

AVIJJĀ SUTTA

Venerable Uda Eriyagama Dhammajiva Maha Thero

Quality Printers 0114 870 333

**Meditation Retreat
at Nissaranavanaya Meethirigala**

CONTENTS

AVIJJĀ SUTTA

Venerable Uda Eriyagama Dhammajiva Maha Thero

**Meditation Retreat
at Nissaranavanaya Meethirigala**

This is a compilation of the English translations of the Dhamma Talks and Question/Answer sessions recorded at the Meditation Retreat held at Nissaranavanaya between 25th February and 6th March 2011. This Retreat was organised by the Damrivi Foundation.

• Dedication and Acknowledgment	iii
• Translator's Foreword and Introduction	iv
• Editor's Preface	vi
• The Author	viii
• Dhamma Talk - Day 1	1
• Dhamma Talk - Day 2	9
• Dhamma Talk - Day 3	27
• Dhamma Talk - Day 4	45
• Dhamma Talk - Day 5	67
• Dhamma Talk – Day 6	87
• Dhamma Talk – Day 7	107
• Dhamma Talk – Day 8	125
• Dhamma Talk – Day 9	141
• Questions and Answers – Dhamma Discussion	159

Printed by
The Quality Printers
17/2, Pangiriwatta Road, Gangodawila,
Nugegoda, Sri Lanka.
Tel : +94 11 4 870 333

Dedication

'Pubbhā bhikkhave kōtin nam paññāyati avijjāya Itō param na avijjā'

'...Even with my fully enlightened mind state I cannot see the beginning of the state of avijjā (ignorance). Avijjā has no perceivable beginning...'

This book contains a compilation of Dhamma Talks and Dhamma Discussions on the Avijja Sutta by Venerable U Dhammajiva Maha Thero at Nissaranavanaya in February 2011. Our appreciation goes to all those who were responsible for the audio-recording and audio-editing of the discourses, the translation and editing of the manuscript, proof reading and the printing.

We offer this Dhamma dana to the Sangha of Nissaranavanaya and it is strictly meant for Free Distribution only.

This publication is dedicated to our grandparents.

Sanjay and Deshal de Mel

27th April 2012

Translator's Foreword and Introduction

The Dhamma Talks in this book were given at a ten-day meditation retreat at Nissaranavanaya, Meethirigala in February-March 2011. The Meditation Master is Venerable Uda Eriyagama Dhammajiva MahaThero and the retreat was organized by the Damrivi Foundation in Colombo. These Talks were based on the *Avijja Sutta* (Book of Tens – Anguttara Nikaya) and were in Sinhala.

During these ten days Venerable Dhammajiva effectively captured the Word of the Buddha when describing the genesis of *avijja* (ignorance). In a step by step manner he illustrates the causes that lead up to *avijja* and then goes further to show how, by using a similar structured formula *avijja* can be eliminated. On each day of the retreat, while extracting and expounding the deep Dhamma embedded within this Sutta, the Meditation Master repeatedly brings the yogis' attention to their individual practice. The manner in which he exposes the opportunity to skillfully apply these powerful Dhamma teachings to ones' own meditation practice is unique. His style of teaching is dynamic and evolving, and he makes complex Dhamma topics understandable at a theoretical level. He emphasizes that his teachings are for the diligent enthusiast and demands from the yogi strong commitment and application of the Dhamma into their daily lives. Yet, he makes the absolute novice as well as the experienced meditator feel at ease and enjoy every moment of the retreat.

As a teacher Venerable Dhammajiva inspires yogis with his depth and breadth of knowledge of the Dhamma. The dedicated teaching at Retreats scheduled on almost every day of the month, his unwavering abiding to the vinaya and the diligence with which he puts into practice what the Buddha taught are exemplary. The

experience gained from being a bhikkhu of over twenty years seniority, having taught monks as well as laity for nearly fifteen years both locally as well as globally is reflected in his discourses and Dhamma discussions, as well as during interviews with practitioners from all walks of life. His sharp and incisive mind, the profundity of the teachings laced with lots of wit and humour are what make him a much sought after meditation teacher today.

During his entire teaching career Venerable Dhammajiva has always used the Buddha's discourses as the base for teaching meditation practice to both monastics and the laity alike. Deep *suttas* from the tripitaka are treated by this Master with extraordinary clarity and deep sensitivity. One yogi at the end of a Retreat amply described this experience as one where he felt as though he was sitting in Jeta's Grove in Savaththi listening to the Buddha.

(Pali terms have been retained wherever it was felt that the accuracy of the meaning of the teachings may have been compromised had they not. The Translator liberally used the Buddhist Dictionary (Venerable Nyanatiloka) and A Pali-English Glossary of Buddhist Technical Terms (Venerable Nanamoli and Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi) to give meaning to the content and to add richness to the discourses)

Editor's Preface

When I was invited to assist in the editing of these Dhamma Talks I felt honoured to do so. I saw it as an opportunity to deepen my own inquiry into the topic of Avijja as well as be of service in supporting the study of Dhamma.

These talks frequently highlight the importance of association with the wise. This not only includes who we associate with, but also what we fill our minds with. In studying and contemplating the Dhamma our minds are also 'associating with the wise'. So it is important to discern what kind of Dhamma material serves us best in our cultivation.

The Buddha recommended Dhamma teachers to offer guidance in a graduated and systematic way so that the information given unfolds in a coherent and logical manner, sensitive to the needs of the audience. Here we are given the steps in the Sutta, then practical examples for each stage of the list, followed by tools to work with potential difficulties that may arise along the way of putting these teachings into practice. Throughout the talks Venerable offers descriptions of the innumerable benefits of cultivation. These talks offer clarity, practical guidance and inspiration to develop the Buddha's Path of practice.

In various chapters Venerable Dhammajiva refers to the three stages of progress on the Path: *sutamayā-paññā*, *cintāmayā-paññā* and *bhāvanāmayā-paññā*. *Sutamayā-paññā*, is knowledge derived from study, *cintāmayā-paññā* is knowledge gained through reflection, and *bhāvanāmayā-paññā* is the ultimate understanding of The Truth of the way things are, realized through our own direct experience. These talks are a support for the first stage. They articulate the essence of the teachings within the *Avijjā Sutta* in a clear, accessible and pragmatic manner. Following the steps described can change the

experience of association on all levels of our lives. Seeking out the wisdom and noble example of others can eventually lead us to discover more and more deeply the wisdom within.

May all beings be well

Sister Kovida

The Author

Venerable *Uda Eriyagama Dhammajiva Maha Thero* is a meditation teacher with many years of experience. He is presently the Chief Preceptor and Vice Abbot of the Meethirigala Nissaranavanaya, a respected monastery in the strict forest tradition of Sri Lanka. This monastery was founded in 1968 and was led under the guidance of Venerable Matara Sri Ñānārāma Maha Thero.

Venerable Dhammajiva is a bhikkhu with over twenty years seniority. He was ordained by and trained under the guidance of Venerable Ñānārāma at Nissaranavanaya. Subsequently he spent several years in Burma training with Ovadacariya Sayadaw U Pandithābhivamsa – a leading meditation master who follows the lineage of Venerable Mahāsi Sayadaw.

Venerable Dhammajiva was formerly a graduate in Agriculture and obtained a MSc in that subject. He is currently the Meditation Master at the newly constructed Retreat Centre at Nissaranavanaya . He conducts many long Retreats during the year for Sri Lankan yogis as well as those from overseas. He also teaches at Retreats held in other parts of the world. He is fluent in Burmese, English and Pali, and has translated several meditation guide books from Burmese to Sinhala and English. He is also the author of several books in English and Sinhalese such as: *'In this Life Itself'*, *'Towards Inner Peace'*, *'A Mind Revealed'*, *'The Seven Factors of Enlightenment'* and *'Walking Meditation'*.

Day 1 - Dhamma Talk

This is the beginning of a series of Dhamma talks I plan to give during this ten day retreat. These talks will be based on the Avijjā Sutta of the Anguttara Nikaya, Book of Tens (Dasaka Nipāta). On the previous retreat I conducted in January this year I based the Dhamma talks on the first part of the Avijjā Sutta. These talks will be a continuation based on the same sutta.

***"Iti kho bhikkhave sappurisasamsevo paripūro
saddhammasavanam paripūretī...."***

'Bhikkhus, once the association of true person is fulfilled listening to the truth is fulfilled'

The Buddha begins this Sutta by making a very profound and visionary statement,

'...Even with my fully enlightened mind state I cannot see the beginning of the state of avijjā (ignorance). Avijjā has no perceivable beginning...'

It is a fact that all faiths and religions in the world are trying to trace a source and an origin. Similarly, in all religions (other than Buddhism) there is the presence of a deity, a god, or a divine being. It is only in Buddhism that there is no 'being' responsible for creation and existence. The Buddha states categorically, that the only source of our existence and our lives is our own ignorance, and that this source lies within ourselves and nowhere else. The Buddha further states that this being is subject to cause and effect, i.e. conditionality, and that its origin too is dependant. (see Dependant Origination - Paṭiccasamuppāda). Even after the Bodhisatta reached enlightenment and after he understood the Four Noble Truths, he never saw the beginning of existence. He advised us therefore, not to look for the beginning because we will never find it. However, since ignorance is conditioned and subject to cause and

effect, it has particular nutrients that feed it. The nutrients that constantly feed ignorance are the five hindrances (*pañca nīvarana*).

When we observe the precepts (five, eight, ten or a higher *sīla*) and we discipline ourselves so that we don't commit unskillful acts by word or deed we are protected from certain defilements, i.e. *vītikkaṃa kilesa* (transgressional type of defilements). However we are not protected from the defilements that spring from the mind (*pariyuṭṭāna kilesa* – obsessional defilements) which are the five hindrances. We all know these very well, because they attack us even when we have observed a higher *sīla* and sit in meditation. Even before the Buddha came into being, certain rishis (sages) and ascetics who attained high states of concentration were living in India. They managed to suppress these hindrances during deep meditation. As a little boy during the harvesting ceremony, Prince Siddhārta too attained such states, suppressing the hindrances. All yogis who regularly meditate will know what a difficult task that is.

The defilements that lie deep below both above mentioned types are the *anusaya kilesa* – dormant types of defilements that are the most deadly and have travelled with us all the way in *samsāra*. The Buddha's unique and revolutionary discovery was his ability to identify and to uproot these dormant defilements. But well before coming to that stage, the yogi must be able to understand and release the mind from the recurring five hindrances. He must master the art of attacking these hindrances by recognizing and removing the nutrients that feed them.

Because of three types of wrong conduct – *trivida duccharita* - unwholesome thoughts, words and deeds, we constantly feed the hindrances. If we can commit to avoiding these acts we can be successful in disabling the hindrances. Unwholesome words and deeds (*kāya* and *vacī duccharita*) can be checked by observing *sīla*, but avoiding unwholesome thoughts - *manō duccharita* (i.e, *avijjā, vyāpāda, micchā-diṭṭhi*) - is much more difficult to achieve. Such unwholesome thoughts keep flowing all the time, particularly during lay life. These three types of wrong conduct must be deprived of nutrients.

Pleasing the senses is a feature common to both humans and animals. Lack of sense-restraint is the first nutrient that facilitates wrong conduct. Due to lack of sense-restraint, *sīla* cannot be observed. The ability to control the six senses is a huge spiritual development. This is said to be the distinguishing feature between true and untrue persons (*sappurisa* and *asappurisa*). The value of continuously giving pleasure to the senses, self-indulgence, (*kāmasukhallikānuyōga*) is globally marketed by many groups of people, and this is used by governments, politicians, social scientists, and the corporate sector. To be rich, prosperous and well endowed with sense pleasures is what everyone aspires to. But the Buddha, having experienced all of that for nearly 29 years said that such pleasures never give permanent happiness, and that they are always followed by discontent and sorrow. The Buddha says that such life styles will always make us spiritually 'poor' and that it is those who exercise sense restraint, who will be 'richer' spiritually.

In the past, moral shame and moral fear were qualities that were found in abundance amongst many people. And people with such traits were always respected. Today, with rapid economic and social development we find that the opposite is prevalent. No one feels ashamed of moral transgressions, life styles and behaviors are liberal, and lack of restraint and caution is common. Therefore, the value of being satisfied and content through spiritual development is not understood.

The nutrient that feeds sense-restraint is mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati- sampajañña*). This is a very personal and individual characteristic that can be developed especially under certain supportive conditions. This retreat for instance is focused entirely on developing strong mindfulness. Yogis have left behind their families, homes, jobs and friends, and they live in quiet seclusion during these ten days. We sit in meditation in quietness allowing our bodies to be still, eyes closed, completely mindful and with clear comprehension of what we are engaged in. Similarly, we engage in walking meditation with mindfulness, slowing down all of our movements. When exercising *sati sampajañña* we become

disciplined and obedient, and we can sit perfectly still in meditation. *Sati sampajañña* actually defines and describes the entire teaching of the Buddha. But in Sri Lanka it is not a word that was known of or understood until recently.

I am happy to say that this term, *Sati sampajañña* was incorporated into the Constitution of the Nissaranavanaya. *Sati sampajañña* is the key for developing wisdom and if a yogi lacks this he will never have sense restraint and in turn will never be free of misconduct in words, deeds or thoughts.

The main reason for lacking *sati sampajañña* is unwise attention (*ayōniso manasikāra*) and *ayōniso manasikāra* occurs due to lack of confidence/faith (*saddhā*).

Although some of us may have a misconception that wisdom (*paññā*) is greater than having *saddhā*, the Buddha repeatedly says that *saddhā* plays a big role in developing *yōniso manasikāra*. The Buddha taught us how, through *vipassanā* practice and by using *sati sampajañña*, we can investigate *saddhā* and how we can assess its beneficial effects.

In fact the Buddha taught us how *vipassanā* gives a new meaning to the word *saddhā*.

Sadly, because so many wrong interpretations were given to *saddhā*, it lost its importance and glamour, and many Buddhists today refer to *saddhā* only in association with ritualistic Buddhism. I would say that one of the main reasons for lack of *saddhā*, is the lack of listening to the *saddhamma*.

Venerable Gnānārāma, my preceptor and teacher used to say that although there are so many Buddhist talks broadcast and telecast on the radio and TV, and at every junction on the road, the country does not seem to be improving in any way and that society continues to go downhill. This is because there is very little *saddhamma* being listened to, although *bana* is preached everywhere. The main reason for this is associating with people of wrong conduct (untrue persons - *asappurisa sansevanaya*) and not associating with people of good

conduct, true persons/good friends - *sappurisa* or *kalyānamitta*). Hence the importance of *kalyānamitta* as that is what will lead to reducing ignorance - *avijjā*.

Today's topic for discussion is – '**the benefits of associating with *kalyānamitta* - *sappurisa sansevanaya***'

Prior to his Enlightenment the Bodhisatta used to always consider carefully the person he associates with and would ask himself, what qualities of this person should I respect and what qualities should I not respect? The Bodhisatta was always very sensitive to this fact. Moreover, the Bodhisatta was also determined to rid himself of any defilements, so that anyone associating with him would not get wrongly influenced by him. Therefore we could consider the Buddha as the world's first *sappurisa* and *kalyānamitta*. Thereafter, the Buddha decided to teach the monks how to become *sappurisa* and he used revolutionary methods to do so. When Ven. Kondañña understood the first teachings at Varanasi, the Buddha was very pleased.

And we should also be pleased that 2,600 years after the enlightenment of the Buddha, at how large numbers of *sappurisa* have contributed towards keeping the teachings alive and how many *kalyānamitta* have helped to perpetuate the *saddhamma*. Members of the Theravada lineage have performed a phenomenal task over many years. Therefore we must recognize that *kalyānamitta* do exist. The Buddha reminded Ven. Ānanda that the existence of the entire *sāsana* is 100% due to *kalyānamittata*.

Just as it is rare for a Buddha to be born into this world, it is also rare to be born a human, and even more rare for us to be born with all our senses intact, so that we can hear the Dhamma, read the Dhamma and associate with *kalyānamitta*. Our ambition should be to meet a *kalyānamitta*, and to be able to recognize them when we meet them, then the entire *brahmachariya* (life of chastity) will be complete.

Soon after his enlightenment the Buddha wanted to teach his teachers, *Ālārakālāma* and *Uddakarāmaputta*. But he realized that

they had both died a week and one day previously, after having attained the eighth and seventh *jhāna*. They were re-born in the immaterial realms - *arūpa brahma* worlds - where they had no sense faculties, so they couldn't hear or see the Buddha. Next he thought of the five ascetics who had helped him during his period of austerities.

Initially they were reluctant to accept his teachings, but later they did so and Ven. Kondañña attained *sotāpanna* with that first teaching whilst the others attained stages of enlightenment gradually. When Ven. Vappa (one of the five ascetics) was to *parinibbāna*, he said in verse (*Thēra Gatha*) how the Buddha (as a *sappurisa/kalyānamitta*) came to them and tried to teach the Dhamma and how they didn't accept him because the five ascetics at that time had no qualities of a *sappurisa*.

'Passanto passati passantham apassanto-ca passati,

Napassanto napassanti passanto-ca napassati'

Ven. Vappa learnt from his mistake. When we learn for sure that the *kalyānamitta* we meet is actually a *kalyānamitta*, then we have achieved a lot. Until we actually 'hear' the dhamma we don't understand or relate to it and we don't realize its value. But if we meet and recognize a true *kalyānamitta* then we will actually 'hear' the *saddhamma*. In order for this connection to take place the yogi must also be full of purity and wholesome qualities including *saddhā*.

When I was conducting a retreat in Perth last December, one of the yogis asked me, 'How can we recognize a non-*kalyānamitta*?' I said the best method would be to look in a mirror! I said this because most of the times we don't realize how foolish we are. As a result we don't recognize a *sappurisa* even when we are in the presence of an *arahant* or even a *pacceka* Buddha. As I said before, this is because we don't have '*sappurisa* traits'. We must have at least a few of those wholesome traits to be able to recognize such noble beings when we meet them.

The next question is how do we learn to cultivate such qualities? Wisdom is essential for this. *Sutamaya ñāna* (theoretical knowledge of the Dhamma) and *Cintāmayā ñāna* (ability to think and reason out the Dhamma) are not adequate, while *bhāvanāmaya paññā* (realization of the Dhamma through meditation) is essential.

The Buddha said, "Bhikkhus, there are persons with the following seven qualities. Do not fail to associate with them"

1. Those who are pleasant to live with and associate with (*priyabhāva, mānavadayā*),
2. Those who are approachable
3. Those who are liked by everybody, humans, animals, devas. If we don't have those qualities it is unlikely that we will meet such people..
4. Those with authentic moral purity
5. Those who are respected by others for this trait (*garubhāva*).
6. Those who radiate goodness and *metta*. his quality is difficult to detect by those who lack it. (i.e, by *asappurisa*).
7. Those with such purity, conduct themselves without any expectations of praise or accolades. Sometimes they get blamed by the very people whom they have helped. But they will still continue to help others and not respond or react to anything. They will also not criticize or blame anyone either.

Many people have told me not to preach deep Dhamma, but instead to teach something simple like the Jātaka tales. The late Venenerable Gānārāma Mahā Thera, my teacher, was ordained in the village temple when he was only thirteen and one of the tasks assigned to him was to clean the ola leaf manuscripts. In the process one day he discovered some writings on meditation. This was the first time he had come across such writings and he set about searching for more on this amongst all ola leaf manuscripts he could find. This made him

learn details of *vipassanā* at a time when such practise had been obscure and was almost non-existent in Sri Lanka. When the monks from Burma arrived in the country he sat with them and learnt *vipassanā* deeply and thereafter whenever the opportunity arose Ven Gānārāma always taught *vipassanā* meditation to anyone who came to see him. He then wrote books on the subject and truly revived *vipassanā* practise in Sri Lanka.

For my good *kamma*, I saw the same trend being followed by my Burmese teacher Venerable U Panditha Sayadaw and both these teachers had great ability in teaching meditation. The Dhamma they taught was deep and very meaningful to the practise of meditation, and this was very precious.

Such were the qualities of the *kalyānamitta* I associated with.

Our task should be to identify how much of those qualities we have? What percentage of *sappurisa* attributes can we claim to have? We should question ourselves, thus, always. Turning *silā* into *adhi silā* should be our aim. Similarly, turning *citta* into *adhi citta* and *paññā* into *adhi paññā* should be our aim. And we must remember that only humans can do this, no one else. When we succeed in doing so, then we will be able to recognise *sappurisa* and *kalyānamitta*. Then we will be able to see that the Dhamma is alive and feel as though we were seated with the Buddha in Jetavana. The Buddha asked us to refrain from keeping company with fools (*asēvānāca bālānam*), before asking us to keep company with the wise (*paṇḍitāna ca sēvanā*), and *this is* because the former is more important. Similarly he first said *sabba pāpassa akaranam ...*, removing our own *kilesa* is priority, because it is only then that *kalyānamitta* will come near us.

Today, globally, there is a huge Dhamma 'net' connecting all virtuous beings and yogis, irrespective of who or where they are. Those within the net have the benefit of the Dhamma and it is obvious. Therefore we must endeavor to move away from *pāpamitta* (those with unwholesome conduct) and to come together with virtuous people with good qualities.

Day 2 - Dhamma Talk

'Sappurisa samsevo paripūro, saddhamma savanam paripūreti Saddhamma savanam paripūram, saddhamparipūreti'

If you hear the *saddhamma* repeatedly then the *saddhā* within you will grow in strength. If you meet and associate with a *kalyānamitta/sappurisa*, then listening to *saddhamma* will occur naturally and it will be completely fulfilled.

Yesterday we discussed how association with good friends (*kalyānamitta sēvana*) opens doors for listening to the true teachings of the Buddha, i.e. listening to the *saddhamma*. And we discussed how listening to the *saddhamma* leads to increasing levels of confidence and faith (*saddhā*).

Today, our discussion will focus on examining the interconnectedness of associating with *kalyānamitta*, listening to the *saddhamma* and the arising of *saddhā*, and how these three factors have a linear relationship. The difference between conventional/traditional *Dhamma* and the *saddhamma* is a deep topic and cannot be discussed in detail in one night.

By continuously associating with *kalyānamitta*, we will gradually begin to understand the *saddhamma* - its depth and breadth - and then begin to learn how this association will take us towards learning the deep *Dhamma* (*living dhamma*). In a very concise form, *saddhamma* can be described as zeal or diligence in the practise of Dhamma that is the very foundation of progress, as is heedfulness or being circumspect and careful /*appamāda*. This is the same as knowing and being mindful or aware (*Sati*). When the original English version of the three baskets of the Pāli Canon (*tipitaka*) was documented by the Pāli Text Society, its author, Professor Rhys Davis wanted to make it as concise as possible. But that was extremely difficult.

For instance, the Buddha, on various occasions had said that the *Dhamma* can be summarized in each of the following doctrines, i.e. the Four Noble Truths or the Dependant Origination (*Paticcasamuppāda*) or as morality/virtue, concentration and wisdom (*Sīla, Samādhi, Paññā*) or as eradicating greed, hatred and delusion (*lobha, dosa, moha*). And all of these are true. Similarly, the term *appamāda* fundamentally describes the essence of *saddhamma*.

At a time when the entire world was seeking pleasure derived from the six senses (i.e. *kāma*) one individual stood up and made a brave pronouncement that a divine/holy life of chastity (*brahmacariya*) was possible and that he had realized this. None of the spiritual leaders at the time of the Buddha could accomplish that task, nor were they able to preach to their followers. This was because they all lived their lives steeped in *kāma*. In society, the success of people is usually measured by their wealth, property, employment status and the other comforts they enjoy. These are all measurements used within the *kāma lōka*.

The Buddha showed how a *brahmacariya* lifestyle and *appamāda*, leading to *saddhā*, were all an essential part of the *saddhamma*, and thereby how the *saddhamma* can be differentiated from the *kāma lōka*.

Some writers have referred to *saddhā* as a trait that can be enjoyed by all beings. And it has been described as the capacity for dedicated effort in whatever one does, man and animal alike, which would mean that bees, white ants and other similar industrious insects or animals have considerable *saddhā*. But the Buddha specifically refers to humans as very special beings, who have the intelligence, innovativeness and creativity, and who can be pushed to achieving the highest potential possible. The Buddha says that it is only a human who can develop the faith/confidence (*saddhā*) and understanding required for this highest attainable achievement and that it is only the *saddhamma* that can direct a human towards this noble endeavor.

However, it is only after a successful meeting with a *kalyānamitta* that this becomes possible. Until this happens we act on negligence and are not diligent and heedful (*pamāda*, as opposed to *appamāda*). This is because we feel that heedfulness or *appamāda* is too difficult and that we have too many responsibilities, too much work and that we have no time for it. We keep postponing this all important mission for another day/ month/ year or until the appearance of the Maithri Buddha. But if by any chance the yogi meets a *kalyānamitta*, the *kalyānamitta* may be able to encourage and advise the yogi to include *appamāda* into their daily routine, at least for a few minutes or a few hours. The ability of a *kalyānamitta* to teach this and to convert the existing belief that 'its too difficult' into a 'its possible' makes that teaching the *saddhamma*. This would pave the way for a significant shift in that person.

The Buddha made it possible 'by turning the wheel' of the *saddhamma* to reach all beings. This was a unique ability of the Buddha who is the original teacher of the *saddhamma*. It is a very rare opportunity made available only to humans. And those who understand the teachings undergo a significant transformation. Therefore, the availability of the precious *saddhamma* in this tiny corner in the world is a huge blessing and privilege that we must all treasure. Most of us are conventional Buddhists endowed with traditional/cultural *saddhā*.

But we rarely use this *saddhā* to test what the Buddha actually taught, by sitting meditation or walking meditation. The unique potential of *saddhamma* is to inspire us to developing true *saddhā* so that we can put into practice what the Buddha taught. Even if we read many books on Buddhism and associate with '*kalyānamitta*', if we don't attempt to meditate we cannot refer to the teachings we have received as *saddhamma*, nor can we refer to the faith we have developed as *saddhā*. If a true *kalyānamitta* is found there will be a gradual transformation in the person, and the previous '*saddhā*' will mature into *kusalacchanda* and realization will arise. Such a yogi will begin to have faith in the *kalyānamitta* and be inspired by them. They will also develop an urge to discover and to test the teachings

received by meditating and being continuously mindful. Then *saddhā* will continue to grow in strength.

Saddhā is dependently arisen (i.e. in a *paticca-samuppāda* manner) from associating with *kalyānamitta* and by listening to *saddhamma*. Supposing we don't become enthusiastic to pursue the *Dhamma* or to move towards *appamāda*, then we will end up with just a thin layer of superficial *saddhā* (i.e. *pasāda saddhā* and *amūlika saddhā*). Herein lies the 'Religion-issue', because if we have not transformed *saddhā* into *kusalacchanda* then we are left with only the *saddhā* of Buddhism as a Religion, and then we are no different to those of other religions. The Buddha's reference is to a specific, unique type of *saddhā* which occurs only when listening to *saddhamma* and associating with *kalyānamitta*. This *saddhā* is deep, vibrant and very much 'alive'. When this type of *saddhā* is present in us, we are able to understand and realize that what the Buddha taught is in fact true. When this transformation takes place it means that the previous superficial *saddhā* (which is similar to floating moss) has become deeper and *penetrative* (*okappana saddhā*), and the yogi, with wisdom begins to realize and see the teachings of the Buddha directly during meditation.

From my understanding when a yogi is able to identify the primary object of meditation and investigate it, knowing fully that it is an 'in'-breath or 'out'-breath, then their *saddhā* has matured. It is stronger than the *saddhā* that arises when just listening to Dhamma talks - bana. The 'bana' has now come alive through direct experience. Therefore if a teaching is able to push a yogi towards investigating the Dhamma and if they actually see the Buddha's teaching during meditation, such a teaching is indeed the *saddhamma*. And if they then work towards converting that into *kusalacchanda* there is no way that they can escape *nibbāna*. A person in whom *kusalacchanda* appears will reach their real 'home', i.e. *nibbāna*. The simile used to describe this inevitability is how when a dead body (human or animal) floats in the sea, the waves will toss and turn it for long periods, but eventually, the body will always be washed up on the shore. This occurrence would equally apply to a huge whale or a tiny

sea shell. The Buddha says, a yogi in whom *kusalacchanda* manifests will always see *nibbāna*. Such is the transformation that takes place. Such is the nobility of the *saddhamma* – its purity is at the beginning, the middle and the end (*kēvala bhāvato paripurānam parisuddham*).

The *saddhamma* was recited by five hundred *arahants* and its contents were agreed upon at the first Buddhist Council three months after the demise or *parinibbāna* of the Buddha about 2,554 years ago at Rajagaha. Once agreed upon by the *arahants* the sacred contents were named '*Buddha Dēšana*' – the Word of the Buddha. There have been six such Buddhist Councils all together. For the many yogis who have actually tried and tested these teachings and placed a great significance and value on this *saddhamma*, the Buddha's teachings became alive and extremely precious.

If I were to narrate a relevant portion of my personal life, until I was about sixteen years old I had studied Buddhism as a subject in school. At my first attempt at the GCE Ordinary Level examination I got a credit pass for Buddhism. I had to sit the exam twice (since I was not a clever student) and I got the same result for Buddhism in the second attempt. During that time, after the eighth Grade we were assigned to different academic streams - Arts, Science, Commerce. I was selected to the Science stream and with that change I began studying subjects like Chemistry, Physics, Biology, but not Buddhism. We began to revere famous scientists like Isaac Newton and Archimedes since they were considered great teachers. The Buddha, whose teachings are more than 2,500 years old, was not given similar prominence. It was a common belief that studying Science subjects would give better opportunities for 'white collar' jobs and thereby better social standing. Buddhism was considered important simply because it was easy to get a credit pass at the examination and I was in a big hurry to set it aside and to get on with my substantive work. At that time I never dreamt that Buddhism would have such a close and deep impact on my life.

We also had the misconception that Buddhism was a subject studied by Arts students because they wanted to eventually major in

Buddhist Civilization, and that such students were academically 'inferior' in contrast to the more 'superior' and 'able' Science students.

It was common to relegate subjects like Sinhala and Buddhism to a lower place as they were not considered as rewarding as Science subjects. Science, we believed, was the path to important jobs, modernization, wealth and development. It was only after I entered University, that for the first time I was exposed to the teachings of the Buddha and this made me want to investigate and explore the subject further.

My first exposure to the *saddhamma* was through the teachings of Ven. S. Dhammika. Frankly, it was because Ven. Dhammika was a Western monk that I stood for about one and a half hours at the door of the meditation hall listening to him. I had no other incentive to hear the Dhamma. I was simply curious to hear the *Dhamma* being taught in English. At the end of the discussion I went and spoke to him. He was not very encouraging and told me that it might be a waste of his time trying to teach people like me, because he felt that I would never attempt to practise what the Buddha taught. During my school life I was never made to understand that the Buddha's teachings had to be practised. I only knew that we had to memorise certain stanzas and important events in the Buddha's life. For instance I memorized the Dhammapada but I did not know its meanings.

I remember telling Ven. Dhammika how I felt that, in Buddhism there was nothing to 'do'. An exception was the students who read for PhDs in the University I attended.

Ven. Dhammika repeatedly advised me not to disrespect the *saddhamma* and taught me its profound value. He taught me how the *saddhamma* brought life into the Buddha's teachings and how it would affect *my* life deeply. I then asked Ven. Dhammika to kindly teach me the *saddhamma* in a way that would affect my life. It was only then that he taught me the meaning of mindfulness (*sati*) and its close relationship to heedfulness - *appamāda* - two terms I had

never heard so vividly explained until then. Although I was a typical Sri Lankan Sinhala-Buddhist living in the Dhammadvipa my knowledge of the *Dhamma* was minimal. For about three years thereafter I sat with Ven. Dhammika and with the little English I knew I managed to understand the essence of his teaching, i.e. that Buddhism is actually the *Buddha Dhamma*, which is *bhāvana*, which is *vipassanā*, which is *sati*. However, many people may argue this issue.

But I am simply relating what I learnt at that time. Then I never considered whether I was moral/immoral, or whether I knew the *tipitaka* or not. I simply wanted to test myself as to whether I could practically undertake what Ven. Dhammika advised me to do.

I have to humbly confess that until that moment I had never meditated. I was advised by Ven. Dhammika to be mindful in all my daily activities. Maintaining moment to moment awareness became a big challenge and I found it to be interesting and fun. I remember how I wasted a lot of Ven. Dhammika's time when I used to report my practise, because I gave a lot of unnecessary details about many things but not the primary object of meditation. After about four years of this type of practise, Ven. Dhammika asked me to go with him to Nilambe for a meditation retreat. It was only then that he taught me *ānāpānasati*. I started this practice but I realized that I just couldn't do it. I couldn't find my 'in'/'out'- breath, let alone watch it, and even when I rarely did locate my breath, I found that within three or four minutes I had fallen asleep. And when I woke up I didn't know where I was, what I was doing, or where I had started or stopped.

As a result of this 'failure' in my progress in meditation I had to distance myself from Ven. Dhammika for a period. But all of these events led to me undertaking a deeper exploration and comprehensive study of the *saddhamma*. Eventually, after about 8-10 years I managed to understand what *ānāpānasati* was and I began reading about it from the texts written by Ven. Gñānārāma, my teacher and preceptor.

As I mentioned before I was not a person who was deeply committed to *sīla*, nor was I a dedicated meditator. During that period Ven. Dhammika had a small group of people who held regular Dhamma discussions every Wednesday and Friday, and I too was invited to join them. I felt they were like a '*brahma/deva*' circle. Although they never proclaimed they were Buddhists, never wore white clothes and never propagated Buddhism, still they led very pure lives and with exemplary characters. This became a wonderful platform for me to engage in morality/virtue and meditation (*sīla* and *bhāvana*), and I was amazed that this group was willing to accept someone like me, although my life was not all that pure or moral. They never questioned me about my life or my character but simply encouraged me to join them. This became a very peaceful sanctuary and gradually I began to practise *ānāpānasati* with regularity. Almost ten years had passed since my initial encounter with Ven. Dhammika, by the time I had reached this stage.

The yogis present at this retreat should feel encouraged, because after a few days most of you will understand meditation and have already begun to practice successfully, unlike me who was a late starter. It is important to know that this is the nature of the *saddhamma* – the more you learn and deeply you engage with it, the more deeply it would affect your life. At a particular point, a very special type of confidence and faith (*saddhā*) arose, particularly towards my teachers (e.g. Ven. Dhammika) and a desire to investigate and deeply explore all facets of the teachings developed. I then asked Ven. Dhammika how I should systematically begin this training, and he advised me to read the '*Khaggavisāna Sutta*' of the Sutta Nipāta. After/reading the text I realized how, in all thirty seven stanzas of this *sutta*, the emphasis was placed entirely on the necessity for seclusion.

This posed a big dilemma for me. I had made many plans in life, like securing a good job, a marriage, a family and I had many of the natural desires of a young man. My teacher advised me not to worry about any of that and that I should simply continue to be in the

saddhamma and to continue meditation. He predicted that soon I would come into contact with *kalyānamitta*. *Saddhā* would also naturally come when associating with a *kalyānamitta* and he said that the *saddhamma* would come alive and push me forward gradually. All of this happened to me very gradually and during this process I found a strange resolve developing in me.

During my monastic life I had two significant milestones: One was when I met Ven. Gñānārāma Maha Thero and the other was when I met Ven. Katukurundē Nyanānanda. By the time these meetings took place I had decided that I was going to dedicate my entire life to the mission of the Dhamma. Subsequently Ven. Gñānārāma Maha Thero passed away and I left for Burma to undertake further training with Sayadaw U Panditha. Sayadaw U Panditha is a very skillful meditation master and he gave me some special teachings. He taught me how one should be extremely careful when teaching the *saddhamma* to others and how to make it as simple and direct as possible, and not to bring too much textual teachings (*suttas*) into discussions.

He said how the *saddhamma* can be taught to anyone without any pre-requisites, and in a way that can benefit one's daily life and be applied under any circumstances. He emphasized how we should make no difference between those who know and those who don't know, between the student and teacher, and how anyone from any background can learn this. It was only after this training that I began to learn how to teach the *Dhamma* and also how to extract important points after listening to a *Dhamma* talk. It was then when *saddhā* towards the Buddha truly increased. I then learnt how layer by layer learning the *Dhamma* unfolds, and how deeply I was able to understand the teaching. An ant who is walking on top of an orange will not know what lies within the core of the fruit, similarly, as long as we are skimming the surface it is very hard to understand the deep core. However, as you go deeper and deeper into *ānāpānasati* we will be treading the same Path as the Buddha. Then you begin to develop *saddhā* associated with the Dhamma in an incredible manner. Even today, although I study many books and the *tipitaka*. I

still endeavour to understand what the Buddha tried to teach us by always going back to the basics like a toddler taking his first steps. Although we are in a different country at a different time, the teachings of the Buddha remain as alive as 2,600 years ago. It is only the way we are trying to learn those teachings that differs and also our enthusiasm towards the learning.

I wish to remind you again of the importance of understanding the meanings of *appamāda* and *sati* clearly. Similarly, the importance of *brahmacariya* as a way of life. If a *kalāyanamitta* is able to make you understand these practices and is able to increase the *saddhā* within you, the value of such a *kalyānamitta* is immeasurable. The Buddha was the first *kalyānamitta* and subsequently all others with great sanctity carried the *saddhamma* and passed it on from person to person, thus transmitting the Buddha's teachings. The character of the Dhamma is described as:

'*Svākkhātō bhagavatā dhammo
sanditthikō akālikō
ēhipassikō ōpanaikō
paccattam vēditabbō viññū hīti*'

Svākkhātō; well proclaimed is the *Dhamma*. It itself as the truth. When this is related to experience in *ānāpānasati* and the movement of the breath in and out of the nostril, if one observes very carefully, the air element vividly expresses its own characteristics (*vāyō photthabbha dhātu*) i.e, stiffness, tension, expansion, contraction, pressure, movement etc. The character of the air element of the out-breath differ from the characteristics of the in-breath and the yogi will be able to discern and understand this very well. If the yogi manages to experience a sense of calm when he keeps observing the air element in this manner continuously with uninterrupted mindfulness, they are experiencing the Dhamma expressing itself under one's very nose.

When we observe a leaf on a mango tree moving even when a slight breeze gently plays on it, we are experiencing the same observation,

and we know with certainty how the Dhamma is expressing itself just as in the case of the in/out breath externally and the characteristics of the air element. When the *vāyō dhātu* expresses itself in this manner under any circumstance, there is no 'me or mine or I' associated with it. Similarly when we see a river flow, a fire burn, or hear and feel the wind or when we feel the hardness of the earth, the elements are manifesting themselves, i.e. the *Dhamma* (phenomena) are manifesting with no 'self' attached. Why we don't usually perceive these as *Dhamma* phenomena is because our *saddhā* is not ripe enough. Supposing one day our *saddhā* matures and we realize how in every activity of ours, from morning till night, day after day, from birth till death, in every single living and feeling moment we can observe the *Dhamma* unfolding before us. But due to our ignorance and lack of *saddhā* we miss this and instead we understand these events differently, and we associate them with either personification or we see them mixed with other mundane pleasures and events.

The person who steps into the *Dhamma* as a novice is said to be in the 'beginners phase' (*ādi kalyāna*) and it means that he is starting this noble journey. Due to the *svākkhathō* characteristic of the *Dhamma* the novice gets inspired and undergoes a substantial transformation and their road to *nibbāna* starts at this point. It is like the pleasure a mother gets when she sees a new-born baby smile or walk for the first time. Although the *saddhā* is not mature at this stage it can be converted into resolute faith, *kusalacchanda* by systematic training with normal faith in *ānāpānasati*. To ensure that we don't fall asleep while experiencing these features we need to habitually do walking meditation prior to sitting and build up energy (*virīya*). When we reach a certain level of concentration we will begin to understand through our own wisdom (*paññā*) how to employ *saddhā* and *virīya* and how they are leading to *sati* and *samādhi*.

At this stage we may not 'enjoy' the *saddhā* experienced by the Buddha or the arahants, but the *saddhā* (even though lightly felt) at this stage should be mastered thoroughly and it must be treasured.

Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw used to say that when we were very small if someone gave us five cents we would treasure it because that would be our sole wealth. This was because we knew that with five cents we would be able to buy a pencil with an eraser fixed on top. Such was the value of five cents at that time. But today even five hundred thousand rupees would not be treasured very much, unless we had the same mentality that we had, when five cents was our only wealth. Therefore as a yogi, always treasure your first meditative experience. If, even in small amounts you feel that your *saddhā*, *virīya*, *sati*, *samādhi* and *paññā* are growing, do not try to accelerate the speed. If you do so, you will lose all the gains you had achieved as a novice. For that you have to understand and value the concept of how to develop beginner's mind or a '*Zen mind*'. *The 'Beginner's Mind'* is a very good book by the Zen Meditation master D. T. Suzuki where he shows the importance of having the lightness of a beginner's mind in meditation. Even though we enter yogic training as senior citizens, as yogis we are still infants. Even in monkhood, at whatever age you get ordained you will still be referred to as an 'infant-novice monk'. Therefore, starting afresh is the most important aspect of yogic training.

I still have enormous respect for Ven. Dhammika because it was he who taught me the value of *sati* and the meaning of *appamāda*. His advice proved to be invaluable at that stage together with this concept of 'beginner's mind'. Although I had learnt many things from many teachers thereafter, it was because I met Ven Dhammika and because of what he taught me as a *kalyānamitta*, that I learnt the *saddhamma* for the first time and also developed *saddhā*.

When a yogi sits for meditation, however experienced they consider they are, they must not think of 'yesterdays' meditation or how good/bad it had been. Nor should they think of all the opinions expressed by various people on the subject. They should simply think, 'how a new born baby would learn to breathe' Similarly, they should allow the natural process of breathing to manifest.

Ven. Gñānārāma Maha Thero used to say, that a yogi should sit for

meditation with both sides symmetrically and evenly balanced like a pyramid, they should relax all the muscles with no tension, and establish mindfulness with the reflection – '*now, I am here*'. This is critical because even if you live a hundred years and haven't experienced sitting in the present moment being fully aware of your posture, it is unlikely that you will ever be able to do so. Unless such training has been given to us by a *kalyānamitta*, we will continue to stand or sit in one place but all of our thoughts will be roaming elsewhere. We will never be in the present moment and instead we will either be in the past or the future. The ability to be in the present moment is a great achievement, because only then we will have purity of mind and we will not be creating any thoughts or emotions based on the defilements - greed, hatred and delusion. And if we can stay relaxed, in that manner – in the present moment - for a long period we have achieved a lot (*Kēvala paripuṇṇo, parisuddhā*) and even Māra cannot disturb and take that opportunity away. Only humans can achieve this phenomenal task. We should also not aspire for great achievements when we sit for meditation. We should simply pay attention to the primary object (i.e. 'in' breath and 'out' breath) as and when they arise.

During the initial stages keeping the mind on the present moment will be a difficult task and, therefore the yogi should be away from noise and other distractions. The closer the mind is to the primary object the less chance of the mind wandering away. Next, the yogi should be attentive (*manasikāra*) to each in-breath and out-breath as they occur. Gradually even in the midst of noise and aches and pains the yogi will master the technique, and will be able to sit for longer periods. At this stage, most teachers advise yogis to distinguish the experience of the in-breath from that of the out-breath, clearly.

Ven Gñānārāma used to say that during the in-breath the yogi should contemplate and know, 'this is in-breath and not the out-breath' and vice versa. The mind actually knows the difference. If the yogi can take 10-20 breaths in that manner clearly knowing the difference between the two, it's a great achievement. Gradually the yogi will be

able to tell the teacher during interviews if his in-breath was longer or shorter than the out-breath, whether it was cooler or hotter, rougher or smoother.. Then the teacher will realize that the yogi has actually learnt something and that the yogi can observe and report scientifically, i.e. he can record the *experiment* (knowing the in-breath as the in-breath), the *observation* (noting or contemplating the in-breath as the in-breath) and the *inference* (that the in-breath is not the out-breath and vice versa). The day the yogi confidently masters the ability to distinguish the in-breath from the out-breath due to its particular characteristics and report accordingly, the yogi graduates to the next phase (i.e. from *ādi kalyāna* to *majjhē kalyāna*). Then the yogi sets themselves a new target i.e. knowing the differences between the in-breath and the out-breath, how many breaths will I be able to take in such a discrete manner?

Just as when an individual attempts to carry a heavy bag of cement from the lower Centre to the upper monastery (that means about half a kilometre), first someone should help them to load the bag on to his shoulders and thereafter the man will not stop until he goes all the way up. If he decides to rest half way and drop the bag, he will never be able to lift it up again by himself, so he runs straight up non-stop. In the same manner a yogi will gradually develop confidence to continue with the breath for a long time.

Similarly the yogi uses effort (*virīya*) in three kinds in three stages – Initial application (*ārambha dhātu*), middle stages (*nikkhama dhātu*) and the final spurt of energy (*parākrama dhātu*), where the yogi will go ahead with the primary object without stopping. The method each yogi will use to step into the meditation object will differ, but they will know the importance of deeply going into the object and staying there. If a yogi knows thoroughly the in-breath and the way it differs from the out-breath, and all its sixteen facets, the Buddha said it is akin to the yogi knowing the world and all its disciplines (i.e. the yogi's graduation to the *majjhē kalyāna* phase). But when the Buddha said this he was challenged by many, especially by those who were not practicing.

Many yogis in previous retreats have questioned me if it is useful to do some preliminary chanting prior to starting *ānāpānasati* and some have asked if it is useful to do *kasina* meditations, cemetery contemplations, and contemplation on foulness on the body. We have this tendency to collect these different meditations and put them into one basket instead of choosing one subject and through striving, mastering it to the full. It is the nature of *kāma* to like variety and diversity, hence the need to choose many objects of meditation rather than specializing in one. The Buddha said if we jump from one object to another we will never be able to see *dukkha*., Similarly during *ānāpānasati* if we keep changing positions we will never have the opportunity to see suffering. Whereas if we decide to retain our posture whatever assails our body and mind, and keep observing only the 'in' and 'out' breath, we will then go deeper and deeper into *ānāpānasati* as well as into the feelings.

As I mentioned earlier, stepping into *ānāpānasati* indicates that the yogi is in the *ādi kalyāna* phase and as they begin to observe the eleven facets of the breath and they get a thorough understanding of all the elements and their characters they have moved to the *majjhē kalyāna* phase. When they feel the breath calming down and becoming indistinct, they have arrived at the *pariyōsāna kalyāna* phase and is now ready to go into further realization. The yogi will then know that, through *ānāpānasati* they have mastered the technique of understanding all the characteristics of corporeality (*rūpa dhamma/kāyānupassana*), and that now they can make the transition to observing the characters of mentality (*nāma dhamma*). They will then begin observing the feelings/sensations of the breath and its characteristics, i.e. they will know how they feel towards the coolness of the in-breath as opposed to the heat of the in-breath, and similarly the other sensations in both 'in' and 'out' breath.

We mentioned earlier that the stage of *passambhayam kāyasankhāram assasissāmīti sikkhatī* signified an important transition in a yogi's journey. The transition is from observing *kāya or rūpa dhamma to nāma dhamma*. It is at this point that we begin to understand perception (*saññā*) together with feelings. *Saññā* is the

labelling and signs connected with our memory that we carry with us, relating to any sensation of feeling. We know that heat is 'heat' because we recognize it through comparison with the perception of 'cold' in our memory. After observing, *rūpa dhamma* in this way for a while, the yogi will gradually move towards observing feelings - *vēdana*, and then *saññā* and *sankhāra* (perceptions and formations). The yogi must develop a sense of detached awareness and simply be a passive observer. They will then mature substantially, diving deeper and deeper into *ānāpānasati* and then with observing consciousness (*viññāna*) they will have to learn how to differentiate between all of the five aggregates of clinging (*panca upādāna khandha- rūpa, vēdanā, saññā, sankhāra, viññāna*). They will understand that the aggregates have certain characteristics in common.

This important transition from only knowing the individual characteristics (*rūpa and nāma dhamma*) to knowing the shared characteristics (that all *rūpa* and *nāma dhamma* are subject to impermanence, suffering and non-self) is when the yogi shifts into the *majjhē kalyāna* stage. The individual characteristics always predominate when the defilements are active, but when the yogi sees the common/shared characteristics these defilements become less prominent.

Once this stage is reached all the divisive issues and conflicts will cease. The *kalyānamitta* who helps the yogi to reach this transformation will be giving the best gift that any one can ever bestow. Such a gift is incomparable and all ideas and misconceptions that the yogi may have held previously fades away. With this transformation into realizing the common/shared characteristics of all *dhamma* - phenomena, the yogi's existing *saddhā* will mature into *okappana saddhā*; *virīya* will mature into *nikkama dhātu or into paggahita virīya* ; *sati* = mindfulness will mature into *steadfast mindfulness = akanda sati*, *samādhi* will mature into *upacara samādhi* and the *paññā* will develop to an extent where the yogi will be able to see all phenomena arising and passing away clearly, as though they were using an electron microscope. The yogi will now

be seeing the true nature of all Dhamma - phenomena - that all is transient *anicca*, *dukkha* and the characteristic of *anatta* becomes evident.

The yogi's notion of me/myself/I fades away and the character of 'non-self' makes a big impact on them. He feels comparable to a grain of sand in a huge river-bed, not the person whom they previously knew as 'myself'.

This is when the yogi has entered the *majjhē kalyāna* stage, and life becomes unbelievably different. They feel a total change in personality, dissatisfied and fed up with everything. Dispassion (*virāga*) sets in. This change in the yogi is often referred to as a sensational transformation (*viparināma*). The teacher at this stage skillfully approaches the yogi with a lot of wisdom, and advises the yogi to simply contemplate this change that is occurring in them. There are numerous examples in the texts of how teachers have used a variety of innovative methods to encourage yogis at this stage. A personal, one to one effort between the teacher and yogi is very important during this period. The skilful teacher guides the yogi with loving kindness and wisdom, much more than a mother would do to a child. This is the most personal and confidential interaction between a teacher and student. Eventually the teacher will set the 'final examination' for the student at the stage when they reach the insight knowledge *sankhārupekkha ñāna* to test their final transformation (*pariyōsāna kalyāna*).

The *Theravāda Sāsana* has undertaken an enormous task to keep the *Dhamma* alive and to take it forward. We can hardly imagine what efforts the Buddha would have taken to teach the *Dhamma* nearly 2600 years ago. To be born in an era where the teachings are still available and to be born a human with our faculties intact so that we can hear and appreciate the *saddhamma* is indeed an extremely fortunate experience. Under such fortunate circumstances if we still say we cannot meditate, we need to seriously examine ourselves, because then we are like the people who were gifted with an elephant but kept grumbling that they can't

use the elephant because they had no access to a ankus (a sharp metal hook used for training = henduwa).

Follow the Buddha's advise and strive on with diligence.

Day 3 - Dhamma Talk

'*Saddhā paripura* *Yoniso-manasikāram paripureti*'

(If someone fulfils faith/confidence (*saddhā*) to them with attention (*yoniso-manasikāra*) is perfected as a benefit.)

It should be appreciated that the Avijja Sutta was preached by the Buddha purely out of compassion, since he himself had successfully overcome the darkness of ignorance or *avijjā* when he became the ***Sammā Sambuddha***. '*Buddha*' means an Enlightened One and the ***Sammā Sambuddha*** means a fully Enlightened One who discovered the path to enlightenment on his own with no teacher. '*Sammā*' refers to the ability to successfully teach others the path to enlightenment so that the follower can reach enlightenment. An arahant is an enlightened person who may teach others like Buddha whereas *Pacceka* Buddha is enlightened but he cannot teach the Dhamma like a *Sammā Sambuddha*.

After the enlightenment, the Buddha seriously considered whether ordinary, uninstructed worldlings (*puthujjana*) who are steeped and drenched in defilements could understand this deep Dhamma. The Buddha therefore had to have not only compassion but also a great deal of wisdom, as well as the skill to effectively communicate the supreme teachings to the ordinary people.

At the very outset the Buddha reminds us that *avijjā* or ignorance arises without a discoverable beginning and he warns us not to even attempt to look for its origin. Instead, the Buddha cautions that *avijjā* is always a result of a cause, and traces its cause in a sequential manner giving nine reasons for *avijjā* to arise. Eventually, he halts at the most important cause, i.e. association with non-virtuous persons. The Buddha points out that all causative factors which lead to *avijjā* stem from this dark, dangerous and unwholesome association.

The proximate nutrients that feed *avijjā* are the five hindrances (*panca nīvarana*), which in turn are nourished by lack of moral conduct (*duccarita*). Both of these occur due to non-association with *kalyānamitta*. The Buddha then explained the gravity and consequences of associating with untrue or evil persons and advised that, in order to break this cycle we should actively seek and find a *kalyānamitta* (a good friend). The Buddha's dispensation (Buddha *sāsana*) is meant for this purpose, i.e. to provide avenues for associating with true persons - *sappurisa samsevana*.

In the second half of the *sutta* the Buddha says that when someone realizes this important aspect of the teaching, the first thing they should do is to take steps to immediately dissociate from 'ignorant' or untrue and evil persons and associate with those who are wise and virtuous, such as good monks or nuns, or ones who are learned and practice the Dhamma. This is because there is a sense of urgency regarding the repeated rounds of rebirth (*samsāra samvega*). The Buddha made every effort to communicate this aspect of the teaching thoroughly, because the *kalyānamitta* association has a direct impact on the development of faith – *saddhā*.

At the previous meditation retreat in this newly built meditation hall in Nissaranavanaya in January 2011, we started with the first part of the Avijja Sutta where we discussed the connection between bad associations and the development of *avijjā*.

In the current retreat we will be tracing the process of events from association with *kalyānamitta* right up to liberation, through the realization of the ultimate truth, i.e. *vijjā vimutti*. This will be through a ten-step process and so far we have dealt with three of those steps.

The association with untrue persons (*asappurisa samsevana*) leads to engaging in slander, idle chatter and gossip, whereas association with *kalyānamitta* paves the way to listening to the *saddhamma*. The Buddha says, if you wish to talk in company, you may engage in dhamma discussions and if not, just remain silent. It is not wise to discuss how to keep away from certain people in their presence because you could make them angry, and this is particularly so in

the case of the *asappurisa*, because such persons can be resentful. If you take a caterpillar it is only his fur that is poisonous, a scorpion has a tail that stings and a snake has venom in his fangs; however, in the case of the *asappurisa*, his entire self is corruptive. Therefore in the presence of such a person, the Buddha's advice is that it is best to remain silent.

The *saddhamma* is a nutrient to developing *saddhā*. For instance the dayakas present at this talk decided to spend their time, money and effort in offering *dāna* to us not because of any legal requirement or a Government order or for a tax concession, but simply because of their *saddhā*. Similarly, the yogis who joined this retreat did so not because they had nothing else to do, nor in order to receive accolades but simply because of their *saddhā*. And we should realize that in *samsāra* we have accumulated good *kamma* by associating with *sappurisas*, by listening to the *saddhamma* and that is the main reason we have the ability to attend retreats of this nature. We all are very fortunate in that sense. To reiterate what I said previously, *saddha* has as its nutrient listening to the *saddhamma*, and it is only if we listen to the *saddhamma* that *saddhā* will develop. And here we are referring to the deep and pure *saddhā*, i.e. the *saddhā* (faith/confidence) which helps us to develop *kusalacchanda* (resolute faith – a desire to investigate by practicing what the Buddha taught), that helps us to reach *okappana saddhā* (faith/confidence that inspires the mind) and that will help us to see *nibbāna* in this life itself.

We know devotion/faith is the foundation for most religions. Similarly in the Buddha Dhamma, *saddhā* is considered an essential prerequisite. But the *saddhā* that the Buddha speaks about can be analysed, verified, explored and investigated thoroughly. Furthermore the Buddha said that if a yogi has diligently listened to the teacher, followed the instructions and has a deep and clear understanding of the *saddhamma*, they can reach the highest levels of spiritual attainment in this life itself. This can be seen in as little as seven days or in seven years at the longest as described in the *Satipatthāna* sutta. The Buddha made this profound statement with

such confidence and certainty it makes us place our utmost faith in it and to believe it with no doubt whatsoever. It is as though a vendor is marketing a particular type of merchandise by showing us the definite benefits we will accrue if we go ahead with the purchase. The fact that we can investigate *saddhā* in this life time itself and understand its depth according to the Buddha's advice makes it a unique type of 'faith/ devotion/ confidence'. Herein lies the difference between Buddhism and other religions of the world.

Today's topic for discussion is an extension of this position.

'Saddhā paripuro Yoniso-manasikāram paripureti'

The Buddha said, if someone has *saddhā* such a person will have wise attention (*yoniso-manasikāra*) as a benefit. Although *yoniso-manasikāra* is commonly referred to as wise attention it has a deeper spiritual meaning. *Upāya manasikāra* means acting with wisdom and this has a deep connection with *saddhā*. Although it is a common belief that *saddhā* is a counter position to wisdom and that the greater the *saddhā* the lesser the wisdom (and vice versa) it is possible to have *saddhā* together with wisdom through practicing meditation. The Buddha took delight in teaching people who practiced in this way because he knew that when *saddhā* ripens, it becomes a nutrient to *yoniso-manasikāra*.

There are two suttas that I would like to refer to in this connection, one being the *Devatā Nimitta Sutta (A.N.III)*. In this sutta the Buddha addresses the bhikkhus citing an incident where, after many years, a *deva* who was living in the Nandana Vanaya had exhausted his life span. Many other *devās* had noticed certain remarkable changes in that *deva*, such as fading of the flowers in the garlands he wore, soiling of his attire with dust, unpleasant odours with sweating from his axillae, becoming un-delightful towards his own divine abode and developing nausea for divine food. These are referred to as 'signs of death' in the celestial realms because it signifies that the life span of a divine being is nearing its' end.

Those living in the divine abodes are always in states of bliss, where everything is pleasant, free from *dukkha* and the perception of ageing, sickness and death. Therefore doctors, nurses and morticians have no business in *deva* realms. Because it is so pleasant it is very difficult to realize *nibbāna* in a *deva* realm since there isn't the obvious experience of suffering. It is only in the human realm that all the ingredients needed for experiencing the Noble Truth of Suffering or *dukkha* are available. However, if someone has already started the process of seeking liberation in the human realm they can continue and complete that task even if born into a *deva* realm.

In such a 'wonderful world' the evidence that a *deva* was going to die brought a lot of sadness to the fellow *devas*. In unison they told their moribund friend to seek a 'fortunate heavenly' rebirth. At that point one of the bhikkhus asked the Buddha, 'What could be a better realm for *devas* to be born in, and what did those *devas* mean by a 'fortunate rebirth'? The Buddha then explained that it is a human birth that *devas* consider as fortunate, because they know that it is only a human that can seek liberation from the *kammic* cycle. Those who venerate the gods of Kataragama etc. will feel disappointed when they hear this. The Kataragama god must be collecting lots of merit to become a human and when he sees poor humans venerating him what must he feel?

The Buddha explains that if no one experiences suffering (as is the common position in the divine realms), no one will want to investigate the deeper meanings of life. In an average human life there is always a ratio of *dukkha:sukha* - 50:50. This is common to kings and subjects, rich and poor, man and woman, employer and employee, bhikkhu and laity.

Without any exceptions everyone will have the same experience. However much developed the modern world is, with science, infrastructure, communication and material comforts, we all will invariably have to experience the First Noble Truth and go through ageing, sickness and death. The Buddha said that we can use this inevitable Truth as a platform for our investigation into the Path to wisdom and Liberation. This is why the *devas* know how precious the human birth is.

Yet, the uninstructed worldling will keep grumbling that the *dukkha* they have far exceeds the *dukkha* of others. This is because, due to their ignorance they cannot appreciate the 'good' they have and they only keep seeing the 'bad'. Noble beings on the other hand, because of their wisdom, will always appreciate the good they have, despite all the difficulties they go through, and they will not keep talking about the 'bad'. The bhikkhus then asked the Buddha 'What is the greatest benefit due in the human birth?' And the Buddha replied, '*Saddhā* is the most valuable gift of a human birth'.

In another sutta (*Ālavaka sutta*), the Buddha confronts the demon Ālavaka, and when he is ordered out of the demon's den twice, the Buddha obeys. But then the Buddha refuses to leave when he is ordered a third time. Then the demon says he will smash the Buddha's head to a pulp if he is disobeyed, and the Buddha says, 'Please try if you can, but you won't succeed and remember I am not scared of you'. Ālavaka then challenged the Buddha with a quiz and asked, 'What is the most valuable treasure a human can possess?' The Buddha replies – *saddhā. Saddhida vittam purisassa settham*

In both of the above instances the Buddha highlights the importance of *saddhā* and gives it a new meaning, *i.e.* *saddhā* is the seed that flowers all, the wealth that buys all the strength we have for everything. If someone has no *saddhā* then they have no seed for spiritual development and no real wealth and they cannot enjoy the comforts they already possess.

In the western world due to scientific advancement and industrialization over the past few decades, religions based on devotional prayer and deities have received a considerable blow. The 200 years of scientific advancement have led to many generations who don't believe in God-based veneration, because science and evidence-based rationalization are not compatible with these religious practices. Therefore, today, large numbers of people do not have any faith or religion and instead they profess radical views and revolutionary thinking. Lack of any form of belief, or faith has led to the deterioration of moral standards, together with the loss of moral fear and moral shame in many young people. This

situation has become a wake-up call to many Governments in the developed world, so that social scientists and policy makers in certain administrations have taken serious note of this moral decadence and societal downfall. Leaders in Government have begun to seriously worry about alcoholism, drug use, teenage pregnancies/abortions and lack of respect for law and order. And there is now a resurgence in promoting belief in some form of faith or religion as well as encouragement for people to get back to family values, established cultural norms and traditional ways of life.

Sadly, with some Sri Lankans rapid westernization has led to a similar degeneration of moral values. In certain instances this has opened doors for fundamentalists to take advantage, promoting certain types of beliefs amongst vulnerable groups. The Government of the United States of America which is secular by nature and cannot impose a religion or a faith since it is thus enshrined in the Constitution, has more recently introduced Christianity to the platforms of Presidential Elections. In Sri Lanka as well, God-based faiths were being promoted by certain interested parties. Today this has become a common global phenomenon.

It is unfortunate that certain Buddhists in this country, use the word 'saddhā' to promote Buddhism purely as a conventional religion. But this is very different to *saddhā* as the Buddha described it, i.e. *saddha* based on true wisdom. The Buddha predicted that the word *saddhā* would be used superficially without the true deep meaning. This is one of the reasons for the lack of understanding of what the Buddha actually taught and hence the decrease in moral fear and moral shame in some sections of society. We see this happening in the behavior of young people in such societies, which is pitiful and sometimes no different from animals. 'Faith' should never be blind or without good reason. We need not be slaves to *saddhā* and we should be able to investigate it with wisdom in this very life. Sri Lankan Buddhists appear to have a lot of *saddhā* and this is manifest in the way they take care of temples, offer *dāna* to monks and also by the number of devotees that observe the eight precepts on the *Uposatha* days. But if you count the numbers that show firm resolve

and determination to understand and investigate *saddhā*, it would be only a tiny proportion. Many have postponed this task to the advent of the Buddha Maithri and this is entirely due to lack of heedfulness - *appamāda*. If with *appamāda* one decides to investigate the *saddhamma* and thereby develop *saddhā* in this life itself, then one has clearly benefitted from *yoniso-manasikāra*. But those who possess radical ideas with no *saddhā* will get left behind.

Saddhā paripuro – yoniso manasikāram paripurenti
(Those who fulfill Faith also fulfill wise-attention)

We should be determined not to postpone this investment anymore but to convert even the small amounts of *saddhā* we have into *kusalaccanda* or resolute faith (i.e. a desire to investigate) by practicing what the Buddha taught. For instance generosity (*dāna*) is a skilful action (*kusala kriya*), but keeping virtue (*sīla*) is a greater *kusala – adhi kusala*. But do we have sufficient *yoniso-manasikāra* to know this difference? The fact of knowing that *danā* is good and stealing is bad is not sufficient unless we know why *sīla* is superior to *dāna*. How many people realize that *sīla* needs to be strictly adhered to, with sense restraint rather than simply partaking of *dāna*. The traditional Sinhala Buddhists who thrive on *dāna* alone are actually in the Montessori stage. Our ignorance precludes us from going deeply into *sīla* and realizing its importance.

Dāna is a proactive exercise needing money and effort, however, *sīla* is far simpler to observe in that sense. It is free of costs and we don't need to go anywhere to keep *sīla*. *Dāna kusala* can be quantified but *sīla* cannot - because it is immeasurable. The Buddha says, if an individual decides to have one thought moment free of inflicting any harm to even a small insect, that benefit is huge and it cannot be measured. Whereas, in giving *dāna* one can count the number of monks, the *ata pirikara* (eight requisites) and so on. It is a great pity that, while the Buddha has repeatedly advised us on how important it is to protect our *sīla* and that it should be protected like our own life, the enthusiasm people have to offer *dāna* today is far greater than the enthusiasm they have to keep *sīla*. The number of

Buddhists who meditate in comparison to those who offer *dāna* and keep *sīla*, is significantly low. Again, the Buddha has clearly said how the *adhi kusala* accrued by even a few minutes of *metta* meditation is un-quantifiable. But this is not appreciated, simply because the *saddhā* we have is inadequate. The person who understands *saddha* will even sacrifice *kusala* and move towards *adhi kusala*. And this is possible if there is *yoniso-manasikāra* (*radical reflection=wise attention*). It is not difficult to teach this to someone with *sutamaya ñāna* (knowledge consisting in learning) but the challenge is for the listener to put this teaching into practice. Of their own accord, from *dāna* they must graduate to *sīla* and then to *bhāvana*, and the yogi doing *samatha* must move towards *vipassanā*, and the *vipassanā* yogi should reach for the insight knowledges, and from there to the different stages of enlightenment. With the initial thrust given by *saddhā* this journey is launched (*pakkhandana*) and must go on without stopping and *yoniso- manasikāra* has a big role to play in this.

The final destination of such an endeavour will be full enlightenment. This is illustrated in the famous simile, where a carcass of any animal big or small, when floating in the ocean will always eventually be washed on to the shore. The *saddhā* that plays a pivotal role in this is called *pasāda saddhā/amūlika saddhā* and it is very superficial. Generally yogis get a taste of this in the presence of special moods, as well as during retreats like these, but no sooner they leave this hall *saddhā* (if it is superficial) will fall away. Similarly, monks who officiate at funerals will institute *pansil* to the crowd, but as soon as the body leaves the house the *sīla* is broken. I remember at one such house where I was present immediately after the body was taken for cremation a krait that had crept into the house was hacked to death by the very people who had previously undertaken the five precepts. This is because people don't observe *sīla* with responsibility or with actual *saddhc*.

When Sri Lankan Buddhists are advised to listen to good Dhamma talks that will help them to keep *sīla* and to meditate, they make lame excuses such as: the teachings are too deep or profound, hence

decide to postpone the activity. What I would like to see is yogis who have started on breath meditation or walking meditation due to *saddhā*, using this existing *saddhā* have sharpened and developed *yoniso-manasikāra*. This is the discussion I would like to have now.

Suppose an avid *dāna*-giver who also observes *sīla* starts meditation using the instructions given to them. Suppose they actually locate the 'in' and 'out'-breath clearly (or belly movements or walking, as the case may be) and they continue thus for a while, establishing total mindfulness on the object. Then suppose the yogi feels able to stay a little while longer, say maybe 10-20 breaths longer, he may then observe certain additional qualities of the breath – e.g. coolness of 'in'-breath/heat of 'out'-breath, the expansive nature, pulsating nature etc. and that the breath totally occupies the nostril, and so on.

However a yogi who commenced this exercise without any prior instruction or without *yoniso-manasikāra* or any other experience, may only notice the coarseness of the 'in'/'out' breath. But even that is a great achievement, because there are people who even don't note the coarseness and as a result they simply give up meditation. . Most yogis will see the breath completely filling the nostril in the 'in' and 'out' breath. What the Buddha expects us to know through *yoniso-manasikāra* and skilful observation is how the breath became this nature. Where did it come from? To do this we must effectively monitor the breath and locate its beginning so that we can watch carefully not only every breath but also its beginning. This will be very subtle at the start but once we are adept at watching the entirety of each breath its beginning will become clearer and clearer. *Appamāda* and skilful attention has to be devoted to this, and applying *yoniso-manasikāra* is invaluable in seeing the breath as it arises before it becomes coarse. Because the start of the 'in'/'out' breath is always inconspicuous and because that has been the pattern throughout *samsāra*, due to *ayoniso-manasikāra* the beginner is never skilful enough to see the subtle start.

When Ven. Sariputta, prior to becoming a monk spotted Ven. Assaji and asked for some teaching, Ven. Assaji's response was documented as Ven. Sariputta's first contact with the Dhamma:

*Ye dhammā hetuppabhavā
tesam hetum tathāgato āha,
tesañ ca yo nirodho
evamvādī mahāsamaṇō*

(Of those things that arise from a cause,
The Tathāgatha has told the cause,
And also what their cessation is:
This is the doctrine of the Great Recluse.)

The Buddha asks us to use *yoniso-manasikāra* in order to clearly examine the arising of each breath. To master this instruction in the exact manner taught, a great deal of *saddhā* is needed and if we are able to do so, we will realize one day that within this 'in' and 'out' breath we have the potential to realise nibbāna.

Sayadaw U Pandithābhivamsa says if you want to shape or mould an iron bar, strike it when it's very hot, because if it is cold it will crack into pieces. Similarly, as we encounter the 'in'-breath with *yoniso-manasikāra* we keep our mind on the breath with extreme clarity. When the mind free of defilements then we will see the noting mind and the beginning of the 'in'-breath. This means we experience the first insight knowledge, i.e the Knowledge of Delimitation of Mind and Matter (*nāmarūpaparicchedañāna*). Suppose, with complete *saddhā* and *yoniso-manasikāra*, you can identify the 'in'-breath and the arising of the breath, then you have experienced the Knowledge of Discerning Cause and Condition (*paccayapariggahañāna*) – you have identified the cause and the effect, and this is all that is included in the teaching on *Paticcasamuppada*.

'How does the breath arise and what is its cause? How does the breath cease and what is its cause? You will realize how the entire *Paticcasamuppada* can be understood in the 'in'/'out'-breath. This will happen only when the *saddhā* ripens fully.

To illustrate this further, let us imagine an out-break of a virulent disease. When the first patient is admitted to hospital he is very ill and in a serious condition. The doctors find it difficult to identify the causative organism because the patient has deteriorated considerably and many additional signs and symptoms have complicated the presentation, making the diagnosis difficult. But the physician's responsibility is to identify the causative organism, make a diagnosis and cure the patient however difficult the task maybe. Because it is contagious he also notifies the health authorities and appeals to them to send out a public health warning asking patients to report to the nearest doctor before the condition worsens. If the public believe this announcement they will seek medical help as soon as the first indications of the disease manifests.

Now the doctor should examine the signs and symptoms of newer patients and to locate the causative organism more easily. Then the doctors are able to give more precise information to the public, and therefore isolating the organism becomes much easier. When the doctor is able to inoculate the identified organism into a normal person/animal and replicate the manifestations of the disease, the evidence of the cause of the disease is clear. This is the Cox postulate. Then he is absolutely sure that this is indeed the causative organism of the original disease.

Similarly the Buddha said that if an investigation is done with each 'in' and 'out'-breath, going from soft to coarse. Investigate systematically the experience of anger/irritation/jealousy/greed etc, and if each condition can then be tested as it occurs, and how it originates, then one can do a self-assessment/evaluation and identify the methods to 'cure' it. I am reminded of what Mahatma Gandhi said: 'Any illness, if caught right at the start can be cured by either using hot water or salt water. But it will not be easy after the condition has worsened.' Similarly, as you repeatedly observe the start of anything (e.g. 'in'-breath, unpleasant emotion) it can be 'cured' with minimal intervention and this is made possible through *yoniso-manasikāra*.

Rūpanca pajānāti, rūpasamudayan ca pajānāti, rūpa nirodhamca pajānāti

(Repeatedly watch the *rūpa* - 'in' and 'out' breath - and look for its start/beginning. And then watch its cessation)

In breath meditation, *rūpa is the vāyo phottabbha dhātu* and an inexperienced yogi will only identify the in/out-breath and not its arising (*samudaya*).

The Buddha's instruction is to repeatedly watch the in and out breath and look for its start/beginning. Please don't make excuses saying you cannot do this. The yogi must be fully prepared to do this when they sit, and their mind must be fully focused on this because this is the road to *nibbāna*. The Buddha also instructed to see all other objects as they arise and then he advised to look for cessation (*nirodha*) of the object with dispassion. We generally don't do that. We celebrate only the origin, the birth, with joy and we shun or weep over cessation and death. The Buddha's wisdom encourages us to see the cessation of the primary object (*rūpa nirodha*), something we tend to ignore.

Then the yogi will see for the first time the start, the middle and the end of the breath, all three for the first time. If the yogi diligently looks for the start they will automatically see the end. But yogis are not willing to see the end. They will note its passage from the start and then say the breath has disappeared. Quite unknown to the yogi, the disappearance (cessation) of the breath has taken prominence. Although the yogi's attempt was to see the start of the 'in'/'out'-breath and its smooth nature with clarity, they end up seeing the very cessation. This makes the yogi lazy, frustrated and uninspired, because they feel the breath was lost.

The Buddha says to observe the start of the 'in'-breath as much as possible, the end of the 'in'-breath and similarly the start of the 'out'-breath and the end of the breath. The start and end of all five aggregates can be noted in this manner and when you do so, you will eventually see the entire cosmos and its arising and ceasing in a similar vein. This is how the yogi transfers from *kāyānupassanā* to

vedanānupassanā. A person who gets very angry will be able to see how their anger arises and how it ceases. And with *yoniso-manasikāra* the yogi will see this phenomenon in all of the aggregates. At the beginning, with *saddhā* he sees everything with wisdom as meditation continues. This is a phenomenon that cannot be thought out. It has to be realized experientially. By listening to *saddhamma*, continued practice and experience, yogis will come to this stage easily. Once they master this skill with wisdom then they recognize what their past mistakes were and they will have immense gratitude towards the teacher. And thereafter in everything that happens to the yogi in life, they will be extremely sensitive to the start of things. They will investigate everything and become exceedingly mindful, full of *appamāda* – this is called the 'Doctors Sign'.

For the non-meditator all this will be confusing and meaningless.

In life everything arises and ceases, and if we get used to seeing everything as it arises we are bound to see cessation in a non-reactive way. It's like a circle going round and round, that we can see with the help of *yoniso-manasikāra* and *saddhā*. Deep Dhamma is usually realized when one is in trouble. They say that Dhamma comes to mind only when we are in the toilet. The Buddha has explained this in the Satipatthāna sutta when he says to be mindful when engaging in activities in the toilet. Because whether we offer a flower to the Buddha with perfect mindfulness or whether we sit on the toilet with mindfulness, it makes no difference. This statement can be quite controversial because it can be misconstrued to mean that the Dhamma can be found in the toilet, but I am only emphasizing what the Buddha said, i.e. the great importance of *sati* where ever you are and in whatever you are doing.

At the beginning of our practice, in order to get the full benefit of *ānāpānasati* and to follow the instructions of the teacher we need ideal circumstances, like a quiet environment and other conducive facilities. But when the technique and the methods we use in our sitting/walking practice have matured we can be in the present moment with complete understanding. Then we should be able to

practise anywhere, provided of course, *yoniso-manasikāra* has been well established. If in our daily lives we are confused and if our minds are disorganized and cluttered then we cannot apply *yoniso-manasikāra*. That is why Meditation Retreat Centres are expected to simply start the yogi on the journey, expecting them to continue at home. Sadly, yogis often fail to do this. However, if they continue to be mindful of the primary object when sitting/walking and also mindful of sights, sounds, smells etc. , and of how each sensation arose, its cause and how it ceases, then they are on track. Instead, often, with the occurrence of each sensation the yogi gets on a train of associative thoughts/emotions and goes on a long journey, and forgets the origin due to *ayoniso-manasikāra*.

The vital role of *yoniso-manasikāra* is, with each sensory impingement on the relevant sense faculty, it directs the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) inwards and then helps to investigate – 'How did it arise? What was the cause? How did it cease?' This is what is meant by 'Insight'. In daily life, when multi-tasking, the yogi is challenged to be mindful and as Ven. Ñānārāma used to say, they need to be fully prepared to meet each sensory impingement. If the yogi gets confused they can ask themselves – 'Why did that happen and what was its cause?'

The yogi will gradually get used to looking at the start of every pain wherever it arises, every emotion and every pleasant/unpleasant thought. Then they will discover the beginning and he will then realize how simple it is to address the root cause of any issue. It will be like using a finger nail to break something when it is small instead of when it gets big, at which point we may need an axe. When we delay seeing root causes, emotions become big and they take us over, controlling us before we can control them. Hence the importance of *yoniso-manasikāra*. Until this becomes an integral part of our lives we will need unlimited mindfulness. If the yogi is 'obedient' and listens to the teacher and understands the instruction, there is no way that they can escape learning this Dhamma. This is why the Buddha said this can be mastered even in seven days. Some yogis have even come to realization by the evening after listening to the teacher in the morning. This is indicative of how

extremely sensitive the yogi had been to the Buddha's word and how effectively the instruction had been communicated.

It is only when a teacher decides to teach the Dhamma that he will fully realize the depth and the gravity of the task. We can hardly imagine how difficult it would have been for the Buddha to teach the Dhamma to uninstructed worldlings at that time, and why he would have been reluctant to teach as soon as he gained enlightenment. Because then, like now, people are so steeped and drenched in *kāma* and they are such slaves to the external world of the senses. The Buddha would have wondered how they would ever learn to look inwards and turn the direction of their normal life. Even the five ascetics refused to listen despite the Buddha travelling so many miles by foot simply to teach them the Dhamma..

The Buddha taught that '..if something arises, it will cease..', but the problem is that we don't see the 'arising' of anything. If we did then we would invariably see it 'ceasing' – *nirodha*. This is why , when *Konnañña* understood the teaching the Buddha was immensely pleased. And since then for 2,600 years all the *Theravāda* teachers and the entire *sāsana* protected this precious teaching and carried it to us. If we can imagine for even a moment the suffering and anguish they went through to accomplish this task, we would never grumble at the minor aches and pains we have when meditating. We simply feel ashamed at our immaturity and ignorance.

Most secrets in the world last for a maximum of about hundred years, but the Dhamma has lasted for 2,600 and it is still shining. But it shines the brightest in the minds of diligently meditating yogis, and not in the flags, lights and decorations people use during Wesak. If the Buddha Dhamma prevails and lasts it will do so in the minds of those who possess *silā, samādhi and paññā*. But sadly this is not what the Ministry of Buddha Sasana thinks. *Yoniso-manasikāra* and *ayoniso-manasikāra* hold the key, and if anyone has understood this they should feel triumphant. For this understanding *saddhā* is vital. *Saddhā* leading to *ayoniso-manasikāra* is not to be venerated, but the *saddhā* leading to *yoniso-manasikāra* is what is essential, it is like a mother's first milk to a new born.

In Sri Lanka we are fortunate that we are born as Buddhists who understand *kamma*, cause and effect, and rebirth. Today in the West they take so much effort to organise conferences and workshops just to make people understand *kamma* and *kammic* retribution, rather than the core-teachings of the Buddha. We are therefore privileged. Our challenge is to understand *samatha sammāditthi* and *vipassana sammāditthi*. And for this *okappana saddhā* is essential *appamāda* is essential and the ability to 'tame' *ānāpānasati* is essential. If all these requisites are available to you and if you are fully prepared, you will see the 'arising' with its counterpart 'ceasing' or *nirodha*.

Day 4 - Dhamma Talk

Yoniso manasikāro paripūro ***Sati sampajaññaṅ paripureti ti***

“If a person is fulfilling the requirement of *yoniso-manasikāra*, then such an individual will gradually be endowed with *sati-sampajañña*”

During the first half of the Avijja Sutta the causes of *avijjā* (the darkness of ignorance) were described in great detail by the Buddha. The foolishness of an individual and their lack of understanding have been expounded thoroughly, and by citing the causes of ignorance the Buddha goes further to describe **the opposite**, *vijjā* (i.e. the ability to understand with wisdom) and *vijjā vimutti* (i.e. achieving freedom/liberation through wisdom/ knowing).

During the first talk we discussed how *vijjā vimutti* occurs through the association of those who have good/wholesome conduct (*sappurisa* or *kalyānamitta*). If someone frequents the company of *kalyānamitta*, then invariably such an individual will have the opportunity of frequent exposure to the *saddhamma*. This would occur very gradually, after the association with the *kalyānamitta* has been going on for quite a while. In the *Canki Sutta* (MN 95), the Buddha analyses how this association with *kalyānamitta* takes place.

Saddhā jāto upasankamāthi.

When we understand that someone has a meditative background we gradually get drawn to such a person. This is because we feel that such a person has good qualities and that they have earned a good reputation amongst many, and this would make us develop respect and regard for that person.

Upasankamatto payrupāsati

As we get to know such a person, we wouldn't immediately decide that he/she is a *kalyānamitta* and we wouldn't ask that person to

give us a discourse on the Dhamma. Instead, we will associate with them for a while and judge whether such a person actually practices what they preach, and thus we would assess their behavior and conduct.

Payrupasanto sotam odahati

While associating with such a person, we would listen to what they say and evaluate if they actually behave in accordance with their words. Also if they are simple and reliable or an unreliable and complicated personality. This can be tested only by listening to their speech.

ohita soto dhammam sunāti.

Then you could understand the Dhamma explained by them gradually.

In the *Avijjā Sutta* the Buddha says, '*sappurisa samsevo paripūro, saddhamma savanam paripūreti*' – if you meet and associate with a *kalyānamitta/sappurisa*, then listening to *saddhamma* will occur naturally and it will be completely fulfilled.

Saddhamma savanam paripūraṇ, saddhamparipūreti – if you hear the *saddhamma* repeatedly then the *saddhā* within you will grow in strength.

Usually the laity feel that they do not have the time and the opportunity to fulfill these factors. Their excuse is that, although *kalyānamitta* and the *saddhamma* are both available and are within their reach, they feel they cannot access these precious gifts. Furthermore, because they are leading a lay life they feel they cannot always adhere to the precepts and the *sīla*, e.g. due to the nature of their livelihood. Lay people sometimes have the misconception that in order to adhere to *sīla*, to develop the *Dhamma* in their lives and to gain *paññā*, they need to join the monastic community or go to forest monasteries. As a result the laity often postpone or set-aside the task of developing *saddhā*, for 'another day'. The greatest value of associating with *kalyānamitta* and listening to *saddhamma* is that anyone can develop the

confidence that it *can* be done, i.e, that developing *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* is a doable task.

The *kalyānamitta* is able to point out that even though the lay person says they cannot do all this, the very fact that they have met the *kalyānamitta* is indicative of existing *saddhā* and ability. The reason for getting an opportunity to listen to the *saddhamma* is also indicative of **potential** purity. Explaining thus, the *kalyānamitta* is able to advise the lay person to 'rekindle' the perception that it 'can be done'. They are able to convince the person that 'it can be done' and that 'it will be done'.

In the *Karanīya metta sutta* the Buddha said,

'*karanīyam atthakusalēna*' (he who is skillful and wholesome in fulfilling his own wellbeing)

'*yanthan santhan padan abhisamecca*' (and wishes to obtain the state of peace and *nibbāna*)

'*sakko ujū ca sūjū ca*' (knows that he is capable of practice and uprightness).

The ability to know that it can be done (*sakko*) is important. This perception of 'do-ability' was an innovation introduced to the Nissaranavanaya by the late Asoka Weeraratne when he was a lay person. Although there were many people who entertained doubt and had no confidence that *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā* could be developed, he would not associate with such people, because he always maintained that it could be done (**haki sañña**). This was purely due to the *saddhā* he possessed. If there is *saddhā* there will always be *upāya* marga, i.e, *yoniso-manasikāro*, *upāya-patha-manasikāro*. If on the other hand you start any endeavour saying 'it cannot be done', then even if there are ways and means to do it, it will not be done.

Yesterday we discussed how a person with *saddhā* will use *patha-manasikāra*, *upāya-manasikāra* and *yoniso-manasikāra*, i.e. such a person will use the 'assets' **and potential** they possess - such as, reflecting on how fortunate it is to have been born a human being,

and to be blessed with all the faculties in an era where the Buddha's teachings are still available, where it is possible to listen to the *saddhamma* because the Buddha *sāsana* is still prevalent; and *kalyānamitta* association is still possible. Having reflected on these blessings we should make maximum effort towards spiritual awakening. Such wise-reflection and understanding is what is referred to as *yoniso-manasikāra*. And, if one does not reflect in that manner, and if the precious assets are not made use of, that is referred to as *ayoniso-manasikāra* (unwise reflection).

In the present retreat we mentioned:

Yoniso-manasikāro paripūro, sati-sampajaññaṃ paripūreti.

The Buddha said that , if a person is fulfilling the requirement of *yoniso-manasikāra*, then such an individual will gradually be endowed with *sati-sampajañña*. Both these terms signify very deep and profound Dhamma. Today we will learn how *yoniso-manasikāra* helps us to develop *sati-sampajañña*. In order to do this we will learn three *cetasika* (mental formations). The *cetasika* of *manasikāra* (attention) and *yonī/yoniso* (at the very beginning). *Yoniso-manasikāra* means seeing something as it arises at the very beginning (along with its start - *samudaya*). There is also the radical view which says that 'yonī' is the **womb**, where life actually began – the very start. Buddhist Commentaries define *yoniso-manasikāra* as 'wise reflection/attention', whereas I prefer to use the term – 'seeing things as they arise, i.e, at the very beginning, or as they arise'.

There is the common saying that if you wish to see something at the very beginning, then you will see it at a point where you will be able to arrest it with the force of a finger nail or when it is possible to 'nip it in the bud'. Whereas if you wait until it has fully arisen then there is not much you could do, unless you use an axe. If this is an occurrence that takes place repeatedly, without waiting until it is fully established you should train your mind to see it at the very start. Therefore in *vipassanā* practise, from where we are now (where we need an axe) we will need to move backwards, steadily, to capture

the moment where we can see it and arrest it with a finger nail. At face value this seems an impossible task but if we are determined to convert from a 'cannot be done' mental frame-work to a 'can be done' attitude, we need to repeatedly observe the occurrence over and over again, and eventually see the possibility to deconstruct the phenomena. For instance if we are observing the 'in'/'out' breath, or anger/greed arising and ceasing, or the left-right foot in walking meditatio, it is all the same.

Usually we view all these occurrence with *ayoniso-manasikāra*. However as I mentioned if we view each of these very carefully when they arise, over and over again, we will see these situations as though we are viewing them through a magnifying glass with great precision and clarity. Then gradually *yoniso-manasikāra* will grow and mature.

For this to occur we also need *appamāda* or *sati*, then we will see the arising when it occurs and similarly the cessation. Therefore the entire teaching of the Buddha could be referred to as *appamāda*. With *ayoniso-manasikāra* we need an axe (since we are negligent or with *pamāda*) but with *yoniso-manasikāra* we need only a finger nail (since we have *appamāda*). *Appamāda* has a special meaning. The normal uninstructed worldling (*puthujjana*) are in a state of *pamāda*. Whether they are alive or not doesn't mean much, since they are similar to a corpse or a ghost or 'dead'. This is why the Buddha said, '*appamādo amatha padam*.' A person with diligent *appamāda* is always 'alive' with each thought moment and he knows the middle way, the *vipassanā* way. *Pamādo maccuno padam*= *negligence is the path to death*.

Before the Dhamma appeared in the world there was neither accepted belief nor a person who taught that we could trace everything to a beginning. Time is like a big steam roller which crushes us continuously from every direction, making one weak, feeble, shriveled up and old. The Buddha said that we should adhere to the *Dhamma of appamāda* which is as fast and as powerful as time. *Arahants* don't get crushed and destroyed by the 'time-steam roller' because they are almost as fast as time itself. They are on par

with time and not behind time, since they live and practise the *Dhamma of appamāda*. An *arahant who is diligent* will not allow a single thought moment to escape without awareness. Since *arahants* will be as swift as time they will not grow 'old' and 'feeble', i.e. they will escape senility.

**'*Appamādo amatha padam, pamādo maccuno padam*
Appamatthāna mīyanthi, ye pamattā yathā matā'**

(Heedfulness is the path to the deathless, heedlessness is the path to death.

The heedful do not die, the heedless are as if dead already –
Dhammapada)

The Buddha gave us the best prescription to escape 'ageing' because *appamāda* doesn't allow the ageing process to take over. When continuously exercising mindfulness and being in *yoniso manasikāra* will teach us to see the beginning (the arising) of everything. A high degree of faith (*saddhā*) is needed for this. We should not make excuses as to why we cannot be mindful or why we cannot associate with *kalyānamitta* or why we cannot listen to the *saddhamma*.

In order to follow the Buddha's advice, to a mind that is familiar with *yoniso-manasikāra*, *sati sampajañña* should be introduced. Using *sutamaya ñāna* (knowledge based on learning), the two *cetasika* – *sati and sampajañña* – must be trained by the yogi. If they do so successfully during meditation, yogis will feel great joy and awakening in the mind, because they will then feel that this is what the Buddha actually realized by himself and taught others. The yogi will then understand that the single Dhamma phenomenon prescribed by the Buddha in order to learn to swim upstream (instead of downstream), is *sati* together with knowing with wisdom : *sampajañña*. When a traveler undertakes a journey with a guide, the guide will direct him as to which turn to take or not to take. If we take the journey without a guide, at every junction we will be doubting and wondering if we should take a turn or not.

Sati functions as the guide that gives us the background and necessity for *yoniso-manasikāra*. Therefore the Buddha said, ...'*this*

Dhamma is for the intelligent Of course this also makes it easy for people to say that they cannot meditate because they are foolish. This will become your folly because the Buddha will never come to you and wake you up and teach you the Dhamma. Therefore, the intelligent people who meet *sappurisa*, listen to the *saddhamma*, develop *saddhā* and *yoniso-manasikāra* will typically behave as though their 'head is on fire', (i.e. a huge urgency develops in them). Such a person begins to list out what they need to 'acquire' in order to proceed on the Path without delay.

They will find out that *sati sampajañña* becomes a natural guide and advisor, because it simply shows the way. When this happens the yogi sees the benefits of *sati-sampajañña*. Yogis will realize they already have the character of *sati* and that such a golden opportunity must not be lost.

Then their attitude towards pleasing the senses becomes very moderate and their desire to pursue sense pleasures decreases. They also begin to use every opportunity to fill the gaps that exist in *sati*. The value of *sati* and how it gives meaning to life and also the value of meditation is seen much more clearly than 20-30 years ago (i.e. in the 1980's and 1990's).

I can personally bear testimony to this phenomenon. During the past 20-30 years, more people (both Buddhists and Non-Buddhists) have begun to see *sati* in a new light.

It is also disappointing that most publications on *sati* available are in English. The Sinhala publications can be found within the existing *tripitaka* but only a few can be found in common Sinhala.

The problems that people face today - their tensions, conflicts, restlessness and greed- and how these can be addressed using mindfulness has been best expressed in Ven Nyānaponika's book, '*The Power of Mindfulness*'. He has beautifully explained in practical terms the meaning of *sati* in the context of our daily lives and the issues we face. As the Buddha said, being mindful simply means being fully aware of whatever we are doing i.e. when eating we are totally aware that we are eating, similarly when we are walking,

sitting, lying down, breathing, attending to the toilet and so on. But only very few people will actually do this or understand what this actually means. Although the *Satipatthāna Sutta* is recited with much veneration by most Buddhists in Sri Lanka only a very small minority will actually understand it practically and practise *sati* in accordance with the sutta.

Ven. Nyānaponika refers to *sati* as, 'Being able to watch one's steps, so that one may not stumble or miss a chance in the pursuit of one's aims'. He goes on to say how to progress on the spiritual path and how to develop the spiritual factors (*cetasikas*) that will help us, i.e. *saddhā* (faith/confidence), *virīya* (energy/effort), *sati* (mindfulness), *samādhi* (concentration), *pañña* (wisdom). *Sati* is one simple factor amongst the rest. He emphasizes what a simple and unassuming position mindfulness takes. It never exposes itself, it remains in the background.. On the contrary, the other spiritual factors – *saddhā*, *virīya*, *samādhi*, *pañña*- are very forward and are ever willing to express themselves. *Sati* is quiet and inconspicuous but it can be depended upon at all times in our spiritual journey. Whereas the others can never be depended on. They can betray us at any time, particularly at the time we need them the most!

All the spiritual faculties are beneficial to us in different ways but *sati* is the most reliable. *Samādhi* will give us bliss and make us float in the sky amongst other marvelous feats, but it can always betray us and make us helpless as we were before. *Sati* will however always be with us.

The only person in the world qualified and equipped to teach us this practise is the Buddha. This is a radical situation where only a *Sammā Sambuddha* can give the due respect and regard to *sati*. Therefore it will be only a Buddha, with his infinite wisdom who will 'invite' *sati* from amongst all the *cetasikas* to take the lead role and take the 'Chairmanship'! But *sati* is likely to refuse this 'honor' due to its unassuming and simple nature. The Buddha's advise is, always give prominence to *sati* because it is the most valuable *cetasika* to help you as a beginner. The yogi with *yoniso-manasikāra* will know its value and will keep it at the fore front. The yogi will gradually

experience a distinct and definite change. At the beginning however, this change will be extremely slight and non-discernible (unlike in the case of *saddhā* or *virīya*, both of which are conspicuous and prominent in their manifestations). But as time goes on *sati* will gradually manifest itself and you will then witness the change.

I remember how Ven. Dhammika advised me about thirty years ago, asking me to respect *sati*. He said *sati* will not fail me at my time of need. I kept arguing (due to my ignorance) with Ven. Dhammika saying that the Buddha never described anything called *sati* and I told him that the Buddha asked us to have *saddhā* and *virīya* but not *sati*. It was many years later after serious practise of *sati* I came to realize that, although *samādhi* develops with great enthusiasm, it can crash into nothingness. *Samādhi* has the ability to take you up to the eighth *Jhāna*, but if you do not possess that state of absorption at the time of death, there is no benefit in the next birth. Even if we get a birth in the Brahma world due to such attainments and stay there for aeons we always have the possibility of taking a birth in the lower realms (maybe even as a worm) unless we have become enlightened. *Sati* will not betray us in that manner and if we keep practising *sati* with diligence it will be a huge asset in our next birth.

This understanding became a big strength to me when I was starting my spiritual journey. I then realized that this was the 'bank' in which I should invest my 'assets', because the interest accrued would continuously increase. Other banks could go bankrupt and stop paying interest at the time of need, and we have seen many such examples in the recent past. Therefore I would say that the best gift we can give our children is to motivate them to learn to be mindful. Similarly it's the most valuable gift we can give our parents and even our teachers and everyone.

It is a great pity that most members of the sangha do not emphasise on *sati* and praise it the way they would praise *saddhā*, *virīya*, *samādhi* or *paññā*. Ideally they need to emphasise how *sati* is like a vertebral column that is needed to strengthen the other four spiritual faculties. However, in order for *sati* to develop or grow it would need *sampajañña* (which is akin to wisdom – *pañña*). But I can

say with confidence that if you can develop *sati*, *sampajañña* will automatically follow as in a threaded needle, the thread will always follow the needle, or a cart will always follow the oxen that have been tied to it. There is no need for any special effort to develop *sampajañña* because with the influence of *kalyānamitta* this will automatically happen. But for *sampajañña* to develop within an environment of *sati* the mind should be free of clutter and disturbances. There should be sufficient room for *sati* to grow - this is called *satipatthāna* – consolidating mindfulness. This is what we attempt when we sit for about 60-90 minutes. We set everything else aside and we consolidate our mindfulness. A lot of sacrifice is needed for this.

When *sati* begins to establish itself during a sitting session, we can incorporate *sati* when doing walking meditation and eventually during all of our daily tasks. When mindfulness becomes uninterrupted we arrive at a stage where *sampajañña* is established. Then it is possible to realize *vipassanā*/insight knowledges or other super knowledges like *abhiñña* in accordance with the perfections (*pāramitā*) of our previous births. Therefore the yogi must exert effort towards initiating and consolidating *sati* and when that happens successfully, he will get the benefit of *sampajañña*.

Yoniso-manasikāro paripuro

Sati sampajaññaṃ paripureti

The *Satipatthāna sutta* teaches us how to establish mindfulness and prompts us to ask ourselves how much importance we have given to *satipatthāna* in our life. And if we know the value of this teaching we should ask ourselves how much more we can understand in this regard? Due to the importance of this topic I thought I would spend a few minutes discussing the *cetasika* – *sati*, and use it to introduce the yogi to the development of the four *satipatthāna*.

I learnt this mostly in Burma and in fact even my Sri Lankan teacher Ven. Gñānārāma had learnt most of this teaching from the masters of Burma. We are indeed indebted to the Burmese teachers for

introducing this teaching to us and also for continuously training us on this subject.

In this country, up until a few years after the Anuradhapura era, the vast majority of Sri Lankans (monks, laity - men and women) had practiced the *satipatthāna*. This information is chronicled in the ancient commentarial texts. Due to invasion by foreign forces as well as a variety of other reasons, the teachings and the practise of *sati* had gradually disappeared. Together with this, the entire Sinhala race fell into a deep, dark abyss and the golden era of the Dhamma was lost. At that time Buddhism was learnt purely as a religion (as an '...ism') and not as the Buddha-Dhamma. The Sinhala-Buddhists of that time had constantly engaged in petty quarrels with people of other religions and consequently, the Dhamma underwent a steady decline and degeneration. The main reason for this pitiful situation was that *sati* and the *satipatthāna* were forgotten. But the greater tragedy was that at the time, there existed no one who had the capacity to realize this. This unfortunate situation was accompanied by an economic and cultural degeneration. The Bikkhu sangha had lost their independence and strength, and the Buddha-Dhamma in Sri Lanka experienced a very dark period.

Historically one could draw a parallel of the Sri Lankan situation with that of Burma and the invasion by the Japanese, and also the counteractive forces introduced by the Mahayana Buddhists. All this had led to weakening and disabling of the Dhamma and the *vipassanā* lineage in Burma. Fortunately these forces were unable to completely annihilate the *Vipassanā* tradition, therefore it was possible to reawaken and rejuvenate the Burmese Theravada monks and the *vipassanā* teaching. This was particularly so with the Buddha Jayanthi celebrations in 1956. Unfortunately in Sri Lanka this resurrection could not happen because the umbilical cord of the Buddha-Dhamma golden era that existed many centuries ago had been completely severed. '*Vipassanā* lineage' (Vidarshana Parapura, in Sinhala), a book written by Ven. Gñānārāma describes how, as a very young monk he had explored all the ola leaf manuscripts he could find and also searched for teachers' handbooks and instruction

manuals for some information on the meditative path to *nibbāna*. Unfortunately he couldn't find any. He had been able to locate instructions for the four protective meditations and also for *samatha* practise, but he could find nothing on *vipassanā*.

It was during that period soon after the Buddha Jayanthi, that the Government of Sri Lanka had invited leading Theravada monks from Burma and arranged for those teachers to introduce *vipassanā* practise to Sri Lankans. During the Buddha Jayanthi, most Sri Lankans had celebrated with many events and decorations. But a few people had also attempted to meditate in accordance with the *satipatthāna*, and that was what had prompted the invitation to the Burmese *vipassanā* teachers. For the first time we had the opportunity to associate with and learn from the Burmese monks, and after many centuries the importance of *sati* and *satipatthāna* was revived.

One of the Sri Lankan monks who had learnt from the Burmese monks who visited Sri Lanka and had started practising and teaching the *vipassanā* method was Ven. Gñānārāma. The few monks who had benefited from the Burmese teachings by then realized that the *satipatthāna* practice was indeed the ridgetop needed to stabilize the Bikkhu sāsana. However, those monks met with much criticism and they were accused of teaching an incorrect 'Burmese style' of meditation. Nevertheless, undeterred they pursued the task and taught a few committed yogis and were able to successfully revive the *satipatthāna* practise in Sri Lanka.

The Burmese teachers used the meditation instructions in commentaries and prepared meditation manuals to help yogis learn *vipassanā*. In the manuals they said that an indication that *sati* is present in the mind is the *apilāpanatā lakkhana* (state of non-drifting).

If a dried melon is put into water it will keep bobbing up and down, and similarly a cork will float on the surface of the water. A stone on the other hand will sink to the bottom. Similarly, a mind that's strong in *sati* will not bob up and down nor float, it will focus onto one

object/subject and stay there unwavering. The yogi will not be drifting, nor will they have any doubt because they are sure that the mind is in one place. Therefore yogis should focus on the breath (if that is their choice of primary object) and we advise them to know with certainty that the mind is either on the 'in'-breath when breathing in, or that it is on the 'out'-breath when breathing out. And the yogi should know with certainty that during each 'in' and 'out'-breath the mind is not elsewhere. Then the yogi is advised to contemplate when he is with the 'in'-breath, that he is in fact with the 'in'-breath, and similarly with the 'out'-breath. This 'knowing' and 'contemplation' will strengthen the mind and bring it to focus.

If the yogi is able to focus his mind on this occurrence for some time, he is advised to keep repeating this observation over and over again. This is done to consolidate mindfulness. When the yogi is engaged in this contemplation over and over again, the mind will struggle to stay with the primary object. But the diligent yogi will keep bringing it back **without getting discouraged**. It would be like a small child who is admitted to primary school. For the first time they will have to work according to a time table set by the teacher. The small child who had previously been used to playing as and when they wished has now been asked to be 'obedient' and listen to the teacher. This is something very new and the child is reluctant to obey. But eventually the teacher is able to get the pupil to follow every instruction very clearly. Once the yogi is able to follow every instruction then they are able to transform the mind that was discursive and distracted into a focused and one-pointed state.

Although we are senior citizens, as yogis we are still in the childhood, with untrained and undisciplined minds. We are all novices in regard to meditation practise. Many people criticize me when I say this and they say we are not young children to be taught meditation in this manner. My position is that if you are able to directly move to contemplating the in/out-breath, please go ahead and do so. If not, please follow my instructions and start with simply knowing the 'in'-breath when breathing in and also know that you are not with the 'out'-breath when breathing in. This situation also brings to mind

when as a small child we learn the mother tongue very easily and it comes very naturally to us. But when we are learning a second language as adults we have many difficulties. Therefore we have to have a beginner's mind in order to learn new skills in the latter part of our lives. This is why yogis need to start with the very basics, in the most simple and uncomplicated manner.

We must admit to ourselves that, although we start the day with a lot of plans and determination we are quite poor when it comes to maintaining mindfulness in our day to day activities. Generally we are totally unaware whether we are 'hearing' a noise, 'seeing' a sight, or whether we are simply 'day dreaming' or 'walking' or 'sitting'. Our mind is most of the time like a mad monkey. Hence the Buddha's reference to it as a 'monkey mind', always leaping from one object to another with total lack of mindfulness. Therefore if a yogi is successful at keeping their mind on the 'in'-breath and 'out'-breath, I would consider it as a huge achievement. The yogi should feel triumphant and be happy that this is equivalent to experiencing *nibbāna*, at least for the time being. I say this because when a yogi has reached a certain stage of mindfulness they experience no defiling thoughts connected to greed, hatred or delusion, and therefore at such a time the mind is pure and free of defilements. By that time the yogi has already refrained from bodily and verbal misconduct (*kāya* and *vaci duccharita*) and has developed virtue – *sīla*. And with the mind totally on the 'in'-breath and the 'out'-breath they have no mental defilements (*mano duccharita*).

The yogi having established mindfulness in this manner, should then make a firm determination that they will take one more 'in'-breath and 'out'-breath with mindfulness, then make a determination for another, and so on until the yogi gets into the swing of it.

The reluctance that some people have to attempt such a simple exercise is that, they don't believe in its significance. They would rather go on pilgrimages to India or organize and partake in Kathina ceremonies, because most people wish for material benefits in the next life. Due to their ignorance they fail to understand the positive

results of mindfulness of breathing and its significant role in leading to ultimate liberation.

It is none other than the Buddha who realized and taught the absolute benefit of *ānāpānasati* in eradicating our defilements. This is why the ordinary worldling (*puthujjana*) experiences many distractions and diversions, and will make a multitude of excuses in order to postpone this task. And this is why teachers need an enormous amount of patience when instructing yogis on this subject. When a yogi feels that they actually know how to focus on *ānāpānasati*, they then get the confidence to mindfully note the **forthcoming** 'in' and 'out' breath, and thereafter the next in and out-breath, and so on. This confidence is very important. This represents the function of mindfulness- i.e. keeping the object of meditation face to face with the noting mind.

Similarly, during walking meditation the yogi knows how fickle the mind is, darting from one object to another, the eyes shift from one object to another, he hears one sound after another. Such a yogi now believes with confidence that he can keep his attention on the left step and then the right step, then again the left and then the right step, and so on. When we reach such stages and develop such confidence we should be extremely grateful and value such a stage in meditative development. I am saying this because the magnitude of **skilfulness** one accumulates through such meditation cannot be equated to even a very large *dāna* offering or by observing *sīla* **throughout** our lives.

The Buddha says that if we live for one hundred years and spend just one day in mindfulness and in meditation, that one day is of far greater value than the one hundred years spent in heedlessness. The Buddha had to use such descriptions to explain the value and importance of mindfulness and meditation, because he knew that the average person would place far greater importance on *saddhā* and *virīya*, but would tend to neglect *sati*. If one day, having met a *kalyānamitta* and having listened to *sadhamma*, and having understood *yoniso-manasikāra* we observe *sati*, then we will meet with success. Please remember that this change in the yogi will not

just benefit them in this life but its results will be profound in all *samsāra*.

Once mindfulness sets in, the yogi is protected (this is the manifestation of mindfulness) and it will guard them against discursive thoughts and other disturbances that were previously common. They also know that their mind is not darting to another object or to another person. And that alone is a great asset. The yogi then finds it is easier to be in the present moment - 'Now, I am here' – 'Now I am with the 'in'-breath' – 'Now I am with the 'out'-breath'.

Dhammo havē rakkhati, dhamma carī

This type and magnitude of protection the yogi acquires cannot be compared to the merits they would accrue with alms offerings or *sīla*. This is a special protection which only meditating yogis experience. If you wish for your own **well-being** or if you're interested in being safe and protected, and if you are keen in acquiring *adhi-kusala*, then endeavour to take at least one 'in'-breath and one 'out'-breath with mindfulness.

The lay supporters (*dayakas*) who offer alms at Nissaranavanaya visit the upper monastery and meet me. I then ask them why they decided to come. They often say that they came to see the meditation huts (*kutis*) and then I say 'Please do so'. When I ask if anyone of them would care to discuss meditation practise, there would often be no volunteers, instead they would look at each other embarrassed. The men would be particularly reluctant to speak and the women would be quite shy to admit that they did in fact meditate. I always try my best to encourage the group to meditate before they leave the monastery.

One day a woman told me an interesting story. When she had gone to a temple to observe the eight precepts on a full moon day, the monk addressing them had said 'if you can take one 'in'-breath mindfully every day, in the same way that you would smell a flower, that alone would be of great benefit'. I was so happy to hear how beautifully that monk had expressed the value of mindfulness. My plea to you is to try and do this for a start and then be determined

to advance from one mindful breath to two per day, and so on. Because if a big rock is consistently hit with a small **hammer** over a long period, one day the big rock will crack open. That would be our breakthrough. We may not experience super knowledges in meditation (*abhiññā*) or clairvoyance, or clairaudience or be able to perform super-human feats, but we would have been able to cleanse our mind of defilements at least for a while. During each 'in'-breath and each 'out'-breath taken mindfully, it would be as though we have experienced **momentary nibbāna** then and there. The reason for our delay in this realization is that we have so many defilements in the midst of all what we do. If the yogi attempts to have several mind-moments (*cittakkhana*) free of distraction and defilements, they will get the momentum to proceed. And that alone is purifying.

When yogis sit for meditation, they are plagued by body pains, distracting thoughts and sounds. Every single yogi faces these obstacles but we think we are the only ones to suffer. Our teacher used to advise us that we should attempt to simply be mindful of one 'in' and 'out'-breath at a time, repeat the same exercise for as long as you can. Supposing you are able to last for five seconds with mindfulness on the breath, and supposing having taken only five breaths during that period, you had been successful in redeeming five breaths that were previously steeped in defilements and heedlessness. By using mindfulness you have been able to convert heedlessness into heedfulness (*pamāda* into *appamāda*) thus enabling purification of the mind. If after sometime you are able to achieve this for one minute or more, you can imagine how many purifying mind-moments you have been successful at achieving. This purification task can be done only by you. No one else can do it for you, and similarly none of us can do it for our children, nor for our spouses nor for our parents or anyone.

The Buddha used to say that he could not accomplish this task for us, he could only show the way. If by any chance the Buddha had a way to help others develop mindfulness, he would have helped Ven. Rahula his son. For fifteen years since his ordination Ven. Rahula struggled with this practise. Similarly for Princess Yasodhara.

Therefore we must realise that in this task we are helpless and that we are very much alone. Although we have partaken in many meritorious deeds these will not help us to gain mindfulness. Unless we make haste and develop this ability, at the moment of death it would be as though we are caught in a Tsunami with no one to help us. Mindfulness will be our only salvation at the moment of death.

The Buddha clearly explained this to Ven. Rahula. The Buddha advised that we should experience all eleven characters of the breath during *ānāpānasati*. If we are successful whilst alive, then at the moment of death we will be able to revert to the practise and the mind will not be disturbed and distracted. Simply doing meritorious deeds alone will not help us at this point. It is only if we become familiar with all aspects of breath meditation when we are young that that training will help us to achieve mindfulness at the moment of death. As we grow older it becomes increasingly difficult to master mindfulness. This is compounded by the usual aches and pains and other ailments associated with ageing. Therefore my advice is to start your practise when you are young.

This is the best example you can give your children and you can well imagine how inspired young children would be to see their parents meditating. Instead, what happens now is that the entire family with all the children sit in front of the TV and watch some of the most unworthy programs shamelessly. The TV channels today telecast various useless programs and similarly all the news papers publish the most worthless stories daily. Today, people are so addicted to this type of media that they can't even fall asleep unless they watch TV news. Thereafter they keep blaming all the print and electronic media for telecasting and broadcasting useless material and they also keep complaining that their children are disobedient and going astray. This is why I keep advising people to switch off the TV and radio, and ask them not to waste money buying news papers.

My advice is not to allow your mind to go seeking after what the sensual world is offering and instead to turn your mind inwards and observe mindfully, each 'in'-breath and 'out'-breath. The ability to take on this challenge and to make this radical shift of mind-state, is a

manifestation of the development of *yoniso-manasikāra*. Some people wonder if they could actually accomplish this task, because they think it is not doable. I can assure you that everyone can do this. And as I mentioned earlier the 'Dhamma-protection' you get from this type of effort is a mega protection and cannot be compared to any other. The spiritual benefits and merit you gain by offering *dāna* or by keeping *sīla* are unique to those meritorious actions, but the immense benefit one gets from meditation and the practice of *sati* cannot be compared to any of those deeds. However, *dāna*, *sīla* and meditation have to be accomplished in a step-by-step manner and we must remember that all three are important to progress on the Path. If we engage in *dāna*, if we purify ourselves with *sīla* and then reach *samādhī* and subsequently achieve *paññā*, then our endeavours to progress will have been fruitful.

In this manner as the Buddha said, we must remember that the success of our efforts to develop mindfulness will depend on the repeated mistakes we make in that effort and the lessons we learn thereof. The continued and consistent effort in maintaining the four foundations of mindfulness (*sathara satipaṭṭhāna*) is what will eventually help us to gain a stable start. Please don't expect your past 'merits' or the influence of the *devas* or devotional prayers to help you to develop mindfulness. It is the effort you exert to develop *sati* that's important, and that alone will give you compassion and kindness to yourself, in this noble endeavour. Therefore, if a yogi who has *yoniso-manasikāra* attempts to develop *sati* while in sitting/walking meditation and in daily activities, eventually they will gain *sati sampajañña* (clarity of consciousness). *Sampajañña* comes with wisdom and it will become established on a foundation of *sati*. And it will only be your own effort that will help in this regard. No external sources or people can help you in this mission.

The yogi then gradually becomes humble and self-effacing and they have no selfish or opportunistic traits. Most people criticize the Theravada lineage, accusing it of being a selfish journey. This is true because the Buddha says that no-one can rescue another person from the bonds of *samsāra* and that only the person concerned can do so for themselves. Therefore if you wish to help others to

overcome the sorrows of *samsāra*, please help yourself first. This is what the Buddha said. He also said that if people liberate themselves, the positive energies that would radiate from them will have a resounding effect on others around them. A person who is thus established in the four foundations of mindfulness will be a strength to others and an example for others to emulate.

The Buddha-to-be, when practicing with heroic effort to reach enlightenment, isolated himself to such a degree that even if he heard the sound of a woman gathering firewood in a distance, he would 'run' to another mountain and 'hide', in order to escape company so that he could strengthen his practice. However, once he became enlightened he slept for less than two hours a day and spent the rest of his time teaching and helping others to become liberated. There had been days when, if the Buddha knew that an individual had the potential to become a stream-enterer (*sotapanna*), he would travel hundreds of miles on foot simply to guide that person towards reaching *nibbāna*. Such an act would not have given the Buddha any 'merit', but such was the Buddha's kindness and compassion. After his enlightenment the Buddha never isolated himself (except in very exceptional situations) to enjoy the bliss of *nibbāna* in solitude. Instead, he offered a selfless service to all.

This is why it is important to remember that the effort we put in at the start has to be done alone, in quietude with minimum publicity. Once *sampajañña* develops to its full, and after we are rid of self-view, then we can afford to teach and help others with a mature mind-state, which is not our 'own'. After a while, when the yogi has advanced to a point when *sampajañña* matures, the Dhamma quality of *opanayiko* (encouraging to come and see) ripens. Then, extremely valuable *kalyānamitta* will begin to appear before the yogi and he/she begins to hear and learn deep Dhamma. Profound *saddhā* begins to appear from within and *yoniso-manasikāra* develops to such an extent that the yogi can directly target the object of intention with great precision. It is like a rabbit-hunter who had been previously targeting the bush, is now able to aim at the rabbit with great clarity and focus. The yogi's mindfulness is now

strong and unwavering and therefore they can progress with ease rapidly. The yogi will begin to understand complex Dhamma phenomena very naturally. The maximum effort they exert at the start enables a smooth passage, i.e. a Dhamma journey with ease and happiness. They will begin to meet more and more learned *kalyānamitta* and will continue to hear more deep Dhamma. For a diligent yogi at this stage, meditation and Dhamma learning can even become joyful and 'fun'.

My advice is to value this rare and precious human birth you have with great care, make a lot of effort, many sacrifices and start the practise of *sati*. That will lead you to the different stages of development we have spoken about. Some people tend to opine that the present revival of the *sāsana* is a temporary phenomenon which has occurred after the Buddha Jayanthi, and that it will soon fade away. This may well be true. However, at present we have good teachers who can clearly explain what mindfulness is, and also many meditation centres, retreat options and yogis who are striving like all of you. I strongly urge you therefore to make best use of this opportunity with wisdom.

Day 5 - Dhamma Talk

'*sati-sampajaññaṃ paripuram Indriya samvaram paripureti*'

(If a person has established *sati-sampajañña* then such a person has the likely hood of becoming calm and composed, whose senses are **restrained** to a great extent)

In the *Avijja sutta*, the Buddha had examined the complexity of 'avijjā' (ignorance) with great depth and detail. The genesis of *avijjā* has been unraveled with so much care and finesse, that even a lay person with no knowledge of the Dhamma would be able to get a clear understanding. Complicated and convoluted questions pertaining to the subject have been simplified and streamlined, and the Buddha shows how, in ten systematic steps a person can eradicate ignorance and how anyone who does so can even reach the highest human potential i.e. *nibbāna*.

At the outset the Buddha explains the benefits of associating with those with wholesome/**true** conduct – *sappurisa* or *kalyānamitta*, and he also explains the dangers of associating with those with unwholesome/**un-true** conduct – *asappurisa* or *pāpamitta*. The Buddha cautions that the responsibility of choosing whom to associate with, rests entirely in our own hands. I am reminded of a well-known story: how two little birds soon after birth were separated from their mother's nest, and one lands in a nest close to a robber's den whilst the other lands in a nest that is inside a monastery. The two birds grow up manifesting characteristics that reflect the environment in which each of them lived, and their adult lives show qualities that are strikingly different from each other.

The Buddha says, when we meet a friend it is difficult to conclude if that person is actually a **true** *kalyānamitta* or not. After associating with them for a while, if they are a true friend we begin to hear the *saddhamma* from that person and then we may develop *saddhā*

towards them. This may also make us realize that this person could actually be a *kalyānamitta*. This is the nature of the *saddhamma*, it creates a sense of awe in the listener. The next stage that naturally evolves in such a person is that, begin to consider very carefully every action or speech they undertake. They become cautious and endeavour to avoid making any mistakes. This is because it becomes clear that correcting mistakes is far more difficult than to avoid making them. They diligently apply *yoniso-manasikāra* in all situations, because it would be clear that with *ayoniso-manasikāra* they are helpless and not in control of themselves because becoming heedless (*appamāda*).

If a person is fortunate enough to have *yoniso-manasikāra* then such a person is also fortunate enough to have *sati* and to be in the present moment.

Being able to be in the present moment enables us to develop insights and special knowledges. In the *Satipatthāna Sutta*, the Buddha clearly instructs the yogi to establish mindfulness in the body (*kāya*), in the feelings (*vedanā*) and in the mental states (*citta*). He instructs yogis on the establishment of *sampajañña* (clear **comprehension**). *Sati* and *sampajañña* are like twins, whichever way they are placed they are an inseparable pair and have a very close connection with one another.

Today I would like to base my talk on the stanza ;

'*sati-sampajaññaṃ paripuram Indriya samvaram paripureti*'

(If a person has established *sati-sampajañña* then such a person has the likely hood of becoming calm and composed, whose senses are **restrained** to a great extent)

Let us discuss how a person with *sati-sampajañña* will have a composed state of mind. Let us take a bhikkhu for example. He would lead an exemplary life and in society he would stand out as being a person who has restrained or tamed his senses. His supporters and his lay devotees will respect and venerate him only if he possesses such a demeanour. Whereas, if a bhikkhu is very restless, distracted

and gets agitated easily he would evidently not be one with restrained or tamed senses, nor one with *sati-sampajañña*.

We also know certain people who behave with a lot of dignity and composure in society, but will assume a diametrically opposite character when not in the public eye, i.e. they would display a Jekyll and Hyde personality. A person who genuinely observes sense-restraint will always demonstrate that trait, whether they are alone or not. This is a Dhamma phenomenon that those with wisdom can develop.

Today I propose to discuss how we could develop sense-restraint and how the knowledge we would get from studying the Buddhist scriptures (*sutamāya ñāna*) can be beneficial for this. Yesterday I spoke at length on *sampajañña* and its link to wisdom (*paññā*). However, *sampajañña* as mentioned in the Satipatthāna sutta refers to the following: *ānāpāna pabbhayā*, *iriyāpatha pabbhayā* and *sampajañña pabbhayā*. In the case of *iriyāpatha pabbhayā*, we would need to know thoroughly, each time we assume one of the four **cardinal** postures – sitting, standing, walking and lying down. But during a large part of our general lives, we spend a lot of time in-between these postures, hence we need to know thoroughly, the posture-junctions as well.

Sampajañña means that we are mindful of each such junction – e.g. being aware of the tiniest movements that take place when moving from one posture to another such as; sitting to standing position, or when moving a leg or shifting the body during sitting meditation.

I think I should explain this clearly before I discuss sense-restraint.

When doing walking meditation we **note** when we keep the left foot as left, similarly the right foot as right, and at the end of the walking path we know we need to stop and turn. At the moment of turning we need to shift from the walking posture to the standing posture. It is during such a 'posture-junction' that it is very easy to lose our **prevailing** mindfulness. Maintaining *sati* in one posture is relatively easier than when shifting from one posture to another. This situation can be compared to driving a vehicle. When we drive

along a main road and approach a junction, we know we have to turn right, then we are sensitive to the fact that there are vehicles behind us. Therefore we slow down, switch on the signal lights and we gradually move to the centre of the road while indicating our intention to turn right. Since we follow the **traffic** regulations we don't suddenly turn without indicating to the other drivers who are behind us or in front of us.

If we take sudden turns on the road we **are prone** to meet with an accident. Similarly in walking meditation when we approach the end of the walking path, we know that we are approaching the end, and knowingly slow down and stop and turn and resume walking. If we fail to do so, we will lose the mindfulness that had built up. When reaching the end of the path we must be with full awareness and adopt *sati-sampajañña* at all posture-junctions i.e. *iriyāpatha sandhi*. In order to do this we must be fully prepared, because at the end of the walking path usually all six senses are ready and waiting to be active – the eye will beckon us to see sights, similarly the ear, the mind and so on. The consciousness (*viññāṇa*), which until now was with the body (*kāya*) during walking, will be tempted by the sights–eye consciousness (*cakkhu viññāṇa*), sounds – ear consciousness (*sōtha viññāṇa*) etc. and these will compete with one another to take prominence. At this stage the yogi should be fully aware of how the *viññāṇa* shifts swiftly from one sense impingement to another, and be well prepared for this eventuality when approaching the end of the path.

A similar situation may arise during sitting meditation but to a lesser degree. When we sit in meditation, after a while we start to feel pain in our legs and after bearing up for a while we will then be tempted to shift our legs and move position a **little**. Then we need to be fully aware of how our mind-consciousness (*mano viññāṇa*) is tempting us to move the legs and also be fully aware of our response to move the leg. If we do decide to move, then we should do so very, very slowly, fully aware of each minute movement and how the postures shift. Each posture-junction should be considered with sharp and acute mindfulness. If we have gone through all the motions with

total awareness then we won't have interrupted the *sati* we had built up until then. With *sati-sampajañña*, every tiny movement is carried out with complete awareness, and when doing so the yogi is able to retain mindfulness throughout the sitting upto the very end of the session when they mindfully and gently open the eyes. Therefore the specialty of *sati-sampajañña* is the slowing down of the speed, and the total awareness the yogi places on every tiniest movement, every posture change and each sense-awareness.

Sampajañña (clarity of consciousness) is of four types:

1. *Sāttaka sampajañña* – clarity of awareness regarding purpose (knowing fully, the purpose/reason for change)
2. *Sappāya sampajañña* – clarity of awareness regarding suitability (knowing fully if the change is appropriate)
3. *Gocara sampajañña* – awareness of the meditative domain
4. *Asammōha sampajañña* – un-deluded conception of the activity concerned (where we know with confidence and certainty what the change will entail)

This process could be explained with the following example.

When sitting in meditation, being aware that you are sitting, and then being aware that the left knee has started to hurt, then aware that the pain is becoming worse, and being aware that you are tempted to move the leg. Being fully conscious of that temptation, and knowing that your body-knowledge has taken the decision to move the leg. Knowing every movement of the leg when shifting position, knowing the stretching of the knee, and knowing that you are now sitting in a new position and knowing that you have returned to *ānāpānasati*.

When going through such a complicated sequential change in posture, you may have to shift from *kāyānupassana* to *vedanānupassana*, or to *cittānupassana* and then to *dhammānupassana*.

Similarly, when doing walking meditation you may need to shift the awareness from the lower part of the body and feet, to the upper

part of the body or elsewhere. And these four aspects relevant to *sati-sampajañña* can be applied with each shift of posture and each change of feeling/thoughts/emotions. When we get used to dealing with such transitions with absolute awareness, our mindfulness will not be interrupted. This scenario could be compared to a baton-relay with four runners. If, with each baton change the runner slows down or if the baton is dropped during the change-over, then the speed of that team will be compromised and this would enable the other team to win. Therefore the *sati* that we build up during our meditation should not suffer during changes of posture (*iriyā-patha*). Consequently, a yogi with *sati-sampajañña* will be disciplined and will exercise *indriya-samvara*, especially at *iriyā-patha sandhi*.

Traditional Buddhism teaches that first we establish *sīla* and then develop *samādhi* and then *pañña*. But in the description above we are told that it is only if we meditate diligently that we will have *indriya-samvara* and *sīla* – a diametrically opposite position to what we already know. At this retreat for example, we administered the eight precepts to all yogis at the very beginning. If one of the yogis had refused to take the eight precepts we would have not been able to allow that yogi to join the retreat, because we would say that keeping the eight precepts is essential for this meditation program, for development of mindfulness and so on.

During my early days as a yogi I had to face a similar situation. I was told by my teacher at the very outset that I would be likely to lose my *sati* if I didn't keep my *sīla* and that I would not succeed in my meditation. I respected my teacher's view but I also asked him to please advise me on what I should do in this regard. He then asked me to focus entirely on developing *sati* and to forget about *sīla* for that period. After a few weeks I found that my mindfulness was gradually getting established, and at that point I was fully aware of the number of unwholesome things I was engaging in, without any fear or shame. I began to realize this only because I was establishing mindfulness. When I reported this to my teacher he challenged me to keep engaging in unwholesome activities, whilst being totally

mindful. He said my first priority would be to maintain *sati* and keeping mindfulness at the forefront, I should go ahead and try to break any of the precepts. Furthermore, he said to be conscious of every act I commit, and each time I transgress the '*sīla*-boundaries to be fully aware that I am doing so, and to maintain *indriya-samvara* at all times with mindfulness.

I then realized first hand that whenever I was in total mindfulness I could never break any precept and that I was in fact keeping *sīla*. When our minds are clear and focussed we will never commit any unwholesome act, nor any crime. The Buddha said, that in order to commit any such unskillful act (or speech) results in fear and shame, we necessarily have to confuse our minds and become heedless. This is why the Buddha said to avoid intoxicants at all costs, because they cause confusion in the mind and facilitate heedlessness. Indulging in intoxicants leads to lack of *indriya-samvara* and we then heedlessly eat as much as we like, drink as much as we like and make merry, allowing our senses to run riot. If one day we realize what we have done we come to realize how, due to our irrational enjoyment of sense pleasures we hurt people and caused them to suffer, and have regret and deep remorse. We then know that we will always suffer – someday- for the hurt we cause. We don't realize how, when we hurt and disappoint people with no sensitivity at all about their feelings, that they too have the same 'hurts' that we have, that they too suffer the same way we do. We will come to such a realization only when we are faced with similar situations. And the only reason we embark upon such hurtful, disgraceful and destructive activities is that we are heedless, because we have no *sati* and therefore we lack sensitivity. If we had *sati*, we would not have acted in such a manner.

I remember an example from my childhood, where in our home kitchen we used to have what was called a 'dirt-corner' – a place where all the refuse and rubbish was collected until it was swept away at the end of the day. If it was not cleared the refuse collection would grow and after several days it would become a rubbish heap. With added moisture and insects who came to devour the refuse, the rubbish would be very unpleasant to see and smell.

But if the rubbish was exposed to direct sunlight all the existing pathogenic microorganisms would die and it could be converted into compost and become useful as fertilizer. Similarly, if we allow unwholesome thoughts/feelings to lurk hidden in the crevices of our minds and don't confront them, they grow, fester and become very unpleasant. On the other hand, if we don't allow such 'rubbish' to collect in the deep and dark corners of our mind, and instead we expose our minds to the light of mindfulness by being open to them and recognizing them as and when they arise, a radical transformation in our mind-states takes place.

The Buddha said, '*...the more the Dhamma is exposed by the Buddha, the more it will shine..*'

The Buddha always said that if every word/action is spoken/performed with complete mindfulness it will never be wrong or unwholesome. If those who practise *sati-sampajañña* meet regularly and discuss their experiences and share their individual knowledge, the wealth of information we then have access to, is tremendous. In fact the Buddha will not be missed. Because, in such a situation the Buddha becomes 'alive'. Similarly the Dhamma and the Sangha become very much alive and in our midst. This is why the Buddha recommended that it is beneficial for yogis who practise *sati-sampajañña* to meet regularly and discuss their practise – *sappurisa samsevana*. My advice to such yogis is, if they do decide to meet to discuss each other's practise, be factual in your descriptions of experiences and do not **instead** engage in frivolous and irrelevant chatter.

In the *Sati-sampajañña Sutta* (AN- Book of Tens) the Buddha says that in between *sati-sampajañña* and *indriyasamvara*, there is another connecting Dhamma, *hiri-ottappa* (fear and shame of engaging in immoral or unwholesome acts/speech).

"Bhikkhus, if someone does not have sati-sampajañña such a person does not have even the foundation for hiri-ottappa to take place.."

-Sati-sampajañña sutta (AN-Tens)

Similarly, the Buddha says that if someone has *sati-sampajañña* well established in them, automatically they will be endowed with *hiri-ottappa*. And if one has no *hiri-ottappa* they will have no foundation for *indriya-samvara*. One who possesses *hiri-ottappa* will always have *indriya-samvara*.

In summary, *sati* will always lead to *hiri-ottappa* and *hiri-ottappa* will eventually lead to *indriya-samvara*, always.

Hiri-ottappa is said to be a characteristic that can even successfully govern the world order. We tend to believe that politicians and law enforcement systems are responsible for successful governance. I don't have much faith in such systems and conventional institutional structures. These have proved to be artificial barriers constructed globally through traditions. But they have rarely been successful in preventing or curbing sinful actions that we, as citizens of the world habitually commit. A person with no fear or shame (*hiri-ottappa*) can never be governed by such systems. What the Buddha attempted to convey was, that each person through inner realization should have a sense of moral responsibility for their actions. With mindfulness and clarity of consciousness such a sense can be aroused in a person, then they will not need law enforcement systems to govern them. For a group of yogis like you all, the *suta-mayā ñāna* you are developing through my description can help to develop *sati-sampajañña*. Already you have made a lot of sacrifices and a lot of organizational effort to come for this retreat. With a lot of commitment you have established *sati-sampajañña* to an extent, and I would consider this an ideally conducive environment for meditative development.

In the *Indriya-samvara bhāvanā sutta* (MN 152) the Buddha asks the Brahmin student Uttara if sense-restraint is recommended in their faith as well.

'Uttara, does the brahmin *Pārāsariya* teach his disciple the development of faculties?'

The Brahmin replied saying that in their faith their teacher (Brahmin *Pārāsariya*) advises his students to avoid looking at sights, hearing sounds and so on.

The Buddha responds '...then that would mean that those who have been born blind should have already achieved (arahantship) by now, and similarly those who have been deaf since birth..and so on..'. The Brahmin then realized that the doctrine he had been following does not advocate sense-restraint but instead promoted not seeing, not hearing and so on (i.e. avoiding sense impingements), all of which are not practically possible. The Buddha then tells Ven. Ananda, that once in several thousands upon thousands of years a *Tathāgata* will appear in this world system, who would advocate the practise of *indriya-samvara bhāvanā*. Ven. Ananda then asked the Buddha with respect, to explain this to all present with great compassion. The Buddha explained, when a yogi is practicing the Dhamma, first they will note each time he see 'form' (*rūpa*) and they will know if it is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral accordingly, and thus they will be restrained. Second, they will know that the *rūpa* is different from the 'feeling' (*vedanā*) experienced as a result of noting the *rūpa*, and that the feeling is pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Third, they will know that the 'feeling' experienced as a result of 'seeing' is a mental formation (*sankhāra*), which will arise and cease, and that it is a result of cause and effect, and dependently arisen (*paṭiccasamuppanna*). Understand it thus, *sankhātan – olārikan – paticcasamuppannan*.

If a yogi 'sees' each sight in this manner they will develop equanimity towards all sights, sounds and tastes etc. This is establishing *indriya-samvara* and this is the crux of the Dhamma talk tonight. A person without *indriya-samvara* will believe that it is the *rūpa*, by itself that gave rise to the feeling which was either pleasant or unpleasant or neutral. Such a person believes that a *rūpa* comes and tempts and taunts the eye to feel good or bad or neutral. The inner eye which 'sees' this *rūpa* is like the camera lens – a camera lens will never have pleasant or unpleasant feelings. Similarly, a camera will not be moved in any way even if the Buddha was to take a photograph. Similarly, this audio-recorder which is recording this talk will never show any change or develop *saddhā* even though it is recording a Dhamma talk. Our eye-lens is like a camera and our auditory

apparatus **and ear drum** is like the audio-recorder, they are no different from one another. What is different is that our mind and thoughts react to each sight, sound etc. If we are unmindful we will continue to believe that the responses are due to those *rūpa* (i.e. sights and sounds). *Rūpa* is what comes inwards from outside, whereas *manāpa-amanāpa* etc.(our favourable or unfavourable response) is what goes out from inside. When these two meet, *viññāna* (consciousness) takes place. Without *sati-sampajañña* we will continue to believe that both are the same, and we will never be able to differentiate *rūpa dhamma* from *nāma dhamma*.

I am reminded of the famous fable of the King Kekilla. A villager orders that a clay hut be built in his garden. The contractor builds it and goes away, but it soon collapses, and falls on the back of a **villager** who immediately complains to the King about the incident.. The King promptly orders the execution of the contractor. The contractor pleads his innocence before the King and explains how, when mixing the clay, the pot in which he brought the water spilled more water than necessary due to its ill-shaped mouth opening. Because the clay mixture got more water than required the building became weak and **the hut** collapsed. Since the contractor accused the potter for causing this debacle the King immediately summons the potter and reprimands him. The potter pleads his own innocence, since he says while molding the pot a good-looking woman had passed by to and fro many times, and this had distracted him and thus resulted in a defective pot. The King then pronounced his verdict – it was the woman who was guilty, and ordered her execution. The woman, when brought before the King pleads her innocence, saying that in order to go for a wedding she had given her jewels to be washed but the jeweler who undertook this task had not completed it on time, and hence the necessity for her to make several trips to the jeweler's shop **well-dressed**. The King summons the jeweler and accuses him as the guilty party and orders that the Royal elephant stamps his foot on the jeweler's body to kill him. The jeweler then pleads with the King saying that the elephant's foot might get harmed by his (the jeweler's) bones protruding out when

stamping on him, since he was very thin and emaciated having recently suffered from a nasty fever (dengue!). However, the jeweler says, the owner of the shop next to his has a big belly and that if the elephant stamps on him it would be unlikely that the elephant would get hurt. The King agrees to this suggestion and issues the order.

This is the kind of exercise we engage in all the time. When we make a mistake about anything we will promptly find an individual or situation to place the blame on. If we develop an unwholesome thought we immediately place the blame on the object as a reaction to which the thought was generated. We all laugh at King Kekilla, but this is how we all behave. Each time we have a feeling, thought, emotion (*sankhāra*), we should recognize it and not blame the object (*rūpa*) that we thought caused it. If we can discern the *rūpa* as *rūpa* and the resultant *sankhāra* as *nāma*, then we will be aware of the collision of the two. We cling to every *rūpa* that assails us from outside, and we grab every sense impingement as me/mine and as a result we suffer.

Ven. Katukurunde Ñānānanda used to say that in a sewing machine, when the needle hits the cloth the stitch is made only because the bobbin has the thread. The cloth would not get stitched, even if the needle hits the cloth if the bobbin did not have thread. An *arahant* will not have any thread in the bobbin, and therefore however much the needle hits the cloth there will be no stitch. There is no contact (*phassa*) and therefore no *sankhāra* is formed. Our 'bobbin's are full of thread, so it is very easy to make *phassa* and to create *sankhāra*. And we are proud to have a lot of 'thread in our bobbins'. Māra creates this illusion in many ways to tempt us, to make us feel that it is a great thing to get attached each time we make contact, and then we create a lot of *sankhāra* and keep circling in *samsāra*.

Defilements (*kilesa*) are not in *rūpa*, but they reside within the *nāma dhamma*. The *āsava* (influxes) and the *anusaya* (dormant *kilesas* = underlying tendencies) that emerge from our minds as thoughts, emotions, reactions and feelings are what trap us within this *samsāric* journey. We never realize that this 'I/me/mine' is creating this *kilesa* in response to *rūpa*, and that *rūpa* by itself has no *kilesa*. It

is our own self-view (*sakkāya ditthi*) and conceit that cause all of this. There is also the famous fable of the rabbit who keeps hitting at the sticky jak fruit (*koholla babā*) - the *kholla babā* does nothing but simply waits. While the rabbit keeps hitting at it each time he hits he gets stuck more and more. The rabbit keeps clinging, literally, to the sticky jak fruit. If instead of hitting at it, if the rabbit just notes it, **even for one** thought moment there would be no clinging.

The famous stanza from the Udāna describes the Bahiya incident, where the Buddha gives this powerful teaching (Udana 1.10)

'...in the seeing let there be only the seeing..'

When seeing something if we are able to stop at the seeing, without attaching ourselves or reacting to the object, then we have truly conquered. When one encounters an object (*rūpa*) the reaction of that person will be totally different to another person who encounters the same object. Person 'A' would develop one type of *kilesa* whereas Person 'B' would develop a different *kilesa*, although they both encountered the same object. For instance, if a man and a woman both look at a woman, the man is likely to get *rāga* thoughts whereas the woman is likely to get *dōsa* thoughts. Unless we are constantly on guard and restraining our senses we will certainly fall into this trap. At least if we can understand this using *sutamayā ñāna*, this would be a great thing.

Quantum Physics explains that all of the world's 'matter' exists as 'energy' that travels as vibrations or waves. Such 'energy' turns into 'matter' only when it meets with a conscious mind, and if not it remains simply as energy only. Once a conscious eye/ear meets these waves they turn into matter and thus convert into 'sight' or 'sound'. If there were no contact between the eye and energy waves they would just remain as energies. I admit that this is hard to believe. Imagine a dense, dark and dangerous forest devoid of human habitation, and in the middle of this forest a huge sandalwood tree was to fall. Would there be a sound heard? If there is no one to hear, there will be no sound! Similarly, it is only when an external *rūpa* makes contact with an eye/ear etc. that *sankhāra* get

formed in **the mind** and we react to it. Once we know this thoroughly we will not react like King Kekilla.

If a yogi with total mindfulness of their left foot and right foot during walking meditation approaches the end of the walking path, suddenly hears a bird singing or a car horn, their mindfulness is disturbed and they become helpless. Unless their *sati* is absolutely strong, they happily leave the insipid left/right/left movement and are tempted to look at the bird or to investigate the car horn, because those are novel and exciting. Similarly with sitting meditation, after a while if they hear a sound they gladly accept it because it is novel in comparison to the monotony of the in/out movement of the breath. The mind gets rapidly attached to sounds, pains, thoughts etc. during *ānāpānasati*.

They say that it is only a meditator who will know how many thoughts we have. And each time we make contact with those we end up with *rāga* (greed), *dōsa* (hatred), *mōha* (delusion). This is the most natural phenomenon that occurs due to the law of cause and effect, and we will all encounter the most gross reactions. A yogi who possesses this knowledge as *sutamayā ñāna*, can perhaps imagine what a 'tele-drama' goes on inside our minds. And they can also imagine what beautiful 'dramas' arahants and meditating monks experience in their daily lives. Such a yogi will never want to watch TV ever again.

We should awaken our minds to such deep Dhamma some day. If not, I would consider our minds to be 'animal-like', because at most times we are like the cat who is about to pounce on the mouse. The cat sees the mouse and immediately reacts when his eyes make contact with the mouse. The cat cannot use the 'Bahiya-formula', i.e. '*let there be seeing in the seeing*'. He *has* to react. We are just like the cat. But we have the ability to follow the Buddha's advice because we are human. We can develop *sati-sampajañña* and then see, how when we change from one posture to another posture, our feelings, thoughts, emotions change accordingly. Our minds are eternally getting embroiled with all matters - what we see, what we hear,

what we touch and so on. We either get drawn to those and get attached, or we reject them and become repelled, and consequently create *sankhāra* for our selves. This is the nature of our undisciplined and chaotic mind. And for this we try to blame everyone except our **own dark ignorance**. We fail to realize that this is one game that we can play with everyone, except the Buddha. Because it is the Buddha who has repeatedly advised us about the importance of establishing *sati-sampajañña* and *indriya-samvara*, and the dangers **and risks** of not doing so.

First, we need to establish *sati* during *ānāpānasati* and walking meditation. Then, at each moment when we break our *sati* we will know how our likes and dislikes tempt and taunt us, and we learn how to become fully aware of each such thought moment (*cittakkhana*) as **and** when they happen. Then we realize that the fault is within us, and we cease to blame others. We also realize that each time we blame the external impediments and don't see our own ignorance, our meditation will not progress and mature.

This is why it is important to seek an environment which is conducive for practice. We sit in quiet meditation halls with our eyes closed and we practise *ānāpānasati*. Invariably **feelings** and pains assail us, then we note our mind – how it moves from the breath to the pain. If we observe our mind carefully we will see how it meets with *dukkha vedanā* and then *sukha vedanā*, and we will then learn to know each *vedanā* fully. We will also learn how not to make *vedanā* (*dukkha vedanā* in particular), an obstruction to meditation. Moving from *kāyānupassanā* (in this case the in/out-breath) to *vedānupassanā* (in this case the pain in the knee), is natural. This is what the Buddha taught in the Satipatthāna Sutta. But we must be fully prepared to face this junction. There is no set pattern on how this change takes place, and it will vary from yogi to yogi, but each one of us must know thoroughly, how it happens as and when it happens.

We think we are clever, disciplined and full of sense-restraint, but when we sit and observe this process we realize how helpless we are in trying to maintain our awareness during this change. Like a mad

monkey who does not know which branch he is jumping to our mind darts from one object to another with alarming speed.

On one occasion when the Buddha was with a group of bhikkhus, all were in deep meditation and fully established in sense-restraint. *Māra* got agitated because he knew that all of these *bhikkhus* would reach *arahantship* at that event. *Māra*'s worry was that he knew the Buddha would be the 'winner' that evening, and he (*Māra*), would lose control over the *bhikkhus* when they reached *arahantship*. Therefore he approached the Buddha in the midst of the *bhikkhus* in the guise of a farmer and asked if he had seen his oxen wander in that direction. The Buddha, having immediately recognized *Māra*, addressed him and reprimanded him for disturbing the tranquility of the *bhikkhus* saying:

“What are oxen to you, Evil one?”.

Māra then replied, '*please remember that the eye is 'mine', rūpa (forms) that you see with the eye are mine, and cakkhu viññāna is 'mine' – and similarly the ear, the nose,, the touch, the taste, the mind, i.e. all six senses and six associated types of consciousness are mine. Where can you go, ascetic, to escape from me?*

The Buddha says, '*Māra, if anyone says that the eye is 'mine' or that the cakkhu-viññāna is 'mine', then what you are saying now will be relevant to that person. I have never said that any of our six sense faculties are "mine" and that consciousness is "mine", because they are not. Please remember that you will not be able to even see the wind in the path that I have travelled*'.

This is how we have been deceived by *Māra*. When we see a nice picture we will take a photograph, we will develop it, enlarge it, frame it and then call it MINE. Then we keep believing it is MY photograph, which I took, and I can see it better because MY eyesight is better...and so on. If we ever get some wisdom so that we don't fall into *Māra*'s trap, then can we see a beautiful picture, and be as though we didn't see it or be as though we were blind. Or can we consider that beautiful picture as not 'me/mine/I' or that the picture too is subject to *anicca* and *anatta*? If I ever ask people to do

this whenever they see a nice sight or hear a beautiful sound, I get criticized. I am told that we have good eye-sight which enabled us to enjoy the nice picture because of our good kamma and that I should simply understand and appreciate that. This is the cardinal difference between the conventional truth (*sammuthi sacca*) as opposed to the ultimate truth (*paramattha sacca*).

It is only when we practise *sati-sampajañña* and *indriya-samvara bhāvanā*, when we attempt to understand the deep doctrine as preached by the Buddha, that we value the life of a forest monk or living at the root of a tree. Please don't misunderstand me. Don't think that I am saying this because I am living inside a forest monastery and you are living in an urban environment.

Once when Ven. Gñānārāma was alive, there used to be an elderly lay yogi who was **determined** to become a monk but he kept postponing his decision. When the ordination ceremony was being planned he explained to our head monk that due to an extremely heavy work load because of a big meritorious event that was coming up, he could not get ordained that time as well. Nevertheless he said how much he admired the forest monk tradition. Ven. Nānārāma knew this was yet another excuse, and he told that lay man, 'please remember whether you are a meditator or not, the forest is an ideal location even for sleeping as well as, obviously for waking up'. This is because the forest environment is soothing, non-provocative and non-stimulating. It is a place full of peace. The city on the other hand, is full of provocative sights, sounds, people and events.

At every junction there are cut-outs that tempt us from every angle and creates much turmoil in our minds. I think, let alone a hermit even an *arahant* is not safe in the precincts of the city.

The Buddha knew how much the minds of a novice or a lay devotee will be disturbed if they have no *sati* specially when living in the city. This is why he recommended strongly living in a forest, under a tree. (...*arañña gathova, rukkha mūla gatova..*). This is why I say, that being able to spend at least a few days within a forest monastery in meditation will perhaps yield much greater merit than all of the meritorious acts you may have done in *samsāra*.

Even when you are trying to establish *sati-sampajañña*, the forest is so protective. This is because our eyes, ears, tongues are all in the grip of *Māra* **when we are in the city/village**. The forest environment is the best support for sense-restraint. We must make sure our environments are prepared in such a way that we don't become helpless victims of *Māra*. Since most of you are compelled to live in the cities with all of the attendant stress and chaos, if you still endeavour to be mindful as far as possible, and if you can be aware of each thought-moment, and if you can be fully aware of the posture-junctions you encounter as much as possible, daily, with a disciplined mind, then I would say that even if you lead a hectic urbanized lifestyle, you can still exercise *sati-sampajañña* and *indriya-samvara*.

In the book 'Insight and Calm' by Sole Leris, the author says that if what I said earlier **regarding practicing within urban conditions** was not possible, the Buddha's teachings would never have gained any popularity in the Western world. In the West, despite the extremely hectic work/life styles of people this practise was made possible. If an ordinary, uninstructed worldlyling goes into the normal world fully 'armed' and prepared to meet every sense impingement with total *sati*, then this practice is possible. The number of unfavourable situations people meet with on a daily basis can lead to calamity, unless we have a degree of *sati* established. If *sati-sampajañña* is kept at the fore-front, even if *indriya-samvara* and *hiri-ottappa* are not strong we still have some respite. We will be tamed and disciplined. We will listen to the *saddhamma*, we will develop *yoniso-manasikāra*, and we will seek the company of *kalyānamitta*. All of these lead to further establishment of *sati* and then we will learn to contemplate *anusaya kilesa* (proclivities/dormant defilements), i.e. *rāganusaya*, *dōsanusaya*, *mōhanusaya*.

Then we will also learn to contemplate defilements at all levels, i.e. *vithikama kilesa* (bodily and verbal misconduct), *pariutthāna kilesa* (obsessive defilements-hindrances).

We then learn to see our inner selves with all of our defilements

quite naked before us. That alone is a great achievement because then we realize why each *kilesa* came about, its causative factors, and how our greed, conceit and self-view have contributed towards it. But with all of these unpleasant realizations that we face, we should not get disappointed but instead be happy that we are able to see our true selves with clarity, i.e. seeing the truth as it really is – *yathābutha ñānadassana*. And what we see in this manner is not gold or silver, but simply our own defilements, our own identity-view. When we see these close up, we should be really happy. It is only a *kalyāna mitta* who would say this **in it's correct perspective**. What we must not do is feed these *kilesa* by providing nutrients. Instead we should recognize them, note them as they arise and cease and disclaim them. This is commonly done during meditation retreats i.e. at retreats we shed our *kilesa* as opposed to when partying or engaging in frivolity, where we tend to accumulate *kilesa*.

When we develop *sati-sampajañña*, we begin to have *hiri-ottappa*, and then it seems as though we are swimming against the tide, and we undergo a severe transformation in character and personality. You may even think that you are going crazy or those around you may think that way. Then comes the value of *kalyānamitta*, with whom you will be able to discuss your new feelings and experiences. If the Buddha is alive we would run to him, but since that is not possible we should develop a good yogi – mindfulness - community with genuine friendships. I urge you to develop your *sati*, and face each sense-impingement with total awareness and then cultivate *hiri-ottappa* and *indriya-samvara*, and with all of this you will understand the deep Dhamma and that in turn will lead you to a profound and **total** transformation.

Day 6 - Dhamma Talk

Indriya samvaro paripūro *Tīni Sucaritāni paripuretiti*

(it is only if a person has sense-restraint that such a person will have wholesome conduct, i.e. right speech, right action and right thoughts)

The Buddha begins the Avijja Sutta by telling the Bhikkhus about the gravity and importance of ignorance (*avijjā*) and that even the Buddha is not able to see the beginning and the origin of its occurrence. Therefore the Buddha says that we should consider the significance of our own ignorance, and understand that we ourselves do not have the ability to trace its genesis. But what we can see or realize is that our ignorance or delusion takes place as a result of a cause, and that it is due to this cause that delusion takes effect. And the Buddha reminds us that, even though we cannot trace its beginning at least we will know that ignorance/delusion is subject to the 'cause and effect' Dhamma phenomenon.

Thereafter, very systematically the Buddha shows us how, step-by-step, ignorance originates starting with the Five Hindrances (*pañca nīvarana*).

Samatha or *Jhanic* practitioners start meditation with the suppression of these Hindrances. Such practitioners will develop the *jhanic* factors after successfully suppressing these Hindrances. And it is these Hindrances that function as the chief nutrients for the existence and growth of ignorance. Suppressing the five Hindrances is exceedingly difficult as those who practice meditation will know, and the effort one has to make to do so is phenomenal. I would compare such effort to that of a person who would stand at the sea shore and attempt to stop the waves. The Buddha says that the Hindrances are very powerful and that those with unwholesome conduct (*duscarita*) are more likely to have these Hindrances

steadfastly imbedded because unwholesome conduct serves as a nutrient for the development of Hindrances. Trying to cultivate wholesome conduct is very difficult and those who preach to others to become wholesome often **fail to fully understand** their own unwholesomeness. The Buddha emphasized the importance of correcting oneself first, before attempting to correct others and I strongly endorse that perspective. Today we see many situations where individuals or organizations create a mandate for themselves to correct others' conduct with scant regard to their own transgressions. Such is their hypocrisy.

The Buddha next examines the reasons for unwholesome conduct and points to the lack of sense-restraint, and cautions us that as long as we are not able to control our senses, we will end up with **three kinds of *duscarita***. Today we see a popular trend where every parent attempts to make the son/daughter adopt good conduct. Similarly every King will want to make each of his subjects good in conduct, and so with every teacher his pupil, and every doctor his patient, and so on. But this is not likely to be a success simply because the examples set by those who preach are not very encouraging. A Vedda (indigenous people of Sri Lanka) may urge his son to behave as a gentleman, but as long as the son sees how the father conducts himself it is unlikely that the son will change. Sense-restraint is exceedingly difficult to accomplish, and those who have tried to do so realize that. In fact it seems far easier to break precepts and violate *sila*, than to control one's senses. We have often heard statements like, 'business cannot be done without lying'. Those who have been successful with sense-restraint sometimes earn a reputation for being timid and submissive, and such people seem to be going against the norms of society.

The Buddha with **his infinite wisdom and compassion** advised us that it is not the societal norms that matter, rather, that sense-restraint should be given more priority. Furthermore, the Buddha warned us that clarity of mindfulness and awareness (or *sati-sampajañña*) is the proximate cause for sense-restraint and that if we don't cultivate *sati-sampajañña* we will not proceed far in sense-

restraint or in the Dhamma. I am reminded of what the great former Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (**who designed the present** Indian flag) said after achieving independence for his country. He **is the one who** included the *Dhamma cakka* (the wheel of the Dhamma) as well as King Asoka's Pillar into the design of the Indian flag - as though symbolizing the Buddha's teaching and Buddhism within an Indian identity. This was a very noble gesture. Whilst praising and endorsing the teachings of the Buddha he commended all those who attempted to follow the Dhamma. But he expressed grave concern as to how average people living in general society would be able to live according to such a principled doctrine (i.e. with sense-restraint, wholesome conduct and clarity of awareness and without the Hindrances), knowing how society functions under ordinary circumstances.

Prime Minister Nehru said that, "I have my fair doubts as to how much these teachings of the Buddha could be put into practice by the society at large , but one thing is sure - that if you practice, the benefits will be assured"

The point that needs to be highlighted is that, understanding the Buddha's teachings and applying it to one's own life is a very personal effort and a lonely journey. When many people and society are involved it ceases to be the Buddha-Dhamma and ends up being yet another religion – Buddhism. When there is an attempt to mix these two aspects, invariably problems crop up. Suppressing one's Hindrances, establishing *sati-sampajañña* and developing sense-restraint are all very private efforts that each one must do for themselves. There is no room for societal involvement in following this **pragmatic** doctrine, as it was clearly explained by the Buddha. For instance, establishing *sati-sampajañña* is what an individual yogi with their own efforts will master when they undergo a ten-day meditation retreat like this one. But such a yogi will also know what a tremendously difficult task it is, to maintain one's total awareness when in sitting meditation, when breathing in and out, when walking, when eating, when attending to toilet matters and so on. Therefore many people may think that this type of meditation can

only be successfully done by bhikkhus **in** forest monasteries. That it is not for lay people who are constantly bombarded by multi-tasking, and thoughts connected to home and work.

Hence, the Buddha goes on to say that if *sati-sampajañña* is difficult to cultivate while being a lay devotee, at least try to provide it with a nutrient like *yoniso-manasikāra*, because the latter nourishes its growth and helps sustain its development. That is why the Buddha repeatedly explains the meaning and relevance of *yoniso-manasikāra* and *ayoniso-manasikāra*, when walking on the meditative Path. The depth of understanding required to discern these two Dhammas are critical to a yogi. I can already see some lay supporters in the audience nodding with drowsiness and this could perhaps be due to the depth of the Dhamma we have approached. I also suspect that even some of our retreatants may be in the 'nodding mood'. Nevertheless I will go on since these are vital components included in the Avijjā sutta.

When describing the importance of *yoniso-manasikāra*, an aspect that the Buddha repeatedly emphasized was the development of confidence/faith - *saddhā*. This is a very common term used in our vocabulary since all religions are based on faith. But the difference in the type of faith is that most religions begin with *ayoniso-manasikāra* and end with *ayoniso-manasikāra*, whereas a follower of the Buddha's teachings may, with the development of *saddhā*, begin with a lot of *ayoniso-manasikāra* but end up with *yoniso-manasikāra*. This is a critical transformation in a yogi's life and is called, *paschīma bahvīkha*. Such a yogi invariably reaches at least *sotapanna* and would make a determination to complete the journey in this very life.

I see our challenge as one where we make a determination to use the *saddhā* that we are born and blessed with, in a country with a 2600 year old history and tradition of the Buddha's precious teaching, and convert our *ayoniso-manasikāra* into *yoniso-manasikāra*. Furthermore I see this task as a purely personal one and not a common battle that we need to wage together with others. I admit that we all possess a certain amount of *saddhā*. And why we have

embarked on this Path with seriousness is because we have all heard the *saddhamma* to some extent. If we had not heard the *saddhamma* we would, not have developed *saddhā* by now but instead developed *a-saddhā*. We notice how in the same family one would awaken and arouse their *saddhā* by listening to *saddhamma* and surge forward, whereas another would bend towards *a-saddhā* and take a different path in life, possibly towards decline. The single causative factor that would facilitate these changes is the presence (or absence) of a *kalyānamitta*. The association with persons of unwholesome conduct would invariably be detrimental to the yogi's path to progress in the Dhamma.

Thus the Buddha very skillfully traces back step-by-step, the causative factors for delusion and ignorance, to our association with persons of unwholesome conduct – *asappurisa sevana*. When listening to a friend talk, the contents of the conversation will clearly show whether we are in the presence of a *kalyānamitta* or not. Using the Dhamma as a yard stick of measurement one can make this decision with common-sense and wisdom. And if we decide to move away from such a person it needs to be done discreetly and in a way that will not cause hurt and displeasure. But a comforting factor is that, when a yogi listens to the *saddhamma* more and more, then the lifestyle of the yogi changes quite visibly, persons with unwholesome conduct will automatically stop their association. However, it is not advisable to publicly tell such a person that you don't to associate with them since they are not a *kalyānamitta*. Instead, if you devote more time towards listening to the *saddhamma* and associating with *kalyānamitta*, *saddhā* will grow substantially. You will then learn that your previous superficial *prasāda saddhā* is replaced by *okappana saddhā*, and you are able to meditate and differentiate *nāma/rupa*. You begin to understand the meaning of *sati* extremely well, and you will know where *sati* will take you. Such a development is called *kusalaccanda* (resolute faith) and the desire to experientially understand and realize the real Dhamma for yourself develops.

The distinction between *saddhā* and *kusalaccanda* is that, in the case of the former there is no desire to experiment and realize the

Dhamma whereas in the latter, this becomes the cardinal feature. In Physics we learn of speed (*vegaya*) and velocity (*pravegaya*) - two concepts that are very difficult to teach. 'Vegaya' (speed) is a form of energy **without a direction** and *saddhā* can be compared to that. Whereas 'pravegaya' is something that has direction so one can organize **and** use it for a purpose. *Kusalaccanda* could be compared to the latter, where the yogi uses it to the maximum, whether it is in developing *sīla* or *samatha/samadhi bhāvanā*, or whether it is *vipassanā*, they proceed to the aim with strong determination. The role the *kalyānamitta* plays in this journey is very significant. When *kusalaccanda* develops in a yogi, a *cetasika* called *adhimokkha* (determination/resolve) begins to operate as well. This is where the yogi begins to see the direction of their future path and know the way they would now direct their life is different to what was experienced before. They begin to lose some former friends and associations, yet the yogi is convinced of the path they have chosen to travel, and it seems as though they become endowed with a spiritually sturdy personality and a strong vertebral column.

I would consider this as a transition from an 'animal-like' state to a spiritually strong human state. This is because until such time we traditionally engage in everything that animals do, such as continuously succumbing to and pleasing our senses at every given moment. At this stage of transition we become disciplined in our *sīla* and *samādhi*, and begin to develop *paññā*. It is when *saddhā* gets converted into *kusalaccanda* that this spiritual transformation becomes visible. Some people say that this occurs only when the yogi is in their forties or fifties, because by then usually people begin to realize that there is more to life than simply eating, drinking and entertaining themselves. During such a period in life there is likely to be more spiritual awakening in a person and even when pleasing the senses, caution sets in and they begin to be more aware than before. When continuously working with *saddhā* in such a manner, *yoniso-manasikāra* will set in, creating a huge awakening in that person. The yogi will gradually develop a mature understanding that if they are to progress with wisdom and be triumphant in this Path, they need

to use *yoniso-manasikāra* and cultivate *sati-sampajañña*. At such a time the yogi's maturity would have ripened to such a level that the value of these two Dhamma phenomena would have seeped into them.

If on the other hand, the yogi is advised about *sati-sampajañña* at the very outset of their practice, they may not have any idea of what they need to do and may even become confused. But at the appropriate time the yogi will realize the value of *sati* and its position of credibility in relation to the other four Spiritual Faculties (*i.e. saddhā, viriya, samādhi, paññā*), and then they will develop a lot of clarity and this will create a difference in their personality. This transformation will take place purely by chance and at a time you will not expect it. The Buddha pronounced that if a yogi develops *sati-sampajañña*, invariably they have to have *indriya-samvara*, and gradually become a composed and restrained personality. They become very sensitive when using the six senses, and they will never utilize the senses to create hurt or cause displeasure to others or themselves. Due to such sensitivity they immediately apply restraint when they get the signal that limitations are being exceeded or when transgressions are about to occur.

A person who has no such sense-restraint and who is addicted to sense pleasures (*kāma-sukhallikānuyoga*) will behave in the opposite manner and they will not apply the same wise attention that a yogi with *yoniso-manasikāra* and *sati-sampajañña* would. Instead, such a person will believe this life is meant to be enjoyed to the hilt by giving maximum pleasure to the senses.

The unique value of a human life is that the ability for such discernment is available to all of us in this very life. The Buddha taught how we have the ability to reach the highest possible human potential and to lift our minds to the highest levels of wisdom like that of the Ariyans. Mastering Dhammas like *indriya-samvara*, *yoniso-manasikāra* and *sati-sampajañña* enables such spiritual achievements. Such persons endeavour to associate with *kalyānamitta*, listen to *saddhamma* and to develop *saddhā*. Such yogis need to make a huge sacrifice to develop *indriya-samvara*

since lots of effort is needed, but this will not happen simply by effort alone. *Sati-sampajañña* is the essential proximate cause for sense-restraint and for someone who has no idea about *sati-sampajañña*, sense-restraint is impossible. Such an individual will never be tamed by punishments and the usual law enforcement methods. This is why I repeatedly say that the conventional laws that govern society will never be able to create a substantial and lasting change in human behavior unless and until a certain amount of realization on sense-restraint is in operation.

Today the topic for discussion is;

***Indriya-samvaram paripuro
Tini sucaritāni paripurenti***

(it is only if a person has sense-restraint that such a person will have wholesome conduct, i.e. right speech, right action and right thoughts)

The difference I wish to highlight is between giving excessive pleasure to the senses and restraining the senses. Sometimes we use the term *kāma-sukhallikānuyoga* for the former – a type of unlimited addiction to sense-pleasures with scant regard to societal norms and traditions. Sometimes certain people use sense-restraint in an extreme form and fall into the category of self-mortification – *atta-kilamathanuyoga*. One of the first things the Buddha pronounced was that anyone who wishes to enter the *sāsana* (*bhikkhu sangha* – monastic order), should first reject these two extreme forms of behavior i.e. unlimited addiction to sense pleasures and self-mortification. *Indriya-samvara* or sense-restraint is the path that is charted between these two extremes. When a yogi travels this middle path they come to a stage where it is impossible to commit any unwholesome acts or speak unwholesome words or have unwholesome thoughts (*kāya duscarita, vaci duscarita, manō duscarita*).

However, I cannot see how society will ever move in this direction because, with the economic and technological advancement that is happening globally, we constantly see ever greater addiction to sense pleasures.

Even Sri Lankans are following the patterns of so-called developed nations and are believing in the philosophy that speedy economic infrastructure and technological development translates into pleasing the senses. It is this **hedonic** message that the younger generation is being taught. Despite witnessing the debacles that have afflicted such developed nations like environmental catastrophes, economic collapse, mental health conditions and much more, we still continue to believe in this invalid and discredited view. What we have failed to realize is that, if we are genuinely seeking the Path to *nibbāna*, it is the opposite set of values we must imbibe, and that we should start to restrain our senses and behave in moderation.

A yogi who becomes sensitive to this aspect of the Dhamma and begins to observe the *cetasika sati*, then asks themselves how does one use *sati* to perfect *sīla*? And they also ask themselves how *sati* can help in preventing *kāya, vaci and manō duscarita*. *Sīla*, as we all know is an excellent discipline and a training that helps in the development of *sati*. What the Buddha said in the Avijjā sutta is that, even if a person is not totally disciplined and even if they still possess unwholesome thoughts and commit unwholesome deeds or speech, they still have the ability to develop *sati*, simply because of being human. That alone is enough to encourage and inspire a person to gradually develop their *sati*. This advice from the Buddha demonstrates the great compassion and kindness he had towards all human beings. Unfortunately, those who are strict **moralists and conformists** would not accept that those with an imperfect *sīla* or lacking sense-restraint can still develop *sati* and progress from there. Such persons make judgments in haste and pronounce that a person is not suitable to develop the *satipatthāna* without careful consideration. This is unfortunate and the Buddha says that only those who have wounds in their hands should be afraid of immersing them in a toxic solution, because those without wounds will not be hurt by the toxins. This means that if this doctrine is understood thoroughly, we then know that, even if we don't have perfect sense-restraint or perfect *sīla*, if we have the desire to learn to develop *sati*, then we should be accepted as keen students and taught the Dhamma. The

Buddha encourages such enthusiasm and believes that those who learn to establish *sati* will end up developing the *sāsana*.

I keep on reiterating this because of my personal experience on this matter. If someone had advised me when I was about 25 years old on the importance of being wholesome and developing *sīla*, I may have said something very rude to them. And if I was told that I would end up in the hell realms if I break *sīla*, I would say that that would be my problem and not theirs. It is with such a mind-set that I had the good kamma to meet Ven. S. Dhammika, who advised me that if I am a Buddhist I should simply start developing my *sati*. I clearly explained to the Venerable that I had no *sīla* or precepts and that I had absolutely no **idea about** sense-restraint, but he was not discouraged and kept telling me to develop *sati*. I stubbornly refused to accept his position and challenged him saying that he is only an Australian and that I am a native Sri Lankan who knew my Buddhism thoroughly. Ven. Dhammika said that it was really no use in teaching people like me, because we think we know everything.

However, I decided to follow his advice and I gradually developed *sati*. I was amazed at how sense-restraint and *sīla* also developed simultaneously. These are Dhammas that came to me automatically. I am saying that I have immense sense-control now, but I wish to tell you what a difference it made to me. If a person starts working on developing *sati*, then they will undoubtedly step on to the correct path.

I would like to remind you of what the Buddha meant by sense-restraint, particularly for the sake of supporters who are present here for the first time. When a *rūpa* meets our eye, we get a pleasant feeling, an unpleasant feeling or a neutral feeling. For instance when we set out on a journey early in the morning if we meet a monk on alms round we may consider it a bad omen and therefore have an unpleasant feeling. In this instance the *rūpa* of the monk is an external impingement on the eye, and what we experience as an unpleasant feeling is an internal displeasure that is expressed outwards. Similarly a child feels happy when he sees a beautiful flower, and here the flower creates an impingement on the eye of

the child, and eye-consciousness (*cakku viññāna*) is developed and the child's consequent happiness is because of an expression outwards. This difference between what goes in and what is expressed out, is not easy to distinguish.

During mindfulness of breathing, some of us still have difficulty in distinguishing the 'in'-breath from the 'out'-breath. The *rūpa*, the breath (*vāyo phoṭṭhabba dhātu*) will enter the nostril with a scraping sensation and will leave the nostril in a different way, but it is exceedingly difficult to know one from the other. Unless we apply strong mindfulness throughout the 'in'-breath and the 'out'-breath, we will not see the difference. This is like a gate-keeper who diligently watches each **vehicle** as it enters and leaves through the gate-post, and marks each vehicle in two columns – 'Entry and Exit'. If the gate-keeper fails in his mindfulness he does not catch every single car in both columns. A humorous story comes to mind – once a chicken farmer wished to know how many eggs were being laid by his chickens on a daily basis and he started keeping count. During a period of absence from the farm, the farmer assigned this duty to a farm-hand asking him to note the day on each egg on a daily basis. On his return he found that the farm-hand had very diligently written, 'today' on each egg. Similarly, if a yogi feels the 'in'-breath and the 'out'-breath, as well as the rubbing and the tension of each in and out breath, but is not able to identify the difference between the two, as well as the distinguishing features from one breath to another, then the yogi's efforts have not borne fruit.

Furthermore, we need to know the 'form' (*rūpa*) we see, makes contact from the external but the response we elicit (pleasant, unpleasant or neutral), is an internal manifestation but is expressed outside. Unless we understand this fundamental difference **at least theoretically** through *sutamayā ñāna* and are totally prepared to realize this Dhamma, we tend to believe that the response expressed (pleasant, unpleasant or neutral), is due to the external *rūpa* and that the response (*nāma dhamma*) and the *rūpa dhamma* are one entity - that they belong to the same package. The Buddha taught us how to fundamentally distinguish between the two. The color or

shape (as *rūpa*) that made contact with the eye is external to us. The pleasant or unpleasant feeling is something internal and which is expressed. If there is no response that is expressed, it would be as though we never saw the form or its shape or its color. Now we can understand that it is only with the response, that we are pleasantly affected or unpleasantly disturbed by any 'form' (*rūpa*) – i.e. sight, sounds, tastes, touch, odour and mind objects. If we don't elicit a pleasant or unpleasant feeling, then it is as though we never made contact with that particular *rūpa*. Every *rūpa* we come into contact, generally creates *rāga* or *dōsa* in us. *Rūpa* that don't result in either, will end up creating *mōha* (delusion or ignorance), because they have been non-provocative and we may not even remember encountering them.

Indriya-samvara or sense-restraint means to be aware of and restrain the pleasant or unpleasant feelings elicited when our sense faculties come into contact with forms, and not to control the external forms that impinge on our sense faculties. My question is whether we are capable of this task? Initially we need to recognize the difference between these two, i.e. the form that contacts the sense faculty is one thing, and the pleasant/unpleasant/neutral response elicited is another. This is not easy to discern. Take for instance the eye – with each and every form that comes into contact with it, there is a magnitude of responses. And the speed with which that happens is unbelievable. We become helpless victims. The Buddha has clearly identified that, out of all the sense faculties, the eye (seeing), is responsible for eliciting the most defilements in us. We are wholly dependant on the eyes and the pleasure sight gives us. We would feel helpless if we couldn't see. We value sight enormously, hence the commonly used term – '..as precious as the apple of my eyes'.

A yogi finds controlling sight/seeing very difficult, due to the speed with which it occurs. Whereas hearing works more slowly, and therefore is a little easier to control. The nose (odour) operates even more slowly and taste as well. The body (touch) is the slowest of all and therefore the easiest to control.

This is the reason the Buddha taught *kāyānupassanā* first. The Buddha's genius is such that in introducing *kāyānupassanā*, he first introduces mindfulness of the 'in'-breath and 'out'-breath, because the breath by itself does not naturally elicit pleasant/unpleasant responses being a very neutral/indifferent object. Because it is difficult to identify a pleasant/unpleasant response in relation to the 'in'/'out'-breath, this can frustrate the beginner yogi and they may wonder what exactly to look for. It is difficult to focus mindfulness on a non-provocative object like the breath.

If a yogi overcomes this challenge of establishing mindfulness on the breath and is able to sit in meditation for a while, their effort at walking meditation thereafter gets stabilized. In walking meditation the yogi is assailed by many sense impingements and they are challenged to maintain *sati*. Facing these challenges allows the yogi's fragile mindfulness to grow and develop in strength. But they often grumble during this period and complain that the *sati* was disturbed by various distractions such as a cough or a sneeze, or other yogis walking about, or sights and sounds. What the yogi does not realize is that this is simply a test that the Buddha gave us, because he wanted us to be challenged in order to strengthen and continue to develop our *sati*. The yogi should also realize that in walking meditation they will naturally have desire to see sights other than the feet in front of them. In this desire we need to recognize the pleasant and unpleasant responses arising, while looking around as opposed to maintaining *sati*. The yogi who succeeds in this endeavor is one who will know these tendencies and is fully prepared to meet these challenges.

This is what the Buddha meant when he said we would be 'swimming upstream', and that this is the 'middle-path' of the Dhamma. When we elicit pleasant or unpleasant sensations we need to be aware that we are on an arduous journey which is bent towards sense-restraint, and this is a very hard task to accomplish. For aeons in *samsāra* our mission had been hedonic, i.e. to please the senses, so how can we start restraining them now? It would be like catching a wild buffalo who had been running amok in the

jungles for years, bringing it to a village and trying to tame it. This is an almost impossible task. A yogi or a bhikkhu who attempts this phenomenal task deserves veneration. When such a yogi is doing walking meditation and experiences unpleasant sensations when seeing sights or hearing sounds, they tend to blame those sights and sounds for the interruption of *sati*. It is only after much practice and several such interruptions of *sati*, the yogi realizes it is not the sights or the sounds that are responsible, but their own mental responses. On the day the yogi fully understands that the sight/sound is external and not connected to the pleasant/unpleasant response which is internal, they would realize that their judgments and reactions are just like those of King Kekille, i.e. they have judged based on the external input without considering the internal reaction. This is due to an immature and undisciplined mind.

Such reactions of our minds are entirely due to our taints or cankers (*āsava*) as well as due to our dormant defilements (*anusaya*). Therefore these judgments will always support our greed/lust (*tanha*), views (*ditthi*) and self-view/identity (*māna*). When we realize this we recognize that what we previously assumed to be success was instead reinforcing our self-view, conceit and our views. Although we lived a long life we have not lived each thought-moment (*cittakkhana*) with mindfulness. When we begin to live with an understanding of each response to each sense impingement as an internal response from our minds, we begin to be *appamāda* – heedfulness. This is when *sati* is blossoming to its full. It is only when *sati* is well developed then we are able to understand each reaction/response that is elicited by *rūpa* that we encounter as pleasant or unpleasant. We have a tendency to seek either pleasant or unpleasant responses and we tend to move away from those that are neutral. Those that are neutral don't provoke or excite us, and hence our tendency is to ignore them.. The more we elicit a rapid response to pleasant/unpleasant objects the more we lose our self-control and sense-restraint and our *sati* and *yoniso-manasikāra*.

We fail to realize that in any circumstance, we could choose to have a pleasant response or an unpleasant one, or even choose to be

neutral in the face of either. Most importantly, we fail to realize that the only 'animal' who has the capacity to elicit such a response is the human being.

In the *Indriya-bhāvana* sutta (MN 152), the Buddha mentions this unique ability that we as humans possess. It is also taught that if a yogi becomes a *sekha*, and then eventually an *arahant*, if they wish they have the ability to see unpleasant objects as pleasant. And also to see the pleasant and unpleasant and neutral aspects of an unpleasant object. This means that it is not possible to subject an *arahant* to remote control. It is not possible to provoke an *arahant* into *rāga*, *dōsa* or *mōha* thoughts with external objects. In fact an *arahant* would be able to create an opposite response to that of an uninstructed worldling. For instance when meeting an object that would normally cause *mōha*, they may have *amōha*. The capacity to do this is called *ariya patihariya*, and it is a quality that each one of us has the potential to possess. This special quality is exposed and is able to uplift the mind when it is equipped and strengthened with sense-restraint that inclines towards *trivida sucarita* (*kāya*, *vaci*, *mano*). All of us possess this ability and potential, and that is what the Buddha emphatically taught.

I would not be surprised if you disagree with me on this aspect and even criticize me for teaching such deep Dhamma. This is a rational position because, our parents, teachers, politicians, social scientists and everyone else we know, holds a different point of view. The Commentaries often cite examples of those who adopted this practise and became highly developed in *yoniso-manasikāra* and *sati-sampajañña*, and those who didn't, failed to develop those two important Dhammas and instead developed *ayoniso-manasikāra* and *asati-asampajañña*.

There is a famous story in this regard which can be traced back to the Anuradhapura era, when in the very early hours of one morning before dawn, a bhikkhu was traveling from the jungles of Mihintale in the area of the Kaludiya pokuna, towards the Anuradhapura town on alms round. At the same time a woman was walking from the town towards the jungles. The bhikkhu had been one who had regularly

practiced the *attika saññā* whilst in the jungles, and therefore when he saw the woman approaching and smiling at him, he only saw the teeth and not the woman nor her **other features**. Since this bhikkhu had been a diligent practitioner using this method of meditation he had immediately used the *attika saññā* to develop the *odātha kasina* and then became an *arahant*. He had continued walking and he met a man who inquired if the bhikkhu had seen a woman walking past. The bhikkhu then said that he had not been sure if it was a woman **or a man**, but he had seen a set of white teeth passing by. There was no time for the bhikkhu to identify the owner of the teeth as a man or a woman, because, with the development of the object of his meditation, he instantly **took the sign of 'teeth' and** became an *arahant*. The bhikkhu had been able to see and not react or respond to what he saw. He had simply stopped at the 'seeing' only. The background to this event had been a row that this couple had had the night before, and the woman had left the house early in the morning on her way to **her parent's house through** the jungle when she met the bhikkhu.

The Buddha mentioned that it is our existing pre-conceptions and perceptions that pour out, when we meet with people, objects or situations. It is not the external diversity of the world that creates lust/greed or hatred, but it is simply our responses with the perceptions we already have. And these depend on the *āsava* and the *anusaya* Dhammas that we already possess. The person with wisdom will not blame the external forms but will know that it is internal defilements that cause these responses. The formations – *sankhāra*, we elicit are from our inner sense of 'self', and these have nothing to do with external form. The recognition of these two entirely different phenomena (the external form and the internal response we elicit to the form) is very important, and such a realization is a significant milestone in a yogi's spiritual development. *Sabbhe sankhāka aniccā*, *Sabbhe sankhāka dukkhā* does not mean the external elements like *paṭhavī*, *apo*, *thejo*, *vāyo dhātu*, it means all the responses we develop on contact with external forms are subject to impermanence and sorrow. Furthermore, they are non-self, or *anatta* since we cannot claim

ownership to any *sankhāra* that arises and ceases with no control on our part.

Generally people don't like such discussions. But the Buddha spoke about this deep Dhamma after he had introduced *sati* and *yoniso-manasikāra*. He advised how not to take decisions and make judgments about every person or every event that we come across in life without wisdom. Instead the yogi's responsibility should be to stop **merely** at 'seeing' and to stop at merely 'hearing' and so on. The yogi should take responsibility for the perceptions elicited for each sight and sound, since it is these *sañña khandha* that they have come into this life and will continue to create defilements. Instead of recognizing this, if a yogi tries to teach the world or correct others that would be most unwise.

The Buddha repeatedly warned us not to correct others. He said we should simply watch how our response with perceptions and obsessive and dormant defilements arises with contact, and how to watch this from a distance, uninvolved and detached. Some day we will be able to catch these *sankhāra* as they initially arise and then we have really progressed with *indriya-samvara* and *sati-sampajañña*, towards the *trivida sucarita*. Then we know experientially how we are bombarded incessantly with perceptions and mental formations which we believe to be mine/me/I. And with that we are dragged into *samsāra*, similar to how a bull is dragged towards the abattoir. If we see the difference between the external form and the internal response with clarity, within that single thought-moment a serious realization takes place.

The Buddha also warns us that, if during breath meditation we get a pleasurable thought then *ānāpānā sati* has ceased and a defilement has taken over. Similarly if we feel unhappy or frustrated that we cannot feel our 'in'/'out'breath, that too is a defilement. Supposing we experience both these scenarios but we are able to remain unshaken and equanimous in the face of both, then we don't create any defiled thoughts. Therefore we should remember that in *ānāpānāsati* (or *kāyānupassanā*) alone these Dhammas will manifest, and it is not necessary to go to *cittānupassanā* or

dhammānupassanā. This is why the Buddha says that even one *satipatthāna* is adequate to reach the level of *sotapanna*.

The ability of the yogi to watch their breath mindfully for long periods and to know and be fully aware whether the meditation went well or not, and then to learn to watch the response (pleasant/unpleasant/neutral) to each breath and see how they arise and cease, is adequate to achieve these realizations. If during breath meditation, a light appears before us and we keep looking at the light and neglect watching the breath, or neglect to observe the feeling and response we have to the light then again we have sacrificed *ānāpānāsati*.

What the yogi should do in such situations is to continue watching the breath while the light is present and observe the response while not sacrificing the breath meditation. Some yogis fall asleep during breath meditation. They should not be perturbed **but** decide to resume meditation after waking up. Some yogis are jolted during a spell of sleep and get frightened and then give up meditation. All this happens because the yogi starts this effort without preparation so much so that they may even not be aware that they had fallen asleep during *ānāpānāsati*. A yogi needs to clear this hurdle with total awareness of each and every experience that takes place while in meditation even during the period when the breath becomes subtle and very refined. Until we clear this hurdle we will not experience *sucarita* – i.e. *kāya samvara, vacī samvara or manō samvara*.'

When we master the technique of recognizing this particular stage in breath meditation, and we determine to experience all *sankhāra* to thoroughly purify our thought processes, gradually leave behind all *kāma-sukhallikānuyoga* and also realize the futility of *attakilamatanuyoga*. At this stage the yogi will retain only the practically important aspects for continued meditation. Many people the yogi thought who were friends will leave their company. Many persons of high integrity and worthy of veneration, who open the doors to *sadhamma* will come in to the yogi's company. The yogi will also begin to understand very deep Dhamma as though it were the Buddha teaching i.e. 'Dhamma becomes alive' to the yogi. They

realize that the Dhamma which is over 2,600 years old will never become stale or out-dated even though the Buddha is not in our midst. During this period the yogi's breath-meditation goes well and they master understanding the responses to each 'in'-breath and 'out'-breath, and develop a desire to increase sittings and Dhamma practises.

It is important to remember that this realization and understanding is possible in this very life. Don't believe in the idea that your chances to experience this would increase in the future era Metteiya Buddha. Many people believe that they should offer alms and pray for the realization of *nibbāna* in the future Buddha's dispensation. That would be just a dream. Even if Gotama Buddha or Metteiya Buddha were to appear before you, you would not know the difference between them or be able to identify either of them. Also you would not be able to know if these discourses are *saddhamma* or not. Therefore please remember that this pure and precious doctrine is **already** available to us in this *sambuddha sāsana* and should be learnt now and not later. It should be held with both hands in veneration. We should undertake the gradual path in developing *sila*, and cultivating our *sati*. We need to clearly identify the responses we elicit each time we develop or lose our *sati*, *samādhī*, or our *virīya*, and not be elated or distraught when that happens.

Whenever we experience seeing, we see a colour and form **just like a camera**, and as long as our eye and the form exist we will perform this task. Once we see the form our eye-consciousness (*cakku-viññāna*) is activated, and thereafter we will recognize and know it. It is at that point we experience either a delightful feeling or sorrow or a neutral feeling towards that form. Up to the point where eye-consciousness is activated, it would be the same for the Buddha in relation to this process. But thereafter we experience pleasant or unpleasant feelings whereas the Buddha's mind is always free of defilements. In the case of an uninstructed-worldling the responses would always be full of *kilesa*. This is why the Buddha says, 'in the seeing let there be only the seeing', and don't allow it to result in responses of any sort. Identify each response as it arises.

I am reminded of what Jesus is supposed to have said in relation to the type of food we take; he said that what matters is what comes out of our mouths and not what goes in. Similarly no sound or sight will create defilements in us, but it is our reaction or response to those that can be deadly. Therefore the Buddha said not to try and suppress external sense impressions but to identify and note our responses and reactions to them as they appear. That alone is enough for sense-restraint to occur. The Buddha also said that developing *sati* gradually through sitting in meditation initially for a short while daily, and then for longer intervals, will result in a sudden realization that can be surprising. These Dhammas are deep and profound and have the tendency to lead from one to another. The first step is *sati*, and eventually this will lead to *nibbāna*. Those who experience this will know how unique it is, how the light of the Dhamma is the brightest, and the protection from the Dhamma is the greatest, i.e. '*Sabbham rasam dhamma rasam jināti*' – of all tastes, the taste of the Dhamma is the best.

During our journey in *samsāra* we have offered alms and observed *sīla* many times, and that is why we are blessed with a human birth. Still many humans don't realize this value and will still resort to killing and stealing and other vices. Unless we use this life to develop and cultivate the human mind and attempt to reduce and eradicate the *trivida duscarita* we will not do justice to this rare and precious human birth. It is not every one who can do this, but if they do it is called *attha kusala*.

This is why the Buddha said, 'please use these empty huts and roots of trees and meditate without delay, lest you will regret later'.

Day 7 - Dhamma Talk

Tini Sucaritāni paripūrō cattārō satipatthānā paripūrentī

'Once the three restraints are fulfilled, the four foundations of mindfulness will be fulfilled'

In this Sutta, the Buddha systematically traces the origins of *avijjā* (ignorance) step-by-step and states that association with *asappurisa* (unwholesome persons) is a proximate cause. Thereafter, the Buddha shows how associating with wholesome persons (*sappurisa*), (although seemingly distant and elusive) will pave the way to be totally rid and free of *avijjā*. Usually, the Buddha shows the proximate cause for suffering as craving (*tanhā*), and *avijjā* as the distant cause of **the same** suffering. In this Sutta, the Buddha starts with the distant cause and shows, if a person associates with wholesome persons who are living in the Dhamma, the counterpoint to *avijjā* – *vijjā vimutti* (true knowledge and deliverance) - will be realized. And the Buddha illustrates this teaching in a sequential manner, showing the ten steps during which this **realization of the true knowledge** takes place.

Yesterday we discussed how *indriya samvara* (sense-restraint) is the hall-mark of a person with wholesome conduct (*trivida sucarita*). Today we will discuss how the Buddha taught that such a wholesome person would be in a position to easily develop the *sathara satipatthāna* – the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. We also discussed, due to the association with wholesome persons we will be in a position to listen to the *saddhamma*, thereby develop *saddhā*, and that this would lead to the establishment of *yoniso-manasikāra*, and thereby *sati-sampajañña*. As a result of the establishment of *sati-sampajañña*, *indriya samvara* takes place, and this leads to the person being *sucarita* (one who does not commit any unwholesome acts – bodily, verbal, mental). The state of

sucarita will improve and establish *sati*, and the *satipatthāna*. One can observe how reciprocal relationships become established, where at one point *sīla* will facilitate the establishment of *paññā*, whereas at another, *paññā* will help re-establish and consolidate *sīla*.

The traditional teaching describes that *sīla sikkhā* is followed by *samādhi sikkhā*, and how thereafter it leads to the desired *paññā sikkhā*. However, even a small child would know that when we study the Noble Eightfold Path, we learn it in the order where *paññā* (*sammā diṭṭhi* and *sammā saṅkappa*) comes first, then *sīla* (*sammā vācā*, *sammā kammanta*, *sammā ājīva*), and thereafter - *samādhi* (*sammā vāyāma*, *sammā sati* and *sammā samādhi*). Therefore you can understand that it is difficult to categorise or schematize the *bodhipakkhiya-Dhammā* teachings of the Buddha in just one particular order. The Buddha directed his teachings in different ways in order to suit the listener and also to make it more understandable and relevant to each audience. This would be similar to a doctor deciding on the method of treatment for different patients. The doctor would examine the patient and study their condition before deciding what should be prescribed first, and this may differ from how he would treat another patient with a similar condition.

Therefore, as we mentioned, *sati sampajañña* gives rise to *indriya samvara*, and then the *trivida sucarita* that comes about as a result of *indriya samvara*, would again help in facilitating the *sathara satipatthāna*. Thus you can observe the interconnectedness of all these Dhammas and how each situation can condition the other as dependently originating, as well as facilitate the other in reverse order. This is why we need to approach the Dhamma with an open and receptive mind so that we do not get confused or bewildered when trying to understand these teachings. You also realize that although there seems to be an interconnectedness between *sīla* and *paññā*, and also between *paññā* and *sīla*, it appears that *samādhi* does not get mentioned. This is despite our familiar knowledge of *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*, occurring in a seemingly sequential manner. One might wonder why such an important component in

the meditative path such as *samādhi* gets left out in important *suttas* such as this one.

Samādhi does have a valid role to play in the journey, but one could deduce that this may not be an indispensable component. This expression may seem controversial, because as many of you know, *samatha* meditation includes *samādhi* as a vital component. And as such it would be an essential component of the practice of *samatha-vipassanā* yogis, and also the pure *vipassanā* yogis as well as those practising *yuganaddha* (*samatha-vipassana*) meditation. Some yogis use *samatha* practise first and then turn to *vipassanā*, and some others start with *vipassanā* and end up in *samatha*. Since the time of the Buddha, different yogis have used different combinations of these meditative experiences successfully.

My personal view is that one should consider *sīla* and *paññā* as two components which merit great importance. If these are understood thoroughly and if they are kept at the forefront of the meditative path the yogi takes, the meditative journey can be fruitful. And it would be possible to take the 'journey' without any undue 'greed' for states of *samādhi*, specially for *samatha* *samadhi*).

Please do not misunderstand me, I do not mean that you can take the journey successfully without adequate *samādhi*. I only mean that we need not consider **samatha samadhi** as indispensable. This is a classical situation in the case of *vipassanā* practise, and as a person whose predilection is towards *vipassanā* practise, I can only recommend the same.

The Buddha had mentioned in the texts that if *sīla* and *paññā* are thoroughly mastered, developing *samādhi* (either *Samatha* or *Vipassana* *samadhi*) becomes an easy and natural occurrence. For instance in the *Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta* (DN 4), the Buddha refers to the village in which the Brahman leader *Soṇadaṇḍa* lived. The Buddha was staying in the forest nearby and when *Soṇadaṇḍa* heard of the Buddha being in the vicinity, he decided to go and see the Buddha. When this news reached the other Brahmins they advise *Soṇadaṇḍa* that he, being the most senior of them all, should not pay a visit to

the Buddha and instead, the Buddha should pay a visit to him. *Soṇadaṇḍa* however disagrees and gives a list of all the qualities that the Buddha possesses, and explains how he is worthy of veneration. He insists on carrying out his idea due to the deep respect he has for the Buddha.

When this position is made clear, the others agree and *Soṇadaṇḍa* together with the retinue of Brahmins visit the Buddha. After greetings and exchanging preliminaries, the Buddha tells *Soṇadaṇḍa* that he being a leader of the Brahman clan, would necessarily have many leadership qualities to be able to successfully fulfil his role and asked him: 'by how many qualities do Brahmins recognise a Brahmin?'

Reverend Gotama, there are five such qualities.

What are they?;

1. A Brahmin well-born on both the mother's and the father's side.
2. Of pure descent to the seventh generation.
3. He is a scholar versed in the mantras.
4. He is handsome and pleasing.
5. He is virtuous.

The Buddha agrees with these list of 'qualifications' that a Brahmin should possess and commends it.

The rest of the Brahmins were happy about how the pleasant discussion between the two leaders was proceeding. Then the Buddha asks, if at some stage, all these five attributes are not present in a potential Brahmin, which four (out of the five) would you consider as most important?

'It is possible Gotama. We could leave out appearance, for what does that matter?'

Soṇadaṇḍa says, that even if the looks weren't pleasing, if the other characteristics were present, such a person would be acceptable. The Buddha endorses this position, and then questions further ;

'But could not one of these four qualities be omitted, leaving three whereby one could be recognised as a Brahmin?'

Soṇadaṇḍa answers;

'It is possible, Gotama. We could leave out the mantras, for what do they matter?'

Although the rest of the Brahman clan were not happy with this exchange where their perquisites for leadership were being challenged, the Buddha endorsed this position very clearly.

Saccaka for instance was a Sakyan, but he mastered the *tri-veda* to perfection and had an impeccable character and was virtuous. He successfully gave leadership to a large retinue of Brahmans and this is mentioned in the *Culasaccaka*, *Mahāsaccaka* suttas. This is probably what Soṇadaṇḍa was also familiar with. Then the Buddha goes further and asks Soṇadaṇḍa,

'But could not one of these three qualities be omitted, leaving two whereby one could be recognised as a Brahmin?

Soṇadaṇḍa answers;

'..and if he is learned and wise, and is the first or second to hold the sacrificial label – then he can be recognised as a true Brahmin?

'..If he had virtue and wisdom, then he would be accepted for leadership.

The rest of the Brahmin clan expressed their dissatisfaction vehemently.

'What Brahmin, if one were to omit one of these two points that he can truthfully declare "I am a Brahmin".'

"No Gotama".

The Buddha agrees wholeheartedly and repeats what Soṇadaṇḍa had said, and pronounces it as the Word of the Buddha –

'So it is, Brahmin. Wisdom is purified by morality and morality is purified by wisdom.

Where one is, the other is.'

The moral man has wisdom and the wise man has morality, and the combination of morality and wisdom is called the highest thing in the

world.' (Soṇadaṇḍa Sutta page 129-131, DN -The Long Discourses of the Buddha by Maurice Walshe.)

The Buddha at that point says that it is only those with *sati sampajañña (pañña)* who will have *indriya-samvara-sīla*. The Buddha added that it is only if one has *indriya-samvara (sīla)* and thereby is rid of *trivida duccharita* that *sucarita* (morality) is developed. And it is only such a person that can develop the *satipaṭṭhāna*. This highlights the unique relationship existing between *sīla* and *pañña*. There is an ancient Sanskrit saying: 'it is only a person who has knowledge and understanding, that can tame themselves'. Those who do not possess *pañña* use a different argument and say that taming one's self and to apply *indriya-samvara* are qualities of meekness or mildness, or signs of defeatism or lack of character. The Buddha repeatedly contradicts this position, and emphatically reiterates that those who have the ability to control themselves are virtuous and possess wisdom.

A person who has no moderation or control over their behavior will erupt spontaneously and passionately, but this won't last long and they will soon be defeated by those emotions and lack of control.

Therefore it is quite clear that it is only those with *trivida sucarita* end up being successful in developing the *satipaṭṭhāna*. We know with certainty that a person, who has the capacity to develop the *satipaṭṭhāna* is considered as a meditator and a true traveler on the Buddha's Path. Until about twenty years ago, we know that chanting the *satipaṭṭhāna sutta* had gained popularity simply as a *pariṭṭa* for bestowing blessings or **protection** on families and other situations. It is only more recently that it has been appreciated more than chanting the sutta. The protection is maximized by actually translating the *satipaṭṭhāna* into action. This is why a Burmese bhikkhu used to refer to the *satipaṭṭhāna* as a *pariṭṭa sutta*, because of its protective nature. There are three types of *pariṭṭa*: those you can listen to (the protection is simply by listening to the chant), those you can chant **and listen to** (the protection is by chanting yourself). And those that you can put into action (the protection in this instance would be by being mindful).

If we take the *satipaṭṭhāna sutta*, it is well known that even just listening to the *sutta* offers enormous protection. It is said how once, a monk dwelling in a cave had recited the *satipaṭṭhāna sutta* and 500 bats who were inside the cave had been listening. Upon their death the bats became humans who later became monks, who eventually became *arahants*. As *arahants* when they looked back at their *samsāric* journey, they knew that they had been in that cave listening to this *sutta*. Such is the power of the *satipaṭṭhāna*. The protection from accurately reciting the *sutta* far exceeds that from listening to it.

But the greatest protection is for the person who systematically develops the *satipaṭṭhāna* in terms of practising mindfulness. Even if a person develops *sati* for one thought-moment in a day or for few moments daily, the protection is enormous.

This is why I thought I will devote today's talk to the development of the *satipaṭṭhāna*. This *sutta* is found in the *Majjhima Nikaya* (MN 10) as well as in the *Digha Nikaya*, as the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (DN 22). In both these suttas the beginning is identical –

**'Ekāyano ayam bikkhave maggo- sattānam visuddhiyā soka
pariddavānam samatikkamāya
Dukkhadomanassānam Atthangamāya ñāyassa adhiḡamāya
Nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya Yadidam cattāro satipaṭṭhāna'**

'Monks, this is the only way to the purification of beings, for the overcoming of grief and lamentation. For the eradication of pain and sadness for the gaining of the Right Method, for the realization of nibbāna.'

This is a very powerful and radical statement by the Buddha. Because purification of our own selves was not taught as being within our own power and ability. Rather, we have been taught that this would be within the power of a superior being like a creator. This was the common belief at that time i.e. the popular view of faiths where a creator-god is the supreme being and that it is only within his power to change a person's mind, let alone purify it. This is why psychiatrists and neuro-scientists of the developed Western world until recently

held the view that, it would be impossible to change the mental states, views, dispositions and personality of a person after they passed beyond childhood i.e. after about six years. Therefore, whenever they examined those with disturbed mental states, they believed that the causative factors were linked to situations that occurred in those early childhood years. Therefore they resorted to counseling and similar other interventionist measures. These yielded some results, but did not provide a total solution, because, often the person concerned relapsed and reverted to the original condition due to the conditioning. This would seem as though a cloth when dirty is rubbed clean but then again becomes dirty when exposed to dirt.

Until about 2006, the popular belief was that our mental state and character, the personality traits, views and opinions we had developed over the years, were unchangeable - similar to that of a hard-wired circuit. At a famous annual conference held by the 'Mind and Life' society during that year the theme was, 'Train your Mind and change your Brain'. The participants deduced that if the mind was liable to change with meditation, the brain and the nervous system could also be subject to change, i.e. the personality and character of a person could also be changed. Therefore, this task although not possible to implement using physical methods can be achieved through meditation. This position was accepted by the West for the first time.

This affirmed what the Buddha had said in the first few lines of the *Satipaṭṭhāna sutta*. It is now clearly accepted that even if a person who holds a different view to that of the Dhamma, or has a behavior that is not socially acceptable, if such a person begins to develop the *Satipaṭṭhāna*, they can hopefully achieve purification in this life itself. This is what the Buddha stated in '*sattānam visuddhiyā*'- the most revolutionary and radical teaching, and the greatest challenge he placed before mankind. Sadly, if you count the number of persons in this country who believe this teaching, i.e. that ultimate purification is possible in this life itself, it is a only tiny minority.

However, it gives me great pleasure, because I am at Nissarana Vanaya giving this Dhamma Talk, to state that this position was clearly enshrined in the Nissarana Vanaya Constitution as early as 1965. After returning from Burma in 1997-8, I became involved in the administrative affairs of the Monastery during 2001-2, at which time I began reading the Constitution and discovered that '*In this Life itself*' had been incorporated as the 'OBJECT' of the Monastery by the late Mr. Asoka Weeraratne. It is only after this statement that details such as the composition of the Committee members etc. had been described.

During that period, a senior bhikkhu had travelled from afar to meet Mr. Weeraratne at the Dhammadhutha temple in Colombo. This bhikkhu had expressed his pleasure that Mr. Weeraratne had invested all his assets and begun a program at Nissarana Vanaya where reaching *nibbāna* in this life itself was being popularized. However, the bhikkhu expressed his reservations saying that it is only those who have perfected their *paramis* that are able to achieve this goal, and that therefore, whether such a huge investment on the part of Mr. Weeraratne would in fact be in vain. Mr. Weeraratne was thankful for the advice, but he also asked the bhikkhu in return:

'By looking at a person would he would be able to correctly pronounce that they had actually perfected the *paramis*. And if so, whether the bhikkhu could in fact identify anyone in Sri Lanka who would have done so?'

The bhikkhu replied in the negative and this led to Mr Weeraratne advising the bhikkhu that such pronouncements would dampen peoples' hopes and determinations, and as a bhikkhu to please refrain from making such statements.

The massive effort that those like Mr. Asoka Weeraratne made to help people realize that achieving purification and *nibbāna* in this life itself is possible (*sattānam visuddhiyā*) is more than commendable. Today, forty seven years later, the enthusiasm we see amongst meditators bears testimony to that effort. We can imagine how revolutionary and outstanding it would have been when, 2600 years

ago the Buddha proclaimed this **Satipatthāna Dhamma** for the first time.

Let us discuss how a yogi can set about achieving this situation as mentioned at the start of the *satipatthāna* sutta. If a yogi, after receiving instructions and a meditation subject from the teacher sits for meditation and starts observing their 'in'-breath and 'out'-breath, as they manifest naturally. The yogi then begins to mindfully and continuously note the 'in' and 'out'-breath for a while. They clearly note how the 'in'-breath differs from the 'out'-breath, **if possible** with heedfulness. They do not succumb to aches and pains, or sounds from the surroundings, but are able to keep the mindfulness only on the breath. If they are able to know the 'in' and 'out'-breath clearly with no thoughts of desire or ill will, nor delusion for several successive breaths and thought-moments, and are able to continue for a while, **they** will then be able to know how each 'in'-breath differs from the next 'in'-breath and similarly so for the 'out'-breath. After about 2-3 days of continuous meditation the yogi will then come 'face-to-face' with their 'in' and 'out'-breath effortlessly.

If during such a period, the yogi is disturbed by a sound or a pain they will not be disheartened, and are able to shift attention momentarily to the disturbance (as a secondary object) but revert back to the primary meditation object swiftly, without any thoughts of ill will/greed/delusion. When such a situation appears we are able to say that the purification the yogi had **started to** achieve during the early phases has become stabilized and established. The yogi will then have experienced, even for some moments, true *visuddhi* – purification, and will have reached a certain amount of maturity in mindfulness so as not to be disturbed nor remorseful by the natural disturbances to the established mindfulness.

This is referred to as the beginning of *sōka pariddhavānam samathikkamānam* – the ability to see each disturbance as it is, with a steady and unperturbed mind.

Similarly, a meditator who develops mindfulness during a sitting session, is able to develop the same during walking meditation. And

more importantly, such a person will be able to face the natural sorrows and disappointments in life through the 'eyes of mindfulness' successfully. Such a meditator will always know clearly when such emotions are about to take-over and disturb their mind. At least the yogi should determined to facilitate this with a resolute mind. The *sati* we develop during our meditation becomes firmly established and stabilized, and gets transformed into *satipatthāna* when we are called upon to face the natural disappointments in life. Even the most devastating situations can be faced and traversed successfully, by the yogi who has mastered the *satipatthāna*. Such a yogi will know that this is moment where they shift from *kayānupassanā* to *vēdanānupassanā*, and that this is a moment where they move from *rūpa dhamma* to *nāma dhamma*. Once a person has experienced such transformations, their lives are never the same again.

There are some on-going studies in the West where scientists are investigating the changes that a patient undergoes during the final stages of their lives. While studying the experiences of those with near-death experience they found that such people undergo massive transformations and become almost different individuals on recovery. These are largely non-meditators. An important discovery made on studying such individuals is that, after transcending such a critical juncture of near-death, such persons will:

never heap self-criticism/self-blame;

they will never harbor hatred/ill will towards any living being and,

even at old age such a person will always be keen to learn new subjects and will be creative.

This phenomenon can be seen in the histories of heroes - brave and courageous people world-wide, who achieved heights of creativity or bravery only after they underwent some serious devastation in their own life. There are no records to show that such persons had cultivated mindfulness.

IMr. Asoka Weeraratne's library had a book which described the life stories of the world's 100 heroes during the past century. And most of those described had all gone through some major disappointment or devastation, and none of them had made that a barrier to further living a full life. Therefore, if one is able to transcend such situations, there is bound to be a new beginning. And this is the message of the *Satipatthāna Sutta* as well i.e. for the overcoming of grief and lamentation and for the eradication of pain and sadness (*sōka pariddeva- dukkhadomanassānam*) the Buddha recommended the development of the *satipatthāna*. He recommended that the best preparation for meeting and facing sadness bravely, was the preparation one can get with the development of *sati* because then we will not be overwhelmed and crushed by such situations. Instead, during such times with *sati* as a sheet anchor, we can evolve as mature and sober individuals with an enhanced capacity to face the vicissitudes of life. With the association of *kalyānamitta*, having got the correct advice from noble teachers, having listened to the *saddhamma*, and having practiced *sati* repeatedly, we become spiritually strong and resilient after experiencing such disappointments and sorrow.

There is not a single method to develop this Dhamma that would suit all individuals. Each person has their own unique method to discover the middle path and reach states of wisdom. The secret lies with the establishment of continuous mindfulness, moment-to-moment. This is why the Buddha cautions us in the preamble of the *Satipatthāna Sutta*— '*...ñāyassa adhiḡamāya, Nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya..*' - ..for the gaining of the Right Method, for the realization of Nibbāna..'. We should have no ambiguity in our minds that this is indeed the correct path. We should not think that repeatedly offering alms, observing *uposatha* and consolidating our *sīla*, and praying repeatedly that through those meritorious deeds we will attain *nibbāna* during the dispensation of the future Buddha Maitree.

Please remember that this is one task that we can never achieve with the help of any other person or with any other external support.

When a yogi is on the meditative Path and is in the process of transcending the *sankhāra* (*kāya, vaci manō*), the importance of the *trivida sucarita* (*kāya, vaci manō*) has been very clearly shown by the Buddha in the *Satipatthāna sutta* as well as in the *Ānāpānasati sutta*.

The yogi can meet with serious difficulties unless this advice is taken. And I say this in respect of two aspects: one is in relation to keeping one's *sīla* and the other is in relation to one's mental health.

If a yogi takes up the *satipatthāna practise*, but is negligent about their *sīla*, they are likely to suffer a lot of complexities and remorse. I mentioned previously that it is only the person who has *yoniso manasikāra* who will have *sati-sampajañña* and *indriya-samvara*. But at that stage I assumed that the person has not taken up the practise of *satipatthāna* with seriousness. Now I am referring to a person who has seriously taken up the practise, where they have taken the decision to either be a monk/nun or an *angārika* practitioner, or to attend a retreat of this nature, or to be a serious lay practitioner at home. Such a person must be sanitized and disinfected to a large extent, just like a patient would be prepared prior for surgery. Because, just as in a toxic environment the surgery will not be successful due to the infections that would ensue, the *satipatthāna* practise will not bear fruit if the yogi is not 'cleansed' through keeping *sīla*. Gradually in such a person, *sīla* will evolve into *adhi-sīla*.

Similarly, if a person suffers from behavioral problems such as inferiority complexes or superiority complexes/arrogance and other complex mental health issues, they will face many hurdles en-route. And a teacher will be able to detect these issues during interviews with the yogi. The yogi can become extremely disturbed and distressed in such situations and this is why meditation teachers are always alert to these matters. There is also the danger that non-meditators have begun to label meditators as being crazy, and this is well known even in international meditation centres. This is why it is so important to protect one's *sīla* prior to and during one's meditative life. The Buddha compares this situation to a farmer trying to cultivate some cereal in the thick jungle in the midst of so

many weeds and other foliage. The farmer takes great care to clear the plot and to be sure that wild elephants and other possible pests will not be able to destroy the new plants as they sprout.

During *ānāpānasati*, when the 'in' and 'out'-breath gets fine and indistinct, the yogi on the one hand knows that the *sati* is developing but on the other hand fears that something strange is happening to the meditation. And unless the yogi is prepared to face this eventuality they become disturbed and distressed and may stop. This can happen at the stage where *rūpa dhamma* subsides, i.e. when calming the breath takes place (*passambhayam kāya sankhāram assasissāmithi sikkhathi*) and the yogi feels positive that *samādhi* is setting in, but, simultaneously feels insecure and uncertain about what is actually going on. At this juncture the yogi must feel confident that they have invested in an unquestionable confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha and that they are established in the *sīla*. Then they should make a strong determination to transcend this situation.

The yogi will come to a stage where they feel distinctly uncomfortable, with sweating, shivering, quivering etc.as common manifestations. But once they transcend this stage, they will be 'gifted' with joy and rapture –

*pīti patisamvedī assasissāmithi sikkhathi ,
sukha patisamvedī assasissāmithi sikkhathi –*

This is the 'gift' that the yogi will receive for their patience, effort and determination to go through that junction. Joy and rapture are 'gifts' because the yogi has been able to maintain mindfulness steadfastly during this period and no one else or no external force has helped them to do so. It was purely the *sīla* and *saddhā* towards the Buddha that helped them. The joy (*pīti*) and rapture (*sukha*) are feelings that pervade the entire body. The Buddha says that these cannot be compared to any joy experienced through pleasing the senses. This seems as though the yogi has seen the prelude to *nibbāna*. However, unless the yogi has adequately been established in *vacī and manō sucarita*, at this stage they may develop a sense of

pride and achievement. And this can also be a set-back. Therefore you can see what a tight-rope the yogi has to walk on. This would be similar to when we are changing a flat tyre on the car. Once we place the jack and raise that side of the car so that we can change the tyre, unless we make sure that the jack is firm, the side of the car will fall back. Therefore we always need to make sure that it is sufficiently raised **upon** either a rocky foundation or some other hard device. The device that will give the foundation and prevent us falling, is our *sīla* and that is why it is important that we develop our *sīla* from *panca sīla* to *ājhiva atthamaka sīla*, and then eventually go on to *upōsatha sīla*, in at least on some selected days of the month.

After the yogi transcends the *kāya sankhāra* and then the *pīti* and *sukha* (joy and rapture) stages, he would then reach *citta patisamvedi* and the *passambhayam citta sankhāram* stage, where the yogi will come face to face with extremely refined feelings and **perceptions**. The meditation at this stage will exclusively deal with *nāma dhamma* (mental states). Various types of thoughts begin to appear, about the past and the future, about what is real and what is not, and this may confuse the yogi and even **lead to doubting**. They also may feel many types of bizarre pains and aches, coolness and heat, and may see various images as well. These are perceptions – *saññā* - that the mind projects, and the yogi will experience as real and may sometimes feel helpless and lost. But the immunity **they** have developed so far through transcending the *passambhayam kāya sankhāram assasissāmithi sikkhathi* stage, now helps them to cross this hurdle as well. And they can renew the confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha and be extra cautious about protecting the *trivida sucarita*..

One of the biggest dangers at this stage is that, the yogi begins to feel over confident and may begin to teach meditation to others. This can be the biggest disaster. Because, when the students they start to teach begin to learn and if their progress in meditation is satisfactory, the 'teacher' will have to develop various means and methods to be on par with them and to seem more developed than them. The Theravadin teachings have beautifully shown the pitfalls

that anyone who travels the path can fall into. They show how conceit, pride, arrogance and superiority complexes in relation to one's own progress, plus one's abilities to teach others assuming that one has the requisite attributes to do so, can be detrimental and even dangerous to a yogi's journey towards *nibbāna*. Hence the necessity to consistently renew the *saddhā* in the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha; and the need to be humble and full of humility always.

We discussed how when a yogi transcends the stage of *kāya sankhāra*, they are rewarded with joy and rapture –

*pīti patisamvedi assasissāmithi sikkhathi ,
sukha patisamvedi assasissāmithi sikkhathi .*

Similarly if a yogi manages to transcend *citta sankhāra* **they** will reach greater heights of joy –

*abhipamōdhayam cittam assasissāmithi sikkhathi,
abhipamōdhayam cittam passasissāmithi sikkhathi.*

The Buddha warns us that the joy experienced at these stages is indescribable in terms of the average sensual joys. Even bodily pains and physical ailments can be masked during such joy and rapture. The *cetasika passadhiya* flows in and even during sorrow or gladness the yogi can develop the meditation. The yogi realizes with certainty that grief, sorrow, lamentation are all created by one's self in one's own mind and they will realize how not to accord importance to such feelings. It is only at such a stage, that the yogi becomes a suitable candidate to understand the three characteristics of life and the Buddha's teachings on the *tilakkhana - anicca, dukkha and anatta*, i.e. the *Dhammanupassanā* section in the *Satipatthāna sutta*.

At this stage the *trivida sucarita* gets cleansed like never before. But even at this stage there still remains the likelihood of falling into another pit, if the yogi develops conceit and pride. We must never assume that it is only our own practise that has developed or that it is only our teacher that is skilled, and that the others' are not. Such conceit and arrogance can do serious damage. This is why it is more important at that stage to renew humility, and keep remembering that it is only the Buddha, who with full enlightenment, understood

this Dhamma and that the yogi is still a yogi, learning from his teachings. But please remember that the humility you desire to have at this stage will not be forthcoming unless your *sīla* is extra pure.

During such a stage the yogi should confront any thoughts they may have in relation to *tanhā*, *ditthi*, *māna*, and apply self-investigation (*dhamma vicaya*) looking at these with *RightThought* (*sammā sankappa*). This would enable us to understand the Dhamma in a more sensitive manner, from the coarse to the subtle, and then we feel that although the Buddha attained *parinibbāna* 2,600 years ago, the qualities of the Buddha and the purity of the Dhamma is very much alive. The yogi at this stage undergoes a transformation in personality and becomes more and more tame and humble – a quality they previously felt was not complementary or worthy of having.

When, in the yogi's mind there is no hesitation to devote their entire life to the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha; that is when the *dāna pārami* becomes fulfilled. Previously we would have felt that *dāna* encompassed the ten types of offerings commonly referred to. It is only at this stage of the development of one's meditation that we see that the ultimate *dāna*, is to let go of our likes and dislikes, views and opinions, cherished ideals, dreams and wants. It is only then that we understand that we have traversed this *samsāra* for aeons clinging to these notions and **pet** ideals, working over-time, breaking rest and earning beyond our needs, not purely for the sake of families or sustenance; but for the views and positions we called 'me/mine'. However, when the Dhamma ripens and matures it overflows and 'boils-over' in such a way that all of these previously cherished ideas seem unimportant and perishable, so much like toys and breakables that we played with as children. The letting-go of these is therefore the ultimate *dāna*.

The Buddha refers to *nibbāna* in a similar phraseology to that of *dāna*, i.e. *cāga* (generosity), *paṭinissaga* (abandonment) *mutthi* (being free) *anālayo* (with no clinging). During the stage of *dhammānupassanā* only one confusion remains – it is a confusion as

to why we continue to meditate. Until this time as a beginner or novice the yogi always felt meditating was to achieve something or to reach a particular goal. Now the motivation becomes obliterated.

At such a stage these issues don't exist and also there is no 'questioner'. The meditation by then has reached addictive proportions and as a result the yogi continues with the flow of that **momentum**. It is like when a lizard's tail drops off the tail keeps moving although there is no 'lizard' moving it. The Dhamma has its own agenda and program and that is what keeps it going, motivating the meditator to continue with their task with no expectations in any form. This is highly commended by the Buddha, and this is why, towards the end of the *Satipatthāna sutta*, there are only the Dhamma aspects that are left, with no owner, no person or doer – leading to total purification in a systematic and structured way, and eventually to *nibbāna*.

This is the same Path taken by the Buddha and the *arahants* like Venerables Sāriputta, Moggalāna, and a Path that can lead to total purification in this life itself.

Day 8 - Dhamma Talk

Catthārō sati patthānā paripūrō

sattha bojjaṅgā paripurentī

'Once the four foundation of mindfulness are fulfilled the seven factors of enlightenment will be fulfilled'

We discussed the two main aspects mentioned in the Avijjā sutta - the first is the factor which binds us to *samsāra* and the root of all *kilesas*, i.e. *avijjā* or ignorance and its hidden dangers. The second aspect described are the methods used to break the vicious cycle and to be rid of *avijjā*. When describing the first, we are reminded how, association with unwholesome people (*asappurisa*) leads to *avijjā*. Although generally we don't consider this aspect very seriously we are reminded over and over again that this is of vital importance. My teacher, Ven. **Matara Sri** Gñānārāma advised us that association with *pāpamitta* (as opposed to *kalyānamitta*) is like being with vicious serpents, and that we should understand this clearly and keep away from them. This is because, if we don't pay heed, we too will develop the unwholesome traits of such persons and end up in the darkness of ignorance and delusion. Hence the necessity to understand this and proactively seek the company of *kalyānamitta*, i.e. those with *sīla* and wholesome qualities.

The Buddha illustrated the methods of getting of *avijjā*, systematically in nine steps, leading to the association of *kalyānamitta*. Thereafter the Buddha advises how, with faith and confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha; and through listening to the *saddhamma* with mindfulness at the fore, one moves towards *vijjā vimutti* in ten steps. Therefore it is clear, how the text places great prominence on moving systematically towards eliminating ignorance and reaching liberation, and the ten steps that lead up to such *vimutti*. Hence the categorization of this *sutta* in the *Dasaka Nipatha* (Book of Tens) in the *Anguttara Nikāya*.

I would like to compare these teachings on the two aspects highlighted by the Buddha. The **immediate** reason for *avijjā* is cited as the Five Hindrances (*panca nīvarana*). These are commonly known dhammas that most people are familiar with. Literally they refer to the conditions that obstruct the realization of *nibbāna*. It is only if the Hindrances are removed that *avijjā* can be eradicated, since it is only then that the refined and sublime Dhammas can be exposed and understood. The Buddha clearly explained two ways of removing the Hindrances – one is the development of the *Sathara Satipatthāna*, and the other is the ripening of the *Sattha Bojjaṅga*. In this journey, one endeavors to move from the *Sathara Satipatthāna* towards the *Sattha Bojjaṅga*. If we go even further, towards the Noble Eightfold Path, then we are on the turf of the *bodhipakkhiya-dhammā* (the 'thirty-seven requisites for enlightenment' that bow towards the Bodhi-tree). As mentioned in the Pali Canon, the Buddha referred to these requisites for enlightenment in many places, particularly in the *Mahā Parinibbāna sutta* (DN). The Buddha refers to these thirty seven requisites as essentials for reaching *nibbāna*. These include:

The four foundations of mindfulness (*sathara satipatthāna*),

The four right efforts (*padhāna*),

The four roads to power (*iddhi-pāda*),

The five spiritual faculties (*idriya*),

The five spiritual powers (*bala*),

The seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjaṅga*),

The noble eight-fold path (*magga*).

The Buddha, in the *Avijjā sutta* has highlighted a close association between the four *satipatthāna* and the seven *bojjaṅga Dhammas*.

A similar association has been shown in the *Ānāpānasati sutta* (MN 18), where the Buddha says that if a yogi keeps developing mindfulness on the breath as the single primary object of meditation, they will be in a position to realize the four foundations of mindfulness. The reason I refer to this statement of the Buddha's

is because the *Satipatthāna sutta* cites twenty one objects of meditation that a yogi can adopt. Some meditators have the misconception that all twenty one objects of meditation need to be mastered to reach *nibbāna* and feel inadequate if they have not done so. Certain yogis unfortunately, attempt to learn all, instead of mastering only what suits them as an individual. Therefore it is important to remember that the Buddha mentioned in the same *sutta* that if a yogi **simply** masters *ānāpānasati*, they are **eventually** able to develop the *satipatthāna*. He then goes further and states that a person would develop the *satipatthāna* invariably develops the seven factors of enlightenment.

In the *Avijjā sutta* the Buddha reiterates this stating that a meditator who develops the *satipatthāna* develops the factors of enlightenment.

Today's topic for the Dhamma Talk will therefore be focused on how the development of the *satipatthāna* leads to the development of the *bojjhaṅga*. If we study the thirty-seven *bodhipakkhiya-dhammā* we realize that the *cetasika* called *sati* is mentioned in eight places, i.e. in the *satipatthāna* it is mentioned in four places, and it is also a component in each of the *indriya*, *bala*, *bojjhaṅga* and *maggā*. I remember when I used to visit Nilambe in my early days as a yogi (1979-80), during one of our Dhamma discussions a foreign yogi raised the question: 'Does the *cetasika sati* remain the same if continuously developed, or is there an improvement? Or does it would evolve into a mature form of the *sati* itself?'. An elderly Dutchman who was a fellow-yogi at the time, commented that, fundamentally *sati* remains the same, with no significant change. Today, more than thirty years later my experience tells me that with repeated practise and with further consolidation of the *bodhipakkhiya-dhammā*, one's *sati* **does** undergo a change. Not only does it mature but it also evolves and undergoes transformation. The *sati* that the yogi recognizes at the start of their meditative career, after continuous practise becomes more stable and dependable. Initially, the *sati* that we start practicing with is what we learn in the *sathara satipatthāna* –through the practise of

kāyānupassanā (mindfulness on the body). We begin with exercising mindfulness of the 'in' and 'out'-breath in the sitting posture with the eyes closed. This is what we refer to as intensive practice or '**sitting meditation**'. Then we practise being mindful in walking meditation with the eyes open in the presence of sounds and odours. When walking we note the **touch of the right sole** and then the left, and then again the right and so on - our aim being to protect the *sati* amidst external sense-impingements, and under coarser and rougher situations than when sitting. This is a form of semi-intensive practise.

In an extensive form we attempt to protect and preserve *sati* during our day to day activities, either at work or at home. In this manner we focus on being mindful of our bodily movements (focusing on *rūpa dhamma*). We refer to this as *kāyagatāsati*.

When mindfulness of the body is steadfastly developed in this manner, ideally we allow it to mature and become stabilized before developing mindfulness of mental factors (*nāma dhamma*) like feelings (*vēdanā*), thoughts (*citta*) and Dhamma objects. Therefore the Commentaries describe *sati* as a *cetasika* that will mature and grow, and that it is the proximate cause for the initial application of mindfulness to the body and its movements. It is only after mindfulness of the body) is allowed to stabilize and mature, that we can then apply mindfulness to feelings, perceptions, thoughts/volition and consciousness, i.e. the *nāma dhamma*. When studying the *Satipatthāna sutta* we can see how the Buddha systematically, commenced with *kāyānupassanā* and then went on to the other three (mental) foundations of mindfulness. The Buddha's teaching followed that particular order of establishing mindfulness, and he did not teach *vedanānupassanā* or *cittānupassanā* as isolated components. He insisted that in mindfulness practice, the umbilical cord (i.e. *kāyānupassanā*) be retained as the preliminary step and that this is the basic 'A B C' of meditation.

After a while, if the yogi is able to keep mindfulness steady on the primary object (i.e. the 'in'/'out'-breath, belly movement, right/left

step) and mindfulness becomes continuous and uninterrupted, it is then referred to as *samādhi*.

And this is why it is said that *sati* is the proximate cause for *samādhi*. When *sati* and *samādhi* work continuously together for a while, the yogi can observe that *sati* getting a 'new life' and a new momentum. Just as a small child, after some maturity, becomes excessively active and develops curiosity, the formerly quiescent *sati* now spontaneously begins to investigate *vedanā*, and also *cittānupassanā* and also *dhammānupassanā*. This is what the *Satipatthāna sutta* refers to, and the development of *sati* in this manner happens automatically. After a while when the thirty seven *bodhipakkhiya-dhammā* take shape, the *sati* evolves to a stage where it becomes a *sati indriya*.

For instance if previously the yogi had experienced *sati* as weak and not in leadership and consequently they were unable to maintain presence. Suddenly during a sitting it is as if *sati* takes over leadership and becomes dominant and well established. That is when *sati* has evolved to the *sati indriya* stage. The yogi becomes very happy and is anxious to know how to keep the *sati* stable in this manner, i.e. as a *sati indriya*. But the teachers will advise the yogi that this not yet possible. Now the yogi's challenge is to convert the *sati indriya* into a *sati balaya*. In such a situation the yogi will then not be disappointed even when they fail to maintain *sati* in a continuous and uninterrupted manner.

In the stage of *sati balaya*, the yogi knows when *sati* is established and when it is not, with a somewhat equanimous state of mind. Therefore the difference in *sati* during the stage of *sati indriya* and the stage of *sati balaya* is that in the case of the former, when the yogi becomes heedless and loses *sati*, they invariably become disappointed. This is not the case in *sati balaya*. If the yogi, after listening to the *saddhamma* repeatedly, gets good advice from teachers, develops their confidence and personality, and practices was according to those instructions, then they come to a stage where they realize they he will never have a 'perfect' and all-

complete *sati*, but that they have to remain unshaken when *sati* is lost. That is when the yogi develops true 'power' – i.e. *sati balaya*. That means that one day they will develop the ability to continue to meditate even while the *sati* is disappearing.

Let me illustrate this with a familiar situation. If during walking meditation a yogi sees a dog running across the path or hears a door banging, immediately the attention (that was on the right/left foot) goes instead to that object of disturbance and follows that train of thought. But the yogi (like a puppet) keeps on walking **even though their mind and** thoughts are elsewhere. Then suddenly they realize what has happened and return to noting the right/left foot. When the thoughts were suddenly swept away by the dog or the door, they were totally unaware and without *sati*, and that is why the mind went away so fast. When they realize what has happened and remember *sati*, they realize that they should return to noting the feet with no remorse or regret. If however, there is regret and remorse then they develop a hindrance and *sati* is weakened and it will be difficult to re-establish. Yogis should challenge themselves and be committed to not becoming remorseful and disappointed when *sati* is lost. For this to happen a lot of *saddhā* and *virīya* are required. Then they can re-commence the meditation with a fresh mind

The two instances which the yogi must attempt to be totally aware of are; first – when the mind travels to another object while meditating and second – when the mind returns to the object of meditation and regains the lost *sati*. When a yogi develops awareness with these two instances and is confidently able to note both, this is a great achievement. The Buddha clearly stated that it is only someone who has listened to the Word of the Buddha who can develop joy and gladness even during such an instance. And he further stated that it is a greater achievement to mindfully know when mindfulness (*sati*) is lost. This is the preliminary stage of learning how to swim upstream. There is no reason to feel disappointed when the mind leaves the primary object, because that is the nature of the mind and that is what it (the mind) is

expected to do. Our challenge would be to know that and be glad that we knew it, and not allow regret to take over. Instead, we should not worry amidst such small mishaps. If however, regret does take over and the yogi cannot feel joyous when they are able to revert to the primary object, it means that such a person has not applied *yoniso manasikāra* nor listened to the *sadhamma*. And in such a person *sati indriya* will never get converted to a **powerful** *sati balaya*.

A diligent yogi knows that when meditation progresses, the intruding thoughts, sounds and pains invariably increase. This is a very natural phenomenon and it is an indicator that *sati* is developing. The sensitivity of the yogi's mind is improving!

The yogi should allow this to mature and know that for *sati indriya* to develop into *sati balaya*, they need knowledge and skills. Therefore *suta-mayā ñāna* with its appropriate application is essential for this development. And this will not happen by meditation alone. When these factors of theoretical knowledge and practical application align with each other, the joy that the yogi feels can be equated to experiencing *nibbāna*. Please remember that the Dhamma is very much alive and will not age, even though its origins can be traced to 2600 years ago. Therefore the yogi must be brave and pay heed to the Buddha's advice, when he says that the mind will wander because that is its nature. The yogi's task should be to know it as **and when** it happens, and to make a point not to be unhappy and remorseful. This is why teachers repeatedly raise this issue during interviews and Dhamma talks, so that yogis can be regularly reminded of this important aspect in meditative life.

In every incident or situation the chances for good and bad are 50% each. This is common to all things world-wide. The Buddha taught us to see the happy side of things, to see only the 'love-spots'. He says if practiced repeatedly this then becomes a form of *metta* meditation. Today we see just the opposite, where, all the world's disasters, people's tragic happenings, gossip and irrelevant/useless information is disseminated throughout the day. Most of these

'news' items belong to what the Buddha referred to as topics that meditating bhikkhus should refrain from engaging in. This is because they incite and provoke defilements, and are of no use to anyone except to create sensationalism and profits for the agency that is responsible for their dissemination. In fact, a gentleman once told me that all major news agencies globally, have a dedicated a sub-editor for each of the **thirty two** subjects that the Buddha listed not indulge in. Sadly it appears that most of the older and younger generations today are trapped within this monstrous vortex and cannot escape.

This is why it is so important to remember what the Buddha said about trying to focus on the good things in life and not to be obsessed with the bad. The Buddha cautioned us because, as long as we are wrapped up and engulfed in this type of bad news and unpleasant mind-set, we will never be able to **up-lift** our minds to something greater and more spiritually rewarding. Therefore we need to look at life with the correct perspective and avoid this type of media sensationalism. Try to see, at least **occasionally** the good and the happy side of things, instead of always seeing the dark and the depressing. Developing *sati* will help us to see a silver lining in every dark cloud. Those who do not practise *sati* will never see the good side within themselves, and will tend to see the bad side **internally as well as** in others. This is a dangerous trend and it is what the media exploits.

Therefore, in meditation, each time the mind wanders away, we need to bring it back to our primary object with no regret, and come back to base – '*Now I am Here*' - that is the achievement of *sati indriya* developing into *sati balaya*.

Now we will discuss how to develop this further and allow the *sati balaya* to evolve into *sati bojjañga*. Our Burmese teachers used to teach us that the yogi knows that *sati balaya* has developed into *sati bojjañga* when, they are able to distinguish *sati* from *dhammavicaya* or other similar mental factors. The yogi begins to understand what the *cetasika sati* does, and know when *sati* is there

and when it is not. Also, they know how to resurrect *sati* using their own methods. The features of established *sati* would be; the ability for the mind to penetrate and remain with an object steadily, the lack of confusion as to whether it is the 'in'-breath or the 'out'-breath, or the left or the right foot, and the ability to clearly know if the mind is face to face with the object or not. The yogi will further develop *sati* by continuous contemplation on the object of meditation for longer periods. These would enable the yogi to know that they are firmly with the object. If the yogi reports that thoughts keep intruding, the teacher will ask the yogi to go back to the primary object and with repeated contemplation identify if it is actually thoughts or sensations/feelings getting in the way of establishing *sati*. Or the yogi will be asked to count the breath with no such interruptions, and keep the mind firmly on the object. With repeatedly applied intention (*vitakka*) the mind becomes steady with the object allowing *vicāra* to establish itself.

When discussing the *bojjhaṅga* it is important to define and explain what is meant by *vitakka* and *vicāra*. These terms are very familiar in *samatha* meditation since they are the first two of the five *jhāna* factors (i.e. *vitakka*, *vicāra*, *pīti*, *sukha*, *ekaggatā*). *Vitakka* in *ānāpānasati* means repeatedly being attentive to the 'in'-breath as the 'in'-breath, and the 'out'-breath as the 'out'-breath. Literally it is called 'applied thoughts'.

The continuous application onto the breath in this manner is *vitakka*. Similarly, in walking meditation continuously being aware of the left foot as it takes a step and of the right foot as it takes a step is *vitakka*.

Vicāra means, the sustained attention to each breath, so that you know thoroughly what each 'in'-breath consists of, what unique characteristics it has, and similarly with the 'out'-breath. The Commentaries give an interesting simile to explain these: a bee finding a blooming flower and sitting on it is compared to *vitakka*, and the bee walking on the surface of the flower and collecting the pollen, as *vicāra*. Another simile is: striking a large bell is *vitakka* and the reverberations are *vicāra*.

While *sati* has the ability to bring the mind to the object and to be securely mindful on it, the next *bojjhaṅga* (*dhammavicaya*) enables the yogi to observe and engage in the characteristics of the object. When *dhammavicaya* is present the yogi will have *Samma Sankappa* (as opposed to *miccā sankappa*). *Sankappa* is what is meant by *vicāra*, the ability to inquire into the object thoroughly. This is why teachers advise students who have developed *sati* to some extent, to thoroughly investigate the difference between the 'in'-breath and the 'out'-breath. And also the difference between the right and left foot during walking. This ability to discern between the two, is referred to as an **inquiring mind** (*vicāra buddhi* or *dhammavicaya*).

The critical question we face at this juncture is whether examining these differences is something that the yogi proactively engages in, or whether it happens automatically. If the yogi is skilled and knowledgeable then this is helpful. Such a yogi considers *ānāpānasati* as the most important thing and would sacrifice everything else in order to focus on the breath and observe its natural and intrinsic characteristics. Some note the 'in'-breath as opening a door and the 'out'-breath as the door closing, or as a swing that gently swings to and fro. If the yogi continues to observe these then they note if the swing gradually loses its speed and settles down, or if it speeds up.

This means that the observant mind has now matured enough to know how the 'in'/'out'-breath behaves and its characteristics.

The yogi who already has *sutamāya-ñāna* would at the end of a meditation session describe in detail what they experienced with each 'in'/'out'-breath, rather than simply be happy with a peaceful meditation. The Buddha described a variety of features in the breath which yogis can and should observe. In fact all *rūpa dhamma*, all four *satipatthāna* and *nibbāna* itself can be observed in each 'in'/'out' breath provided, they are able to see more and more deeply into it. Initially the yogi can feel the gap between each 'in' and 'out'-breath, and after some time they are able to see several **thousand** breaths

within each 'in'-breath and within each 'out'-breath. Eventually, they come to a stage where it is possible to see the gap between each of those tiny breaths occurring within each 'in'-breath and 'out'-breath, as though viewing the details of the breaths through a magnifying glass. It is like watching a cartoon movie in slow-motion, where each frame follows the other as separate pictures rather than seeing **animation in a movie**.

But for this we must be vigilant and acutely observe the details of the breath. Then we will not see a continuum but a slowed-down cartoon movie. We will see only the movements with a dark space in between. Therefore, just like investigating the micro details of a slowed-down cartoon movie, *dhammavicaya* will show us that all things in this world in a microscopic way, that there is no one compact entity. And although they appear as a single unit, the yogi will know that all things are only an **agglomeration** of several particles. For instance a human being is made up of matter/corporeality (*rūpa khanda* – an aggregate of large amounts particles). This is the same for a table, a chair, a house, a car and so on. We are used to considering people, objects and possessions as one entity and being attached to these, and we are loathe to see these being dismantled or destroyed. However, with meditation we are able to discern that there is no thing and no one person, that can be considered as a single entity, **man or woman**. And that all of us and our possessions are made of large amounts of tiny particles. Then we are able to group the 'matter' and 'activity' separately. This is when **actual dhammavicaya** begins to work systematically.

I remember in school during the science class we were taught how soap is able to clean dirt. The function of soap is to wrap a layer of emulsion around each dirt particle so that the particles become discrete and separate from one another, and then it becomes easy to dislodge them. This is how the dirt gets cleaned up. Similarly, in the case of the 'in'/'out'-breath, or in the case of a person or an object, we need to wrap the 'emulsion' of *sati* around each particle, and then see the gaps inbetween. This would enable us to see each particle as distinct from one another and not as a whole. Then we

can see no identity as a person or an object or a breath. Similarly, when we are walking in a poorly lit area, from a distance we may see a row of ants as a serpent or a stick or as a piece of string, because we are not able to see the ants individually. When we look closely at the actual situation, we will see there is no string or stick but a line of ants, i.e. we see things as things really are. This is when we transfer from *sati sambojjhañga* to *dhammavicaya sambojjhañga*. When this happens the yogi **may** feel very despondent and disappointed, because what they believed to be real all their lives is now shown to be **otherwise**. The yogi may tend to develop a distaste for meditation and feel frustrated, and cannot express this experience to anyone, because no one except an advanced practitioner is able to understand this bizarre phenomenon.

An advanced yogi who already has a theoretical knowledge to this effect would know that they have in fact made progress and reached *dhammavicaya sambojjhañga*.

If the yogi is prepared and advised well by the teachers they can cross this hurdle. The teacher will advise the yogi that this stage shows progress and improvement and that **they** should continue practicing. Then the yogi should develop strong effort and energy, i.e. *viriyā sambojjhañga* because the previous energy and effort will now be inadequate. It is like having a launching rocket to propel the first stage of a rocket to the second stage and then towards the final destiny, the moon. The Buddha said that the yogi needs to be rejuvenated with a special effort at this stage, like a tight-rope walker needs to skillfully balance at the middle of the rope. With adequate wisdom, the yogi understands that many sacrifices are needed at this time. Then he progresses further *pīti sambojjhañga* will manifest accordingly. *Pīti* would mean joy or gladness that the yogi experiences on clearing all these hurdles purely by their own efforts and perseverance. The meeting of a true *kalyānamitta*, the ability to listen to the *saddhamma*, the immense *saddhā* they have developed towards the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha; their very own *yoniso manasikāra*, *sati-sampajañña*, *indriya-samvara*, *sucarita*; and the development of the *satipatthāna* have all led to this experience and hence the immense immaterial gladness and joy

they feel.

However, if the yogi clings to this joyful experience and forgets the object of meditation, they will slide back. Instead, if they are able to note the joy and mindfully return to the primary object, then the *pīti* will purify and mature into *sukha* (rapture), and the yogi will feel a sense of calmness that the Buddha described in the *Ānāpānasati sutta*. This experience is entirely immaterial and not be experienced through the six senses. It is only when the six sense faculties are shut and when the five *jhāna* factors are ripened that this stage comes to being. This kind of rapturous pleasure is never experienced by humans under normal circumstances through their ordinary sense impingements and therefore it can be referred to as a celestial/divine or '*brahma sukha*'. The conventional and luxurious sensual pleasures that we are used to experiencing, can be compared to what is beastly or animal-like, when compared to what the yogi endowed with wisdom experiences..

The yogi derives such a state entirely through practicing *ānāpānasati* and with no external support whatsoever. Such a yogi cannot be deterred by any of the hindrances during this stage. It would be as though they have gone inside a bunker, safe from all impediments with sufficient immunity against all possible intrusions and disturbances, i.e. safe -guarded with immense Dhamma protection. This experience can last for a long time and with the maturing of *sukha*, tranquility - *passaddhi sambojjhaṅga* – becomes established, with tranquility of mental factors and tranquility of consciousness -

As mentioned in the Anapanasati sutta

Passambhayam kāyasankhāram, Passambhayam citta sankhāram.

Under normal circumstances the yogi might feel frightened when going from a known situation to an unknown one, from the coarse to the refined, from a 'self' concept to non-self, from being a doer to being an observer. When this feeling of tranquility is experienced the yogi knows that this is where they always wanted to get to, i.e.

Dhamma therapy, or a healing which is only possible with the *passaddhi cetasika*.

When the Buddha falls sick he asks that the *Bojjhaṅga* is recited to him by Ven. Cunda – '*...passaddhi sambojjhaṅgo kho bhantê, bhagavata sammadakkhato bhāvitō, bahulikato, abhiññāya nibbānāya samvattati....*', then the Buddha is reminded of the *passaddhi bojjhaṅga*. This is why the *Bojjhaṅga* recitations are well known as **protection** = *paritta*, because they offer protection during illness. And in the thirty-seven *Bodhipakkhiya- Dhammās*, *passaddhi* is only found in **the** *Bojjhaṅga*. When the yogi experiences *pīti* they are still a little agitated, but with *sukha* they quieten down, and with *kāya passaddhi*, particularly *citta passadhhi* they become very calm and tranquil. Achieving this stage in meditation is perhaps the greatest gift and the most compassionate thing one can offer to one's own body.

A person with highly developed states of *passaddhi* (tranquility), have what we call 'healing powers', because when they associate with or touch someone, the waves of compassion and calmness that emanate will not create any form of harm or disturbance to the mind or to the surroundings. In the presence of such a person it is rare for any eruptions to take place and they offer protection as though they were a shock absorber. The Americans call such a situation, one where 'good vibes' are present.

Having one such person in an office or at home offers protection to everyone. Non-reactivity is not a common feature in the world, and hence the constant conflicts, mistrust and strife. A person who has developed the *cetasika passaddhi* will not over react, and will endure and absorb shocks without allowing any disturbance to affect themselves. The Buddha purified himself to such an extent that he experienced an advanced form of this *cetasika*.

So extraordinary is this state, that when a yogi reaches it, their *saddhā* in the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha becomes magnified, and the initiatives they have taken to develop *sati*, listen to the *saddhamma* and associate with *sappurisa* all come into full bloom. The yogi will realize that they have journeyed in *samsāra* for a long

time with no knowledge of this, in total darkness and ignorance, relentlessly pursuing *kāma* (sensual pleasures). And they know that *passaddhi* can never be established in such situations. This is why the Buddha referred to this state as *vivēkajam pīti sukam* (happiness derived from being free from all six senses), and this is the state that is closest to *Vipassanā samādhi*. Such a state is possible only after reaching *pīti*, *sukha*, and *passaddhi* in that order, and when the yogi is unaware of how long he have been meditating. Until such a stage is reached, a yogi is with the concepts and the conventions. It is only once they transcend this state that they will get near the *paramatta sacca* (ultimate truth and reality), and move towards the noble or ariyans' Dhamma.

One can never reach this mile-stone in a meditative life if one is totally with the sense-pleasures or if one has a non-equanimous mind-state. If a yogi can discern the difference between the material and immaterial pleasures (*āmisa and nirāmisa sukha*), the conventional and ultimate truth (*sammuthi and paramatta sacca*) then they can progress. But until then they are lost and groping in the dark.

Samādhi sambojjhaṅga is highly praised and sometimes over-rated and may lead yogis to distraction, due to over-estimation of themselves. Therefore one needs to be excessively careful and balance this *bojjhaṅga* with *upekkhā sambojjhaṅga*. This would have been a pit-fall for those who meditated deeply before the time of the Buddha.

Such contemplatives attained the first to the fourth *jhānas* and thereafter the fine material and immaterial states, and then the attainment of seeming extinction of preception, and decided there was nothing more to attain. *Siddhārta* the hermit, long before he became the Buddha attained all these states of deep *samādhi* and then realized that this was not ultimate liberation. He then developed *upekkhā* towards the deep concentrated meditative states that he himself had attained. This is why *upekkhā sambojjhaṅga* is so highly valued. If one studies the Mangala Sutta

you see that from the thirty eight auspices given in the Sutta, the Buddha mentions in Verse 10 that austerity and chastity leads to *nibbāna* and in the next verse he states that (*upekkhā*) equanimity (if the mind does not tremble and is unaffected by the eight worldly winds) is the highest auspice.

Putthassa loka dhammehi-cittam yassa nakampati,

Asokam virajam kheman-etammangala uttamam.

The Buddha states, when describing the *bojjhaṅga Dhammas*, the importance of treating them with care, mindfulness and dispassion, and with no clinging. It is only then that the yogi can reach *vijjā*

Day 9 - Dhamma Talk

Satthabojjhaṅga paripuro vijjā vimukkti paripurentī ti

'Once the seven factors of enlightenment are fulfilled, the liberation of knowledge will be fulfilled'.

In the *Avijjā Sutta* the reasons for *avijjā* have been sequentially listed with clarity, starting with the dangers of association with unwholesome persons (*asappurisa samsevana*). Here we are reminded of the *Mangala Sutta*, where, in a similar vein the opening stanza refers to: *Asēvanāca bālānam- Pandita namca sevā* (association with fools is not recommended, whereas association with the wise is indeed auspicious). The immense value of this piece of advise by the Buddha, and the long-term positive implications and the Dhamma-benefits by such association are described vividly in the second half of the *Avijjā Sutta*.

A yogi who thus associates with the wise, gets the opportunity of listening to deep Dhamma through *saddhamma savana* and consequently develops a strong and penetrative from of *saddhā*, which then facilitates the development of wise-attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) to anything that the yogi faces in life. This invariably develops the capacity for mindfulness (*sati*) together with wisdom (i.e. *sati-sampajañña*). Therefore a meditator with such a background will definitely have a greater capacity to cultivate mindfulness than one without, and they will gradually become calm and composed with substantial sense-restraint (*indriya samvara*). Gradually, this yogi evolves into a person with humane qualities, endowed with the *trivida sucarita* and free of *kāya, mano, vacī ducarita*. Such a person can harness all the 'immature *sati*' that they started with and come to a stage where they mature, and become established in the *sathara satipatthāna* (four foundations of mindfulness). They may even contemplate devoting their entire life towards meditation practise.

A person committed towards the *sathara satipatthāna*, will participate in Retreats of this nature and will have a regular, established practice, and the capacity to develop these four foundations of mindfulness towards the *sattha bojjhaṅga*.

They would develop great amounts of *saddhā* and a serious determination to reach *nibbāna* in this very life, during this dispensation of *The Gautama Buddha*. The systematic development of the *Bodhipakkhiya Dhamma* and the *satthabojjhaṅga* will be the proximate cause and invariably lead to the end of *avijjā* and thus the reward of *vijjā vimutti*.

In the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* the Buddha mentions when a yogi is seated and develops mindfulness on the breathing they can develop all four foundations of mindfulness with that single object of meditation - namely *anapanasati*. The Buddha goes on to say, that with these four foundations of mindfulness, the doors to the *sattha bojjhaṅga* will open, and how through the *sattha bojjhaṅga*, the doors to *nibbāna (vijjā vimutti)* will open.

In the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* the Buddha describes how a yogi can develop the *Bojjhaṅga Dhamma* successfully and reach *nibbāna* if these qualities are developed without greed or attachment, and if it is supported by seclusion, with feelings dispassion, cessation and relinquishment. (*Idha bhikkhave bhikkhu, sattha bhojaṅgam paripurenti, viveka nissithan virāga nissithan nirodha nissithan patinissāga passin*). The general interpretation is that, with the greed and craving which occur due to our own ignorance, we are bound to this dangerous and never ending cycle of *samsāra*. Therefore if, instead of cultivating greed and craving we decide to pursue the path of seclusion, detachment, dispassion, cessation and relinquishment, then we will be cultivating the *Bojjhaṅga Dhamma* and therefore will be closer to *nibbāna*.

Tonight I chose to discuss this topic further, with special emphasis on how, when in seclusion, with dispassion, cessation and relinquishment the yogi will be in a position to view the *Bojjhaṅga Dhamma* with greater clarity. If we look at the *sati bojjhaṅga* for a

start, a yogi who has practiced *sati* for a while may come to a stage where they may develop an attachment or greed for that *sati*, and may not wish to see a situation where they lose the *sati* they have gained. Therefore we should aim at cultivating the *Bojjhaṅga Dhamma* with spiritual maturity, so that we will be equipped to skillfully deal with our coarser defilements and not cling. Instead to view even the cessation of good and much wanted Dhammas like *sati* with dispassion, relinquishment and with equanimity, This is particularly so during the stage when one would lose the *sati* that he had so painstakingly developed over time.

Sati is usually referred to in the Commentaries as a positive Dhamma and its presence is considered with a lot of pride. As a result, its fading away is not perceived positively by the yogi. Let me illustrate this in the context of the present Retreat situation. Many of you have decided to spend these ten days in mindfulness and noble silence having sacrificed your homes, families and other comforts. During this period you spend 8-9 hours in meditation whilst the hours in-between are spent in moment-to-moment awareness. However, if you lose your mindfulness, either due to a some issue at the monastery or due to another yogi's (or your own) mistake you may become irritated or unhappy. This can lead to a lot of stress because you would think that this happened because of the lack of your *sati*. That would mean *sati* had not been developed within a mindset of '*viveka nissita*', i.e. with detachment/seclusion. Therefore our challenge is to develop a mindset where, when we cultivate *sati* we are happy and at peace with ourselves. But when we lose the *sati* we have carefully developed we know that we have lost it but we do not lose our peaceful state of mind. For this to happen we should have the realization that *sati* is also an *anicca Dhamma* and that it too has to fade away. We endeavour to know when we lose *sati*, but remain detached and equanimous.

Yesterday we referred to this phenomenon when we discussed how *sati indriya* gets converted into *sati balaya*, we can recognize this change because we then know when the *sati* is lost, and we are not unhappy or distressed about it.

This is what Venerable Sāriputta taught us.

“Pamade na kampati ti sati balam

(unshaken even at the negligence is called power of mindfulness-
Patisambidha magga bala katha.)

If we are to understand and develop the *Bojjhaṅga Dhamma*, we need to skillfully exercise *upekkhā* (equanimity)- the eighth *Bojjhaṅga Dhamma*, when we lose *sati*. We need to understand that we will have to relinquish *sati* some day and be at peace when that happens. Such a development is an indicator of a spiritually mature and seasoned yogi. Supposing a relatively experienced yogi who is aware about *sati* sits for meditation, but after a while gets carried away by a thought and is unable to be in the present moment. This is because the mind is continuously either in the past or the future. When they are with the past there will always be an element of remorse and when in the future there will always be a slight agitation or expectation. Since either of those two situations takes the yogi's mind away from the object of meditation, the *sati* and *samādhi* are lost. We begin to understand these signs during a sitting. If such a yogi begins to recognize as soon as the mind has left the object of meditation and is then able to bring it back to the object with minimal delay that is a skill and an indicator that *sati* is developed.

There is a simile that the Commentaries cite in relation to the above. If a man with minimum means decides out of the goodness of his mind, to offer alms to the village temple even though he can barely make ends meet, such a thought is called a '*cetanā dāna*'. When such an offering is accepted by the monks at the temple it is called a '*vastu dāna*'. The question is asked, which of the two above yields greater merit. The answer is the former, since it is the thought (*cetanā*) of making the offering that led to the actual giving of the alms to the temple. Similarly, when a person is without *sati*. (i.e. with a wandering mind), and they know at the time that they are without *sati*, that is referred to as *kārāpaka appamāda*. When the yogi having realized this, brings the mind back to the object and re-

establishes the lost *sati*, it is then referred to as *kāraṅka appamāda*. When that happens the yogi notes that the mind is back on the object and that before the disturbing thoughts took the mind away, it was also on the object. Between the two, the middle was full of thought (wandering) moments characterized by *pamāda* (unmindfulness or negligence) whereas the beginning and the end, had thought moments with *appamāda*=diligence or mindfulness.

If at the point where the yogi brings the mind which was distracted by thoughts, back to the object and is able to re-establish mindfulness swiftly, then there would be not much harm from the disturbing thoughts that took the mind away from the object and the resultant unmindfulness during that period. Generally the yogi will develop remorse only *after* they realize that the mind had been disturbed by thoughts and only *after* mindfulness is re-established on the object. Remorse will not place while thoughts have intruded, because then the yogi is simply enjoying the thoughts. Therefore, in this context Ven. Sāriputta advises us that if having understood that *appamāda* had taken place in the first instance, and if we can still remain equanimous then it means that the *sati* is powerful.

With repeated practise in remaining equanimous the yogi develops a positive inclination to cultivate *sati* in a detached manner, with dispassion in seclusion, and with an attitude of relinquishment and cessation. We would never get an opportunity to know and note the appearance and disappearance of *sati* if it did not undergo cessation. Therefore we begin to realize that *sati* may sometimes be there and sometimes not there, and when we recognise the latter, *sati* will bring the mind back peacefully to the object and re-establish mindfulness. The second part of the operation is beyond our control and occurs as part of the function of *sati* itself (*citta niyāma/dhamma niyāma*). Just as we described in the earlier example, when there is an intention to offer alms, all the requirements for this alms offering fall into place and we are able to accomplish it successfully. A mind that will be unshaken even when the *sati* is lost, is required for this mind-set to develop. This ability of the mind to be equanimous when *sati* is lost, is an indication of *sati* being developed to a stage of *bojjhaṅga sati*.

This is not an easy mind-set to develop because we all have this belief that *sati* is a *cetasika* which is positive and one which always denotes a 'good' side of meditative practise. It is difficult for the average yogi to accept that being unshaken and equanimous when losing *sati* is praiseworthy. However, whether we like it or not, in our journey towards equanimity we will have to face these situations repeatedly. Therefore a mature yogi who has listened to the *saddhamma* will be at an advantage because they will know to cultivate an equanimous mind-state to face such eventualities. This is an important junction in our meditative career, because we will be assessed and our attributes of being a '*sappurisa*' will be tested. Every yogi has the likelihood of being distraught when losing *sati*, but the Buddha tells us very clearly that if we develop this ability to regain *sati* each time we lose it, we develop a very pleasant and unique feeling that cannot be achieved through any form of sense pleasure.

This is why it is very important to understand and recognize the presence and absence of *sati*, and the need to listen to advice given by experienced teachers so that we are prepared, and are not be unnecessarily crest-fallen when losing *sati*. The *sati* developed through such maturity and wisdom is referred to as *viveka* (seclusion and detachment) *nissita sati*, *virāga* (dispassion) *nissita sati*, *nirodha* (cessation) *nissita sati*, *patinissaggānupassī* (relinquishment) *sati*. When the yogi comes to this stage of development they realize that, even though the *sati* was disturbed due to an unforeseen and unpleasant situation, there is nothing that can prevent them bringing it back to the primary object. Not even a deity, Māra, Devadatta or a person from another faith can prevent the yogi from doing this. They can investigate themselves and discover that whatever the reason for the loss of *sati*, as a human being they are equipped with the ability to bring it back with equanimity. This is a unique potential that only a human has. And it is the *saddhamma* and the *Dhamma* protection cultivated by the yogi thus far, that gives the strengths they need to do so. In other words the yogi has built an unbreakable and un-destroyable *sati*.

A yogi might wonder, if during their meditation while *sati* is established, a thought (of greed, hatred or delusion) crosses the mind, and without investigating the thought they simply restore the *sati* would they have created bad *kamma* due to that thought. The answer is that such a thought crossed the mind without intention by the yogi, i.e. it was without *cetanā* (*acetanika*). Such a thought should be disclaimed since there was no *cetanā* or volition. The Buddha said, '*cetanā bikkhave kammam vadāmi*' (volition makes *kamma*). Hence the Buddha's advice when such thoughts arise during meditation is, to consider each thought as 'not me, not mine and not myself' and totally disclaim them. It is only when an amateur yogi meditates unprepared and is unfamiliar with the Buddha's teachings that they claim all such stray thoughts, feelings or ideas as 'me/mine'. On the other hand if the yogi investigates those thoughts through *cintāmayā ñāna* or through *vipassanā* practise they would learn that those don't in fact have an owner. A book I read recently ('*A thought without a Thinker*' by Mark Epstein) speaks of a multitude of thoughts with no owner. And this is a very common phenomenon experienced by most people. On a daily basis many people suffer remorse and regret throughout the day with such irrelevant thoughts that have no owner. This results in so much stress and unhappiness. The Buddha advised us that, once we develop *sati* substantially and it reaches the level of the *bojjhaṅga*, we are then able to note each thought as being 'not me/mine/myself'. This kind of spiritual maturity helps us to see every unpleasant and every pleasant thought, as being free of any ownership.

If we develop all the *bojjhaṅga dhamma* with such clarity, firstly *sati* (the presence or the lack of *sati*), then *dharmavicaya sambojjhaṅga*, we will learn that, as the Buddha said even the *Dhamma* will have to be relinquished at a particular stage. Would we ever think that this *Dhamma* that we are so eagerly listening to and the *sutta*/Pāli that we so studiously learn will have to be set aside, and that we would even feel happy when we decide to do so? We think to the contrary, because we feel that the more *Dhamma* we accumulate, the better it is and the happier we imagine we will feel.

The Buddha teaches us that during that special thought-moment (*cittakkhana*) when we see *nibbāna*, we will even have to let go of even the *Dhamma*.

We all know the sport, pole vaulting and we also know that the pole gives us that additional leverage to clear the bar with greater ease. When we practise hard using the pole, on the day of the competition in order to beat the other competitors, we use the pole to clear the bar with our very best effort. At the point of clearance we will throw the pole away and then make the final leap. If however, we decide to keep the pole as a souvenir and don't throw it away what would happen? We would hit the bar and be disqualified.

Similarly, the *Dhamma* has to be used to the maximum, but it will need to be dispensed with in a similar fashion at a crucial moment on the Path. Please remember that this would not be disrespectful to the *Dhamma* in any way. The stage of *Sankhāra Upekkhā ñāna* (where the mind is equanimous to all *sankhāra*) is the stage the Commentaries describe as this crucial juncture. They give the simile of how a yogi, who is determined to cross the river to the far-shore, would summon all their strength and run towards the river hoping to cross it with the aid of a creeper that has fallen at its mid-point. The speed with which they run helps them to clutch the creeper and swing across to the other side. But if at that point if they don't let go of the creeper they will swing back to where they started from.

The true *sappurisa* will know how to use the creeper (the *Dhamma*) so that they can cross the river successfully and reach the far shore (*nibbāna*). Therefore we must realize that even a profound *bojjhaṅga* like *Dharmavicaya*, which is so important for us to understand the *Dhamma* with clarity, is only an instrument to travel on the Path, and that it is not *nibbāna* itself. Therefore we must be prepared to let it go. Similarly during our day to day lives there may come a time when we will have to accept a conventional belief, and at such a time we will have to keep the *Dhamma* aside, temporarily. For instance, if we are conducting affairs for an organization which has as its constituent members, non-Buddhists as well as those of a variety of different faiths, we should conform to their views with

regard to the functioning of that organization and not bring the Dhamma into such a situation as a proirity. Because if we do so, it will end up in a big mess. Therefore the one with wisdom will know when to put the 'Dhamma basket' down, and when to pick it up again. But for this to happen, a sufficient amount of Dhamma should be present within that person, and therefore my talk is geared for those who have a certain amount of Dhamma understanding and knowledge, and is not meant for the total novice.

There is the story of a two very poor hermits who lived during the time of the Buddha. They were devoted to each other, and the wife would always feed the husband with whatever they had in the house even if she had to starve herself. One day while the wife was feeding the husband some rice and curry, the Buddha appeared, but the wife was quick to gesture the Buddha to leave because the food she had was only enough to feed the husband. However, when the husband saw this, he developed immense faith in the Buddha and offered the already mixed rice and curry meant for himself. The Buddha praised the spontaneous generosity of the man and blessed him with a Dhamma talk which resulted in the man becoming a *sotapanna*.

The Buddha used a very relevant point at that time to teach him, and this shows how he used the Dhamma to suit each person at a given time. Therefore I want to make the point that one must not be too attached to the Dhamma itself, and one must know with wisdom when and how to use the Dhamma as well as when to leave it aside. Therefore, *Dhammavicaya sambojjhaṅga* should be developed within a framework of *vivekanissita*, *virāganissita*, *nirodhanissita* and *patinissaggānupassi*.

Viriya sambojjhaṅga should be developed with total *sati*. The yogi will find that there are times when they may get some bizarre thoughts that lean towards drowsiness, inertia and lethargy. This can lead to a lot of despondency and remorse. Then the yogi must realize that *virīya* can present itself with different faces. On the one hand *virīya* has a negative side to it, which is prone to sadness. *Viriya* also can have a stubborn attitude within it, where the yogi will find it difficult to tame and control. This should be recognized by the yogi

and when that happens they can understand that the remorse, despondency, lethargy and other emotions experienced are not 'me/mine and not 'self'. Similarly, the yogi knows that there are equal chances for enthusiasm and excitement about the Dhamma, and elation about one's meditative experience to develop. This spectrum of emotions too should be viewed in a similar fashion, i.e. as not 'me/mine' and not 'self'. One must be prepared for such fluctuations in emotions to occur and one need not analyse and judge these with a lot of anxiety. Therefore it is important to learn to consider *virīya* in a similar way to *dhammavicaya*, i.e. with *vivekanissita*, *virāganissita*, *nirodhanissita* and *patinissaggānupassi*. When this development takes place the yogi feels stronger and more confident.

Initially, in the case of some yogis, after they transcend the stage of *kayānupassanā*, an extremely dull and uninspiring stage in meditation can surface. When such a situation arises, unless they have had heard the Dhamma and met a *kalyānamitta*, they can develop a very distorted view of the Dhamma and may even leave the Buddha-Dhamma for a while. However, if the yogi manages to overcome this situation and successfully gets back on track, they may feel that such a feeling can never arise again. But it will do so.

And the yogi will at some point realize that this is simply a state of mind and only to do with their '*citta*'. Then they will come to the conclusion that the *virīya cetasika* is not 'me/mine/self'. I am reminded of what a certain bhikkhu said about the screen in a cinema hall – if a huge cascading waterfall is projected on to the screen the screen does not get wet, or if an erupting volcano with oozing lava is shown the screen does not get scorched. Similarly, whatever comes to our mind, good and bad, will not harm our minds..

They will hurt or scorch our minds only if we claim those situations as 'me/mine/my self' through our *tanha*, *ditthi*, *māna*. If we don't do so, these situations will simply come and go with no impact. In another simile, the sky will not be affected with the large numbers of clouds that come and go. Therefore whenever these *cetasika*

dhammas (e.g. lethargy/inertia or *virīya*) arise and pass away the *citta* will not be affected, and those who have successfully seen this happening during meditation will bear testimony to this fact. They witness that these Dhammas are all subject to change - *anicca* - and this insight reflects the nature of the openness and the level of tolerance of our mind states.

When the rest of the *bojjhaṅga dhamma* like *pīti* and *sukha* arise and pass away, the yogi will be able to clearly see how it happens, and how rapidly these changes occur. The yogi will learn to appreciate joy and rapture devoid of the six senses, and they will enjoy the *nirāmisa sukha*. But the yogi will know that the latter experience is also subject to cause and effect and that it will cease when its causative factors cease. And that cessation can lead to regret and remorse. I am reminded of what Mahasi Sayadaw said about the experience of *vipassanā ñāna* (Insight Knowledges). He said that if we experience a small insight knowledge, then we have to experience a form of small *dukkha* just before that. And if we experience a more profound knowledge, then the *dukkha* that precedes it will be far greater. This is true for all the 'hills' we will have to climb in meditation. Every successful experience will be felt only after an arduous climb. Every yogi--and the Buddha was no exception - experiences this and it is only natural. It is the ability to repeatedly experience such difficult situations that sufficiently equips us to face the trauma we will have to confront at the moment of death.

There was a situation where the Buddha visited Nigrodharāmayā in Kimbulwathpura, and a large group of Sakyans had assembled to hear his teachings. But the Buddha was feeling unwell with a back ache, and therefore asked Ven. Ananda to give the Dhamma talk so that he could rest for a while. The Dhamma talk given was very good and the Buddha told Ven. Ananda that, had he himself given the talk, it would have been exactly the same. This shows that even the Buddha, with all the special qualities of a Buddha and all the Parami fulfilled, also fell ill and felt pain.

When the Buddha was on his last journey to *Kusināra* in the *Parinibbāna sutta*, he describes how much pain and illness he experienced at that time. His legs were swollen and he could hardly walk, and on the way he wanted Ven. Ananda to spread his robe so that he could lie down. This is normal and natural for any human being and the Buddha was the same. At one point Ven. Ananda asked the Buddha why he has to travel so far to *Kusināra* and why he would not stop the journey mid-way. The Buddha said that *Kusināra* is very important because previous Buddhas and many *cakkavatti* Kings had been present at *Kusināra*. And this is what prompted the Buddha to walk such a distance amidst such hardship. Even the Bhikkhus who study and recite the *Parinibbāna sutta* as well as those who listen to it, cry because they become so emotional when they hear of what the Buddha went through.

Therefore, please remember that the *pīti* and *sukha* we experience during meditation are not permanent, and can turn to *dukkha* at any moment, and that no person is immune from that. The yogi should understand this continuously on their own accord and only then will they understand that *pīti* and *sukha* should be experienced with *vivekanissita*, *nibbidhanissita*, *nirodhanissita* and *patinissaga*. The ability to recognize this change as not 'me/mine/myself', and not to allow *tanha*, *ditthi*, *māna* to proliferate, will be enormously useful and will help the yogi to see things as they really are. Only someone who has developed their character to the level of *bojjhaṅga dhamma* is capable of accomplishing this. Without this level they will continuously blame themselves and consider all the mistakes they make as 'me/mine/myself', and the image they have created about themselves as meditators will be shattered.

Similarly, when the *passaddhi bojjhaṅga* sets in, the calm and tranquil state of the mind and body is incredible. One may think that this experience will never get shattered, but it will. The skill of the yogi is to not be defeated in spirit when this change happens and to keep the determination as unshaken as possible. The mature and emotionally stable yogi with experience, is in a position to do so.

The *Ñānadassana Visuddhi* ends with the insight knowledge called *sankhāra upekkhā*. Such a yogi can remain equanimous in the face of all *sankhāra*, i.e. when facing the rise and fall of all the *bojjhaṅga dhammas* they can still remain equanimous. This is something we all experience throughout our lives, except that we don't realize that this is a Path to *nibbāna*. Meditative experience is essential to understand this. Therefore, with exceptional moral integrity and other humane qualities such as immense patience and tolerance, we need to set out on this journey. Equipped with the spiritual faculties and the *bojjhaṅga dhamma*, with a willingness to sacrifice one's life time for the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha; the effort we decide to make for this noble journey needs to be remarkable.

In the Western world, Dhamma and meditation are considered as therapeutic measures to promote well-being and developing calm and composed mental states. This is how Buddhism is 'marketed' in those countries. When Western yogis enter a ten-day or two week Retreat, they want to know what they will get at the end of that period. Therefore a lot of explanation has to be given to those yogis prior to commencing the program. Whereas in Asia the Dhamma is considered as preventive (rather than as therapeutic) and is seen within this correct perspective, and is revered spiritually as the Buddha's ancient and valuable teaching. Yet, there is often the belief that there will be a 'return' for the investment made in meditation. Therefore when we advise yogis to develop the *bojjhaṅga dhammas* with an attitude of seclusion, detachment, dispassion, cessation and relinquishment, they don't understand why they should do so..

The best way to understand this would be to ask ourselves why the Buddha continued to meditate after his great enlightenment. And why Venerable Mahakassapa, practiced all thirteen *dhutaṅgas* (extreme austerities, which were believed to shake off the defilements) after he became an *arahant*. It was because they were the best role models for the *sangha* to emulate. Initially a yogi starts by saying that they meditate in order to develop *sati, samādhi* and then subsequently to develop *jhānas* or insight knowledges. It is only much later, when the yogi comes near to completing all 'Thirty Seven

Requisites for Enlightenment' that they realize that everything is subject to change, including the human qualities cultivated to shake off defilements. This is why it is important to have an attitude of seclusion, detachment, dispassion, cessation and relinquishment in our meditative life.

This would be perhaps the deepest and most genuine effort that one could make towards achieving the highest possible human potential. But please don't expect any human mind to truly understand and appreciate this commitment. The Buddha says that our minds always seek something and expect some return for whatever we do. The defilements we have are so great that we keep looking for rewards, accolades and certificates for whatever we engage in. If a yogi who is on the Path keeps meditating with no expectation at all then such a person is indeed a true *kalyānamitta*. In the *Kaggavisanga sutta* the Buddha mentioned that leaving everything aside and being free of all expectation, is the greatest aid to liberating one's self. But at the start the Buddha, with great compassion, helps the yogi to establish themselves and to understand the basic teaching. Thereafter when they develop the skill and decide to commit their life towards the Path and reach *vijjā vimukthi*, with or without any attainment or achievements, this is where they reach a state of *mahāpurisa*.

It would be difficult for a novice to begin the practise with such a mind-set. Such a person is advised to begin with cultivating mindfulness. I mentioned earlier a question asked by a fellow yogi when I was at Nilambe: 'They asked whether *sati* remains the same or whether it improves and develops in strength as one's meditation develops. A significant transformation takes place in the *sati* as well as the person, with time. Even so, just as in the case of the pole-vaulter who throws away the pole at the time of making the jump, *sati* will have to be thrown away as well, at the crucial moment. Every single person who has followed the Path of the Dhamma, has at the crucial stage of reaching the moment of *nibbāna* given up what aided them to reach that point. This is a natural course of events where all the coarse and finer defilements are shed one by

one and finally the glistening pure mind-state is revealed. It is always a state of letting go. Even as a Buddha, there is nothing one gains, and the Buddha explains this in response to a question posed by a deity in the *Devata Samyutta* (SN), where he is asked whether he is happy. The Buddha replied that there is nothing that he has gained and therefore he has nothing to be happy about. Asked whether is he unhappy the Buddha answered that he had lost nothing for him to be unhappy about. Then the deity asked whether that means he is neither happy nor unhappy, and The Buddha acknowledged it as the correct response.

The unique recognition of the great importance of this human life with all of our faculties intact, and the value of the Buddha Dhamma *sāsana* are the only assets we need to treasure. The realization of the *bojjhaṅga dhammas* and through them the development of an unshaken mind-state is a great achievement. We must consciously avoid always wanting more and more, and be satisfied with what we already have been blessed .

If a yogi is in the situation of experiencing the *bojjhaṅga dhammas* with seclusion, detachment, dispassion, cessation and relinquishment, then such a person is said to be experiencing the taste of *nibbāna* although they have not yet reached *nibbāna*. This is very difficult for a yogi who always expects achievements or results to understand. The realization of *nibbāna* is a situation where one leaves all entrepreneurship towards expectations behind – *payogapatippassambana*. This is where we gratefully accept what we have. And a yogi who develops such a mindset will steadfastly keep going with their practice, treasuring what they have already gained without any remorse or expectations. No one, not even Māra can disturb the natural journey of such a yogi. And the Buddha knew how difficult it would be for anyone to understand such a Dhamma and the Path one needs to travel. Hence the initial decision of the newly enlightened Buddha not to teach. It was Brahma Sahampathi who then decided to invite the Buddha to teach, because he knew what a tragedy it would be if he didn't. Brahma Sahampathi knelt before the Buddha and pleaded with him saying that there are

people in the world with little dust in their eyes, and that they should be taught.

We are immensely fortunate to have received this Dhamma in its pristine state even after 2600 years. This is an incredible phenomenon. How many *sappurisa* were responsible for the transmission of the true Dhamma with such great effort and dedication to the *sāsana* is unimaginable. And if we are to ensure that this effort is to continue then we should make all possible sacrifices to transmit this precious Dhamma to those of the next generation. We have this even greater task to fulfill and we need to be committed to it with no expectations whatsoever.

Therefore when we meditate we need to be steadfast and continuous in our efforts, and if anyone asks why, we should say that we really do not know and perhaps it's an addiction which is difficult to let go of!.

Nigantanathaputtha (one of the spiritual contemporaries of the Buddha) used to say that there were charismatic features of the Buddha which were hard to describe, and that anyone who meets the Buddha develops a strong attraction towards him. The army general Sīha, was one of Nigantanathaputtha's commanders and he wished to meet the Buddha. This gave some concern to Nigantanathaputtha since he feared that Sīha might be attracted to the Buddha and that he might lose him. Therefore he formulated some questions for Sīha to ask from the Buddha. .

At the end of the question and answer session, and after listening to how the Buddha responded to his queries, Sīha was so inspired by the Buddha that he asked to be considered his disciple. The Buddha very kindly asked him to carefully reconsider his decision, since Sīha was a leader of a large number of personnel and that an important decision like changing one's faith should be done after a lot of consideration. This further increased the faith and confidence that Sīha had in the Buddha even more, and he told the Buddha that any other spiritual leader would have celebrated such news with great joy, and would not have advised him in that way. This made Sīha an

even stronger disciple of the Buddha and he was determined to share this with his family.

The Buddha's teachings have been carried on the shoulders of many disciples and that is how the *sāsana* grew and became stronger with time. Such persons sacrificed their preferences, their life styles, their families and their livelihoods to bring the Dhamma to us for the past 2600 years. Similarly we must do our bit to ensure that this message is carried through to our second and third generations. We should do so with no expectations at all and with no criticisms leveled at anyone. Our meditative life and experiences will help us to do this service.

We owe it to the *sāsana*.

Avijja Sutta - Dhamma Discussions Questions and Answers

Please explain the difference between sati and sammā sati

According to the commentaries *sati* is always a wholesome *cetasika*. The Buddha also referred to *miccā sati* and *asati* as well. I would like to explain the answer in this way.

If *sati* (as a spiritual faculty=*indriya*), is converted to a *sati balaya* this would be a distinct change. In relation to the 37 *Bodhipakkhiya Dhamma*, *sati* features in the *sathra satipatthāna*, *sati balaya*, *sati indriya*, *sati bojjhanga*, and *mārga anga sati*. When *sati* is at the *sati indriya* stage (as a spiritual faculty) and then gets converted to *sati balaya*, it is difficult to recognize the distinction between the *indriya* and *bala*.

During the *sati indriya* stage the yogi will know when they have lost *sati* and why they lost it. They may even have remorse that the *sati* they had built with so much care has now got lost. But they would also know that they can regain it fast. When the *sati* develops into the stage of *sati balaya* then they would not have any remorse, and that is the only difference between those two types of *sati*. Once the yogi is in the *sati balaya* stage, even when they lose the *sati* and get into *miccā sati* they can laugh at themselves knowing well what had happened.

My question to you is - is it more beneficial for a yogi who has *sati* to know that they have *sati*, or is it more beneficial for a yogi to know when they have lost his *sati*? The latter is more valuable, because we will make mistakes and must learn through those mistakes. When we know that we have lost *sati* we must remain non-remorseful. It is because we always hope to be perfect and to be in *sati* all the time that we feel remorseful. This is not a realistic expectation. Ven. Sariputta said that if we break a precept what would be admirable is if we are completely remorseful and also if we mindfully know what we did. Then we would have the *sati balaya*.

This is why Ven. Nyānaponika called his book the 'Power of Mindfulness' – because when a yogi's *sati* converts from *sati indriya* to *sati balaya*, then have power and some joy. A non-meditator would never know the difference whereas a practicing yogi knows this and feels equanimous when such transgressions (in relation to breaking precepts, for instance) take place. Please remember that even *sati* is subject to change, and that when we lose it, we experience *dukkha*. Even *sati* is subject to the *tri-lakkhana* and it is only when we realize this that we will know how to move aside and 'watch ourselves' in performance.

How will we know when sati gets converted to sati bojjhanga?

Once the rest of the Enlightenment Factors develop one by one, we can then identify how *sati bojjhanga* can be differentiated from the rest. We will then be able to clearly know that *sati bojjhanga* is not any of the other Enlightenment Factors and the distinguishing features will be manifest. From there you can go to the next stage and on to *mārga anga sati*. Then it will surface from every direction with a lot of clarity.

Recently I translated a Burmese book by Mahasi Sayadaw which had about one thousand pages. He has done an immense service to our generation in spreading the Dhamma and he is one teacher who exemplified the value of *sati* to a high degree. In his book, he winds up asking the yogi to remember that *sati* is also subject to *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*, and that we will also have to let go of *sati*. The Buddha clearly says that we have to let go of even this Dhamma.

This is true. We make short notes and long notes at Dhamma talks and at retreats. When I returned from Burma I brought along with me six bags full of notes. I realized that these are all simply useful instructions for our journey on the Path. But these notes are not to be venerated daily or to be considered as a religion. Instead, if we use mindfulness regularly we will then sharpen it each time we use it. This also means that *sati* is being used and the Buddha will be happy with this situation because the yogi is truly travelling on the Path.

This is the beauty of *vipassanā*. We learn and re-learn and we realize eventually that all what we learn is subject to *anicca, dukkha* and *anatta*. And if we are able to watch this with equanimity then we are through. There is nothing really to be happy or sad about even if we are in *nicca sati*. Therefore, don't make meditation a regimentation or a very serious matter. Make it a hobby and make it fun. And also find a reason to be glad under any circumstance.

Wouldn't we have moral fear and moral dread (hiri, ottappa) when we lack sati?

Yes, but it is only because we possessed *sati* that we even know that we have transgressed. And when we **know** that we have moral fear and moral shame it means that we have had *sati* and we immediately know that we had stepped off the rails. This is a serious 'knowing' that comes from within and it only happens when we have *sati*.

Please can you explain the following: 'passambhayam kāyasankhāram assasissāmīti sikkhati'?

It is important to know that this particular saying appears in the following Suttas, namely, the Sathara Satipatthāna Sutta, Girimānanda Sutta, Ānāpānasati Sutta and Rāhulōvāda Sutta.

In relation to Insight (Vipassanā) meditation, it could be said that if this line is correctly understood by the yogi, they have entered the correct path or it can be interpreted that the yogi is qualified to practise Vipassanā.

Once a yogi sits for meditation mindfully, after having purified their virtue, they refrain from verbal and bodily misconduct. Then they make a serious attempt to suppress the five hindrances. Even if they are not totally successful they will try to suppress them to a large extent. In Serenity Meditation (*Samatha*) they proceed to completely suppress the five hindrances. In Insight Meditation the yogi makes every attempt to note and label each hindrance as it arises and then set aside each hindrance and proceed with their meditation.

During this period the yogi will he will come face to face with formations (*sankhāra*). In serenity concentration (*samatha samādhi*), *vacī sankhāra* (formations due to speech) will be removed. In *vipassanā* practise the yogi will be able to see all *sankhāra* as one of the following: *kāya sankhāra* (formations based on the body), *vacī sankhāra* (formations based on speech) or *mano/citta sankhāra* (formations based on mind states). And they will proceed to remove *kāya sankhāra* and *mano sankhāra*. This will be done in two stages, first, the yogi will see and distinguish the two formations as they appear and then they will go further to make the formations dysfunctional and then completely paralyse them making them ineffective. During this process of identifying and attacking these formations the first decisive step the yogi takes is described in - '*passambhayam kāyasankhāram assasissāmīti sikkhati*', i.e.' calming the breath and making it peaceful and smooth, I shall breathe in, thus he trains himself'.

The most minimal and lowest indicator of the living body is the breath. In the *Cūlavedalla Sutta*, the Arahant nun Dhammadinna says, *kāyasankhāra* is breathing in and out. This is because, if there is no breathing there is no body, only a corpse. Even if the breath is very fine and subtle we still refer to it as 'body' (*kāya*) - an aggregate of form (*rūpa kandha*). The lowest indicator needed to call this aggregate 'mine' or 'me' is the breath.

Once the breath disappears we don't refer to it as 'me/mine' because there is no owner. Then we call it a 'corpse'.

By calming the breath it becomes tranquilised and peaceful. In the Satipatthāna Sutta, in the *Kāyānupassanā* chapter this is described in four steps. The Buddha starts by encouraging the yogi to first note clearly, the length of the 'in' and 'out'-breath, i.e. the long breath: '*Dīgham vā assasantō dīgham assasāmīti pajānāti, Dīgham vā passasantō dīgham passasāmīti pajānāti*' and similarly the short breath: '*Rassam vā assasantō rassam assasāmīti pajānāti, Rassam vā passasantō rassam passasāmīti pajānāti*'. Also during walking meditation, the yogi would clearly note each step.

Next, the yogi will know that they are breathing in coarse/rough breaths and that they are breathing out, coarse/rough breaths. By now the yogi would have completely acquainted themselves with the breath. Mindfulness has set in and they feel as though he is face to face with breathing.

Then the Buddha instructs the yogi to continue maintaining mindfulness as the breath becomes finer and finer, and less discernible. Gradually the touch sensation of the breath on the nostril will almost disappear. At that stage, the Buddha instructs the yogi to observe the entirety of the process by observing the whole body of the breath, '*Sabbakāya patisamvēdi assasissāmīti sikkhati, sabbakāya patisamvēdi passasissāmīti sikkhati*'. By now the yogi has developed some confidence in observing each 'in' and 'out'-breath, even though the breath is more refined. When they reach this stage with confidence they can identify the beginning, middle and end of the body of each 'in' and 'out' breath i.e. the yogi notes and observes each 'in' and 'out' breath in its totality.

At this stage a certain change and significant transformation takes place in the yogi's mind-body process. The mind that was previously associated with the senses externally, begins to turn inwards. And with the progression of *ānāpānāsati*, consciousness becomes focused inwards, stationary and moves away from the senses. Although the calming of the breath and one-pointedness of the mind occur at the same time, the yogi may become disturbed and confused, and may feel isolated and they may experience sloth and torpor. This is because the yogi is unclear about what is happening and doubts if the meditation is correct. Although the yogi should become calm, composed and collected at this point they generally show the opposite traits. This is because of their own defilements (*kilesa*), self-view (*sakkāya ditthi*) and unpreparedness to face this critical juncture. If the yogi had been well prepared and forewarned, and cued wise-attention/ reflection (*yōniso manasikāra*) and wisdom, they would become calm and tranquil at this point. Usually the yogi would eagerly look for results from *ānāpānāsati* or attempt to breathe faster or may even fall asleep. The wise yogi would allow none of that, but remain calm and confident that what they are doing is actually correct.

More than 2,600 years ago, the fully enlightened, all-knowing Buddha clearly advised us on what needs to be done at this stage and it would be unwise to change track or give our own interpretation. We should simply proceed according to the Buddha's advice.

Even though the meditation is proceeding correctly, due to our own ignorance and self-view, we wish to change our posture or the teacher or the meditation centre. But if we understand this situation and learn from our mistakes, we will eventually succeed.

This particular juncture in our practise is a critical milestone. Although it doesn't signify high attainments like the *Jhānas* in *samatha* practise or Insight Knowledges as in *vipassanā*, the yogi will either correctly proceed towards progress or not. Therefore it is vital that the yogi repeatedly studies this juncture thoroughly and investigates it fully. In practise I would consider this particular juncture as the vertebral column of our practise i.e, what gives the yogi's practise strength and stability. Hence the importance of '*passambhayaṃ kāyasankhāram..*' It is at this cross-roads that the yogi will make a shift in their practise, from materiality (*rūpa dhamma*) to mentality (*nāma dhamma*), from 'doing' meditation to simply 'allowing it to happen' and from a coarse meditation to a refined meditation. The yogi assumes the role of a non-interfering, detached observer and has laid the important foundation for progress in *vipassanā* practise.

During these ten days can you advise how, based on the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, we can use Cittānupassana as a subject of meditation?

This question implies that the yogi has already started on a meditation subject of their choice. Usually my policy is to allow the yogi to start the practise by using a primary object that they are comfortable with and to allow them to proceed. Like allowing a rock that is rolling off a mountain top to simply roll down with no interference, I will simply watch how the yogi proceeds and

subsequently advise only if necessary, based on the yogi's character and personality.

During ānāpānasati when all five jhānic factors come to fruition and when one-pointedness sets in with illumination, how do I shift the focus to vipassanā?

A yogi who starts with *samatha* meditation, reaches *jhāna* and then turns to *vipassanā* has better opportunities for further progress than one who begins with *vipassanā* itself.

Yogis practising 'bare insight' always use objects based on corporeality (*rūpa/kaya*), and they have only one door open to them, whereas *jhānic* practitioners have two doors available to them (*nāma* and *rūpa*), and are therefore placed in a more advantageous position.

If a yogi is actually convinced that they have reached *jhāna* then they should investigate that state thoroughly and repeatedly. The yogi should come out of that state and re-examine the experience.

All five *jhāna* factors should be cultivated and mastered. If the yogi can stay in *jhāna* for one hour, determine to come out after 15min and do so. At that point even though they are not in *jhāna*, the yogi is free of hindrances and the mind is strong and alert, and at that stage *ānāpānasati* might come back into focus. They can then turn the *ānāpānasati* into *vipassanā*. Or, the yogi may choose one *jhānic* factor like rapture (*pīti*) which may feel like bobbing up and down in a boat on a river and turn that experience into *vipassanā*. When turning to *vipassana*, if the object the yogi chooses is *ānāpānasati* (*rūpa* dhamma) they can examine the beginning, middle and end of each in and out breath. Similarly if its *pīti* or *sukha* (joy) then it is *nāma dhamma* (i.e. *vedana*), they may examine the beginning, middle and end. Watching the arising and ceasing of either above phenomena (i.e. *rūpa dhamma* or *nāma dhamma*) is best done by noting the beginning, middle and end. That is what is meant by turning to *vipassanā*.

Sometimes it is better to do this after mastering the second *jhāna* (where *vitakka* and *vicāra* are absent), because then *pīti* is very prominent and gives a big push and encouragement to turn to *vipassana* and it therefore becomes much easier. Ven Matara Gñānārama used to advocate this method and Ven. Bikkhu Bodhi commended him for recommending this as a very good and indigenous method suited well for Sri Lankan yogis. Ven Ñānārama used to say that the yogi mind is *sō* alert and active when in second *jhāna* that it can be equated to the fourth insight knowledge, the knowledge of arising and ceasing (*udayabba ñāna*). Ven Gñānārama's book, 'Seven Stages of Purification and The Insight Knowledges' (BPS- Buddhist Publication Society), describes this phenomenon well.

Could you please discuss ānāpānasati as it is described in the Satipaṭṭhāna sutta and in the Gīrīmānanda sutta.

In the Satipaṭṭhāna sutta, *ānāpānasati* is used only for *kāyānupassanā*. In the Gīrīmānanda, Ānāpānasati and Rāhulōvāda suttas, by using *ānāpānasati* as the object for meditation the yogi can convincingly do all four satipaṭṭhānas. And it is explained how it is not necessary to do all the other meditations listed under *kāyānupassanā*. The Buddha says that by just doing *ānāpānasati* alone, the yogi can develop all seven enlightenment factors (*bojjhanga*) and that all dhammas can be realized, and so the entire list of meditations need not be done.

However, my Burmese teacher (Sayadaw U Panditha) does not agree with this position because he promotes belly movements as the object of meditation. Ven. Ñānārāma, in his book, replaced belly movements with *ānāpānasati* and that worked very well for the Sri Lankan yogis. My view is that belly movements should be recommended only if the yogi cannot feel the breath at the nostril, and that the yogi should be first advised to sit in meditation and see which works best for them. If belly movements become prominent

then the yogi directly goes into *vipassanā*, whereas if they find the breath as prominent they have two options, i.e. either *samatha* or *vipassanā*. The teacher is crucial at this juncture, for advising the yogi on which path to follow. But please remember that all these roads eventually lead to *nibbāna* and that all four suttas should be read for greater clarity.

Please explain the ten perceptions in the Girimānanda sutta and how ānāpānasati features in it.

If a person's character/trait is to be strengthened or confirmed it can be developed at three levels:

first – at the level of perception (*sañña*),

second – at the level of the mind (*citta*),

third – at the level of the view (*ditthi*).

When at the level of *sañña* it is easy to change, at the level of *citta* it is difficult but can still be changed particularly in the presence of powerful and enlightened persons like the Buddha, but at *ditthi* level it is not possible to change even for a Buddha. That is why the Buddha didn't spend much time trying to change people whom he knew had wrong view (*micchā ditthi*). If a person has the perception of permanence (*nicca*) strengthened and developed to *ditthi* level there is no point in trying to change that view, because they cannot understand *anicca*. The Buddha said to constantly reflect on the perceptions of impermanence (*anicca*), foulness (*asubha*) and 'non-self' (*anatta*). This is because these three are presently at *citta* level in all of us, and in meditation they get strengthened further and eventually develop to the *ditthi* level where that cannot be changed. There are ten perceptions mentioned in Girimānanda sutta, and the last one is *ānāpānasati*.

In the book on 'Walking Meditation' it is said that you can combine breath meditation with walking meditation. But when doing this a lot of thoughts keep flowing in. How should a yogi deal with this?

When walking we only focus on the lower part of the body, the legs, feet and ankles. When sitting we focus on the upper part of the body, keeping the lower part still. When sitting we observe the air element and its rubbing/striking feature (*vāyo phoṭṭahba dhātu*) as the draft of air moves in and out of the nostril scraping the nose or the abdomen. When walking we observe the foot making contact with the ground and the ensuing movement. When sitting we keep our mind still, only focusing on the in/out breath or the abdomen. When walking and taking left/right steps, we shift our mind focus to two places, one after the other.

Although we develop mindfulness in both types of meditation, we use two methods to do so. As the yogi keeps walking in this way, they cultivate the ability to turn their mind inwards, and not focus on external matters. Mindfulness becomes firm and turned into the body. In walking, the yogi will note that the mindfulness which first started with the soles of the feet gradually moves upwards, from the ankles, calf, legs and thighs right up to the neck and head. They will note this ascent very well, like when a train when an engine shunts, the vibrations move along the railway carriages one by one in sequence. Therefore even though the attention of the yogi is on the sole of the foot or ankle, mindfulness develops the power to move upwards in stages. This is a positive after effect of the first stages of walking.

Similarly, together with walking, the breathing, the heart beat and all other pulsatile movements can work together with the movements of the feet. For this to happen the yogi should have been walking for about 15 minutes. At such a stage, they may be able to incorporate breath meditation into walking.

Ven Gñānārama advises not to use *ānāpānasati* together with walking at the beginning. After commencing walking, if mindfulness sets in well and *samādhi* gets established, then it is appropriate to

incorporate breathing. In this situation, *ānāpānasati* is only a secondary object to walking. One can use two similes to explain this technique – first, it would be like a bull, the horns appear after the ears (always the ears appear first). Or when traveling in a car peacefully, we will first establish mindfulness and then later start *ānāpānasati*. Always establish what we started with (e.g. walking) and then move to the secondary object.

Could we use recitations and chanting to minimize the continuous flow of thoughts and mind objects (sankhāra)?

Thoughts develop as a result of corporeality (*rūpa*), feelings/sensations (*vēdana*), perceptions (*saññā*) and consciousness (*viññāna*). Repeated recitations can sometimes lead to a trance-like state and can suppress the flow of thoughts. But this is temporary and is not a permanent solution. It is not a route to understanding *sankhāra* and removing them, but just a method to avoid them, i.e. recitations don't provide a radical solution.

When in sorrow and tears flow freely what can one do? Do we just observe the tears?

If one can observe the tears it is good. Be a detached observer as though the sorrow and the tears don't belong to you.

Can you explain the relationship between kamma, viññāna, citta and cetasika?

These have very complex relationships and complicated configurations with one another, which cannot be explained by way of linear relationships. They operate in a multi-dimensional manner. The power of kamma lies in volitions (*sankhāra*) - *Cetanam Bikkhave Kammam Vadami!*. Consciousness (*viññāna*) is based on *citta* and *cetasika* comprises *saññā*, *vedanā*, and *sankhāra* (*cetana* included).

Our wants and needs facilitate *cetanā*. If we are only **observers** of our actions, no *kamma* will accumulate. If we don't **think** or **do**, but simply observe, we will be doing *vipassanā* and no *kamma* is produced. We need to observe without producing *cetana* (volition). When we simply become 'observers' and not 'doers' or 'thinkers' we automatically become disciplined in our minds.. If we are successful in learning to observe *kāya sankhāra* as they arise and cease, then observing thoughts and feelings in a similar fashion becomes easy. We must learn the art of being a non-reactive, detached observer. Then we are able to create an inner-space, that we can always be in. As though we have handed over the driving to an auto-pilot, we become free from time and space, and simply non-reactive passengers where we don't know where we are going or what we are doing. It's a feeling of total freedom like *nibbāna*.

In *passambhayam kāyasankhāram assasissāmīti sissatī* we don't totally eliminate *kamma* but we develop a state where *kamma* formations are almost non-existent. In that state, as I explained before, we are unaware of where we are or what we are; whether we are asleep or not, whether we are meditating or not, i.e. it is a death-like state, like *nibbāna*.

Does this mean we need to experience near-death? That is quite traumatic.

Yes, it can be traumatic. I did my first retreat in 1979 with Sri Munindra-ji, in the premises of a Catholic church near a river where I was the only Sinhalese Buddhist. The rest were mostly non-Buddhists. Sri Munindra-ji said that we would experience deathlessness only after experiencing death through meditation. And he explained the importance of experiencing the 'pain' of death so that going beyond and transcending the death-like state becomes pain free.

Can the state of 'passambhayam kāyasankhāram..' be equated to the state of equanimity (upekkhā)?

This stage can be referred to as the entry point or the very beginning of *upekkha*, although it does not have all the features and the hallmarks of total equanimity. In the preliminary stages of 'passambhayam...' the yogi is already watching the onset of *upekkha*, the early stages of the middle way. The yogi ceases to get provoked by disturbances and simply watches what unfolds before them. It is our nature to get provoked.

The Buddha said in that it is our true nature to respond and react to all that confronts us. Therefore during this stage of meditation we need to sit still, be observant and allow our minds to be passive, and adopt a nihilistic attitude.

It is good to be like the lion in the jungle who, unlike other animals will not react to each and every disturbance. He will just watch - passive and detached. Similarly I would advise all of you who lead busy active lives to adopt such an attitude and be with an inquiring mind. When reaching such stages in meditation, disclaim all disturbances and distractions that flow in, avoid all temptations to move or react. Gradually you will reach tranquility, and *niramisa pithi sukha* – immaterial pleasures. Watch the cessation of all thoughts and movements - that is *vipassanā*.

In order to come to such a state you first need to stabilize your serenity. It is through *samatha* that you will reach such calmness. But once you get there, turning such a moment into *vipassanā* is a meditative skill you need to develop. It is like how a driver learns to shift gears when driving. Only the skilled driver knows at what stage they need to change to the second gear or third. No instruction book can advise them on that. The yogi will know intuitively the correct moment to switch to *vipassanā*. It is your own research and investigative ability that will guide you.

Can you explain the energies that we encounter in our meditative practice?

All phenomena start with different energies. In *vipassanā* we try to reach the source, the primordial form of each energy. These manifest as sounds, tastes, smells and so on. The investigative mind trained with the ability to trace the energy source, is *vipassana* practise.

It is like the projector, although we see the drama with its actors vividly on the screen, if we trace the source of the picture we go back to the light which originates from the projector, and then right back to the celluloid film, where what we see is something totally different to what is on the screen. This is like in *vipassanā*, we trace each phenomenon back to its primordial form. Then we can see that our differences lie in the 'celluloid' state. The 'light beam' is similar in all of us (*prabāshwara aloākaya* or un-tainted unconsciousness). It is said that all human beings are greatly similar to one another and the differences amount to only about 2%, i.e., 98% of people are all the same in their RNA/DNA levels. Which means that all the conflicts in the world take place due to this meager 2% difference, and if we disregard that small percentage we can develop the good qualities of humanity to a large degree. Actually we believe we are different because of the defilements we possess. Our defilements like jealousy, greed, hatred, anger etc predominate due to the ignorance we have. In deep states of meditation we will realize that all people are the same and that we all have the same primordial states, and that we all have the same 32 parts of the body. *Vipassanā* teaches us to investigate this ultimate reality.

The Buddha said our challenge is to first understand corporeality (*rūpa*) and to see its arising and passing away. The ability to see the other aggregates in a similar fashion will come naturally as one advances in meditation. When *rūpa* can be observed clearly, the arising and ceasing of *vēdanā*, *sannā* etc. will happen like a dominoe effect.

In *vipassanā* practise the mind is alert and investigative. In *samatha* we are tranquil and almost 'anaesthetised'. But without *samatha* we cannot practise *vipassanā* because a racing mind that is not calm will

not have the ability to see things clearly. Humans are the only beings that can practise *samatha-vipassanā*, because we have the ability to investigate, research and see the primordial states of all beings and situations. With *vipassanā* we will be able to see people minus any prejudice.

People try to avoid understanding suffering (*dukkha*). They wish to ignore suffering. This is due to ignorance, and it will only lengthen the journey in *samsāra*. Everyone has experienced the pain of suffering – the doctor and his patient, teacher and pupil, king and subject. All people have the same suffering. The Buddha said, suffering is the worst thing in the world. But he also said that there is no greater pleasure in *samsāra* than being able to understand suffering in its true form.

Please explain how Ven. Katukurunde Nānānanda describes nibbāna in his book - (Nibbana- the Mind Stilled)

Nibbāna can be explained through the five aggregates or *khandas*—*rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *sankhāra* and *viññāna*.

The *nibbana* in relation to form/corporeality - *rūpa* can be described as 'space'. If, after contemplating the four elements (*dhātu* - *paṭhavī*, *āpo*, *tejo*, *vāyo*) thoroughly, the yogi is able to discern the 'space' in between, they will realize that this 'space' will not show the presence of any of the four elements. But until the yogi knows the presence of the *rūpa dhātu* and their specific characteristics with certainty, they will not realize their non-existence or the space found in between. Therefore it is important to first experience the four elements thoroughly and to master them. Then at a particular moment the yogi realizes an area/space which they will find hard to describe. This would seem like 'nothingness' or emptiness, and it will not be subject to *anicca*. Therefore this state could be referred to as the *nibbāna* with respect to *rūpa*. *Dhātu* has substance and it is not empty, and therefore it is subject to change - *anicca* and will undergo transformation and therefore will be 'non-self' (*anatta*). Whereas 'space' is not subject to any transformation because there

is nothing to change, only emptiness. It will never cause suffering and it is anyhow also, 'non-self'.

However, this gap or 'space' will be discernible only after the four elements have been repeatedly experienced and set aside. As we know in Physics, we first identify 'matter' thoroughly and it is only then that we identify 'dark matter'. Similarly we need to thoroughly identify 'dark matter' before we can approach 'dark energy'. If less than four percent of the world consists of 'matter' and if about 26% of the world comprises 'dark matter' (which would total up to about 30%), the balance 70% would account for 'dark energy' which we cannot identify or discern. We could assume that 'dark energy' has a void/emptiness, and therefore there will be no suffering and it will be non-self; and this could be described as *nibbāna*.

In the case of feelings/sensations - *vedanā*, pleasant and unpleasant feelings can be identified. But the transition from one to the other (*sukha* to *dukkha* and vice versa) is always via the neutral feeling – *adukkhamasukha*. But we are never sharp enough to experience this because we are so fanatically engrossed in experiencing either *sukha* or *dukkha*. It is only after we have thoroughly and totally experienced both *sukha* and *dukkha* with mindfulness that we would observe the 'black box' in between, and this is referred to as the 'middle way'. Therefore we must consider both pleasant and unpleasant feelings in a choiceless manner to be in our meditative path and principle, and we should not avoid nor ignore unpleasant (or pleasant) feelings. Instead we should master the art of observing both in their totality. Once these two feelings are mastered and perfected then we would be literally pushed into the middle point – the indescribable and inconspicuous state of neutrality - *adhukkhamasuka*. In worldly pursuits if pleasant and unpleasant feelings are part and parcel of *samsāra*, then the Path that seems like *nibbāna* would be the neutral feeling because it is a state that will not stimulate, provoke or trigger our emotions in any way, i.e. it is solidly set in the middle way. And this could be referred to as *nibbāna* or at least the sure pathway to *nibbāna* in relation to *vedanā*.

Perception – *saññā* - can be experienced in meditation in different ways. The yogi encounters a particular stage in *ānāpānasati* after the breath becomes very fine and subtle. This state is not describable and it does not fall into the categories of normal *saññā* or any other category. You may even wonder if you are asleep. This could be referred to then and there as the *nibbāna* of *saññā*.

Formations- *sankhāra* - can be classified as mental formations consequent to bodily action (*kāya sankhāra*), speech (*vacī sankhāra*) or the mind (*mano/citta sankhāra*). During *ānāpānasati* when the breath gets very refined and subtle, *kāya sankhāra* is being tamed. This is called the most subtle form of the breath. When this happens we feel very uneasy, nervous and isolated. And this subtle state is tangible and can be experientially identified. But, with respect to this it is difficult to catch the taming of *citta sankhāra*. Suppose you can master *citta sankhāra* as well, and when all three *sankhāra* (*kāya*, *vacī* and *mano*) are mastered thoroughly, then the yogi will experience a stage where all *sankhāra* are tamed – *sabba sankhāra samata*. This is a situation that cannot be described and communicated, and this can be referred to as *nibbāna* of *sankhāra*. *When the breath become subtle, accordingly one must be alert to maintain this subtle state so that furthering of the same, i.e. citta sankhara also will be calmed accordingly.*

Consciousness – *viññāna* - can be explained at three levels. At the level of the *kāmaloka* it would be all the worldly senses and associated consciousness, i.e. *indriyapātibaddha viññāna*. But once *ānāpānasati* gets more and more refined the yogi would get somewhat separated from the six sense faculties and then they develop a state of inner-peace, a blissful state rather devoid of the six sense input. This is referred to as *anindriyapātibaddha viññāna*. Usually the uninstructed and unprepared yogis are fearful of this stage and accordingly they would start breathing fast or they would open the eyes in surprise. If on the other hand the yogi just waits with no interference. They would feel something like going back 'home', to the original level of consciousness. Until up to such a moment, even if we had lived a hundred years without any

meditation, we would have lived enslaved and captured by the six senses. All our life in all the disciplines we have studied, the jobs we have done, the professions/vocations we have mastered, are all products of the six senses, and we did all that we did only for the enrichment of the six sense faculties. If, one day we decide to turn away from such a state and instead look inwards we will see a true, relatively unadulterated state of consciousness, with no identity. In order to experience such a state we need to purify our selves, originally with virtue and a high degree of faith – *saddhā*. But this is not *nibbāna*.

This state too should be mastered to perfection and then we will see deep beneath that state a non-manifested consciousness – a state similar to no consciousness .

When individual rivers with identifiable names separately flow into the sea, at a particular point they each lose their identity and they become one with the ocean. Each river would get incorporated/dissolved into the ocean. Similarly, our individual consciousness, which we hitherto considered as me/mine/I , gets 'dissolved' into a common state of consciousness with no identity remaining. As long as we are boxed into our own little identity with the me/mine/I concept, we are ordinary uninstructed worldlings - *puthujjana* , trapped within the conventional dimensions of time, space and person. But once our consciousness gets dissolved, it loses its sense of time and space and identity, and it would seem like no consciousness . And this is the third type and the most primordial form of consciousness.

In all five aggregates, *rūpa*, *vedanā*, *saññā*, *sankhāra* and *viññāna* , we come across a stage, at least temporarily where, although we are not in *nibbāna* we can reach states that are describable as *nibbāna*. But yogis don't know that this is in fact the middle way and they don't know that we need special effort to master these stages in meditation without fear or apprehension. When approaching these states most yogis feel nervous and they interrupt their meditation. This is entirely due to the yogi's defilements and the me/mine/I concept. This is why yogis will open the eyes, stretch the

legs , breathe fast or do something to stop the momentum of the meditation. This is a great pity.

I urge you to remember and learn from all the mistakes you have made over time. Every mistake you have made has a message included in it and it is your task to learn from it. A yogi's meditative development will essentially depend on the mistakes they have made over time. Every yogi makes mistakes and therefore yogis who feel shy about their mistakes and don't want to learn from them will not progress. What should make the yogi pleased with themselves is that the mistakes made were a result of meditation and not a result of engaging in unwholesome activity like killing or stealing. Therefore, always consider that the meditation you have done so far is a huge investment and you should continue to venerate such an investment. Developing a positive attitude and always feeling that you 'can' do it rather than you 'cannot' will be helpful . Develop confidence in what you have learnt so far and make it an instrument to face the future. Do not be afraid of the disturbances and challenges you will face in your meditation because you will need those to progress on the Path.

Instead of preparing ourselves to face the problems we will encounter during meditation, we habitually try to avoid problems or we take insurance policies, we deposit money or we hire private security or we take every possible step to avoid the situation. This is because we still believe that merely venerating the Buddha will make us reach *nibbāna*. This is a serious misconception. We should always bravely face the suffering that comes to us. The more we face the problems and learn to approach them with wisdom as the Buddha taught, the more spiritually mature we will become. This has been cited clearly in the Buddhist scriptures, where the Bodhisatva had rejected the two extremes of addiction to sensory pleasure (*kāma-sukh'allikānuyoga*) and self mortification (*attakilamatānuyoga*), realizing that both were foolish endeavours . And the Bodhisatva learnt from those mistakes. On the night of the enlightenment the 'teacher' who gave him the subject of meditation was none other than Prince Siddhartha – the little boy, who, at the King's ploughing festival attained deep states of absorption – *Jhāna*.

These are the points that I recollect from my readings of the book- '*Nibbana - the Mind Stilled*' by Ven. K. Ānānanda.

Furthermore, Buddhist Commentaries point out that when we are developing mindfulness it is always mindfulness that will help us. And this is how we will develop in our meditation- by learning from the mistakes we make. Today's mistakes in mindfulness practice will be overcome only by learning from yesterday's mindfulness and its flaws, and not by using any drug or injection. This is one of the reasons I deeply respect those who attempt to meditate. When some yogis who attend meditation classes ridicule newcomers by gloating over their own achievements I feel very uneasy and this is why I never encourage yogis to focus on attainments/achievements. I wish they would simply focus on their practice here and now and nothing more. When a yogi is sincerely on the Path, they will realize that it is not a label or a designation that is of value but only perseverance. The less the yogi expects, the more they will progress in *vipassanā*. If you keep on expecting attainments you will only meet with your defilements and impure mind states, i.e. you will be facing ignorance and suffering.

The *nibbāna*-like-states experienced as the 'space element' in *rūpa khanda* or the depth of the neutral feeling experienced in *vedanā* or similarly the other states mentioned in relation to *saññā*, *sankhāra*, *viññāna* can never be understood in a theoretical sense. Books will give fine examples but unless there is an experiential realization of these states the yogi will not progress in the Path. There is a popular Zen story, where the teacher points at the moon and tells the yogi, "there is the moon". The yogi looks at the teacher's pointed finger tip and says, "where is the moon, I can't see it". The student only sees as far as the tip of the teacher's finger and cannot project it to see the moon. The teacher only shows the way, the student has to do their own 'looking' to actually see the moon (i.e. *nibbāna*), because the teacher can't draw a line between the tip of his finger and the moon.

During meditation, after a while I experience a light and I feel like continuing my meditation. But a little later the light disappeared and then I lost the 'GO' I previously had and therefore I felt like stopping. Why did that light appear and then disappear?

Although at the start we experience light and calmness as part of *samādhi*, later, once we get to *vipassanā* we feel less enthusiastic and as though there is no 'go' in the meditation. That is the reality of *vipassanā*. Commonly we abandon meditation at this stage and then decide to watch TV, have a chat with someone or direct our senses outwards in some way. On the other hand if we continue to look inwards we will never see anything pleasant, only ugliness. This is because when we direct our attention inwards we encounter our defilements, the thirty two body parts and all the suffering, and then we keep seeing all this as me/mine/I.

That is why it is essential to keep repeating this exercise over and over again, in intervals, and if you do so you may see some change. Please do not expect to see change during meditation, but if you keep experiencing calmness and light followed by the uncertainty you mentioned, then the cycle gets repeated and that shows progress. It shows that you are now coping with this change well. Fluctuation is a good sign. And if you can remain equanimous during the changes you experience (high and low) then that is progress.

You may feel some doubt and you may question your methods, you may feel like you have not attained anything and that you have had to exert more effort than you would have in any other task but yet there is no achievement. During the stages of purification, after 'Purification of Virtue' (*sīla vīssuddhi*), 'Purification of Mind' (*citta vīssuddhi*) and 'Purification of View' (*ditthi vīssuddhi*) we encounter a stage of 'Purification by Overcoming Doubt' (*kankhāvitāraṇa vīssuddhi*), and this stage is common when the yogi sees a lot of doubt in the Path they are travelling.

The yogi may feel a state of 'nothingness' = like a reptile that has shed his worn out skin. Yogis often tend to change teachers or the meditation Centers during this stage, not realizing that in fact they

are on the Path and that they are progressing. But they must not entertain any ill-will or anger during such a stage. If with a lot of patience and determination a yogi can reach the stage of 'Purification by Knowledge and Vision of What is the Path and What is not the Path' (*maggāmaggañānadassana vīssuddhi*), then it would be like when a person who had been lost in a dark, dense and dangerous forest manages to crawl out under very harsh conditions and sees the sun shining in the open distance. Such a yogi feels greatly rewarded and relieved, and this is a situation where the yogi's resolve is tested to the maximum.

Entertaining doubt and being unable to know with confidence that they are in fact on the correct path or not, are the worst problems such yogis face. They experience this also because they can't let go of what they hold on to and can't develop the 'Beginner's Mind' as described in Zen teachings. This is when we should follow the Buddha's advice like a total novice and forget our conventional positions and assets in society and be prepared (the way the scout masters advise) with no expectations whatsoever. Opportunists or those with big egos will not succeed, because this endeavor needs a lot of humility and simplicity.

Sati, samādhi and saddhā appear and disappear with such frequency that the yogi must learn to be extremely equanimous in all such situations. Because none of these three will remain in the same intensity at any point. Similarly the light will appear and disappear. This is because all these characteristics are subject to change (*anicca*), they cause discontent (*dukkha*) and they are non-self (*anatta*). And this is the pattern for every yogi. But many tend to take this personally, and they take it as me, mine and my self. But having equanimity (*upekkha*) helps us to face these vicissitudes in our practice and the Buddha has amply equipped us with the necessary instruments to meet these inevitable situations.

My mind is very disturbed in normal life and therefore when I reach the third or fourth jhāna how will I know for sure?

First, I am curious how a person with a self-proclaimed disturbed mind will reach the third/fourth *jhāna*. But more importantly, what I need to emphasize is that there is no method or instrument devised as yet to identify if one has reached *jhāna* and if so at what level. A famous Russian spiritual teacher, Mr. D.J. Gurdjeff used to name his teachings - 'Dhamma from the other World'. When his students in the audience used to ask him if he had actually experienced his teachings, the teacher's reply was, 'even if I am to say 'yes' or 'no', do you have a way of verifying what I am saying?'. We must be aware that when we pose such questions, it shows doubt and uncertainty in our minds. If a fellow yogi claims that they have reached certain attainments (all of which will be non-verifiable), we need not accept, reject nor investigate their claims, and instead it is advisable to have a suspended decision on such matters. It is the same with oneself too.

Does reaching enlightenment mean that one has achieved a stage of saint-hood (e.g. sotāpanna) or does it mean eradication of defilements?

Once we keep eradicating our defilements one by one, we will eventually see enlightenment. Recently I read an article where Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi had advised to consider eradicating defilements and enlightenment as two separate events. However, Ven. Katukurunde Ñānānanda takes these as simultaneous events. But both these situations remain purely theoretical because what we experience is something entirely different from the theory.

My advice is not to worry on such matters but to use every opportunity we get, to erase our defilements and to continue the practice of mindfulness. There is the story of the 'last straw that broke the camel's back' – similarly, with diligent practice we will continue to eradicate our defilements one by one and progress in

the gradual Path. At a particular point we will make the breakthrough. Although it is the cumulative effort made until then that would contribute to such an event, it would appear as though the last thrust was the deciding and critical factor. Even after a budding lotus bud emerges from the muddy waters it will still remain a bud and not burst into full bloom until the sun shines on it. The emergence from the water is like our job to rid ourselves of defilements, if not, the mind will not be free of the 'water' and able to face the external influence (like the sun) that will make the defining difference.

Sometimes during ānāpānasati I feel the breath very refined and in the chest region as though in the lungs and sometimes outside the body. Please explain the significance of this experience.

The Buddha clearly says that if a yogi claims to have felt the breath during meditation that in reality they should have experienced its eleven facets or characteristic forms.

The eleven characteristic forms are:

the past/present/future form,

coarse/refined,

far/near,

within/outside the body,

pleasant/unpleasant.

The characteristic you have experienced appears to fall into refined and outside forms. We feel concerned here because our 'bodily' boundaries seem to disappear and this is contrary to the 'me/mine/I' concept. When the limitations and boundaries dissolve and the breath is felt outside or sometimes in the head, we feel as if we are hallucinating. But these are all literally possible scenarios in the practice. And if we have continuous uninterrupted mindfulness we will not feel frightened, and the yogi will realize the variety and the diversity expressed by the 'in'/'out' breath.

The Buddha advised us to be prepared to accept these changes and warns us not to be disturbed or confused, but to repeatedly experience these changes.

The yogi who has followed this advice will first note the coarseness and then go on to experience the rest of the facets and manifestations as described. In the Rahulovāda Sutta the Buddha advised young Ven. Rahula, 'If during your life time you have repeatedly experienced all the eleven facets of *ānāpānasati*, I can assure you that in your dying moments as well you will experience the last 'out'-breath mindfully.' Even at death the mind will not be disturbed if this advice is followed. Therefore my advice to you is instead of being concerned and attentive to external matters during your daily life, be very attentive to all aspects of *ānāpānasati*, and this will reward you with a clear and non-distracted mind state at the time of death as well.

Usually new comers to meditation will experience about four or five positive facets, characteristics of *ānāpānasati* and it is only when you repeatedly engage in this exercise with continuous mindfulness that you will experience eleven characteristics choicelessly. Sometimes a yogi may notice that *ānāpānasati* may interact with a thought, at which point the 'thought' will take prominence and *ānāpānasati* will get relegated to the background. Or the thought may completely take over the yogi's attention and *ānāpānasati* will disintegrate into nothingness. However, despite all these disturbances if the yogi remains vigilant and mindful, and if they do not develop ill will towards the disturbance they will then succeed in experiencing some of the eleven facets, characteristics which are not prominent otherwise. Whenever the yogi develops anger toward disturbances and gets distracted by these events they will always remain at square one and not move forward. What is unique is that, during each disturbance the yogi is presented with a golden opportunity of experiencing yet another facet or aspect of *ānāpānasati*, and they should wisely use it.

Therefore even though at the start the yogi seeks a quiet, secluded place to meditate, eventually they will be accomplished to deal with

each disturbance with wisdom where ever they are meditating diligently. In this way they enhance their capacity to observe the 'in'/'out' breath continuously and all eleven characteristics of the breath. The yogi then matures in the Path substantially he begins to understand *anicca* and *dukkha*. They learn to cope with discontent and also how to 'recycle' *dukkha* and use it to progress. Therefore the yogi must understand that unless they master all eleven facets/aspects of *ānāpānasati* they may fall into a false sense of confidence thinking that they know *ānāpānasati*. Because until that happens they will actually not know it.

It is common for yogis to get angry when in the meditation hall someone bangs the door, or coughs or ruffles a shopping bag noisily. They then react immediately asking, 'why did this happen to me, particularly when I was meditating so well?' A wise yogi, when experiencing such a noise or when encountering such a thought, would note it mindfully but swiftly revert to observing the breath whenever possible and not get carried away by that impediment.

They would in fact be happy that they were able to return to mindfulness so promptly. The more you become familiar with this method of remedying the situation, the quicker you will progress. If however, the yogi had been actually very mindful they would not 'hear' sounds and it is only when mindfulness is brittle and not continuous that these disturbances affect you. The wise yogi will also be happy at such disturbances because they would enable them to look at themselves critically and learn lessons to use in future meditation. And invariably, the mindfulness the yogi subsequently develops will be stronger and more durable.

Ven. Webu Sayadaw explains this by saying that if a yogi's mindfulness is interrupted by another's cough it would be indicative of how fragile the mindfulness was. It was so fragile that even a cough was able to break the mindfulness. And he advises the yogi to contemplate on how they could convert their weak mindfulness into a strong one. When the yogi challenges themselves thus, they progress with a stronger and more mature *sati* than before and can meditate anywhere under any circumstance.

Please advise on walking meditation, whether we contemplate on 'left, right' initially but later move to 'lifting, moving, placing'. Please can you advise the technique that you use?

According to a famous joke amongst Burmese monks, certain teachers used to ask their pupils to not fail to practice what they preach. But they also ask them to not follow what they practice. Similarly, in my personality, my methods of walking meditation are totally different from what I teach. You would not want to emulate me in that regard. I do walking meditation very fast and in a very unorthodox manner. This may be due to my athletic nature.

But the important point is that firstly, walking meditation is common to both *samatha* and *vipassanā* practitioners. Secondly, to all new comers my advice is to start by noting the feet moving as; left- right, left - right. If the yogi notices the hardness/softness of the ground, or the coolness/ heat while practicing in this way, the teacher during the interview will gauge that the yogi is actually veering towards *vipassanā* practise (or *samatha*). If the yogi is more towards *samatha* the teacher will then encourage the yogi to keep going in this manner repeatedly. Instead, if the teacher concludes that the yogi's tendencies are towards *vipassanā*, he will then advise the yogi to break each step into two, namely; lifting-dropping. Once that is mastered he will be instructed accordingly to note three phases/or notings per step , namely; lifting, moving, placing – in each of the left and right step.

If the mindfulness is stronger the *vipassanā* yogi can go even deeper and contemplate the elements in each step, such as the hardness or coolness of the ground when placing the foot. This is the typical Burmese technique, of three stages. The Visuddhimagga goes into six stages. According to this Burmese *vipassanā* method once the noting of physical three steps is mastered the yogi is instructed to observe the intention (*nama dhamma*), i.e, intention to lift and lifting, followed by the intention to move and moving, followed by the intention to place and placing. This would include intention - *nama dhamma* as well as *rūpa dhamma*. If the yogi moves fast during that advanced way of noting, they tend to lose balance and

sway to and fro, this would mean that the pace of change of position has exceeded their limits of concentration. They will then be advised to revert back to one step. Which means to note lifting and placing only. The teacher will need to then alter the method to suit the individual yogi. This is some brief advice for the time being.

This is true *vipassanā* practice. On the other hand the *samatha* practitioner will only engage in the left/right practice and that is adequate since he does walking meditation purely to get concentration.

Please can you explain Nirodha?

The third Noble Truth - *nirodha* -cannot be explained in words, it needs to be experienced and realized, and in order to do this you need a lot of *saddhā*. We will try to experience it during this retreat as much as possible, through our own practice! Instead you may try to see the end of 'in' breath and 'out' breath as a training.

If a yogi feels the breath at the nostril and wonders how long he will be able to experience it in that same position, will it be an obstacle to meditation?

My advice is to allow the breath to remain in that position and simply continue to watch it . Only observe what is happening and don't be a 'doer'. The breath will appear to be there or may even appear to not be there. Ven. Ñānārāma used to say if you had been with the breath in that manner for ten minutes, try to remain for another five to ten minutes, and so on. You then get into the 'autopilot' phase and you are simply a passive and detached 'observer'. Eventually the yogi becomes very comfortable with that situation and becomes quite seasoned. The breath will become very fine and refined at that stage and the yogi will notice it only very slightly, and quite different to how they noticed it previously. It would be like how we would see the moon at noon, as opposed to how we would see the moon at night. This is a sure sign of progress.

In any situation (e.g. breath meditation or the rising and falling of the abdomen, walking meditation, or when we experience emotions) we should learn to experience the beginning, middle and end. This enables us to see its arising and ceasing. Then we will have the capacity to understand each occurrence as soon as it arises without any delay or negligence. Usually we notice, every occurrence only once it is fully established and gross. This is due to our lack of diligence. Like the coarse breath or anger when it is full blown. Once the yogi gets used to this particular observation with diligence they will be accomplished in noting each feeling, thought and emotion as and when it arises. This is a Noble Path and the Dhamma in practice.

Like when we switch on the TV if the screen is full of dots as we keep watching we feel quite frustrated. Then if you focus your attention on one dot only, you will realize that it will arise on its own, that it will never collide with another dot, and that it will cease on its own. This is the lesson we can learn from *ānāpānasati*, or by walking meditation. Each 'dot' is like each tiny breath, it will not collide with a sound/pain/thought unless the yogi has an underlying tendency of ill-will or anger and no diligence. And if you learn to note anger as it arises then you are bound to see it's fading away. It is only we who disturb the disturbance such as noise, because the noise doesn't disturb us. If we learn to note any seeing, hearing etc, just like a blind, deaf, dumb person we will never be in conflict with them. And only humans have this potential on non-reaction to external stimuli.

An untrained mind will keep reacting to any and every stimulus and it will make judgements and have opinions, and pronounce the verdict without allowing even a moment to pass. Therefore the more prepared we are when in sitting meditation the more capable we will be in meeting these adversaries. We can then learn to let go of each as they arise with wisdom. We will not allow these defilements to take hold of us and control us. They say that if your mindfulness is well established it will allow you to 'spy' on yourself as though a civil defense protection mechanism is in operation. This is usually difficult because of the delusion we have about ourselves, and because we can't 'look' at ourselves critically due to the

'me/mine/I' concept. The skill is to learn to 'see' but to instantly 'disclaim' our possible defilements, saying they are not 'me/mine/I'.

This would be like a dream seen by a man who is dumb, because he cannot articulate what he saw.

When taking a meal, munching food as well mixing food occur at the same time. Please explain if this is permissible. Also, can you explain if we should keep our hands still when munching food?

This is an important question because, usually when lay people engage in a meal it is an opportunity for entertainment. Often there is a lot of chattering, laughter, the TV is switched on or there will be music and so on. This is what is commonly referred to as *bojhana sangraha (parties)*. In a monastery or in a meditation retreat centre you would experience the complete opposite. Just like what you are experiencing now. And this is a very good experience.

The Buddha constantly warned about the importance of exercising sense-restraint (*indriya samvara*) during meal times. The Buddha advised bhikkhus on the subject of heedlessness at meal times, particularly in reference to the four *parājika dhammas* (i.e. the four conditions which could lead to a bhikkhu being expelled from the *bhikkhu sangha* community). According to the monastic code of discipline (*vinaya*) instituted by the Buddha, a bhikkhu can be expelled from the *sangha* community if he violates or doesn't conform to four of these rules. And these rules are binding, in order to remain within the *sangha* community. The Commentaries of the Connected Discourses (*Samyutta Nikaya*) refer to an instance where the Buddha said that, if for some reason he would have had to institute a fifth such disciplinary rule (*pārajika dhamma*) then it would necessarily have been in relation to un-mindfulness when partaking of a meal.

If the Buddha had in fact instituted that fifth rule, I doubt if even a single member of the *bhikkhu sangha* would be able to conform to it. I say this because it is natural for anyone to be very unmindful at meal times. Although heedlessness at meal times is not considered

as violating a precept, it is as important and as sacred in terms of the Dhamma, due to its direct relevance to exercising sense-restraint. There is an interesting story connected to this subject going back to the time of King Ashoka. The King, as you know, having waged war (especially the Kalinga war) and caused a lot of destruction for many years, underwent much remorse and wished to turn over a new leaf and therefore looked towards the Dhamma. Until such time the King was a Hindu devotee and it had been his practice to daily offer food to the Hindu priests, Brahmins.

The Commentaries say that these Brahmins after partaking of a huge meal would have excess food stuck to their beards so that crows would peck and eat the crumbs off their chins. It was also said that the Brahmins ate so much that it would be difficult for them to raise themselves from the seat after each meal. And the eating went on for very long time and that left-overs from each meal are strewn all over the dining area. The King had commented that when he watched this performance on a daily basis he developed no faith (*saddhā*).

One day the King had watched one of his nephews (the son of one of his brothers whom he had slain, due to the fear of being overthrown from the ruler ship) – a novice monk – walking mindfully in a very calm and composed manner. He had then invited the young novice to come and take a seat. Since the others present belonged to laity, the monk had seated himself on the King's throne which was the highest seat available. The King had then invited the monk to partake in an alms offering the following day at which point the monk had said that he could not accept such an invitation on his own, and that he would pass on the invitation to his teacher, the senior monk, and would act depending on his response. The next day, the senior monk and the novice monks attended the King's alms offering and partook of the meal with such mindfulness and dignity that the King immediately felt immense faith and confidence in the *bhikkhu sangha*. This proved to be the initiation of the Dhamma journey for King Asoka.

I am relating all this to impress upon you the importance of partaking in meals with mindfulness. It is a vital component of the Dhamma. Having said all this I should also relate my personal experiences in this department. I had a huge battle within myself to fulfill this requirement of the *sīla*, in the early stages of monkhood. But now, after being a monk with twenty years (plus) seniority, I can afford to advise my fellow junior monks and yogis like you. It should be clear to you that this is not my individual opinion, but the importance of this aspect of *sīla* was made clear to me at the time I got ordained and it was also made very clear that this 'rule' was not negotiable. My teachers used to be very critical of me in this regard and on one occasion I was told that even a lay female devotee would have better mindfulness at meal times than me, who was a bhikkhu with higher ordination at that time. I was made to understand what was expected of a monk and similarly what non-meditators would expect of meditating yogis, i.e. the quality of sense-restraint. At meal times, when bathing and when using toilet facilities, the Buddha expected sixteen disciplinary rules to be followed by bhikkhus in partaking a meal. This is all part of the monastic code of discipline (*vinaya pitaka*).

I would like to return to the question that was asked at the beginning - if munching and mixing food could be done at the same time. If mindfulness had been established when sitting for the meal, both these actions cannot occur at the same time. Once you are totally mindful about munching food, the hand will automatically become still. Once the yogi becomes conscious of this, they will automatically become mindful when sitting for a meal. When mixing food they will not be swallowing and likewise when swallowing food they will be doing nothing else. Only one thing is to be done at one time. Mindfulness and attentiveness can be developed on one thing only always, with full awareness.

Similarly, the Buddha says that when a bhikkhu wears a robe he needs to do so with mindfulness; contemplating that he is doing so to cover his nakedness and to protect himself from insects and the exigencies of weather, and not for fashion nor adornment. In the

case of alms food, the Buddha advises that the bhikkhu takes the meal not for greed nor to beautify the body, but to simply quench the hunger and for sustenance.

When bhikkhus enter a temple, a monastery or any sacred premises the Buddha advises the bhikkhu to contemplate mindfully on entering the building, why he is entering it, and the Dhamma he hopes to practice in the premises. When sitting or lying down the bhikkhu should not allow his bare skin to touch the chair or wall so that it will be smeared with sweat or grease. This is why bhikkhus put a cloth on the seat before sitting or leaning anywhere.

Therefore consider eating mindfully as a 'meditation' that should be practiced with great care. In the Mahasi Centre in Burma, when the bhikkhus and yogis serve themselves and sit down to eat, they would all have to first recite a verse in unison prior to eating mindfully. Ven. Sayadaw would not commence eating until everyone else had finished and he would walk around watching if every morsel had been eaten without any waste. This is because the Burmese lay supporters were very poor and he didn't want any of the food offered wasted.

Therefore remember to eat every meal mindfully so that you do not interrupt your mindfulness and also so that you would inspire others to take up the practice. Others would be able to 'judge' your mindfulness and conduct, by watching you partake in a meal. The Dhamma talk tonight will also be on sense-restraint, therefore we can take this discussion up in the night as well.

What is meant by a 'brahmacariya' life style and please explain the meaning of the vow, 'abrahmacariya veramni sikkhā padam samādiyami'?

The word *brahma* is used in relation to the highest heavenly realm (the *brahma* realm) from amongst the thirty two realms in the world systems as described in Buddhist cosmology. In the *brahma* realms there are no gender differences and it is therefore referred to as a realm where beings have no sexual relationships. Similarly when

human beings conduct their holy lives devoid of any form of sexual relationship, they are said to have a life style that is compatible with '*abrahmacariya*', i.e. celibate and renunciant life style. And the vow taken in this regard would mean the same thing, where we would avoid having sexual relations of any sort.

When the laity generally observe the five precepts, the third precept refers to vowing not to engage in any form of illicit/illegitimate sexual relationship. The sexual relationship between a legally married couple is exempt from this vow and does not fall within the category that refers to the third precept. However when observing eight precepts during *uposatha attanga sila* the third precept is replaced by '*abrahmacariya veramani sikkha....*' i.e taking the vow for celibacy.

I should also mention that it is only in Buddhism that celibacy is recommended during such observances, and that no other religion recommends it. The Buddha was the only spiritual leader to mention such a vow and the only one to have practiced it. The Buddha could bravely make such a pronouncement because he was the only human being who was able to successfully uproot all types of defilements (i.e. *pariutthāna kilesa*, *vītikama kilesa* and *anusaya kilesa*) and therefore prescribe the same to the followers. .

The Buddha also recommended to the *bhikkhu sangha* that they should not break the vow of celibacy at any cost. I remember when I had the intention to get ordained I had initially thought that Ven. Ampitiya Rahula, who was a great practitioner of the *vinaya*, could be my preceptor. Once when I met him and I expressed my interest on possible ordination, he cautioned me, saying that monkhood is similar to behaving like an *arahant* when you are not. Because even though we get ordained with the ultimate aim of becoming *arahants*, unless we make every effort to behave like one we would be failing in our quest. And protecting the vow of celibacy is one important component of that practise.

During our numerous journeys in *samsāra* this could in fact be the first time that we would be taking such a vow. The vow of celibacy is

therefore very powerful and that is why the Buddha recommended that monkhood should be only for volunteers who were willing to make a total commitment to the Dhamma and the *vinaya*. This vision is unique to Buddhism and is not seen in the teachings of other religions, and it would seem quite radical since it is stark deviation from accepted norms in society. But the Buddha recommended it for the sake of purity and he was a living example and a symbol of ultimate purification. As for me, I am proud to proclaim that I have kept this vow for twenty years and I can confidently say that one may deserve veneration for that practise alone.

Sati is referred to as awareness. How important is awareness for meditation? Even a thief who is planning to break into a house needs to have complete awareness and therefore this creates a doubt in me. Does the word 'sati' always imply awareness with wholesome states of mind (kusala citta)?

In meditation retreats such as this one should we give priority to enabling wholesome mind states so that sati will be automatically established?

Conventionally, *sati* is referred to as a wholesome (truly beautiful) state of mind. But Ven. Katukurunde Ñānananda used to disagree and he taught that every person's mind has *sati*, irrespective of whether he has *kusala citta* or *akusala citta* and he used to cite the '*Sariputta Sutta*' and the '*Samiddhi Sutta*' (SN) in this regard. The difference between the two would be that meditator would know how to direct their mind state towards *kusala-sati* and make use of it, whereas a non-meditator will not. The latter may develop mind states that are sometimes referred to as '*micca-sati*' (awareness on unwholesome subjects). An example would be the total awareness and direction of mind that a cat develops when it is about to pounce on a rat. This is an example of *sati*, which is not *sammā sati*. Similarly, the total attention a banker would devote towards counting a bundle of currency notes without missing a single note is also *sati*, but then again this does not fall into the *samma sati* category. What I am

trying to illustrate is that everyone does have the *sati* mind-state, but it is only a yogi who will know how to harness this and use it as *samma sati*, i.e. for wholesome/skillful activity or *kusala*. In order to do this the Buddha recommended that we direct our mindfulness towards a neutral object (as opposed to the cat facing the mouse, or the banker towards his notes).

I would like to offer some synonyms to *sati*: exercising choiceless-awareness, choiceless-attention, evenly suspended attention, non-reaction, non-judgement, awareness/attention without judgment and an unassuming nature. *Samma sati* will be without any trace of greed, hatred or delusion, and it is a neutral mind-state. It could be compared to what a third umpire (the replay video) does in a cricket match – pronouncing the verdict in an objective and completely non-partisan manner. Then there is no possibility of human error. *Samma sati* is not easy for a lay person to develop (because they always value the judgemental mind) as long as perception (*saññā*) remains. This is because we will always judge according to our memories. This is why we need to commence a de-learning process and to develop a beginner's mind which is devoid of past impressions, opinions and judgments, i.e. a process of de-conditioning. This would mean going back to our babyhood or childhood. When we were babies we could touch gold or faeces without any difference, since we didn't have an impression or past memory about either. An *arahant's* mind is like that of a baby, it is devoid of judgement or perception, it is simple and has choiceless-awareness. Therefore we need to have mind-states that are pure, with no pro-active intentions, and such is the *sati* that yogis should cultivate.

During this retreat should we attempt to develop wholesome (kusala) mind states?

My answer to that is, that you should be skillfully attentive to everything and not to make any special attempt to develop any specific mind states, and not to have a result-oriented approach. The moment we make a distinction between *kusala* and *akusala*, we

become judgmental and that would cloud our clarity. Instead, if we exert choiceless-awareness with simple and pure *sati*, I think we would have achieved our aim.

During the practise of *kāyānupassanā* we learn to develop a lot of neutrality, but as we go further and move towards *vedānupassanā*, *cittānupassanā*, we begin to learn how to note each feeling/sensation and each thought/emotion, as they really are. Seeing things as they really are, is my recommendation.

During ānāpānasati when we reach the stage where we hardly feel the breath, how do we mindfully observe the beginning, middle and end of each breath?

And why do we need to wait until the breath is very refined and almost non-discernible to note the beginning, middle and end? Shouldn't we actually do this when the breath is coarse?

Dīgham vā assasanto dīgham assasāmīti pajānāti

(Breathing in long, he understands; 'I breathe in long')

Dīgham vā passasanto dīgham passasāmīti pajānāti

(Breathing out long, he understands; 'I breathe out long')

Sabbha kāya patisamvedī assasissāmīti sikkhati

(I shall breathe in experiencing the whole breath-body', he trains thus!)

Sabbha kāya patisamvedī passasissāmīti sikkhati

(I shall breathe out experiencing the whole breath-body', he trains thus.)

The reason for this recommendation is that, when the breath is coarse it is still the very early stages of *ānāpānasati*, and there is still room for the mind to stray. It is only when the breath becomes fine that the occasion is ripe for the yogi to observe the breath close. An indicator of this stage is that the yogi has been able to be face to face with the breath. During the stage of the coarse breath, the mind is

flitting from object to object and it is only after a while that it gradually settles down.

With every meditation object (the breath, feet, rising and falling of the abdomen or any other), we will usually see and experience only when the movement is coarse. But as we keep experiencing the movement/object over and over again, we will begin to notice the subtle and finer aspects as well. Then the yogi will not just notice the peak (the middle) where the object is most prominent, but they will also notice the beginning and the end - the cessation (*nirodha*) - that is when they will realise the entire process i.e. the beginning, the middle and the end. The Buddha says, to go on with your observation with no interruption because it is only if observation of the breath, 'in' and 'out', is uninterrupted that the yogi would see the rest of the developments which occur when the finer and more refined stages are reached.

During meditation when aches and pains become prominent do we ignore them and pretend they don't belong to us, or do we change the object of meditation?

When a yogi sits in meditation and feels the 'in'-breath and the 'out'-breath well, and then proceeds with the same *ānāpānasati*, they will invariably start to experience thoughts, sounds and aches/pains. This is most natural. If at this stage, the yogi decides to abandon *ānāpānasati* and goes on to investigate and analyse the pain, they may be sacrificing the most important thing. Similarly, if there is some noise at the back of the meditation hall and the yogi decides to investigate the noise, then again they would be sacrificing *ānāpānasati*. The yogi must not become remorseful or unhappy with any such disturbance. Instead, if the yogi uses their wisdom and decides not to analyse nor respond to sounds, thoughts or pains, they will remain fully aware of each thought (or sound or pain) that arises and will decide to continue with *ānāpānasati* as and when it is suitable.

First, the yogi must know and be fully aware that they are observing the 'in'-breath and the 'out'-breath. Second, they must know and be aware of each disturbance that is occurring as and when it occurs. But, the yogi must have the confidence that they can go on with *ānāpānasati* whilst simply noting each disturbance, without taking any ownership and without claiming that the disturbance is 'mine, me or I'. This would be possible only if *sati* has been well developed. The only time a yogi should respond to aches and pains (or sounds/thoughts) should be when they become unbearable and intolerable.

As you can see from my explanation, it is only if the yogi has been able to develop *sati* satisfactorily during that particular sitting, that they will be able to respond to sounds/pains/thoughts in this manner, without sacrificing *ānāpānasati*. Even if a yogi is an experienced meditator, unless *sati* is well developed during that particular sitting this would not be possible. It would be like when a driver takes a vehicle up a mountain, it is only an experienced driver who will know exactly when to change gears. No instruction book will be able to prescribe when exactly the change should be made and it is only that particular driver's experience and wisdom that will guide them. Similarly each yogi will know how to adopt their own individual technique on how to be aware of sounds, thoughts and pains without sacrificing *ānāpānasati* during each sitting.

Could you please explain how development of mindfulness helps in our daily lives?

Sati is the most reliable *kalyānamitta* in our lives. *Sati* may sometimes be shy and hide itself and be invisible, temporarily. But it will surface again, similar to how the stars become indistinct when the sun is shining bright, but 'reappear' and twinkle brightly in the night sky. A skilful yogi will understand how to make use of *sati* as and when it surfaces, and they will know that when they 'lose' *sati* that it is only a temporary phenomenon. Therefore such a yogi will use his wisdom and not make that temporary loss of *sati* an impediment to

practise and will not feel remorseful or unhappy. *Sati*, like everything else is also subject to *anicca* and a wise yogi will know this and will respond appropriately.

After doing ānāpānasati for a while, even though I feel the 'out'-breath quite well, I don't feel the 'in'-breath. Even when I note the rise and fall of the abdomen, the rise is not as prominent as the fall. When doing ānāpānasati my upper body tends to sway to the right with the 'in'-breath, and it seems to sway to the left with the 'out'-breath. And I do not feel the breath at the tip of the nose, is this due to lack of mindfulness?

In my view this yogi's meditation is going very well. The fact that the yogi knows 'in'-breath is not prominent alone, shows how well their mindfulness has set in. The yogi's questions are due to the doubts and uncertainty they have. I often say that if a yogi feels either the 'in'-breath or the 'out'-breath well, that alone is adequate. The Commentaries give an interesting simile for this. When a cow-boy guides the herd of cattle onto the field, since none of the cattle are tethered they will graze everywhere at their own will. But the cow-boy knows that at the end of the day the entire herd will assemble at the water-hole. Therefore, at the end of the day the cow-boy will go towards the water-hole himself and he would wait for all the cattle to gather.

Similarly, the Commentaries advise yogis to patiently wait for each breath to occur at the nostril and then to mindfully note it as it appears.

Therefore I would always teach that if a yogi knows that the breath '(in'-breath or 'out'-breath) has disappeared, that such an observation requires much more mindfulness than observing that the both the 'in' and 'out'-breaths are present. If a yogi observes swaying of the body as an involuntary motion, my advice would be to simply observe it as it occurs. And it is only if a yogi's mindfulness is strong that he would realize that the breath is not prominent. Please don't doubt such occurrences because the pure entertainment of doubt can end up as a Hindrance (*vicikiccha*, - skeptical doubt) which will invariably interfere

with progress. The yogi would need to adopt a feeling of strong confidence and faith so that they are not deterred nor shaken by doubtful feelings, and not leave any room for self-view (*sakkāya ditthi*) to take over at such a point in the practise. The unwavering confidence one gets with such steadfastness of faith and belief in one's self, will prove to be a sturdy support always like a walking stick, when you need help to walk. Mindfulness will provide such strength like a *kalyānamitta* would, freeing you from doubt and showing that you can in fact be free of defilements.

For a yogi to be able to experience this stage, they must experience the disappearance of the breath, if not they will never know this.

In order to reach sainthood (e.g sotāpanna) do we need to repeatedly experience cessation in our meditation practise?

Repeatedly observing your experiences during meditation is a practice that you should master, when you wish to progress towards liberation. This is primarily because a yogi should be convinced that their observations are not tricks of the mind and that they in fact did occur. And the only way to eliminate this doubt is by repeated observation of what takes place 'under one's very nose'.

If a person had reached a state of sotapanna in a previous life how will that person know this in their present life?

Jāta sotapanna (*sotapanna* at birth) is a state that is discussed by some teachers but it is not found in the scriptures. Ven. Kannimahara Sumangala made a pronouncement that he was born a *sotapanna*, but since this is a very radical position expressed by anyone I questioned my teacher Ven. Gñānārāma about the authenticity of the statement. His view was that there was a possibility for such situations to arise although it is not mentioned in the *tripitaka*. He also said that such persons will not bear any stigmata (e.g. birth marks) by which they could be identified.

I remember when I was in training in Burma, a senior scholarly monk who used to be a frequent visitor to my Burmese teacher Ven. U

Panditha, used to refer to this subject with an interesting story. In Burma, generally Buddhists as well as non-Buddhists used to eat meat and fish, and killing animals for the purpose of food did not make much of an impact on them. In a particular village close to the monastery the fish from the river were traditionally used for meals of the villages. The type of fish used had to be hit on the head after they were brought ashore to ensure they were dead, because if not they stayed alive for long periods. Villages who went to purchase this type of fish had to watch the fisherman draw the fish out of the tray, hit them on the head to ensure they were dead, prior to making the purchase. There were times when parents used to send their small children to purchase fish and in some situations certain children refused to do the chore because they couldn't watch the process. Even though their parents used to chide or beat the children for disobeying them, yet such children did not agree to carry out the order. The senior monk used to remark that maybe such children were *jata sotapanna*.

It is said in the Ratana Sutta:

'..Kincāpi so kammam karoti pāpakam

Kāyena vācā uda cetasāva,

Abhabbo so tassa paticcādāya

Abhabbatā diṭṭhapadassa vuttā

Idam'pi sanghe ratanam paṇitam....'

(..whatever bad deed he does unknowingly

either by body, verbally or by mind,

he is incapable of hiding,

This incapability is said to be that of one

who sees the state of *nibbāna*, i.e. *sotapanna*..)

In such a way a *sotapanna* would always confess to any 'bad' deed committed and they would constantly cleanse themselves in every way. Such a person would not commit any bodily or verbal

misconduct (*akusala*) at anytime, even if their parents (or anyone else) would urge them to.

At the end of the meditation on the four elements (dhātu manasikāra), can we compare the emptiness experienced to the space element –ākāsha dhātu?

This is a little difficult for me to answer. Our general tendency is to move from what is arising to what is ceasing, from what is coarse to what is refined, from being the 'doer' to being the observer, from what is present to what is absent. In the case of contemplating the four elements, we would repeatedly practise until we are left with emptiness, and this can be also referred to as the 'space element'. It is difficult to explain if this feeling of 'emptiness' is simply a result of experiencing all four elements to completion, or whether it is actually the space element itself being experienced as a separate entity. The explanation would perhaps be more in line with Physics.

Generally, when all vibrations and energies associated with the four elements are experienced and set aside with the knowing that our form (*rūpa*) is nothing more than a composite of these elements, what is left invariably is the 'space element'. I would advise that yogis who arrive at this stage repeatedly observe this experience and that realizations would then automatically occur.

When I meditate on the foulness of the body (asubha bhāvanā), at a particular stage I am able to contemplate all the internal organs quite vividly and then I experience a joy, something like nirāmisa pīti. How does this occur?

Usually joy does not accompany this type of meditation. In fact with meditation on the foulness of the body, yogis experience the opposite – a sense of dispassion or disgust. I am reminded of an interesting simile given in the Commentaries in this regard. In the past, in certain towns in India, those whose job was to clear collections of human faeces from the city used to do so in buckets

specially allocated for the purpose. Such persons used to have a certain number of buckets set aside for an average day and on completion of the task they used to get paid by the number of buckets that they cleared. On days that there were festivities in the city, the population was higher and consequently there were more buckets to be cleared and of course more pay. This had brought some joy to the faeces cleaners.

This clearly shows the unpredictability and immaturity of the human mind, where earning more money by even clearing human faeces brings joy.

My advice to the yogi who asked this question is, that they should repeatedly engage in the meditation on foulness and repeatedly make this observation. They can also observe their mind states better. Everything will become very clear then.

During ānāpānasati when the breath becomes very subtle I feel it only as a slight thread. In such a situation am I experiencing the breath as mind and matter (nāma-rūpa) and as non-self?

I would say that in this instance '*rūpa*' has got converted from a coarse stage into a refined/subtle stage and that the yogi has observed this transformation. This observation by the yogi is '*nāma*'. This would mean that yogi's mind - '*nāma*' - has been very attentive with uninterrupted mindfulness to notice this change. If not, the yogi would not have noticed that the coarse breath became refined. If, when the breath becomes refined the yogi applies mindfulness to the maximum and watches the change very intently, they will notice that there is no 'me/mine/I' concept and that it is simply a phenomenon. And to note this, it is imperative that you repeatedly observe every experience.

If we were to keep slicing up a plantain trunk, over and over again, eventually we would realize that there is no substance and that it is with no solid core. Similarly, if you repeatedly experience how the elements manifest themselves one by one, at a particular stage you

will know that there is no 'one', no 'self' and no 'I' . And if you can note the mind that is observing all these elements ('*rūpa*') you will also see that the mind is never the same, that it is in a changing mode . You will then know, experientially, that *nāma* and *rūpa* are always in a state of flux, arising and ceasing.

My advice would be not to worry too much about mind-sates (*nāma dhamma*) at present but to concentrate on *rūpa dhamma* first and to observe how insubstantial they are. Eventually *nāma dhamma* will manifest on its own. Actually, what we are trying to prove in an experiential manner, is that there is in fact nothing called 'self', no 'I'. This could be also compared to the Null Hypothesis. But in order to get there repeated and diligent practise is essential.

Is it essential to practice some preliminaries prior to sitting meditation?

My recommendation is that for *vipassanā* yogis walking meditation is the best preliminary meditation you could practice. My Burmese teacher Sayada U. Panditha (in his book, '*In this Very Life*'), advises that we engage in some protective meditations (e.g. recollecting the virtues of the Buddha, Metta meditation) for a very short time – maybe a maximum of three to five minutes. Because, as you all probably know the best time for a yogi's sitting practice is the initial period of sitting, because as time goes on the yogi feels tired and loses concentration. Therefore we advise yogis not to spend much of those initial minutes in other meditations. Personally I find that twenty minutes of walking meditation prior to sitting gives a big energy boost and helps to establish mindfulness when I sit soon after.

When does 'animitta appaṇihita suñña' occur ?

Animitta means without a sign, *appaṇihita* means without any planned/prepared desirous expectations and *suñña* means emptiness/voidness. There is nothing that exists for two thought-

moments together. It is not possible to cognize and recognize such a thing that exists in absolute terms. Due to the exceedingly rapid change of thought-moments that occur, it will be very difficult to distinguish this. What we recognize is not what we cognize. But these are very fine realizations that yogis will experience only with the insight knowledge - *sañkhārupekkhā-ñāna*. When things are subject to such rapid change we cannot plan for anything and we cannot build/construct anything and they remain as void.

Please explain how to develop insight meditation (vipassanā) once the 'in'-breath and 'out'-breath cease to be felt during ānāpānasati? And is such a stage equal to nibbāna?

Once you reach that stage in meditation keep your attention strictly focused on what you experience in the breath and do not try to change the track. Keep noting what you observe over and over again, repeatedly. Or, once you get to that stage start watching your mind, and see how well you can 'not do' anything, just learn to be a detached passive observer. If you attempt to tamper with that state and try to do *vipassanā* you will not progress. Whereas if you just watch the subtle breath attentively with no interference, you will observe some, eventually. It would be like sitting by a river and watching it flow. If you attempt to disturb the flow, you will wet your hand and then you will cause ripples in the flow. Both should not happen. Be only a river-watcher.

Since your mind will be free of defilements during such a time, it would seem like a state of *nibbāna*, but that thought-moment will not last long, therefore it will not be a lasting *nibbāna*. It is certainly a more pure state than what we are in right now, but it is not lasting. Therefore keep observing to familiarise these states over and over again.

In states of regression I have heard that one could experience past lives.

In deep states of meditation this is possible. We can go back to see our past lives. Some people can go to a state where many past births can be experienced and different teachers have different views on this.

During our first retreat this year in January 2011, I was discussing the Kajjaniya Sutta. In this Sutta, the Buddha clearly pronounces that if any ascetic makes a statement about his observances of previous lives, he would be doing so only in relation to the five aggregates of clinging. Because whether we go back to the past or if we go to the future, we will still be discussing the aggregates, which we all have and which we cling to, in this life. And the Buddha further says that, if we know the five aggregates of clinging well enough we will never venture into exploring the aggregates of the past because they would be the same.

A true *vipassanā* yogi will not show any interest in seeking the five aggregates of the past and instead they endeavour to see the arising and ceasing of the present. This alone is so troublesome. I therefore ask the question, why bother with the past and why look for further trouble.

If someone was to say that our past five aggregates were better than those of the present, then it is perhaps worth going back to and fro looking for such. But if a yogi during *vipassanā* meditation actually experiences the five aggregates they will never wish to see the same five in another life. Yogis seeking to experience 'regression' should be very cautious and try to understand the situation very well. Because if we pause to take look at each thought-moment, do we have any respite from sights, sounds, thoughts, tastes, smells and tangibles? We are constantly trapped within these six sense fields and we cannot control our needs to experience these. We are helpless, because we are enslaved and trapped by sense attractions at all times. Do we ever have the ability to say 'now I am not going to watch sights, or smell, or taste, but I am only going to hear this particular

sound, or adhere to *ānāpānasati*? No, we don't have that ability. Even though we think we are very well disciplined we cannot have an agenda of our own. We are constantly dictated to.

Some conventional Buddhists may want to 'show off' in regard to any particular feats they are able to perform. I consider this to be a 'magic show' which the Buddha would never have approved of. He considered those *ānārya* (ignoble) principles (as opposed to *āryanā* principles, i.e., those of the Noble ones). In the practise of *vipassanā* meditation we don't need to explore any of this, we should simply focus on experiencing the five aggregates of clinging.

Some Psychiatrists and similar therapists from the Western world have used the technique of 'regression' to analyse the past of patients with the intention of getting to the root cause of the problem. But if the patient goes further back in memory they may even enter a previous life experience or even beyond. This phenomenon has led to many Westerners believing in rebirth and Buddhism, and I see this as a positive development in relation to the Dhamma being accessed by many in the west. However, such experiences are not relevant to the practise of *vipassanā* meditation.

Do you believe that doing meritorious or skilful acts leads to making Perfections (Pārami) or does it lead to wholesome determinations only?

Kusala - translates into 'skilful actions' and the more you engage in such action it becomes a like a sharpened weapon. But once you reach a certain stage you have to let go of this as well, and reach a higher level. For instance if you offer *dāna* and aspire for the donor, the recipient and everyone present to reach *nibbāna* then it would be skilful and it also displays a sense of selflessness - *anatta* - and therefore displays some wisdom on the part of the aspirant. Whereas if you offer *dāna* and wish for some material things for yourself then that is unskillful. The best would be to practise *dāna* with a renunciant attitude (*nekkhamma*).

I remember how you once discussed a sutta where the Buddha advised Ven. Moggallāna on how to overcome sloth and torpor (thīna middha). Please can you explain that again?

The basic advise would be to first recognize the perception (*saññā*) of sloth and torpor right from the beginning, and as you see it learn to break it. When you identify it as it arises it is very easy to uproot. If that doesn't work, contemplate on some Dhamma, sometimes with some chanting, walking meditation, wash your face or take a shower, tickle yourself, pull your ears or look at a distance light like the moon. And if all else fails just go and sleep with the idea of waking up in fifteen minutes.

During ānāpānasati I got a flow of thoughts, are these from my subconscious mind or are they from a conscious level?

During *ānāpānasati* we will all experience thoughts, sounds and pains. Every single person experiences these. But our task is to carry on with *ānāpānasati* and to not allow these to be impediments to the practise. There is no purpose in debating or analyzing where these thoughts came from and if a yogi unwisely does this they would be sacrificing *sati* for a useless exercise. These thoughts, sounds and pain will arise and pass away in accordance with their own agenda, they do not concern you and they don't belong to you, therefore do not interfere with them. As questioned; many of these thoughts are from the subconscious or better say, 'these are thoughts without a thinker'!

Please can you explain the concept of dark energies?

These cannot be explained but I can certainly recommend some books, mostly by American authors, which that you may wish to read on the subject. However, the Buddha's deep explanation on emptiness covers all of these. It is amazing how the Buddha explained all this in such detail. We cannot understand this complex phenomena because we try to approach it through sensory fields,

and that does not work. The Buddha's explanation on emptiness matches the dark energies very well. It is incredible how scientists of this century are describing what the Buddha taught 2600 years ago. You can search in the internet and can find enough literature on this.

Please explain 'mindfulness' and 'concentration' in the context of a surgeon who will operate on a patient with total concentration

Mindfulness (*sati*) is the proximate cause for concentration (*samādhi*). And concentration is the outcome or the effect of mindfulness. During meditation, if mindfulness is uninterrupted and continuous, concentration will invariably occur. Mindfulness is something like the clinical detachment of the surgeon and the concentration is like the anesthesia to the patient.

Please can you explain how a lay person can practise mindfulness in an office environment?

Mindfulness can be practiced and developed in three ways:

1. Intensive method - deep and total mindfulness is practiced under laboratory conditions in sitting meditation in an extremely conducive environment in an uninterrupted manner in a meditation hall.
2. Semi-intensive mindfulness is practised during walking meditation. This is more gross but also very versatile.
3. Extensive mindfulness facing all variables is practiced in a working environment. Here only a thin layer of mindfulness will remain.

Ideally, yogis would start with the first and then move to the second and third.

But I started with the third when I was a second year university student and I was then ashamed to claim that I was a yogi or even a Buddhist, and I tried to hide everything I did. Ven. S. Dhammika advised me to apply mindfulness daily, to every task I performed

from brushing my teeth to dressing, to eating, to sitting on the toilet. Then gradually I started to notice the peppermint taste in my mouth after brushing my teeth. I noticed squeezing the tooth paste tube. Then I stopped multi-tasking and started being very mindful particularly when I was alone. It is important to listen to your own sounds when you perform a task mindfully. But it took me 8-9 years to develop this very well and it worked out fine for me thereafter.

After we finish this retreat how can we get any further advice and clarification from you?

I have written my email address (dhammajiva@gmail.com) on the white-board and I would suggest that you email your questions to me, and unless I am traveling I usually spend about an hour or two every day answering such queries. I also have a telephone number but you would understand that at most times like now, there will be no one available to answer calls. You may also contact the office, because they will be aware of my movements and, there is also a plan to connect the monastery to skype, but that too is time consuming, and as such I would recommend email as the preferred option for communication.

Is there a difference between the meditation states of the alternate experience and the faint awareness of death? And if there is a difference, how does the breath present?

These are different terminologies used to describe such experiences and states. Some people describe this as an 'oceanic-experience' and some use the term 'whole-body' experience. For instance, when our mind is at a rational level any experience can be noted as being either seen (using the eye), or hearing (using the ear), or tasting (using the tongue) or smelling (using the nose) or touching (using the body) or as thinking (using the mind). But when we are contemplating on only one object (e.g. the 'in'-breath and 'out'-breath, rising and falling of the belly, or right and left foot when walking meditation), we will

become more and more familiar with that object, and at a particular stage we will notice that the object is becoming more and more subtle. Then when we experience something, we may not be able to attribute it to the eye or ear or tongue or nose or body or mind, and then we may refer to it as a whole-body experience.

For instance if you take the five fingers and you identify each and every finger/finger tip, you will be able to demarcate one from another. However, if you identify the common base of all five fingers in the lower portion of your hand/ wrist you will not be able to demarcate one finger from the other. Similarly, if your experience comes from the centre and it is in the region of the cortex or the medulla of the brain (or we could say the 'subsurface mind') then we would refer to it as a whole-body experience. Some people prefer to call this an oceanic-experience, because here the similarity is drawn to when a river flows and enters the ocean it 'becomes one' with the ocean, thereby losing its identity, and it is then referred to as being 'oceanic'. During such an experience you would experience a 'human mind' rather than your own 'personal/private mind'. Because our 'private' mind would lose its identity. Although it is not a completely refined state, we would lose our individual likings and disliking, and our personality traits. It is a very nice experience to have and usually occurs during *vipassanā* practise.

Faint awareness of death is negative and is always associated with a dormant tendency of hatred, fear, uncertainty, boredom or monotony. And when you become familiar with it, after many encounters it becomes quite positive and dramatic. Whereas the oceanic experience is neutral or sometimes positive, and if you wish to develop that further (right up to the point of being aware of a death-like state), you would develop your immunity, tolerance and understanding about life in a greater sense. In order to experience such a situation, one must have a positive mind-set or one should meditate with a well prepared mind for such a 'whole-body' experience.

Please can you describe the characteristics of a traditional walking meditation path? And also please advise what one should do in order to prevent harming small insects and plants when walking on such a path.

Nissaranavanaya has already made possible the free distribution of some of its publications and a small book in Sinhala of about 30-40 pages on 'Walking Meditation' is one of them. You can download it from the monastery website (www.nissarana.lk) Usually those who construct walking meditation Paths build a water-trough around it so that insects would find it hard to crawl over. However the maintenance of such a Path with a trough is not easy. The troughs in the walking paths in the upper monastery don't function and it is very difficult to ensure that there won't be a crack in the trough and that water won't leak out. Still if you find rows of ants across your walking path you have no choice but to walk over them. Unfortunately in Sri Lanka there are very few books written on walking meditation. In the English book, 'In this life itself' there is a good description of walking meditation in Chapter 5. You may also access this information on the site, www.vipassana.com/meditation/dhammadjiva.

During ānāpānāsati, after about 30 minutes when the breath has become refined, I hear a 'gong' like noise and I feel that my level of concentration is good. Thereafter, after about 15 minutes I feel a jolt and my concentration deepens but I feel pressure at the top of my head as if my head was squeezed from both sides. Although this is not a severe pain I could feel other pains in the body and also I could hear noises. I feel that this may be a transition from the first Jhāna to the fourth. Please advise.

I have heard of such experiences but please remember that in *Jhānic* states one needs to experience such situations over and over again to be certain of what *jhāna* we have actually felt. With one or two such accidental experiences it is very difficult to come to a conclusion that what you have experienced is indeed a *jhānic* state. From what you say, I would infer that what you have attained is a state of *samādhi*

and furthermore I can accurately state that such *samādhi* states can also be experienced during *vipassanā* meditation..

Once *ānāpānāsati* has become tame, refined and subtle, and the yogi feels pains/jolts and hears sounds, if they are able to note each one and simply observe them from a detached position; after a while the characteristics of the elements (*dhātu – pathavi, āpō, thejo and vāyo*) will begin to manifest either at the nostril (where the primary object of meditation was observed by the yogi) or in the entire body. Ven. Gñānārāma's book describes this phenomena, as a scenario where for instance, the *pathavi dhātu* will express its presence by creating a tightening feeling in the head or neck or hand. Since the yogi is unaware of the *paramattha dhamma* (ultimate truth) at this stage, they will describe this as a 'head/ neck/ hand hardness', assigning a conventional anatomical area for the pain. This is because the yogi is yet to understand the language of the elements and how they express themselves. If the yogi realizes that this is simply 'hardness' or the manifestation of the earth element (*pathavi dhātu*), he would then learn to observe this development as a dhamma phenomenon and not connect it to an anatomical part of the body, *jhānic* experiences or a physical sensation. Similarly the heat element (*thejo dhātu*) will manifest as warmth/coldness in the body, the water element (*āpō dhātu*) will manifest as cohesion, fluidity and wetness, the air element (*vāyo dhātu*) will show properties of movement and expansion. During interviews when we discuss meditation experiences with yogis we advise them that they should observe these experiences purely as dhamma phenomena (as the elements/*dhātu* only) and not as physical symptoms.

Ven. Gñānārāma used to say that those who have a great attachment to the body would find these experiences very disconcerting and even frightening. But if the yogi had understood this as the language of the elements and goes fully prepared, they should be happy that the elements are expressing themselves through their body. This kind of meditative experience is usually a manifestation of *sati* and *paññā* in the yogi, and may or may not be *jhānic samādhi*. These elements are always manifesting in us, but

the reason why we fail to note and observe these features during non-meditative periods is that, usually we are busy engaged with observing other peoples' bodies, listening to other's voices, smelling and tasting other things extrovertly. If we care to pause for a moment and look inwards at how our own bodies work during meditation, we would be surprised at the continuous machine-like activity that goes on. This is not something we like to do, because we prefer to see and listen to other people and external objects. That has been the pattern we have got used to in our *samsāra*.

Vipassanā is called Insight Meditation because it gives the yogi a clear picture of what goes on inside themselves. Otherwise what we would do is to constantly look externally and get engaged in those external people/activities. When practising Insight Meditation a yogi would also feel doubtful and uneasy, since their experiences would be varied. If however, the yogi goes fully prepared they will be pleased, because they would know that their meditation practice is now progressing well. This is why I emphasize the importance of associating with *kalyānamitta* and listening to the *saddhamma*. With consistence and continuous practice the yogi will be rid of all fears, doubts and anxieties and will proceed very smoothly in the practice.

This is why I said at the outset that it is difficult to link such experiences exclusively to tranquility (*samatha*) meditation and to *jhānic samādhi*. Furthermore, I believe that it would be wise to consider these experiences in relationship to *paññā* (wisdom)

I understood from your discussion that the energy waves referred to as Shrodinger waves, are not accessible through the five senses. Did I understand this correctly? And would we be able to access to our mind the waves which exist within an electromagnetic radiation field?

These would not be accessible through a rational or conditioned mind, i.e. one that operates within the limits of the five sense faculties. As long as we are with the five-sense world our experiences

will be very mundane and limited. It is called *indriyabaddha viññāna*. When we reach a stage beyond this during meditation, as in *anindriyapatibaddha viññāna*, then we would be able to access these. As long as our mind is with external worldly matters the deep Dhamma will not be accessible, because such a mind will always be discursive and easily distracted overtly and disturbed. But once our mind turns inwards then all these energies will come together and it is then that we would be able to access states like *abhiññā* = direct knowledge, These are special 'knowledge-states' which a disturbed and stressful mind would not be able to reach. Such states of mind were referred to by the Buddha as *neyya mandala* – states where all is known. The reason why we don't access such states of mind is because we are engrossed and enslaved by mundane matters like those which are related to the five senses.

This is why, when during meditation we experience the whole-body/oceanic experience and we transcend the *indriyapatibaddha viññāna* and reach a different levels, then our mind is at peace, tranquil and one-pointed. Such a mind is able to access many supra-mundane states. However, a yogi will know if they have reached such a level only if the *suta-mayā ñāna* has been developed adequately. Every yogi will not be able to make that connection and reach such an understanding.

Matter and energy have to be understood contextually. Previously it was thought that matter was always tangible, that it had a shape and size, and that it was subject to gravity. Energy displayed the opposite characteristics. Energy was studied as Thermal Physics and matter was studied as solids, liquid and air. More recently with Einstein's discoveries (first presented by Edwin Shrodinger in 1927) it was shown how matter could be transformed into energy and vice versa. This type of development has been shown in films like Star Trek as well and now we know that this is actually not 'magic' since such phenomena are accepted scientifically.

'If someone claims that they understand Quantum Physics, clearly they do not' - This is a common saying. These new and advanced scientific discoveries have removed the 'self-view' of the individual

to a large extent, and the discoverer in fact begins to lose interest in creature comforts that they previously enjoyed. Greed is also reduced substantially. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has in fact advised such scientists that they should apply the teachings of the Buddha to such experiences, because an explanation for these changes in their personality would then be evident. An organization called *Man and Life* have annual conferences attended by eminent scientists and reputed scholars of Buddhism and Buddhist monks, where the ancient teachings of the Buddha and the modern discoveries of science are compared with precision and accuracy. I believe that the fact that we have been born during this period where such comparisons are being studied is due to our previous meritorious acts.

I strongly believe that a thorough knowledge of *vipassanā* and strong mindfulness are essential pre-requisites if one is to benefit from these scientific discoveries. A true *vipassanā* yogi will be able to identify and relate the teachings of the Buddha to such discoveries with great precision. I read a book called *'The Physics of the Soul'* where the author Amit Goswami clearly describes 'emptiness' and that relevant chapter is extremely close to the Buddha's teachings on *suññatā*. These are deep Dhammas and I believe the best person to explain these would be Ven Katukurunde Ñānānanda, a very senior monk with much knowledge and understanding on this subject. More recently he has begun to include these aspects into his teachings, describing the relevance of advanced scientific discoveries in relation to Buddhism. When deep and profound aspects of the Buddha's teachings which are 2600 years old are being examined and 'certified' by modern day scientific discovery, it is indeed a reason for joy and appreciation.

Today's younger generation who have a thorough knowledge of science would do well to connect these two doctrines - namely new science and Buddhist meditation, particularly if they had studied *vipassanā* or preferably practiced meditation and learnt mindfulness. Because in the Western world such an understanding would be greatly appreciated. Today, parents would spend lots of

money and make great efforts to help their sons and daughters to get a PhD or an MSc from a reputed overseas university. In addition if they encouraged their children to exert mindfulness and observe the 'in'-breath and 'out'-breath, or if they were encouraged to note the right and left foot as they walked mindfully, the benefits would be incalculable. But this is not their priority and their constant excuses would include paucity of time and other pressing needs like multi-tasking work. If parents were to set noble examples at home, children would someday follow suit, and if they were to sit in meditation and experience the realizations described by the Buddha, they would be able to give meaning to everything that science has taught as well as yet to discover.

During meditation when experiences are noted in the mind I feel as though I am digressing from my meditation subject. Is it necessary to make such mental notes?

This question has been due to incompleteness in meditation. If an experienced yogi, after a lot of practice, approaches the preliminary stages of *Udayabbha ñāna*, they will begin to realize experientially what they thought, heard or read. The interconnectedness between the knowledge and his experience will appear before him very naturally. They may not experience the entire picture, but certain components will be experienced with absolute clarity so that he would have a great desire to teach this to others. The yogi may wish to halt the meditation and start writing letters home, explaining their achievements, or calling friends and boasting about what they had experienced. When this happens their mindfulness and meditation will fail and they will go back to where they started. This is something that every single person experiences.

Instead of announcing achievements, if the yogi continues the practice the next day with equanimity, they would then experience an additional feature/aspect to the existing experience, and the following day they would be seeing more and more. Initially they would experience the interconnectedness of phenomena in a linear

fashion but eventually they would be exposed to a three dimensional realization of deep the Dhamma and the entire landscape would be visible before him. The yogi becomes so joyous and may even cry. Some will shed tears with either joy or sorrow. They may get goose bumps and experience tingling. When the Dhamma gets internalized in the yogi (during the early stages of insight'), and when they further develop an understanding of perceptions (*saññā*); during conversations with another person they would examine each word and sentence. They feel as though the Dhamma would not leave them and that even during normal daily affairs and that it is within them. .

I cannot explain how this happens and also this is not a common feature amongst all yogis. For instance Ven. Konnañña, although he became the first disciple of the Buddha to attain the state of *sotapanna* after hearing the first sermon, he never preached to anyone. Ven. Bakkula lived up to 160 years, but preached to only one person according to the available records. Whereas Ven. Sariputta preached the Dhamma tirelessly to many people until the last days of his life. This communication ability, internally and externally is also a very individual trait that some people may have and some won't.

If a yogi's meditation is done with a lot of seriousness and purity, and if they pass the stages of *rūpa* and *vedanā*, and takes it up to the level of *saññā*, i.e. after he masters *kāyānupassanā*, *vedanānupassanā* he will then begin to understand *saññā* to such an extent that he would be a master in knowing what to teach, and how to teach, and when to teach. Such a yogi would be able to discern what another person is trying to explain or express. It's a unique and individual trait that a skilled meditator develops, and this would be independent of language and is almost a communication between two sets of consciousness. Twould know its importance only when you reach the stage where you have a clear idea about perception=*saññā*.

It would also help if someone was to learn a second language, because this would enable the person who meditates to master that language with ease.

Some yogis decide to keep notes at this stage of development. They label this note book as '*My Dhamma Book*' and they start noting each new experience and its interconnectedness.. One's own methods of learning and experience would be applicable and beneficial only to one's own self. Each one of us would have our own 'notes/note keeping systems' which are very precious, in the same way when we were small we had our own little toy box, with all its broken bits and pieces.

When I returned from Burma after my training I was blamed because I had brought seven boxes of notes. During the teachings of Sayadaw-ji U Panditha, I wrote down everything he said. I never left anything out. I used to sit right in front, and at 1.00pm after the lunch *dāna* when everyone was nodding he used to teach, and I diligently wrote down every word that came from his mouth. Even now, there are times when I go back to those notes and refer certain pages, and everything comes back to me so vividly, as though I was still at the *Padithārāma*, sitting before the Sayadaw-ji and learning the Dhamma.

Such a period in one's life, when the Dhamma begins to reveal itself and the yogi's understanding matures is extraordinary and very precious, and those memories are unlikely to leave you. I am not saying for a moment that you should write down what I am saying, because even if you didn't, at a particular time it will all come back to you and will get summarized with great clarity. But those who write notes will later realize that if they were to teach others eventually, their personal notes will become very handy, because these are your personal experiences. Perhaps the Commentaries of the Buddha's teachings had their origin in such note taking.

Nāma - rūpa could be described as first mind (intention) and then action. In the Guinness book of records it is described how a person could stand for 24 hours on one foot. Here the first occurrence would be the 'mind' but the Records don't indicate how one would keep holding the breath for 24 hours. I would therefore suggest that breathing alone is not nāma-rūpa, but instead is rūpa-nāma.

We refer to this as the First Insight Knowledge – *Nāma-rūpa paricceda ñāna*, because when you first experience the body (*rūpa*) and then you begin to know with your mind that experience, then it is *nāma*. During walking meditation we instruct yogis to first note each placing of the foot as 'left' foot and the 'right' foot. In the second stage we instruct them to note, the lifting and placing of the right foot, and the lifting and placing of the left foot. Thereafter in the third stage, we instruct them to note, lifting-moving-placing the right foot and similarly, lifting-moving-placing the left foot. It is only after that, that we instruct yogis, to note the mind (*nāma*), i.e. the *intention* to lift and the lifting, the *intention* to move and the moving and the *intention* to place and the placing, of the right foot. And similarly the left foot. Until such time, we ask them to note the *rūpa* only, because it is only after you master the technique of noting the action (*rūpa*), that you can successfully note the thought/intention (*nāma*) that precedes each action.

Therefore you will note that in the experience of walking, is where we start with *rūpa* and then move to *nāma*, i.e. we start with *kāyānupassanā* and then move to *vedanānupassanā*. Although in theory we call it the opposite, as *nāma-rūpa*, in reality they manifest together. Because *nāma* and *rūpa* cannot exist without each other, they need each other for their survival. You will note as yogis, that the easier Dhamma to relate to is the *rūpa* dhamma, because they are verifiable, tangible and coarse, and therefore easier to note. Whereas the *nāma* dhamma are more subtle and refined.

Theoretically, all four combinations possible;

Nāma causes *rūpa*,

Nāma causes *nāma*,

rūpa causes *rūpa*

rūpa causes *nāma*.

Please can you explain whether, watching TV or reading a novel or when engaging in idle chatter or gossip, would be engaging in unskillful actions even if we were to contemplate anicca, dukkha and anatta during each of those activities?

When responding to this question, I remember how Sayadaw U Panditha used to say, that if we kill an animal/insect knowingly and willfully, the *vipāka* would take us to the hell realms because these were called '*kamma patha*' that extended right through our *samsāric* journey. And if we commit an unskillful action like killing or stealing and we are aware of the gravity of that action, the gravity of the bad *kamma* would be the same as that of killing in terms of '*kamma patha*'. If we gossip it will be same although we will not realize it. It is easy for us to gossip or engage in idle chatter, as opposed to killing. Hence the danger of these unskillful actions. And when watching TV or reading a novel, you may consider the *anicca, dukkha* and *anatta* conceptually, but the actual change in you would manifest only if you experience an internal change of the three characteristics. That would be the true realization. But if such a thing happened it is doubtful as to whether you would continue to watch TV and entertain gossiping.

Please explain if in the sathara samyapadhāna, allowing existing akusala to get reduced can be done during ānāpānasati or should we use vipassanā meditation for this practise?

In a very subtle sense, the *cetasika -virīya and sati*, function in different ways in that *virīya* would enable undeveloped *akusala* to remain undeveloped, whereas *sati* would help the developed *akusala* to diminish in strength in the present moment. You could imagine a fortress, where the sentries would be placed on the outside, to prevent external enemies from creeping inside – such a sentry would be *virīya*. The sentries inside who would make every effort to identify the spies within the fortress and to get rid of them, would be similar to *sati*. Therefore you could see how *virīya* uses *sati* to execute the task of not allowing undeveloped *akusala* to

manifest. When we live with *akusala* for long periods of time, we develop a blinding mesh which prevents us from seeing *akusala*. A delusional layer which prevents us from seeing the true state – this is called *Mōha patala*. The task of *sati* is to gradually break this down and *virīya* would ensure that a new such layer will not develop.

Ānāpānasati can do both once established and that is also *vipassanā*..

You mentioned that the Commentaries state that eating unmindfully is an action that could have warranted a Bhikkhu being expelled from the sangha. How could yogis like ourselves, adopt this practice while being householders?

My advice is to be very mindful each time you sit for a meal. And eat only to quench the hunger, do not keep gulping the food just because there is a variety in front of you, and always make sure you don't do other things like watching TV, listening to music, reading the news paper or chatting when eating.

Again I am reminded of a saying which states that, for only seeing we have two eyes, for only hearing we have two ears, for only smelling we have two nostrils, but for two functions – eating and talking – we have only one mouth and therefore we must use that mouth with extreme care. The Buddha was very particular when he advised about *bojhana sangraha*, because he knew that this is a place where maximum idle chatter, gossip and false speech, plus all the other *kilesas* could be accumulated and this is perhaps the main reason for the Buddha to advise not partaking in the night meal.

This *vinaya* rule was promulgated after 20 years of the Buddha's ministry, when a monk was on alms-rounds in the night and a householder not recognizing that this was a monk, screamed and threw a bucket of waste water at him, fearing that this was a ghost. This prompted the Buddha to include this issue of partaking only one meal (or only during the morning) as a *vinaya* rule. However

there were protests against this from a section of the monks because this rule was a late introduction and the monks at the time of ordination were unaware of it. But the Buddha explained that even though it was a late introduction, if it helped in minimizing *kilesas* it should be observed. The Buddha cites the simile of a wild elephant, who, if tied to a tree trunk his entire life it would try his best to break that bondage, whereas a tiny female bird when flying, if he sees even a cobweb he would avoid hitting it and would fly away. Therefore if we have to breakthrough certain situations in order to minimize our defilements then we will need to do so.

Supposing we develop a reasonable amount of sati and samādhi during this life time but we are unable to attain saint-hood, in another human birth would we be able to utilize our spiritual gains for liberation in that future birth, or would we have to start afresh?

What I have heard in this regard is that if you have developed the *sati cetasika* in this birth, in a future human birth it will be hidden away until a time of understanding and thereafter it will reappear and will keep developing and it will not fade away. This is different to *samādhi*, which may be prominently present in this birth, but may or may not appear that easily in a future birth. I remember how my teacher Ven. Gñānānārāma used to advise me that my remembering certain childhood events with clarity had something to do with the *sati* I would have cultivated in a previous birth. I always advise yogis to recap mindfully, the events that had transpired during that day, at the time of going to sleep each night. Ven. S.Dhammika was the first person to instill in me the importance of developing and strengthening *sati* at every opportunity, since he knew its value in the spiritual progress in this birth as well as in a future births if at all. He used to tell me that the graph that can be plotted in relation to developing increasing levels of *sati*, will only be going upwards, and that it would never take a downward turn. This is why I repeatedly urge all yogis to always give *sati* its due prominence.

Please can you advise if we can collect kamma during sleep and also if dreams are of significance in relation to accumulating kamma?

The Buddha says that although when we dream our minds appear to be connected to the events of the dream, in terms of will, these are not significant enough to yield *kamma*. *Sankhāra* do not get created during dreams although the events may seem real and although our minds are seemingly connected in some way.

Daily when we engage in meditation with energy and effort, the spiritual aspirations we have can increase. I feel that these can hinder our progress. Please can you advise me on this?

Something that I have noticed after deep states of mindfulness and concentration is how the mind becomes extremely energetic and creative, so much so that when we get up after a sitting we do so with many projects and plans in mind. We can spend such days with a lot of clarity and brightness. Whereas on certain days the mind is dull and wretched, very much like a burial ground – quite the opposite of what was described previously.

My experience is that the creativity and progressiveness we experience in our minds on certain days is beneficial in the material world, and such plans and projects are conducive to facilitate the *samsāric* journey, and not otherwise. The opposite states experienced would seem quite monotonous and uninspiring. Yet, for the yogi, these would be signs and opportunities to understand dispassion and detachment (*virāga*), revulsion (*nibbidā*) and liberation (*vimutthi*). Naturally, they would be good signs in the path of progress, and the yogi may even develop insight knowledges on *nibbidā*. This would seem quite a radical position and is described only in *vipassana* practice.

All other faiths and religions would encourage the blissful states and the progressive mind-set, and would consider dispassion and detachment as absolutely negative states. This is why they say that Buddhism does not attract psychopaths, because such persons get

drawn to happy and bright states. This was known by the Buddha well, and hence he placed the *Noble Truth of Suffering* at the helm of his teaching. Those with other faiths would be loathe to develop interest in a teaching where suffering is highlighted as a truth. This is why we now see a trend where certain Buddhists try to 'temper' this Truth, by incorporating seemingly 'happy' paraphernalia with drums and bells, colourful bunting, and similar activities which would attempt to 'sugar-coat' the *Truth of Suffering*. This is usually done to attract the masses. However, every person who has attempted to create this deceptive impression has fallen into complicated and complexed traps.

The teaching of the Buddha is not meant for populism and therefore it is said to go against the grain, and is not palatable by many. But that is the reality. The discerning and the wise who understand this would take up the challenge, whereas the others would not.

During ānāpānasati meditation, after reaching a state of samādhi when the paṭibāgha nimitta appears, turning towards kāyānupassanā and directing the light towards the entire body has been my practice. When this happens should I contemplate the body parts as asubha and is it advisable to not focus on the 'in' and 'out'-breath at that time?

My advice is to continue to direct the attention on the 'in'/'out' breath and not purposefully on the body parts. You may see the body parts, but don't intentionally try to do so. When you direct attention on the breath, you will be on a clear path and will not be misled.

When the breath ceases to be prominent and when one is on 'auto-pilot', is our mind in a bhavanga state or similar to what we experience when asleep, because during sleep kāya-duccarita and vaci-duccarita don't occur?

It is recommended that you repeatedly experience that stage where the mind is in a 'stilled' state where it does not create *kamma*. During

this stage the yogi's mind is at peace and at 'home', and is not in a situation where it is excited by sights, sounds and so on. Never have we obtained lasting happiness with excitements from any of the six senses. Therefore the yogi should master this stage in meditation repeatedly and understand it to perfection. During the *bhavana* state or when the yogi is asleep, one cannot be aware and it is difficult to awaken into. But the situation I explained is different. And as long as you become familiarized with that state, one can be awakened into it. Please try that.

During a sitting meditation session towards the end of the hour my mindfulness becomes dissipated and I am quite ready to get up from the sitting. But in fact when the hour comes to an end I feel reluctant to do so. Could you explain why?

This is quite a common phenomenon because the mind is in a state where it is gripped with pain after a long sitting, but when the time comes to end the sitting the mind lets go of the pain, and at that point you will not be in a big rush to get up. This is a strange game that the mind plays. You may also know of the situation where we keep looking at the clock from about 55 minutes into the session, waiting for 60 minutes to be completed. But when in fact 60 minutes is up, you will not feel like getting up from your sitting. Similarly, a prisoner who is waiting to leave prison, on the day they are released will be reluctant to leave. A patient warded in a hospital may experience the same situation.

I remember Ven. Katukurende Ñānānanda describing this process when we are fighting the battle with Māra at death's door. At such a moment Māra plays the game of tug-of-war with our sense faculties and we are resisting, pulling them towards us. But eventually Māra wins. Ven. Ñānānanda's advice was for us to pull really hard and then release the grip at once, so that Māra would tumble and fall backwards. Similarly, when we are meditating, before Māra comes and taunts us, gradually start releasing the grip. My teacher used to say when we sit for meditation, first dedicate and offer your mind

and body to the Buddha before you start. Therefore if Māra comes and asks for both the body and the life just say that you have given both to the Buddha! We must use various creative methods to escape from the natural obstacles like pain and boredom that we face when meditating. Due to our own defilements and self-view, we believe that if we continue to sit with pain, we will end up with paralysis or a stroke or some such serious condition. These are far from real and therefore at the outset, placing immense confidence in the Buddha is most important. We need to pledge that we will continue this meditation with utmost faith and devotion, whatever the outcome. The Buddha's support and the dhamma protection at a time like this is invaluable.

The Noble Eightfold Path is broadly categorized into sila, samādhi and paññā. Should a yogi who is cultivating the path towards nibbāna, take these practices in a sequential manner or should they all be practiced together gradually?

Although when we practise the Noble Eightfold Path we do so with emphasis given to *sila* first and then the other two, but when all three practices, i.e. all eight factors in the Eightfold Path, crystallise during one thought-moment we refer to it as *magga-cittakkhana* – the precise moment where the yogi transcends the mundane path to the supra-mundane Path. That moment is electric. Up until that it is gradual.

Why is the Noble Eightfold Path named the Middle Path? What 'middle/moderate' characteristics do the Eight factors possess?

In the fourth Noble Truth the Buddha explained the Noble Eightfold Path as consisting of eight factors which do not represent either excessive sensual indulgence (*kāma-sukh'allikānuyoga*) or self-mortification (*atta-kilamathanuyoga*). Each factor represents a middle path. The Buddha's teaching is that we should not be attached to either extreme mentioned, and nor should we be attached to the middle way. While not being attached to the middle

way, we should allow the middle way to transform/evolve itself, and when the transformation occurs we should not cling to the Noble Eightfold Path as well.

This is very difficult to explain, and the Buddha reminds us, in the name of the middle way, to not be attached to either extreme and therefore let them go, and thereafter the coarseness of the middle way should be let go for the sake of the refined middle way. And thereafter the refined should be let go for the sake of the ultra-refined/the sublime, and thereafter until whatever is felt as matter is replaced by energy, and so on until nothingness. This is a stage which evades communicative ability, and it can only be experienced by direct realization only. Therefore the middle path is unique, in that it paves the path to let go of the two extremes and it represents only a visionary path and Dhamma phenomena, not a religion or a faith. Traditional Buddhism and its rituals are not represented in the Middle Path as such, it only represents as well as emphasise certain *cetasika dhamma*, as seen in the Eightfold Path. Therefore synonyms for the Middle Path (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) would include forsaking the two extreme forms of gratification mentioned earlier as well as the Noble Eightfold Path and Dependant Origination.

Please can you explain the difference between dhamma and saddhamma? 'Sat' = the truth, something existing here and now therefore *saddhamma* will yield tangible results that can be experienced here and now, and not later. Whereas, a religion will speak of results to be experienced in another life, i.e. there is a time span. The *saddhamma* has no time-span (*akālikō*) and it beckons you to come and see (*ēhipassikō*). Once it begins it unfolds increasingly in a sequential manner (*ōpanaikō*) eventually leading towards *akaliko = here and now*. Therefore *Dhamma* is governed by time and space as opposed to *saddhamma*. Complete understanding comes through actual experience, in that if we refer to *sutamayā ñāna* etc, as *Dhamma*, we could then refer to *sadhamma* as direct personal realization through experience.

If, when doing walking meditation before sitting if we are mindful of our breathing and we feel the body disappearing, is that a useful experience?

According to the question that the yogi is doing *ānāpānasati* while engaged in walking meditation prior to sitting. My advice is very straightforward, if the breath is felt naturally during walking meditation then you may continue, but if not please don't go looking for the breath during a walking session. That is not a good practice, instead you should focus on the steps.

During a sitting meditation session, when doing ānāpānasati, when the breath becomes subtle if thoughts come pouring in, are these anusaya kilesa? Is it advisable to suppress these thoughts using mindfulness? Won't these be an obstacle to developing concentration?

During *ānāpānasati* when the breath becomes subtle, some yogis may begin to see the thoughts very prominently. It is not that there are more thoughts than before, but it is just that those appear very prominently. It's like when a wound is being cleaned and exposed, at which point it becomes very sensitive and even a draft of air can cause pain. If these thoughts do not represent any major desire or ill-will, I would suggest that they be simply ignored, and consider them only as background thoughts. During *ānāpānasati*, the exercise would be to have the mindfulness and concentration continuous while these thoughts come and go. When one's mindfulness and concentration develops it becomes easier to ignore these thoughts, to keep them at a distance and to allow them to simply flow while observing the primary object of meditation.

'Sabbe sankhāra aniccā, sabbe sankhāra dukkhā, sabbe dhamma anattā' - do all sankhāra get included into this word 'sankhāra' or is it just the sankhāra created by ourselves?

Sankhāra means what we create, hence the term 'mental formations or, fabrications'. We need to be concerned only about the '*sankhāra*'

created by us, as a result of coming into contact with sights, sounds etc. This is what it means. *Sankhāra* are not the *rūpa* we see/hear, but only our mind's reaction to those. It is those that are subject to *anicca* and it is only those that create *dukkha*. As Mahasi Sayadaw says, the world is full of various *rūpa* but they will not create *dukkha* but that it is our mind's response and reaction to them that will create *dukkha*.

Sabbe Dhamma on the other hand, includes all – the *rūpa* that we come across through sights, sounds etc. whether we react to them or not, are all subject to *anatta*–non self.

Please can you explain what are included in the vikāla bōjhanā veramani sikkha precept? What drinks need to be avoided after 12.00 noon?

According to the 'Monastic Code' (*Patimokkha*) meant for bhikkhus, all should be avoided except what is allowed, i.e.

"five tonics to be taken by a sick person - ghee, butter, oil, honey, sugar-molasses.

sugar lumps for bhikkhus who are ill, and sugar lumps in water for one who is not ill.

fruit medicine - whatever other fruits are medicine and do not serve, among non staple food, the purpose of non staple food; or among staple food, the purpose of staple food- one may keep it for life and, when there is reason, consume it."

This list is not complete and it largely comes from tradition. It is very difficult to answer this question completely, especially for lay devotees. Therefore it is best to minimize the use of '*gilanpasa*' as much as possible.

Please explain how good and bad responses are shown not only in response to the sense impingements but also due to our own thought processes. Is there a way of stopping these responses?

I have stated before that there is no way of stopping these good/bad responses. That is going against our progress towards wisdom. Our task should be to recognize when a good/ bad response is formulated in our thoughts and as they are vocalized. We cannot make claims against the good/ bad that come from outside to in, whereas it is within our power to recognize and know/label the reactions the responses we formulate.

Please remember that we have no right to advise others about the good/bad responses that they may develop towards their own sense impingements, because we have exactly the same problem. And that problem will remain as long as we are alive. Therefore advising others about sense-restraint has to be done with extreme caution, and is best not done at all. We must develop sympathy about others just like for our own self.

Mind, citta, viññāna – are they all the same and if not what are their differences? And what is the connection with the heart?

The Abhidhamma *Dhammasangani* commentary describes that all these are similar. The mind's connection with the heart has not been proved. The Commentaries have expressed various views on this but Western Medical Science has been clear and negative on their position. We do know that even if the heart is transplanted and the patient is bled, the consciousness remains the same. But if the brain is removed there is no way out, because the patient dies.

Please explain how, when ānāpānasati becomes subtle I keep feeling a lot of hardness in various parts of my body and it becomes intensely uncomfortable. I also feel heat and coolness. I know these are the elements manifesting and I keep observing them and I seem to lose the breath.

It is clear that the yogi has understood the language of the elements. You should keep observing each such manifestation with keen mindfulness, and at some point you will begin to notice the breath again and thereby develop more confidence in the experience. Please continue with the practice patiently,

Please explain the difference between patience and equanimity?

Patience is showing tolerance towards any unfavourable situation. Equanimity is being unshaken and firmly in the middle ground, whether a good or bad situation arises. Patience when cultivated leads to equanimity.

When engaged in walking meditation I am aware of the left or right foot just after I place it on the ground. Should I know this before I place the relevant foot on the ground? And should I be aware of the command given to move the foot?

This is an important question and I remember a senior teacher advising me on this same point. If you are able to note just as you keep the foot (right or left) on the ground, then there has been *no delay* in your mindfulness. Whereas if you knew it just after you placed it then there has been a *delay* in your mindfulness. And knowing it just before placing the foot is also not the correct practice. I advise yogis to initially walk briskly for a few minutes with no meditation in mind. Thereafter, I would advise you to be simply aware each time you place your right foot, as 'placing the right foot' and similarly the left. Being aware of purposeful commands is not advisable for the beginners. However with maturity and time if you naturally begin to note an intention to move the foot and then place it, then that is acceptable.

Please explain if at the moment of death one can experience nibbāna? This has been cited in Buddhist literature. Is this correct?

Yes, it is correct and called "*Sama sīsi*".

This is very difficult to explain, but I can suggest that this occurs due to the sensitivity one develops to the painful sensations one experiences at the moment of death. It is said that the intense contemplation of the pain at that moment will be powerful enough to experience *nibbāna*. We should also realize that such information will not make a big difference in our lives.

How should we overcome fear? Can we do this by only meditating in familiar terrain like our home or favourite meditation hall, or would it be helpful to live in a monastery or a forest and be with nature and the animals?

The Buddha has referred to 'fear' as a representative manifestation of all types of defilements and that 'fear' is a product of our defiled mind states. If someone has a fear to meditate in a particular environment then it is best for that person to avoid such places and meditates in a place they are used to, because one must not allow fear to interrupt the practice of meditation specially at the beginning. Every single person in this world has some form of fear, there is no one without fear in this world.

We must remember that there are four qualities that are common to man and all animals : hunger for food, need for sleep, desire for sexual activity and fear. Except the Buddha and the *arahants* everyone else will feel fear. All sophisticated security equipment and all security personnel in the world exist due to the fear people have. The development of *saddhā* and *sīla* will always help you to overcome fear initially and it is best for such persons with fear to initially meditate in places that they are comfortable with.

If when looking at an electric wire, I keep seeing the arising and ceasing, is that manifestation of vipassanā?

This experience is possible even for a non-meditator and if the person manages to keep the mind still during such an experience and develop *vipassanā* practice, then it would be useful. We all have

a blind spot in our eye and the images that fall on it are generally not seen. But if a person with a *vipassanā* background is able to perceive this manifestation then it could also result in such an experience.

Please explain what is meant by observing dhutanga practices?

Dhutanga means shaking off one's deep defilements and this is a practise adopted by certain monks who were determined to be rid of such strong defilements. There are thirteen *dhutanga* practices - some are in relation to the robes monks wear, seeking alms food (*pindapātik'aṅga*), accommodation and the medicines to be used. Sometimes it would appear that these practices border on giving extreme torture to the body. The *Visuddhimagga* gives more details on this subject.

Please explain to which side a yogi should turn during walking meditation?

Usually in Burma the recommendation is to turn to the right. And this is also regarded as being auspicious. But in *vipassanā* practise it really does not matter to which side you turn.

Please advise about the role of foot-wear during walking meditation

When doing the classical walking meditation, i.e. on a prescribed path, pacing to and fro with mindfulness on each step, then it is ideally done with bare feet since in *vipassanā* practise the yogi is asked to be mindful about the sensations that the naked sole experiences. That is the norm.

However, this is not always practical in the colder climates or when very hot. In such situations, for practical reasons one may need to wear socks or foot-wear as the case may be. Yet, even if we have worn shoes or slippers we could still be mindful with each step we take. Ven. Kovida (an American monk), who used to be here during

the time of Ven. Katukurunde Ñānānanda, when visiting the latter's kuti after lunch would make the entire journey from his own kuti, a walking meditation.

Yesterday you mentioned that we should be able to see sorrow and sadness within a frame of happiness. Could you kindly explain this?

We should realize that even *cetasika dhamma* like the *Indriya Dhamma* and the *Bojjhaṅga Dhamma*, which are very hard to obtain can give us unhappiness. We can examine how a valuable *cetasika* like *sati*, or *Dhammavicaya bojjhaṅga* can give us happiness as well as sadness. We develop the *Indriya* or *Bojjhaṅga dhamma* purely to help us reduce and to eventually get rid of our defilements. These Dhammas are also subject to *anicca* and therefore they will not always give us pleasure. And unless we see the *dukkha* within them we will get attached and when they fade away we will become sad. This would be a hindrance in our journey towards *nibbāna*. This is why we are taught to look at all these *dhammas* with equanimity and it is only if we have sufficient *upekkha* that we will be able to use them in this journey. This is not easy to explain but it will happen automatically when we develop on the path. The *upekkha* thus developed, is considered as a happiness by The Buddha.

Please can you advise if a feeling of indigestion that some of us are experiencing at present is a result of deepening of our meditation practise?

This does not seem likely, since some of our monks too had experienced similar indigestion and I am beginning to suspect lack of hygiene in the preparation of meals. However, Mahasi Sayadaw had described a situation where, when middle-aged persons take up the practice of meditation they undergo many changes and they re-configure their lives so much that they even develop dispassion towards the usual home comforts, food and family. When this happens some of them give up regular eating habits and consequently their health suffers. Sayadaw has recommended that yogis must not be encouraged to be careless about their

eating/sleeping patterns and personal hygiene, and that they should have regular meals.

Please explain Jhāna and nimitta

This is especially relevant to *ānāpānasati* meditation when the yogi is observing the 'in'/'out'-breath, they will note the breath but not where it strikes. This is typically a *samatha* practise. After a while the yogi may find the breath calming and then may note where the breath is striking, i.e. the nostril or upper lip and so on. This would be an additional benefit and one could even refer to the point where the breath touches the nostril (*rūpa dhamma*) also as the *nimitta*. After a while a successful yogi would note a light and that too would be referred to as a *nimitta (nāma dhamma)*. Therefore the *nimitta* can appear at two stages. The latter situation is when an *alōka nimitta* appears and this signifies a temporary suppression of the defilements (*nīvarana dhamma*). This leads to the yogi being able to experience the 'illumination' of their own mind.

Once the novice meditator keeps experiencing this light many times and the concentration develops to a stage of *appanā-samādhi* then it would seem as though the light covers the entire body, and at that stage we say that the yogi has been absorbed into the *nimitta*. That would be the *jhānic* state. The stage just before they would get absorbed into the light, or when they are very close to that would be referred to as access concentration = *upacāra samādhi*.

What does one do when thoughts keep bombarding the mind, despite following all your advice?

Just allow the thoughts to keep coming. Do not show resistance to the thoughts because then, that alone would be an invitation for bombardment. Just sit comfortably in meditation and like waiting for the breath to manifest in whatever place, allow the thoughts to manifest. If they do, just note them (as 'thoughts, thoughts, thoughts'). Do not get angry or try to block or resist them. If the

thoughts are predominantly those related to desire, then you would need to practice meditation on repulsiveness (*asubha*), and if they are related to aversion you should practice *metta*. If a lot of lethargy is present then one should practice *Buddhānusati*, and if you wish to postpone the practice and you are indecisive, then you should practice contemplation on death (*maranānusati*). These four types of special meditations are referred to as the Four Protective meditations and will be useful prior to starting on *ānāpānasati*.

Other stray thoughts may come and go, but don't pay any attention to those and allow them to come and go. Do not claim them as 'me, mine or myself'.

Can we guarantee in any way, that at the moment of death we would develop a thought-moment that would lead us to a favourable rebirth?

There is no guarantee at all. The teaching is that unless one has reached the level of *sotāpanna* at least, the possibility of a rebirth in one of the (*apāya*) hell realms is possible. In the event of reaching the stage of *culla-sotāpanna* (when one has attained the *paccaya pariggaha ñāna*) and managed to maintain it, then there would be certainty that the next birth (only the immediate next birth) would not be in a hell realm. But even though we reach certain levels in our meditation if, after we leave a particular retreat we go home and we get entangled in worldly activities we run the danger of losing that state, and we may need to work very hard to develop that situation once again. Our minds are extremely unpredictable and therefore it is not possible to give an answer with certainty to this question.

In the case of someone attaining the *jhānas*, one should be able to sustain the *jhāna* states throughout and if so with *samatha* practise it could be possible to attain a favourable rebirth. But one must be able to sustain the state of absorption and exit from it. Even the Buddha went up to the fourth *jhāna* where there was no visible

respiration, but did not attain *parinibbāna* during that absorption. He descended to the first *jhāna* and then it was only after that he attained *parinibbāna*. When in the fourth *jhāna* only Ven. Anuruddha knew that the Buddha was still alive although the other monks who were non-attainers thought he was not.

But even if we do gain a favourable rebirth through either *samatha* or *vipassanā* practice, how would we know what kind of activity we might engage in during such a life to come? Could we guarantee that we would have access to the Buddha's teachings, meet better *kalyānamittas*, or have the opportunities to practice the Dhamma better than now? Therefore don't make it a priority to get better rebirth, because our burning problem should be to know how to end the *samsāric* cycle in this life itself.

During Ānāpānasati, a variety of features could be observed in each breath - like the length of each in and out-breath, temperature, the rise and fall, the number of breaths per nostril etc. Please explain this further.

Once a yogi is able to observe the features of the in and out-breath face to face, various characteristics will manifest on a daily basis. This is natural. The next step is to repeatedly note what you observe, very intently. Then at some point the situation will change and the yogi will encounter some results. These should not be discussed at this stage. My Burmese teacher used to say, that the yogi's task is to keep observing the breath as it appears, and to not expect any result. Expectations will be harmful to a yogi's open journey.

And each yogi's experience will be different from the other. The signs of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā* can manifest in different ways in each yogi and that would be the point that they would clear the first hurdle.

If one develops a physical sensation it is possible to watch it arise and cease, but how would one treat a mental sensation? Please explain this using an example.

If I take the first instance, when a bodily sensation arises – we could

refer to it as a *sukha* or *dukkha vedanā*. The reaction to the *sukha vedanā* (i.e. with pleasure) is the mental sensation we experience. Similarly, the reaction to a *dukkha vedanā* (i.e. displeasure) is the corresponding mental sensation. But it will be very difficult to experience the mental sensation devoid of the *anusaya dhamma* (underlying/dormant tendencies) that accompany it.

This would be like when we light a lamp, the lamp will always shed some darkness to its very base. Therefore each time we experience *sukha vedanā* and the pleasure along with it, we will always have the hidden desire to keep the pleasurable sensation going due to the proclivities (*anusaya*) that come along with it.

Only a well-trained mind will be able to detect these as two distinct entities, i.e. the pleasurable sensation and the desire to prolong it, and similarly the unpleasant sensations and the dormant aversion towards it. Unless we develop the ability to see the pleasure or pain, and the corresponding underlining desire and aversion to those two respectively, we will never be able to transcend the state of bodily pain. Therefore when contemplating *vedanā (nāma dhamma)*, it is different from *kāya (rūpa dhamma)*, because always the hidden proclivities come hand in hand, and unless we master the technique of identifying these *anusaya dhamma* as different from the mental responses, we will not be able to understand the depth of *vedanānupassanā*.

Does the gap between the end of the 'in'-breath and the beginning of the 'out'-breath increase with shortening of the breaths during Ānāpānasati? I can experience this at present. Would I be in a position to experience vedanā, saññā, sankhāra within this gap?

It is important to get a firm grip on the *rūpa dhamma* ('in' and 'out'-breath) first, and deeply and continuously observe how it manifests. Then after a particular stage the *nāma dhamma* will begin to manifest as the breath becomes subtle. It's like a garden swing. When we initially give it a push it swings to and fro very rapidly and we will not see the mid-point as its natural place. But when the garden

swing slows down considerably, and eventually comes to a halt, we will see the mid-point because it will halt at that mid-point. Similarly, in a movie between two picture frames we don't see the gap or the darkness, because on the screen there appears to be continuity of light. If however, we see the picture in slow motion, we will see the gap in between the two frames. And in the case of the breath, we need to see the 'in'-breath and 'out'-breath repeatedly until it slows down significantly, and it is only then that we will see the end of the in-breath and the beginning of the 'out'-breath and the gap in between, and thus be in a position to note the *nāma dhamma*.

Habitually we don't like to see the breath slowing down and to observe the gap, because it is not exciting enough. Just like in normal life, we seek excitement all the time and then we end up creating problems when we don't have any. This is probably why the Buddha has a half-smile on his face. He must be looking at us and seeing how we keep piling problems on to our selves, willingly. When we don't have any defilements and we are at peace with ourselves, we feel bored and we either watch TV, have a telephone conversation with someone or do something where we end up creating excitements/defilements. This is why we are impatient when the breath slows down, because we don't understand that throughout *samsāra* we have been repeating this pattern not realizing that this is the middle Path, and we keep going in a similar fashion. At the beginning it is not possible to note the *vedanā, saññā* at that gap but by seasoning it and training to stay with that moment long enough, we can be aware them.

You mentioned that trying to teach the Dhamma to others may be harmful to ourselves. Please explain this.

In the *Theravādin* tradition we refer to this inclination of the yogi as *upakkilesa* (impurities or corruptions) . This is when the yogi feels they know the meditative Path and are knowledgeable and impatient to teach others. That very impatient nature disturbs your mindfulness in the first place. This can be harmful to the yogi's

personal journey. Therefore my advice is to invest that energy you have in wanting to teach others, back into your own practice and into furthering your own understanding. That would indicate wisdom within the yogi and it is likely that they would then realize all the *vipassanā ñāna* in quick succession.

Please advise if I should do metta meditation after I develop samādhi through ānāpānasati so that I could be rid of the feeling of aversion that I keep having?

If during *ānāpānasati* you are able to identify this feeling of aversion, then you could actually devote an entire hour of sitting meditation to *metta*. If you were travelling in an old cart with many people the cart would be constantly jerking with noises of wheels and you would be bumping on the fellow passengers, and the ride would not be smooth. If some lubrication oil is inserted to the cart wheels, the ride would be somewhat smoother. The Buddha calls *metta* a type of lubrication for a meditative journey. This is essential for everyone particularly for those with constant irritation.

This is described well in Gerdjoff's book, where he says that when a person becomes spiritual and is more aware of what they are doing, there are four manifestations in such an individual : irritation, fault-finding, disappointment and pedantry. Because such a person becomes more sensitive and therefore judgmental, this gives rise to stress. And although this is an indication of true progress in an individual, the community in which the yogi is practicing may find it unpleasant. Therefore I always advise yogis to incorporate *metta* meditation into the daily practice and then the ride becomes invariably smoother for everyone. Please remember that, *anapanasati* itself also can answer these difficulties.

During Ānāpānasati meditation we have been asked to see the 'in'/'out'-breath with its sixteen characteristics. Are we then experiencing the cetasika vedanā? If so why do we refer to the vedanā cetasika as dukkha, sukha and adukkhamasuka only?

In the *Ānāpānasati* sutta the sixteen aspects, 1-4 as kayanupassana, 5-8 can be grouped as *vedanānupassanā*, 9-13 can be grouped as *cittānupassanā*, 14-16 as *dhammānupassanā*. Therefore it is only the second tetrad that can be accurately referred to as *vedanānupassanā*. The Buddha refers to this issue when one group of bhikkhus states that the Buddha only refers to two *vedanā* as *sukha and dukkha*, and then a second group disagree and says that he referred to three types of *vedanā* as *sukha dukkha and adukkhamasuka*. During this debate between the two groups of monks a third monk steps in and expresses his view, where he says that the Buddha really referred to five types of *vedanā*, i.e. *dukkha, sukha, adukkha-masukhā, domanassa and somanassa*.

The Buddha condemns this argument and advises all three groups of monks that it is not useful to debate in this manner and that *vedanā cetasika* can be described in many ways if necessary, but what is important is to clearly understand what one experiences. Always my advice is also to experientially understand everything first, and then later you can apply it to theory. If you approach the Dhamma in the opposite way (i.e. where you place the theory first), then you will have a problem since you will become so dependant on the theory that it may become an obstacle to your understanding and realization of the reality.

We often hear about 'Māra' during Dhamma discussions. Please can you elaborate on this?

I hardly speak about Māra during my Dhamma talks and in fact I respect that person. In the Commentaries and elsewhere Māra has been categorised into five groups –

1. Māra of defilements - *kilesa māra* (the ten armies of Māra, each is given the name of a defilement)

2. The Māra related to the five aggregates - Skandha Māra
3. The Māra of kamma formation - Abhisankhāra Māra
4. Māra as a deity - Devaputta Māra (*paranimittavasavatti* king deity).
5. Māra as death - Maccu Māra.

(See page 227 Path of Purification, VII,59).

Please advise about observing the five precepts on a daily basis and also whether selected paritta recitation with family members at night is advisable.

I described earlier about the *paritta* (=protection) that we chant, we listen to, and those that we actually do. The last of the three is the best, because when developing the *satipatthāna*, no defilements arise in the mind during this period and this is the supreme protection of all. And when we contemplate the *sīla* we have observed, it gives us much joy of the non-sensual type (*nirāmisa pīti*) and it enhances our purity. Also, *sīla* assures you that your mind-set is free of fear.

Please explain what is meant by 'pabashwara citta'?

This means a mind that is free from the hindrances/ defilements and is therefore very clear and bright, commonly seen amongst *samatha* practitioners during deep *samādhi for the first time* when the *parivuttāna kilesas* are suppressed. In *vipassanā* practise when the dormant *anusaya kilesas* are removed this mind state becomes even more luminous and clear. We cannot then call this a 'mind' in ordinary sense.

Please explain the meaning of 'siw pilisimbiya path' arahants? If vipassanā practise is very wholesome and if it generates a lot of good kusala, will our future bad deeds if any, also get erased due to this effort?

A bhikkhu is entitled to the title of '*siw pilisimbiya path*' theoretically once he attains the stage of *sotāpanna*. Therefore one need not become an *arahant* to be referred to as such. Ven. Ananda was one. This refers to the ability of the bhikkhu to communicate the Dhamma lucidly, and to teach very effectively and to the point. A book called '*Patisambhidha magga*' reportedly having been written by Ven. Sariputta describes this in detail. The last such bhikkhu in Sri Lanka was Ven. Maliyadeva.

The second part of the question refers to the benefits of *vipassanā* practise, although we will reap *akusala vipāka*, we will not be deeply disturbed by those. Because such a yogi will apply *vipassanā* practice and note that each *sukkha vedanā* will end in *dukkha* and vice versa. Therefore they will not be perturbed by *dukkha vedanā* or *sukha vedanā*. The yogi will be neither excited during *sukkha* nor depressed during *dukkha*, and will be like a car traveling on a rutty road with good shock absorbers.

What is the difference between bare attention and mindfulness?

Attention is translated as *manasikāra* and mindfulness is translated as *sati*. Bare insight is translated as *sukkha vipassanā* (bare insight, or insight which is actually not supported by serenity). When having bare insight the yogi proceeds without *jhānic* experience and this is also sometimes referred to as bare attention. Bare attention is also translated as choiceless awareness and evenly suspended attention, and also non-judgmental awareness. Ven. Nyānaponika explains these terms in his book, '*The Power of Mindfulness*'.

There is a story about how a bhikkhu who was caught in the jaws of a leopard became an arahant simply by contemplating the pain he was going through. How would you explain this?

This is possible but it would have to happen very naturally and the monk would not be able to plan or predict such an event. The monk would have applied mindfulness at that moment. The *Patāchāra* incident is also the same. When she appeared before the Buddha in deep distress, half-naked and sobbing, the Buddha only said, apply mindfulness. She immediately became mindful and fully aware, and became a *sotapanna*.

Therefore always try to bare up to pain with mindfulness. If we watch our pains and grief with mindfulness we will be able to tolerate sorrow. Please don't expect to reach *nibbāna* by living within your comfort zones minus all problems and fears, thinking that they must never happen. This will not build up your resilience and help you move towards wisdom. There are many examples to this effect and stories of how people who bravely face and then transcend deep sorrow, emerge as totally different people. *Vipassanā* practise teaches us to face difficult situations and not to avoid them.

This particular monk also achieved the stage of *anāgami* and not the final *arahanthood*.