mine'. But in doing so there is selection, choice, appropriation, which can only exist in balance with its opposition, the non-selected, the non-chosen, the discarded, the hated. And therefore, the very thought of love is the creator of hate, as the denial and the opposite of love. Whereas the only love

is in loving, the thought of love is not love at all, but produces the opposite memories of love and hate, both images, no doubt, but antagonistic and thereby the seat of conflict. Thought of the beloved is an attempt at retention and revival, if possible, of what is stored in memory as a pleasurable experience. Such thought is, therefore, of possessiveness, which strengthens the 'I'-concept, increases isolation and exclusion, opposition, and conflict. In the possessing of the symbol of love, there is exploitation of the object for personal satisfaction; and that is truly hatred.

If this sensation of hate is observed, as the memory of love was seen, both sensations of love and hate will vanish with the dissolution of memory, of the possessor, of the 'I'. Then, without conditioning, without clinging to either, there will be an open perceiving of the entire play without conflict, without opposition, without selection, without choice, without object, without 'self'. And in that there is love, which is universal and unconditioned.

Love, if it cannot be experienced at any odd moment of the day under any condition or circumstance, is a mere ideal which one hopes to realise in some distant future in another world or life. If love is only perfect in the sight of God in heaven, we may just as well forget about it, for the ideal life in heaven is as much a concept as any dream can be, notwithstanding the revelations, prophecies, miracles and dogmas proclaimed in the holy books of many religions.

As long as the idea of love remains an ideal, a concept, a thought, an image, a picture, that cannot be love and cannot be actual in the present and real in experience. And can one strive for something which is not real? Can love be brought into existence by striving to become full of love? Can one strive for something unknown?

But, without striving to become something in some unknown future is it so difficult to be what one is now? The difficulty is not in being thus, but in understanding it. For, throughout the ages the present moment has been influenced and conditioned by identification with the past, in customs and traditions, in faith and in



fear, in hope and desire, in education and environment. This identification with those thoughts and memories has been so thorough, that 'I' have become 'that'. 'I' am the past with its clinging to what is dead. And thereby there can be no living in experiencing the present moment. We do not live in the present and can therefore not be sensitive to the present, we cannot be sympathetic to the needs of others, and we cannot understand the nature of the fetters which bind us to the past in fear and craving for security.

But in seeing and understanding, there is freedom from fear, from conditioning, from striving to become; and in that atmosphere of calm and unselfishness there is love, now.

Love is not acquisitive. Rather it is destructive, because it does not build up, does not maintain and preserve, because it has no thought of the future. It cannot maintain past, because it has no memory to feed on. That which lives in memory is not love; it is possessiveness, acquisitiveness, selfishness. That which lives in ideals is not love; it is hope, it is fear, it is escape, it is 'self'.

Love destroys all things made by the mind, by its thoughts of clinging to past memories; for, love is loving, and cannot think of 'self' while loving; it cannot strive to become, to retain, to possess, when there is fulfilment in loving. Love cannot build, cannot protect, cannot make secure; love is blind to the future as well as to the past, because in love there is no concept of time, of duration, of continuing. And so, love has no problem, no conflict, no knowledge of attachment or opposition, no worry, no agitation, because in loving there is no desire, no gratification, no thought of 'self' or others.

Love is destructive, because it destroys all thought of self, of security, of permanence. It is destructive, because it destroys all that has been built up so carefully so as to endure throughout the ages, faith and hope, religion and tradition, emotion and devotion.

In love there is nothing to gain and nothing to lose, for there is no thought of anything, past or future. It is only now, at the moment of

loving; and that moment is always now and cannot be made, cannot be repeated, cannot be retained, cannot be remembered, cannot be relived, cannot be anticipated, cannot be created, because in love there is no 'self', and hence no opposition in another. It is a fire, always burning with a new flame, destroying all, and living in the glow and warmth of its all-embracing love.

To find out what is love, one has to divest the mind of all notions, which under the cover of the word 'love' denote quite something else. When religions speak of love, the love of God, the love of one's neighbour, they present an ideal of which the mind knows nothing. One of their own saints said once: How can you say that you love God whom you do not see, when you do not even love your neighbour whom you daily meet?

Do I know my neighbour? I see him with a prejudiced mind: I judge him from a prearranged viewpoint; I meet him for my own purpose and satisfaction. If he belongs to a different political party, or religious denomination, or social standing, I refuse to know him. Thus being mentally isolated there is no understanding, and there can be no love.

Sexual fulfilment is called love; but that is only a momentary abandonment of oneself with a fierce intensity of emotion which burns out almost immediately, leaving only exhaustion and memory. Thus, it has to be repeated over and over again to keep that emotional fire burning. It has in it an element of beauty and truth, when there is a total abandonment and surrender of self without thought or purpose beyond the moment. But the desire for continuance changes that love into lust, and need into greed, leaving anxiety, jealousy and conflict, in the struggle for possession. The love to possess is not love.

Love, then, cannot be dependent on ideals. It must be free to arise and cannot be cultivated or desired. When the mind is full of thoughts of 'self', of fear and hope, of judging and longing, of knowledge and emotion, there can be no love. Love is not in the

past, it cannot be in the future. Love is loving now, when there is no comparing or judging, when there is no desire or clinging, when there is no isolation or opposition, when there is no standards of 'self'. In loving there is no duty, no responsibility; but there is a complete understanding without opposition, without thought of self, without ideals of gain or loss. Then there is no fear, but utter freedom, in which there is no independence either on an ideal or on a person, freedom from authority, from organisation, from dogmas, from the image of 'self'. In the understanding of that freedom there is no will and no selection, no acceptance and no rejection. There is just the complete absence of 'self'; and that is love, the perfume of life.

## Compassion

We have been dwelling on the lofty concept of love at great length, as the other divine states (*brahma vihāra*) are all based on that essential approach and attitude. Once there is love without the reflection of 'self' there is also compassion (*karuṇā*) and a sharing of joy (*muditā*).

Compassion is not just a feeling of pity which inclines one to help others in need. It is a true passion as an outburst of enthusiasm, a gushing forth of zeal, but without the lust for life or for enjoyment. In fact, it is a passion without desire, or projection, or purpose, or goal beyond; a passion shared (compassion), and hence without self-motive it is the feeling of distress that things could be so different, if there were better understanding in mutual relationship. Such compassion moved the Buddha to share his discovery of truth with others so that they too would understand. It is a feeling together (compassion), but not as a sentimental substitution in which the suffering of others is fancied as one's own. That kind of vicarious experience has the self as object and hence the self as goal and that is far from sublime.

Compassion is frequently seen as a necessary antidote to hatred, from Buddhaghosa<sup>28</sup> to Conze<sup>29</sup>. The many centuries of Buddhist thought have repeated the three roots of evil to be lust, hate and delusion (*lobha, dosa, moha*). And in doing so we certainly follow the Suttas, the sayings of the Buddha himself. But it is one thing to pinpoint the source of evil, and quite something else to set up a system of opposites to overcome the evil by resistance. The well-known saying that ‘hate cannot be overcome by hate but by love alone’ has no doubt much to recommend it. But the question is raised whether love and compassion should or even can be cultivated as an antidote to the evil of hate.

Thus, when it is said<sup>30</sup> that the ‘cultivation of friendliness and compassion can bring about a reorientation of our attitude to others ... induce us to be tender to all that lives, and direct our hatred away from other people’, it is also admitted that ‘the root of all this hatred is the belief that we are separate individuals, and this cannot be eradicated by the cultivation of social emotions.’

The fact of hatred, of aggressiveness, of opposition, is fairly obvious, as obvious as that there is water in the river. But can one prevent the water forcing its way merely putting a dam across its course? Can one stop hate by sentiments of loving kindness, by acts of friendship, by edifying statements and professions of compassion? Even when those feelings are sincere in their expressions and active in their benevolence, they originate from a source which is quite alien to the impulses of either love or hate.

To put it very simply: it cannot suffice to condemn or to suppress hate by cultivating an opposite tendency of love and compassion; because such attempt leaves untouched the source which seeks an outlet. A more profitable outlet for hate would be to direct this hate on to another object, thereby creating a diversion, as it is done when

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<sup>28</sup>Visuddhimagga.

<sup>29</sup>Further Buddhist Studies.

<sup>30</sup>Conze, Further Buddhist Studies, p.39.

a river is canalised at a dam site and used for other purposes, such as irrigation or hydrodynamic power. And that is done in ancient religious monasteries by means of asceticism which uses up the heat of hate on oneself. That, of course, is an outlet of energy, but it does not bring about understanding of that energy. And the result of such diversion is, of course, no solution of the original problem at the source of all conflict. Why is there hate? And what is hate?

As long as compassion is based on suffering in oneself, as a reflection of the misfortunes of someone else, there may be a feeling together, and even a suffering together. But that is a substitution in the mind, which identifies itself with the other. It is a feeling in oneself, reflecting the pain, suffering and sorrow, experienced by someone else. That the mind is capable of such identification to a very huge degree is shown in such individuals (saints?), who not only experience actually in their mind in concentration the suffering of Jesus on the cross, but who even physically present in their body the stigmata of the crucifixion in their bleeding hands and feet. It is a manifestation of faith (*saddhā-bala*) with the power of concentration (*samādhi-bala*) which can make people walk over fire, psychic powers (*iddhi*) can control physical activity. As in the case of 'concentration' on kindness, here is a concentration of a particular aspect (pain or grief) in a person with whom I have identified myself so much that the suffering is felt as a personal affliction. This identification may be, of course, an expression of one's affection, of good-will, of fondness, which is emotional, such as a mother's love and care for her child.

But the sublime virtue (*brahma-vihāra*) of compassion must be above personal affection to be truly immeasurable (*appamaññā*) to be universal. Thus there can be in compassion which is universal and all-embracing no division, nothing personal, nothing ego-centred. And so, the concentration on the sorrow of a person dear to me has to be deprived of its identity, stripped of its self-identification, and hence without opposition to an enemy. To be truly sacred there

should not be a barrier of distinction, which is actually the barrier of 'self'. And so, the object is not the person who suffers, but suffering itself. And with that, 'concentration' becomes 'contemplation'. And again the question arises: What is suffering? What is hatred?

In true compassion one is moved to action, though not just emotionally, for no other reason and with no other motive than the setting right of what was fallen. It may be the mere removal of a stone on the path, which may cause hurt to people walking in the dark; the prevention of a child hurting itself in ignorance; the showing of the right path to a traveller going astray. The result is immaterial, but the deed must be done, and is done without forethought, without plan, without thought beyond. Thus, there is no thought of regret, no anticipation of reward, but the mere understanding of the need of immediate action which comes spontaneously as long as one's eyes are not closed, as long as one's mind is not preoccupied with greed. This spontaneity is an essential characteristic of compassion. But, for the mind to act spontaneously, that is, to act at all, instead of merely reacting, it is to be free from conditioning in which the mind can only respond without seeing, without understanding, without love.

When the house is on fire there is only one thought: save what can be saved. Books may be thrown out of the window or soaked with water in an attempt at preventing them getting burnt to ash. There is no time or further thought, for further motives or desires: save what can be saved, without thought of method.

Well, we are on fire. 'Everything is burning', said the Buddha, 'with the fires of lust, hate and delusion'. Can I see so much foolishness and be unmoved? No one can save another one, if he does not want to be saved. Even the teaching of the Buddha is impermanent and must decline, and in the course of time disappear altogether, but at least, let me not be the cause thereof, or even contribute thereto by my selfish actions of lust and hate and foolishness. He, who understands that he is a fool, is a fool no more; and that insight

will show itself in action spontaneously. To understand that this individuality of mine is but a bundle of reactions, physical, emotional, sensual, conceptual, even conscious—that understanding can bring about a halt to this reactivity. And that is the beginning of pure action with understanding and love, which is compassion. And so, we are back again with the question: What is suffering, and what is hate? Suffering, sorrow, conflict, is the opposition in the mind which seeks the ‘self’ in exploitation of the ‘other’. It is in opposition that there is hate; it is in competition that there is the search for ‘self’ at the cost of others; it is in the preservation and isolation of my identity, that there is opposition and conflict. Seeing thus the cause and the essence of sorrow in my own isolation and opposition, true compassion will break down those barriers which protect the ‘self’ and which prevent any contact, relationship and understanding. Those barriers are mine; ‘I’ am the first and the last line of defence; ‘I’ am the fear which blocks all love and compassion; and thereby ‘I’ am that hatred which divides, which opposes, which is the cause of all conflict.

If there is no understanding of the gulf I have created, then there can be no understanding of the sorrow of conflict which I maintain in preserving my own identity in search of ‘self’. Compassion is usually seen as building a bridge across the gulf which separates me from my fellow-beings. But that is a mere reaction to my desire for action: I want to do something to help those suffering masses. But in building the bridge I maintain the abyss which actively separates. Even the filling of the abyss if that were possible, is no remedy for the separation and aloofness of the ‘self’ which stands apart to maintain its identity.

The psychological bridge of approaching the sorrow in others is only a substitute which still preserves the separation and the conflict. One may give help, economically or spiritually, but there remains the separation between the helper and the helped. Such attitude demands gratitude, acknowledgement, recognition, which

is the food on which the 'I' goes. True compassion lies in the total surrender of that concept of separation, which is the 'I'.

Even when we recognise a problem as a conflict, the mind finds pleasure in attempting to solve it. We do not want a solution, but we derive intellectual pleasure or spiritual enjoyment in the attempt at solution. Once we have solved a cross-word puzzle, the fun is gone; but we enjoyed meeting the challenge. The problem, once it is solved, has no further interest, for there is no further stimulus to action, which is the source of pleasure, because it is only in action that the 'self' can assert itself. The prospect of winning a prize is too remote to be effective. Thus it can be seen why people like to postpone final deliverance, why they find excuses for not living here and now, why they imagine that our present Buddha-Dhamma is insufficient, so that rebirth will be necessary under the dispensation of Maitri Buddha and his Dharma. We do not want a solution, but we want to play chess, to play about with the pieces of life, matching the power of religion (the bishop) against that of the state (the castle), or escape round the comer with a horse, sacrificing a pawn here and there to protect our vested interests (the King and Queen). And thus we move about in a real of idealism, of symbolism and of pitiful pride, postponing the moment of disillusionment, because we fear the void of the understanding of life without self.

When we come across sorrow and suffering, we see them as forces which play against us, and so our whole play of life is now directed to the overcoming of opposition. We feel that opposition when ideals are being frustrated. But we also visualise it, when we see the sorrows and the problems of others. That arouses a feeling of compassion, that is, a feeling together, suffering together. But, unless it is an understanding together, this feeling of pity may be just a transfer in which the image of sorrow is being transferred from the other to myself. Then I feel the sorrow of others, because I have put myself in their place. Such substitution cannot bring about a solution. It may be soothing for the other to know that there is



companionship in pain; and such sympathy could provide greater strength in bearing up with one's difficulties. But, greater strength to bear up does not really lessen the burden. It does not affect the burden at all, although it shifts my awareness of the burden. What then is the truly compassionate approach to the problem of sorrow in somebody else?

When Kisa Gotami came to the Buddha with her request of restoring life to her dead child, he did not console her with words, he did not give life to the child (as Jesus is reported to have done), but he cured the mother's ignorance, her selfish attitude of attachment which could see the child only as her child, her creation, the extension of herself. Thus, when after some futile attempts in procuring a medicine for death, she realised that there is no life which is not death, she realised that her approach to the problem of life and death was exclusively selfish. The death of the child was no loss to the child, but it was her loss; and that was the cause of her sorrow. Seeing that, she realised the meaning of sorrow as conflict. And that made her free. Such was the Buddha's compassion which did not revive the child, but cured the mother.

To see conflict in others may bring about an emotional compassion to be of help, which is certainly noble. It is the noble virtue of a bodhisatta, bringing others to perfect virtue. But to see that the real conflict is not in pain and sorrow, but in the isolation of the 'self in opposition, in the desire to regain what is lost, in the urge to overcome impermanence through self-projection, such understanding of conflict in its cause, the 'I', that is the approach of insight which leads direct to Buddhahood. It is only this insight which can truly solve the problem of conflict, and which, therefore, is the true spirit of compassion, dissolving all opposition and isolation in love and understanding.

## Sympathy

Sympathetic joy (*muditā*) is probably more sublime than compassion, although it is a mental rejoicing which partakes of the essence of gladness. According to Buddhaghosa<sup>31</sup> it is the absence of envy in the presence of prosperity in other. Where compassion can be the effect of self-identification with the grief of others, substituting in one's feelings the sorrow of others, it is much more difficult to appreciate the success of others where one has failed oneself. It is indeed the absence of envy.

But envy is not something one can put aside easily. Envy is a grudging contemplation of more fortunate people and their advantages. It is an ugly disposition which not only leads to antagonism and ill-feeling with regard to others who have done no wrong, but it also sours the mind and makes it turn against it-self. No wonder, therefore, that all religious teachers of morality have condemned this attitude of the mind, and advocated the fostering of non-envious thoughts of kindness and compassion.

Does that answer the challenge? Here my thought is of envy, and I do not like it. I do not want it, and I want to do something about it, so as to become non-envious. Thus, I form a desire for the state of being non-envious; but I am still envying, for I envy the opposite, which I feel I should be according to the rules of the books of religion, morality, good behaviour in society, etc. And now I envy those who are non-envious, and try to become like them, sympathetic.

Is not my very desire an expression of envy? How then can I ever meet this challenge? Obviously, my trying to respond to the challenge of envy is making me more envious of those who are not. And that is not meeting a challenge at all. It is mere resistance, provoked by my knowledge of moral behaviour. And that resistance can only produce more conflict. An ideal is set up as a target of achieve-

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<sup>31</sup>Dhs. A. & Vism.

ment, whereby an extra incentive is created for striving to reach a pre-set goal. Such desire of making become what is not, obviously confuses all understanding of what is. It is the mind of the past, the memory through personal experiences, or concepts derived from traditional doctrines which have created this hunger for achievement in the various fields of life, religious, educational, political, social, racial. This achievement is an ideal, for the attainment of which the present is sacrificed. How many parents wish their children to do better than they, even if they do not have the ability to excel. How many sacrifices have been made by the present generation to provide greater comfort and security for the next? Such future is the continuation of the present in the eye of those who set up the standard, who strive for an ideal, who project their own thought of 'self' to become a better 'self', a super 'self'. It is the creation of such ideals which has produced supermen as dictators, heroes for imitation, gods for adulation. In the past too, such tendencies and ideals have brought forth the present state of society, the present chaos of confused thinking, the present turmoil of strife and envy, which only prove that the ideal has not been reached. The search for security in the future will always fail, because there is no understanding of the present. The despair of failure, which is envy of the ideal, cannot be overcome by greater ideals, more striving, higher sacrifices, but by understanding the nature of envy as a desire for self-continuance in a self-made ideal, in a future 'self'.

Now, instead of wanting to change my envy into something which is more comfortable, more sympathetic, let me see why there is this attitude of mind, see it without judging or comparing. It is not the envy which causes the mental conflict, but it is rather the conflict which is made by the desire to change, which is envy, the will-to-become what I am not. Desire to change prevents understanding of what is. It is only when the mind is at peace and free from the burden of anxiety, involved in the desire to change, that there can be a direct approach. But, in a direct approach there is no conflict,

no preoccupation, no pettiness, but an openness, an adaptability, a freedom which is totally free from envy, when the mind is silent, when there is no seeker, and when there is truly feeling together, sympathy.

No amount of culture or of civilisation of religion or of philosophy, no transcendent state of ecstasy, no submissive state of ritualistic observance, no accumulation of meritorious past karma, no application of divine grace, can bring about the destruction of that hindrance which not only places 'self' above others, but which is the creator of 'self', the pride which says 'I am' (*asmī-māna*). Pride and envy cannot be overcome through striving, for they all have the same basis of wanting to overcome, wanting to become.

The only approach, perhaps, would be true self-love which is a love without selfish opposition. Any love for self which creates a conflict cannot lead to sympathy, but when in an understanding of the formative activity of the ideal 'self' there is true insight of what this 'self' involves, then thought, the creator of conflict, will come to a halt and see the true nature of thought in action; and thereby bring that process to an end. Only in oneself can 'self' be made to cease. And that is truly the last word in perfect understanding with love, compassion and sympathy. Sympathy (*muditā*) then is not only feeling together which could also be compassion and a sharing in sorrow, but it has here the characteristic of rejoicing in and with another's well-being. Thus, it becomes a capacity for sharing another person's emotions not only as a consolation in suffering, but which is perhaps much more difficult, as a sharing in joy which is not one's own and which cannot form a basis of substitution. One can transfer the emotions involved in the suffering of someone else by placing oneself in that position, and thereby feel sorry for oneself in that imagined plight. But it is not so easy to think of oneself as enjoying what is not one's own. It is often much easier to feel envious of the good luck of someone else when comparing that with the lack of luck in oneself.

This kind of sympathetic joy is therefore very sublime, as there is hardly any trace of a thought for oneself. Such sympathy with gladness is not directed by personal feelings, for there is no emotional substitution possible. Hence, in the absence of envy there is the absence of ill-will and hate, which forms the natural basis for loving kindness. Only when there is love can there be joy; and only in the absence of selfishness can there develop the right relationship which is the basis for understanding and insight. Appreciation of virtue, admiration for spiritual attainment, gladness over moral victory, as well as rapture in the experience of beauty, ecstasy in discovering a truth, no more desire in the presence of peace, all are expressions of this joyful sympathy in which there is no feeling and no thought of achievement in oneself.

Thus, sympathy is like a symphony which has all the ingredients for harmony, the soil in which conflict cannot grow. The fact of interdependent conditioning in the arising and cessation of all relationship shows that no event is self-sufficient in its cause and in its effect. Thus, being mutually interdependent and complementary, there can be no essential conflict with another. Conflict, which is disharmony, is brought about by a discord in sympathetic understanding of dependent origination. As always, it is the 'I'-element which disturbs the harmony in its opposition, it its urge for continuance, destroying all creative activity.

In symphonic harmony the composer may perhaps introduce an apparent discord, only to solve it in the joy of sympathetic accord. Such is the challenge in life which in its challenge may appear disturbing, and yet provide the opportunity for creative understanding and a harmonious solution. To achieve that, the discord must be dissolved by allowing it to play out its force whereby the true harmony of understanding is established.

This sympathy of love and understanding cannot accommodate any feeling of conflict or a continuation of opposition. Then, in the absence of conflict there is the characteristic joy of peace which is

not 'mine', but which is all-pervading just because there is no 'self'. And so, this all-pervading sympathy leads on to a perfect harmony which is the final and most pure abode in mental development, the peace of equilibrium, even-mindedness, poise, equanimity (*upekkhā*).

## Equanimity

The peace of even-mindedness (*tatra-majjhataṭṭā*) is the goal of all concentration (*samādhi*), culminating in tranquillity (*samatha*). In the constant experience of conflict (*dukkha*) there is but one aim: the experience of no-more-conflict (*dukkha-nirodha*). It is the third noble truth, leading directly to the path of deliverance, the noble eight-fold path (*ariya-aṭṭhaṅgika-magga*). It is the perfect bliss (*parama sukha*) which is the cessation of all becoming (*bhava-nirodha*), the end of all desire, Nibbāna.

Equanimity as a lofty mental factor (*sobhana-cetasikā*) is an ingredient to all skilful thought. It makes the concomitant factors proceed equally and smoothly, checking both deficiency and excess. It is the balancing power in thought, the neutral middle of equilibrium, and hence, even-mindedness. Not being balanced in favour of one or another, it leads to one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*) which is necessary for tranquil concentration (*samatha bhāvanā, samādhi*).

This equanimity is the culmination of ecstatic concentration (*jhāna*) when all hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) are inhibited and put to sleep. It is also the culmination of the ten perfections (*pāramitā*) of a bodhisatta, the final virtue which qualifies him for enlightenment, if he so wishes. It is the last and most glorious aspect of the seven facets of insight, the seven factors of enlightenment (*satta sambojjhaṅga*), forming an essential part of the 37 limbs of wisdom (*bodhipakkiya dhamma*). Thus, it is notable among the four sublime states (*brahma-vihāra*), as the most divine of all. Intellectual among the emotions, detached among the virtues, one-pointed in absorption, it calms down the passions of aversion and of fawning;

it realises the sameness of all beings and asks for neither preference nor acknowledgement. Yet, equanimity is not just a state holding the balance in the middle; for, that would for ever remain a most precarious position, liable to be upset by the slightest unbalance on either side. Such may be the suspended awe in ecstasy where the obstacles are made inoperative for the moment. Such mental attitude could be the outcome of mind-control; but in control and discipline there is the effort to maintain stability; there is self-restraint and desire for a well-balanced condition. This condition is, however, still an ideal for which the mind and the will strive in developing, in the hope of attainment of the ideal concept of equanimity. But, as long as equanimity remains an object as an ideal virtue, there is no even mindedness, but only striving to become, escaping from the turmoil of conflict, searching for a peace in which the 'self can continue undisturbed.

Once again, therefore, one has to turn away the view from the objective goal which is the goal of subjective striving, as all this effort is only an escape from conflict into the image of tranquillity. What is the object of this striving for mental peace? It is the 'I' who is being disturbed and hence seeks peace. And what is this disturbance? In the non-acceptance of what is there is the building up of an ideal image from which all disturbances may be excluded. And what is there to disturb the 'I'? What is the 'I' to be disturbed? While writing or concentrating on my studies, I am distracted by external noises. But those noises are not external; they are the reactions of thought to the reception in the senses. That means that I am that reaction; and that I am the disturbance. It is the reaction of rejection which is the disturbance.

Merely to force thought to concentrate more on my books and study will not reduce the disturbance; for, my increased objection and rejection can only increase the opposition which has been made by the isolation of 'self'. Now, the entire process is reversed, as it were. Instead of concentrating on a suppression of a disturbance

through mind-control or substitution or whatever system of mind-culture is advocated, here is watchfulness of what is actually taking place. The disturbance is seen as an opposition of the 'self' and not as to the 'self'. The opposition is felt, because there been set up a barrier of self-defence, an ideal frontier where none but 'self' may pass. In that isolation, which is opposition, there is no relationship possible, no contact, except with the ideal, created by the 'self'. According to that ideal there must be undisturbed peace of mind, so that the mind can follow-up its pre-set striving for the goal of its own making, and which is (as we have seen already) one's own 'self' as the ideal of perfect peace.

But, the 'self' is not ideal; it is very real in the sense of action and reaction, in the meaning of projection and desire, of escaping from the unwanted.

Watchfulness, without striving to attain an ideal state, can see the play of thought trying to become. And seeing it as play, its apparent reality has gone; and with it the ideal vanishes. Here is no laying of ghosts which never were there. Here is 'no conquest of a self' which never was. Here is just seeing the play as a play. And that too is an enjoyment, because now there is no more self-involvement; and that joy can be truly bliss, when all self-isolation has ceased to oppose, when there is no conflict of a spectator and an actor, when there is just living and experiencing life as it comes, when the 'I' is seen as the play. For, in this awareness there is also an awakening attention which sees and understands.

But, even here in this awakening there is still a lurking danger of a dualistic set-up: the spectator separating himself from the actor, as earlier the actor set himself apart from the action. Seeing the actor at play, and thereby seeing the unreality of both actor and play, being mere play-acting, that is an experiencing of aloofness, of non-involvement, of not being in with it. But this very experience of non-involvement, of not being in with it, is easily interpreted as being out of it: I am free, detached from all acting. I can see the



puppets on the stage of life and may even be impressed by their skill in movement, beauty and rhythm; and see it all as part of the play of which I am no part anymore. I can use it, and use myself and others with it, as one plays with a child at make-believe, and yet not be part of it. It is not my game. I can even see myself fooling about with the things of the world, food and clothing, comfort and ease; and also see that those things, those acts, are not mine. I may be in the centre of the stage or not, I may not play at all; the words, the acts, the gestures, the costumes, the lights, may not affect me, for that is not myself.

Yet, in seeing, there may be the concept of the spectator, who is no more part of the play, but who now has set himself up as the spectator, the critic with his superior knowledge that there is no longer a playing puppet. To see this last line of 'self'-defence is truly an awakening from a dream, which was a play written, produced and acted by the 'self'. In this awakening of intelligence there is no further conditioning of thought and will, by memory and ideal, by volition and choice. In seeing and understanding without conditioning there is direct action, which is not a reaction of being pulled by strings this way or that. And thus there is a perfect balance in the absence of opposites.

That is even-mindedness without separation of actor and the action, of the actor on the stage and the spectator in the wings. That is insight in what is. This is the truth which sets free.

Then, is there is not an 'awakener', someone who is awakened, who is enlightened, who is emancipated, who is a Buddha? It is that very question which is one of those impossible questions (*avyākata*), a question which cannot be answered or decided with a yes or no. 'Is the Buddha after his final deliverance existent or is he not?' It is the question which shows the ignorance of the questioner. There is still a search for security, a search for the final refuge for the 'self'. The 'I' still wants Buddha to help, to teach, to lean on. In the dream the 'I' continues the search, for without a search the 'I' is not. 'I'

am that projection, that ideal, which cannot be reached without willing; and 'I' am that willing, that greed to continue, which makes even the concept of the Buddha continue, so that the 'I' can exist and continue to exist. I am the searcher, I am the search; and the search is the 'I'. The search is an escape from a conflict made by the 'self' in producing, in projecting, in protecting that idea. Hence, the 'I' must continue to exist; and the 'I' needs Buddha or rather a concept thereof, to protect its growth towards that ideal.

The Buddha is Buddhahood, is the intelligent awakening of enlightenment, an awakening from the dream that there is a being apart from becoming. Becoming must necessarily cease; and thus the search is on for that being which alone can provide the safety and continuance of 'self', which even the Buddha could not provide: sabbe dhammā anattā: the conditioned as well as the unconditioned are without entity. And so is the Buddha; so is Nibbāna; so is the 'self'.

Striving to meet the Buddha, striving for attaining Buddhahood is striving for 'self', a delusion. But that striving is the craving for continuance, the resistance to maintain existence, the conflict in escaping from the actual in search of the ideal.

Such am 'I'. When this is seen and understood, the 'I' will cease to act as an actor, the 'I' will cease to look on as a spectator, action will cease to be a reaction, need will not produce greed, existence will not be resistance. There is no 'I'! And that is equanimity, more than a balanced mind; for there can be no upset of balance when thought has ceased its projecting. When thought of 'self' becomes no more, there is only insight of pure action which has no basis in the past, and no prospect in the future, and is therefore only in the present moment, an action without craving, an action which is not karma, because there is no will when there is no 'I'.

That is more than divine, more than sublime; it is truly boundless, immeasurable (*appamaññā*) and beyond; a beyond, which is not an escape of transcendence, but a peace of stillness of thought

in pure awareness and experiencing, where the thought of 'self' has finally ceased.

Such is not death, even though the 'self' is dying. It is life and being alive, alert, awake with joyful interest in all that is, with no more will for what is not, with no more conflict, no more desire, no more delusion, in perfect equilibrium, in the harmony of love and compassion and sympathy for all that is.



# About the Author

Henri van Zeyst was born in Utrecht, the Netherlands, in 1905. Educated throughout in Catholic schools and colleges, he spent his final years of studies in philosophy and theology and his first year his priestly ordination in an Italian monastery near Florence. At the age of 31 he was sent to London to be in charge of a new foundation of his Order, where he was also teaching Dogmatic Theology to the scholastics of Christus Rex Priory in North London. An intensive course of comparative religion brought him in contact with Buddhism. Within a year of his coming to Sri Lanka he was ordained a Buddhist monk there in 1938 under the name of Bhikkhu Dhammapala. From 1956 to 1968 he worked at the Encyclopaedia of Buddhism at the University of Ceylon in Peradeniya of which he was in the final years of that period the Senior Assistant Editor and Administrative Officer. From the 1980s onwards he lived at the Nilambe meditation center in Sri Lanka. He passed away on 15th September 1988.