

Guide to Yogis

Nissarana Vanaya, Meetirigala

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Things to do on arrival

1. Inform the front office located at the lower part of the monastery on your arrival.
2. Inform Bhante Dhammajīva (Kuti 10) of your arrival, or if he is not present, whoever is in charge of the monastery.
3. Find a bed for yourself in the dormitory located below the *bhavana sala*.
4. Request administration of the eight precepts from a senior monk (if not immediately, then within a day of your arrival).
5. Listen to recorded meditation instructions, located on a computer in Kuti 10. Ask Bhante Dhammajīva or another monk to set you up with this.
6. Review this guide.

Timetable

3:30 am	Wake up
4:00 – 5:30 am	Walking and sitting meditation
6:30 – 7:30 am	Breakfast (morning <i>dana</i>) and cleaning
7:30 – 9:45 am	Interviews / Dhamma talk / Dhamma discussion (see schedule below)
9:45 am	Start gathering for <i>pindapata</i>
10:00 am	<i>Pindapata</i>
10:30 – 11:30 am	Walking or sitting meditation
11:30– 11:55am	Lunch <i>dana</i>
12:30 – 5:00 pm	Group meditation (sitting/walking)
5:30 – 6:00 pm	Cleaning and preparing for <i>vandana</i>
6:00 pm	Buddha <i>vandana</i> (Vihara)
7:30 pm	Tea break
8:00 – 10 pm	Walking and sitting meditation
10 pm	Sleep

Schedule for morning activities (when Bhante Dhammajīva is present at the monastery)

Monday	Sinhala Vinaya discussion at 7:30 am
Tuesday	Sinhala recorded Dhamma talk at 7:30 am;
English	Dhamma discussion at 8:30 am
Wednesday	Interviews from 7:30 am*
Thursday	Sinhala Dhamma talk on meditation at 7:30 am
Friday	Interviews from 7:30 am*
Saturday	Sinhala Dhamma discussion, 7:30 – 9:00 am
Sunday	Interviews from 7:30 am*

* Yogis' interviews begin following monks' interviews.

Poya days Renew precepts, Kuti 10, 8:30 am.
Poya days (full moon and new moon) are announced by a sign across from the entrance in the *dana sala*.

Rules and Conduct

- All yogis are required to be dressed in white. Shorts, tank tops and sleeveless tops are not permitted at the hermitage. A shoulder cloth (*uthuru saluwa*) is a recommended item.
- Smoking is not permitted.
- While on the Eight Precepts, food may not be eaten between noon and the following dawn. A few substances with limited nutritional value (sugar, some fruit juices, honey, etc.) are permitted, but not milk.
- Please speak quietly while in the monastery, to preserve a quiet environment for meditation. Be particularly mindful when in the vicinity of the *bhavana sala*, and while walking along monastery paths near kutis.
- If you are the last to leave the *bhavana sala* at night, please turn off the lights and close the gates. If you are the last to leave the outdoor walking meditation paths, please turn out those lights (it's the leftmost of the switches outside the entrance to the dormitory).
- Cell phones are not permitted. If you bring a cell phone, please check it in at the front office. If it is necessary for you to make or receive a phone call, please seek permission from the teacher, or in his absence from an authorized monk.
- The use of cameras and video recording at the monastery is strictly prohibited. Taking photographs using mobile phones or other

equipment of the monastery, the monks or the yogis is not permitted. If you have brought a camera or a video recorder, please hand it over to the front office at the commencement of your stay.

- Yogis should not meet with outside visitors unless there is a strong necessity. Please seek permission from the teacher prior to meeting with visitors. On arrival, visitors must inform the office at the entrance of the monastery.
- Please do not dump garbage with plastic items in the forest within the monastery grounds. Use the recycling bins in the **dana sala**.
- Please take care not to leave any containers or plastic materials that may collect water outside so as to avoid breeding mosquitoes that can spread disease.
- Repairs should only be made with the permission of the authorized monk.
- The Nissarana Vanaya forest is a forest reserve and the monastery supports an esteemed lineage of mendicant monks and meditation masters. During your stay, your behavior, attire and effort must reflect and show respect towards the forest tradition adopted by the monastery.

Hazards from other living beings

Poisonous snakes may be encountered at Meetirigala, though the bite is usually not life-threatening. Be watchful when walking outside, especially at night.

Leeches are plentiful, especially after rainfall. Their bites can cause some bleeding but is not harmful. Check your feet and legs after walking outside in damp weather.

Ticks may appear like small black moles on the skin. They can be removed by applying salt moistened with a little water.

Monkeys can be aggressive in seeking food. Be mindful of your actions in their presence; don't aggravate them or play with them. Keep all doors and windows closed, especially where food items are kept. Don't leave any items outside that may attract the attention of monkeys.

Human thieves have been known to strike at Meetirigala. Keep any valuables behind a locked door if possible, or leave them at the front office or at home.

Basic guidelines for intensive meditation practice

1. Yogis should do 10-14 hours of formal sitting and walking meditation per day.
2. Yogis should stay alone and observe noble silence. Socialising is not encouraged.
3. Yogis must keep reading and writing to an absolute minimum.
4. Yogis must carefully observe the eight precepts.
5. Yogis must strictly adhere to the meditation teacher's instructions and should not practice according to other meditation methods.
6. Yogis should not discuss meditation or give meditation advice to other yogis.
7. Yogis must not get involved in any activities that are not related to intensive meditation (for example, listening to the radio, massage, photography, cooking food, learning languages, or work activities beyond the minimum necessary).
8. Yogis must restrain their senses. They should act like a blind, deaf, dumb, sick or dead person.
9. Yogis must perform all activities in slow motion.
10. Sleep should be limited to between four and five-and-a-half hours a day.
11. Yogis should practice with: respect and sincerity; diligence; honesty and straight forwardness; heroic effort; perseverance;

patience; sustained, continuous, moment-to-moment mindfulness from the time of awakening to the time of falling asleep at night.

12. There is no space for thinking, reflection, speculation, analysing or interpretation during intensive practice.
13. Generally, meditation is for people with a normal and stable mind. If, however, a person is mentally not in shape to undertake intensive meditation practice, especially to conform to the strict discipline, that person may not be admitted as a yogi.

Guidelines for reporting

At Meetirigala Nissarana Vanaya, we have times allocated for interviews with the Meditation teacher. Although participation at interviews is optional, discussing one's meditation experience with an experienced meditation master has many benefits.

Reporting is also an aspect of meditation.

Please refer to these general guidelines, when reporting your meditation experience:

Align your awareness, so that your attention confronts the primary object directly (i.e. the in-breath and the out-breath or the rising or falling of the abdomen).

First, identify the object (i.e. what did you notice - was it an in-breath (inhalation) or an out-breath (exhalation). Or, in the alternative, it may be that you noted the rising or the falling of the abdomen.

Then, observe the process of the identified object. If it was an inhalation, how did you observe it? Was it an inward gush, coolness, or was it a short in-breath or a long in-breath? Observe the natural characteristics of the experience of the in-breath *versus* the out-breath. Similarly, what did you observe in the rising phase of the abdomen (*versus* the falling phase of the abdomen) - did you observe an expansion and/or a contraction, a stiffness or tension?

When the out-breath was observed, was your mind directly confronting it and what was your experience? Was it a long out-breath? Or, was it a heat or an outward gush? Or, was it an expansion or a contraction of the abdomen or a tension, a stiffness, hardness (etc.)?

Now communicate this experience to your teacher. What was it that you noted (in-breath or out-breath/ rising or falling of the

abdomen); what was your experience (inward rush or gush/ coolness/short breath or long breath; or a contraction/ expansion, stiffness or tension in the rising and falling phase(s) of the abdomen). The interview should be about the identified primary object that you noted and the experience in noting it.

Describe your primary object in clear, simple, precise terms with all the accurate detail you have observed.

An example of correct reporting is as follows:

“I noted an in-breath and I observed that it was a short in-breath or as an inward rush of the inhalation; or a rubbing sensation; a warm sensation or coolness (whatever the observation/ experience). I then noted the out-breath to be longer than the in-breath; or that the exhalation was an outward gush; or that the movement of the exhalation was a warm sensation or an outward rubbing sensation.

“I noted that the in-breath was shorter than the out-breath or that the exhalation was warmer than the inhalation. My mind then wandered and I noted it as 'wandering, wandering' and the thoughts subsided. I returned to noting the in-breath and the out-breath.

“A pain then arose and I noted 'pain, pain'. It then increased in intensity and began to throb. I noted it as 'throbbing, throbbing', and it lessened in its intensity and finally, disappeared.

“I returned to noting the in-breath and the out-breath. A sound occurred and I noted it as 'hearing, hearing', but immediately observed an itch on the face. I noted, 'itching, itching.' After several moments, the itch subsided and I returned to the primary object.”

Please note that if your primary object is the rising and the falling of the abdomen, then you must explain in precise terms the object noted (rising and falling of the abdomen), and the experience

(the expansion, the contraction, the stiffness or the tension experienced in the process of rising and falling along with any secondary objects that you noted as outlined above).

Those familiar with the Maha-Si style of reporting may adopt the following guidelines.

The three aspects of noting mind and body phenomena are:

1. **NOTICING** when the object arises (the mind must be turned towards the object)
2. **NOTING** it
3. **OBSERVING** what is there (its nature, attributes, characteristics). Yogis are asked to begin the interview by reporting on the primary object (the movement and the nature, the characteristics or the experience of the in-breath and the out-breath, or the rising and the falling of the abdomen.)
 - 3.1. “I noticed the in-breath” or “the rising of the abdomen”
 - 3.2. “I noted it as a short in-breath or an inward rush or a coolness” or “I noticed it as a rising of the abdomen and observed the stretching, pressure (etc.)”
 - 3.3. “I noted the out-breath as long or as a warm sensation or an outward gush” or “I noted the falling of the abdomen and observed pressure, fading away (etc.)”

Only after that should you go on to report secondary objects.

Secondary objects:

1. Bodily sensations – pain/ itch
2. Thoughts – ideas, planning or remembering
3. Mental states / emotions – anger, pride, happiness

Please relate the following information for each object described:

1. The arising of the object (for example - pain arose in the knee)
2. What you did, how you noted it? (I noted it as “pain, pain”)
3. What you observed? (I observed stabbing pain)
4. What happened to the object?(The stabbing changed to hard pain)
5. What did you do next? (I noted it as “hard, hard”)

Then, return to:

1. What you observed? (I observed slow pulsating hardness)
2. What happened to the object? (It decreased)
3. What did you do next? (I went back to note the primary object)

When reporting thoughts such as ideas, opinions, memories, planning, imagining, reflecting, speculating, judging and so forth, do not report the content, but how you labelled it. For example, either describe with a general label such as “thinking, thinking” or a more specific label such as planning, remembering, reflecting, etc. Then, report what happened after you noted it.

When reporting mental states such as emotions, do not report how you reflected about it, but just label which emotion it is (was). For example, note anger, sadness or frustration. Then, report what happened after you noted it. A yogi must really put in a wholehearted effort when noting the sensations arising in the six sense doors (seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching or thinking).

Please note:

1. Don't attempt to discern whether your inclination is as a *samatha yogi* or a *vipassanā yogi*. Instead, report the observation and experience of the primary object in precise terms, be it the length of the in-breath and the out-breath or the rising or the falling of the abdomen; the sensation (i.e. coolness, warm sensation or a rubbing sensation; the expansion, contraction, stiffness or tension felt in the abdomen). Depending on your experience and observation, the teacher will discern your characteristic as a *samatha yogi* or a *vipassanā yogi* or both.
2. Report your experience honestly and fully and keep your interview short and to the point.

Instructions for sitting meditation, walking meditation and establishing mindfulness in daily activities

(From the appendix to "In This Life Itself" by Bhante Dhammajīva)

Sitting meditation

When undertaking *ānāpānasati bhāvanā*, a yogi practises both insight meditation and concentration meditation (*vipassanā* and *samatha bhāvanā*).

In the *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta*, *Ānāpānasati sutta* and the *Girimānanda sutta*, the Buddha discussed the suitable environment and the appropriate posture for the *ānāpānasati* practice.

Ānāpānasati bhāvanā must be practised in a relaxed environment, with a little breeze and a medium amount of light. The yogi must be in solitude and consider a comfortable and conducive posture. It is recommended that the yogi sit firmly on the ground in the full lotus posture. Alternatively, yogis can sit in a half-lotus or quarter-lotus posture. Yogis with disabilities or weak health conditions that preclude them from sitting on the ground can use a meditation bench or a straight-backed chair. It is important that the yogi sits in a symmetrical and relaxed manner, keeping the upper part of the body erect. An erect posture facilitates the movement of air through the body and energizes the meditation practice.

Close your eyes and sit in a comfortable, relaxed, symmetrical and erect manner and become mindful of the sitting

posture. Do a mental scan of the posture, bringing your mind to the present. Do not think about the past or the future, the person sitting in front of you or those around you. Sitting in solitude with the least amount of distractions is recommended.

If you customarily sit in a particular place, you will become accustomed to it and it will be conducive for your practice. Early sittings of course will be a trial and error process. Through experience, you will identify the most conducive posture for you. Once you know your alignment and the posture that works best, you can commence *ānāpānasati bhāvanā*. Bring your attention to the present, to the "here and now". Sitting in this manner in itself is a meditative experience. Remain in the present to avoid chain thoughts, irritating sounds or bodily pains that may disturb you.

Focus your attention on the primary object. Then your attention will converge to one part of the body - your nostrils, the top of the lip, the throat or the diaphragm. Do not do forced breathing to locate the in-breath and the out-breath, or to gain a prominent experience. Let the breath become prominent at its own pace.

Gradually, the in-breath and the out-breath will become prominent. The breathing must be natural and not forced. Becoming aware of the in-breath and the out-breath continuously, the breathing process will become prominent at a particular point. Your attention should be refined to this point.

According to the *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta*, you should focus on the object in front of you (*parimukhaṃ satim uppatthapetvā*).

Classically, the attention of the in-breath and the out-breath is referred to as being at the tip of the nose or at the top of the lip (as an object in front of you). But some may find the most prominent point of touch to be in the middle of the skull, the throat, the chest or in the navel. Wherever it may be, your attention should be confined to one place and you should not allow the mind to move from one place to another. As you progress with meditation, your focus will become refined and calmness will set in.

Observe the in-breath as a separate unit from the out-breath. Observe the in-breath and its touch. Be fully aware of the out-breath as it occurs. Gradually the noting mind will move closer to the breath and you will experience the in-breath and the out-breath in a contrasting and different manner. The air draught of the in-breath may appear cooler than the out breath or the out-breath may appear warmer. Or else, you will observe that the in-breath as longer than the out-breath or vice versa. Do not manipulate what is occurring. Just observe the transaction of air.

Owing to continuous mindfulness, irritating sounds, bodily pains, day dreaming or fantasizing will not distract you. If distractions come and go without any interference, you can continue to observe the in-breath and the out-breath. By making a mental note of the in-breath as "in" and the out-breath as "out", you can keep casual thinking, bodily sensations or sounds at bay.

With continuous mindfulness, the breathing will become subtle. With a refined observation and a calming down of the body,

the breath will become less prominent. Mindfully, you must observe the difference between continuing in-breaths and continuing out-breaths. Earlier you observed the difference between the in-breath and the out-breath. Now you must observe the in-breaths and the out-breaths in their totality, from the beginning, through the middle to the end. Observe the difference between one in-breath to the next and one out-breath to the next.

Distractions such as thoughts, sounds or bodily pains will occur. Do not react to them. If you are a habitual thinker or day-dream, make a mental note that you are "thinking", bringing your attention back to the breath. Or else, you should note it as "thinking-thinking-thinking", "day-dreaming - day-dreaming - day-dreaming" or "fantasizing-fantasizing-fantasizing".

Noting thinking as "thinking", you don't digest the contents of the thought. Simply become aware that "thinking" has occurred. Don't be concerned about the content of the thought. Similarly, if a sound irritates you, just note it as "hearing-hearing-hearing". When pain arises, note it as "pain-pain-pain". When they recede, come back to the breath and note the in-breath as "in" and the out-breath as "out". The noting mind and the object of meditation must be aligned, straightened. That is the purpose of meditation.

Your observations during meditation must be discussed with an advanced yogi every two to three days. By doing this, you can receive guidance on how to advance in your practice. The distractions encountered in the practice will be specific to your personality traits.

By reporting to an advanced yogi, you will receive the appropriate instructions. With practice, you can determine whether your natural inclination is towards concentration or insight meditation. It is very difficult to predict this beforehand. Both the meditation and the reporting will lead to the proper path. Your observations must be clear and your reporting should be to the point. Generally, a beginner yogi must do at least an hour of sitting meditation daily.

Walking Meditation

After a meal or a sleep, it is recommended that you do walking meditation before sitting meditation. A period of walking meditation before sitting serves to focus the mind.

In traditional meditation centres there are open-air and internal walking meditation paths. Internal meditation paths are covered to avoid adverse weather conditions.

Before commencing walking meditation, stand at the end of the walking meditation path and contemplate the body. Bring your attention to the present moment. During walking meditation, you establish mindfulness amidst activity as your eyes are open and you will hear the sounds of birds and the external environment. The mindfulness established can be carried forward to day to day activities.

The yogi must first walk up and down the path to activate blood circulation (especially after a long session of sitting

meditation). Walk at a normal pace to ensure that the path is suitable and that there are no obstructions. Become aware of the movement of the feet. Your arms must be as if tied in front of you or behind you. Your attention must be on the movement of the feet. When the right foot moves, observe the experience of the movement and the sensations of the foot. Experience and note the sensation of the sole touching the ground. Observe whether the sensation is coarse or soft. Then shift your focus to the left foot, its movement and the sensation as it touches the ground. Your attention could also be kept on the movement of the joints, the ankle and so forth.

Your eyes should be cast down and you must look about five feet ahead of you. The eyes should be focused on the walking path. Just as during sitting meditation, your attention may be carried away by thoughts and sounds, but your attention should remain with the right foot and the left foot as much as possible. Continuous attention on the right foot and the left foot allows you to keep distractions at bay and to proceed without any interference.

During walking meditation, you exert energy to maintain the focus on the steps and to note the movement of the feet. Accordingly, the energy that is exerted must be double. Warming up in this manner is conducive for sitting meditation. During intensive retreats it is usual to alternate periods of sitting meditation with periods of walking meditation, one after another throughout the day.

In your daily life, you must have at least one session of walking and sitting meditation in the morning and in the evening. If

you meditate in the evening after work, doing some walking before sitting focuses the mind and arouses energy for the sitting that follows. Do not commence sitting meditation straight after your daily activities. The energy aroused during walking meditation, develops accuracy of awareness as well as durability of concentration.

Establishing Mindfulness in Daily Activities

Doing a task simply for the purpose of establishing mindfulness is difficult in our daily activities. Generally we do things for a purpose or to fulfil responsibilities. But to control the speed of our daily activities, we must find some time to establish mindfulness.

Try to bring your attention to the present moment as much as you can so that you are accountable for our experiences and actions. You will no longer attend to daily activities mechanically, like a puppet or a robot. With mindfulness, the experience is live and vivid.

Unless you are experienced in maintaining continuous mindfulness, it is rather difficult to be mindful when you are socializing or attend to numerous tasks. To establish mindfulness in daily activities, become mindful of personal activities such as washing, showering or going to the toilet. You can start doing things *Silently, Mindfully* and *Slowly*. This is the "SMS" that you should apply when establishing mindfulness in daily affairs. In this way, the mindfulness established during sitting meditation could be

extended to day to day activities.

Establishing mindfulness during sitting meditation is an intensive method of meditation. Walking meditation is a semi-intensive method and establishing mindfulness in day to day affairs is an extensive method. Mastering the art of establishing mindfulness in day to day activities, you become more organized and will experience an appealing change in your life.

Mindfulness cultivated during sitting meditation can diminish after you get up. But, the mindfulness established in day to day activities is durable. Both sitting meditation and wakefulness to day to day activities must complement each other to ensure continuous application of mindfulness.

Although instructions for sitting meditation (being the intensive method) are given first, you should not underestimate the benefits of walking meditation or establishing mindfulness in day to day activities. One can observe very profound aspects of the *dhamma* during walking meditation, and even become enlightened.

Chanting - Taking of Precepts

Requesting Precepts

*Ahaṃ, bhante, tisaraṇena saddhiṃ uposatha aṭṭaṅga sīlaṃ
dhammaṃ yācāmi, anuggahaṃ katvā sīlaṃ detha me, bhante.*

May I, Venerable Sir, observe the Uposatha Eight Precepts with the Three Refuges; please Venerable Sir, have compassion and grant me the precepts.

*Dutiyam'pi, ahaṃ, bhante, tisaraṇena saddhiṃ uposatha aṭṭaṅga
sīlaṃ dhammaṃ yācāmi, anuggahaṃ katvā sīlaṃ detha me,
bhante.*

For the second time, may I, Venerable Sir, observe the Uposatha Eight Precepts with the Three Refuges; please Venerable Sir, have compassion and grant me the Precepts.

*Tatiyam'pi, ahaṃ, bhante, tisaraṇena saddhiṃ uposatha aṭṭaṅga
sīlaṃ dhammaṃ yācāmi, anuggahaṃ katvā sīlaṃ detha me,
bhante.*

For the third time, may I, Venerable Sir, observe the Uposatha Eight Precepts with the Three Refuges; please Venerable Sir, have compassion and grant me the Precepts, out of compassion for me.

Teacher: *Yamahaṃvadāmitaṃvadetha.*

What I recite, you follow.

Yogis: *Āma, Bhante*

Yes, Venerable Sir.

Paying Homage to the Buddha

Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa

Homage to him, the blessed one, the fully enlightened one (3 times)

Tisarana (Three Refuges)

Buddhaṃ saranaṃ gacchā-mi

I go to the Buddha as my refuge.

Dhammaṃ saranaṃ gacchā-mi

I go to the Dhamma as my refuge.

Sanghaṃ saranaṃ gacchā-mi

I go to the Sangha as my refuge.

Dutiyampi Buddhaṃ saranaṃ gacchā-mi

For the second time, I go to the Buddha as my refuge.

Dutiyampi Dhammaṃ saranaṃ gacchā-mi

For the second time, I go to the Dhamma as my refuge.

Dutiyampi Sanghaṃ saranaṃ gacchā-mi

For the second time, I go to the Sangha as my refuge.

Tatiyampi Buddhaṃ saranaṃ gacchā-mi

For the third time, I go to the Buddha as my refuge.

Tatiyampi Dhammaṃ saranaṃ gacchā-mi

For the third time, I go to the Dhamma as my refuge.

Tatiyampi Sanghaṃ saranaṃ gacchā-mi

For the third time, I go to the Sangha as my refuge.

Monk: *Saranā gamaṇaṃ paripunnāṃ*

Taking Refuge is complete.

Yogis: *Āma Bhante*

Yes, Venerable Sir

Eight Precepts

1. *Pānātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from killing any beings.

2. *Adinnādānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from taking what is not given.

3. *Abrahmacariyā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from any sexual activity.

4. *Musāvādā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from false speech.

5. *Surā meraya majja pamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī*

sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from drinks, drugs and intoxicants.

6. *Vikhāla bojanā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from taking food at improper times (after midday).

7. *Nacca gīta vādita visūka dassana mālā gandha vilepana*

dhārana maṇḍana vibūsanatṭhānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ

samādiyāmi

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from dancing, singing, music, shows, from the use of garlands, perfumes, cosmetics, adornments and ornaments.

8. *Uccā sayana mahā sayanā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from using high and luxurious seats or beds.

Teacher: *Tisaraṇena saddhiṃ uposatha aṭṭaṅga sīlam dhammaṃ sādhuḥkaṃ surakkhitam katvā appamādena sampādeṭṭhabbam*

Maintaining well the Uposatha Eight Precepts with the Three Refuges, accomplish the training with mindfulness.

Yogis: *Āma Bhante*

Yes, Venerable Sir.

