

The Medicine of Mindfulness

Ashin Kavindāḷankāra

Translated and abridged by Simone M. Tai

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About the Author

Sayādaw Ashin Kavindālankāra was born on October 17, 1979 in Thant Se township, Shwebo district, upper Burma. He became a novice at the age of 9, and studied at the well-known Mahagandhayon Monastery in Amarapura. He has earned several degrees, including the *Dhammacariya*, *Alankāra*, *Vinayavidhu*, *Dīghanikāyavidhu*, and *Anguttaranikāyavidhu*. He practiced *vipassanā* meditation at the Mahasi Meditation Center in Yangon in 2007, and then at the Panditarama Meditation Center in 2008. He has taught meditation at the Panditarama Meditation Center in Yangon, and also at the Panditarama Hse Main Gon forest center in Bago. He currently resides at the Sāsana Alin Saung Meditation Center in Hlegu Township.

Translator's Note

This book is a translation of a selection of chapters from the Burmese original *Illness and the Yogī: Living Free from Disease* (2013) by Ashin Kavindālankāra. With the author's permission, the order of chapters has been slightly altered, and minor omissions have been made within a few chapters. Sayadaw has also written a special introduction for this book.

I would like to express my gratitude for all of my meditation teachers and Burmese teachers, and wish to give special thanks to Daw Than Myint, without whom this translation would not exist.

Author's Introduction

When one gets sick, suitable food and medicine are the main things necessary for the illness to be cured. Only when you can take the right food and medicine so that it gets absorbed by the body can you be free from the disease. The method of taking the treatment must also be a beneficial and correct one.

Similarly, those who wish to be free from the disease of mental defilements must take the medicine of the Dhamma, or the Buddha's teachings. So that this Dhamma medicine gets properly absorbed, when taking it, the "mouth" which we call morality (*sīla*) must be in good condition. Morality is the fundamental basis for the fulfillment of one's meditation practice. The Buddha has said that morality is just like the mouth.

Why is this? Because those who do not keep good morality do not have a clear conscience, it will not be easy for them to gain clarity and peacefulness of mind. If the mind is not calm, then there is no way for wholesome practices to be developed.

Therefore, yogis (meditators) who want to take the medicine of mindfulness, and who want to practice according to the method laid out in this book, must first of all keep the basic moral precepts. Only then will they have security and confidence of mind, and be able to gain mental stability and tranquility.

The fundamental moral precepts are:

1. Do not kill
2. Do not steal
3. Do not commit sexual misconduct
4. Do not tell lies
5. Do not take drugs or intoxicants

These are the basic moral precepts necessary for all human beings. Yogis must keep these at the very minimum.

In addition, when you are taking the medicine of the Dhamma in a meditation retreat, in order to refrain from the disruptions of sensual pleasures, you must also keep eight precepts.¹ The three additional precepts are:

6. Refraining from eating after twelve noon, which can encourage sense desires;
7. Refraining from participating in or watching dancing, music, or any entertainment; refraining from beautifying the body (using cosmetics, wearing perfume, jewelry);
8. Refraining from using overly lavish seats or beds.

Having fulfilled the basic moral precepts, which are like the mouth, if you can practice meditation according to the method shown in this book, all physical ailments (except for some incurable diseases), as well as mental defilements, will surely disappear.² May all yogis who wish to be free from both physical diseases and mental defilements, and who keep the basic moral precepts so that they are secure, with the practice of meditation which is the Buddha's medicine of mindfulness, be able to reach the goal they wish for.

With *mettā*,

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November, 2014

¹ When taking eight precepts, the third precept is to keep celibacy.

² One cannot learn to practice meditation only by reading this book. It is necessary to learn under the guidance of a qualified teacher.

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If You Have a Body, Diseases Will Arise

It is the nature for diseases to arise because of having a body. Even the Buddha, who fulfilled *pāramīs* for the whole duration of four uncountable aeons and a hundred thousand world cycles, had illnesses due to having a body. Even the Buddha could not avoid this.³

Because of having eyes, eye diseases arise. Because of having ears, ear diseases arise. Because of having a nose, nose diseases arise. Because of having teeth, teeth problems arise. Because of having a liver, liver diseases arise. Because of having kidneys, kidney diseases arise. Because of having a stomach, stomach diseases arise.

To summarize, because of having a body, many diseases can arise and spread all over it.

Nowadays, there are many kinds of diseases among many people, including diseases never heard of before in the past.

These days, so many diseases arise so that: “before you finish speaking of them all, you could traverse three mountain ranges.”

Two Types of Diseases and Ninety-Six Kinds of Ailments

If you sort the various kinds of diseases into similar groups, there are just two types, bodily ailments and mental illnesses.

Among these two types, if you divide them again into smaller groups, there are ninety-six kinds of diseases that arise in the body, and as much as fifteen hundred that occur in the mind.

Thus, Sayadaws say:⁴

³*Pāramī*: perfection. They include: generosity, morality, renunciation, wisdom, effort, forbearance, truthfulness, resolution, loving-kindness, and equanimity. Bodhisattas aspiring to attain Buddhahood must fulfill these ten qualities over the duration of many world cycles.

⁴*Sayadaw*: senior monk.

Two kinds of diseases go around,
In the body ninety-six are found.
In the mind fifteen hundred can grow.
Sickness comes surely this you must know.

Among the ninety-six kinds of diseases that arise in the body, thirty-two are due to bile, thirty-two are due to phlegm, and thirty-two are due to wind. All together ninety-six causes for diseases to arise can be counted.⁵

As for mental illnesses, these fifteen hundred mental defilements are what pollutes the minds of beings, burns them up, causes one to lose one's entire life, and tortures one over and over, again and again.

Ten Mental Defilements

Kilesas, or mental defilements, are the things which inflame and befoul beings.

When *kilesas* arise, beings experience mental suffering, anxiety, unhappiness, and live in unease. They repeatedly brood over their problems. It is indeed very difficult to endure.

Therefore, *kilesas* are called diseases. When you say: "I'm so depressed I want to die," it is due to the disease of defilements.

If we separate the *kilesas* and study them, on the short list there are ten. If expanded, there are as much as fifteen hundred.

In short, the ten defilements are:

Lobha: greed, desire

Dosa: hatred, grudge, cruelty

Moha: not knowing correctly, confusion

Mana: pride, arrogance, haughtiness

Diṭṭhi: knowing wrongly

⁵ This is the traditional Buddhist categorization of diseases.

Vicikicchā: uncertainty regarding the Triple Gem, *kamma*, *kamma* results;
wrong belief⁶

Thīnamiddha: not making effort and shrinking back, sluggishness, dullness

Uddhacca, kukkucca: scattered mind, worry

Ahirika: lack of shame about doing unwholesome things

Anottapa: lack of fear about doing unwholesome things

Among these ten, if any one arises in one's mind, we say that the disease of defilements is occurring.

The Hottest Fire

These mental defilements (*kilesas*) are what burn beings up and make them dirty. To what extent can they burn?

Which fires in the world are hottest of all?

Kilesa fires, which cause beings to fall.

Kilesa fires' glowing flames,

Burn each life, again and again.

This is said because in comparison, *kilesa* fires are even hotter than the fires which can destroy the world.

Among all the fires, *kilesa* fires are the most ferocious, more so than the fires which can dry up all the waters in the oceans and seas, more so than the fires which can scorch the entire world and reduce it to ashes.

The heat of *kilesa* fires is hotter and more intense than world-destroying fires, which are considered to be the hottest and most severe of all.

If you encounter world-destroying fires, you only lose one life. If you are subjected to *kilesa* fires, however, you perish in each and every life, one lifetime after another.

Therefore, among all the fires, *kilesa* fires are the most infernal.

⁶ The Triple Gem: the Buddha, the Dhamma (the teachings) and the Sangha (monastic order). *Kamma*: the law of cause and effect.

Because of *kilesas*, beings experience grief, sorrow, lamentation, physical and mental distress.

Under the command of the *kilesas*, beings unjustly try to acquire things, and land in misery after falling into the abyss of the four lower realms.

If You Have a Body, Old Age, Disease and Death Will Come

Although all beings who possess a body do not want to get old, they have to age. No one can stay young forever.

Although they do not want to die, they have to die. No one can live forever.

One can only find assurance when one searches for a way so as not to age, get sick, and die. Only then will one's life be secure.

Thus, Sayadaws say:

Although you don't wish to get old, you have to get old.

Although you don't wish to get sick, you have to get sick.

Although you don't wish to die, you have to die.

These verses remind us that we have not escaped and are not free from these three dangers.

Why do beings encounter the dangers of old age, disease and death? If we look for an answer, we find that it is due to having a mind and a body.

To put it more exactly, it is because of having craving and desire which attach onto the mind and the body.

Thus, if you don't want to encounter the dangers of old age, disease, and death, you have to strive for the cessation of the mind and body process.

To strive for the cessation of the mind and the body process means that you must uproot and get rid of the craving and desire which attach onto the mind and the body.

If you eradicate the craving and desire which attach onto the mind and the body, and if the mind and body process is extinguished, the three dangers of old age, disease, and death which are connected to the mind and body can no longer arise.

Therefore,

If you have a body, old age will surely come.

If you have a body, illness will surely come.

If you have a body, death will surely come.

These verses remind us of the Buddha's teachings that with the cessation of the mind and body process, and with the cessation of craving and desire which attach onto the mind and body, you can be liberated from the triple bane of old age, disease and death.

If there is no craving which attaches onto the mind and body, there will no longer be a mind and body. If there is no mind and body, old age, disease and death, along with the sufferings of illness, which are interdependent on the body, can no longer arise.

Thus, if you are free from craving, you can reach *nibbāna* which is devoid of old age, disease and death.⁷

The Buddha's Dhamma Medicine

What is the medicine that can root out and eradicate craving and desire, which are the basic causes for diseases to arise, as well as the causes for the dangers of suffering, old age, disease and death? What is the medicine of the Dhamma which the Buddha formulated?

They are the four Noble Medicines of *Satipaṭṭhāna*:

1. The Noble Medicine of *Kāyānupassanā Satipaṭṭhāna* (Mindfulness of the Body)
2. The Noble Medicine of *Vedanānupassanā Satipaṭṭhāna* (Mindfulness of Feelings)
3. The Noble Medicine of *Cittānupassanā Satipaṭṭhāna* (Mindfulness of the Mind)
4. The Noble Medicine of *Dhammānupassanā Satipaṭṭhāna* (Mindfulness of Dhamma)

⁷*Nibbāna*: The cessation of the mind and body process, the end of suffering.

These four foundations of mindfulness practice are the noble medicines formulated by the Buddha.

If you take these four noble medicines, not only can you recover from physical diseases which cannot be cured by modern medicine, you can also uproot and be free from the internal disease of mental defilements.

Now our yogis know what diseases are, and they also know the medicine which can cure the disease. What are still needed are the directions for taking the medicine.⁸

How Should One Take the Medicine?

How did the Buddha give instructions? Yogi patients who are taking the medicine of *Satipaṭṭhāna* prescribed by the Buddha must first sit in a cross-legged position.

When you sit like this, so as to be able to sit for a long time, the two legs must not overlap. The foot of one bent leg must be placed in the crook of the other bent leg, with the two lower legs parallel.

After sitting like this, the back must be kept straight. In your back you have eighteen vertebrae⁹. These are bones and joints. Normally, these bones are stacked one on top of another.

You must sit so that these eighteen vertebrae articulate with each other, one by one, naturally. Do not have them curved forward, which means do not sit with your back slouched. Also do not have these vertebrae pulled apart, which means do not forcefully stretch your back so that it is rigid and stiff, and difficult to maintain. Keep your back straight naturally.

Afterwards, you should place the two hands together with the palms facing up, with the thumbs touching.

The hands which have been thus placed should be positioned near the lower abdomen, resting on top of your cross-legged seat.

⁸Yogi: one who practices meditation.

⁹ This is counting the twelve in the thoracic spine, five in the lumbar spine, and the sacrum.

After sitting properly like this, first, for about a minute each, practice the four guardian meditations.

They are:

1. Contemplation on the virtues of the Buddha (*Buddhānussati*)
2. Developing lovingkindness (*Mettābhāvanā*)¹⁰
3. Contemplation on the loathsomeness of the body (*Asubhabhāvanā*)
4. Contemplation on death (*Maranasati*)

These four guardian meditations should be practiced first for about one minute each.

How to Contemplate on the Virtues of the Buddha (*Buddhānussati*)

First, you must contemplate on the virtues of the Buddha.

If you are going to reflect on the quality of “*araham*,” it means “one who has uprooted and eradicated the mental defilements (*kilesas*).”

The Buddha uprooted and eradicated all *kilesas*. He has no mental defilements. Not having *kilesas*, there is nothing impure about the Buddha. He is free from fault, clean and pure.

Not having *kilesa* defilements, the Buddha does not perform any actions which are two-faced or dishonest. He is totally upright and virtuous. This is the meaning of “*araham*.”

Because he is free from the dirt of *kilesas*, and because of having the qualities of being pure and faultless, sincere and straightforward, humans and *devas* revere and honor the Buddha. He is worthy of accepting the special homage paid by all humans, *devas*, and *brahmās*.¹¹

Those who contemplate on the quality of “*araham*,” reflect on the Buddha’s virtue of being free from the stain of *kilesas* and being faultless and pure, and thus his worthiness of the special reverence given by all humans, *devas*, and *brahmās* due to his honesty and integrity. To get the benefits from taking this object of meditation, so that one’s own mental continuum, like

¹⁰*Bhāvanā*: meditation, mental training, mental development.

¹¹*Deva*: celestial being. *Brahmā*: heavenly being of the *brahma* plane, a more immaterial plane than the *deva* realm.

the Buddha's will be less dirtied from defilements as much as possible, you must strive to the utmost of your ability to control the mind, taking the Buddha as an example. Contemplate and maintain in your mind the quality of "*araham*."

Developing Loving Kindness (*Mettābhāvanā*)

Secondly, you must develop loving kindness or *mettā*.

Starting with one's parents, teachers, relatives, and friends, you must send loving kindness to all humans, *devas*, and *brahmās*.

When you send *mettā*, for example, if you send *mettā* to your parents, first of all, visualize your parents so that their image arises in your mind. When their image arises, while reciting, "May they be healthy, may they be happy, may they be free from enmity and danger, may they take care of themselves happily," send *mettā* mentally.

To whom should *mettā* be sent first? Only after the image of the person to whom you are sending *mettā* arises, can you send *mettā*.

If you can send *mettā* systematically, because of the *mettā* you send, both you and the receiver will experience the benefits. The one who sends *mettā* will have peace of mind and body, and be free from enemies. The receiver will get the benefits of health, happiness, and freedom from danger, etc.

Although you cannot see *mettā*, there is a mutual connection between the sender and receiver.

The texts give the example of the mother sea turtle. The mother turtle, after laying her eggs, covers them with sand and goes off to wherever she likes. She may not come back again to where her eggs are kept. However, her mind is always on them. Saying, "May the little eggs be safe and sound, may little turtles come out happily," she always has a loving mind and sends *mettā*.

If the mother turtle doesn't die, then the small turtles can hatch.

If it so happens that the mother turtle dies, then the small turtles can't hatch. The eggs will rot and perish.

Why does this happen? It is because the mother turtle is no longer sending *mettā*.

This is the unseen power of *mettā*.

Therefore, when you send *mettā*, do not do so casually. After visualizing the person to whom you are sending *mettā*, you must send it with care. About one minute is sufficient.

How to Contemplate on the Loathsomeness of the Body (*Asubhahāvanā*)

Number three, you must reflect on the repulsiveness of the body. When practicing *asubhahāvanā*, do not use a corpse. Meditate on your own body, so as to visualize and contemplate on its uncouthness, its repellent and disagreeable nature.

If you really think about this, there is not a single thing that is nice in the body.

The body is considered beautiful. But if you just take the face and separate its parts and look at them thoroughly, there is nothing attractive about it. If you don't wash your face, it is always nasty with grease.

If we consider the eyes, which are thought to be as lovely as marble, from the eyes, every day tears and eye crust seep out. If we consider the nose, so straight and fine, from the nose, snot and boogers are always oozing out.

If we look at the coral lips, as gorgeous as crimson rosebuds, sputum, saliva, phlegm, and mucus are always flowing out from them. The smell is something awful. So that people don't know this, you always have to conceal it, always covering the mouth with lipstick and wiping it with a napkin.

The teeth, as pretty as a row of pearls, are reeking with food debris and whatnot, and always have to be kept clean by brushing.

Therefore, if we look at the so-called beautiful face separately, there is absolutely nothing pleasing about it, and if we analyze the whole body in a similar way, we only find repulsiveness.

In this way, you should contemplate so as to see the body as foul and uncomely. "Oh, this body that I have, because it is full of vile things, such as head hair, body hair, fingernails, toenails, thick skin, thin skin, etc., is indeed revolting." After visualizing in your mind, you should contemplate thus.

How to Contemplate on Death (*Maranasati*)

Number four is the contemplation on death.

Maranasati means to contemplate on the advent of death: “I can die anytime. My life is not permanent. Death is certain.” You must reflect on this again and again.

Beings are the dying type. However, without constant reflection, no one ever thinks that they will die. Not realizing this, they fight with each other to get a position, the strong torturing the weak.

If you don’t realize that you can die anytime, you’ll spend all your time thinking: “What shall I do tomorrow? What shall I do next year?”

You Can Get Great Benefits From the Four Guardian Meditations

In this way, by developing the contemplation on the Buddha’s virtues for about a minute each, not only can you obtain mental serenity and maturity, you can also experience coolness and tranquility after the *kilesas* have been calmed down.

With the development of *mettā*, you can be safe from danger and meditate peacefully without any disturbances. You can succeed in your work and accomplish all of your tasks.

The Buddha triumphed in his eight great victories through the power of *mettā bhāvanā*. He even conquered the fearsome ogre Alakara because of *mettā*, and defeated Māra, the most malevolent and cruelest being of all. Both were defeated with the weapon of *mettā*.

Attachment Weakens With *Asubhabhāvanā*

With the development of *asubhabhāvanā*, you can be free from concern and attachment for the body.

When you meditate, you can progress only when you have no attachment for your body. If your attachment to the body is strong, you won't be able to achieve the *dhamma* for quite some time.

Why is this? If you don't develop *asubhabhāvanā*, because of having attachment and concern for your body, when you sweat, you wipe it off. When the face becomes greasy, you wipe it off. When an itch arises, you scratch it. Thus, concentration cannot arise for quite awhile.

If concentration can't even arise, then there is no way wisdom can arise.

According to the Buddha's saying: "*Samāhīto bhikkhave bhikkhu yathābhūtam pajānāti,*" only when there is *samādhi*, or concentration, will wisdom, which perceives things as they are, be able to arise.

Therefore, in order to get concentration, starting from the time when you sit down to meditate, no matter what arises in the body, you should be able to disregard it. Only when you do so, can concentration arise easily.

So as to get concentration easily, so that you do not have attachment to your body, develop contemplation on the loathsomeness of the body.

The Effects of Contemplating on Death

With the development of *maranasati*, when you meet with difficulties and unpleasant sensations, reflect thus: "I have to die anyway. These sensations are nothing. I will strive so as to overcome them. Before I die, I will strive to achieve the Dhamma. Only the Dhamma will follow me, and I will die a good death." So that you will have the courage which can overcome the difficulties and painful sensations that arise during meditation practice, so that when doing wholesome deeds, you can work with bravery and without stopping short, develop contemplation on death.

When you practice each of these four guardian meditations for about a minute each, after the mind becomes tranquil, you will feel cool and peaceful.

After about five minutes contemplation, the fatigue and tiredness resulting from coming over from your lodgings will disappear. There will be no more worry in the mind.

Only after this, send your mind to the abdomen, to the middle section which is below the solar plexus and above the navel. As the abdomen stiffens, you should mentally note “rising” as you observe it.

Aim Right and Use Might

When you note, you must “aim right and use might.” That is, you must aim accurately and put in enough effort.

Let us take shooting an arrow as an example. First of all, the archer must aim accurately. Secondly, after aiming, he must use sufficient energy. If the aim is not correct, the desired target cannot be reached.

Sometimes the aim is correct, but there is not enough power, so the arrow cannot hit the mark.

If the effort is excessive, the arrow will overshoot. If the effort is weak, the target cannot be reached.

Therefore, in order to hit the target, the archer must aim precisely. Then he must use adequate strength. Only then will he be able to hit the mark.

Just like shooting an arrow, when you note “rising” as the abdomen stiffens, the yogi first of all must aim his mind so that it reaches the abdomen. Secondly, with sufficient mental energy, he must observe the rising abdomen with full concentration.

Make Many Records

Observing with concentration means you must have keen perception. According to the texts, the term “*thirasaññā*” is used. It means “making a strong record.”

Just like when you take photographs, in one push of the button, the visual images, whatever they are, are recorded inside the camera as they are, so too when you note “rising,” you must make a distinct record of what is happening at the abdomen so that you come to know it vividly. “Where is the stiffness occurring? How is it occurring? Is it becoming hot and stiff? Is it

becoming hard and stiff? Is it softening? Are you seeing the image of the abdomen? Or do you only see the natural characteristics, such as stiffness, tension and vibration?”

After stiffening, when the abdomen slackens, mentally note “falling.” You must observe the falling with accurate aim, full effort and complete concentration.

Noting rising and falling means you observe with steadfast concentration so as to know the natural characteristics of the wind element, such as tension, vibration, and movement.

No Mindfulness, No Knowledge

After focusing your mind on the abdomen, noting “rising” as the abdomen stiffens and noting “falling” as it slackens, the mind will go off, going north, going south, wandering to the north, wandering to the south.

Thinking of the past, one feels regret; thinking of the future, one gazes vacantly. Not being able to know the present dhamma, one ends up feeling heavy hearted.

When one sees the mind going off north and south, one can’t help feeling dejected.

Some yogis cannot stand the punishment of the wandering mind, and even report it thus: “When I lived at home, my mind was just fine. But now only after meditation, it has gotten worse.”

In truth, the mind does not wander because of the meditation practice. Because you are always attaching your mind onto your body when you meditate, you come to know that the mind wanders quite a lot. This is what happens when mindfulness arises.

Actually, when you are living at home, your mind is always thinking nonstop. However, when you are at home, your mind is not on your body. Because there are many other obvious objects, you don’t notice when the mind wanders off.

Think over this carefully. The only time your mind is on your body is when you are living at home, beautifying yourself in front of the mirror. Mostly the mind goes off to another place and ruminates about it at length, or keeps on thinking about your work.

So, how can one come to know the nature of one’s mind?

The Buddha said, “The mind is never at rest for a single moment; within one second, a billion units of consciousness arise and pass away.”

In accordance with this point, when you meditate, because your attention is always placed on your own body and observing it, you come to know the way in which many different kinds of minds change, one by one. Because there is awareness, you come to know that the mind wanders a great deal. The mind does not wander more because of practicing meditation.

Do Not Be Disappointed by the Wandering Mind

Therefore, do not become disappointed if the mind wanders a lot. Note the wandering mind appropriately in order to know it thoroughly.

When you are noting, sometimes greed arises, sometimes anger arises, sometimes sadness appears, and sometimes happiness appears. You will come to find one mind occurring after another, constantly changing.

Thus, if wanting arises because of *lobha*, note “wanting.” If anger arises because of *dosa*, note “angry.” If sadness arises, note “sad.” If happiness arises, note “happy.” If thoughts intrude, note “thinking.” If you happen to reflect, note “reflecting,” etc. When you note these minds as they arise, you must send your awareness to where the thoughts arise in the head (or, if it is more obvious, in the chest) and immediately note it.

After noting for about ten times, stop noting the mind, and send your attention back to the abdomen and return to noting “rising” and “falling.”

Here you must be careful about one thing. When you are noting the wandering mind, in the beginning, do not note more than ten times. If you are unable to note, you can get carried away by the thoughts.

After noting ten times or so, stop, and return to noting rising and falling. When noting rising and falling, if the thoughts haven’t ceased, but are arising again, note the thoughts and imaginations again about ten times. Then, leave it and return to noting rising and falling.

If you note like this many times, after some time the mind will not even wander off anymore. If it does go off again, you will no longer think of it as anything to get upset about.

When you note the wandering thoughts, do not become disturbed or restless. “These are just objects for noting. This is the raw material from which one’s power of mindfulness can be extracted. These are merely objects of meditation. Noting the wandering mind is *Cittānupassanā Satipaṭṭhāna*.” Thus, with the right attitude and attention, every time the wandering mind appears, without feeling frustrated, you must note it calmly and willingly.

This Is Meditation

In this way, when the wandering mind appears, willingly send your attention inside the head. If you note the wandering mind every time it appears, even though unwholesome thoughts appear, because you are noting willingly, with the power of mindfulness (*sati*), you can catch the wandering thoughts without missing. Using the power of effort (*vīriya*), you make effort so that the noting mind reaches the head or the chest when wandering thoughts arise. After applying awareness and while putting in effort, the power of concentration (*samādhi*) causes the mind to stay on the object of observation. With concentration, you come to know how the wandering thoughts change one after another. You come to know the heaviness, tightness and restlessness in the head, the physicality which arises due to the thoughts. This is the power of wisdom.

In this way, because you note “wandering” when one unwholesome thought arises, the power of mindfulness, energy, concentration and wisdom all take place in the same moment.

Every single time you note the wandering mind, the power of mindfulness, energy, concentration and wisdom gets stronger and stronger.

From unwholesome wandering thoughts, wholesome mindfulness, energy, concentration and wisdom can be extracted. This is what is called “meditation.”

From the afflictive body and unwholesome mind, one can extract the wholesome power of the Dhamma.

Therefore, if unwholesome thoughts arise, do not become frustrated. Note them calmly, appropriately, so that the power of meditation can arise and be extracted.

Noting like this is *Cittānupassanā Satipaṭṭhāna*.

Thus, when you are unable to note the rising and falling because of the frequently wandering mind, this is the treatment and the method of noting so that the meditation does not decline.

Treatment for Unpleasant Feelings

While noting “rising” and “falling,” if unpleasant feelings keep appearing, the mind will no longer stay on the rising and falling, but will go towards the sensations instead.

Thus, if one is unable to note the rising and falling when painful feelings become very strong, you must send the mind to where the sensations are appearing. If there is pain, note “pain,” if there is itching, note “itching,” if there is aching, note “aching,” if there is smarting, note “smarting,” if there is numbness, note “numb,” etc. You must focus the mind so that you clearly know the true nature of the feelings as they arise.

Noting feelings does not mean that you note so that they will disappear. Rather, note them in order to understand their nature.

For example, if you are noting “pain,” what is happening at the location where the pain is occurring? How is the pain occurring? Is it decreasing? Increasing? Is the pain hot and burning? Is the pain becoming harder? You must note courageously without shrinking back, and note thoroughly with full concentration, so that you come to know the mutable nature of physical phenomena.

After concentrating on the place where the pain is felt and observing it, you find that even though one does not wish to encounter pain, one has to experience it. You also find that physical and mental strength become depleted and wither away. It is in this way that you come to understand clearly through your own knowledge the characteristic, function and manifestation of the tormenting, unbearable feelings which are obvious in the present.

Thus, when you focus your mind on the pains and aches and are able to note “pain, aching,” in order to understand their nature, you are practicing *Vedanānupassanā Satipaṭṭhāna*.

If you note feelings (*vedanā*) with the intention that they disappear, without clearly knowing their nature, when the feelings do disappear, it is all for nothing. There is absolutely nothing to take pride in.

I mention this because some people feel proud when they see unpleasant feelings disappear and talk about it.

In truth, whether unpleasant feelings disappear is not the main point. The main thing is whether you know the true nature of the sensations or not.

The Buddha instructed: “Do not note feelings so that they will disappear, but note them in order to understand their nature.” It is necessary for yogis to comprehend this.

Therefore, when you are noting unpleasant feelings, do not try to avoid anything or make anything disappear. You must watch the feelings courageously so that you can come to understand their nature.

When you note unpleasant feelings, in the beginning, note them only about ten times. Then, leave it and return to noting “rising, falling.”

In the beginning, if you note more than ten times, *dosa* or anger is liable to arise.

Thus, whenever unpleasant feelings arise, note them only ten times. After noting ten times, return to noting rising and falling. Noting like this is *Vedanānupassanā Satipaṭṭhāna*.

Three Ways of Noting *Vedanā*

When noting unpleasant feelings (*vedanā*), there are three methods:

“Divided, connected, and from afar.” These are the three ways. Divided noting means, when an unpleasant feeling arises while noting the rising and the falling, note it ten times. Afterwards, return to noting rising and falling. This way of noting separately is called divided noting.

Noting in this way is also known as the “guerrilla tactic.”

When fighting a battle, if the opponent is very strong, you cannot face them head on. So you must use irregular warfare. This tactic means to treat the enemy thus: “Let the fruit that is ripe fall by itself, and take what you can from the rest.” Attack, then retreat, then attack without

warning, then retreat again. The strong army will gradually lose its power. This is called the “guerrilla tactic.”

For example, if the painful sensation is very strong, one cannot note it head on, so just note it ten times. Afterwards, return to noting rising and falling. When the feeling decreases, come close and note it again. Noting separately in this way is called “divided noting.”

Second is “connected noting.” If yogis who suffer from illnesses cannot note rising and falling directly, they should note the sensations together with the rising and falling.

For example, note “pain, pain” two times, then note “rising, falling” once. Then note “pain, pain” again, then “rising, falling” once again. This way of noting “pain” and “rising falling” by turn is called noting together, or connected noting.

The third is noting from afar. This means noting with bravery, as though there is a distance from the object.

Distancing with bravery means that if *vedanā* appears, you do not pay attention to it, but with courage, catch and note the main object of “rising” and “falling” without missing.

Another way of noting from afar is to separate the pain from the place where the pain is felt. If you can separate the pain from the experience of pain, when you note, it seems like another person is in pain. It is as though you are sitting next to another person and observing. The body is in pain, but the mind is no longer in pain.

Thus, separating the place where the pain is felt and the pain itself is called noting from afar, or from a distance.

These are the three ways of noting unpleasant feelings. Each of these three ways of noting is mindfulness of feeling, or *Vedanānupassanā*.

If You Have Good Medicine, You’ll Have Less Worry

If you have the medicine of *Satipaṭṭhāna*, you will be at ease when diseases arise.

No matter how much the body is in pain, the mind will not be very much shaken. You find that you can withstand the suffering.

Although the intensity of the disease is no different, the response of the mind towards the unpleasant feelings which arise from illness is vastly different during the times when you have the medicine of *Satipaṭṭhāna* compared with the times when you don't have it (after having practiced meditation and before ever practicing meditation).

Before you have practiced meditation, when illnesses arise, you experience fearfulness and agitation, depression and unhappiness, along with weakness. After having practiced meditation, however, you don't feel these things quite as much in your mind. You can face the illness with fortitude. You can stay calm.

When unpleasant feelings arise due to sickness, after sending your mind to where the sensations are occurring, when you first begin to note, the sensations will gradually increase. As you note more and more and gather momentum, you will find that the place where the pain is occurring is one thing, and the mind which experiences the pain is another thing. Having separated the two, you see that: "only the body is in pain, the mind is not in pain." If you can note so as to understand thoroughly the nature of pain, you will no longer experience pain in the mind. It is as though you are sitting next to and watching someone else who is in a lot of pain. You can keep noting and ignore the pain. This is the method for finding relief from unpleasant feelings arising from sickness when you are taking the medicine of the Dhamma.

Note Seeing and Hearing

If you cannot stay on the rising and falling when seeing, hearing, smelling, etc. arise, send your mind to the eye base, ear base, and nose base, and note "seeing," "hearing," and "smelling." Afterwards, return to noting "rising" and "falling."

When you note seeing and hearing, you must send your mind to the cornea and eardrum, respectively. Noting like this is *Dhammānupassanā Satipaṭṭhāna*.

It is difficult to practice *Cittānupassanā* and *Dhammānupassanā* methodically. Yet it is quite profound. This noting is extremely subtle. Even a lot of old timer yogis do not have a systematic way of noting.

If you do *Cittānupassanā* and *Dhammānupassanā* perfunctorily, there is no way you can master the practice.

If you really want to get the Dhamma, it is necessary to pay attention to this. If you cannot note the mind and the workings of the mind systematically, it will really not be easy to attain the Dhamma.

How *Vipassanā* Knowledge Develops and How Diseases Disappear Stage by Stage

Thus, with rising and falling as your base, if you strive again and again so that the four *Satipaṭṭhānas* can develop, the mind will come to stay only on the abdomen for a long time.

When the mind stays on the rising and falling for a long time, you come to see distinctly with your own knowledge the nature of the wind element, the tension and vibration which occurs in the abdomen, how it moves and is propelled stage by stage.

You come to know that tension and vibration arise, and the noting mind rushes into it, and that the noted object and noting mind are precisely banded together, occurring concurrently.

After focusing your attention and observing for some time, if you note more and more, when you note and observe, you can see that the physical phenomena of the wind element, the stiffness, tension, vibration, are happening continuously in a line, one by one, one part after another, one segment after another.

You see clearly that tensions and vibrations arise, and after you note them for a short time, they disappear. Then they arise again, and upon noting for a short time, they disappear again. Not for a moment do they stay still, but keep arising and disappearing.

This is seeing the impermanent (*anicca*) nature of physical and mental phenomena.

If you keep noting again many times without losing sight of the object, as you are noting, you see the tensions and vibrations very rapidly arising and disappearing in a blur, occurring without rest.

You also see that no matter how rapidly the arising and disappearing of the noted object is occurring, the noting mind does not lose a single one, and no special effort is needed. You find that the noting mind is occurring automatically.

For example, it is like when you stand nearby and watch fast trains passing, the doors seem to flit by. Without your volition, you come to see clearly with your own knowledge that the noted objects and the noting mind, like the rapid rotation of a fan, appear, get noted, disappear, once again appear, get noted, disappear again in a blur without any special effort. The noting and knowing is taking place by itself. You understand this as if seeing it with your own eyes, or as if holding it in your hands.

When you come to know like this, in the minds of the yogis who see like this, the factors of enlightenment (*bojjhaṅgas*) will arise, such as faith (*saddhā*) which is also called confidence (*adhimokkha*), joy (*pīti*), tranquility of mind (*passaddhi*), equanimity (*upekkhā*) which enables one to note without special effort in a regular rhythm, and wisdom, which clearly and distinctly knows with every noting.

The mind which arises, being clean and clear, is free from the filth of the *kilesas*.

When the mind is clear, the blood in the heart (*hadayavatthu*) which is dependent on the mind, becomes purified.

When the blood in the heart is purified, the physical matter of the body which is dependent on the blood in the heart, also becomes cleansed.

Thus, as much as purified physical matter arises, clean and clear new materiality arises in the place of old and rotten ones, and all the diseases in the body can disappear.

What has been discussed just now is the way of taking the medicine of *Satipaṭṭhāna* given by the Buddha, and how knowledge develops and how diseases disappear stage by stage.

You Must Follow the Rules to Be Free From Disease

When yogis methodically take the medicine of *Satipaṭṭhāna* to be free from diseases, while taking the medicine, so that it is done in a systematic way, there are instructions on things which must be avoided, and things which must be put into practice.

The things which must be avoided are:

While you are taking this medicine, you cannot talk. No matter how good of a speaker you are in the outside world, during this time, you must behave like a dumb person who cannot speak. You must try to refrain from talking as much as possible.

If you talk, your practice will deteriorate, and the medicine will not be effective.

Next, you should not look here and there. Checking the eyes with restraint and guarding them, you should behave like a blind person.

When you hear sounds, you should not follow and listen to them without restraint. You must behave like a deaf person.

The ears and the eyes are closely related to one another. If you cannot control the ears so as to block them, the eyes will automatically turn to look towards sounds. So that this does not happen, it is necessary to guard the ears especially. Do not be forgetful and listen to sounds.

Next, when you are coming and going, you should walk slowly and gingerly like an unhealthy or sick person.

Like a sick person who gathers his strength with great effort in order to move, those who are taking the medicine of *Satipaṭṭhāna* should control their feet with energy, stepping slowly and softly, focusing their attention on the feet and walk with mindfulness. You should not walk too quickly without any noting.

When sitting and getting up, when bending and stretching, you must make each and every movement with mindfulness, gradually and gently, like a person without any strength. Do not perform movements quickly.

Thus, Sayadaws have composed the following verses to remind us:

Although you speak well, be like a dumb person,

Although you see well, be like a blind person,

Although you hear well, be like a deaf person,

Perform bodily movements like a sick person,

Although you have strength, be like a weak person.

These five things must be put into practice by all patients who are taking the medicine of the Dhamma.

The next thing which must be carried out is:

Note without stopping, without any gaps,

Note respectfully, practice without lapse,

By noting what arises, many sufferings will break and snap.

According to this, the first point is:

Don't Be a Chameleon Yogi

When you are noting, do not stop and rest. You must note continuously without resting or stopping. Yogis who stop and rest, stop and rest, are called chameleon yogis.

When chameleons see their prey, or their mates, they come galloping down from the treetops. It seems they will immediately go and eat up their food.

After rushing down, do they go straight towards their food at once? No, not yet. After stopping, they will look here and look there. When they see someone over there, they bob their heads up and down; when they see someone over here, they bob their heads up and down. After doing that, they run for a bit more, and then stop again. After looking here and there, they bob their heads again. Since they keep on running and stopping, and bobbing their heads, they can't get to their food for quite some time.

Just like chameleons, some yogis, huffing and puffing, note the rising and falling. When they get tired and don't feel like noting anymore, they stop and look around here and there. When they see someone over there, they smile; when they see someone over here, they smile. Then they stroll over and chitchat. Later, when they overcome their laziness, they return to noting. Then they stop noting again, and go off to chat with whoever they meet. Looking at whatever they see, they gaze around. They keep noting and stopping, and cannot meditate continuously without a break.

This kind of yogi who stops and rests, stops and rests, is called a “chameleon yogi.”

When you are taking the medicine of *Satipaṭṭhāna*, don’t be like a chameleon yogi, now taking the medicine, now stopping the medicine (now noting and now not noting). You must note continuously without resting or stopping.

The second point is:

Note Respectfully

When you note, you must do so respectfully. Respectfully means, you must note carefully, always being alert, so that your objects of attention do not get lost. It is like guarding the shadow of an object which you cherish, always being anxious and worried lest it disappears, gets destroyed, or is taken away by others.

So that you do not miss any objects, you must constantly pay attention. You should have mindfulness of going, or going *sati*, eating *sati*, coming *sati*, staying *sati*, sitting *sati*, standing *sati*, sleeping *sati*. You must always attach and keep mindfulness on your own body.

This is called “noting respectfully.” There is one final point:

Keep Your Mind Like an Elephant Bull

The saying goes: “By noting what arises, many sufferings will break and snap.” According to this saying, while noting all the painful sensations that arise, after having overcome them, you can continue onwards.

Let us give an example according to the texts. While you are noting every arising object without a break, you should note whatever painful feelings that arise like a powerful elephant bull who tramples over a shoddy, tilted, crumbling little bamboo hut and grinds it to dust, and having destroyed it, proceeds along his way. “So you can be painful? Well, I can note you, can’t I?” With an imperturbable mind, you must know the sensations clearly, and overcome them by noting with patience and perseverance.

The saying: “If you forbear, you can reach *nibbāna*” is meant for yogis who are practicing like this.

Overcome the Mass of *Dukkha* With Bravery¹²

While you are noting unpleasant sensations with endurance, with what should you note so as to overcome them?

According to the saying: “*uppannuppanam dukkham vīriyena abhibhavitva bhāvanam sampadeti,*” you must overcome whatever painful feelings that arise with courage so that mental development can progress.

The Pali meaning of *vīriya* is courage. Yet most translators interpret the word *vīriya* as “making effort.”

Actually, the underlying, deeper meaning of *vīriya* in Pali is “*vīranam kammam vīriyam,*” or “the work of those who have bravery.”

“The work of those who have bravery” means this is not the task of cowards.

Indeed, those who lack courage and valor cannot undertake meditation.

Some people, when setting forth from their homes, announce: “I’m gonna beat you up, man! I’m gonna wallop you, you oaf!” They come as though they are about to meditate and attain *nibbāna* right now, as though they are about to become Buddhas right away. They act like a brick.¹³

They think they can get the Dhamma with ease. Actually, after they arrive at the meditation center, and encounter painful feelings while they are practicing, they lose their mettle. They become cowards. After pretending to note in the Dhamma hall, they watch for what time, through which hole, and for what excuse they can run away.

These yogis can no longer practice properly. They even look upon whoever tells them to note seriously as an enemy.

Because of encountering painful feelings, they become faint hearted.

¹²*Dukkha*: suffering, unsatisfactoriness.

¹³ Like a brick about to be used in building a pagoda, i.e., high and mighty.

Therefore, when the yogis who are taking the medicine of *Satipaṭṭhāna* meet with painful sensations, they must overcome these difficulties with courage and vigor, so that mental development can progress.

To what extent should one have bravery? “Let the bones be pulverized, let the body dry up and shrivel, let the liver rot, let the lungs split apart.” You need this degree of courage not to back away in meditation practice.

You must not be frightened and pull back when you meet with unpleasant sensations.

If you want to get rid of the disease of defilements and really wish to reach *nibbāna*, you cannot just achieve it with ease. You can get there only by putting in courageous effort.

You Have to Muddy Your Earlobe to Catch the Crab

Not to mention *nibbāna* which liberates one from the world, even the mundane task of catching crabs is not easy to accomplish. Only when you get your earlobe muddy will you be able to catch it.

Crab catchers, after rolling up their *longyis*, go down on their knees and use their hands to reach inside the pit. When they reach in and touch the crab, it runs further inside the pit.¹⁴

Thus, the catcher has to reach his arm in more. When he does so and touches the crab, it runs further inside again.

In this way, the catcher keeps on reaching in, and the crab keeps running inside. After reaching in more and more, the catcher eventually has his entire face and side plastered on the ground, with mud on his earlobe. Thus, only when he stretches his entire arm in and gets his earlobe all muddy, is the catcher able to get the crab. This is a worldly matter.

Although it seems easy, even the mundane task of catching a crab cannot be achieved readily. You have to muddy your earlobe in order to succeed.

¹⁴*Longyi*: ankle-length wrap skirt worn by both men and women in Burma.

There is no longer any need to discuss further the effort necessary for the attainment of *nibbāna*, which is free from the disease of defilements which have been afflicting one for the whole of *samsāra*.¹⁵

You must persistently overcome all the pains and sufferings step by step with courageous effort until you succeed.

“Let the bones be pulverized, let the body dry up and shrivel, let the liver rot, let the lungs split apart. If I’m heading towards my funeral, so be it. I will not get up from my seat until I win.” You can only succeed with this kind of spirit.

If you practice with weak effort, reluctantly, superficially, the disease of defilements will not disappear, but can even arise.

Therefore, those who are taking the medicine of the Dhamma must do so by overcoming all the pains and sufferings which arise with courage (which is called *vīriya*), and forbear illnesses until they are cured.

What has been discussed just now are the tasks which those who are taking the medicine of the Dhamma must carry.

Three Internal Afflictions

When *kilesa* diseases arise, one hungers for beautiful sights. One hungers for melodious sounds. One hungers for fragrant smells. One hungers for delectable flavors. One hungers for enjoyable tactile sensations. One hungers for pleasurable thoughts. This is the disease of hunger (*lobha*), this is its characteristic.

Then, if one cannot get what one hungers for or what one desires, fury comes up. This is the *kilesa* disease of mental affliction (*dosa*).

If we search for the reason why the diseases of hunger and mental affliction occur, it is because one does not know correctly, does not see the objects connected to the six sense doors, that is, sights, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile sensations, and thoughts according to reality. Not knowing correctly is delusion (*moha*). We can call delusion “the disease of mental derangement.”

¹⁵*Samsāra*: the cycle of existence.

When you are in muddy water, you can't see anything inside. Similarly, when the mind is muddy and unclear, you cannot see correctly. Not being able to see correctly is the disease of mental derangement. When you are deluded, just like an insane person, you cannot distinguish right from wrong.

Because of the disease of mental derangement (*moha*), if you do not know correctly, wanting arises. You become "hungry." This is called the disease of hunger (*lobha*). To get what you want from being hungry, you search. Not getting what you want, you become furious, and the disease of mental affliction (*dosa*) arises in an instant. For this reason, previous Sayadaws remind us with the following verses:

Because of not knowing, you want.
After wanting, you cling.
After clinging, you strive to acquire.
After acquiring, you obtain.
Because what you obtain is the disease of
Old age, illness and death,
It happens again and again.

If you want to get rid of the various diseases of hunger, mental affliction and mental derangement, you must first work to be cured from the disease of mental derangement, or delusion, which is the cause for the arising of all other diseases, as well as the cause for not knowing correctly.

If the disease of delusion is cured after knowing reality as it is, the subsequent diseases of hunger and mental affliction, which are dependent on not knowing correctly, will also be cured.

Therefore, you must first of all strive to know correctly.

If There Is No Noting, Diseases Will Arise

To make clear how diseases arise when one cannot note so as to know correctly:

At daybreak, when you open your eyes, you first see a visible object. This visual object in essence is materiality, or physical phenomena.

“Seeing” means seeing materiality. This is what really exists. Up to this point there is no delusion.

However, when seeing the visual object, if you do not note immediately, you bypass the materiality of the visible form and see a man or a woman.

It doesn’t stop there yet. Without noting, you then consider whether the object is beautiful or not.

This means if the object is beautiful, *lobha* arises. If it is not, then *dosa* arises.

As soon as you see a visible form, if there is no noting, the disease of hunger which is called *lobha*, and the disease of mental affliction which is called *dosa* come up in a moment.

If we investigate the cause for the arising of the disease of hunger and mental affliction which leads you to think of the object as beautiful or not, we find it is because of not knowing the truth. Not knowing truly or correctly is delusion (*moha*). *Moha* is called “the disease of mental derangement.”

When the turbid disease of mental derangement or “not knowing correctly” arises, the *kilesa* disease of hunger and mental affliction arise and follow in a row.

This is the way in which the *kilesa* diseases of hunger and mental affliction regarding visual objects occur when you don’t note so as to know correctly.

Thus, if you don’t want these diseases to arise, you must note so as to know correctly.

How to Note in Order to Know Correctly

How should one note in order to know correctly? When the eyes open and see a visible object, at the same time as soon as seeing occurs, at that very moment, you must immediately note “seeing.”

It is necessary to note in the right way. Just noting “seeing, seeing,” at random, as if reciting by rote a text that you have already learned, will not lead to true knowledge.

So that one notes and knows correctly, it is necessary to apply a systematic way of observation when you note.

How to Note When Seeing

To explain the method in which one should note systematically:

“Seeing” means, when the visual object, which is physical phenomena, strikes the eye base, or the cornea, seeing consciousness arises from the contact between the two.

Thus, when you suddenly see an object, you must send your mind to the cornea and note “seeing.”

After focusing your mind, you must “aim right and use might.” That is, you must observe with accurate aim and mental energy.

So that the awareness reaches the eye base, when seeing, you must send the mind there with right aim. You cannot be late. When the visual object strikes the eye, focus the mind in order to know clearly: “What happens at the cornea? What do you see? How do you come to know the visual object?” You must observe with undivided attention.

Thus, at the very moment of seeing a visual object, send your mind to the cornea and observe with complete concentration so as to know clearly, so as to know “seeing” as it is. This is called noting.

When seeing, having sent the mind to the cornea with accurate aim and mental power, if you note again and again like this without being late, you no longer see a “man” or a “woman.” You only know that the visual object is striking the eye base.

You no longer think that the visual object, which is physical phenomena, is one whole and solid entity. You understand clearly with your own knowledge that individual, tiny little materialities, after arising and striking the eye, immediately vanish and disappear.

Like a Bird Hitting Glass

For example, when birds are trapped inside a building, they think that the glass doors are a hole. When they try to fly out with force, their beaks hit the doors and they fall right there with a thud. It is just like this. You find that visual objects come and strike the eye base part by part, and immediately disappear at the very place of contact.

Moreover, you understand very clearly that when the visual object and eye base come into contact, seeing consciousness immediately appears, and upon noting, they vanish at the same time. You also realize that after noting “seeing,” the noting mind itself disappears continuously.

In this way, when you send your mind to the cornea and immediately note “seeing,” you no longer discern whether it is a “man” or “woman.” You come to know that only the visual object arises and impinges on the eye base.

You realize that when the visual object strikes the eye base, seeing consciousness also arises.

When seeing consciousness arises, the noting mind also arises by itself without special effort, and automatically notes “seeing.” It is as obvious as an elephant walking in the middle of a field.

When you note “seeing” in this way, you comprehend clearly for yourself that within one moment, at one spot, the physical eye base, the visual object, seeing consciousness, and the noting mind, appear and disappear one object at a time, one consciousness after another, all at the same time.

In order to come to know like this, you must have a systematic method. If the way of noting is not methodical, even old timer yogis who have been practicing for a whole year cannot understand this.

Some old timer yogis do not want to accept any instruction. They are fixed like creases in clothing. Being inflexible, there is no way they can change. They think they are practicing correctly. Because they think they are practicing correctly, these yogis no longer adjust their practice, and so certainly cannot come to know rightly.

Diseases Clear Up When You See Clearly

When you know seeing correctly, at the same time, craving or the disease of hunger associated with the visual object, can no longer arise.

Anger, which we call the disease of mental affliction, also cannot arise.

At the moment of noting “seeing,” when you know for yourself the continuously arising and disappearing, ever changing nature of the mind and body process, delusion, or the disease of mental derangement, also does not appear.

In this way, when you note seeing in order to know the seeing process as it is, you are free from the disease of defilements.

This is the way to be liberated from the disease of defilements when you are noting visible objects in order to know correctly.

How to Note When Hearing

Similarly, when the ear hears a sound, before the mind follows the sound after knowing hearing, direct your mind to the auditory base inside the ear, or the eardrum. You must focus the mind and observe as you note “hearing.”

To explain so that you understand what “sending to the eardrum” means: when hearing a loud sound like “boom,” vibrations occur inside the ear.

When you hear a sound, you must note so that the attention reaches the ear base.

In this way, when you first begin to note, small sounds seem to be very loud.

The Clangor of a Clock

For example, when you begin to note the sound of a clock going “tick, tock, tick, tock,” it feels as though a ten pound hammer is pounding on the eardrum. You hear it very loudly, “Bam! Bam!”

After noting thoroughly many times, the sounds seem to slowly recede into the distance. You feel that very faint sounds, coming pleasantly from far away, impinge on and enter into the ear. Finally, you come to know distinctly that the sound waves arise and strike separately and individually, one after another, like small particles, or dark little balls.

At this time, you no longer differentiate what sound it is. Only the sound arising and striking the eardrum is obvious.

Like Bullets Shooting Out of a Rifle

For example, it is like when you load up a rifle with many bullets and shoot, the bullets, like shadows, come out with great speed and hit an object.

You find out for yourself that these sounds come separately, one by one, and hit the eardrum, and after striking the eardrum, they disappear immediately.

It becomes apparent that when the sounds strike the eardrum, hearing consciousness immediately arises. It is also obvious that at the same time, the noting mind is occurring continuously.

It is evident that while noting, the sounds, the ear base, hearing consciousness, and the noting mind all vanish at one spot simultaneously.

If you can note so as to see this happening clearly, the disease of hunger, mental affliction and mental derangement associated with hearing can no longer arise.

In this way, you note whatever object that arises at the six sense doors (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, knowing) as soon as you see, as soon as you hear, as soon as you smell, as soon as you taste, as soon as you touch, as soon as you think. If you note again and again with right aim and focus, and without missing, you come to know distinctly with your own knowledge the constantly arising and disappearing, ever-changing nature of the physicality and mentality of every obvious object that arises at the six sense doors.

You realize that because of its nonstop arising and disappearing and ceaseless fluctuation, the mind and body process is frightful suffering.

You Can Reach *Nibbāna* If You Are Free From Disease

You come to understand that the nonstop arising and passing away and constant change is happening on its own; it is arising and passing away according to its own nature.

Thus, for the yogis who are able to note so as to understand that the physical and mental phenomena which continuously arises and passes away at the six sense doors—every seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, knowing—is impermanent (*anicca*); that because this ceaseless fluctuation is never ending, unrelenting torture, it is suffering (*dukkha*); that because it happens on its own without any governance, it is non-self (*anattā*), then the disease of hunger, or craving which attaches onto the mind and body can no longer arise.

Anger (*dosa*) and grief (*domanassa*), the diseases of mental affliction, also no longer occur.

The disease of mental derangement, which is ignorance (*avijjā*) and delusion (*moha*), which leads one to think that there is an “I,” a “self,” that “I am doing,” “I act, I eat,” etc. also no longer arises.

You can be liberated from the disease of defilements. In other words, being free from the disease of defilements with momentary cessation, you can reach *nibbāna*.

Thus Sayadaws say:

Seeing impermanence, craving comes clean.

When craving ceases, non-greed comes in.

When non-greed arises, *nibbāna* is seen.

Seeing suffering, aversion comes clean.

When aversion ceases, non-anger comes in.

When non-anger arises, *nibbāna* is seen.

Seeing non-self, ignorance comes clean.

When ignorance ceases, wisdom comes in.

When wisdom arises, *nibbāna* is seen.

To further explain the meaning of these verses:

When you realize the nature of impermanence (*anicca*), the incessantly changing, arising and passing away of every object that arises at the six sense doors, you are free from the *kilesa* of craving which attaches onto the body. Craving is replaced by the opposite quality of non-greed.

When you realize the nature of suffering (*dukkha*), the never-ending torture of the nonstop arising and passing away of the mind and body, you are free from *dosa*, the anger which arises in connection with the mind and body. Instead of *dosa*, the opposite quality of non-anger arises and replaces it.

When you realize the nature of non-self (*anattā*), and see that the mind and body process arises and passes away on its own according to its own nature, not being subject to control, you are free from *moha*, or not knowing correctly. In the place of *moha*, the opposite quality of wisdom (called *amoha*) arises.

Therefore, when you see *anicca*, at the same time craving is cleared away and non-greed arises.

When you see *dukkha*, at the same time aversion is cleared away and non-anger arises.

When you see *anattā*, at the same time delusion is cleared away and non-delusion or wisdom arises.

When you are free from the disease of *lobha*, *dosa*, and *moha*, the noble qualities of non-greed, non-anger, and non-delusion arise. Thus, according to the saying, “When non-greed arises, *nibbāna* is seen. When non-anger arises, *nibbāna* is seen. When wisdom arises, *nibbāna* is seen.” Before long, the arising and passing away, constant flux of the mind and body process will be extinguished altogether, and after attaining the peace of *nibbāna*, you will be able to have a peaceful and pleasant life which is free from worry from disease.

After reaching cessation, you will be liberated from the great dangers of old age, disease and death.

The Medicine of Mindfulness Frees One From Disease

Therefore, when diseases arise, one does not worry and quickly takes without hesitation the medicine of *Satipaṭṭhāna* formulated by the Buddha which can even cure chronic diseases. Let me once again promote the remedy which contains just four lines:

If from many a disease should you fall ill,
The Buddha's *sati* medicine beats any pill.
Every arising, note for sure,
Many yogis will find a cure.

Following the words in this pronouncement, when the disease of *kilesas*, internal and external illnesses arise, take the Buddha's medicine of mindfulness by noting every arising object continuously without a break, as soon as you see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and think.

If you use the medicine thus, because all diseases which arise can disappear immediately and permanently, the Buddha gave a guarantee and gave these words of exhortation to all patients.

Treat Right Away to Be Well

Having taken these words of encouragement seriously, when we meet with various kinds of diseases, according to the saying: "Before the suffering of old age, before the suffering of illness, before the suffering of death, Dhamma must be attained first." Before old age, disease and death arrive, and while one has a good opportunity, when you are taking the noble medicine of *Satipaṭṭhāna* without pause and exerting yourself with all your might, may you be able to strive so as to be fulfilled with that which every being wishes for, so that: "from sickness and ill health you can be freed."

It is said, “If you take just one pill of *sati* regularly, in the end, you can reach *nibbāna*.”
By taking one dose of *sati* time after time, may you be able to reach *nibbāna*, and always be able to live free from disease.

From sickness and ill health you can be freed,
Sati medicine is all you will need.
Preserve and protect the *Sāsana*'s light,
The shore of *nibbāna* will be in sight.¹⁶

¹⁶*Sāsana*: the Buddha's dispensation and teachings.

The Medicine of Mindfulness

Two kinds of diseases go around,
In the body ninety-six are found.
In the mind fifteen hundred can grow,
Sickness comes surely this you must know.

If from many a disease should you fall ill,
The Buddha's *sati* medicine beats any pill.
Every arising, note for sure,
Many yogis will find a cure.

From sickness and ill health you can be freed,
Sati medicine is all you will need.
Preserve and protect the *Sāsana*'s light,
The shore of *nibbāna* will be in sight.