

FOOTPATHS
THROUGH
THE WILD MISTS
OF MOUNT ILLUSION

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PREFACE

Higher Teachings

If we are to compare spiritual practice to climbing up Mt. Sumeru, then please look below your feet. The ground is made up of bones of your past lives, piled up to the sky. Its peak, however, remains hidden by clouds of unknowing. What lies beyond these are called “The Higher Teachings”.



In Sri Lanka, at Adam's peak is found what is believed to be a footprint of the Buddha

In the Buddhist tradition, however, the word ‘*Abhidhamma*’ refers to a section of the teachings compiled under the third basket of texts in the canon (after the *Vinaya*/ Discipline and the *Sutta*/Discourses) and is often translated as ‘The Higher Teachings’. Sometimes they are also called Teachings of Metaphysics or even

Buddhist Phenomenology. Bhikkhu Bodhi in his introduction to a translation of the '*Abhidhammattha Sangaha*' describes it as:

“A disclosure of the true nature of existence as apprehended by a mind that has penetrated the totality of things both in depth and finest detail”.

The entire basket (pitaka) is voluminous. It comprises of seven books, starting from 'The Analysis of States – '*Dhammasangani*', to 'The Great Conditional Relations – '*Mahapatthana*'. Traditionally, if one studies them together with its commentaries daily, it may take you ten years to complete, whilst undergoing examinations regularly. If you have not any knowledge of its scriptural language, Pali, then add a few more.

As a result, Venerable Anuruddha Thera of a past Sri Lanka (the date is debatable somewhere between the 5th-12th century AD), had come up with a concise introduction. This has been translated into several languages, including English, and as far as I know, is widely used as a stepping stone to the study of the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*.

Although traditionally, the *Abhidhamma* has been ascribed to the Buddha and as the Buddha's words itself, many scholars believe it to be 'a monkish work of later periods'. Does that mean that we should consider it as spiritual nonsense which is best to be ignored for want of something better? My reply to this is, we do not know exactly which parts of the texts the Buddha actually spoke simply because we were not there, or at least we do not remember. What matters is that the teachings are the Truth and are verifiable, and that the practice leads to the true peace.

When asked what book will I write next, after some discussions, more than once, a friend suggested '*Abhidhamma*'.

My first reaction was a big 'NO'.

1. Firstly, to be able to do that, one should, I think, have a good command of the *Pali* language and my knowledge of it is hardly enough to feed cats.
2. Secondly, knowing Pali itself does not necessarily mean that one knows anything about *Abhidhamma*. One should have gone through the seven

books of the Pitaka together with its commentaries and sub-commentaries and have also passed the required examinations.

I did not have the patience for all that although I did (miraculously) complete the basic introductory text of the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* of Anuruddha Thera through a Thai teacher from the Burmese training. Still it took me some years. No, I did not take any tests, but being young and enthusiastic then, I think I would have scraped through somehow.

3. Thirdly, the study has to be supported by practice and experience. An Indian monk I once met in a meditation center in Thailand told me that when he disclosed to his preceptor that he wanted to learn *Abhidhamma*, his preceptor sent him to a meditation center instead, saying that to learn *Abhidhamma* one must first have practical experience. This answer speaks much of the Buddhist approach to life and all matters, and it remains true also for the study of *Abhidhamma*. Another Swedish monk who was conversant in *Pali* language when asked about learning the language replied that he never knew *Pali*. The reason he explained was that many important words such as *Nibbana* and *Jhana* could only be comprehended when one has had such experiences.

Being in the meditation field for some time, I may be able to say a few words from that part of the teachings to help in the practice and this is what this book is about. How some basic knowledge of the *Abhidhamma* can help in one's practice. But I will do more than that, I will write what I would like to write about, and try to be also poetic besides being precise and practical.

Please note that I have used "Consciousness" capitalized instead of the usual "consciousness". This is because the meaning meant here is different from the definition one would find in an English dictionary. It is meant to be a more open definition to allow the reader to search into its nature. I would state it as "The phenomenon of the knowing of an object at a present instant, also accounting for the many coexistent mental states and other phenomenon closely connected to it". I have also used it with a capital letter for the names of Consciousness since they are proper names. I have also left the word as it is to be used in both in its singular and

plural case. So unless the meaning is the same as in the dictionary, such as “he was conscious of his intentions” or “he lost consciousness when his head hit the bar”, then the word consciousness is left in small letters.

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Sujiva

Nitra, Slovakia

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Chapter 1

CONCEPTS AND REALITY



This photograph was taken about a hundred years ago of a learned Sri Lankan Elder who must have passed away by now. The face and forms around him that you see are concepts. The realities are the eye objects, colors that make up the photograph. Who was he? At that time he was in reality just mind and material processes arising and passing away. If you had been there and knew him, his name and person are concepts. But you could see his material processes which were conditioned by *Kamma*, but unless telepathic, would not know the mental streams flowing. But this you know now – the mental processes that are yours as you watch the picture, and any ideas that you have about the elder are also just concepts. One can, therefore, see how closely interwoven and related concepts and realities are.

Chapter 1

CONCEPTS AND REALITIES

The Question of Existence

There is more than one way of asking this existential question.

- What is real? What is life? Who am I?

Firstly, consider if at all this question is relevant. I think more than one would not think so. It could be easily qualified under 'unthinkable questions', because it is deep and there are many who would rather give the excuse of having no time, or admit their limitations and surrender to a godhead.

But it is important and relevant because the inquiry can cut into the net of delusions the mind has woven around one's life and thought processes. How often have we thought we know what and why we are doing things, only to find out later about our secondary motives and what lies ahead of us, often too late. To live life meaningfully, I think, gives real happiness. Where there is good and genuine purpose, sufferings encountered become insignificant.

What is life?

A Chinese man, a friend of mine once answered, 'Eat, sleep, work, shit'. It may sound crude, but there is some truth to it. If one is unable to go on with these processes, life ends or becomes unworthy of continuation because of resultant sufferings.

Who am I?

This question which is often adopted by Zen and Advaita practitioners, comes

close to the essential. More than once I have also asked this question to yogis. When unable to come up with a satisfactory answer, I then try to rub it in further by saying, 'If you do not know what you really are, then isn't it silly to work for YOURSELF OR YOUR FAMILY OR YOUR WHATEVER?'

What is real?

What advice could one give to someone who has had good experiences in insight but does not have much structure? In one case, I told the person to consider the experiences if they were real or not. It would definitely serve one against the development of hallucinations and continue to guide one on the right path. Reality is precisely what the teaching is about and the ignorance of it might as well be called delusion, the root of all our troubles. Becoming aware of this is also what insight meditation is about. It is also quite amazing that the world at large is quite indifferent to this important issue which could mean a world of a difference.

The key to this obviously concerns the Consciousness and its perceptions. That is why in *Abhidhamma* studies, one is first taught about conventional and ultimate realities

Perhaps the term 'ultimate realities' (*Paramatthadhamma*) is not the best translation because, with the exception of *Nibbana*, the unconditioned element, all others are not ultimate. They can be called 'ultimate' only in the sense that when one is mindful of the present without conceptualizations, those are states that one ultimately experiences. For example, hardness, pain, pleasure, and sound. One does not need to think or conceptualize to experience them. However, to experience them correctly without any hallucinations or perversions, there must be mindfulness. Mindfulness, therefore, is the key to know what is real or not. Mindfulness that is fully present does not conceptualize and is very clear and sharp like a super looking glass. These that are experienced are what the *Abhidhamma* always refers back to, sort of its - A, B, C, D.

It enumerates four main categories:

1. Consciousness (*citta*)
2. Mental states (*cetasika*)

3. Material qualities (*rupa*)
4. The Unconditioned element (*Nibbana*)

In practice it is not so easy because concepts are thickly knitted into the mind through habit. It is only and unless one has the strong and clear mindfulness of the present that one is able to disentangle from all these concepts.

Concepts

At this point, it is relevant to clarify what is meant by concepts.

Concepts are what the mind conceives. It is like thinking, but can be something more subtle than that. The grosser and more advanced forms involve thinking, fantasizing and so they are farther away from reality. These are like castles in the air if they are nice, or ghosts that appear in our nightmares if they are more vicious. Without mindfulness, people would not think that they are imaginary.

On a more subtle level, it comes along with the thought or mental processes. It does not have to be active, that is, consciously and actively creating the concepts, but the Consciousness does it on its own accord, without our conscious will. It comes with the nature of the mind, and past conditionings like *Kamma*. These concepts involve words, time, space, person, form and shape, and many others. Concepts comprise a large part of our conventional lives and are so also called conventional truths.

For example, words or word concepts are made up of various sounds put together. At one moment of present reality, they do not exist. What can be experienced is just a vibration called sound that passes away the moment it has arisen. But the conscious mind is usually too slow and so is unable to notice the processes that ran before the creation of the concept, and so take it as real.

The time concept is based on experience of the process of things. When it is gone, we refer it to the past, when happening, the present and when yet to arise, the future. We even make measurements of it based on the sun, moon, stars, etc. The space concept is, however, based on experiences of that which are visual and felt bodily. We again make measurements of these to create further concepts.

Can we live life without the use of the concepts ‘left’ or ‘right’, ‘you’ or ‘me’? Sometimes we can, but not always. In this world we have to use concepts, but when we want to develop insight into deeper reality, we have to put them aside. One very important concept in the field of meditation is the person concept.

The person concept

Who are you and me? This question has often been used like a Zen koan. A better way to put the question is, ‘What is it that is You or Me?’ The understanding of this concept is important and constitutes the first step towards the understanding of the Reality of *Anatta* (non-selfhood) in Buddhism. People get caught in this concept which occurs as an identification process developing in many ways, such as the ‘Big Self’, ‘small self’, etc. It is also the main core of egocentrism which makes up a megalomaniac, besides the swarm of psychological mess and disasters. Generally, the bigger the ego one has, the bigger will be the suffering. As the saying goes, ‘Pride goeth before a fall.’ Meditators can be assured that they are not exempted from it.

Meditation concepts

This is another class of concepts that meditators should be aware of. One of them is the object of tranquility exercises and is often called ‘signs’ (*nimitta*). They come about because they are developed with the concentration that has been built up. For example, one tries to visualize light or some object one has seen before. When the image which may be the grasped sign (*uggaha nimitta*) or counter sign (*patibhaga nimitta*) appears, it is because of one’s visualization efforts. After sometime, it can remain without effort and so it would seem that one does not make it. It is true that we do not CONSCIOUSLY create it, but the mind which can be conditioned to do so, creates it. Where there is form and shape or ideas, it still is a concept. That’s the very reason they say that pure tranquility meditation objects usually don’t lead to insight knowledges because the latter are freed from conceptualizations. These objects can be very fine, and abstract. Often it may even seem that there is nothing there at all except voidness and space. Even ‘voidness’ and space are concepts!

While practicing Insight Meditation one can also come up with concepts. When one has ideas about what it is, these are concepts. After having had genuine experiences free from concepts, one can begin to create concepts about them and

then get lost in them. So, although the Nature of Reality is not a concept, there are many concepts about it. When we read about Impermanence, Unsatisfactoriness and Non-Self, we have concepts about them. *Nibbana* by itself is not a concept, but there are many wrong concepts about it.

In meditation circles, it is not unusual to use concepts like Enlightenment, *Nibbana* or *Jhanas* indiscriminately. Experience is one thing and the question is how can one correlate it with the words and terms found in the texts. This has given rise to much disputes, resulting in schism of schools. Wisely, the *Theravadin* school has forbidden claims of superhuman states by members of its clerics. However, there is no strict rule in this for the laity and so many false claims are not uncommon. It really depends on the maturity and common sense of the individual to discriminate. When one can see the pride beaming out from the faces, then there's *no Anatta*, rather the big *Atta* is present.

Tricky isn't it? It's also sticky. So be careful when you argue what is right or wrong, quote this or that teacher and method. *You are using concepts.*

Abhidhamma concepts

My first *Abhidhamma* teacher who is also a meditation teacher told me that it is very difficult for *Abhidhamma* scholars to free themselves from *Abhidhamma* concepts. It really sticks.

Old habits die hard. Ingrained and drilled in patterns of thoughts find root in the deeper recesses of the Consciousness. It makes us believe that we are not thinking but actually we are. Sometimes we are not, yet it can still exert its influence to prevent clear vision.

So in this sense it is not enough to understand *Abhidhamma* without actual practice, particularly insight practice that gives realization of the true nature of things. The tool for study is mindfulness and it is based on its acme of transcendence and this is what *Abhidhamma* is about and for. But this does not mean we can do away with concepts. They are described as the means by which the wise use to communicate in the world. We have to start somewhere and so we need to use concepts. There are real concepts and imaginary ones. There are meditation concepts

and those of the mundane kind. And so we use them discriminately and finally go beyond them. When we return to the conventional world, we can then use them more wisely.

‘THAT’ concept

Many years ago, a friend passed to me one of his favorite books, one that he carries around like a bible. It is none other than the book by Nisargardatta, “I Am THAT”. It is a book about the teachings of an Advaita master and this book is quite known in the West but quite unknown in the Asian Buddhist circles. I read over it and must admit that it is quite Zen-like. And although I may not agree with some points, I do agree with others. The main theme is about ‘THAT’. What is ‘THAT’? I suppose it means REALITY. I have also talked to a few who have encountered this tradition and have professed to know what is ‘THAT’. Their experiences differed. I noticed that it’s not just because of individual ways of seeing the same ‘THING’, but also the level of awareness present in them. As a result I would prefer to call ‘THAT’ not specifically the Supramundane state, but also all conditioned realities. Thus, the word *Paramattha Dhamma* in Pali as translated as ‘ultimate realities’ would apply. Of course, we also cannot exclude the possibility of being just a concept.

We have already seen what is meant by *Paramattha*, but the word *Dhamma* needs some more clarification. *Dhamma*, often translated as ‘a state that bears its own characteristic’, can also be rendered as a ‘state of being’. In short, existence or presence. How can we tell that something exists? We can do so by describing the experience, one that comes without conceptualizations. So when it is material presence, it is called materiality (*rupadhamma*), and when it is mental presence, it is called mentality (*namadhamma*). The basic quality of being the Earth element for the first, and the second case being cognition.

Nowadays, they are grouped together and called Phenomena, and sometimes, mental and material processes to further indicate their conditioning. When I was learning this during my lessons, I noticed an emphasis on certain qualities that come with these states.

They are:

1. *Nisatto* - not a being

2. *Nijivo* - not a soul
3. *Sunno* - void

Therefore, the Truth of Non-Selfhood (*Anatta*) is the point to be emphasized. In a more positive rendering, it is not just an absence of the idea of a Self, but rather, a natural occurrence, existence of qualities in the web of conditioning. One does not have to think and conceptualize, identify and be attached, but it happens. There is Suffering but not one who suffers. But it must also be added, that there is the Path but not one who walks on it. It is too easy to talk, much more difficult to practice, and yet, rarer are the realizations. The message is none other than detachment or the better word being dispassion. The 'person' is thus perceived as just a concept concocted by the habitual tendencies and it has to be put aside to allow the mindfulness to see the reality that lies behind it.

The first part of the *Abhidhamma* involves an exhaustive classification of states. It helps one to develop in the initial analysis. Therefore, in the opening verse of the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*, Ven. Anuruddha writes:

***“Tattha vutthabhidhammattha, catudha paramatthato, Cittam cetasikam
rupam Nibbanam iti sabbattha”***

“These four categories of Natural Phenomena - Consciousness, mental states, materiality and *Nibbana*”

Chapter 2

CONSCIOUSNESS



Watching Consciousness is like looking into a crystal ball (mind door) and within it you see a rose quartz crystal (Love-Consciousness).



On looking closer, within it discover its numerous threads of connections.

Chapter 2

CONSCIOUSNESS

“Where do I begin to tell the story of a love that’s wider than the sea?”

Guess where this line comes from?

Never mind, if you don’t know. The suggested answer that follows is: “In the first Hello”.

My suggestion is the Consciousness. In the deeper sense, the *Dhamma* and when referring to dependent origination, it has been stated as ignorance. Delusion may be too difficult a place to trace for a beginner and so most would rather start with Consciousness.

Returning to the moments in Florence when a friend, Carolyn, suggested the topic of Abhidhamma for my next book, my mind began to wonder about the phenomenon of Consciousness. It would be an appropriate starting point and Venerable Anuruddha Thera did himself begin with it. It is obvious that it plays a central role in our existence because it is involved in everything that we do, whether we are consciously aware of it or not and then come up with resultants that not just surprise us but also shock us. Haven’t you seen anyone devastated or you yourself traumatized?

The opening verse of the *Dhammapada* puts it succinctly:

“Mind is the forerunner of all states, mind made are they. If one speaks or does with an evil mind, suffering follows one as wheels follow the feet of the draught ox.”

I then began to wonder how it can be best defined. Certainly with more than one word. I also remember that once after having given a talk for an hour

about mindfulness of Consciousness, a participant who is also a psychiatrist came and commented how good a talk it was. But he was disappointed that I did not define Consciousness itself. My Consciousness exclaimed, "He hasn't been really listening."

Often, I ask this question – "How do you define Consciousness?" It is interesting what comes back as replies because the meanings of the word ascribed to it in different languages differ according to their experiences and concepts. One psychologist in Sweden said that they usually try to avoid answering it. Another in Seattle called it, 'Levels of awareness'. I like that because it has an open ended definition which allows one to search and discover more about it by oneself. The territory is so wide that any amount of words is insufficient to include everything. Then one day in Rome, at a talk on the same subject, I was asked in return, "What is your definition?" There are times one has to wriggle oneself out of a situation and somehow I managed by answering, "The knowingness of the present." The Presence is what I stressed, because then it becomes an open ended definition, not just to be opened to any possibilities but especially to the transcendental possibilities.

So on that fine sunny sitting at the patio of a large cozy Florence home, I mused onto giving Consciousness the definition of a mathematical formula which includes all the possibilities and variables found in the Universe. As a graphic representation there will be parabolas that run through all the different dimensions of existence. At some points where coordinates meet there would be blackholes of unknown possibilities which they themselves are in some way connected by logarithms. As I am not a mathematician, I was contented to stop just there.

The texts are not lacking in similes concerning the Consciousness. One would often think of the monkey and such a simile as of the monkey jumping from tree to tree. It usually refers back to the restless Consciousness. There are given also its other mischievous behaviors. The monkey is also not just restless; it can also be greedy and nasty. In the classic religious satire from the China, the monkey was given the position of the active mind that leads the pilgrim to his destination (India in this case, in search of Buddha's holy scriptures). But he has now and then to be controlled by the crown of concentration.

More commonly found are *Suttas* about the thoroughbred horses and elephants. The former referring to a well trained mind and the latter to a great being, such as a Bodhisatta or Buddha. Then it is also mentioned sometimes as cows and bulls, creatures not unfamiliar in India.



Isn't he beautiful? Take a good look - does it remind you of something? How about the Consciousness?

In a discourse given by the Buddha about non restraint of a person with regards to the six senses, six animals are given together with their favorite sites:

1. Snake - ant hill
2. Crocodile - water
3. Bird - air
4. Dog - village
5. Jackal - charnel field
6. Monkey - forest

Can you recognize some or a particular one in yourself or in another person? The Consciousness can take many modes, or personalities. And so it is not surprising that split and multiple personalities occur.

In the discourse the six animals each are tied to a string and then they are tied all together and then set free. What would then happen? It is then the law of the jungle, the survival of the fittest. The dominant one would overpower the rest and they would have to go along no matter the consequences. Hopefully, instead, the well

trained thoroughbred horse would come along, train them and work in harmony for the well-being of oneself and others. But where? How about at a meditation center?

A more recent simile of the Consciousness would be a monster computer. They say that computers are stupid. They cannot think. It is just programs that condition their responses. But aren't humans conditioned too? Computers have no feelings, another affirmation of the superiority of sentient intelligence who suffers mentally while computers do not. But they also anticipate that one day computers will take over the world. If one is grounded in the doctrine of *Anatta*, this could be accepted without difficulty. As for something with biological touches, it could be described as a ghostly amoeba. I once thought about the octopus, but the Consciousness has more arms than that. It has unlimited arms reaching farther than we can imagine. The nature of its plasma renders it almost invincible. Fortunately and also unfortunately, it is also conditioned. That is, it has its limitations, and price. Who pays? We will be the ones.

Get it? It is **THE THING**. Watch out for it.

The *Dhammapada* also tells us that it can do more harm to us than our enemies; it can do us more good than our parents. It is also subtle and swift, but training it is good. A well trained and guarded mind brings happiness. Aha! How do you deal with a monster computer heavily infected and menaced by super viruses? How do you wrestle with a ghostly amoeba which is more slippery than the most slippery slipper?

Do not be frightened. Being frightened does you no good. Or put it another way, you do not have any choice. So get on with the mental training and do not complain. Try to be happy about it. It is actually quite interesting. You have plenty of time in *Samsara*. Just do not do anything so terrible in life that Death, when it comes, bites you where it hurts most.

Anyway, it is all about YOU.

So the first step one can do is not to identify with it. Then it is no longer YOU but IT, or would you prefer it to be THAT? After that, be ready to accept whatever you find. And remember, do not be frightened, do not be frightened!

Enough of all those sour jokes and very sorry if it seems so obnoxious to you. So coming back to Consciousness, the word itself had been translated variously from the *Pali* word “*Citta*”. According to the commentarial definition: “*Cittan cittenti cittam*”, which again has been translated as, “That which thinks, therefore, it is called *Cittam* (Consciousness).”

I do not like that. Thinking is a mental process and the mental states significantly involved being “initial and sustained application” (*vitakka, vicara*). However, the Consciousness is behind all this. The other definition which seem more acceptable (to me, who ME?) being “that phenomena which knows the object.”

To clarify, when trying to understand this definition, one should take note that the ideas of “who” knows, in “what way” it knows, and “what” is known does not intrude, although these other states have to be there. How can one know without the object or the ways that one can know?

Then a friend quickly asked, “Do you mean the Universal Mind?” I would not say he is wrong but I pointed out that he was drawn into another level of limited perception which denied him of the transcendental means.

That is precisely the point. Definitions are ideas and can never replace realities. At best, instructions serve that purpose, like the finger pointing to the moon.

At this point, I would like to bring up another Zen idea. There is a statement that goes:

“Firstly, there is the mountain, then there isn’t the mountain, then there is the mountain.”

It is meant to illustrate the development of perception by one who sees through illusions. Obviously, the third mountain is not the same as the first. In that case, the illustration is inadequate.

The first mountain would have to mean that which a normal person perceives. When asked, “Do you see that mountain?” and he answers, “Yes, I do.”

After meditating for some time, he may notice how the Consciousness, mental states and sense objects work together to create the experience and then he concludes that the mountain perceived is not what he thought it was. In other words, it is all in the mind. Which comes up with another question, what then is there?

As to the second mountain, if it is not the first, then what is it?

Before I come to that, let us go back to the first mountain. In the *Abhidhamma* sense, we can call it a concept. It is just a little short of an illusion. It is conceived, not what is actually there. And that means the shape, form, name, etc. The only difference with gross illusions is that the mind that conceives it does not have to have the unwholesome mental states rooted in attachment, aversion and delusion. One, who is drunk of course, may see something else.

When one comes to the second level, the piecing out of the mountain has many levels. First, one who is mindfully observant without concepts and thoughts, what one perceived are “the realities” or mind and material phenomena at work to make the experience happen. Consciousness is one of them, and itself can be pieced out. This conditioned state has been described by the well known monk Thich Nhat Hanh as “Interbeing”. That is, one cannot take what one sees without giving due consideration to what other things that are connected with it, like one cannot just take food without considering the farmer who grows it, besides the sun, the rain, and the insects, the insecticides that obliterated them, the remains of those toxic compounds which you consume, thus the preferred biological health products that you buy instead and thus also the extra money that takes leave of your pocket. So, the Consciousness does not exist on its own. It has to be dependent on other ultimate realities.

This is exactly what I would like to include in the definition of Consciousness. When it is defined as “that phenomenon which knows.” A phenomenon of knowing that is spread all over the whole universe creating chaos and order, torturing and blessing the beings which are also results of its activities, yet by itself is also conditioned, and quite illusory.

Finally we come to the third mountain.

And here, permit me to rephrase the Sage's statement (most humbly). How about something like this?

First there is the Consciousness, then there isn't the Consciousness. Then there is the *Dhamma* and the *Dhamma* here I take to mean Reality. That is the gist of *Abhidhamma*, isn't it?

And, so now what?

The Practice of Mindfulness of Consciousness. One of my favourite topics - GETTING TO KNOW THE BOSS. This would come under another chapter.

The Range of Consciousness

In the list of consciousness, there are 89 of them in simple classification and elaborated to 121. We stick to the simple and are given as a reference or starting point.

Firstly, they are classified according to planes. Planes are levels of Consciousness and they are characteristically found in certain realms or worlds of existences (spatial) although they may not be limited to them. They are like different levels of vibrations or energies and each having their range of objects and conditionings. A human for example can experience absorption levels even though he belongs to the sensual level. A Brahma for example still can have wrong views of the sensual realms.

- (I) The basic level of Consciousness is the Sensual sphere plane (*Kamavacara bhumi*).

Where it occurs, beings are still attached to the five sense bases and objects. They still occur in other planes when the active thought processes run. *Refer diagram in Appendix (i)*. In brief they are:

1. 12 unwholesome Consciousness

The 12 unwholesome consciousness which are again subdivided according to the roots (attachment, aversion and delusion) that plays the chief role.

They are observed mindfully in the practices as “Consciousness with lust”, “Consciousness with aversion”, and “Consciousness with delusion”.

These are negative and constitute unwholesome *Kamma*, Characteristics of the ‘Down End Man’.

Consciousness rooted in attachment – 8 types:

Pleasurable/indifferent feeling x associated/dissociated from wrong views x prompted/unprompted.

Consciousness rooted in aversion – 2 types:

Displeasurable x associated with ill will x prompted/ unprompted

Consciousness rooted in delusion – 2 types:

Indifferent feeling x associated with skeptical doubts/ restlessness.

2. 18 Rootless Consciousness

These are Consciousness without the unwholesome and wholesome roots. They are either resultants which include the Five Sense Consciousness of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching (10) and functional (3).

5 Sense Consciousness which are unwholesome results of unwholesome *Kamma*

5 Sense Consciousness which are wholesome results of wholesome *Kamma*

2 Receiving Consciousness and 3 Investigating Consciousness which are also results of wholesome and unwholesome *Kamma*

1 Five Sense Door Adverting Consciousness - a functional

1 Mind Door Adverting Consciousness - a functional

1 Smile producing Consciousness of an *Arahant* - a functional

Do not be alarmed at some rather unusual names and descriptions. Many of these are involved with the thought process. An important point is the advertence. One turns towards the sense door, the other to the mind door. Interesting enough, the mind door adverting consciousness performs other functions such as determining the type of response to the object, hence the

importance of the mental state of 'Attention'. It would become clearer when one comes to the chapter on the thought processes.

3. 24 Beautiful Consciousness

These are Consciousness that have at least two of the three good roots – non-greed, non-aversion and wisdom.

Eight Great Wholesome Consciousness which occurs when wholesome acts are performed.

Eight Great Resultant Consciousness which occurs as the life continuum of happy births.

Eight Great Functional Consciousness which occur in Arahants in place of the Great Wholesome type in anyone less than an *Arahant*.

- (II) The second level is the form sphere level of Consciousness.

They occur when absorptions occur (*Jhana*) and so the mind is in a deep, peaceful state elevated and away from the five sense objects. Being absorptions, the Consciousness is in fixed concentration and so the subject-object experience is not apparent. The difference of the absorptions lie in the difference in the *Jhanic* factors and the grosser ones are left out as one advances.

15 Form Sphere Consciousness

Five Wholesome Form Sphere Consciousness corresponding to the five absorptions that occur in one in deep concentration.

Five Form Sphere Resultants which occur as life continuum of those beings who are reborn as a result of the above absorptions.

Five Form Sphere Functionals which occur when *Arahants* enter into these absorptions.

- (III) The third level is the level of the Formless level of consciousness

They occur when the formless absorptions occur. While the former has reached its finest state in terms of mental state, here the concentration is brought to more depth and refinement by way of its object and so are named accordingly.

12 Formless Sphere Consciousness

Four Formless Wholesome Consciousness which occurs in one in formless absorption

Four Formless Resultant Consciousness which occur as the life continuum of beings born as a result of the above.

Four Formless Functional Consciousness which occurs when *Arahants* enter into absorptions of this type.

These four are named according to the nature of the objects they take:

1. Infinite Space
2. Infinite Consciousness
3. Nothingness
4. Neither Perception Nor Non-Perception

- (IV) Supramundane level

These are Consciousness that take only the unconditioned element and none other. As such they occur only when one's insight has reached an advanced level.

Eight Supramundane Consciousness

Four Path Consciousness are those that occur when one's insight has matured to the extent of turning completely away from conditioned states to the unconditioned. They are considered active and wholesome.

Four Fruition Consciousness are those which occur as results of the above and so considered passive resultants.

The Four Paths and thus also their Fruition, resultants are named according to the maturity of supramundane insight which results in greater dispassion and radical purification and so lessening of or ending of rebirths.

They are –

1. Stream Winner (who has won the stream that leads to *Nibbana*)
2. Once Returner
- 3 Non-Returner (to the sensual world)
4. The Adept, *Arahant* (who will not be reborn again).

Chapter 3

(A) THE UNWHOLESOME MENTAL STATES – The dark forces



When the darkness sets in, even the glory of the sun will be hidden. On a clear night, however, the moon beams may comfort, yet it is still just a reflection. Reflective thoughts can never be compared to direct experiential insights.

Chapter 3

MENTAL STATES (A) THE MANY FACES THE CONSCIOUSNESS CAN TAKE

First let us consider the difference between Consciousness and mental states.

Mental states have been defined as those mental phenomena that arise and cease, share the same object and base as the Consciousness. This definition clearly demonstrates the proximity of the two phenomena, especially when it states that at one moment, they are inseparable and termed coexistent states (*sampayutta dhamma*). My *Abhidhamma* teacher used the relationship of water and the state of the water to illustrate this. Water being Consciousness and the state of the water like being still and moving, frozen and fluid, as mental states. Recently a friend suggested the simile of white light and its various rainbow components. I also used the faces of a cube or some other crystal structure at some point. So what can one say is the difference?

Well, for one moment of Consciousness, many mental states can coexist. Over a period of time, Consciousness is more central in the whole web of conditioning. Mental states however are more specific for a situation. Both are on equal par in that they are ultimate realities (*Paramattha Dhamma*).

One can also use a psychological simile. One can compare the different personalities of the multiple personality problems as the different Consciousness. It becomes a problem when there is much clinging, aversion and especially delusion. So, the different traits that come with each of those personalities would be the mental states. If there are two different personalities which are very different and do not recognize the other, then it becomes a split personality.

But the mental states do not come alone, they come in a package. The

personality problem comes about with the identification process and then clings to it. Otherwise, they are just the many faces of an actor.

According to the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha*, there are 52 mental factors:

1. Seven Universals - which occur in all the 89 Consciousness
2. Six Particulars/Occasionals - which by themselves being unmoral occurs variously in different Consciousness
3. Fourteen Unwholesome Mental Factors - which occur only in the 12 Unwholesome Consciousness (*akusala cittani*)
4. 25 Beautiful Mental Factors - which occurs only in the Beautiful Consciousness (*Sobhana cittani*)

If you are concerned what they all are, don't. You can fill it up later by looking up the index.

Let us now deal with some mental states. And it would be good to start with the 'beginning'.

(A) The Unwholesome Mental States

Delusion (*Moha*) and its allies

In the Buddhist viewpoint, inconceivable is the beginning of the world, but The Wheel of Dependent Origination places ignorance (*avijja*) as the first link in the chain.

There are different words to express this darkness. I will quote a few - Ignorance (*avijja*), delusion (*moha*), hallucination (*vipallasa*).

Delusion is a mental state and, its opposite is Wisdom. Wisdom being that which reveals what is hidden (by delusion), otherwise unseen and unrealized is

therefore often described as light. With worldly matters, then it is mundane or worldly wisdom. With other worldly matters, then it is supramundane wisdom. Guess which is more difficult to acquire, but don't let that stop you.

These two opposing mental states have Consciousness as its common base but clearly both cannot coexist at the same thought moment in an individual.

1. Delusion (*moha*)

Let us consider first the mental state of Delusion (*moha*) another favorite subject of mine. This is spoken of in Abhidhamma sense with a meaning more specific and perhaps more technical than that meant in the English dictionary.

It refers to a Mental State (*cetasika*), and one mental state is connected to many others which, therefore, have also to be considered. It is just like when one gets married to someone then one has also to consider one's mother-in-law, or her crazy brother. And when a child comes up, you don't just give it away. As the saying goes, "blood is thicker than water", only that in the case of mental states, it is more inseparable, that is thicker and it is not so easy to get rid of.

As a mental state, it is often a dull state of mind. It is often heavy and dark. But it does not mean that one is not conscious. What is stressed is an absence of clarity or wakefulness of what is really happening. It is like a web or tinted glass pulled over one's eyes and one sees the world in a perverted way such as through rose tinted glasses. It can also be amazingly active, though but often behind the scenes. You don't usually fight with the Master unless you come quite to par.

For example, I once asked someone how is it like to be drunk. He asked in return, "Do you mean you have not been drunk before?" Anyway, he did explain, "They think they know what is going on, but they only think they do."

2. Ignorance (*avijja*)

The word, Ignorance (*avijja*) is used more often with reference to the first link in the chain of Dependent Origination (*Patīcassamuppāda*). Here its encompassing power covers the whole world with a thick blanket and hides away all the escape

routes except for the most thorough observer. It is interesting that even though it may not be present in the Consciousness at that moment, it can still exert its influence because of the web of conditioning. And yet, delusion does not mean lack of information. Also, the mind may seem very clear but hallucinated. People can seem to have clear visions like mediums, drug addicts and the like. I think that knowing the absence of wisdom is a key factor in dealing with it and so too the clarity here is not just what is perceived seem sharp, but perceptions (the mental state) that are **clearly** sharp.

How do you see what is not there?

Look for something beyond expectations.

How do you know that you do not know?

Cultivate the habitual tendency of knowing clearly.

One who is blind cannot see light.

He does not have the faculty, try hearing instead.

He also cannot know the darkness.

But it does not mean he cannot know something else.

3. Hallucination (*vipallasa*)

As for Hallucination (*vipallasa*), it is used to indicate its hand in the creation of illusions.

I once visited California and its highlights. One was Disneyland and the other, Hollywood. It didn't take me long to associate it with *Mara's* realm.

The first, Disneyland, is illusion in its childlike form, less threatening, pleasant, sweet and innocent. And as we all know, childhood eventually ends sooner or later to give way to something else more real but hard. So you wake up to find that the

fairy godmother is actually the wicked witch herself in a different form. Something more deceiving, determined in all her ways to make you sleep another thousand years. Should some prince accidentally arrives and wakes you up, then that prince charming who swore his heart and soul for you had already quite a harem, and you are nothing more than one more little toy to add his erotic appetite. Haven't you experienced waking up from one dream to another? Creations are interlinked, although some are more false than others. Are there those more real than others? I think that real reality is only one. When you talk about conditioned reality.... There are dreams within dreams.

The second, Hollywood, is more in the making of a complicated adulthood.

I know of many horror films such as Count Dracula, werewolves and psychopathic serial killers which make up exciting movies that attract throngs of movie goers. The Chinese have also made many sadistic romance movies. I saw one about the handsome singer and boyfriend of a girl who got sick, blind, paralyzed and finally died. It is a wonder why they didn't make her commit suicide, although I know of some films that did. After the show, I could see many leaving with eyes red with tears. I suppose they think that it was a terribly good show. See what I mean? The Buddha in one discourse did say, "He who delights in Suffering will not be free from Suffering." In 'Suffering', he means the five aggregates of clinging. In the case of the movies, it's suffering wrapped up in concepts and more illusions, some of them I think are quite nasty, yet they still delight in them. These are hallucinations grown over hallucinations!

The Unwholesome Factors

For now let us consider the Unwholesome Factors, since we are dealing with Delusion.

It is one of the three unwholesome roots. Roots? Yes, roots as in root conditioning. It is a type of conditioning that grows like roots of a tree, a Banyan Tree that sprawls and spreads quickly and is difficult to uproot. It suffocates its host although some disagree and say it is just a dependency, an over-dependency. Technically, they are defined as those states that enable the associated mental states and the Consciousness to establish in the object. Fortunately, there are also the counter parts - the wholesome roots.

The three unwholesome roots are:

- (1) Delusion – being blind to the essential nature of the object
- (2) Attachment – clinging, sticking on like glue to the object
- (3) Aversion – a revulsion, inability to accept the true nature of the object

It is helpful to keep in mind that **Delusion** does not work alone although it is the chief culprit. **Attachment** is like his very active, ambitious and beautiful wife, and **Aversion** is their really violent, bad tempered and destructive kid. The first makes you blind, the second seduces you, and the third kills.

Being roots, habit becomes obsession and the whole army of Mara becomes quite invincible.

(1) **Delusion** (*moha*)

Before we go further about these three roots, let us narrow it down to delusion at a moment of Consciousness.

Studying its connections or web of connections as given in the *Abhidhamma*, we can take note of these.

Firstly, Delusion always comes with another three mental factors.

- (a) Lack of moral Shame (*ahirika*)
- (b) Lack of moral Fear (*anottappa*)
- (c) Restlessness (*uddhacca*)

For some time, I have had a difficulty figuring out about these two delinquent cousins and that of the other two good twin brothers - moral shame and moral fear (*hiri/ottappa*) and they always come in pairs. In the latter case, they have also been translated as conscience and prudence. The distinguishing feature it seems is that the cause of the first is internal (*hiri/ahirika*), while the other is external (*ottapa/anottappa*). In the case of the delinquents, their description is again given in the negative form as prescribed by the prefix (*ahirika, anottappa*). The first gives an idea of a state without inhibitions, casting ones cares to the winds no matter what others

would say or do should it be discovered thus, the lack of good conscience. The second seems to be a foolhardy state of mind that undertakes ridiculous risks as many self-made heroes often do not and care not a dime what will happen to others. It is probably the incredibly good *kamma* that had kept them alive. It is more like being negligent, hence, the opposite of carefulness. They are both look-alikes, so one wonders why they are separated in the first place. However, it has to be admitted that there are distinct shades in terms of distinct ethical values. So do be careful of the “I DON’T CARE” and “HE DOES NOT CARE” attitudes.

The third, Restlessness, refers to a state of unquiet, a lack of peace. In a more specific sense it is disturbed, troubled like a turbulent sea. Yes, there cannot be real peace of mind if you are in an unwholesome state.

What I finally want to say is that if you consider how the state will be when you put these three together with delusion and Consciousness, you can then pin point the state that is the base for all unwholesome states.

A dark, murky turbulence that moves like a thief in the night; a little mite that crawls under the soft carpets and blankets of pleasure. It steals blood, time as well as awareness, happiness and freedom. It hides and nurtures all those demons. The birthplace, the womb of the lord of darkness is dark, something very dark, black as of black velvet, often thought of as emptiness, which should instead be considered as invisible. The art of invisibility, it seems can be acquired when one has understood and mastered the concentration and absorption of the Consciousness into deep blue/black. A very useful tool to have to escape external enemies, but to escape delusion, light may be a better choice.

According to *Abhidhamma*, the 12 unwholesome consciousness are divided into three groups:

- (1) Eight rooted in attachment: pleasurable/indifferent feeling x associated/dissociated with wrong views x prompted/unprompted.
- (2) Two rooted in aversion: displeasurable feeling x associated with ill-will x prompted/unprompted.
- (3) Two rooted in delusion: Indifferent feeling x associated with skeptical doubts/ restlessness. For these, it is naturally unprompted.

It is clear that delusion root is also present in the first two groups and thus they can be said to be more developed forms.

What interests us at this phase are those two rooted only in delusion. Of them, one has an extra character of skeptical doubts (*vicikiccha*), or as some would prefer to call it perplexity and which I would further qualify it as that concerning the nature of reality. It is not so common an occurrence, and it happens more often with seekers and thinkers who find themselves trapped between paradoxical and conflicting concepts, things beyond their own experiences.

The other one is called 'Consciousness associated with restlessness, rooted in delusion'. This is indeed that dark base that one should be aware of. From there one can get to the root of all things.

The restlessness mental state has been described as disquietude. A more positive rendering would be a state of disturbance and chaos. We can imagine the state like a whirlwind or a stormy sea. You may also say that it is not exactly physical or mental pain, but definitely suffering. Its active form can be experienced as obsessive, neurotic thinking that cannot stop, the passive form would be those drifting butterfly thoughts that wander uncontrolled and when near sleep then turn into dreams.

*A light in the darkness
can be seen from afar,
A light in the darkness
is what we must always remember.
If there is none, find one
or light one.
If you have a light burning,
Share it with others.*

I wrote this poem with these words while in the dark of a forest, a darkness, so dark that one cannot see one's own palms even if held right in front of one's eyes. I wrote it when I was inspired with the light I lit on that little kerosene lamp. But how do you light it in your mind?

Mindfulness, of course, that which can grow into wisdom.

However, I would suggest one to start to light up those blind spots that you never knew were there. And as the Taoist would say, “they become the doors to knowledges.” These doors have been also called, “The gateless gate/barrier”.

That is where that deluded Consciousness lurks. Watch out for them. Watch as you watch the light of conscious knowing goes out. What then is there? Cessation? *Nibbana*? At least the darkness becomes a door that opens up to something if your mindfulness is strong enough.

A common occurrence among meditators is that they find themselves in strange states with strange objects, like when one falls asleep and drifts into worlds which, while it was occurring, seem to make sense, but on waking up, it obviously does not. It would be interesting to find out what these are, but for the time being, let us consider them as just matters of delusion.

And so I recall a moment in meditation when I saw pots and pans, toothbrushes and slippers popping out in my mind’s eye. As to this, my teacher instantly described them as the MAD MIND.

The Lord of Darkness

We do meet someone we know sometimes in the most unexpected places. But who could have thought that I would meet HIM at a corner of a lesser street in that pretty town of Ystad in the south of Sweden on that one fine spring day in May. Standing tall, over confidently eyeing impassively at us, minions of his empire, the Lord of Darkness did not even give us a hint of a smirk. Even as I took photos after photos of this Dark Prince, he looked at me, through me with a look that is at once pretentious, cynical and humorous. I estimated him to be at least three meters in height with a head that is a hybrid of a hippopotamus, kangaroo and a horse. He wore dark (of course) flowing robes that draped down elegantly over his broad shoulders. If not for his HEAD, it could turn out to be for a dignified Taoist Immortal. Given his unlimited powers, he usually takes another head, one that is more pleasant, or if he wishes to frighten you, something more horrible.



The Lord of Darkness at Ystad, Sweden.

I did not stay long to converse with him for I did not want Robin and the rest to be so alarmed that they would lose their wits. Even with the thought, “What on earth are you doing here?” He quickly responded, “And why not?” True, no one here would have thought it mattered. These are simple, contented and complacent people who would not have suspected what he had done, what he is doing and what he will do to them. Therefore, this is obviously an ideal place for a demon to roam unnoticed.

What would you do, if one would ask; if a God fearing Christian would meet face to face with Satan? I think that with all their faith, most would start urinating in their pants instantly. As for Buddhists, how many have practiced mindfulness diligently? The judgment will be clear at one's Death date.

Jokes aside, when you come face to face with Delusion, this is what it is like. Be **ready**, and have faith in mindfulness (which you cannot if you have not practiced well enough). Better early than late, **better** later than never!

Of course! That ‘THING’ that I saw on that fine day at Ystad, Sweden was a sculpture which I thought would represent very well the Lord of Darkness. But isn’t conventional reality very much interwoven with inner reality? We traverse the two worlds and as some have aptly put it, ‘the outer world mirrors our inner world’. Or it could also be the other way round - ‘the inner world mirrors the outer world.’ Religions do not forget to warn us of the forces of evil. They should also define clearly with unprejudiced notions who or what it really is. When groups start pointing accusing fingers, then that dark force is winning, because the next thing that follows will be violence. Even if they have done so correctly, they should also tell us what to do next.

The Buddhist scriptures do tell us of an Evil One, called *Mara*, and in fact also say that there are many *Maras*. To put into words –

1. Devaputta *Mara* - A celestial being up to mischief
2. Abhisankhara *Mara* - The great creators that are the formations
3. Khandha *Mara* - The five aggregates of clinging which have been defined as Sufferings
4. Kilesa *Mara* - The defilements, or unwholesome states, the causes of Suffering
5. Maccu *Mara* - Death which puts an end to striving in this life

As a point of interest, the first is a celestial being who for some reason decided to interfere with one’s practice. In the story of the Buddha, he tried many times before the Buddha’s Enlightenment, and he tried many times after to make things difficult. The disciples, as expected, were not spared either. He can also represent powerful people or whosoever who may or may not have good intentions. The point is they think what you are doing, such as practicing mindfulness, is not a good and a wise thing to do and so decides with varying degrees and ways to stop you in your process of development and do something else they would approve.

The next three types are taken impersonally. These are forces, within and without, forces that run in the inner world of ultimate realities. Looking at it this way reduces the geometric developments of delusion and its syndicate in their multiplication on the conventional level. Secondly, it also brings one to the heart of the matter. The real battlefield is best fought in the inner arena - the Consciousness.

Mara as formations are the creative forces involved with Volitions, the creative *Kammic* forces in our actions that build up the world, *Samsara*, that we live and will live in.

As for the last, which is Death, you know what it means. Most stories end here, good and bad, it is like an antibiotic that knocks down everything including your own immune system. So your master game is cut short, *Samsara* has won again.

O Death, when will you take me? - A nice mantra to recite before you sleep.

By the way, Death is not an evil thing. It is just a part of the process, that which puts an end to many things, good or evil, wholesome or unwholesome. When it is unwholesome, then we can say, 'a little late is too late'. But if you have sown enough good kammic seeds, then there's a chance you can continue with the good processes somewhere else and as somebody else.

Contemplation on Delusion

There are different attitudes one can take when trying to observe Delusion such as into the nature of pain. This line I have said many times. The same can be said of watching delusion. The image of the Warrior, an ancient one, cannot be dismissed. He represents courage and determination. As what someone had said, the way of the peaceful warrior. Maybe, it could be better to call him a warrior of peace. What is certain is that one should not be afraid to face it. Another preferred attitude to take would be that of a healer, something like a nurse, a doctor, psychotherapist, psychiatrist, and more than that, a spiritual guide.

We can come up with the same answer again – Mindfulness.

The contemplation on delusion could come neatly into the territory of contemplation on Consciousness. The base of it will be dealt in the chapter on contemplation on Consciousness, another favorite topic of mine.

1. Firstly, one must establish a continuity of mindfulness, particularly, *Vipassana* mindfulness, mindfulness of things as they really are.
2. Secondly, one zeros in on watching the Consciousness.
3. Watch out for the BLACK OR BLIND SPOTS. These are lapses of clear awareness where the Consciousness takes on a subtle dip or change. One at first will think that one has come across a blank wall of nothingness. One has to realize that one is knocking one's head into the wall of delusion. If one has some mindfulness, it turns out as some simple form of dullness which if nothing else happens, then sleep is likely to slip in. Or it can be a stepping stone to something more ghastly, like skeletons coming out of the cupboard (hidden, latent, or any rather-be-forgotten stuff). Other objects can also pop in unexpectedly, and many can come under thinking. There are incredibly varied number of them. Some are habitual, others seem like mere rubbish.
4. Zero in on the state of delusion of that moment. Notice the type of delusion, the objects and feelings it fills you up with and its thread of connections and thus directions it leads to. If you can do that, you are looking into a very subtle level of conditioning. You are looking eye to eye into the work room of the Lord of Darkness.
5. Then there is the process of communication.

*Hello Darkness my old friend,
I've come to talk to you again....*

These opening lyrics of the song by Simon and Garfunkel I have heard before long ago still echo in the silence of my mind - sometimes. The

reason is not because of the music that goes with it. It's more because the meaning that lies behind it that seems to hit something deep. What darkness was he talking about? I guess, the dark places which one would look for to be in solitude and contemplation.

Darkness and solitude does help in contemplation you must agree, but to contemplate on Darkness in the dark alone will add extra spice and adrenaline to your system.

Whenever I come to this part, occasionally, a chill runs down the spine. I look into that mysterious darkness which seem at first to stare back at me in a timeless way and then begins to consume me. Then the presence of mindfulness becomes critical. Its versatility will be something one must have when one treads into these gray zones, where deep gray turns to black and black to ten thousand things. It is a door, a door at the Mind door (which opens unlimited doors) which are usually closed, locked and barred since time knows when.

This is when you may come face to face with that immense and amazing powers of unexpected transformations. The Lord of Darkness, you will find, hooks onto this store house of impressions (*sanna khandha*) and can then take any form or face, including yours.

One can see at this point how important it is to see it as an impersonal natural phenomena.

6. See into the three universal characteristics of delusion. Can one see this state of delusion arising and passing away quickly? One will first have to ask first about the grosser unwholesome roots. When there is strong right concentration and mindfulness, they would not have arisen in the first place But before that, there may be quite a tug of war, especially when these roots are strong and deep. But then, even as objects (*arammana*), they can be experienced with insight into the three universal characteristics. Then the fires of craving may seem like being flushed out by a thunderstorm of mindfulness, and the tight claws of grudges blown up into bits by the power of mindfulness.

Delusion being very subtle is more difficult and so is rare. But it obviously does happen. One can see it first in its grosser forms, like waking up from dreams that you had been around for some time swept away during the sitting session. These come like waves of objects which are difficult to resist. For the more musically inclined people, they come as songs, musical pieces.

At deeper levels, it is like waking up from empty, void states. It is, therefore, important to be very aware should you find yourself gone into a state that seems like nothing is there. It may, in fact, be just that same blank wall or worse, if it stays long and end up in deep delusion. If there is enough mindfulness, then that deep delusion cracks. It is like waking up from a deep sleep knowing that there had been clouds gray and black fluttering, fuming, choking and suffocating since time immemorial and then it suddenly cleared up.

These experiences can be quite dramatic. When these experiences are over, concentration and mindfulness will run on crystal clear for some time very comfortably if one does not become complacent.

(2) Attachment (*lobha*)

Here, the identification process comes into play and so, the next unwholesome root – craving (*lobha*) or attachment comes into the picture. It comes in many forms from simple craving for good food to more intense clinging to something that one would become miserable or even die if without, and finally to obsessions and addictions. It is the Consciousness grasping, clinging, and sticking to the object blindly.

Firstly, one identifies with objects as a being, as a personality, or something that supports it. Then the demons real and imaginary are at once there before one. Then before you, is that darkness which takes many faces. It could be yours, your friends, your teachers, the neighbor's black cat, or the shadow near the gravestone. Beliefs can turn imagination into something very real. The Consciousness has means beyond our imaginations. So if you find yourself looking at a demon or a cute bambino, find

your way back to 'Mindfulness of the Consciousness' if you find that delusion too tricky a foe.

Firstly, let's see what it means if that delusion takes a face that is your very own. Obviously, this happens often since that is what one usually identifies with. People do speak to themselves. Who are they speaking with? Good guess! Sometimes, one scolds oneself, BAD BOY! Or one praises oneself, GOOD GIRL! Sometimes one does both and then get caught up with confusion. WHAT? WHO? YOU? ME? It is ego play in the scheme of things. It is a very deadly scheme.

This egocentrism is called the 'I AM' conceit (asmimāna)

The first is the bad ego, the second is the good ego, the third the mixed ego which include split and multiple egos

Egos within, egos without.

Egos - big egos, small egos, split egos, and multiple egos,

Hopping and jumping quickly onto those trains of thought processes,

Making a scene, directing a play,

Laughing and crying as well as complain,

What a drama!

Usually, the part of clinging to Wrong Views (*ditthi*) is classified under the Consciousness rooted in greed, which obviously is dependent on delusion. But Wrong View (which is another long story to be told), is already a highly developed form of perversion. When you read the first discourse in the Middle Length Discourses (*Majjhima Nikaya*) called the *Mulapariyaya Sutta*, the Buddha tells us of how the whole process of identification comes about. It starts from the wrong perception of the Earth, Water..... until beings of all forms. This initial phase is work of the Master Darkness himself. Hardly ever anyone notices this. People have been blinded and fooled for too long. By the time the Wrong View has taken place, his indomitable wife, attachment has put that ring around your nose and will do to you as she wishes. Finally, the unhappy family will make a party and then... CARVE YOU INTO PIECES.

Therefore, the texts group three mental factors into a group called 'lotika' or the 'greedy trio'. The main player is attachment/craving and its other two sidekicks are Wrong Views (*Ditthi*) and Conceit (*Mana*), these are Cinderella's two ugly sisters.

In meditation, the strategy is to catch attachment/craving at its root and the other two are also done with. The trouble is that it can be very subtle like an unassuming wish that also often come with a thought, 'it is nice....' It is the pleasurable feeling that has been pulled into the game. When it has grown stronger one can see it is more expanded form which is that egocentrism of conceit. So watch out for that 'I am' better, worse or equal to others. It is not that one cannot compare, it is what mental state that does it. As for wrong views, it is more sticky and rigid. It involves strong attachment to beliefs. Then it is best to see how open and investigative the Consciousness is to an idea. The presence of the 25 beautiful mental factors, I think, helps to recognize its presence or absence. Craving itself can be excessive and obsessive without wrong views or conceit. They are called clinging to sensuality (*kamupadana*). These are addictions and obsessions and when advanced and developed, one may have to resort to more drastic measures such as those employed in drug rehabilitation centers. So it is better to practice sooner than later.

It also becomes interesting in this craving root when one delves deeper into it. It means that one does not push it away instantly when one notices it, but look deeply into its conditions. At first one arrives at the basic conditions of the processes and then when plunging deeper, one goes into deeper causes including psychological causes. But by going even deeper, then the existential causes, the three characteristics of existence come into the picture. To give an example for each level:

- i) When one is watching seeing a beautiful flower, there may arise a wish to want to pick it up and put it on your hair. Then one mindfully notices this craving and withdraws. The craving vanishes and you proceed to walk mindfully.
- ii) There are many types of obsessions and addictions. The causes are often more than just psychological and such things like social conditions and *kammic* past can also have a hand in it. But eventually it still goes back to the mind. If one can trace its arising, one may be able to trace from its apparent, surface causes to deeper ones. Take for example, smoking. One resorts to smoking, as many would say, to get relief from stress. When one goes deeper, there will be other

causes that bring about that need. For example, one may find that it started when one was growing up. At that time one had the idea that to be grown up one must smoke and drink beer. Pa does it, so does Mum, so does Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra. Maybe cigars are meant for the real machos. It is the need for recognition which boils down to the unhealthy Ego and from there trace another 1001 connections.

iii) In the case of existential causes, one then sees the 'non-self' aspect of it together with the other accompanying characteristics of impermanence and suffering. Here one arrives at the level of just the ultimate realities and its conditionings, and then trace it as a root to the basis of existence. These three are connected. The delusion conceals the true nature of suffering and often makes it nice. Craving grows from this and with the arrival of pain and the like, aversion arises. When one has passed through the basic knowledges, then it will be clear how suffering of formations (*sankhara dukkha*) is found connected with and arises from it. It is part and parcel of the deadly army of the Dark Lord.

An interesting report was once given to me. The yogi reported that he had experienced craving in two forms. One is like it is building a network or cage of 'egos'. The second is like a very primitive force underlying all the thought processes. In the first case, it is craving working with the ego-conceit identification process to try to make substantial something unsubstantial which otherwise without the ego, everything would be meaningless. The second is a very primal force that is the craving for existence like a very powerful serpent underlying all existence, and that would not perish even when Death comes.

So how now? Practice of insight, of course! On seeing the Reality beyond all conditioned realities one can cut through all of them and arrive at that unconditional freedom.

Craving, aversion and delusion are impermanent, suffering and non-self. They are not invincible and there is a possibility to be free!

(3) Aversion (*dosa*)

And as for Delusion and Aversion, it is another episode of the somewhat similar

process. That tempestuous kid soon grows up and his dad willingly, for a starter, gives him arrows, then swords, then spears, then guns, then BOMBS. Didn't you see kids enjoying themselves with replicas of the real thing? I am sure that even adults have enjoyed movies like Rambo or the Exterminator. But when it comes to matters like SEPTEMBER 11, then it is something more realistic and less fun. Fortunately, it may take some time before it becomes a reality. Unfortunately, because it just takes one really bad person in the world to materialize it and it may be the end of the world.

Three other forms of aversion are mentioned in the *Abhidhamma* as mental factors. They are – jealousy, avarice and remorse.

Jealousy (*issa*) is that state that does not like someone to be happier or better than oneself. Avarice (*macchariya*) is resentment towards someone who wants a share of one's happiness. If John sees his girlfriend Jenny happy with another man; seeing the man happy arouses jealousy in him. If however, he sees the man taking his beloved Jenny away and then gets angry, then it would be avarice. Remorse/ worry on the other hand means being regretful towards what has been done or undone.

In dealing with these nasty characters, one needs the qualities of peaceful awareness, with full mindful acceptance (not helpless surrender because of despair) including the presence watching the aversion itself.

Besides these, there are another two mental factors in the category of unwholesomeness not mentioned before and they are:

- i) Sloth (*thina*)
- ii) Torpor (*middha*)

They both come together and may be said to be two aspects of the same thing. We learn that one is the unwieldiness of the Consciousness and the other of the mental states. Unwieldiness also means sticky and viscous. It makes one inactive and lethargic. When it refers to sloth, then the Consciousness that normally goes after objects will slow down and be sluggish and lack power, while in torpor the mental states do not work and so activities retract and return to a passive state, the most

common of it being sleep. It is clear when it attacks one during meditation either slowly or quickly. The 'light' dims and one is cut off. That is torpor. Subsequently, it will take some effort to boot it out, and that is because of sloth. So in dealing with these two lazy characters, one will have to call up the factors of energetic clear awareness.

From the *Cula Vedalla Sutta*

In the minor discourse of questions and answers (*Culavedalla Sutta*), the Arahant Dhammadina gives very interesting answers to the layman Visakha about counter-parts (*patibhaga*).

When asked, what is the counter part of pleasurable feeling (*sukha vedana*), the answer is painful feeling (*dukkha vedana*).

When asked what is the counter part of neutral feeling (*upekkha vedana*), the answer is delusion (*moha*)

When asked what is the counter part of delusion, the answer is wisdom (*panna*).

Counter parts it would, I presume to have similarities and differences that suggest close connections, but unlike the delinquent twins and the twin goodies, it also suggests opposite effects - like Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde, like the Prince and the Pauper.

Pleasurable and painful feelings are very contrasting responses, yet they both are direct responses to stimuli. They are like two sisters - the ugly and the pretty. One makes you want to live forever, the other forces you to consider death.

Delusion and neutral feelings do share a bland kind of characteristic, delusion is unwholesome and neutral feeling need not be so, which left to itself, is unmoral. To the indiscriminative eye, they can look very much the same.

When we come to the next pair, then it is what that struck me as astute in a practical sense, in the way they are similar and different.

They are similar in the sense that they are the roots with a right or perverse response to Reality. Thus, it gives them a very important position in terms of practical implication. They are different in the sense of characteristics and also the results that would come about.

What impressed me most is that when concentration becomes deep and perceptions become subtle, then the similarities that I did not expect became obvious. For example, at the level of the knowledge of arising and dissolution, it is said that only the origination and dissolution will be clear and this means that the specific characteristic - of dullness as in delusion and the clarity in wisdom, will not be the apparent factors although still inherent. For all that arises and passes away, is just a process, the process in the river of life. What then remains to distinguish the two will not be themselves seen as objects as mental states of the moment, but what these as mental states lead to as in the Path Conditioning. When it is that delusion, then it keeps hold onto the blank wall and the screen of invisibility, but wisdom breaks it up and moves towards transcendence.

What I would like to say here is that when one arrives at the level of experiencing with insight into the three universal characteristics, delusion which is not easily perceived plays an important part. In my opinion, it is especially so when one draws closer to the higher levels where delusion and the forces of latent tendencies weave an invisible barrier, colors the Consciousness with mundane foibles. All these, if recognized, will enable the final stages, swift crossings. Otherwise, one can go round in circles indefinitely like the chicken and its egg.

For interest sake, following this third counter-parts, there are two more others that follow.

What then is the counter part of wisdom?

The answer is Liberation.

What then is the counter part of Liberation?

The answer is *Nibbana*

What then is the counter part of *Nibbana*?

At this point, Visakha was reprimanded for asking too much, asking a wrong question.

Chapter 3

(B) THE BEAUTIFUL MENTAL STATES – The light in your heart



A beautiful sky can light up your day; beautiful states of mind can light up your life. The light of Right Mindfulness can do more than that, it can show you the way to peace forever.

Chapter 3

MENTAL STATES

(B) THE BEAUTIFUL, UNIVERSAL AND OCCASIONALS

The 25 Beautiful Mental Factors

There is a saying that ‘beauty is in the eyes of the beholder’. That says much for conventional beauty. Or in another way for food people, ‘ones man’s meat is another’s poison’. In other words, what is deemed beautiful can be very subjective.

In the case of *Abhidhamma*, beauty is looked upon in another way. It is something of the nature of ‘ultimate realities’. You may call it mental beauty but more like Dhamma beauty. It does not come with concepts and conventions and so it is most natural. Anger, for example, if observed directly with mindfulness is terrifying. Craving can be seen as a wretched longing and delusion, darkness darker than dark. These states are certainly not beautiful. On the other hand, if one observes the mental states of **generosity** – an expanded and free state of mind; **compassion** – a nurturing and healing state of mind and **insight** – a clear sharp and revealing state of mind, then they are clearly beautiful. It is without form or shape, nor is it material. By its very nature one can know that it brings about happiness, peace and fulfillment.

The above three states are called wholesome roots as opposed to the unwholesome roots.

An interesting note in *Abhidhamma* is that although unwholesome roots come hand- in-hand with unwholesome Consciousness, beautiful mental states do not occur only in wholesome Consciousness. They also occur in other categories such as Great Wholesome Resultants (*Mahavipaka*) and Great Functionals (*Mahakiriya*).

They do not need to be moral to be beautiful, but they cannot be if they are immoral.

The Great Resultants occur as life continuum, a basic Consciousness of an individual life existence. Great Functionals occur in the case of *Arahants*. We shall not deal with these at this moment and so it leaves us with that which occurs with the group of Wholesome (*kusala*) Consciousness.

These include – Eight Great Wholesome Sense Sphere Consciousness, Five Form/ Fine Material Sphere Wholesome Absorptions, Four Formless/Immaterial Sphere Wholesome Absorptions and the Supramundane Consciousness (*lokuttara*) which are the Four Paths and Fruitions, the last being resultants (*vipaka*).

The beautiful mental factors are divided into two groups-

Group A - those that occur only and in all beautiful Consciousness; there are 19 of them.

Group B - those that occur variously only in beautiful Consciousness; there are 6 of them.

Group A

Here, it can be divided into two groups. The first (A) manifests alone while the second (B) arises in pairs.

I. The beautiful states that come singly

(1) Faith (*Saddha*)

Many prefer to refer to this as confidence. I think a better understanding would be an openness to accept reality. It is also an inclination towards what is wholesome. Therefore, texts often refer to it as a water purifying gem. Think of someone who is devotional. Such a one inclines to what one believes in with fervor. But it does not necessarily mean '*saddha*'. If that belief is wrong, then it will be 'wrong

view' instead. Therefore, *saddha* is more confined to a clear awareness that is open to wholesomeness and purity and accepts what is good and real. It is like a current with a force towards purity.

Understandably, it is a critical factor for a beginner. 'No faith, no go' is a true statement. And so this has been described as the seed of spiritual life. When it develops along into the practice of insight, then it becomes the faith controlling faculty.

Depending on what it associates with, it differs. What recommended is faith with wisdom. Blind faith may end one into troubles. Just faith alone is not enough! Then, there is ordinary type of faith and that which comes with meditation. The latter is emphasized as it can take one to the beyond. One must have that, otherwise, there is no direction and motivation to the unconditioned.

(2) Mindfulness (*Sati*)

This is a favorite topic for meditators. What is mindfulness? One can speak of it as different things depending on the conditions. The most popular reference to the mindfulness is in the four contemplations (*Satipatthana*). But as a mental factor it covers a much wider area. I would think of it as mental clarity, just as sparkling crystal clear waters of a spring. One can see through it as if it is glass. The direct opposite, I would think, is delusion. But wisdom is the opposite since it reveals while delusion conceals. Mindfulness, therefore, acts as a precursor to wisdom which is often compared to light. Hence, when mindfulness is sharpened into a knife that cuts through illusions, it becomes wisdom.

It is important to understand what this state is from experience. Otherwise, one may mistake other states for it, such as a dramatic concentration, a particular perception or even an unassuming cognizance of Consciousness. It is like being able to differentiate a friend from a foe. Isn't it true that there are friends and false friends? After that one can select the true guide of the path – the mindfulness of insight, *Vipassana* Mindfulness. Its eyes look at things very thoroughly without preconceptions and prejudices. It sees through concepts and ideas and looks deeply into the true nature of existence. When it is able to comprehend it fully, then it becomes wisdom.

(3) Moral Shame/Conscience (*Hiri*)(4) Moral Fear/Prudence (*Ottappa*)

These two come together and they are called the protectors of the world. That is because they are the basic conditions for morality. Without them, many ordinary folks would give in to unwholesome actions.

There seems to be something sensitive about the word and psychological implications of conscience. Some religions make use of it and may instead arouse fear. Shame that occurs in people is often a form of aversion directed inwards, hence, the qualifying term 'moral' is required. '*Hiri*' is something like humility, not downgrading of oneself. It functions in a way opposite to conceit. '*Ottappa*' on the other hand is more like being careful and heedful. Its opposite, '*anottappa*' is recklessness. Putting the two together, it would seem that they are both aspects of heedfulness, a natural safeguard against unwholesomeness and danger.

(5) Non-greed/Contentment (*Alobha*)

Non-greed is a wholesome root. It does not mean absence of greed. On the other hand, it is something positive, a force that is the opposite of greed. While greed clings, '*alobha*' lets go, therefore, it is detachment and generosity. While greed ties one down, '*alobha*' sets one free. Many people fear detachment because they cannot bear to let go of their nice things. But on looking inside, that detachment is really happy, light and free. In Samatha meditation, the detachment from senses lifts one up to the jhanic levels. In *Vipassana*, the detachment liberates us from all conditioned states.

(6) Non-aversion/ acceptance (*Adosa*)

Just as in non-greed, non-aversion is not just an absence of aversion but a force opposite to aversion. Thus, it can be considered as the mental state of acceptance and in a more positive sense includes amity. Whilst aversion is the inability to accept reality and then turn away in repulsion from it, acceptance takes it in mindfully, despite its ugly and painful side. As such, it is peaceful and does not conflict with those around and gives way to other virtues like patience, forgiveness, amity, etc. The

thing to remember, however, is that it need not come associated with the wisdom factor and so can be susceptible to danger. It is also not the same thing as hopeless surrender in desperation; rather it still continues to do whatever that needs to without expectations. An indispensable state it is in the troubled world.

(7) Neutrality/Balance of mind (*Tatramajjhattata*)

When one is angry, one may say that one is unbalanced. When one is equanimous, one may say one's mind is balanced. It has something opposite to restlessness which sways and jumps in agitation. Hence, I think it has much to do with mindfulness, perhaps it is the stabilizing aspect of mindfulness. The more mindful one is, the more balanced and stable one's mind is. The next thing that comes along would be peacefulness. Hence, a mind well established in this state will be able to perform well in concentration and insight practice and thus occur also as a concentration factor and enlightenment factor.

II. The second group comes in pairs

(8) (9) Tranquility of mental states, Consciousness
(*kayapassaddhi, cittapassaddhi*)

(10)(11) Lightness of mental states, Consciousness
(*kayalahuta, cittalahuta*)

(12)(13) Malleability/softness of mental states, Consciousness
(*kayamuduta, cittamuduta*)

(14)(15) Wildness of mental states, Consciousness
(*kayakammannata Cittakammannata*)

(16)(17) Proficiency of mental states, Consciousness
(*kayapagunnata, cittapagunnata*)

(18)(19) Rectitude of mental states, Consciousness
(*kayujjukata Cittujjukata*)

In the second group, the names themselves are self explanatory. It is not difficult to imagine these states when present, can certainly be described as beautiful and any effects that come about would also be conducive to happiness. But by being wholesome, includes another factor than just being beautiful. It includes the active volition (*cetana*) that executes *Kamma* that can produce resultants.

Another point that may set your mind wondering is the difference between each pair. One is the state of the Consciousness and the other is the state of the mental states. It is just like sloth and torpor as explained in the earlier chapter, except here it concerns something beautiful. But these pairs are certainly relevant when it comes to practice because they clearly tell you that your Consciousness is NOT unwholesome and is most likely wholesome when it is in an active state. Recognizing them helps one to strengthen and enhance them and their effects. Each of them also plays an important aspect of mental development and an apt opposing factor to certain mental defilements, for example, tranquility for restlessness, lightness for heaviness, malleability for rigidity, wieldiness for unwieldiness, proficiency for inefficiency, rectitude for cunningness.

Group B

This group of beautiful mental states does not occur always in beautiful Consciousness. When they do occur, they do so with certain combinations and conditions. They are:-

The first three are called abstinences (*virati*) because they draw one back from unwholesome actions. For example, if one just relaxes, one is not considered having these states. However, when one is about to slap or curse somebody, but holds back, then it is the working of these abstinences.

1. Right Speech (*samma vaca*) abstains from wrong speech.
2. Right Action (*samma kammanta*) abstains from wrong action.
3. Right Livelihood (*samma ajiva*) abstains from wrong livelihood.

These are components of the morality aspect of the Noble Eightfold Path and they form the base for the next parts, concentration and wisdom.

The next two are called the illimitables (*appamanna*) because they can take unlimited beings as their object. However, the condition for them is that their objects taken must be beings. As such one cannot say that one gives compassion to a tree, bottle or chair.

4. Compassion (*karuna*) is the sincere wish to heal another's suffering. Hence, the suffering beings will be its object.

5. Sympathy (*mudita*) is also called sympathetic joy which rejoices in another's happiness. Hence, the happy or prospering being will be its object.

These two come under two of the Divine abodes, the other two are loving kindness and equanimity, and their mental factors being non-hatred/acceptance (*adosa*) and balance of mental states (*tatramajjhata*). They play a great role in favorable relationships between beings which without them, ill will and hatred would otherwise arise. These can also be developed to a high degree in concentration practice to raise its levels to the Jhanic states. They are also important in healing disciplines and also very helpful support to the practice of insight.

6. The Wisdom Faculty (*pannindriya*)

The wisdom faculty is the most important mental factor in the whole lot. It is not easy for it to arise as it is more developed in nature. The text differentiates it from a basic perception which just cognizes the marks of an object, like when one knows this is fat or thin, red or blue; it is not wisdom. It also differentiates it from Consciousness which knows the object in a general manner, like a villager who knows it is time to work; that form of knowing is not wisdom. Wisdom knows the object more thoroughly and deeply just as a lawyer knows the constitution and the doctor knows the human anatomy. As for the meditator, it will be how much he knows of the nature and workings of his own mind, how much he can control it and how he can purify it completely.

The texts use the simile of the light that reveals what is hidden by delusion. In this sense it is like really waking up. Sometimes the simile of the knife is used to indicate its function of cutting off the defilements and thus, also illusions.

There are many types of wisdom, such as worldly and spiritual. On a worldly level there are many fields ranging from mathematics to medicine. On the spiritual level it involves skills and knowledges that help one solve existential problems. In all cases it reveals thoroughly and deeply what they are all about and thus shows the way out of all problems.

The importance of this factor in practice is the fact that only by it is the true nature of the world understood and in a way of direct experience that enables one to be freed from conditioned existence and attain to the peace of *Nibbana*. To achieve this, it has to be Supramundane wisdom and that can come about only by first cultivating the type of mindfulness that arouses insight and then develop in a manner that flows like a great torrent as described in the four foundation of mindfulness. The insights would progressively be developed until one is freed from the mundane.

Besides the unwholesome and beautiful mental states, there remain two groups to be dealt with. These are by themselves unmoral, and only when associated with others can they be considered otherwise. These are (a) The Universals and (b) The Particulars/Occasionals.

The Seven Universals

These Seven are found in all Consciousness. They are like permanent residents while all the rest come and go. As such they have an overall influence on the mind at all times (with exceptional moments). They are:-

1. Contact (*phassa*)

Contact here is mental contact. Physical contact is something else, so is material contact. But let's not complicate things. The main one involved here is mental contact. This has to be present since Consciousness is that which knows its object and so contact is the linkage, the condition that brings the two together. There are six objects at the six sense doors and the six Consciousness arises with the six contacts.

This ordinary and harmless thing does not seem very impressive but it is the starting point. I am sure you have heard of 'love at first sight', but how about 'hatred

at first sight'? It would be good if it is 'insight at the first retreat'. It depends on the nature of the object and it also depends on the contact. The stronger the contact, the stronger will be the impact of the object and its effects. Even if it is not so strong, the frequency will eventually make it so. Fortunately, we can determine to some extent what objects we want to meet with. How good your wise decisions are depends on knowledge and foresight, otherwise, it will be a question of the power of your sense restraint. Therefore, there are the precepts formulated to help you. One may choose wise contacts as the *Mangala Sutta* advises, "Do not associate with fools, associate with the wise, honor those worthy of honor". However, there will be those objects that arise from *Kamma*. Those often follow you to the end of the Earth and is not easy to get rid of them. Like a creditor determined to claim his money or a debtor determined to pay his debts. The latter does not seem like a good example does it?

One contact leads to another. How did one get into trouble? How did one get into meditation? One important set of objects are people. From there one proceeds with more communication which means more objects. If it is meditation, then what type? In tranquility practices there are often mentioned 40 of them, pretty Brahmas all in the waiting from the 'Path of Purification'. In Insight practice, it will be the ultimate realities and finally the three universal characteristics, our sign boards to your ultimate freedom.

2. Perception (*sanna*)

Perception is that mental state that takes note of the marks of the object. It is like the secretary that takes down notes; it is like the painter that paints a model. By itself it is not discriminating; it just takes note of it. It may be false, which means it notes it down with mistake, it is wrong perception, or with mindfulness, then it would be right. Often people are unaware of this and so wrong perceptions will lead to hallucination of thoughts and finally to wrong views. On the wholesome side, it will lead to knowledge and wisdom as in the case of perception of impermanence, suffering, non-self, plus others such as foulness of body.

The interesting part is as the saying goes –'seeing is believing'. Actually what is seen only seems to be true. That is how the magician tricks us. The mind itself can be the greatest magician! The idea is to train and develop the perception till it recognizes reality and brings true happiness.

3. Feeling (*vedana*)

Feeling has been defined as having ‘savoring of the object’ as its characteristic. The king, that is, the Consciousness savors the food, that is, the object. Feelings are classified in various ways, in terms of its object, base, etc. To simplify things at this point, it is recognized by the three feelings – pleasurable, painful and neutral. It arises through contact and so it goes that the stronger the contact, the greater the possibility of stronger feelings. Its arising is immediate and develops as the thought processes run. It is recognized in the doctrine of Dependent Origination as the point after which where the mind responds to the object, in an immoral or moral way, in a way that turns the wheel on or breaks free from *Samsara*.

In the practice of mindfulness, one whole section is given to it as ‘mindfulness of feelings’. An important emphasis is to see pleasurable feeling as suffering so that a completely different view of what is happiness arises – the happiness that is a peace that is free from feelings, is the best happiness.

4. Volition (*cetana*)

Cetana is a difficult thing to understand and I have tried and am still trying to understand it better. A clue given is when the Buddha said that Volition (*cetana*) is *Kamma*. *Kammic* activity can be rightly understood as volitional activities which create results which may be happy or horrible, depending whether the *Kammic* action is wholesome or unwholesome. Its results are kinds of mental effects dependent on the moral aspect of the mental state in relation to reality. Anger, for example, will send waves and ripples that reflect its violent nature. Loving kindness, likewise, would bring about its blessings such as good sleep, good dreams, good friends, etc.

But it is found also in passive Consciousness such as in *Kammic* resultants. From here one can deduce that it is involved with ‘formations’. It will, therefore, neatly fall under the creative force of the mind. Its nature can be better understood when one studies about the workings of the laws of *Kamma*. Therefore, it will be ‘good begets good, evil begets evil’. It will also be mindfulness begets wholesome results, and meditative mindfulness begets meditation results. How much of it will depend on other factors. How long will that take? Never mind, just keep on practicing.

5. One-Pointedness (*ekaggata*)

Usually when people speak about concentration, they refer to this mental state. But does it mean that if one's concentration is weak, then, is it absent? No, one-pointedness is still present. That is when we recognize the difference between concentration and one-pointedness. When there is the object and contact with it, the Consciousness will have a certain 'holding on' to it, no matter how weak. When it is developed as in concentration exercises, then it becomes more firmly fixed and quite unshakeable. That is when we say that there is *Samadhi*. This fixation comes in different degrees, and that would also depend on the type of object used. Then, there are also qualities and forms of it depending on how it is done, such as in tranquility and insight forms. So, as in the others, it is a simple mental factor which when developed can make a great difference as to what one experiences and what happens. Wrong concentration is disastrous while right concentration can lift one up to the highest states.

6. Life Faculty (*jivitindriya*)

It seems to me that very little had been said about this mental factor. Often we are told that they are two forms. One is the material, hence physical vitality that maintains the physical life, while the mental aspect the mental energies. I have also read that the mental life force functions to preserve associated mental states for that moment. I wonder again about that. As such, I tend to think of it as an energy, not in the sense of mental activity and effort which comes under another mental factor or energy. This is more concerned with the continual flow of Consciousness and the force that comes with the life continuum.

7. Attention (*manasikara*)

Wise attention is that which leads to distinction and unwise attention leads to diminution. That has been pointed out clearly by Sariputta in the *Dasuttara Sutta*. But what exactly do they mean by attention? The word 'manasikara' itself means 'making of the mind'. The characteristic is conducting the Consciousness and mental states to the object. But when they ascribe it to the advertence of the Consciousness to the object, then it becomes clear. It is like directing the mind to its object. Just like

to switching channels in the TV, we turn the knob. 'Attention' is then the turning of the knob and the knob itself. But this is not everything. As the knob is turned, the other mental states and the Consciousness change accordingly. In this sense, it becomes a very important factor in meditation and life. If going through life is driving a car (which for me it has always been a bicycle in my dreams), then the steering wheel is the attention (*manasikara*). So, the word 'attention' is not quite precise! Being such an important factor, one needs to be familiar with it, how it works and how to handle it. When handled properly, we travel from darkness to light and from light to the beyond. The importance of this factor can be seen in the discourse of 'All the Intoxicants' (*Sabbasava Sutta*) of the Middle Length Discourses (*Majjhima Nikaya*).

The Six Particulars/Occasionals

This set also comes under an unmoral set, that is, by themselves they are neutral, neither wholesome nor unwholesome. The difference with the Seven Universals is that they do not occur with every Consciousness. It occurs variously depending on the type of Consciousness and the other mental states present.

These have been compared to lawyers or supporters who are by themselves neutral but when they take sides, they give special strength to their party. Many of them are concentration factors and so it would be good if they are on the side of the wholesome. They are:-

1. Initial Application (*Vitakka*)
2. Sustained Application (*Vicara*)

These two usually come together except for the more elevated *Jhanic* Consciousness. The characteristic of the first factor (as described in the Thai sources) is that which lifts the Consciousness to the object. It is compared to the driver that brings you down town. Why you would want to go there is another matter. But you went there!

The second is that which sustains the Consciousness on the object. It keeps you down town, and so you remain there (with that object or those objects).

Often these two are referred to as thinking and reflections. That is because the

mind runs and runs round the objects we think about. It becomes strong when energy is strong and may turn into a cyclone! It is good if it is still under control. Don't think if you don't have to, if you think, think mindfully. Uncontrolled, obsessive thinking are like horses running wild and when they are without mindfulness, then, they are 'Ghost Riders in the Consciousness'.

These two are also as important in meditation. Firstly, they act as concentration factors (*Jhananga*); the first two needed to reach absorption and are part of absorption. Surely to concentrate one must first bring one's mind to the object, then keep it there. How one does it as the concentration develops will come under a different chapter.

It also appears as the second factor of the Noble Eightfold Path, Right thought (*Sammavitakka*) where it brings and sustains the meditative Consciousness on the meditation objects.

3. Decision (*Adhimokkha*)

This factor has the characteristic of giving conviction, and is described as 'setting free the Consciousness and mental states to the object'. For example, when one sees a thief coming, one decides to do away with the thief and so set the dog off for his neck. Or when one has become disillusioned with the world, one decides to renounce all one's worldly possessions and to become a monk. What happens with things to come in the future when you have made the decision? In another shade, it is also determination. For those with attainments, one may make a resolution to arrive again at that state. Of course, that state can be anything..... even if you think it is an attainment but is not, that false attainment recurs. So it is not surprising that it can become an unmoral mental state.

4. Energy (*Viriya*)

Energy here means mental energy although physical energy does influence it. Its characteristic is supportive and exertion. It can be seen in hardworking and motivated people. They can plough through the night until physical fatigue knocks them down. The abundance of it spells restlessness and sleeplessness. The lack of it invites 'sloth and torpor' and one finally succumbs to sleep.

It is interesting to note that mental energy is inexhaustible. It is a mental factor and unlike physical fatigue which needs to be replenished, mental energy needs to be activated. The *Satipatthana* commentary gives several ways such as contemplation of Death and Suffering on one hand and arousing faith through reflection of the Triple Gem on the other.

5. Zest (*Piti*)

I find this factor difficult to pin down. The translation here is from Bhikkhu Bodhi's book. Previous authors translate it as joy, which has to be differentiated from pleasurable feeling and which unless with certain exceptions, occur together in quite an inseparable way. The characteristic mentioned is endearing and its function is to refresh. Thrill is a manifestation. So I guess that while pleasure is a feeling and feeling is a state that is very close to the heart, in this case it is more active, moving in a satisfying way. Someone jumping for joy or dancing with music would see this manifestation clearly. As such, I hesitate to call this the 'musical mental factor'. In the case of meditation, they can also be strong and overwhelming and so has to be controlled if concentration is to deepen. Therefore, it is understandable that teachers warn students not to be attached to it, or else downfall is underway. However, it has to be also accepted that it is also a factor of concentration and insight and should not be underestimated or left out. Just be careful and be mindful. Just be detached and mindful, then you can really 'enjoy'. When it does progress, this joy factor will become more subtle and peaceful.

6. Desire (*Chanda*)

The previous translation by Narada Thera for this mental state is conation, or in elsewhere, the wish-to-do. Desire is not wrong as long as one bears in mind it is not craving although it does come associated with it. If it occurs in the practice then it is the wish for the *Dhamma*. Otherwise, it is the wish for sense pleasures.

This is also a base for accomplishment because one must be motivated to achieve anything. The word '*iddhipada*' – base of accomplishment refers to spiritual powers where four are listed – desire, energy, mind, and investigation. Of these, desire is first and basic. So it is seen that usually those who accomplish success whether the worldly or spiritual must have enough of these forces.

These are in short the 52 mental states listed in the commentarial work '*Abhidhammattha Sangaha*' by Anuruddha Thera, used as a manual to study Abhidhamma for beginners. Following this, is given how their relationship to each other as they occur in the different types of Consciousness. For example, which Consciousness has what mental states associated with it and what mental states occur in which of the 89 types of Consciousness. Except for a little example in the case of feeling (*vedana*) since it occupies an important place in the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, I have no intention to go into details as it can go on and on and is not within the scope of the book. My aim here is to encourage one to observe and investigate into them as they occur in life and how they are involved in the practice.

Feeling (*Vedana*) and its Associations

Since 'feeling' is one of the Seven Universals that occur in all Consciousness, it makes the classification simpler. One only has to consider directly how it occurs as a conditioned phenomenon when associated with the Consciousness and other mental states.

Take the example of Consciousness. How does it *feel* with unwholesome Consciousness associated with aversion? When one's whole being feels like boiling water or a volcano eruption, and that *feel* is such. And how about when it comes with a wholesome Consciousness when one is having loving kindness? One's whole insides feels like bubbling with ecstatic and sky within is glowing with light and happiness, and that *feel* is such. In the case of deeper concentrations, then the *feel* is like a total immersion into really cool clear water.

There is, however, the case when the Consciousness are 'Functionals' such as the resultants of *Kamma*. Take, for example, those which act as life continuum (*bhavanga cittani*), they can have neutral or pleasurable feeling, but not displeasurable feeling. I have wondered why. My teacher told me that such feelings are soft or weak and that explains it. It is not harsh enough to come naturally with displeasure. However, in the Body Consciousness which is an unwholesome resultant displeasure comes with painful feeling. The reason being that, the nature of feeling when it comes with the direct strike of the object at the base can only be painful or 'happy', unlike the other four sense bases which occur through a media and so the feelings are

neutral. The feelings as they arise in the life continuum which is a base for all the other Consciousness running (*pavattikala*) through in life, has an influence on the temperament of that individual. Watch a newborn and you will see that there are happy babies while others aren't.

When it comes to association with the other 51 mental states, then every one of them would be different as it occurs, but we will take only one from each of the group as an example.

(i) In the Universal group of mental states, let us consider Perception (*Sanna*)

Feeling with perception: These two are very close to Consciousness. Perception is a 'knowing' as picking up of the marks of the object. Feeling 'savors' the object and knows it as painful (harsh), pleasing (delightful), or neutral (flattish). It would generally be logical to assume that feeling becomes obvious before perception but both actually arise instantly with the contact. That is because the processes that one becomes more aware of are the later stages. Usually the perception of faults arises with painful feelings and the perception of beauty with joyful feelings while weak perception with neutral feelings. This, in turn, also arises with the latent tendencies of aversion, attachment and delusion, but if well trained, it would be detachment, wholesome joy and mindfulness. Their individual effects become more apparent when the thought processes develop. For example, feelings when strong are like tidal waves of emotions; while perceptions when strong, determine an acute ability to recognize things be it in a positive or negative direction.

(ii) In the group of 'Particulars/ Occasionals' let us consider Initial and Sustained Application (*Vitakkavicara*)

Here, I take both initial and sustained application together as they work together except for certain specialized situation as in the higher absorptions.

These two are involved with arousing and sustaining the Consciousness and its associated states onto the object. One drives the team there while the other keeps it there. They are like wheels of a machine that keeps turning, and from there the feelings are built up and intensified. Hence, its direct association comes with energy and when meditating, comes with concentration. That is how feeling can be regarded

as a powerful factor, giving extra boost as a concentration factor, or it produces greater chaos with the thinking and discursiveness, like one wandering aimlessly in the city at night and finally ending up drunk in a ditch. However, with a clear objective, then one dives down with all of one's troops and charges to that destination which the 'Light Brigade' did, eventually into their 'Valley of Death' with cannons to right and left of them. Surely, that whole troop must have really strong feelings to do that. However, if mindful, then the whole team becomes waves powerful enough to scale up Mount Illusion and to meet and fight the final battle full of fervor with the Dark Lord. Please remember to bring along that sharp sword of wisdom.

(iii) In the case of unwholesome mental states we will consider Delusion (*Moha*)

Delusion is a dark cloud, which with an active mind churns up hallucinations. Hence, it comes with all three types of feelings. Mentally displeasurable when with aversion and a repulsive object, mentally joyful when the object is delightful, and neutral feeling when the object is neither. Pleasurable and painful feelings are more often associated with active Consciousness and so such feelings become stronger with repetition. Hallucination develops and the delusion becomes locked into the Consciousness hiding behind such feelings which gives it more strength. In the moments when delusion is the main player on the stage, as in the two Consciousness rooted in delusion; then it arises with neutral feeling. The feeling is sort of bland, numb and so does not attract one's attention. This makes the concealing function of delusion better. One may even think it is peaceful. What they cannot know, they will not know that it will hurt them. Like cancer which is like a silent killer. Hence, the texts urge one to see happy feeling as suffering and neutral feeling as impermanent.

iv) In the case of feeling as it occurs in 'beautiful' Consciousness, let us take Wisdom (*Pannindriya*).

This is the mental state that is in direct opposition to delusion. While delusion conceals, wisdom reveals. However, one may not like what one sees and so run back to that very nice fool's paradise. Either way it is a disaster. So we try to motivate our friends with a true picture of the situation, paint some more nice things around it, if necessary. Remember how the Buddha made his half-brother Nanda leave his beautiful betrothed on his wedding day to become a monk? He showed him the

celestial maidens which he compared his *Sakyan* beauty to a scorched monkey. Some horses need to be whipped before they get going. In this case, it is a pretty whip.

A study shows that this mental factor of wisdom does not arise easily. It is a rather developed state and so Consciousness associated with it comes with the most number of associated mental states. Be it worldly or spiritual wisdom, it comes either with pleasurable or neutral feeling. So when it arises, one will certainly feel either joyful or peaceful, which in turn arouses more faith and so the wholesome wheel keeps on turning.

Chapter 4

THE MINDFUL CONTEMPLATION OF CONSCIOUSNESS



One is leading the way, the other has gone astray. Their behavior tells much about their temperaments and training. Taking your dog out for a walk can also be a fun training session for dogs. As one watches the Consciousness as it wanders through life, one also trains it and in insight meditation, it is trained to climb up and conquer Mount Illusion.

Chapter 4

CONTEMPLATION ON CONSCIOUSNESS

In a previous chapter, I tried to give one an idea of what Consciousness means, not just as an idea but also as an experience.

By characteristic, it has been identified with “the knowing of its object”. It is like the answer to the question:

What knows?

Or what is that knows?

For both, the answer is Consciousness.

Then someone once exclaimed, “Oh, it’s the screen!”

Another described it as an inner space where things happen.

In both cases they refer to the Mind Door, a conditioned function which the Consciousness performs.

Since it plays such an important part in life and practice, one ought to practice “Mindfulness of the Consciousness” (*Cittanupassana*) soon enough and more often.

Now we ask a question, asked before: “Where and how do you begin to sail across the ocean of Suffering?” In a *Sutta*, the Buddha replied, ‘Faith’

Let’s start somewhere at the beginning. It is about training, and in the midst of it we learn something useful. My teacher once told a yogi who was progressing very slowly, who himself described himself as one of those little creatures that crawl on the ground (a worm?), that if one is in the forest and trying to catch a rabbit, even

if one doesn't, at least one learns more of the forest. We need encouragements in our practice, or at least, consolations. It is not about catching the rabbit, it is about getting out. For that, one needs to know the forest well, also how to survive and the directions.

Since this is not a book teaching a beginner to meditate, I will not go into the details of the basics. But still something has to be said before I proceed further on the topic.

1. Before one undertakes watching Consciousness as a main/primary object, one must in the first place have established some degree of continuity in mindfulness. This means also that one had established mindfulness to a satisfactory extent in the mindful contemplations of the first two foundations, that is, of the body (*kayanupassana*) and of feelings (*vedananupassana*).
2. This also means that one can keep the *Vipassana* Mindfulness of Presence in place for some time. It is like not having any object in particular and so the mindfulness looks at the Consciousness directly. Being mindful one would know, depending on how sharp and concentrated it is, the objects and phenomena present and how they change.
3. The developments and the training that follows can be described under the next headings.

A. Taking a Dog for a Walk

"The dog is a man's best friend" and it seems that women prefer cats. Not that there are no bitches or tom cats. But these animals have their particular traits that appeal to some categories of people. Even certain breeds of dogs display distinct temperaments, and so do those of the human races. As they say and it can be true to whatever extent due to climate and culture. But to what extent do genetics intervene and to what extent *Kamma* plays? Definitely the Consciousness plays an important role and it boils down to the interaction between material and mental conditions.

So, there are humans and there are dogs. There are also different human types and there are different dog types. Then, there is one with many dogs and many to a

dog. There will, therefore, have to be many psychological conditions involved, but let us limit ourselves in the discussion about one person and his dog. What then is it that determines the choice of a dog? Even before that what is it that makes him want a dog?

Although, here we also have to admit the fact that the person may not be the one that makes the choice, or even allow the choice to be made for him. It may very well be that it is the dog that chooses him. In that case, *Kammic* resultants have played its part.

People choose dogs to protect their homes which means that they have something to protect, which also means that there is a possibility and the fear of losing it. Then, there are those who adopt dogs as pets. In which case, it can be the case to overcome loneliness or may be to have more fun. Finally, there are those who adopt a dog out of compassion, which is very much the case again the play of *kammic* resultants. There are those who find one morning, a basket with a cute puppy in front of their doorstep. Will there be people who adopt dogs just to study their behavior? Scientists perhaps, and hopefully, they don't put their victims into too much stress and then make them sleep forever after their purpose has been served. Does knowledge sometimes contradict compassion? If it does, which would you choose?

But what has all this to do with meditation and the mind? Lots!

In place of the dog, put there instead, the Consciousness.

In the beginning, the mind is often quite primitive. In fact, it existed before primitive men inhabited the Earth (and don't ask anthropologists about this, about the first man, they are still theorizing about this with bones excavated from somewhere in remote Africa).

Just take a good look at how a small kid behaves and you must agree that he can act out of instinct before some more complicated or advanced habits have been ingrained into him. So we learn that three things are found in both humans and animals the moment they are born.

1. Search for food
2. Fear of death
3. Search for sensual gratification

Besides these one can also include inherent Kammic tendencies as well as behavioral patterns that are naturally working in the thought processes. These come under what the Buddhists call Kammic and Mental systems (*citta, kamma niyama*).

And so, I often keep an eye on whoever that comes along with a dog, be it in his home, along the street or in the park. Aha! The man and his dog, or is it his 'child' or his alter ego?

Once I saw a big man with a miniature dog. At another time I saw a little lady with a few huge dogs.

It could have been a compensation for or a reflection of what is inside. The big man may be very small inside, and that lady may have been insecure.

Then, there are dogs on leashes, some long, some short and others adjustable. I once saw a lady walking a dog on a long leash, except that they were going in different directions. It was obvious she was dragging it. Then in the very same park, there was also another man with his dog without a leash yet walking side by side, sometimes the man is in front, at other times it is the dog. They seem more like pals rather than master and slave. When I tried to photograph them, they both turned to look at me.

In walking a dog, one may ask, whose walk is it? Is it the dog's or yours? Someone answered, both. But it is often you who finally decide which way to take. Man is very powerful, until he gets lost. I would like to think that it is the dog's, because it gets it probably only once a day and that this is its big thing for the day. But if left completely up to it, you may also end up in places you would try to but cannot forget. However, if the dog is well trained, it will also understand the master and be as well, a ward. It races in front like a scout and returns to the master to see if it's boss is alright. A well trained dog can be of great service to the master as well as to the community. Think of the Saint Bernard's and the retriever sheep dogs. As to this, there is a *Dhammapada* verse that says.....

The mind is difficult to control
Swiftly and lightly it moves and settles on whatever it pleases,
To tame the mind is good; a well tamed mind brings happiness.

No: 35 *Cittavagga*

In meditation, in order to concentrate, the Consciousness is tied by the leash of mindfulness to a stake which is the meditation object. “Being tied down” implies concentration. Definitely it will not settle down immediately and how long it takes will depend on how wild the creature is. Strong wills can change worlds, but one must change for the better. Therefore, Right Understanding is mentioned first in the Noble Eightfold Path. It makes sure one is heading in the right direction and not performing a repetitive exercise.

Usually it is done using a suitable object for the purpose. It will depend on the individual temperament. It is the Teacher who usually decides, but nowadays in this era of “free choice”, much is left to the individual, which may not be so bad.... However, in places where one depends much on tradition and authority as is still often so in Asia, it is the Teacher who decides. So, in the Theravadin tradition, one often ends up with watching the breath, which fortunately is quite harmless, and calming. At the turn of the last decade, in Burma, the most venerable Mahasi Sayadaw introduced the “rising and falling” of the abdomen as the primary object. This is because the ultimate realities and the three universal characteristics are more apparent with this object and so insight developments tend to be quicker. No matter, finally one will have to arrive at the ultimate realities, namely, the Four Great Elements.

When it is the watching of the Consciousness, what stake do you tie it to? Itself? It is more like holding onto the horse and riding it. It is like putting a mirror in front of another mirror, then walking into it.... like what Alice did in Lewis Carol’s *Wonderland*. That is why, as I have said, the initial part of this practice is to establish a continuity of mindfulness irrespective of the objects present, which also means that one has just to keep in place the mindfulness of presence long enough to have a self-maintaining mode like a self-charging the battery while the car is running.

Then, if there are no concepts and no hindrances, what becomes apparent will be the Consciousness itself.

When the breath is considered as that straight and narrow road, then the dog will soon stray from it and have to be brought back again. Sometimes it may take some time before one realizes that it has strayed. So when one is watching Consciousness then one keeps an eye on the dog and makes sure that mindfulness is present wherever and whenever it is about to wander off. If it does, it can be quickly brought back to watching the Consciousness with mindfulness.

What one can be sure of is that it will keep straying off for some time before it settles down. Just like taking the dog for a walk, it will chase rabbits, bark at cows, fight or make friends with other dogs, and if feeling real nasty or frightened, instinctively bite. All this has much to do with habitual patterns and latent tendencies accumulated over time. One has to be patient in building up the tendency and habit of being mindful. Just remember this is all part of the training and better times lie ahead.

So every time it runs away from that central equilibrium, notice it as soon as possible where it had run to. It may be a loud sound, it may be an itch or ache, it may be a smell or it may be thoughts and feelings. The basic destabilizing factor seems to be feelings, for after that arises the active craving and aversion. This is also the level where the five hindrances run freely. So it is also the opportunity to learn to be proficient in detecting, catching and kicking them off and learning about all their tricks.

Haven't you heard of the saying, "It takes a bigger thief to catch a thief?". He would have to be one reformed, and not a double agent.

Actually, the example can be extended to other creatures depending on the nature of the mind one is dealing with. Someone thought it was more like a horse, and sure enough, it started buckling. It is more powerful than a dog, but it also means one must exercise more care. Here it is not like taking it for a walk. It is more like learning to ride it. If it is a donkey.... something can still be done, like perfecting the practice of patience. I also heard of a meditation teacher who kept a cockerel for a pet. A friend said he was observing its nature. In that case, it is watching an external object. Any progress made, however, will most probably not be in the cockerel's Consciousness, but the teacher's.

One thing, however, has to become clear even at this level, that is, the non-self aspect of the Consciousness. It would seem that there is going to be a split and hope that one doesn't end up as a schizophrenic.

Rather than being, double or triple or more, one becomes none. The watcher is that mindfulness and it clarifies, not confuses. It is the rational mind that when unable to make things seem sensible becomes confounded. If you were to find out this, then you would have seen that **thing** that has been around all the while but had not noticed and had thought it was **YOU**, but it is not. **It created you** and therefore you come into the picture and feel, think and do whatever. At least, now is the start of a new era of one of training of what ought to be trained, do what ought to be done and really begin to understand: "Oneself"

B. The Spider

The spider does not appear frequently in the texts. A verse ascribed to the Arahant Anuruddha Thera, however, describes how it weaves a fine net of mindfulness that catches all the defilements such as flies and then kills them with insight. Actually, it wraps it up neatly and then maybe just paralyses it so that it may consume them fresh when it gets hungry.

In the commentary, *Atthasālinī* describes a spider with a main web surrounded by five smaller ones. They represent the six sense doors the main one being the mind door. When food strikes on any of the sense door, for example, the tongue, the Consciousness quickly runs to it. The point emphasized is that its vibrations reach the main net first, the main web being its main base. How do you like that arachnid to represent your mind? Clever isn't it? And it is poignant.

And so, daily the spider wanders around from web to web hoping for some sumptuous meals to get trapped unnoticed. What was consumed and what effects it has is another matter. I wonder if spiders do suffer from indigestion or food poisoning. I doubt if studies have been done on that, but judging from minds observed, it suggests that they don't die so easily, yet still it can get really yucky. I suppose such things like that do also occur to spiders.

What I am suggesting is that we graduate from tracking down lost dogs and

buffaloes to hungry spiders or lizards in anthills as another simile would have it. In a question given by an enlightened novice monk to a learned but unenlightened elder, he was asked, “How do you catch a lizard gone into an anthill?” The answer is obvious - close five holes and leave one opened. Sooner or later when it pops up, grab it!

The idea is the one of concentration and that only one Consciousness occurs at one door at one time. The one thing to look out for is at the mind door.

The other thing to keep in mind is to follow the spider.

This part actually falls under the practice of mindfulness at the six sense doors, with the emphasis at the mind door. At each door, one would have to notice that the Consciousness present is different from that at another door. That is, the Seeing Consciousness and the Hearing Consciousness are different. Even in the ‘Knowing Consciousness’ at the mind door, there are many types that arise and pass away. If one always brings it back to just that presence after wandering off to one of the five senses or to thinking and other lapses of mindfulness, it eventually settles into the mind door and onto the Consciousness itself.

Before we proceed on, let us take another look at Anuruddha Thera’s spider, especially as to how it weaves its web. It first starts to spin out a continuous thin thread (which is, of course, that mindfulness) and then fixes it onto some stable thing like a stone or branch (which, in our case, would be the gross body). It is like constructing the main framework and pillars that make up a house. After that it slowly, patiently advances to the center (the Consciousness). Once that is set, then all the other links are connected. How fine and complete the web is, and efficient and stable it will be, will also determine how well it can catch all those nasty nitwits. Of course, regular repairs have to be done. In any case, one has finally to make Consciousness the center of the practice because of its strategic and all pervasive character, although the body, the mainstay of the system, is indispensable.

However, there is one more point to clarify. The first spider is not the same as the second spider. The first is a *Dhamma* spider and the second an ordinary one. The first removes nitwits; the second is hungry and eats anything. Our work is to educate the second one.

It is refreshing to start a retreat when I think of this. “Welcome fellow spiders. Lesson One - How does one spin a continuous thread of web?”

C. The Candle and the Moth

The *Vibhanga* describes the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind as “oceans”. They are portals to the innumerable sense objects in the universe that can be perceived. When the defilements are uncontrolled, they practically drown one into their floods. But nothing can be compared to the mind door, which by itself, leads to everything. This is the door which one must eventually go deep into. Not that we have not entered it before. We do so every day, but going really deep into it mindfully is not so common. Many have got lost and many will do so in the future, but what choice have you, if you seek escape from *Samsara*? There is where it all happens.

When one eventually settles more into just watching Consciousness as the primary object, that is when the adventures within begin. One sign is that one no longer runs after objects, but rather objects come to one. The Consciousness, then, is like a point of light, a flame, at first flickering and then becomes steady. Surrounding it are all the other objects. If your body foundation of mindfulness with regards to bodily sensations is well established, then the innumerable changing sensations would be like masses of insects and moths flying as quite chaotic fluxes around it. Someone even called them spasms.

There are two things involved, the Consciousness (candle flame) and the sensations (moths). One will first notice the sensations revolving around the point of central awareness. These are clearly observed to be changing and fluctuating. As one observes further, concentration increases and they draw nearer and nearer. It soon comes close enough and then...fzzzt! The insect has been obliterated.

O you mindless moths, attracted to light, so pretty a light, you cannot resist. And so you fly to your doom and so too your mates!

Well said! There are so many traps in this world that are irresistible. At this point, I cannot help recollecting someone (a layman) who claimed to have been observing celibacy for two years, gave it up when he met an Egyptian beauty with blond hair.

Fortunately, this dissolution of the moth is not an immoral affair. Rather, it can be considered more moral than many others.

Here, one is witnessing the paired conditioned factors of the Consciousness and its object. They arise and pass away moment-to-moment. Quickly the Consciousness reappears as if nothing had happened, until another moth comes too near for comfort, and then another, and another....

One then wonders why many do not notice the Consciousness changing moment-to-moment. That is because the Consciousness is too subtle, what more its moment-to-moment changes. When more adept in this matter, one will also be able to observe these momentary blips. It is the sharpness and precision of an experienced and well trained mindful perception that does it. And why is it so important? Peace comes with detachment, any meditation teacher in this field would be able to tell you that. The attachment to individuality then loses more of its grasp, the nature of Consciousness opens up more and the path leads you onto the enchanted pond.

D. The Ajharn's Enchanted Forest Pool

Here, Ajharn is a title of a teacher in Thai language. I use this title because I borrowed the simile from a Thai meditation master, Ajharn Chah, when he described the quiet mind as a still forest pool. What I will extend that to, I am not sure if he would approve, but I'll do it anyway without disrespect.

Here, I would describe the pool as the Mind door itself. It may as well be Madame Blavatsky's crystal ball or the wicked Queen's magic mirror on the wall (in the fairy tale of Snow White). They share some similarity in the fact that they act like a window or screen where one may see what one desires to see. The clairvoyants are up to that, and even those shamans who borrowed power from some external sources (such as from the deities and the like) also do so.

The mind door or in another functional sense, is also called life continuum (*bhavanga*). In the first case it acts as a door to mind objects (which could be anything from *Nibbana* to Harry Potter stories); in that case, it also maintains continuity in an individual existence. In the Buddhist *Abhidhamma*, it is a Resultant Consciousness, that is, a result of past *kammic* action that gave rise to the present life. It is a passive

state, which, with the absence of any active thought processes (*vithi citta*), recedes to just itself, also called the process freed, and is none other than deep sleep. It can also be regarded as the base from which thought processes, mind objects arise and the factor where all past tendencies, *kammic* connections, etc. are linked to in the whole web of conditioning. In this way, it acts like the basic computer program with all its other attached, installed or back up programs. The difference is that it is monstrous. Passive it may be, this Life Continuum Consciousness is certainly not unimportant although like all things (fortunately or unfortunately depending on the situation), it is also impermanent. It flows on and at death, ceases altogether to give place to another one to arise (also for better or worse).

Coming back to the pond, as mentioned in texts, it is in the heart base. The description is locative, but in physiological terms, it is undecided by experts. Where this heart base is, is often quoted as not mentioned by the Buddha himself, although Sariputta, it seems, was quoted as defining it as blood in the heart. Whatever, and as if that matters!

But generally it works, and that is what that matters to me, for if you watch mindfully into the heart area, the Consciousness can be traced easier. Emotions are generally connected with the heart, but if you look beyond that and into those phenomena around it, one eventually comes to the Consciousness. The brain, located in the head region, given western education, seems to be more acceptable as the physical base for the Consciousness. One also presumes and identifies the electric impulses and chemical compounds hopping between synapses of brain cells as synonymous to the mind. Can they be serious?

How do we get to the Consciousness from there? I would suggest getting into neutral feelings first, and from there it is not difficult to end up with a state of mind that is like not having an object. If mindfulness has been well trained, one automatically notices this. If one maintains it long enough, one notices that the Consciousness comes with many states. It can be bright/dull, light/heavy, expanded/constricted, energetic, quick, static, slow, concentrated/distracted and so on. The more one notices, the better. If one is unable to see much of these variations, then one may end up with just a bright Consciousness. However, when conceptual mind objects arise, then you are out of the Vipassana path. But if you could notice all these like energies, and these changes with the changes of the Consciousness, then

it is fine. These changes appear like subtle currents and waves in the magical forest pool. In a very subtle state it is very clear and transparent but with just a slip of mindfulness, the **SLIP** turns into **SLEEP**.

One who uses Consciousness as the primary object, often meets with all types of mental objects. Why they arise is a point of interest. Often it is not useful to know why. Like when one yogi asked me. “Why does my toe twitch? Why do I feel a spin when I watch my head?” She had a long list of these little things. So I replied with a counter question, “Why is the sky so high? Why is the sea so deep?” I don’t think she understood my counter question.

What matters primarily to a *Vipassana* yogi is to observe the three universal characteristics of the *Vipassana* object, which in this case comes with the Consciousness. But when the mind object becomes persistent or strong, then it is another matter. Strong here means more of having great implications or influence in our lives or practice in which case would usually be very clear (*ativibhuta*) but not necessarily so, especially in the beginning. A thief, for example, knows how to be insignificant, and even Kings have disguised themselves as paupers when appearing among masses. When they become obvious, it may be too late.

In the simile given by that Thai teacher: when one is sitting beside that still forest pool, one would at first think that there is nothing happening. But one soon notices that there are many things happening. The sound of the wind on the leaves, a deer comes to drink, etc. Here these are things happening around it. Then there are things happening in it. Whichever the case, it occurs as mind door processes (*Manodvara vithi*).

The mental objects appearing at the mind door have been listed as:

1. Sensitive Matter (*pasadarupa*)

These are: (i) eye sensitivity, (ii) ear sensitivity, (iii) nose sensitivity, (iv) tongue sensitivity, (v) body sensitivity. Again, what they are in the conventional sense is a case for argument. But let’s just stop at the point that it has something to do with the physical eyes, etc. We have to bear in mind that Abhidhamma is a science dealing with things outside concepts. We could be satisfied just to say that these are material

bases for receiving the five sense objects.

2. Subtle Matter (*sukhumarupa*)

Of the 28 species of matter enumerated, this category excludes the Five Sensitive Matter mentioned above as well as the objects received. The body object includes three of the great elements, the fourth - water element is a subtle matter which comes only under this category of 16 Subtle Materialities.

3. Consciousness (*citta*)

Consciousness itself can be an object but not itself at that very moment. This enigma once titillated my mind enough to start asking the question to other senior monks. It went as far to my teacher's teacher, the most Venerable Bhimuladham of Bangkok, a very important monk of his time, who almost ended up as Sangharaja of Thailand if not for implications from rival camps who had him put into prison. He eventually cleared himself of all that and wrote a book, "Victory over Mara".

To the question he replied, "It is like someone who cannot punch someone and be punched at the same time by oneself". The commentary says the same, just like a finger cannot touch itself. I did not question further as it would be impolite. So, what knows the Consciousness? My *Abhidhamma* teacher tells me that it is the thought process immediately following it.

So that's what I called the 'eternal question' which people often ask. Or it could easily come under existential questions.

"How can one mind watch itself? Then it would mean two Consciousness."

The Zen answer to this would be, "Go and watch it to find out!"

4. Mental states (*cetasika*)

The 52 types of mental states had been dealt with in the chapter before.

5. *Nibbana*

The unconditioned element too can be an object of Consciousness, but occurring at the mind door and only to those that are associated with the wisdom faculty. Interestingly enough, it not only occurs in the Supramundane types of Consciousness but also in those of the sensual realm (*kamavacara*), which are those that make up the reviewing process of the 16th insight knowledge. This is obviously the most important object. On seeing it, you see the 'light' at the end of the tunnel.

6. Concepts (*pannatti*)

When we come to concepts, HO! HO! HO! We arrive at ground zero again, but in the mind field (or mine field), ground zero could be anywhere and could get you anywhere. But to get some directions, let's put them into two groups:

(a) Real concepts - concepts with reality backing it. For example, concepts of happiness and suffering.

(b) Unreal concepts - concepts without reality backing it. For example, concepts of finance. As to this last one, does it shock you?

The idea is to stick closer to the first, and since we have now made Consciousness as the primary object, stick to the Consciousness, otherwise, the *Dhamma* (not just mental objects) would also be fine. If you are unsure, then back to the body and feelings.

What would you regard as strong mental objects in such cases of concepts?

Say, while watching Consciousness there appears, 'THE GREEN THING FROM THE SWAMPS' or 'THE HAND THAT DRAWS OUT THE SWORD OF EXCALIBUR', would you consider them strong or at least with significance?

For this, one would have to know the reasons of its arising and then its eventual results. It also includes objects besides concepts.

A commentarial source which I could not trace precisely (except that I read it from a Thai *Abhidhamma* text book) gives us some reasons why they arise as clear or obscure objects which includes any of the other mind objects .

A summary of this will be something to digress upon:

1. Having seen, heard, etc. previously in the past

What is it that struck us so strongly as to leave a long impression? It must be something that had created torrents of emotions and something that had affected great changes in one's life. Those were momentous times. When I try to remember what came out strongest when I call upon the memory, these moments usually come out. Fortunately, they are good ones and the baddies take second place.

The other factor is their frequency or what that has happened recently. Does that strike a familiar note?

If it does not, let me remind you - there are four types of *Kamma* connected with maturation of resultants and more of this later. When it goes further with deepening of concentration, memories of younger days appear. During this innocent period, the mother seems to be always around to give a sense of safety, assurance and confidence. Next comes one's father, siblings and classmates. The dog which we had was relentlessly barking at any passersby and was not pleasant appears next.

2. Connected with what was seen, heard, etc. in the past

These come connected with those mentioned above. As the connections run further, more objects come in. Some otherwise forgotten matters can become strong again. It is the mental states associated with them that make them so. Yet, they are all memories that are not yet quite dead.

3. Connected with faith and confidence

Confidence is a powerful force so it gives rise to objects that they come with special strength. As they say, faith can move mountains. Or in another sense, as the Muslims claim, if Mohammed does not go to the mountain, then the mountain will come to the Mohammed. The Buddhist way of relating to this is that meeting with someone like the Buddha is definitely good *Kamma*. Faith in the past has certainly something to do with it. If one has faith in something, all the rest connected with it follows. The texts also refer to it as the key to treasures (*Dhamma*).

4. Something delightful and pleasing

Joy is certainly another strong factor that determines the recurrence of certain objects. What we like, we (or the mind that gets very interested in) will come back to look for more. Just like a catchy tune, it keeps running on in the mind way after the show is over. As a *jhanic* factor, concentration gives a special adherence to it, and as an enlightenment factor, opens up one deeper into the way. It is also, therefore, understandable why the masses head to imbibe voraciously the sensual pleasures.

5. Through repetitive thinking and considerations

Repetitive thinking and considerations involve the mental factors of initial and sustained application (*vitakka vicara*), another two *jhanic* factors that create a flow and continuity connected with the object, and thus habitual tendencies are built up, and habitual tendencies are very powerful and difficult to get rid of. There are workaholics and alcoholics just to quote two. Such habitual tendencies even escape the cutting edge of death and skip over to the next life to continue to do the work they have been doing. So, if your new born child can speak Indian without being taught, then he was probably an Indian from the past life. If he starts speaking Pali, then you wonder what is he doing here. He should be in Burma, Sri Lanka or Thailand.

6. Through deep thought and wisdom

In this case, the wisdom faculty is brought into the picture. The wisdom faculty reveals objects otherwise concealed by ignorance. It could be something mundane, like how Sherlock Holmes found out “WHODUNIT”. In *Abhidhamma* we are more concerned about the Realities and the Noble Truths which includes “WHATDUNIT”. Mindfulness has first to be thorough if you are looking for a needle in the haystack, something penetrative like laser beam if it is in a thick fog. Another thing to think about is why is it difficult to see one’s own faults but easy is seen those of others. Obviously, certain blindfolds have to be removed before insight can arise.

7. Through Kammic circumstances

“As for objects that arise, some arise because of *kamma*, some not.” So, stressed my Abhidhamma teacher once. He then emphasized it with the example of *kammic* derived matter and *kammic* resultants. I thought it strange not to have thought about it before that what objects I experienced are *kammic* caused and those which are not. *Kamma* does play an important role in the happiness and suffering of beings. One thing is the fact of the death process. The three objects – a *kamma*, a sign of *kamma* and the sign of destiny (*kammarammana*, *kammanimitta arammana*, *gatinimitta arammana*) that arise just before death and become object is further carried forward into the next life as the object of the life continuum. It is indeed an object connected with *kamma*. Even in one’s lifetime (*pavattikala*) the objects through the five sense doors are experienced by Resultant Consciousness although they themselves may not be directly *kammically* derived.

No, I do not want to complicate things further, but dominant objects of this category are worth taking note of. It heralds things to come or will come. So be prepared.

8. Through clairvoyance and other supernormal mind powers

These arise also through the wisdom faculty but not necessarily in the insight development. Those who have developed concentration to a very high degree are capable of knowing and performing feats beyond a normal person. But these powers may be inborn, hence also *Kammic*.

9. Through influence of bodily elements, such as discomfort and illness

These objects of the body door, combined with the strength of painful feelings send the impact into the mind door. This is understandable. A sick person generally does not have nice thoughts. Even in dreams there arise nasty nightmares. I remember as a boy, when I had fever, I dreamed often that I was in a house on fire. In fact, it may have been something brought over from a past life, for the dream was repetitive and seemed extremely clear. Another fell asleep with one hand pressed against another. He dreamt he was caught by a demon. The latter is most probably hallucinatory. The imbalance of elements of the body has been quoted as one of the causes of dreams. The other three come under points no: 1, 8 and 10.

10. Through influence of spirits such as devas, departed relatives, etc.

External agents such as devas and departed relatives or even those around can make an impact onto the mind. It is something like telepathy except that the receiver may not be sensitive or may interpret it in his own way which may seem odd. One example is that departed relatives may ask for help, however, in one's dream they may be asking for money. What they mean are merits (in the Buddhist understanding). There are also stories of devas who have issued warnings in case of dangers that are about to befall. Even when someone who is still alive and thinks of another, it can also occur in that person's dream.

11. Through the practice of the *Dhamma* by study, thinking and meditation

Slowly, we come to the point. The objects that make more sense, that is, the objects that lead one to understanding and to true peace. It is ironical, because usually the occurrence of many of these objects although do come with the practice, but they may not necessarily do so. We first start with study. Coming across the texts, we run into ideas and mind objects connected with them. When we practice concentration, certain specific objects, such as *nimittas* arise at access levels. When we practice *Vipassana*, the Realities appear and so too the three characteristics in various ways at different levels of insight.

12. Through the influence of Supramundane objects.

Lastly, the Supramundane objects belong to the plane of the Noble ones, and it influences their thoughts and mind objects and obviously in the right way. Firstly, it is obvious that it makes the Consciousness much clearer and tranquil. The objects that follow will also be influenced.

Coming back to the mind door and the pond, the important thing to remember is to keep to the Realities where the three universal characteristics manifest. The sure way to do it will be to trace it to the Consciousness itself and, therefore, also to the flow of whatever. All those objects will be like reflections on the water of that pond that spill over and eventually turn into the River of No Return.

E. The River of No Return

I like this expression and many know where this comes from. I have used it as the title of one of my books and the song had appeared to my dismay, and very loudly in the earlier days of my striving in a very conservative, Buddhist monastery in Burma. The voice was clearly that of Marilyn Monroe.

The River of Life as it is sometimes referred to, flows from the past to the present and into the future. But there is something amiss here. There is no more past and not yet the future. Even the present, once known, it had already become the past. The Idea of a flow is also laden with concepts. Yet there is something very strikingly deep about it.

Consider the simile itself. Can a river flow upstream? Not so, unless something goes wrong with the gravity. For example, if the world in 2019 tilts its axis or swings around and about, then perhaps even the Ganges or Amazon rivers will take the time off for a very wild fling despite the protests and cries of the races of homosapiens. May be for once, all will decide to forget their differences be it political, religious, racial, sexual, etc.

What would the river then be if we think of the practice as sailing or swimming along the River of No Return? As to this let us examine into the meaning of the Three Universal Characteristics as it has something to do with it. What do the Three Universal Characteristics mean? I recall a statement made in a *Vipassana* manual by a teacher of insight. Speaking about the three marks of conditioning - genesis, decay and dissolution (*uppada, thiti, bhanga*), they correspond somewhat to the three sub-moments, which are in fact, marks of a process and conditioning. He notes that of the three, the last, namely dissolution comes closest to Reality

That is how things are meant to work out - from illusion to convention to Realities to three characteristics and finally to unconditioned Reality. We can draw a flow chart. It is about closeness to Reality. Practice is, therefore, about coming closer and closer to that unconditioned Nature. The practice that we do is like slowly perfecting the dance between these formations, and as we improve and be more precise with wise attention, more and more illusions (in other words, everything

people know) vanish and what there is, is just the unconditioned reality, the island, the true refuge, just to use some terms.

*Come dance with me
A dance with Death
With all his servants cheering
And playing the band,
When he taps his right foot,
We'll tap our left,
When he swings this way,
We'll swing that way,
When he claps his hands,
We'll smack our lips,
Everything that he does,
We'll do it differently.
So in the end he'll bask in glory,
We'll vanish into thin air.
What a great escape!*

But for most practitioners, it is comforting enough to know that by taking notice and observing closer to this “flow in the river of no return” one is indeed treading the right path to Jerusalem (as someone used it as an expression when speaking to me, a non-Jew).

So for the moment, let the mindfulness flow with the flow of Consciousness. Consciousness being all (or almost all) pervasive includes all things known. But the flow will not always be smooth, as in the lyrics of the same song, ‘sometimes it’s peaceful, sometimes wild and free’. Many conditions influence and condition it. Firstly, mindfulness must be present otherwise one will sink and be drowned. The faculties of energy and concentration must be balanced, otherwise, it will be so peaceful and stagnating or too wild and free that it overwhelms and floods. A well balanced mind means a powerful yet smooth flow. Besides that, there are matters or other things of the river - its objects. In a *sutta* in the *Samyutta Nikaya*, there is a simile whereby reasons are given why a log may not reach the sea.

1. It is grounded on this bank
(practice ruined because of attachment to internal objects).
2. It is grounded on the other bank
(practice ruined because of attachment to external objects).
3. It sunk in midstream (practice ruined because of delight and lust).
4. It stuck fast in midstream/a shoal or raised ground
(practice ruined because of the 'I-am' conceit).
5. It fell into human hands
(practice ruined because of attachment to humans).
6. It was caught by non-humans
(practice ruined because of attachment to non-humans,
such as devas or even one's dogs and cats).
7. It was caught in a whirlpool
(practice ruined because of the vortex of pleasures of five senses).
8. It rotted inwardly
(practice ruined because of immorality of practitioner himself).

In practice we come across various objects. There are so many and some will be more tricky and difficult to handle than others. So we put ourselves into training of the mindfulness of the four foundations and make them our safe resort. To be adept in these will take some time. Many of these formations are not so easy to handle. The body, given its grossness, can still be elusive when subtle. Painful feelings on the other hand can be insufferable, while Consciousness is even more elusive and full of traps and finally, the *Dhammas* a web difficult to unravel and extricate. Meeting with the impact of these objects give rise to different effects. And so the currents and waves roll, hit and splash in various ways.

*A steady boat hand, an eagle's eye,
A fearless heart, a determined mind,
With each experience the voyage matures past another gale,
The true sailor man, the warrior and fighter,
Is none other than the pilgrim milling on his way.*

When one can maintain this flow continuously long enough, then the spiritual faculties would have gathered enough power to lift up to more concentrated levels.

As in the description in the *suttas*, it flows, slides, inclines based on renunciation, dispassion, cessation to the sea of *Nibbana*.

F. The Flight of the Sacred Crane

To the Chinese, the crane represents longevity, purity, spirituality and even immortality. It lives by the water, stalking reptiles and amphibians and when time is ripe, they take flight to the beyond.

When practice has evolved beyond the basics, the mind begins to take flights, in more derogatory terms, trips (used by people more into drugs and stimulants). The Consciousness with developed Right Concentration becomes transformed, expanded and sublimed or in a more mundane word used by more mundane people like psychologists, ALTERED.

In the *Satipatthana Sutta*, under *Cittanupassana*, the mindfulness of consciousness, there are a number of words that describe these levels.

1. Tranquilized/Concentrated Consciousness (*Samahitam cittam*)

Samahita means steadfast, firm, fixed, established, tranquil, attentive. It could be access or fixed concentration in tranquility or insight meditations. These are qualities that one notices when the Consciousness has reached this level. It is strong and healthy unlike those unstable, thoughtless moments when distractions can run in and out as they wished. The strength comes with wholesomeness, and the concentration fortifies it. One is able to keep onto the object precisely longer than before. One is able to ward off defilements effectively. In such a Consciousness, as stated in the *sutta* on Noble Concentration, one will also observe:

- (a) Present happiness and a source of future happiness
- (b) It is noble, not carnal
- (c) It comes about as a practice of discipline, not of base men
- (d) It is excellent, calm and one-pointed
- (e) Mindfully, one can enter and emerge from the state.

Knowing thus, it is clear what is right and wrong concentration, how it came about and what it can do.

2. Expanded /Developed Consciousness (*Mahaggata cittam*)

Which means the Consciousness with full absorption which brings us to an interesting topic, levels not experienced by ordinary folks and they occupy the realm of meditators who indulge in concentration.

The Abhidhammattha Sangaha enumerates 15 form absorption Consciousness (*rupajhana*) $15 = 5 + 5 + 5$

12 formless (*arupajhana*) $12 = 4 + 4 + 4$

And 8 supramundane (*lokuttara*) $8 = 4$ paths + 4 fruition

There are five levels of form absorptions, and with each level they are:

- (a) Active (*Mahakusala*) - as in an active state of concentration
- (b) Resultant (*Mahavipaka*) - as in the life continuum of Rupa-Brahmas
- (c) Functional (*Mahakiriya*) - as in Arahantas in absorption.

The five levels are differentiated by the presence of the jhanic factors in that Consciousness. These will be dealt with more in detail under another chapter on thought processes.

Jhana 1:

- (a) Initial Application (*vitakka*)

The mental state that lifts the Consciousness and its associated states to the object.

- (b) Sustained Application (*vicara*)

The mental state that keeps the Consciousness and associated states to the object.

- (c) Joy (*piti*) – zest, thrill

It is embarrassing that for the frequency of its occurrence and reference in the Dhamma, there is a lack of clear description as the nature of this mental

state. Its characteristic is given as endearing, its function is to refresh, its manifestation being elation and mind-body being its proximate cause. The Thai version of it is satisfaction/being filled up as the characteristic, making the mind/body satisfied its function, being expanded, elated its manifestation and three other (than feelings) mental aggregates its proximate cause. For me, I look for it as a relationship to Reality and so I wonder how this works in the case of joy.

(d) Happiness (*sukha*)

This happiness factor has been translated literally. The happiness here clearly comes under feelings and NOT JOY. But happy feelings (*sukhavedana*) are also many types. Even bodily comfort is called happy feeling and, of course, mentally pleasurable feelings accompanied by joy. As for those in the sensual realm, they come together and in absorptions, it goes as far as the third *Jhana*. After that, the joy factor takes leave and there remain two *jhanic* factors - happiness and one-pointedness.

(e) One-Pointedness (*ekaggata*)

The characteristic is given as non-distraction (*avikkhepa*), although another quoted it as unification. I think that fixedness would be a better description because it occurs in all Consciousness whether wholesome, unwholesome, concentrated or distracted, strong or weak (as it occurs with the moment). Obviously, it would be strong in the case of absorptions and thus fixed, unified with the Consciousness into an immovable state for extended period of days at a stretch. In its most developed states, even the breath is kept on hold.

Jhana 2: Sustained application, joy, happiness, one-pointedness

Jhana 3: Joy, happiness, one-pointedness

Jhana 4: Happiness, one-pointedness

Jhana 5: Equanimity, one-pointedness

(f) Equanimity (*upekkha*).

When one reaches this level, there are only indifferent/neutral feelings possible. The important factor will be equanimity. The mental state attributed to it called neutrality of mind (*tatramajjhata*) with the characteristic of bringing about evenness to the Consciousness and mental states. I think this is a balancing factor as well as stability with wholesomeness to it. Although present in the other levels as well, it does not come forth then because of happy feelings, but definitely it has to be present as in all wholesome states, otherwise, our minds would be 'unbalanced'.

Interesting enough, the *Abhidhamma* classification includes two other factors:

1. Pleasurable feeling (*somanassa vedana*)
2. Displeasurable feeling (*domanassa vedana*)

I suppose that since happiness, and equanimity are closely related to it, it does play a concentrative role with its wavelike intensification properties even if it does not culminate in full absorption, although it can make one a total and deep wreck with wrong concentration.

That is much about that intellectual, analytical, theoretical stuff, and without experience it remains very much at a conceptual level and mystery. But with experience it will be a world of a difference.

For one thing, the explanation of these types of Consciousness is that it is fixed (*appana*) and so there is no place for subject-object differentiation at those moments. That is, when one is in absorption, there cannot be the possibility to be considering whether this state or that state is present or not, what more whether it is strong or not. In fact, there cannot be any concept of time, space or even persons such as 'I' (with the exception of beings as objects). There is just oneness with the object.

It is also very subtle and fine, and as some would describe it in their first experience, like going into a state of void. That is because the rational mind cannot relate to what one has experienced before, with familiarity

and frequent impressions made by the reviewing thought process onto the rational mind, then one knows its characteristics, describe them sensibly and can then review successfully and clearly the factors present in order to determine precisely the level of absorption one was in. Otherwise, who is to say which absorption is which and if it were an absorption at all?

3. Unsurpassed (*anuttaram*)

Unsurpassed which means the Consciousness of the formless absorptions.

These take us one step further in to the levels of concentration. After the mental states, which are concentration factors, have gone as far as it is possible, the next phase will be refinement of the object. As these levels go beyond most people whom I am dealing with, it is not necessary to go into the steps that lead to their existence. There are four of these:

- (a) Base of Infinite Space
- (b) Base of Infinite Consciousness
- (c) Base of Nothingness
- (d) Base of Neither Perception nor Non-Perception

The names indicate the objects used, and it becomes subtler and finer as it goes, a tell-tale of how concentration does deepen with the nature of the object and not just the mental states.

Infinite Space, as one can then assume, will be the object of the first immaterial absorption, Infinite Consciousness (actually the Consciousness of the one before, that is, of the first immaterial absorption) for the second, the concept of the absence of the previous absorption and its object, the third, and the Consciousness of the previous (that is, of the third immaterial absorption), the fourth.

4. Liberated (*vimuttam*)

Liberated which means *Vipassana* or *Jhanic* Consciousness liberated from defilements momentarily or temporarily.

This means that the Consciousness has reached the level of access or fixed concentration. The significant aspect in the experience of these types of Consciousness is that it lies beyond the unwholesome influences of the defilements/hindrances, which means it feels strong in the peaceful, clear and soft way - those very qualities that I emphasized when I talk about the wholesomeness aspect of mindfulness. Again, the emphasis here is on true strength, and as my Teacher describes it as spiritual resistance, to which I add, capable of undertaking greater tasks ahead. Once it was when the bad guy who ruled the land, for now at least there is peace and rest! But for how long will it last?

The change of levels can be quite obvious. It may come with a sudden upliftment or a sudden drop. The hindrance of restlessness which is like senseless chatter is suddenly silent. Any sloth and torpor which are like dull, suffocating clouds gray and black, have vanished to give way to expansive clarity and freshness.

These Consciousness have also been quoted to be still mundane, and therefore, meant for beginners that is, including those with four or eight *jhanas*, or *Vipassana* practitioners lesser than those who have reached stream entry.

Now we return to the Flight of the Sacred Crane.

How do we watch these Consciousness? Surely, one will have to watch them clearly in the *Vipassana* way. Firstly, clear enough to see the type of Consciousness with its varied characteristics, qualities as natural occurrences, as non-self - not me, not mine, not myself. Then we see it as a process, as it runs to the different objects in various ways. It is not difficult to imagine how the meditation goes on into the access level. But as to the fixed level, it is another matter. How can it be done if the mind is in total absorption without subject-object differentiation?

One teacher said that it is observed only immediately after its passing. Then, does it mean that one has to go in and out frequently to observe the impermanence of these *jhanic* Consciousness? Another teacher commented that the speed in which this occurs can be very rapid. If that is the case, then the perception of impermanence must be highly developed, so too the *Vipassana* concentration. It would amount to what they call *Vipassana jhana* which others may consider it not possible. Having

come across experienced yogis' reports, it seemed plausible. Such yogis have become adept in concentration and insight and the speed at which these experiences of arising and cessation of absorptions that occur is quite amazing.

As for those of lesser capability, the first thing is that one should not have attachment to these tranquil states (which is easier said than done), much less identifying it as the Goal of the Unconditioned (a mistake, although this is also not uncommon). Ability to look into its dissolution occurs only at the moment on emergence. But with frequent switching of the two disciplines, the perception of impermanence, etc. eventually get into the experiencing of the Three Universal Characteristics with regards to the absorptions.

In the texts there exists interesting enough, the practice of reflection on the factors of absorption and the Absorption Consciousness in terms of *Vipassana* (that is, Three Universal Characteristics), and in the process advance onwards in the levels of absorption until the last, which with determination done previous to it, enters into the Attainment of Cessation (*Nirodha Samapatti*), a feat possible only by non-returners and *Arahants* with all those *jhanic* attainments.

And so the sacred crane flies into the clouds. Propelled by the force of its wings, it soars higher and farther, until it is not quite perceptible. Just so, the Consciousness and its object become finer and subtler with practice. It becomes so fine that it seems to have disappeared into the void. But wait for a while, it reappears. Those fine states are like that. The crane, for moments, seems not to be there anymore, at other times it seems to have merged with the expanse of the firmament, disappeared and unified with the rose colored sun. If one is mindful enough, one will be able to follow the flapping of its tender wings, its delicate down feathers as it rises and falls, as it speeds with a velocity faster than the speed of light to realms forbidden to worldly men.

G. The Serpent

The Snake or the Serpent is often feared for it represents poison and eventual death. It lives in dark corners, under tall grasses and slides around and about looking for prey. If you happen to be unwary, and unintentionally step on them, that may mean a painful end of you. Strangely enough, the Greek god of medicine takes the

form of a snake! Its mythological counterpart (the dragon), however, is revered but only in the East, while in the West it is a cursed representation of a force that is all evil. All this is not the fault of the creatures themselves who have evolved into something that can move around and even swim and spring without legs (I can imagine them saying, 'who needs legs?' An extra pair of wings, however, would make life easier).

I have this last part to say a little more about the contemplation of Consciousness and have used the serpent as an example in the way used in the 1st *sutta* of the *Suttanipata*, the title of it being 'The Snake'. There are many verses, but just to quote one:

Verse 5:

That bhikkhu who has not found any essence/substantiality in
Existences,
As one searching in a fig tree, does not find a flower,
He gives up the cycle of existence as a snake sheds its old,
Decayed skin.

An old physician after practicing meditation for some time said that his whole idea of what the Consciousness is has changed. The Consciousness has indeed been a mainstay of the whole identification process and, as such, also the wrong views that arise. As one sees more into the non-selfhood of it, another picture of the universe becomes clearer, and the ego becomes smaller if it has not yet been totally abandoned.

The mind is no longer what you or it thought it was. It is like shedding an old skin to find something else, which may not be as nice as you wish but certainly more real and thus also comes with more realistic ways to deal with it. People have all sorts of wrong ideas of what and who they are. They also have wrong ideas of what the Consciousness is and how it works. Every time we shed off some ignorance, another skin is shed. What I am saying here is that not only should we not attach to the Consciousness as self but also to what Consciousness we think is. Then only can we allow the possibility to go beyond the sensual realms and finally also from its mundane states. A good example is, there are ample cases of yogis who have

fear of letting go, the fear of the unknown hangs on, the fear of the nothingness/emptiness which they think is that Nibbana which had been praised by the Buddhas. Therefore, their progress stops just there. Consciousness itself is non-self, impermanent, unsatisfactory and conditioned. Seeming almighty and omnipresent, it is not. Its conditioned nature is a tell-tale of its vulnerability, as implied in texts related to conditioning. It is between the Consciousness and the mental formations, that a vortex of conditioning is formed and thus all existence revolves. **In short, the Consciousness is not our ultimate resort and refuge. We have got to go beyond it.**

Coming back to the simile of the snake, there are another two snakes as mentioned in the texts which I will quote here.

The first simile talks of catching the snake in the right way, that is, at its neck and not its tail. Otherwise, it will strike you with a deadly bite. This is compared to grasping the Teachings/Truth in the right way or else it may cause more harm than good. It tells us that Nature itself is impersonal. One can be in harmony or in conflict with it, and we will receive the corresponding results.

In the second case, a cobra appears in the discourse of 'The Ant-hill' (*Vammika Sutta*). One is told to dig a smoking ant hill (that is, the five aggregates) and when doing so, encounters one article after another and is told to discard it. One finally meets with a cobra and is told not to disturb it, but to give it due respect. That cobra is meant to represent The Perfected One (an *Arahant*). What do you think of this? The state of an *Arahant* is one purified and he will certainly not bite.

Chapter 5

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(A) MATERIALITY



First there is Adam's Peak, then, there is the Earth Element. One is the basis for flora and fauna as well as for pilgrimage; the other is the basis of all material existence as well as insight meditation. One can try to scale both simultaneously by walking mindfully.

Chapter 5

(A) MATERIALITY (*RUPA*)

This third category of ultimate realities which corresponds largely to the physical world is called materiality or in Pali language, *rupa*. Many have tried to equate these phenomena according to science that we know. Somehow it does not fit exactly because these are seen in light of the investigating mindfulness and aimed primarily for practice and not with modern scientific instruments and theory. Therefore, I will not go into details but just give a general idea of what they are where the practice is concerned. They are in brief:

(I) The Great Essentials

1. Earth element – the material quality that is hardness and softness
2. Fire element – the material quality that is heat and cold
3. Air/Wind element – the material quality that is distension, tension and looseness
4. Water element – the material quality that is cohesion, fluidity and dispersion

These Four Great Essentials are the base for all material phenomena and of these the main one is the **earth** element. I am now enquiring what earth element is in terms of direct experience of that ultimate reality. If one considers it as that nature which is also hard and soft (since they can be conceived with measurable units), then it has to be that which one experiences if one does not think of it as hard or soft. For example, if one presses ones finger on the floor, will the experience be hard or soft? The

answer will be that the finger is soft but the floor is hard. Then we are still caught in concepts. A closer answer will be 'pressure' since hardness means greater pressure and soft lesser pressure. A further approach would be something like resistance. Again, when there is a thought of 'resisting something', then we are moving away again from the essential quality to a more expanded version. Finally, I think it will be just 'something present', something which one can call '**that**' in the sense of existence, but which is not mental and so it can only be material, since it is still not the unconditioned. This 'stuff' would then be the basic quality (not with any amount or substance yet) from which all material qualities depend on to exist. Therefore, it can be explained why the texts quote it as having the function of acting as the foundation for the other three essentials and the derived elements.

Following this line of explanation and experience, we can try to look at the other three essentials. In the case of the **fire** element, it has been given the maturation of other material phenomena. Further explanations also attribute it to processes like digestion and softening. When it is strong, then whatever materiality there is, is processed quickly, such as softening and its eventual rotting. Otherwise, as in a refrigerator, the process is slowed down. But what does this mean as an ultimate reality and experience? Many of us would have experienced smearing some medicinal balm or oil on our skin. It may feel cool at first but if it touches certain very sensitive parts, then it burns. Still at this point, it is debatable because there are other conditions, such as feelings involved. On really looking into the element, one will come to feel that this 'burning' sensation has a quality akin to 'eating into something' and that something which is eating, is this material quality itself which may come together with other material qualities. Therefore, it can be concluded it is involved with the process of disintegration.

As for the **air** element, it has been given the characteristic of distension. Tension and looseness are extremes of this quality. So what is it that one experiences when one has gone beyond the idea of its extremes? Again, when one encounters face-to-face with 'that stuff of materiality' then what will be impressed will be intensity that is akin to a force that supports and pushes materiality and thus also cause conventional motion.

We, who have been observing this phenomenon when we have watched for no short time the ‘rising and falling’ of the abdomen, the movements of the feet as we do walking meditation, find this not so mysterious. The movements when closely watched in terms of direct experience are actually made up of series of ‘tensions’. Looking deeper into these moments of tensions one arrives at this basic material existence that is ‘intensity’.

You may have noticed that I have left the **water** element last while in the normal list given, it appears second after the earth element. The reason is that this element is not experienced directly at the body door, instead it occurs only at the mind door hence it comes as a subtle materiality (*sukhumarupa*). It has the characteristic of cohesion and thus, also the qualities of trickling, oozing and fluidity. Since it appears as a subtle materiality, it is often not noticed like the other three. Nevertheless, often yogis do report experiencing stickiness as one walks on moist surfaces when this element is experienced associated with the earth element. Its weaker form, as the opposite of cohesion or viscosity, will be fluidity and the state of dispersion. Yogis would tend to also describe experiences like watching something hard and tight being later turned into something fluid and then powdery. From this, one can arrive at the conclusion that as long as there is ‘that material stuff’, this nature of being intact for the moment must also be present. This intactness would naturally be the essence of the water element.

When we first start the practice, the Body Foundation of Mindfulness is first used. Understandably so, it is grosser than mental phenomena and so easier to follow mindfully and observe. These objects are basically material qualities and so to get a good hold of its meaning and essence, a clear direct perception has to be developed. Usually this is done as one goes along one’s practice but for many they are not so discriminate and thus, the insights that arise will also not be clear. Clear experiences of this, would likewise, lead one to clearer experience of the deeper realities starting with the characteristic of non-self which is self-evident and thus, also clear experiences of the other two universal characteristics; impermanence and suffering.

Just for interest, let us see the elements that predominate in the main meditation objects:

- (a) Breath as experienced in contact at the nose tip – fire (warmth) and earth (pressure) elements.
- (b) The rising and falling movements of the abdomen – air (movements, tensions) element.
- (c) The sitting posture – air (tension) element that maintains the posture
- (d) The touching – fire (warmth, cold), earth (pressure) elements
- (e) Walking meditation – chiefly the air (movement, tensions and release) elements. Also, in different phases in each step, different elements may predominate as stated in the *Satipatthana* commentary.

One at first may have some concepts and thinking but eventually one leaves them all out and one does not expect what sensation would arise or try to identify the elements as they appear. Rather, effort is made to pick them up as they appear and with as clear a perception as possible to see ‘them as they really are’.

(II) Sensitive Phenomena

- 5. Eye-sensitivity
- 6. Ear-sensitivity
- 7. Nose-sensitivity
- 8. Tongue-sensitivity
- 9. Body-sensitivity

(III) Objective Phenomena

10. Visible form
11. Sound
12. Odour
13. Taste, *tangibility (earth, fire, air elements)

These two groups come together and fall under the practice of the six sense bases. Usually, a third party is involved; the sixth sense Consciousness.

These occur when we note “seeing”, “hearing”, “smelling”, “tasting” and “touching”. At one moment, three main conditions are involved – the sense base, the object of sense and the Sense Consciousness that knows. A point to consider is which one will one be mindful of? The obvious answer will be the sense object. For example, when one sees an object, such as a bright light, for a beginner, he would not notice the Seeing Consciousness or the eye base. But it is okay, since the three universal characteristics are also present, and if one is mindful enough, insight can arise. The eye base is more tricky and is described as the materiality which is sensitive and which receives the impact of the eye object. I think that is true but also quite abstract. It has also been described (from Thai sources) that it is a material clarity which is why some identify it with certain parts of the eye, such as the retina. I would rather be careful and silent about this. In experience, I think it is like a sensitive material screen which captures eye objects or maybe it is better to say materialities perceived as such. Some would prefer, and hopefully they can, and I think it is possible, if one is not a neophyte in practice to watch the Seeing Consciousness instead. So would one then be aware of what is seen? If so, only superficially and if possible, only the Consciousness. For example, yogis do report that they experience that there is hearing but the object (sound) seems absent or very mild.

These material qualities together with the rest (14) are classified as ‘derived

elements' in the sense that they cannot exist without the presence of the four great essentials. They all can be utilized as objects of contemplation.

From 19 to 28 (following below) they are referred to as 'non-concretely produced matter'. The reason being that they are not produced by the main causes that produces matter: Consciousness, *Kamma*, Seasonal Conditions and Nutrition. They are attributes or modalities of matter. In other words, they are matter in various forms when observed as a group. Maybe they themselves are qualities that are not experienced clearly by themselves with the moment-to-moment change. For example, production, continuity, decay and impermanence are processes of materialities which naturally occur in groups unlike Consciousness which arises singly, one following another. Still, they can be suitable objects of contemplation which can give rise to insight, for eventually they lead to the moment-to-moment change. All in all they are tools which we can use for practice. The term which can be used is, 'the soil for the cultivation of insight'.

I will mention the other material phenomena but I will not dwell on them as they are not within the scope of this book.

(IV) Sexual Phenomena

14. Feminine faculty

15. Masculine faculty

These are materialities responsible for the Female and Male characteristics and qualities.

(V) 16. Heart base – this is the material base for the Consciousness. It has been said it is materiality found in the heart but not the heart itself. From what has been described, it is also a form of materiality that arise at the very moment of rebirth, even when the brain, heart and other organs have yet to grow.

(VI) 17. Life faculty – this is the physical life force, a type of physical energy that arises because of kamma.

(VII) 18. Nutriment – this is the nutritive essence that sustains the body. I think it could also be considered as physical energy that may arise connected with the fire element.

(VIII) Non-Concretely Produced Matter

19. Limiting Phenomena – this is not the space for solid objects, rather that which delimits materiality. A researcher concludes them as the nature where certain types of materiality do not come together because of their characteristics or conditions. Some even term it as space element.

(IX) Communicating Phenomena

20. Body intimation – materiality which brings about communication by means of the body. Waving hands, for example, involves many material processes with the air element predominating.

21. Vocal intimation – materiality which brings about communication by vocal means. These processes would have the sound object predominating.

(X) Mutable Phenomena

22. Lightness

23. Malleability

24. Wieldiness

These three are found occurring with bodily processes. For example, when one is happy, one's body and movements will be light and free flowing.

(XI) Characteristics of matter

25. Production

26. Continuity

27. Decay

28. Impermanence

Unlike mental processes which occur moment-to-moment of Consciousness and mental states singly, material qualities run on in groups as processes. Therefore, its very arising is 'production', 'continuity' is after that beginning and before its very end which is 'impermanence'. 'Decay' is when a group of material processes has reached the peak and declines. These four may be likened to a wave that arises, reaches a peak then subsides and ends. Waves upon waves they rise and fall!

The Conditioning of Materiality – A Lump of Foam

The Layers of the Foam

The categorization of materiality has been made into:

1. The great essentials
2. The derived elements
3. The non-concrete materiality

They demonstrate 3 layers in the conditioning of materiality as it can appear in a moment (of materiality). The first is the most basic layer and dependent on them, the derived elements can arise. Over a period of development, there can be deduced that they are also conditioned to arise together with them other forms called non-concrete, that is, one cannot define its arising by one of the four causes – *Kamma*, Consciousness, Nutrition and Seasonal conditionings. Still, in the last, they can be considered as suitable objects of contemplation. One may give the example that if water corresponds to the great essentials, then the ripples, the derived elements and parts of the ripple or more parts of ripples grouped together as the non-concrete matter. One must, however, be careful not to equate these relationships with those of the Consciousness and mental states, which come with quite different types of conditional relationships.

The Arising of the Bubbles of Materiality

The Great Essentials and the derived elements are called concrete materiality (*nipphammarupa*) because one can determine its arising and, as in all realities, arises at the moment when conditions are present. Therefore, it has been enumerated four:

1. Kamma and thus Kammic derived matter (*Kammajarupa*)
2. Consciousness and thus Consciousness derived matter (*Cittajarupa*)
3. Nutrition and thus nutrition derived matter (*Aharajarupa*)
4. Seasonal conditions and thus materialities derived from seasonal conditions (*Utujarupa*)

The Abhidhammattha Sangaha goes on to define the first arising of these material qualities:

1. Kammic derived matter first arises at the first arising sub-moment (*uppadakkhana*) of the Relinking Consciousness and after that at every sub-moment (*uppada*, *thiti bhanga*) of every Consciousness.
2. Consciousness derived matter first arises at the first sub-moment of the next Consciousness (the first life continuum) after the Relinking Consciousness and then continues with every Consciousness but only at the arising (*uppada*) sub-moment. All these do not include the two sets of Five-fold Sense Consciousness.
3. Nutrition derived matter first arises when the nutrition is taken in.
4. Materiality derived from seasonal conditions first arises at the present sub-moment (*thitikkhana*) of the Relinking Consciousness and after that there is continual arising. However, what type of materiality arises depends on the individual stream of life becoming. For example, not all types of *Kammic* derived materialities arise in an individual existence, for example, there would not be any eye base for the blind, no ear base for the deaf, etc.

The Foam Flows

If one would ask what are these materialities derived from *Kamma*, etc, then it poses another aspect of the foam. That is, when the teaching about material groupings

(*kalapa*) come into the picture. This is interesting yet bewildering because they have actually been translated as ‘atoms’ and there are people who claim to experience them say they are like little spherical particles. Shapes and forms are concepts and so they actually are just materialities that have to be present in some way when one is present. For example, the basic grouping comprises of the eight inseparables (*avinibbhogarupa*) which are: the four essentials, color, taste, odor and nutritive essence. Others may be added such as the eye base to form a group of nine which is a *kammic* derived grouping. So, one can imagine all these bubbles arising together to form a foam.

They have been enumerated: Nine *kammic* groupings, six Consciousness groupings, two nutritional groupings, two Seasonal groupings.

Another thing that adds to this story is that a material phenomenon such as the above arises and last 17 thought moments. At the next sub-moment, another set/sets arise and they last another sub-moment longer. This gives us an image of a lump of foam with bubbles added at one end of the process and others disappearing at the other at the end of the period of 17 thought moments, and so, we have a flowing foam that is never the same. However, unlike Consciousness, only one Consciousness arises at one instant; in materiality groups, however, bulks of it do so.

To end the story, the last arisings of each type in an individual existence has also been described.

1. Since all *Kammic* derived matter ceases at the ceasing moment (*bhanga* *akkhāna*) of the last Consciousness, the Death Consciousness (*Cuti citta*), the last arising of this type of material groupings can be counted 17 thought moments back.
2. In the case of Consciousness derived matter, it will all have to be ceased 17 thought moments after its last arising at the arising sub-moment of the Death Consciousness.
3. In the case of Nutrition derived matter, it will be when nutrition taken in has all been used up.
4. In the case of Material qualities derived from seasonal conditions, it will last even after death as the corpse.

So, it is not strange that the Buddha once at the banks of the Ganges, pointed at the foam and said,

“Like a lump of foam is materiality....”

Phenupamam rupam...

Khandha Samyutta

Chapter 5

.....

(B) WALKING MEDITATION



Its flight is a vanishing shadow with feathers at its edges. Slowed down, we see Nature walk as does a man. When it stops, we see its face.

Chapter 5

(B) WALKING THROUGH WHITE CLOUDS

Walking meditation is an ancient practice done even before the Buddha's time, but the Buddha certainly did walking meditation and the tradition lasts to this day. I have used this as an example of the practice of mindfulness with regards to the body because a great deal of it involves momentary concentration on material qualities although mental phenomena are inextricably included.

Sometime in the distant past, man started walking instead of crawling or whatever. Since then walking has been part of life. It is from going to places, to going to do things like schooling, search for food, marching in wars, protests, and spiritual pilgrimage.

Then someone comes along and says, "Walking meditation is unnatural." And she even suggested that it should not be done!

When I heard this many years ago, I was puzzled because the one who said it is a professed *Abhidhamma* teacher with a following of her own. There must be, I thought, something wrong somewhere. Could it be walking meditation, *Abhidhamma*, the teacher or all of it? I concluded that it must be the teacher!

One monk even described the Mahasi Sayadaw, the founder of the Burmese Satipatthana *Vipassana* method as 'robotic'. I can understand how this can happen to one who does not understand nature and calls it unnatural. Even sitting cross legged is unnatural in the West. Actually *Vipassana* is trying to be as natural as possible. I think what the Zen people called the 'original nature' must be something long forgotten, ignored and even denied in this world.

Then, there were others. A well known tradition I discovered, left out walking meditation altogether. The founder must have thought it unnecessary while we on

our side think it as something quite indispensable. Then, there is another who left out both sitting and walking meditation altogether and resorted to just mindfulness of daily life. In the latter two cases, they have their origins in Burma where *Abhidhamma* is revered. One then wonders how this thing can happen. Certainly blind traditionalism has its limitations and we also must never underestimate the power of delusion.

It is obvious that the Buddha himself did do walking meditation before and after his enlightenment. He even described how he did it in his past lives. Walking meditation does have a long history. Come to think of it, even in Europe, the Peripatetic school of philosophers of Greece ‘meditated’ as they walked, but in their case, much thinking was involved. The Buddha himself tells of how he tries to purify his mind and overcame fear in the forest as he walked. Even today, one can find in Jetavana grove, near his perfumed chamber, the place where he did his walking as an example to his disciples.

An interesting thing is a description of the incident with Angulimala when the latter was chasing after him but failed to catch up even though the Buddha walked. When asked to stop, the Buddha replied, “It is you who are still running, I have stopped.”

His disciples also did walking meditation. Sona, the chief disciple for energy, walked till his feet bled; Cakkhupala who was blind, walked and stepped on insects and he was blamed; Ananda walked deep into the night and only when he decided to rest, on lifting his legs from the floor, became enlightened - just to mention a few.

The question, therefore, should not be, “Is walking meditation valid?” Rather it should be, “How does one do it and how often?” I, myself, have often reprimanded myself for not doing enough of it, and when done, knew what great difference it made.

Again, in the chapter on clear comprehension, the commentary goes as far as describing the phases of the steps observed and the change of elements, and the interaction of volition and matter involved.

One of the first things I realized when doing walking meditation is that I was just beginning to learn how to walk properly. Most of us would not remember what went through our minds when we were graduating from crawling to walking. Many times we must have fallen and cried. There must be determination and patience even as a child. It seems, BALANCE plays a key role and, therefore, the eyes play a major part. For those blind, it will have to be the body and the mind. When we have grown up, it has become habitual and we take all that balance for granted until we fall down. Once adept in walking, they proceeded to running. In primitive days, running was a useful tool to escape from dinosaurs or chasing after rabbits. They certainly can exercise some mindfulness as well. I cannot recall having come across readings where monks (who are not supposed to run) attained in such action. By the way, running is not mentioned in the *Satipatthana Sutta*.



An impulse infused with clear awareness propels its first process of material tensions that raises the heel upwards. Internally, it feels like a little dove had just opened its wings and getting ready to fly.

Reasons for walking meditation

1. As an Exercise

I think there are more than enough reasons to include walking meditation in one's practice. For one, one cannot sit all the time (unless you have decided not to walk for the rest of your life) The imbalance in the use of postures is also one of the reasons for ill health. Too much walking can result in varicose veins, also with too much standing. Too much lying down - bed sores, and too much sitting also gives rise to problems like hemorrhoids.

Meditators who do intensive retreats often end up with sitting for longer periods. If concentration is not deep enough, certain physical problems of the back and legs may result. Walking helps to offset this; it also serves as a mild exercise for circulation and digestion. Actually, when the Buddha was requested by the doctor Jivaka to recommend exercises to monks for want of better health, he suggested the walking exercise.

However, you must also consider that monks do walk long distances through difficult terrain to beg for food. And when they do, they often do it with speed. Someone even linked it to foot reflexology! I remember that when I was in Burma and I decided to follow the monks for alms-round, just to follow their seemingly casual walk, I had to run. Fortunately, my feet had already been hardened although I had to be mindful of things such as glass and nails.

When one does it for exercise, it is obvious that one has to do it with reasonable speed for a reasonable period of time. In long retreats and in colder places, the matter of exercise should not be under estimated. The body needs to be worked up and some amount of sweating is good. I always make it a point to go for a long walk of at least two hours, at least once a week. It gets me quite tired but on recovery, meditation usually resumes very well. After being diagnosed as a diabetic, walking two hours daily helped me to offset this problem.

2. As a Preliminary to the Sitting Meditation

Most people seem to take this as the main purpose of the walking meditation. It is like a preliminary to the sitting where one settles the mind down from its more distracted nature to a more tranquil state. The momentum and strength of mindfulness and concentration is thus built up and when one proceeds to the sitting, the Consciousness sinks into a deeper level (hopefully) easily. This is obvious and it is common knowledge of yogis that a good walking meditation is (usually) followed by a good sitting. This is also the practice of a preliminary concentration.

At the beginning of the retreat, walking meditation actually seems more effective than sitting which is usually harassed by restless thinking or sloth and torpor. As the practice is built up, concentration in sitting meditation picks up while walking

meditation becomes boring. Thus, there is something to be corrected or taken note of. First of all, one should think that walking meditation is meant not to be just a preliminary exercise. By itself, it is a discipline where one may be able to reach lofty insights. Secondly, concentration in walking meditation is different and not so easily developed because of nature of the active movements involved.

There are some relevant questions that can be asked here.

(a) How is concentration in walking meditation?

The type of concentration in walking meditation is very unique to vipassana meditation. It is obviously momentary concentration. Unlike sitting meditation with eyes closed, walking meditation is exposed to the eye sense objects, at least at its initial phases.

And so, it occurs as a very composed and collected state of Consciousness that does not waver even though many objects come and go very quickly. Even deeper levels can occur with a very momentary cutting off of the external bases.

(b) How does one build up concentration in the walking meditation?

One does it by building up the continuity of mindfulness with the process of the sensations at the footsteps as one walks. At first, one is still very open to the external objects, but with continuity of mindfulness, one is able to narrow down to just the footsteps and cut out the external bases and enter deeper and longer into the mind door and the mind objects. It would certainly involve a much slower pace. More will be dealt with later.

(c) A third question involves how it is done with tranquility meditation?

In this case, it will definitely not be watching the different mental and material processes involved in the walking, but rather on the object one is to be concentrated on. For example, the person in the case of metta meditation, it can be done slower or faster, depending on the faculty to be aroused for the balance.

3. Used in the Balancing of Faculties

This is yet another important function made possible by walking meditation. After one has learnt the basic techniques and mindfulness is more or less continuous, then balancing of the faculties become crucial in determining advancement. It is the balance of energy and concentration faculties. Too much of energy will lead to restlessness and excessive concentration leads to sloth or stagnation. When the faculties are balanced, then *vipassana* meditation proceeds efficiently along the path to freedom.

How does one do this?

There are three main things involved:

(a) The physical process in which we have to consider the speed and how the walking is done.

Generally, the faster the pace the more the energy is aroused. This is because the mind has to follow it quicker and so incitation is involved. However, one has to remember that physical energy is one thing and mental energy another, although both are connected. Balancing is on the mental faculty. Too much physical activity produces fatigue, too much mental energy results in mental tension and restlessness. Slowing down one's pace would also mean a relaxing of the mental energy and arousing tranquility/concentration faculty. Physically it relaxes, mentally if there is no stress due to trying too hard, then tranquility settles in. How quick or slow depends on the state of mind to be balanced.

(b) The number of phases noted with each step

Traditionally, each step can be broken into six parts.

1. raising (heels)
2. lifting (foot)
- 3 pushing
4. lowering

5. treading

6 pressing

Usually the beginner uses only up to three parts: lifting, pushing and lowering. Generally also, the speed slows down as more parts are noted. But one can slow down also with just one part as a whole (noted as 'stepping') at a very slow pace.

Here, a different effect is involved. The increase of parts noted per step means an increase of mental activation with increased initial and sustained application (*vitakkavicara*). So to ensure balance, the observation has to be done with a very tranquil mental state. The slowing down, thus, not only increases both the energy and concentration faculties, the energy will then have to be more refined yet stronger.

(c) The way one observes the steps of the walk

Since the mental faculties are mental and so the balancing process is basically mental. All this comes with the volition and attention to the mental states. The more intense the observation, the more will be the energy, but if done in a more relaxed and peaceful manner, then concentration will be encouraged. Familiarity with how the different combinations of mental states as they come with the Consciousness will determine one's ability to balance it.

4. As an Insight Practice

As mentioned before, the walking meditation plays an important part in insight development.

(a) Firstly, its objects as natural material realities are obvious. In walking, the hardness/softness, the tension/looseness, the heat/cold being obvious, gross and apparent, allows one much opportunity to perceive and discern clearly the characteristics, etc. of these basic elements. Having developed clear perception of these in gross walking, one can then also be able to discern them clearly in its finer forms during sitting.

(b) Secondly, the nature of momentary concentration is also obvious in walking meditation. The mind is exposed to the six sense objects, the paces of the feet also comes up with many different types of sensations, and their interaction with Consciousness, such as intentions make the whole conditioned and non-self nature become more obvious.

Moreover, the balance of walking and sitting postures allow the set of faculties to be balanced in a way that conduces to insight. There should not be as much prolonged sittings as in tranquility meditation.

(c) Finally, I must repeat again that walking meditation itself can lead to the highest insight if done properly and seriously. In which case, it will have to be very slow because of the need for increased concentration.

5. As a bridge that links and integrates meditative practice with all actions in daily life.

One advantage of insight practice and the nature of momentary concentration is that it can be very flexible. The primary concern is not so much of the object of contemplation than of the continuity of mindfulness. Objects come and go, but the mindfulness continues to follow and observe. So it is not just the breath which can be the object of the contemplation, but any of the mind and body processes, and this can be found with whatever posture one is disposed with. So one can extend the contemplations with its depths from the sitting meditation to the walking meditation and vice versa, and from that to all of one's daily activities. The walking meditation is a dynamic form, where many things from movement of the feet to the various eye objects that we meet with, and to the thoughts that may arise, although the central port of stabilization and concentration is at the feet. When one shifts to other activities in the other main postures, such as sitting (and eating), standing (and talking), lying down (and listening or feeling sick), the principle remains the same. In the minor postures such as squatting (and picking up wastes), stretching (and picking apples), etc, but being minor, they last for a shorter time or at least less frequent. In such a case, more general scope of mindfulness that covers the whole body may be involved. Nevertheless, the same principle holds and one will have to decide which will be a choice, for more concentrated or more open form of

awareness. Lastly, it will be clear comprehension which will decide which and what it is best to keep the contemplation going.

Before we proceed further with the walking meditation proper, it is good to look into the Alley/Cloister walk, the factors involved as mentioned in the *Anguttara Nikaya* and its commentary.

Alley Walk (*cankamana*)

First, let us look into what is recommended in the Alley walk.

Incidentally, this alley walk does not occur only in the Buddhist tradition. The Christians, for example, have their cloister walk for monastics which is usually a square courtyard with a well, a tree or a sculpture in the center. The monks walk around it doing their spiritual practice such as prayer, readings, etc.

In the Buddhist tradition, depending on the lineage, the walking can be done in more ways than one and so the space construction can vary. In the Theravadin tradition, it is usually a straight walk which may be covered, walled up or open. The distance varies, and certainly not too long or short.

In the commentary, the Alley walk recommendations are:

(a) Not too Long or Short

The mind has stamina of mindfulness that lasts depending on the concentration of an individual. Once gone beyond this, restlessness and boredom sets in. A similar thing occurs when one is driving along a straight road. After a long while, monotony sets in and mindfulness slips off. That is when accidents occur. To check this, a shift in direction helps. But what is the most suitable length? My estimation is about 8-10 meters. When too long, it can become tiring; when too short it can be abrupt. I was also told once that in certain situations, monks do walk inside their rounded mosquito netting. In such a case, the walk would have to be a pretty small circle. Another quoted a minimum of 6 steps. In either case, I think it is not the best choice, being too short.

(b) Not too Wide or Narrow

The walk should not be too narrow or wide. Being too narrow and constricted tends to tense one up, while too wide will tend to render one too relaxed and result in wandering away. An estimation of $\frac{3}{4}$ - 1 meter is a fair judgment. It will, of course, also depend on individual temperament. It is interesting to note that some do it as if walking in a straight line, that is, one foot placed right in front of the other, toe to heel. Try walking on a narrow drain, an advice was given. It certainly needs a different and more acute sense of balance.

(c) Not Covered by Undercover Greens

Such a situation often occurs for those in the forest. Danger, it is said, can lurk below, such as snakes and scorpions. There is also the possibility of stepping to death on more harmless creatures, and so to avoid this, clear the walk of grass, stones, etc.

(d) Not Obstructed by Trees

A straight line, understandably, is more conducive to concentration than one that goes zig-zag; fancy bumping right into something when the light is no longer bright, especially in the forest at night. I also remember once that there was a yogi who even when told, persisted in walking in the form of an 8 or you may also regard it as a symbol for infinity. They thought he was hopeless and mad. I wondered about this. Maybe he thought that there is a significance of its shape. What about walking in a small circle around a tree? Well, if it is the Mahabodhi (tree), it would definitely be recommended. Many pilgrims and meditators have done it and have been very inspired. What can be a better way of veneration to it than by the practice of *vipassana*? We could also replace it with a stupa then, sit in front of it.

(e) It is even with suitable medium

An even surface means one that is not uneven with bumps which one may trip over or holes which one may fall into and twist ones ankle, which would be unlikely in slow, mindful walking unless your eyes are closed or not functioning. In any case,

an even surface would definitely make the walking more stable and so will conduce to concentration. Slopes are not so suitable although it could be interesting and exercise a different set of muscles. Many yogis, however, noticed that they left their mindfulness downstairs while walking upstairs. Still we have to be mindful whatever the slope is, and not slip and trip.

As for the medium, it has been recommended to be one that is not too hard, in which case one may hurt one's feet. Fine sand has been recommended. Wooden surfaces are not bad. Carpets are comfortable but if you think of all those dust mites inhabiting inside, I wonder about the health consequences. Regular vacuuming and disinfecting may solve some problems, but again I wonder about the consequences of killing. What I noticed as ideal would be one of those rolled up mats which are about $\frac{3}{4}$ meter wide, pleasant but not overly comfortable. Well textured to feel, although I think it may also have house mites besides other little creatures. But as my Thai teacher said, they are made only in one part of Thailand. And in fact it may be true, because I have not seen it anywhere else.

6. It is Well Located and Covered from Sun and Rain

Where the walk is located also matters. A quiet and secluded place would be good. If it is in a natural surrounding, it would make it ideal. I know of a place in Germany where there are nice walks between ponds with little bridges, hidden by bushes. Nothing can beat that. I have also done it on nice long pavements along the corridors in temples in Asia and it is inspiring. This one has an extra advantage of being covered from sun and rain, which is a very important factor in the case of the tropics where rainfall can be frequent and sun fierce.

The Advantages of an Alley Walk

The *Sutta* from the *Anguttara Nikaya* gives these five advantages of walking meditation.

1. It hardens one for travelling

Transport for monks in those days were mainly by foot and even during the days

of the Buddha, they were wanderers until the Buddha allowed monasteries and later they were obliged to stay put in one place for three months of the rains (*vassa*). And so if one just sits and not walk, then with long walks one can become very stressful. Consider those bare feet scraping on gravel for days. This is a life not meant for pea princesses or '*mud Bodhisattas*'.

2. It is good for striving

What is meant here is that it is good for arousing the energy faculty. The walking process requires the mind to keep up with the processes of sensations as one walks, and so requires much initial and sustained application which in turn, requires mental energy.

3. It is healthy

Walking is certainly a form of exercise, and one recommended by the Buddha to monks. I will not go into this except that it is also linked with the next factor, but in this case, it influences the whole physical system.

4. It tends to good digestion after one has eaten or drunk

This point is also self-explanatory. The digestive system can certainly work better if there is some movement rather than remaining in a static position.

5. The Concentration from the walk lasts long

It is interesting that the commentary here describes the lengthening of concentration to include all the different levels of absorptions. It adds to the fact that walking meditation helps in the concentration whether it is tranquility or insight meditation. How it does, it is left to one's own logic and experience!

How is Walking Meditation Done and What Happens

I suppose, it can be done in more ways than one. As the saying goes, "there are more than one way to skin a cat", which certainly is not a Buddhistic expression



*For a moment, it hangs there like a hanged man; attentive and ready for the occurrence of transformation.
After that it sails on the winds lightly as does the sails of a yacht*

and is a rather cruel way of putting it. I also wonder who coined that phrase! I also suppose it depends on what you think walking meditation is about and so the results will vary accordingly. Say, for example, if one considers walking in a pilgrimage; one would expect that a person will not be going about at a snail's pace. One would also be expected to be doing much devotional practices, such as recitations and bowing. Of course, somewhere along the way, one would sit or walk in more serious meditation. But taking the direction we are in, that is, to develop insight, still there are more than one way to do it, as different traditions offer. But here I speak only in what I understand and know and as I have done and am still doing, and am still teaching it to others. So, it is just one way of beginning as with beginners. These are what I would give as basic instructions on it, something that could develop into an unfolding of insight.

1. Standing Posture

Standing posture is important before the walking, as well as the 'in-betweens'. One ensures that one's posture is straight (including the head, that is, not bowed), eyes down cast and hands held together in front or at the back. Then, one sweeps mindfulness from head to toe and toe to head several times, feeling and observing the various bodily sensations as they arise and pass away. This initial phase is important not just to establish mindfulness of the body but also to check and make sure that mindfulness is present without any thoughts. If done properly,

considerable concentration would also build up. Then, it assures that walking begins mindfully with the taking note of the intention to start walking. When movement starts, one attends to the moving leg.

Firstly, walking meditation can generally be classified under three speeds:

(a) Brisk Walking - The Walking Marathon Man

He is tireless, he is undaunted in his goal; he is as strong as a bull. Long walks do require (physical) energy and determination. Although meditation is essentially mental, one cannot disregard the physical aspect. It can hardly be called physically taxing but given the long hours day after day, one cannot be sickly or lame if one wants to do it properly. It is strange, in this type of journey; it is a matter of more haste less speed. Still, sometimes we need to take things easier and “slow down” a bit when one feels in need of some rest. So quicker movements may mean more mental rest? I think it is more of the movements being easy going that gives a freer flow.

This type of walking is done at a speed faster than our normal pace (which itself varies with individuals). It is usually done at the start of the walking period after an intense sitting session as an exercise to loosen the body and relax the mind. The distance can be long, say, 20 meters or even more. However, being relaxed and not tense is the point to remember. As such, one also cannot expect to be able to notice much phenomena of the process. It is also done to shake off bouts of sleepiness or attacks of restlessness. One may be recommended to do this for the initial 10 minutes, but if things go haywire, it will certainly help to do more.

Another variation of this is taking easy walks. In more traditional systems, this is unacceptable. One is not supposed to leave the compound. At Mahasi Center in Burma, the grounds are huge, so claustrophobia had not been the issue. In such a case then, there is a tendency to look around, and if one meets someone along the way, one may be involved in conversation. “Hello, how are you doing?” a greeting which would be polite will be considered reproachable here. Once a yogi saluted the teacher who was passing him, the teacher pointed to his feet. These can lead to distractions and back sliding. So, where lays the boundary? It depends again on the individual and the degree of intensity of practice one prefers. Generally, I would say, to keep the looking

around less, noting “seeing” if it takes ones thoughts too far but avoid conversation altogether. The other extreme is running. Running, however, is another matter. The Buddha as mentioned earlier, did advise monks to adopt walking as an exercise. From what I have seen in Burma, it amounts to almost a run.

The Pali word for “to run” is “*dhavati*” and it does not arise in the *Satipatthana Sutta*. But then neither does a lot of other words like jumping, skipping, squinting, kicking, tickling, coughing.... many of these are often done with more speed, and some, spontaneously. However, it does not mean we cannot (or rather, we should) have mindfulness. They, however, may not be so conducive for concentration. Someone even mentioned that the ‘dance of the dervishes’ are done with much awareness. What about acrobats? In the Buddha’s time, an acrobat somersaulted seven times and landed on the pole enlightened. He must certainly have had good concentration and mindfulness to perform that feat!

Then there are some actions that are done with unwholesome mental states such as killing and stealing. These would not have been done if one is mindful. Even then, one is advised to practice mindfulness as soon as one realizes it, as explained in the part of mindfulness of hindrances (in the *Satipatthana Sutta*). But this is getting us too far from the topic.

(b) Moderately Slow Walking - Lady ‘Specialifine’ Walking

It is more usual to find ladies doing slow, fine walking rather than men. While men marched across the countries brandishing weapons, women took promenades discussing fine culture or family issues. Such segregation of sexes is getting less, but still women seem to fare better in this slow walking. Softly, gently and patiently, they take each step. The quality of mindfulness is more important than how quickly one reaches the other end of the alley walk. This is done at a speed slower than normal with a step made of 1 or 2 phases. Again, the normal pace varies with individuals. Someone from the city would normally walk faster than one from a sleepy hollow.

What I advise would be to adopt a speed slower than normal yet feeling comfortable. Slowing down with comfort is the point to bear in mind. For this, there may have to be a trial and error period. Once the suitable speed is determined,

which will be that which is the most acceptable and efficient for mindfulness and concentration for those moments, one can then lock into that for a time. One will find that if the mind likes it, there is joy, and when there is joy, concentration naturally follows, and further slowing down will come on naturally.

- (i) The 1-phase walking is done noting “stepping”, “stepping” or sometimes “right step”, “left step”

The heels lift, foot pushes forward and then is placed down evenly so that it will not be heels or toes first. The foot should not be lifted too high or pushed too far forward. It may result in a balancing act. There is no pause in the process except for a little while after one step and before the other foot lifts.

The sensations involved would be more like a flow with the tension/movement (wind element) predominant until it steps down and the element involved would depend on what is picked up, most probably hard/soft (earth element).

- (ii) The 2-phase walking is done noting “lifting”, “stepping”

The first part: “lifting” begins with the lifting of the heels, carries it up till it stops.

The second part: “stepping” begins when it begins to drop till it reaches the ground.

There would then be a short pause between the two parts.

Each part has its own set of sensations. The “lifting” part would be lighter with an increase of tension, while the second part, more relaxed, and feeling heavier. The sensations of the first part would, therefore, be more associated with the wind and fire elements, while the second part more with earth and water elements.

(c) The Snail

Observe the snail, is it walking or crawling? Neither. It is sliding slowly with its slimy surface, sensing with its extended “eyes” around the surroundings. The

slow speed and soft foot allows more time to sense and to observe. It allows also the mindfulness and concentration to pick up. Slowing down is at first intentional but later becomes habitual and natural.

How slow is slow? I estimate that it can take for a three-phased step to be from 15 seconds to 30 seconds. And so for a walk of about 20 steps (each step being ½ of that of slow walking) one would take 10 minutes. Making a to-and-fro will be 20 minutes. Three times this would take an hour. One could certainly try to make it slower.

This part can be done from 3 - 6 phases:

The 3-part per step - lifting, pushing, stepping

The 4-part - raising (heels), lifting, pushing, stepping

The 5-part - raising, lifting, pushing, dropping/lowering (foot), treading (toes first)

The 6-parts - raising, lifting, pushing, dropping, treading, pressing

Naturally when done at the snail's pace, one has to be very relaxed, otherwise, tensions build up. It will also have to be very balanced and so small half steps are taken. Also, one can assume that one will not be able to do it if ones mindfulness and concentration has not yet picked up. One can even break up each phase into several phases. That is, for "lifting", it will be "lifting", "lifting", "lifting" as many times as it can be done. Essentially, it is observing it from moment to moment, and so one will progress naturally to be observing the flow, the process, the impermanence.

At this point, it is suitable to be reminded that walking meditation comes under the Contemplation of Mindfulness of the Body (*kayanupassana satipatthana*) and so the primary objects would be materiality (*rupadhamma*). After using the physical form and concepts as an initial base for the build-up of concentration, the mind is then directed to just the ultimate realities (*paramattha dhamma*) and so the concepts of the forms would be left out, if not automatically, then it has to be done intentionally. What remains would be the three of the four great elements, earth, fire

and wind. The water element being a subtle materiality that occurs at the mind door in connection with the others is less likely to be obvious but does arise as qualities of stickiness, powderiness, cohesion and fluidity. A very clear perception of these is important, because they form the base from which the perception of the three universal characteristics is developed.

The *Abhidhamma* gives us the nature of these phenomena in four aspects:

- (i) The characteristic (*lakkhana*)
- (ii) Its function (*rasa*)
- (iii) Its manifestation (*paccupatthana*)
- (iv) Its proximate cause (*padatthana*)

They are like four aspects of the phenomena. If you give a conceptual example to it, with the example of a teacher, then:

- (i) there is teaching/imparting of knowledge
- (ii) he teaches/imparts knowledge to others
- (iii) one can see that there is the teaching/imparting of knowledge
- (iv) students whom he teaches

In the same way, it goes for all other phenomena. All, except the last, belongs to that specific phenomenon determined and described. This last one points out to the phenomena, often its object that occurs at the same moment as a conditioning factor. So while watching one of the elements, any one of the others can be picked up. Even how the characteristic is experienced will depend on the other conditioning phenomena. So when one looks at the teacher, one can see him teaching, and not just one subject. One can also see how in various ways he imparts the knowledge, and how the knowledge is received. When trying to teach to a blank wall, it certainly cannot be called teaching. If the teacher gets annoyed and throws his shoes at one of his students, can you call it teaching? Probably not, unless he intends to teach him a lesson that he will never forget. But teaching is a noble profession and so should be done with a mind of compassion. When really angry, he would perhaps be better called the torturer than a teacher.

The point I would like to make is the conditioned nature of the material phenomena. It is conditioned by other material phenomena as well as mental phenomena. Although it can be perceived by its specific characteristic (*sabhava lakkhana*) clearly, as a whole one cannot ignore the presence of other natural phenomena. To ignore it would pose as an obstacle to the knowledge of conditioning from which will follow the perception of its general characteristics (*sammana lakkhana*). So the specific characteristic is just a starting point, and there can be many starting points. But the clearer and sharper it is would likewise mean that the natural state of things will also be seen clearly with the other characteristics, the nature of conditioning and the universal characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self will be perceived clearly. This is important because one insight knowledge acts as a base for the following ones.

To see the waves, one must first see a wave

To see the sea, one must first see the waves

To really see the sea, one must first dive in and swim

And flow and sink and let any inklings of a self be drowned

Until there is just the sea

And so, to give the four aspects of the four great elements, I have adopted Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation of them here.

(i) Earth element (*pathavi dhatu*)

- a. Characteristic: hardness/softness
- b. Function: acting as foundation
- c. Manifestation: receiving
- d. Proximate cause: the other three great elements

(ii) Water element (*apo dhatu*)

- a. Characteristic: trickling/oozing
- b. Function: intensifying the coexistent material states
- c. Manifestation: cohesion of material phenomena
- d. Proximate cause: the other three great elements.

(iii) Fire element (*tejo dhatu*)

- a. Characteristic: heat and cold

- b. Function: mature and ripen other material phenomena
- c. Manifestation: a continuous supply of softness
- d. Proximate cause: the other three great elements

(iv) Wind element (*vayo dhatu*)

- a. Characteristic: distension
- b. Function: cause motion in the other phenomena
- c. Manifestation: conveyance to other places
- d. Proximate cause: the other three great elements

As a digression on this topic of the 28 material qualities, it would be of interest that based upon these four great elements/essentials, there arises the other derived elements (*upadaya rupa* - 24, which is minus the four great elements, which strangely enough, three is included as the tangible object), which can again be divided into concretely produced matter (*nipphannarupa* - 18, including the four great elements) and non-concrete matter (*anipphanna rupa* - 10).

Derived (*upadaya*) because they are arisen due to conditioning factors upon the four great elements: and concretely produced (18) by the four generations of matter (*kamma*, Consciousness, nutriment and seasons), these are considered as possessing real characteristics marked by the three universal characteristics and, therefore, can act as objects and comprehended by insight.

Then, there are the ten non-concrete material qualities which are considered as modalities and attributes of concrete matter. How then does one consider these as ultimate realities as well? That exactly illustrates the conditioned nature/reality of materiality. Of this group, it may be noted that the three mutabilities of matter - lightness (*lahuta*), softness (*muduta*) and wieldiness (*kammannata*) are often picked up during walking meditation are modalities of matter. So too are the last four - production (*upacaya*), continuity (*santati*), decay (*jarata*), impermanence (*aniccata*), and yet it is clear that it can lead to perception of the three universal characteristics even though they are touched by concepts. In practice, therefore, it is not easy to draw the line between the two realities at a moment although it can be done when it has developed to a higher level.



Gently and softly it lands confidently with composure, stably it advances along the path. The final destination is not of concern for the moment, for the moment itself is the path.

The Build-up of Concentration in Walking Meditation

After some time, many preferred the sitting to the walking because they seem to think that sitting yields more results than walking. The new experiences are more in connection with the effects of concentration. Although we know that such progress cannot come about without proper walking practice, it is also true that concentration will soon become a critical factor in the progress of walking meditation. Therefore, it is in this direction that one should look into.

Here, we look again into the matter of concentration. As mentioned earlier, concentration as it develops is quite unlike what one would expect, that is, as one experienced in its development in sitting meditation. It occurs more in the way of momentary concentration.

Concentration, by the way, is often spoken of in three ways.

1. Fixed Absorption
2. Access Concentration
3. Momentary Concentration

In depth, the first would come out deepest, while the second and third, are on par, which is to say, that it indicates differences in terms of quality.

From the nature of the objects and the way it is observed moment-to-moment, the concentration developed will be momentary concentration. And momentary concentration refers to the fixation of the concentration in the moment. Taking a period of moments as a whole, it would seem to be many objects flowing by at the same time and yet the mindfulness remains stable, composed and unperturbed. I will illustrate this in two examples.



There he stands between one world and the next. A boat may be safe in a harbor, safe only for a while, but man is meant for higher and farther shores. What are you waiting for?

1. The Troop of Ants

The first is a more narrow form of it like a flow of water in a thin line. And, as the example given by a Burmese master, a thin line of a troop of ants; at first the sensations seem to be a line of movement of tension. As one observes closely the sensations of the feet as one walks, they are like little ants walking in a line. These tiny sensations arise and pass away one after the other. Which one? One may ask, as there are many. At the beginning they are partly chosen, for example, those at the lower part of the feet (calves down). But what one picks up is not chosen, as grosser movements from other parts of the body or what is seen and heard may flash by at the mind door. Still, mainly it will be the elements as it occurs at the feet. Some even fix more specifically at the wind element which is also possible as long as it does not restrict ones openness to the three universal characteristics. One will eventually arrive at a point where there is just natural flow of these qualities of elements as perceived. The sounds and visual

objects may still be around passing by quickly and at times be totally absent. Then, that thin line of ants has now gone underground.

2. Walking Through the Clouds

For the second case, one is not as concentrated on the sensations at the feet as in the previous case. One is more open to the other objects around. Sometimes it is not a matter of choice, because the external objects can be rather strong. Sometimes, we have to, because it is necessary, like walking on a busy road; and sometimes it may be a wise choice because the mind is rather tense or the mind needs to be more open to various objects to keep it in the direction of insight development (as in those who have been long ingrained in tranquility concentration).

The process is quite similar to the above case, except that one is more open to other external objects. So in the process, one may be more often diverted to the processes of “seeing”, “hearing” and other bodily movements, and then returned to the primary object, that is, the sensations at the feet. Later when the concentration picks up, the mindfulness becomes very still, composed and unaffected by all the objects coming and going around it and which to the mind’s eye has developed to a set of changing formations. In this case, one is like walking with a mist or cloud of passing formations surrounding one which instead of being distracting, helps to keep the mindfulness steady as one walks keeping the observation on the primary object. As the concentration picks up further, one will arrive at a point where one loses oneself, enters into the clouds and mist as one would enter into the kingdom of unsubstantial of aggregates that have become wisps o’ willows. The solid ground will soon disappear and with it, the legs. That conventional physical frame of reference will not be there anymore, and so one will have to look for some other thing as the reference point. From here, one will have to fly and float in that mist and cloud of ultimate realities. Then, the obvious choice as a point of reference will have to be mental, that is, either that point of insight awareness or an extended sphere of mindful Consciousness. This can develop further - the formations, becoming finer and lighter, expanding into a seemingly limitless space. Of course, at this point one may just stop and stand, while others turn to sitting. And true enough, my teacher who had taught many, did tell me that when they go into absorptions, they just stand there and it may be on one leg.

In both cases, it illustrates how the walking progresses from watching primarily

at the body door and then shifts to the mind door when concentration picks up. And so, as one would expect, by then, more mental phenomena will come into the picture and shift to the contemplation of mindfulness of Consciousness which would then play a greater role.

One may ask to what level can concentration be developed?

Since the commentary to an above mentioned *sutta* on the alley walk mentions the eight attainments, therefore I suppose, to a very high degree. But because walking is a moving process then it will not be easy, as the absorptions will mean the complete putting away of the objects at the five sense doors. But again it can be done at least for shorter moments (though enough) for those absorbed states to arise. Once I did wonder about it, and thought that since people can fall asleep for moments while driving, it should also be possible while walking. But absorptions are not passively sleeping; they are *kammically* active and stronger with regards to will. This makes it even more possible. Only that people usually do not try to or do not believe that it can be done.

Once, a teacher mentioned that momentary concentration is like a sewing machine. The Consciousness moves in and out of its objects quickly and it can be deep, in which case it can be deep enough to be considered as an Insight Absorption (*vipassana jhana*). Personally, I have come across experiences that tally with this. While walking, after sometime, I became unaware of the surroundings although at that time I realized this only after emergence. At times, this can come suddenly as an abrupt cut, and even if it was brief, one realizes afterwards, that one was so completely involved with the objects (like atoms speeding and vanishing) that one seemed to be unconscious at the time of those very moments.



Trust in mindfulness, trust in Truth. Then with a great splash, that rat of a self is washed away in just a moment vanishing.

And how is it when insight arises?

It is not difficult to think how it can arise in the first few insight knowledges. The first involves a strong perception of Non-Self (*anatta*) and this can arise when one's **Vipassana Mindfulness** has been built up to experience phenomena as they are without concepts. This can occur in any posture. A noticeable feeling is that clearly, there is no one walking, just processes. As that mindfulness becomes continuous, then one notices that these specific characteristics do not exist as discrete entities. Instead they are conditioned phenomena, that is, they are 'not one but more' and a 'flow' is a closer description of the base of conditioned existence. This can also occur in any posture. Deep absorptions are not a prior necessity. After that, the Three Universal Characteristics become clear. This means that the nature of formations as materiality and mentality arises and passes away very strongly. It becomes more like experiences in sitting meditation. At this stage very slow walking is recommended to hold the concentration intact.

Solitary and Group Walking

It is not difficult to imagine people sitting in groups, but what about walking meditation in groups? In organized retreats where the schedule requires alternating an hour each for sitting and walking, naturally yogis do it at the same time. And unless space is limited (which is often so), it can be called group walking. However, it is still very individual as one does not correlate one's walk with another except for avoiding collisions. However, in Thailand where monastics often do meditation in groups with a show of solidarity, they do it one following another in a circle or square or whatever design depending on who is the leader. Well, it definitely saves space and promotes appreciation and patience with others, but I wonder, I just wonder how far this will lead to. For me, meditation is essentially solitary although the base to support it at the conventional level may consist of more than one person (which is usually the case unless you are a hermit). When you consider one faring into deeper levels, going deeper into the mind, one will have to take leave from many to one and one to none.

Fare Alone as a Rhinoceros

When I first came across this "Lonely Rhinoceros" *Sutta*, I fell immediately in

love with it. It captured an ideal I never thought about before. Me, a loner? Not as what I could have imagined, rather it struck a key note in the nature of striving and existence. Aren't we essentially alone? As the saying goes, "When you laugh, the world laughs with you, but when you cry, you cry alone", and "Everyman dies alone". In the *Jatakas*, it has often been repeated in the case of deaths, "Uninvited he came, unannounced he left".

So, it is a matter of recognition of this Truth, the acceptance of it, the full utilization of it, and being blissfully in this solitary nature of "an individual".

The roots of this discourse by the Buddha, it seems, traces back farther before his time. It is mentioned that it is a collection of verses ascribed to "Silent Buddhas (*Pacceka Buddhas*), who were enlightened by their own efforts but fall short of establishing a dispensation as in the case of a *Sammāsambuddha*. Their abilities, it is said, excel even the *Arabhatta* disciples. Strangely enough, they have also been looked upon with some disapprobation by some more idealistic circles. Hah! Another ego trip!

After sometime, I came across some arguments against this translation of "*Khaggavisana Kappa*". They claim that it is not appropriate because the rhinoceros is not a solitary animal (Really? Man is often gregarious but he can at times be solitary, like while meditating). The better translation suggested will then have to be, "wander alone like the horn of the rhinoceros is alone". To avoid the issue, some use a "unicorn" instead of the rhinoceros. It, however, gives us other possibilities. In western mythology, it is a horse with a long horn coming out from its forehead. To the Chinese, however, it can be a mythological creature with the head of a lion, body of a fish, legs of a deer and tail of a horse. It has a single horn growing out from the **top** of its head. Its ultimate weapon is its fart, so obnoxious that any creature that is unfortunate enough to be close by to smell it either faints, drops dead or goes berserk. All these take us further into our imagination. For me, I would rather stick to the rhinoceros be it with one horn or two. After all, it is the rhinoceros that wanders; the horn merely sticks onto its nose. What is important is the spirit behind the word and not the word itself.

The commentary to this *sutta* further explains the line, repeated;

Eko care Khaggavisanakappo

Fare lonely as a rhinoceros (horn is alone)

The word that had been picked out at the start, however, is “eko” which means one or in this case, alone. It explains it in four ways.

The word that had been picked out at the start, however, is “eko” which means one or in this case, alone. It explains it in four ways.

1. Alone as in one gone-forth (*pabbajja*), that is as away from one’s family. It even explains that being a monk means essentially being alone even when in groups.
2. Alone as being without company; no body to be with to chat, drink coffee, smoke cigars or to practice sparring in karate with.
3. Alone as without craving (*tanha*); which is the sticky fellow that sticks to you and makes you sticky and stinky with anything till eternity unless you manage to tear yourself away from him (and yourself) to reach that final liberation.
4. As in the case of Silent Buddhas (*Pacceka Buddha*) as mentioned earlier.

The *Dhammapada* has a verse to say something about this. In a verse, on the chapter on Consciousness (*cittavagga*):

Durangamam ekacaram asariram guhasayam...
Wandering far, alone, bodiless, lying in a cave...

Dhammapada verse 37

“Being alone” refers to the Consciousness that is never the same at one moment and only one Consciousness occurs in one moment for an individual. Much has been said and too much about the deep, solitary condition that dwells within an individual in a world of individuals. In a way, everything is in the mind as one sees it, including other individuals, including oneself which is hardest to understand and so the exposition of non-self in the *Dhamma*.

And it does wander far. There is nothing that cannot be present at the mind-door, including *Nibbana*, if it is wise and strong enough. It includes worlds and life times.

And so, everyone is essentially a great wanderer, a helpless wanderer, and depending on how one wanders, one can be considered a tourist, a pilgrim, an extradited prisoner, a travelling salesman, a mendicant... and so the list continues. One that covers all for all will be the wanderer in *Samsara*. Of this, another verse in the Dhammapada no. 153 has this to say as a quotation from the Buddha himself:

*Anekajati samsaram
Sandhavissam anibbisam
Gahakarakam gavesanto
Dukkhajati punappunam*

Many births have I wandered
Seeking, not finding
The builder of this house
Suffering, it is to be born again and again

Dhammapada verse 153

As for being bodiless, it obviously refers to the Consciousness. Without the physical body, it is light and in fact, flits and flies very quickly, which another verse in the same chapter describes it as something difficult to guard and control. “The cave” here refers to the cave of the heart, which commentaries define as the heart base (*hadayavatthu*), the material base for the Consciousness which for humans, the *Abhidhamma* states, arises with the relinking Consciousness (*patibandhi citta*) at the moment of rebirth together with two other *kammic* derived matter; the body base (*kayavatthu*) and one of the sex bases (*itthindriya/purisindriya*).

The commentary to the Rhinoceros Sutta then proceeds to explain the wanderings/ roaming (*cariya*) as seen in a different light in practice and conduct.

1. As in Postures (*iriyapatha cariya*)

This part refers to physical wandering. In terms of practice and *Abhidhamma*, it never really left the body (although some claim to have taken off to other planets by astral travelling and other OBE systems). Being the heart base, it really leaves it only

when one dies. And so, when we are aware of our body in normal activities, the four main postures will be the mainstay of body mindfulness. There will also be the minor postures, which we divert out to sometimes, and sometimes even rarer ones which we resort to from once in a while to once in a blue moon.

2. As in Sense Bases (*ayatana cariya*)

When we speak of wandering at the six sense bases, then we are obviously referring to the wanderings of the Consciousness along the six highways of Samsara. These are cycles that are like based on the mind door as the principal fare, and all along the way committing crimes or saving lives at those stations.

3. As in Mindfulness (*sati cariya*)

As for the wanderings of mindfulness, the possibilities for happiness are better. To cut a long travel journal short, one is supposed to wander into the four foundations/stations of mindfulness, which will eventually become the safe territory where one builds up the kingdom of the *Dhamma*. Usually it begins on solid grounds, that is, the body/materiality, then it dips into the waters, that is, feeling, then flies into the air, that is, the Consciousness, and then to everywhere, that is, Phenomena. When one has come to this point, then one can say all roads mindfulness can take can lead to freedom and peace of the unconditioned!

4. As in Concentration (*samadhi cariya*)

The peaks of concentration are lofty. It gives one a vision to see far. The texts tell us of the four form absorptions and the four formless absorptions, besides the access and momentary concentrations. To be able to wander to these places means that one can have access to the very peaceful and blissful places. They are good resting places of the heavens that rejuvenate one's life force and faith. But staying at those levels can mean stagnation, and attachments to them can mean losing the best escape, unless they are *vipassana* concentrations. In such a case, the concentration takes one above the clouds of hindrances and sensual levels, and to have strength to tread the uphill path of wisdom to freedom.

5. As in Knowledge (*nana cariya*)

There are many types of knowledge, some more useful than others. Some get good marks at school, others are street smart. The first are more likely to be bookworms, the other survive through odds. It will be more practical to be a jack of all trades besides being a master of the ONE. What if you are more interested in the real happiness? Then you would have to immerse yourself in a different kind of books, *Dhamma* books and be smart in another kind of street, the Noble Eightfold Path. Insight meditation is the path of knowledges. We often hear about the sixteen insight knowledges and to really understand it one has to practice and experience them. When completed, then it is the Noble Eightfold Path itself.

6. As in the Paths (*magga cariya*)

The Paths are no other than the four Supramundane Path-Consciousness (*maggacittani*). To step on the first is to be a stream winner, one destined for full liberation. From there one advances through practice to the second Supramundane Path-Consciousness (*sakadagami*) called the Once Returner's Path, and then to the third, the Non-Returner's (*anagami*) Path and finally the Arahatta Path. In its mundane counterpart, it is the preparatory phase as the root path (*mulamagga*) and then as the preliminary path (*pubbabhagamagga*).

7. As in Attainments (*patti cariya*)

In this case it refers to the four Supramundane Fruitions (*phalacittani*) which are direct resultants of the above four Supramundane Path Consciousness. To wander there is to have a real holiday and rest from Samsara.

8. As for the Benefit of the World (*lokattha cariya*)

For one who is virtuous and accomplished like the Buddha and his noble disciples, they wander around out of compassion for the world. For one thing, they collect alms and those generous donors will receive great *kammic* merits for their future. For the more receptive, they receive teachings to help them along their spiritual development.

Now the point of all these is; the most important part of the wanderings here is mental. In the walking meditation too, as in all that we have talked about, it is finally about the Consciousness. One will eventually go more into watching the Consciousness in the direction of insight development.

If one tries to do that in the beginning, it would not be easy, for the grosser material qualities will overshadow these subtler states. So, it is not appropriate for beginners to take it as the primary object. It can, however, be more so when one's perception of Consciousness is sharper and easier and the walking has also slowed down and gentler. Then, because of the increased concentration and mindfulness with the softening of material states, Consciousness would be more prominent or at least enough for one to make it as the primary object for some time.

The clouds will be felt to be more dense and the feet would seem to lift and fly away. Meditation of Consciousness after all is immaterial and bodiless. Then, one will have to be careful if one wants to go deeper in concentration and if one manages to, then it can become more blissful. It will definitely be more appropriate to take on the snail's pace or stop if there occurs strong sensations of sinking or upliftment. If it lapses into absorption like experiences which occurs with the visual sense cut off, it may be better for one to stand or sit on aside for safety. People have been known to have fallen off stairs!

At this point, one may think that insights cannot arise in walking meditation. Truth is right there walking with or standing right in front of one. But on considering the states of mind of people, the clouds of the defilements are dense and even with some clarity, perception is not sharp enough. At this point, it may also be possible to understand that the initial insights can arise easier in the walking than while sitting. The qualities of the elements and the interaction between the mental and material states are grosser and easily discernable. One would then experience clearly how there can be walking but not one who walks. The walking being material processes propelled and experienced by mental processes. It is vividly clear that there is no "I" or "person". From there, it can be extended and refined in manifold ways into the other daily activities. These form the bulk of "formations of striving" or the basic building blocks and back up for the higher knowledges which can also arise in walking meditation.

We have been told that some of the Buddha's disciples have reached enlightenment based on just walking meditation. For example, some yogis while walking are said to experience the fourth insight knowledge of arising and dissolution. They report that even while walking they experience that whatever they see and hear is arising and breaking up very rapidly. What they see seem to be just quickly flashing and passing streams. The whole world around them, including the ground where they stand, trembles and shakes. Even the quick arising and passing away of the Consciousness and mental states can be perceived clearly. With that also comes ecstatic joy and upliftment. It can go further with even clearer experiences of the three universal characteristics and later to experience the oppressive natures in the knowledges of suffering (*dukkha nana*).

At this point, it is important to be clear as to whether it is a knowledge or just feelings and moods. The connection with the signs of impermanence with oppressiveness has to be clear, and the indication is the frequent experience of the fifth knowledge of dissolution in sitting and walking postures. There is really not enough reason to say that it is not possible to go beyond all this in walking meditation. Most people think so based on the assumption that there is not the required concentration for it to happen. That is because they underestimate the power of *vipassana* concentration.

THE DIVINE SNAIL OF THE ENCHANTED FOREST

It was born of the egg of an immemorial past, untraceable beginnings,
That's what it was, an unknown sealed under the shell of ignorance.
Slowly, slowly it developed into an embryo of hope and faith
That something as impossible and incredible as this can happen if at all
Is an unthinkable miracle.

Your steps it traces, following your steps it grows,
So walk mindfully, tread gently,
Lest you may step and crush its fragile growth.

1. Mindfulness is the path it takes, only with mindfulness,
Without it, it ceases, so make it continuous for our sakes,
Walk mindfully, very mindfully and lead the way.

2. From simple gross steps, not too slow but clear for the neophyte to follow,
Graduate it to finer gradations, connect it to peripheral happenings,
Intrusive or not, causative or resultant,
Clarity with peacefulness has to give birth to sensitivity that comes with
softness

To seek out the pathways of the great enchanted forest and transform the
haunted woods of witches.

To perceive clearly all sensations and impressions, further effort to refine
and penetrate intricacies and the network of formations is what a divine
snail requires to attain maturity.

3. Initiated by the will to be free, it moves farther but only with impersonal
impulses toward a present reality of cessation, that is, from the Now to the
Timeless.

From ten thousand formations, it loses its hard shell of the gross material
body,
The concentration based on Consciousness to narrow it down
To a point of lucid clarity, increasing microscopic magnification of
experiences,
And slipping in between all lines of discriminating limitations.

That mindful concentration has to become natural and habitual, fluid and
malleable so that it can slide through every form, find and penetrate into
ever finer crevices and connections between formations, as such, one has
to move from form base to the formless base and into the base beyond
formations.

4. Thus it slides in its world – without fear or anxiety, ever peaceful and
happy; form freed, taking on every possible adaptation; time freed,
always in the liberating presence; sensitive to all unthinkable possibilities,
confidently finding its way out through the enchanted forest and Mount
Illusion to the other side beyond all suffering.

That meditative walk of insight is the movement, growth and development of transcendental awareness and presence. Going through the enchanted forest of formations it breaks through every twig and vine and frees itself and helps others to be free from the sufferings of conditionings, no matter how beautiful or vile, till that unshakeable emancipation has become verification.

WALKING MEDITATION

*Walk mindfully
Observe thoroughly each step
Not the step before
Not the step after
There's just this present process
A flow of sensations.*

*Walk mindfully
Observe closely each of Nature's steps
Leading, penetrating into the moments
No, not that sensation before
No, not that sensation after
There's just this flow of sub-moments
A replicating chain that binds.*

*Step into the present
Let intuition unfold
Step into the flux
Break through the fetters of woe
Step out of space and time
Be free from mundane life*

*Standing on the peak
Watch how the clouds cover up
The world below
Peace is when one has arrived*

*And the heart has found its way
Back home.*

7th July 2013,
Dibbavana, Czech Republic

THE STORY OF THE DIVINE SNAIL

Once upon a time, a very, very, long time ago; in fact it was so long ago that you might as well forget about when or who. People in very, very, ancient days, somewhere far, far away, in fact, so far that you might as well not try to find out where; time did not have much meaning as they did not measure it, as they did not draw maps with distance or heights. Such conceptualizations did not occur in their thought processes. What ‘beings’ experience was just that that was happening, and one may say that things were not less interesting and definitely more revealing in many ways. And yet, even then, certain things remained the same as now with us in this world. Man may come and go, suns and moons will revolve round and round, and yet, you must agree that Truth remains the same; otherwise, it would not be called Truth. There is one Truth that remained steadfast even then, and that is the Truth of Inner Darkness. Inner because it remains invisible yet works its way into everything that exists. That Force behind it that commands it, call it what you will – Delusion, Devil, Dark Prince, held sway over this unlimited kingdom endowed with all the pleasures one can think of and all the horrors one cannot imagine. Every creature is trapped in there. As for those enchanted by wonderful things, they remained complacent and contented in their blindness to their eventual torment; as for those who suspected but found not the way out of what they called the enchanted, soon lost all hopes and remained in the bewitched forest of dreams. There, the trees large and small grew as a huge barrier against any escapes. The trees themselves can bear the sweetest mangoes and strawberries as large as a man’s fist cover its floors. At many other parts there hide nasty creatures that can smell out a ‘wise guy’ who had decided to try his luck trying to find something better. And as the Dark Lord himself says, “How can there be a better place than ‘ZENGSAARA’ where one can find everything? All one has to do is to play one’s game right. If you pass the tests, good game, you win one and I will pay the chips to you for a nice holiday in heavens, otherwise, you have to go down to practice less greed and more patience. Well, I have to find some amusements to pass time like you do. By the way, I am a fair master, wouldn’t you agree? He, he, he....” So he laughed

a laugh that reverberated through entire world systems causing many to crash almost instantly into the “Black Holes” of the Universe as well as experience. “Such dreadful end has happened before, it is happening now and will happen in the future”, so he thought and paid not a fraction of care to it.

However, in this immense universe of combinations, permutations, geometric and trigonometric extensions of creations, a microscopic egg had arisen hidden under innumerable layers of dead leaves that were once beings that wandered all over the kingdom. Unlike other eggs, it had an aura, a light around it. It was a special light which one could only feel but not see. Since it was so small, few if at all noticed its existence. Even the Dark Lord himself who suspected such a thing might happen to upset his supremacy can become forgetful and negligent, which after all is part of him and his dark ways. This egg as you may suspect, is the seed of inner light, the opposite of the inner darkness. It stayed hidden there for a very, very, long time waiting for the right moment to be born. There were, they said, had been others but were squashed out after some time when they were discovered. Such is the nature of survival in dark eras. The wise had to feign folly, had to remain obscure just as like the Daoist sages remind, “To succeed, one must be a crooked tree, for being crooked, it is useless for the greedy man.”

So at that precise moment when all stars and moons coincided in an equilateral triangle along their courses which happens only once in a long time when the moon either turned blue or green, another light of a similar vibration sparked out, and even though it was just a millisecond, it hit that egg and there was born **The Divine Snail**. And that light you may call nowadays as a force of *Kamma* summoned up by the most compassionate of sages over many lifetimes of struggling for the welfare of suffering beings. (Sorry, this last part has quite an obvious Buddhist shade, but it has to appear somewhere but anyway, it is not bad). They say that there are 10 qualities to perfect for a sage of this caliber to complete his mission. They are: generosity, discipline, renunciation, exertion, wisdom, patience, determination, veracity, loving kindness and equanimity. Where his teachings touch the hearts of those hopeful with this seed of illumination then some inner light begins to glow and grow.

Like all snails, it began its journey very slowly. Its body is soft, flexible and also fragile and vulnerable. It moved very slowly. The slow speed on one hand helped keep

it unnoticeable but on the other hand quite fatal when noticed by predators. Say what you like, some things are better done quickly, while others slowly, like express trains and slow food. The question will be which is better for when. Clear comprehension should be able to answer that. However, in spiritual things of great promise, it will take time to accomplish and together with it, loads of patience is needed. This is especially relevant in matters of spiritual insight, where it requires thorough observation and scrutiny into Nature's deep secrets. The Path is there but too long untrodden had become concealed by false claims like fool's gold that glitter but of little value, and the brambles of complicated philosophical thoughts wrought full with thorny questions and prickly concepts. That snail has to be clever enough to avoid all these; patient enough to wait inconspicuously till danger is past, if it is to survive. Patience buys time, clear mindedness executes right decisions, faith in the great freedom will drive it through the forest of dreams and desires, up that magical, mystical mountain with its peak covered by the clouds of unknowing where it will meet with the White Condor of perfect equanimity to fly off to perfect freedom!

(Sorry to disappoint you folks; if you expect me to write a trilogy something like the "Lord of the Rings", forget it! I may not lack the imagination but I question the purpose and the proper use of my time. Still I will get something done.)

I am quite certain that you will agree that even as a young child born to this world, one is quite helpless and vulnerable to dangers. But somehow we get through to become *something* whatever that may be. It depends on too many things and our parents happen to be, if not the most, then almost the most important. All this has to do also with our *kamma* from past lives and this is what I refer to as that 'light' emanating from the heart of the snail. What we are certain is that it is very clear and sensitive. These are two factors of that special intuitive mind. So initially it is this that it possesses that helps it to survive and find its destination. What it consumes is crucial because there are many toxic fungi although lovely and tasty, can kill. Then one may encounter other snails, slugs and even larger creatures that creep and crawl, run and walk, jump and fly. How does it know which is beneficial or which is not? Moreover, survival although takes the first concern is not its main purpose. It must feed on things that make this light grow.

In the human world, our parents are our first teacher and friends, later we also get fed into our Consciousness many things such as fantasies, advertisements and many

worse than useless stuff. Then, one day we come across something that rings a bell. “Man is made for higher things than sensual pleasure.” That is when the noble search begins. This is the same with the divine snail. Its inner voice, sweet and soft, sullen and pure, speaks and speaks often. Sometimes it warns, other times it gives cheers. One must learn to listen to this inner voice of the pure heart. However, beware of those surreptitious whispers from the dark side. The Dark Lord has many spies and sends messages of fear and temptation into the air. Just remember the divine snail’s trust in the voice of the pure heart. Intuition that comes from the inner wisdom faculty is far wiser and profound than rational reasoning although that cannot altogether be ignored. That inner light of intuition is what has guided the divine snail to that sacred tree with pure white blood, its leaves the shape of hearts with an elongated tail like end like that drips droplets of compassion to the parched earth. There, at once, it sensed it had come to the right place and the food that it is given out of compassion that is blameless. So the more it gobbled up the leaves fallen down around it, the more it shone and knew what it has to do. He must meet its destiny up in that magical, mystical Mount Illusion to reach the SKY of ASANKHATA, also called the MIRACLE of NEVER-MIND-NO-MATTER.

Chapter 6

(A) THOUGHT PROCESSES

The amazing electric eels



The Electric Eel (*Electrophorus Electricus*) is certainly not something to be taken lightly. In terms of its anatomy as well as behavior, there are similarities with the thought processes that run through the Consciousness, which are also very potent, capable of sending one to very different worlds!

Chapter 6

(A) THE THOUGHT PROCESSES

So far, we have learned that there is just one Consciousness that can occur for an individual at one moment of time, and that there are many types of Consciousness with different combinations of mental states if considered on a longer time frame. These Consciousness can be roughly divided into three groups:

1. Active / *kammic* (*kamma* – *kusala/akusala*) = 20 sense sphere (12 unwholesome + 8 great wholesome) + 5 form sphere + 4 formless sphere + 4 supramundane paths = **33**
2. Resultants of *kamma* (*vipaka*) = 23 sense sphere (15 rootless + 8 great resultants) + 5 form sphere + 4 formless sphere + 4 supramundane paths = **36**
3. Functional (*kiriya*) = 11 sense sphere (3 rootless + 8 great functionals) + 5 form sphere + 4 formless sphere = **20**

They total up to 89 types of Consciousness as enumerated in the Manual of *Abhidhamma* (*Abhidhammattha Sangaha*).

Now, as we can understand, these 89 types of Consciousness arise and pass away one after another without break except for a few very exceptional situations. What Consciousness follows which Consciousness is something interesting. Obviously, it works according to certain natural laws which can be observed, intuited if one is sharp enough. What makes it difficult for an ordinary person is that these processes occur at an incredible speed, and that they cannot be perceived except by the sharpest and quickest meditative mind. However, with frequent training in mindfulness, they can be experienced or at least understood to some extent.

In a very general categorization, the stream of Consciousness follows two parts:

1. Thought processes (*cittavittthi*)
2. Process freed (*vithivimutti*)

In a simple explanation, the process freed state means that phase when mind stream is not impinged by objects that give rise to thought processes. In the case of humans, it would be the period of deep sleep called the life continuum (*bhavanga*) which flows from the beginning of one existence until the end except when interrupted by thought processes (*cittavittthi*). It acts as the mind door and maintains the unique individuality of a process which one often identifies as oneself. However, many objects are present and they find their way into the stream through impingement at the sense doors as well as the mind door. They give rise to what we call “THOUGHT PROCESSES”, the topic for this chapter. It is like when a stone is thrown into the river and as a result, splashes and waves are produced from the impact. These waves create many effects such as secondary waves. Here is where *Kamma* is performed and its results manifest. Actually, it is referred to processes that run when impinged by objects and in the initial processes they may not yet be ‘thinking’.

The Manual of *Abhidhamma* begins with a simple presentation that there are six types of thought processes and they arise at the six sense doors.

Hence,

1. Eye door thought process occurring at the eye base/door
2. Ear door thought process occurring at the ear base/door
3. Nose door thought process occurring at the nose base/door
4. Tongue door thought process occurring at the tongue base/door
5. Body door thought process occurring at the body base/door
6. Mind door thought process occurring at the mind door.

As you can clearly see, out of the six, the bases for the arising of the first five are material bases, that is, five internal material sensitivities. The last, however, is the mind door which is none other than the life continuum (*bhavanga citta*) itself.

To understand the nature of these thought processes, let us summon some help from Mother Nature herself. And this time they are the:

Amazing Electric Eels!

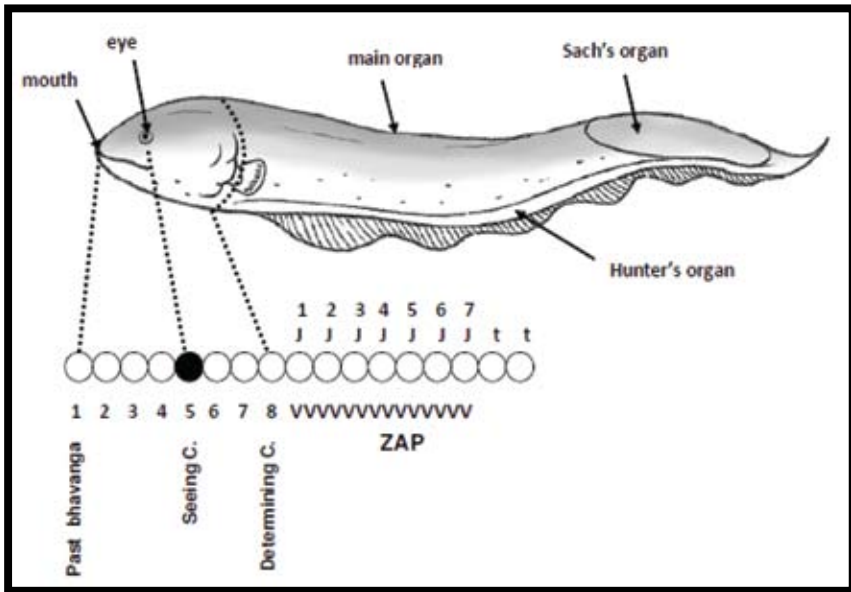
Electric eels are fascinating creatures that live in the rivers of the Amazon region. Technically, they are fishes and not eels (different family). I don't think that matters to many of us, me included, or for the electric eels themselves. However, if you would study them and you would require certain information from recognized sources for reference, then it matters. Usually, the initial observation is anatomical, then physiological and then maybe behavioral. The last would tend towards their psychological aspect which would be more relevant to the concerns of meditators. But I suppose I will not find much there, and understandably so, since psychological research is recent compared to other sciences. Also, on seeing the increasing number and complexity of psychological problems arising in society, it does not seem to be working as effectively as desired. Maybe financial factors are involved, but psychiatrists, one may say, have also to eat, and their pay may not be even with the type of stress and mental hazards that come with the interaction with their clients.

Putting all these ethical questions aside, let us consider first the anatomy of the electric eel.

According to the Wikipedia, the electric eel (*Electrophorus electricus*) has an elongated body reaching two meters in length and weighs as heavy as 20 kilograms (45 pounds). It has a dark gray-brown back and is yellowish orange below. It has no scales (although other sources say they do, tiny ones). Its mouth is square at the end of a snout. Its anal fin extends the entire length of the body to the tip of the tail. Its swim bladders have two chambers; the anterior part enhances reception of hearing, while the posterior portion serves for buoyancy.

It is interesting to note that four-fifths of the body is devoted to organs/cells that produce electricity which can be up 600 volts. They are mainly used for defense and hunting, in both instances, is for survival or existence. There are three organs involved in this. The Sachs organ at the rear which has smaller voltage is used for navigation and detecting prey, while the main one which runs through the length of

the body and the Hunters organ which also runs along the length of the body but at the base, is involved with the storage and BIG ZAPS.



Thought process with the Electric Eel (electrophorus electricus)

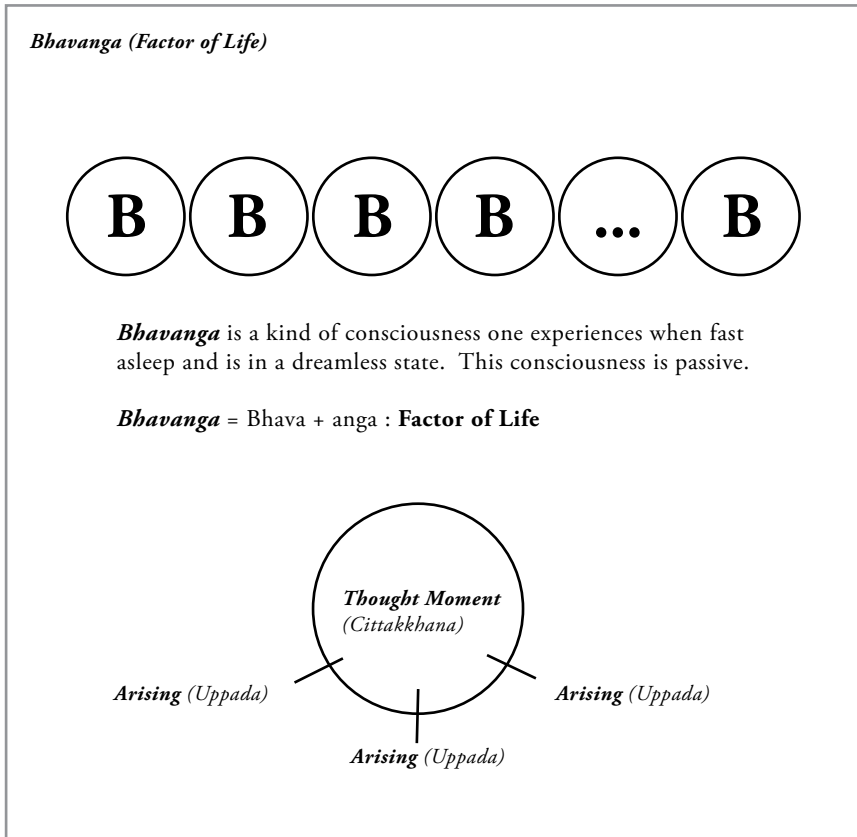
If you observe the diagram above, you will undoubtedly notice similarities to the diagram below which illustrates the sense door thought process. The similarity is more than visual; it is also symbolic and corresponds to reality in certain aspects.

So we can perhaps consider and also say that the first way of studying the thought process is to be “anatomical”. For this we look at the diagram below on the nature of this process as given in charts from the *Abhidhamma* teachings.

Anatomy of a Thought Process

But first let us consider the river from which this creature came. Geographically, it is somewhere in South America. Psychologically, it is in **YOU!** Metaphysically, it is at the sense and heart bases (*hadayavatthu*). That river is also the life continuum (*bhavanga*) which we have mentioned before many times; it is the basic Consciousness

in each of us when there are no thought processes, as in deep sleep. It is represented in the diagram below:



The Three Sub-moments of a Consciousness

One must realize that all these are symbols of the experience of a process, just like when one sees a picture of the eel; it is not the eel itself or is it the electricity it produces.

Rather it represents a happening of conditions that arise and pass away as a flow.

Secondly, in this case, it is a mental process, not something material like electricity although both are forms of energy. So when people measure brain waves

with electrodes, they are not looking at the mind itself, but rather at material processes conditioned by the Consciousness (*cittajarupa*).

Anyway, this process is a basic mental condition or shall I say an abstract mental program that runs on even when asleep. It is like a computer which cannot be switched off and so at best, left to run on in its passive state, with its homepage. To say that it is passive is a little too cool. It does influence our life to a great extent. Just imagine one suffering from insomnia!

Besides, whether one is idiotic, intelligent or a genius depends also on this factor. It is deemed passive in contrast to being active *kammically*. It does not have a hand directly in the creative forces as of *Kamma*, but it still influences in indirect ways as to what can or cannot be achieved.

It seems the electric eel has to surface to breathe every ten minutes. In the case of thought processes, it can be much more frequent. They come under two main types.

1. Five Sense Door Thought Processes

These come and arise when sense objects strike at the respective sense doors effectively enough to produce an effect which runs on like ripples that manifest cognitive qualities. How far the process goes depends on how 'great' the object is. It is like throwing breadcrumbs onto the water, then an eel rises up to grab it. The bigger and tastier the crumbs or chunks of meat, the bigger will be the eels that surface.

2. Mind Door Thought Processes

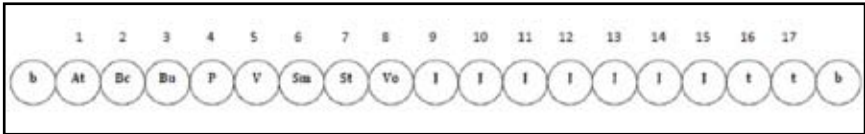
These are like the former, except that it does not have to go through any sense door, but can and often do follow up after them. Just like when some little eels chase after food, its bigger brothers soon find out and also come for grabs.

One thing to be noted is that in the case of the more developed types of Consciousness such as those that occur in deeper concentrations and insights, they

can occur only as mind door processes. They are, therefore, like the juvenile eels from the river having matured enough to travel into the ocean to mate! The only difference in the case of electric eels is that you can find these matured eels in the rivers as well.

The mind door definitely opens to a bigger world, and as a matter of fact is often referred to as the great ocean where many great creatures roam. The farther and deeper it is, the eel there can grow to a greater size.

(a) The Five Sense Door Thought Process



The 17 thought moments of the Sense Door thought process

The standard process is given in this sequence of Consciousness

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Life continuum Consciousness | - the 'past' <i>bhavanga citta</i> * |
| 2. Vibrating Life Continuum Consciousness | - <i>bhavanga calana</i> * |
| 3. Arresting Life Continuum Consciousness | - <i>bhavanga upaccheda</i> * |
| 4. Five Sense Door Adverting Consciousness | - <i>pancadvaravajjana</i> # |
| 5. Sense door Consciousness | - <i>pancavinnanam</i> |
| 6. Receiving Consciousness | - <i>sampaticchana cittam</i> * |
| 7. Investigating Consciousness | - <i>santirana cittam</i> * |
| 8. Determining Consciousness | - <i>Votthapana</i> # |
| 9. Impulsion 1 Consciousness | - <i>Javana 1@</i> |
| 10. Impulsion 2 Consciousness | - <i>Javana 2@</i> |
| 11. Impulsion 3 Consciousness | - <i>Javana 3@</i> |
| 12. Impulsion 4 Consciousness | - <i>Javana 4@</i> |
| 13. Impulsion 5 Consciousness | - <i>Javana 5@</i> |
| 14. Impulsion 6 Consciousness | - <i>Javana 6@</i> |
| 15. Impulsion 7 Consciousness | - <i>Javana 7@</i> |
| 16. Registering Consciousness | - <i>tadarammana</i> * |
| 17. Registering Consciousness | - <i>tadarammana</i> * |

Note:

* = resultant Consciousness

= functional Consciousness

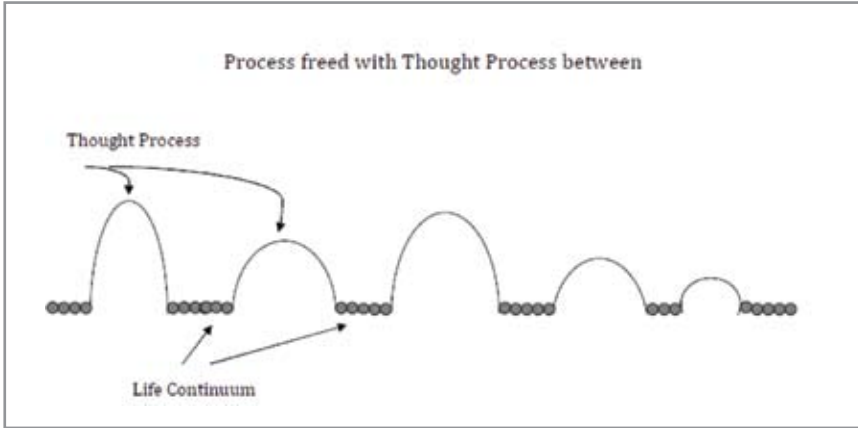
@ = active kammic Consciousness

When we study deeper into the eel, we arrive at the physiological aspect, that is, the inner organs and its functions. In the same way, the thought processes when studied individually, we also arrive at the mechanics and functions of the different types of Consciousness concerned in their position.

When we come to the phenomena of thought processes, we do not just consider the natures of each Consciousness and its mental factors, but also the relationships between them and the functions they play. As such in the manual, this topic is dealt only after the other relevant ‘miscellaneous’ chapters such as categories, etc. But for simplicity, I will deal with them generally along the way and hopefully some will not be confused.

(1–3) The Life Continuum (*bhavanga*)

As mentioned earlier, the life continuum which is also the mind door is a resultant of past *kamma* that gave us this present individual existence. It is, therefore, the basic or fundamental Consciousness from which arise other experiences and they constitute the thought processes. When these thought processes do not arise, it flows like a stream without ripples and is also called the ‘process freed’ phase. It is a state of deep sleep without any dreams. Most people are not aware of this in the sense that they cannot remember what happened, like a blank unconscious period, but they admit that it was nice and regenerative for it to have happened. For meditators of longer standing, they are aware that it was not ‘unconscious’, but rather a very soft, peaceful mental period which is sometimes described as bright, and transparent. If it is clearer, one may be able to know that there is an object present, and we are told that it is something associated with the *kamma* of the past life that gave rise to this. There are 19 types of this out of the 89 types of Consciousness given in the manual. Ten are of the sensual (*kamavacara*) sphere and nine of the expanded (*mahaggata*) sphere of the Brahmas.



The next three Consciousness deals with the life continuum from the moment of impact at the sense base to the moment when its flow is arrested.

- (i) When the sense object first makes its impact on the sense door, it is represented by the first sub-moment of the 'past *bhavanga citta*'. My *Abhidhamma* teacher describes it as the first knock of the object at the sense door.

This phase or Consciousness, however, can be repeated as many times as long as the material object remains, that is, 1 to 17 times. That happens with a very unclear sense object which does not make an impact strong enough to arouse thought processes. Like someone knocking at the door but you remain unresponsive. In fact, you would not consider it had happened except may be the sleep was not as deep as it could have been.

And so, it occurs as a very composed and collected state of Consciousness that does not waver even though many objects come and go very quickly. Even deeper levels can occur with a very momentary cutting off of the external bases.

"Knock, knock, who's there?"

"Sense object."

"But which one?"

"What? Are you blind and deaf? Whatever, we will still get to you at the mind door as a mind object. Sorry, no escape."

"I will be ready. But for now, let me sleep on"

"We'll see!"

The next is the '*vibrating bhavanga*'

- (ii) This is followed by the "*vibrating bhavanga*". Why does this happen? Interesting enough, an Abidhamma book answers it with a simile of one getting down from a bus that is still running. Even when one has got onto the ground, one still needs to run a couple of steps before one stops. That is, in the flow of the life continuum, there is a certain force and this goes on for another two thought moments.
- (iii) This is followed by the "*arresting bhavanga*". It is just like its former except that at this point the *bhavanga* process is arrested. Its function, being to cut the *bhavanga* flow, so one may consider the two together because one occurs naturally after the other.
- (iv) The Five Sense-Door Adverting Consciousness. The function and point here is the turning of the mind to one of the five sense doors from the mind door (which is the life continuum itself). This has been compared to the opening of the sense door before one receives the object. It has also been compared to a spider running from the main web when an insect gets caught in one of its lesser webs. I prefer the former since the spider has to run and that takes some time.

*Run spider run, your prey is in the net,
Kill, spider kill before it escapes.*

A number of interesting points are found here.

(a) As the commentary notes – The effect of the object is felt by the mind even before it has beheld it at the sense door. Just like the spider knows that a prey has been caught even before it has seen it. Thus, the illustration of the ‘*atita bhavanga*’. In the diagrams which we are given, there are four categories of objects.

1. ‘very great’ – with the full 17 moments in normal course with 1 ‘*atita bhavanga*’.
2. ‘great’ – with 2-3 *atita bhavanga* with course up to the impulsion phase but without registration.
3. ‘slight’ - with 4-9 *atita bhavanga* with course up to the Determining Consciousness but without impulsion. Therefore, these are resultants only running through with the exception of the 2 Adverting Consciousness.
4. ‘very slight’ – with 10-15 *atita bhavanga* running through with just a rise of the *vibrating bhavanga* then returning to the life continuum. There is a lot of knocking here, but no one answers.

So the objects can vary with the force when they strike the mind. Many factors are involved and individual conditioning determines it. But when an object that is one of strong *kammic* result arrives, beware. Even with the great psychic potencies, one at most can only delay it.

(b) This Consciousness belongs to the “functional” (*kiriya*) type. There are only two of these in one lesser than an Arahant. The other, being the Mind Door Adverting Consciousness (*manodvaravajjana cittam*).

Here is an interesting hint into the mind of the *Arahant* which instead of the *Kammic* Consciousness, wholesome or unwholesome which runs throughout the impulsion phase, an almost equivalent of the wholesome types, the functional ones occur. It includes the moments

when the *Arahant* is in absorptions, and so they are functional absorptions. What are they? Make a good guess, but remember it is just a guess. When pressed, my *Abhidhamma* teacher says that the difference is in the volition (*cetana*), and that says much. How is it like when there is totally no more wish for existence or non-existence? One gets an idea of being robotic but a robot does not have a Consciousness (an artificial look-alike may be) and, therefore, also no compassion or cruelty. It is just programmed to do things like a vacuum machine. Those who think *Arahants* as being robotic are forgivable since they cannot imagine an existence without a craving for it. I think it is a working of an excellence of Nature, a free mind that simply can do no evil but only right and bestows blessings wherever they are. And so the verses say that the place where an *Arahant* dwells is a happy place.

The other hint is the nature of these two Adverting Consciousness which occur as they do and can be observed or intuited to by someone lesser than an *Arahant*. They arise and work where they are supposed to. Let's consider the sense door adverting one at this point. As it occurs, the mind has to be at sense door or otherwise and so a natural function that has to occur is to perceive the object and thus turn to it. It is not an active state of *Kamma* nor its results, but something that comes naturally with the mind's mechanisms. No, I would not describe it as robotic, rather as a natural working of the nature of the thought process. You see, "non-self" and "without-Consciousness" are different things. For the robot, the second is applicable, for the functional, only the first.

(5) The Five Sense-Door Consciousness (*pancadvaravajjana*)

This could be any one of the five – the Seeing Consciousness, the hearing, the smelling, the tasting, and the Touching Consciousness. It arises immediately after the mind has done its function of adverting to the sense door and for one thought moment receives the object. It just receives it and passes away to the rest that follows. What we know as just "seeing, etc." is already many thought moments or many processes connected with this Consciousness.

It is interesting to note that this Consciousness is a very simple one, with the least number of mental states associated with it, that is, the seven Universals – contact, feeling, perception, one-pointedness, volition, attention and psychic life faculty. And yet it plays a great part of our lives as well as the thought processes.

Secondly, there is a pair for each sense door. One, a resultant of wholesome *Kamma* while the other, a result of unwholesome *Kamma* and so the term, the ten two-fold Five Sense Consciousness embraces the group. So it is also challenging to think that whatever we perceive through the five senses has much to do as results of *Kamma*, and why not? After all, the sense bases themselves – eye, ear, etc. are also material resultants of *Kamma*. We can, however, to some extent avoid meeting with them, but some can be very difficult, for example, creditors or enemies who are after your neck, and also well-meaning people who may step into your life and create complications. *Kamma*, after all, can be very complicated given the fact that there are so many complicated people around in this world. So the best way to simplify things and make life easier and clearer is to deal with oneself first. Another complicated thing is of course, the computer which computer ‘experts’ themselves often scratch their brains over it while others create more complicated programs in hope of making things simple. Actually, meditation is very simple comparatively, although I must say, is not easy. But that is because there are so many conditions that make it up.... again something like a giant computer with a life of its own.

At this moment, one may take note that there are three basic elements involved.

1. The material sense base
2. The sense object
3. The sense Consciousness

When any of the three is absent, the process does not arise. For example, the blind cannot see because of absence of the eye sense base. We do not see something obvious in front of us because the Seeing-Consciousness for it did not arise, and so we see something else. In the dark, without light, eye objects cannot be received by the eye.

(6-7) The Receiving and Investigating Consciousness (*sampaticchana santirana cittani*)

These two are a couple of ‘*cittas*’ that may make you wonder what they are about. But one can gather some ideas from a simile given in the commentary (*Atthasalinī*).

The sense door is knocking again, and so you get up to open it. This part we have dealt with before. When the door is opened, you see SOMETHING there. That is the seeing of the sense object, for example, Mr Eye Object. Then you go forward to receive him and ask him WHO on earth are YOU, and WHAT on earth do YOU want? The ‘going to receive’ is the Receiving Consciousness and the ‘inquiring or fishing’ out more from him is the Investigating Consciousness. It is clear that all the things that pass through Sherlock Holmes mind is too much for this one process to contain. It probably needed millions of them!

Bearing in mind that these are resultant (and rootless) Consciousness, and so they have something to do with the past and they help to move towards the characteristics and connections of the object and bring them out into the open or into ACTION. Only that this phase occurs solely through the sense door process and not the mind door process. It seems this extra bit has to be worked out when it comes through the sense object. Like how the Chinese would put it, adding salt and vinegar to the food and it will taste good if it is good *Kamma* or acid to the wound and make you scream if it is bad *Kamma*.

(8) The Determining Consciousness (*votthapana*)

Now we come to a critical phase of the process. This is also the Mind-Door Adverting Consciousness (*manodvaravajjana citta*). This is the other functional Consciousness in one who is not an Arahant. It also determines the type of response that follows. If there is SKILLFUL ATTENTION (*yoniso manasikara*), the wholesome impulsion/*kammic* action follows, and if it is UNSKILLFUL ATTENTION (*ayoniso manasikara*), then unwholesome impulsion/*Kamma* follows. The interesting point here is the RUDDER MASTER – the *manasikara*, which makes it so. As to this, the commentary elaborates that there are three types of attention to be noted.

1. The Mental Factor of *manasikara*
2. The attention at the Sense Door Adverting Consciousness
3. That at the Mind Door Adverting/Determining Consciousness

What is to be noted is that both the object, the Consciousness and its mental states, are involved when this happens.

Some authors mention that this answers the question, “Is there a free will?” with a positive reply. While others contend that there can be no free will as the will itself is a conditioned state. I agree that this is a very important issue and so I divulge into this a little more.

My first reaction to this is a CONCERN for those who deny free will. It will then be leaving it to the fickle and capricious conditions of the Universe, or to the divine but unknown intentions of SOMEBODY or SOMETHING.

The first would come under the ‘fatalist wrong view’ and the other the ‘eternalist’. I also think the former is more perilous as one ends up with doing nothing and waiting to die terribly. One such person I knew would just go on walking straight into an unknown destination, even if he had to walk into a thick forest if he had lost his way. And he says, “It is fate”. To ask around or turn back, it seems, is an offence to the natural order of things. When I suggested it, he retorted sharply, “You fearful mouse!” It seems some Irish monks have also left their destiny to the winds of God to send them on their mission as they boarded their boat. These ‘*Pelligrinos*’ seem to be a combination of the two.

But coming to the question, it first requires some analysis, or others may get emotional and confused as the debate develops between the philosophers and moralists.

1. What is this will that you are talking about?
2. What is this freedom that you attach to the will?
3. Who is that person who has or does not have a free will?

1. What is this Will?

In Pali, we call it *cetana*, usually translated as volition, an act of willing. It is not a just that, it is something more. The Buddha called it *Kamma* as well. I consider it a creative force influenced by harmony or conflict with Natural Truths, and thus brings about corresponding results. Just as when one may out of anger wish another suffering or even death, in one's mind arises the violent and destructive force that will definitely find its results in oneself. Whether it will happen or not, to the other person who the terrible force is directed to, is another matter.

There are some mental states that are close to it and often occur together. One such state is called Decision (*adhimokkha*) which decides or releases the Consciousness and associates onto the object. But they are not the same. A strong decision generally would affect the volition. Then there is the wish/intention (*chanda*) which is closer to motivation and desires. They do all come together at once and are indistinguishable at one moment. So normally one means not just the volition but other mental phenomena connected with it, including the Consciousness. Am I making it complicated? That, my wish and decision for it not to be so, may not make it clearer, at least not for some. But it is the wholesome will that will bring me clarity and the resultants that will come upon me would also be more acceptable.

It is like when one takes up meditation. First, the wish will be the first critical factor, and after that a deciding factor strengthens the process. When seriously undertaking it, more volition is needed to bring about states and results connected with this quite difficult but profitable task.

Wish is close to faith, Decision to resolution and Volition to creation.

2. What is this Freedom?

There is a concept of freedom and there is freedom. A concept is something conceived by the mind, and that reality of freedom is not a concept. Many people, I imagine, have not thought about this. So what is this freedom?

Many also would mean freedom to be the ability to get what they want. But

what they want may not be what is most needed for their happiness and welfare. Happiness on the other hand has its conceptual counterpart. *Abhidhamma* hopes to clarify this in the first place by making up its own set of concepts. Hah! Aren't we back to square one?

So, a simple question: If we can get what we want and it is freedom, does it mean that we will be really happy? Not really, because what one has gotten may not be able to make one happy and may give instead one something more than what one can 'chew'. The reason is ignorance and delusion. So, that 'freedom' may not be worth considering or is beneficial, and they can even be described as worse than useless. So, shall we leave our future to some leaders who are wiser? Who is so wise that he deserves our trust? Even if Buddha is such a one, there will be many who won't recognize him in person. But that is another matter.

So, one can redefine freedom as the ability to do things that can bring us the real happiness. Again, the difficulty is realizing - what is really happiness? For most people it will have to be joy, or feeling happiness (*vedayita sukha*). The preferred Buddhist happiness should be the unconditioned reality and peace (*santisukha*)

So we come to another definition which freedom is equated with the unconditioned state. This is what the Buddhists would agree. But the problem is that unless illumination has taken place, one won't really know what it is all about. But generally, that unconditioned state is freedom not just because nothing can affect it but because it is unaffected by the defilements and so the Consciousness is free from their harassments as well as the sufferings they can cause. An experience of this freedom is also described as the ultimate peace and Truth.

3. Who is it that wants and talks about this freedom?

This question may make those who ask this question silly. I often rub it in by asking some yogis, "Who you are?" If you can't answer this question, is it not silly then when you don't know who you really are to suffer and work so much for something you don't know?

So this question is also connected with the issue of '*anatta*' which is often translated as 'non-self'.

Then one may ask, if there is no self, who is it that suffers? The Buddhist would answer, 'No one'. As the *Visuddhimagga* itself states, "There is suffering but no sufferer. There is the Path but no one who walks on it." One person, who after listening to a talk on *anatta*, commented that, "It is a dangerous teaching. In that case", she pointed out, "we must as well jump into the river to end our woes."

She has a point there, at least through common logical reasoning, but not realistically. That "I" although labeled as a conceptual has something concrete underlying it. And you may have guessed (HORROR OF HORRORS); it is that strong basic clinging to individuality, eternalist wrong views, etc. to these five aggregates. This 'five aggregates of clinging' includes in it that *cetana* or will together with decision, wish and the rest To deny its ability to influence and condition results is to deny *Kamma* and its results as well. True, it may not be able to change many things in this world but definitely it can do something. So one may say that 'one' has a certain freedom to decide and create things to happen but not everything. A limited or conditioned sort of free will is not the same as the absence of free will. The stronger the will then would mean more possibilities. Does it make sense? I think it does. Again, it will depend on what you mean by freedom. If it is the nature of the will referred to is taken as unconditioned, then of course no, but if it is the ability to make decisions that affect us, including taking steps to make the will bring us the unconditioned freedom, then yes.

So maybe it is not so important that the answer is a 'yes' or 'no'. It is a question that requires clarification rather than a direct reply. The other two types of responses to a question are the counter question and the noble silence.

What is more important, however, to be practical and to make things simple and direct is to practice so that we may realize the ultimate happiness. If one does not think one has the will to do it, or one does not think one's will can do anything at all, then one may as well forget about being a human being much less getting enlightened. Then jumping into the river when one's woe seems insurmountable will then make some sense after all!

And so the Determining Consciousness is the point where this 'freedom to respond and create' operates. The 'person' here is not shown in the process since it is

the nature of the thought process that is being described. It is something very natural in the course of the process as it runs along when the object is clear and the impact is great enough. In the unclear or slight objects, the impulsion phase does not arise. Notice that the Consciousness here is a functional one. It is like a very impersonal sort of thing, a kind of function or mechanism that comes with the flow of events as the Consciousness runs.

(9-15) The Impulsion Phase (*javana*)

This is where the 'action' or ZAPS takes place. Usually, seven Consciousness arise one after another. Why not less or more? It seems that does occur. The book says six or seven but the charts usually give seven. It seems it can also occur in more special cases as four or five where the impulsion takes very speedy cycles as when a Buddha preaches. It can also go on with thousands of Consciousness or more as when one enters into absorptions but that happens in special mind-door processes.

It is during this active phase that *Kamma* is being performed, and it is these Consciousness (*Kamma cittani*) that will give rise to mental and material resultants in the present and future lives. A point of interest is that the first of the seven is considered the presently effective *kamma* that brings effect only in the present life or else none. That which bears fruits only in the next life or never, will be the last two (number: sixth and seventh) while the remaining four (number: second to fifth) can be effective as long as *Samsara* is there for that individual. These, however, still may not bear fruits and so can become defunct. This description gives one the idea of the forces operating in this impulsion phase.

There are 55 types of Consciousness that can arise in this phase. They are:

1. The 12 Unwholesome Consciousness (*akusala cittani*)
2. The 16 Sense Sphere Beautiful Consciousness
(8 Great Wholesome (*mahakusala*), 8 Great Functionals)
3. The Smiling Consciousness of an *Arahant* is functional.

4. The 18 Expanded/*Jhanic* Consciousness (9 *kusala*, 9 *kiriya*)

5. The Four Paths and Four Fruitions

Notice that not all are active/*Kammic* Consciousness. Those of the *Arahant's* responses are functional and the Fruitions are resultants. So the latter two types do not produce *kammic* resultants but it does not mean it does not have any effects. What an *Arahant* does do bear effects and even the Fruitions are very calming and healing.

(16-17) Registering Consciousness (*tadarammana*)

Like the vibrating and arresting bhavanga, these two arise before it subsides into the life continuum. It is stated that it is because the object of sense lasts seventeen thought moments and so its object is imprinted into the continuum. It may also be like the first two, where the momentum of the process carries on with the objects from the life continuum, but here it is from the impulsion. But I wonder about the term 'Registering Consciousness'. It gives an impression that the object is somehow imprinted into the Consciousness, but I wonder! What seems more probable is the process has to run its course. However, also mentioned are an extra buffers called the 'agantuka bhavanga' that has to occur as a buffer in certain cases where a sudden change, for example, of feelings seem unnatural. And so the types of Consciousness that occurs here are those that function as the life continuum.

All these give us an idea of what happens to the Consciousness when a sense object hits the sense door. It very quickly repeats in several cycles before carried over into the mind as a mind door process.

Finally, one needs to say that there are four presentations of objects:

1. Very great object (*atimahantarammana*) in which the thought process runs through the whole course.
2. Great object (*mahantarammana*) in which it runs through the impulsion but stops before the registering.
3. Slight object (*parittarammana*) in which runs only up to the Determining Consciousness.

4. Very slight (*atiparittarammana*) in which does not reach the Sense Door Adverting Consciousness.

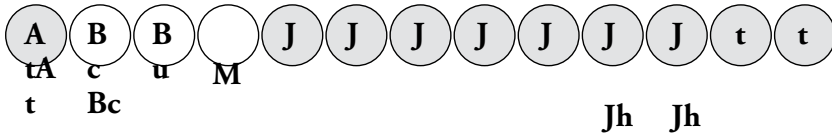
The Mind Door Process

In other words, it is the inside story. It can occur without the five sense-door processes but usually it follows after them. An example of a case when it occurs by itself is when one goes into day dream or deep thought until the point where one is completely unaware of one's surroundings. They are processes that occur at the mind door and through the mind door which is the life continuum itself, which acts like the screen where pictures of the film fall onto, it is like the space occupied by the objects, it is like the door where people come in and out of our lives and which is often impossible to prevent.

In the second case, we first see colors, hear sounds, then smell, taste and touch. Even in the touch, we may not know what it is yet. When it all comes together and the concept of the person emerges, then we will know him or her, and by then he/she is already inside. As it continues, the picture develops and more actions are done to make the link stronger.

The mind door process occurs in 13 thought moments for a very great object.

1. Past *bhavanga*
2. Vibrating *bhavanga*
3. Arresting *bhavanga*
4. Mind-Door Adverting Consciousness
5. Impulsion 1 (*javana*)
6. Impulsion 2
7. Impulsion 3
8. Impulsion 4
9. Impulsion 5
10. Impulsion 6
11. Impulsion 7
12. Registering Consciousness
13. Registering Consciousness

Mind Door Thought Process**Legend:****At** : **Atita Bhavanga** *Past Consciousness***Bc** : **Bhavanga Calana** *Vibrating Consciousness***Bu** : **Bhavanga Upaccheda** *Arresting Consciousness***M** : **Manodvaravajjana** *Mind-door Consciousness***J** : **Javana** *Implusion***t** : **Tadarammana** *Registering Consciousness***Note:**

The process is similar to the sense door process, except that the mind does not go into the sense-door as it has already or need not, and so the Sense Door Adverting, Five Sense Consciousness, Receiving and Investigating Consciousness, do not occur. Instead, it meets the object directly at the mind door itself and everything is done there at the point of the Mind-Door Adverting Consciousness. The rest follows a similar pattern. It can, however, be different at the point of impulsion where Consciousness at this phase can go on indefinitely as in the case of absorptions up to seven days which may mean many millions of *cittas*.

There are also the four presentations of the object in the mind-door process.

1. Very clear (*ativibhuta*) – the full process
2. Clear (*vibhuta*) – as above but without the registering phase
3. Obscure (*avibhuta*) – only up to the mind door adverting, without impulsion
4. Very obscure (*ati avibhuta*) – only with vibrating and past *bhavangas*

The commentary gives a simile of these processes, particularly of the sense door process that is worth mentioning.

A man sleeps under a mango tree. The mango falls (probably with quite a loud thud) near to him. He wakes up, sees the mango, picks it up, examines it and then decides to eat it. While eating, he enjoys the taste, and finally closes his eyes with the thought of the mango in mind and returns to his deep sleep.

The interpretation:

The sleeping man – *Bhavanga* Consciousness;

The mango – sense object;

The mango making a sound on the ground – contact between sense object and sense base;

The man wakes up – the past and vibrating *bhavanga*

The turning to see the mango – the Sense Door Adverting Consciousness

Seeing the mango – Seeing Consciousness

Reaching for it – Receiving Consciousness

Examining it – Investigating Consciousness

Deciding to eat it – Determining Consciousness

The eating of it – impulsion moments

Closing his eyes and thinking of it before falling asleep again – Registering Consciousness

So now we can consider what happened to Newton when the apple fell down. If it had fallen onto his head, it may have other consequences. He might have discovered something else other than gravity.

But from the interpretation, the part occurred when the apple fell on the ground and his mind picked it up is brief. The discovery, however, is very much connected with the impulsion phase and since he is a man of ‘deep thoughts’, we can assume that it contains the type of Consciousness associated with wisdom. But the deeper aspects come only in the mind door. The apple was just the point that started the whole run. We do not know how long or how many thought processes ran through before that bright idea arose. After that, many more continued to build up theories,

many of which are still valid and measurable by instruments. It is also interesting that after all these years, physicists are still wondering what really is gravity. Maybe somebody who does levitation can help them.

Again, coming back to the story of the apple; many other examples can be found. There is, of course, the biblical tale of Adam who took the fruit of knowledge and man had since then been exiled from paradise. If so, then it must be fool's paradise. One can also question the type of knowledge the apple represented. Anyway, because of him, there is a piece of it still stuck in every man's throat.

Then, there was the rose apple tree which the *Bodhisatta* sat under when still a child and reached absorptions. Although there are no record if rose apples were falling near him, nevertheless, that moment served as a reminder to him when he was a child and it led him to abandon the self-mortification practices for the middle way. Even as a child, the absorption processes had run passed through his stream of Consciousness.

Then, there are pineapples but these are not trees and so do not fall down like apples. They just rot on the plant if not harvested. I cannot think of anything spiritual about it, except that they cook it in the tropics and offer it to monks as a meritorious act. Still the thought processes with wholesome Consciousness run through and can be accumulative for further stages as 'Perfections' (*parami*).

Conceptualization Processes

It is also in the mind that the processes of conceptualizations occur. An interesting note is that the *Abhidhamma* does describe the general sequence of processes involved in their formation. It is about how tall and long tales (and tails of eels) grow.

Below is an example of those that follow an eye sense door process:

1. The mind door processes that receive the past sense object (*atitaggahana manodvara vitthi*).

At this phase, the objects are still the ultimate realities of the sense objects except that they occur as mind door objects.

2. The mind door processes that collect together the past sense objects (*samuhaggahana manodvara vitthi*)

After many rounds, the sense objects are ‘gathered’ and thus conceive out the forms, shapes, the various dimensions, etc. It is like an impressionist artist that by using various color points to create a picture.

3. The mind door process that gives an idea of the past sense objects (*atthaggahana manodvara vitthi*)

After the previous phase, the mind now associates that collected concept with past sense objects and gives it a meaning or idea. For example, the thought arises that this is a portrait of a lady.

4. The mind door process that names the past sense object (*namaggahana manodvara vitthi*)

Actually, the process before that does not have the word ‘lady’, it occurred as an ideational concept. What is a ‘lady’ anyway? It could mean many things to many people or minds.

Once the idea has arisen, what follows after will be the ‘naming’.

Then what follows will be the word ‘lady’ or it is ‘Mona Lisa’ smiling her billionth dollar mystical smile.

The above sequence, however, refers to the eye object. One first sees the color, and that is passed into the reception process. Many of these collect or gather to form shapes and forms. These are form or shape concepts that arise as a result of the ‘gathering processes’. Then an idea of what it is – a flower, a face, would arise in the idea forming process and finally a name is given that this flower is a rose, or this is my face, or this can further develop to the name of the rose or the names for the different parts of the face.

As the processes develop, Mona Lisa can start doing other things such as drinking tea, opening the window, or even singing. That is also when the imaginations and hallucinations have crept in by the loads and tons.

In the ear sense, the third and fourth processes are reversed. The naming process occurs before the idea-process.

In the nose, tongue and touch sense, the processes proceed with the idea before the name and it does not have that accumulative part as with forms, shapes and sounds. However, when thoughts of what the taste can be from or combination of, then it occurs, but later.

Some of these need not arise. For example, when you see someone but you do not know his name, and so the naming process for his name does not arise. If you hear a word from a foreign language and do not know its meaning, then the process for the idea/meaning does not arise.

But what happens when it occurs purely as a mind door process and does not go through the five senses?

It would then go directly to the mind object at the mind-door process and will not have a reception phase from a sense base. The process can then usually go through the conceptualization process unless in special situations as in a deeper levels of insight experience. On emergence it could be the naming phase or ideational that comes first depending on the object that had occurred at the mind door.

Before we proceed into the more developed mind door processes involved in meditation practices, let us first summarize what we had dealt with about the thought processes and have an overview as to the scope of possibilities and variations that can happen.

In the categories of *Abhidhamma*, we learn that certain aspects of Nature are concerned with conditioning or conditioned relationships. It describes an occurrence such as the Consciousness that does not just appear, but appears in such a way related to other phenomena and this also determines the functions that it operates and

influences in the process. The thought processes illustrate this very well by putting together these different aspects.

1. Six Sense Bases (*vatthu*)

The six bases are:

1. Eye base
2. Ear base
3. Nose base
4. Tongue base
5. Body base
6. Heart base

These are material bases and some scholars equate them with certain physical organs of the body. They may succeed to some extent but not with the heart base. Nowadays many would prefer to use the brain as the base for Mind Consciousness but that is their point of view.

2. Six Doors (*dvara*)

These are the:

1. Eye door
2. Ear door
3. Nose door
4. Tongue door
5. Body door
6. Mind door

These are avenues through which objects arise to the Consciousness since the first five are material bases as well as conditions and they can be compared to receptors. For the eye object, it acts like the camera lens, for the ear object it is the radio receptor, etc. The last, however, is mental. Again to repeat, the life continuum itself which can be an access to many, many things including complicated concepts and complicated computers; it is obvious that the door is a condition that allows certain objects to arise.

3. Six Objects (*alambana*)

Here again are six objects:

1. Eye-object – form as colour (*rupa*)
2. Ear object – sounds (*sadda*)
3. Nose object – odors (*gandha*)
4. Tongue objects – tastes (*rasa*)
5. Tangible objects – three of the four great elements - earth, fire and wind
6. Mind objects – *five sensitive matter, sixteen subtle matter, Consciousness, fifty-two Mental Factors, *Nibbana* and concepts (*Dhamma*).

*Note: The first two are materialities, the next two are mentality and the last two are neither. As objects, they are also conditioning factors. *Nibbana*, however, conditions but is not conditioned. What about concepts? They are also in a way affect the mind but conditioning is spoken of only in terms of ultimate realities.

4. Six Types of Consciousness (*vinnana*)

These are the:

1. Seeing Consciousness
2. Hearing Consciousness
3. Smelling Consciousness
4. Tasting Consciousness
5. Touching Consciousness
6. Mind Consciousness

The last includes all the 55 impulsion Consciousness

Already described are the next two categories:

5. Six Processes (*vitthi*)

6. Six Fold Presentation of Objects (*visayappavatti*)

This describes the impact of the object on the mind and thus, how far the thought process will run before it stops.

At the five sense door process, the object can be:

- i) Very great
- ii) Great
- iii) Slight
- iv) Very slight

At the Mind door process, the object can be:

- i) Clear
- ii) Obscure

These six points put together give us the picture as to how these processes arise dependent on past and present conditions to create and change the world we live. It is all a very dynamic process of electric eels zapping away the moment it wakes up until we return to the deep waters of the life continuum only to surface after some minutes to zap again. Even in dreams, the zapping continues. We create dreams, heavenly and horrible and we react to it.

*Look for the Vipassana dragons that can zap away your illusions.
They are in the high electrified clouds way above Mount Sumeru.
These are dragons whose roars are thunder,
They spit out lightning bolts that crackle way pass the limits of heavens.*

Thus, we may now proceed to the next chapter of meditative states as seen in the light of *Abhidhamma*.

Chapter 6

(B) THOUGHT PROCESSES - Dragons in the Clouds



Virupakkha, the King of *Nagadevas* (celestial dragons) and ruler of the western heaven is a *Dhamma* protector. It is uncanny that although found in a thousand year old temple in China, he is also portrayed here as blond.

Chapter 5

(B) THOUGHT PROCESSES - Dragons in the Clouds

Do you know that dragons are mentioned in the Buddhist texts? There are several types of *NAGAS*. To make things simple, we can classify them into two:

1. Animal Dragons (*tiracchana naga*)

These belong to the animal kingdom, or *tiracchana* in Pali, a kind of woeful state (*apaya*) with limited potentials for realization. They are sometimes called serpents. But these *Nagas* are something else. They have powers to take different forms, like into that of a human. They can live in luxurious palaces, and they can be earth bound or air bound.

A certain *Naga* wanted to be a monk very badly and so he took the form of a man and got himself ordained. One day he slept unmindfully and his form returned without his knowledge. He was so enormous that his coils filled and terrified the monastery. He had to be defrocked because the ordination is meant only for humans. Even *Devas* are excluded. Since then, when someone gets ordained, he is asked, 'Are you a human being?' Since this rule has been included clearly in the monastic regulations and practiced till now, it says much to confirm the existence of such beings.

An interesting thing mentioned is that they have to take their true form under certain situations. When they are at their birth moment, when they are in deep sleep, when they are mating with their own kind and when they die. And unless they can get rid of their attachment as *Nagas*, they will not be able to be reborn into happy rebirths such as humans and *devas*.

2. Celestial Dragons (*deva naga*)

These are heavenly beings (*deva*) that come under the first heaven of the Four Great Kings. One of them is a *naga*/dragon. The chief of them is called **Virupakkha**. He is also a *Dhamma* protector which Buddhists can summon for help if attacked by demonic spirits. Since they come under the happy realms (*sugati*), it is possible for them to reach the realizations of higher states.

Both of these types come under the sensual realms (*kamavacara bhumi*).

The Chinese, as we know, venerate this mythical creature. The emperor occupied the dragon throne. He is depicted as a dragon with five claws and this can be seen in his imperial robes, throne, palace, etc. No one is allowed this symbol and if discovered, would be beheaded. The ministers, however, are allowed the dragon with four claws and the citizen one with three. Such a high place is given to the dragon is because it is believed to be an immortal creature that comes from the depths of the unknown of the oceans or the clouds and has such great force that it overpowers all else.

The Indians also have the serpent as Vishnu, the Preserver and with that also came the Kundalini force.

To the Occident, it becomes devilish! However, to the Greeks, the serpent is the deity of medicine himself.

But here in this chapter, we are talking of something connected with these. That potent force which can be more powerful than we can imagine, that force which makes the world go round and *Samsara* lasts indefinitely. It can also set one free from these never ending cycles of birth and death.

The last are none other than the *VIPASSANA* DRAGONS!

The more elevated types of Consciousness have to be developed, and unless one has very strong potential, one will have to work very hard to reach them. Some never do. These are the 'Expanded Consciousness' (*mahaggata*). As thought processes, they occur in the impulsion phase, since they are active Consciousness. Concentration has to be high since they are absorptions. The thought processes are processes with fixed concentration (*appana vitthi*). The Consciousness can run for millions of thought

(which usually make up seven moments) but these types can last seven days. At the higher absorptions, even breathing stops. There are two types:

1. Tranquility absorptions (*samatha jhana*)
2. Insight absorptions (*vipassana jhana*)

Origins

Where do they come from? As you may have guessed, they are from the electric eels themselves.

Once there was a large colony of eels and they grew into great numbers. As any society, one will meet with the good eels, evil eels and every type in between. Most, if not all, of them eat eel food, see and play eel sports, listen to eel songs and music, fall in love and then give birth to baby eels and so on. But some eventually realized that these were never satisfying as they gave rise to big eel egos and from there big eel problems arose. One day one of them looked at the moon and thought that having to gulp in air after every few minutes was really suffering. “WE ARE MEANT FOR HIGHER THINGS” became his motto. It and its followers became contemplatives and mystics determined to lift themselves from the sea, and then up into the air. They began also to develop special rules which they thought were important, such as abstinence from mating!

But how can they be really free from such lowly existence? They studied Nature, especially the relationship between the sea and the sky, between heaven and earth, mind and matter. One day a very intelligent eel noticed the occurrence of the hurricanes and typhoons, which later became to be known, also can be caused by *Nagas*. It is caused by a central low pressure which later became the eye of the hurricane. An ascending force is then developed as the energy accelerated, circles and spirals up, and this can rise up high into the atmosphere. That very intelligent and powerful eel tried it and it turned round and round with increasing velocity and as a result, he rose, O how he rose into the air and became a dragon.

There is a similarity to humans in this story. Usually beings in the sensual realms indulge in sense pleasures and remain tied down to the sensual realm which can be

quite nice. But there are shortcomings and dangers, and so to go beyond, one must develop strong concentration that is detached from the sense pleasures. This comes about with the development of right concentration which in turn, is built up from the momentum of the five concentration factors (*jhananga*). Just like the hurricane, it revolves around the object of concentration.

The head of this force is of course, none other than the will (*cetana*) which starts, sustains and accelerates the spin. This is in turn backed up by the spiritual forces of accomplishments (*iddhipada*) which could be a wish/desire (*chanda*), energy (*viriya*), consciousness (*citta*) and discrimination (*vimamsa*).

The first part involves deepening of concentration. Deeper concentrations arrive at absorptions (*jhana*) where complete fixation of the Consciousness and its object occurs.

Firstly, there are the Form/Fine material absorptions (*rupajhana*) attained in tranquility meditations, for which the five *jhanic* factors play the major role. These have been mentioned earlier within the chapter on mental states, the nature of the various *jhanic* factors.

The first brings the Consciousness and associated mental states to the object (*vitakka* – initial application).

Two things are involved. The Consciousness and its associated mental states, and the object. The important part is that firstly it has to be wholesome; otherwise, it may be wrong concentration which is worse than ground zero. *Vitakka* has often been translated as ‘thinking’, which is not wrong depending on the context, because when the mental factor is active in an ordinary person, it means that he thinks much. Thus, if uncontrolled, can turn obsessive which would mean the second factor, *vicara* (sustained application) is also wrong. It is like an untrained person frantically trying to hit the tennis ball and hitting it to the wrong side and hitting wrong things. When it is wholesome and right, there is mindfulness and so would hit it to the right side even if it not too precise. At least it ends on the other side of the court.

Repeated right initial application means a development of the right sustained application which usually is present when there is initial application because ‘*vicara*’

means to stay on in the object. Then the flow of the mental state becomes apparent. One feels that the Consciousness is like a river moving towards the direction of the object. Again, to distinguish the wholesome/right form from the unwholesome/wrong form is the presence of mindfulness and that means to be under 'control' and it can be halted if needed to. Otherwise, it can be called obsessive as in the case of addictions where one cannot help thinking of one's drugs, cigarettes, alcohols or video games. In the wholesome state, it grows to a natural and automatic flow of the clear Consciousness.

When sufficiently powerful, it lifts up and flies (*piti*). As mentioned before this state of *piti* which is often translated as joy is difficult to pin point. Sometimes it is called rapture, a term which is sometimes used for '*sukha*' which is often translated as happiness. *Piti* is the state which usually occurs when there is joy or happy feeling. A clear difference between the two is that the latter is a feeling but the former not. The word 'thrill' comes close to it and a little further is 'interest'. It is a kind of mental activity or movement that inclines to rhythm, beat and system. So it is not surprising that music with all its beats and rhythms produce joyful feelings. I have an idea to call it the *musical* mental state. It can also accelerate to the point of hysteria and trances. Since one naturally becomes attached to nice feelings, teachers often warn students of meditation not to become attached to these joyful states; otherwise, it will change from wholesomeness to unwholesomeness.

There are five degrees of joy mentioned in the texts:

1. Minor (*khuddaka*) joy which gives rise to thrills, prickly sensations, etc. Many of these identified may actually be physical manifestations, while *piti* is mental.
2. Momentary (*khanika*) joy which comes in flashes and sudden down pours of coolness, lightness and happiness which also could be intense but nevertheless momentary.
3. Uplifting (*ubbega*) joy and this occurs with feelings of lightness and that familiar floating feeling. It has an upward tendency and it seems, when sufficiently powerful, can be transportive or even cause levitation.

4. Wave-like (*okkantika*) joy. By the time one gets to this point, the power that has been built up is considerable. One teacher called it 'overwhelming joy' Another called it wave-like because it comes in waves and crashes onto you. While the former type of upliftment causes 'hip-hops', this causes sways, gyrations and one may even topple and be thrown over.
5. Suffusing (*pharana*) joy. It becomes such when it suffuses, saturates fully into one's body and mind, just as water would soak into a piece of cotton.

Generally, they are very pleasant, but the main point here is that it turns out a very powerful force that agrees very well with the feelings/heart. For when the heart is with 'you', or more correctly, with the Consciousness, then 'you' fly!

The next factor to follow is bliss/happiness (*sukha*) which is something extremely sweet and intimate, sticking closely to the Consciousness and its object. The clue to understand this is that it is a '**feeling**'. It is like you are so happy that it hurts, it is like it is so quiet that it stuns, so sweet that it pricks. May be it can be called 'blissfully peaceful feeling'.

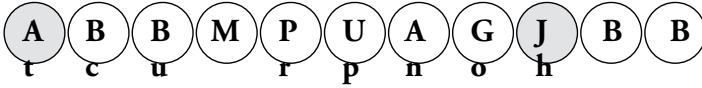
When it is like that, one sooner or later forgets oneself, without thought of separation and with the force of concentration, the Consciousness merges and fixes with its object (*ekaggata*). The final result will then be another level of Consciousness very detached from the realm of the five senses, that is, it will be in *CLOUD ONE*. There are levels of these meditative experiences and they are based on the *jhanic* factors.

Cloud One: Initial Application, Sustained Application, Joy, Happiness, One-Pointedness.

When the Consciousness switches levels at the 'change-of-lineage' Consciousness (*gotrabhu*) in the initial *jhanic* thought process, it can initially enter into this state for a moment. In later processes that follow it can be extended for a few moments more and later, with further training, for many more moments in the impulsion phase. It is like the dragon is capable of increasing its 'electrical batteries' to many millions of units rather than just the seven of ordinary eels. Which is more powerful? Electrical

jolts from eels or lightning bolts of thunderstorm? Such fixed concentrations can last as long as seven days compared to the seven thought moments of the sensual realm Consciousness.

Thought Process of first encounter with *Jhana*

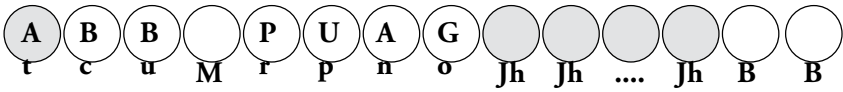


Legend:

- At** : Atita Bhavanga *Past Consciousness*
Bc : Bhavanga Calana *Vibrating Consciousness*
Bu : Bhavanga Upaccheda *Arresting Consciousness*
M : Manodvaravajjana *Mind-door Consciousness*
Pr : Parikamma *Access*
Up : Upacara *Registering Consciousness*
An : Anuloma *Conformity*
G0 : Gotrabhu *Change of Lineage*
Jh : Appana *Directing/Fixing*
B : Bhavanga *Bhavanga*

An interesting point came to my mind when a scholar scorned the use of the 'change-in-lineage' as absurd. It was, anyway, translated by another scholar. From then on I liked it, because it does indicate a Consciousness which is a process of major shift or transformation.

Thought Process for Subsequent *Jhanic* Attainment



Legend:

Subsequent *Jhana* thought process can last for minutes, hours, even up to several days if concentration is good.

- At** : Atita Bhavanga *Past Consciousness*
Bc : Bhavanga Calana *Vibrating Consciousness*
Bu : Bhavanga Upaccheda *Arresting Consciousness*
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G0 : Gotrabhu *Change of Lineage*
Jh : Appana *Directing/Fixing*
B : Bhavanga *Bhavanga*

Diagrammatically, the thought processes are represented as below:

a. One of Average Faculties

- i. Life Continuum (*Bhavanga*)
- ii. Vibrating *Bhavanga* (*Bhavanga Calana*)
- iii. Arresting *Bhavanga* (*Bhavanga Upaccheda*)
- iv. Mind Door Adverting (*Manodvaravajjana*)
- v. Preliminary (*Parikamma*)
- vi. Access (*Upacara*)
- vii. Conformity (*Anuloma*)
- viii. Change of Lineage (*Gotrabhu*)
- ix. Absorption (*Jhana*)
- x. *Bhavanga*

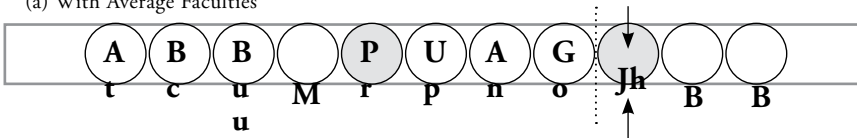
b. One of Keen Faculties

- i. *Bhavanga*
- ii. *Vibrating bhavanga*
- iii. *Arresting bhavanga*
- iv. Mind Door Adverting
- v. Access
- vi. Conformity
- vii. Change of Lineage
- viii. *Jhana*
- ix. *Bhavanga*

Please note the difference between the two. One with keen faculties approaches the access directly without the 'preliminary' and so the thought process is one moment less.

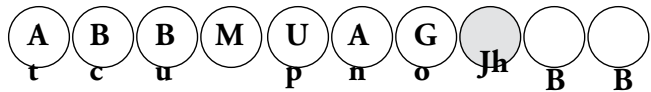
Difference in Processes between Keen and Dull Faculties

(a) With Average Faculties



MKSL – Four wholesome sense-sphere *citta* accompanied by knowledge (Trainee)
MKRY – Four functional sense-sphere *citta* accompanied by knowledge (*Arahant*)

(b) With Keen Faculties



After that, the development proceeds in refinement and power based on increasing subtlety in terms of mental states, removing the grosser one as one proceeds, and then advance to the formless objects, and it is not surprising that the absorptions are named after them

Cloud Two: Sustained Application, Joy, Happiness, One-Pointedness

Cloud Three: Joy, Happiness, One-Pointedness

Cloud Four: Happiness, One-Pointedness

Cloud Five: Equanimity, One-Pointedness

Notice that ‘equanimity’ has not been included as one of the five *jhanic* factors: but has definitely been mentioned and so has been included here and a very important one, too. As a concentration factor, stability is important not just in prolonging the process but also in deepening it.

As the nature of these dragons become ever more subtle and powerful in their Consciousness and mental states, their objects likewise become thus. In the first two, they are active and up to the third, they are joyful. But after that it becomes very subtle and at the last, equanimous. It is at this last one that certain supernormal powers arise, but usually not until the formless absorptions have reached to their fullest development.

Formless/ Immaterial Absorptions (*arupajhana*)

Cloud Six: Infinite Space Absorption

Cloud Seven: Infinite Consciousness Absorption

Cloud Eight: No-thingness Absorption

Cloud Nine: Neither Perception-Nor-Non-Perception Absorption

Isn't it interesting that at these levels of formless absorptions, these dragons do not have forms? These 'clouds' are, therefore, more like clouds of mental concepts. In a way, they are invisible. Still, they make very powerful ZAPS!

There are, however, a couple of technical things to note.

There is a four-fold classification of the *Suttanta* and the five-fold of the *Abhidhamma*. This discrepancy is not important in the practical sense. From what I was taught, it is obvious that the five-fold model does occur. It seems that there is not much difference between the first and second levels, and so practitioners often skip from first to the third, and so the third can be considered as the second.

Then I was also told that the four-fold categorization is clear when it is considered as realms (*bhumi*) where there are four levels described as the *Brahma* realms. So the attainment of the first absorption can give rebirth in the first *Brahma* realm; second and third absorptions will give rebirth in the second *Brahma* realm; the fourth absorption in the third realm and the fifth absorption in the fourth realm. So you have five dragons in four *brahma* realms.

So while they are still in their earthly existence, the dragon state is their Consciousness as active absorptions (*mahaggata kusala*), but on rebirth, they are in the form of passive resultants (*mahaggata vipaka*) in the form of their slumber.

There is also the process to undergo when one wants to advance from one cloud to the next, which is by way of the five masteries (*pancavisaya*)

1. The ability to direct oneself towards the recollection of the nature of the clouds.

2. The ability to enter into that particular cloud as one wishes.
3. The ability to stay as long as one wishes in that cloud.
4. The ability to exit the cloud whenever one wishes.
5. The actual recollection as to what these clouds are and how all these cloud traffic occurred.

These recollections enable one to determine the nature of the cloud one was in and what are the factors. It also enables one to see the faults and shortcomings of the 'cloud one' and so be more determined to exclude the grosser factors to advance to the next. One makes use of resolutions and when one has been established in the last one.

Since this is not a book aimed at the practical instructions for meditation, I have left out all the details.

Finally, after sufficient training, one will have the ability to exercise psychic potencies (*iddhi*). Then the eel not only becomes a dragon, but also a full-fledged one that can spew out fire and ice.

VIPASSANA DRAGONS

However, after the great dragon had mastered the highest reaches of the absorptions, he was still not satisfied, for he knew that he was still subjected to the laws of impermanence. He will live a life longer than any of the eels can imagine, zap lightning bolts stronger than any thundering cloud, yet he will one day perish and find himself again as a little eel or may be even as a worm in the mucky earth.

"There must be something more than concentration", that wisdom arose in him and led him to look deeply into the question of life and death. He eventually arrived at the Law of Dependent Origination starting with 'Birth, Death, Suffering' and ending with 'Formations and Delusion'. From his deep meditations, contemplations and observations arose one insight after another culminating in total detachment to all conditioned states and the unshakeable deliverance of the Mind.

As we find quoted in the texts, "Being disenchanted, one is dispassionate; being

dispassionate one is freed. The knowledge then arose; the knowledge, holy life has been lived and there is no more rebirth.”

From then, thus the lineage of *Vipassana* Dragons arose!

As one can see the story, it is one of detachment. As the saying goes, “Dispassion is the Path, Liberation is the Fruit” (*Patisambhidamagga*)

Whilst in the case of concentration attainments, it comes with detachment from the lower senses, but in this case, it comes with the detachment from all conditioned phenomena and that can be possible only with the development of insight into the true nature of the mind and material processes as suffering, unsatisfactory and non-self.

THE DRAGON’S SEED

This is what I would call as vipassana mindfulness. To be precise, it would be the mindfulness that comes with the first insight knowledge of discrimination into mentality and materiality. And the other thing tied up with it is the Nature of ‘non-self’ or natural occurrence devoid of a self, or soul. It is a knowing without conceptualizations, rather, with sharp perception of what is actually there. One does not have to be in a state of absorption for it to occur but it is necessary that the hindrances or defilements are absent.

Thus, one must have developed some degree of concentration so that these negative clouds filled with delusion are cleared sufficiently long for insight to arise. As for how long, it depends on the sharpness of perception present in the individual. But when the first insight arises, it has to be clear and sharp enough to alter all the other thought processes to follow the same development and way to freedom. Thus, with this first zap, all the cells in the eel begin to transform. In other words, the insight has to be strong enough to occur not only in meditation retreats, but also in daily life. Then, its influence will be powerful enough to sustain itself and develop to the next level. This is when one is not limited by the ideas of a limited and conditioned being that binds one down to *samsara*. This identification trap is like a network which would do anything to preserve its flimsy existence. The dislodging

from this powerful entanglement has begun and, the natures, the sea of the *dhammas* are open for the intrepid seeker of the deathless.

THE RISE OF THE DRAGON OF CLEAR LIGHT

The subsequent insight development is then clear. In the first, one catches sight of one wave, then one sees the next as there is more than one wave involved. Many interconnected waves make up the ocean. Using the example of a Master himself; from far one sees a line, on closer observation one discovers that it is made up of many ants. Such natures of conditioning need not be linear. Many things come together to make a happening, and many things from different time periods. It seems strange to think that something not present has a part of the making and that will seem strange because one is trapped in a time concept. Well, nature does not always need to be limited by that. So the picture of interconnectedness follows, and which involves many forces and changes. How wide this knowledge expands its territory varies. Some may involve a recollection of many lives; some may be just the immediate pure conditioning of mental and material qualities. Basically, its conditioning that makes up the cyclic conditioning of existence that one has to develop repulsion for.

They all later add up to the three universal characteristics. By experiencing this process of change is to experience transcendence. Moment-to-moment change renders all phenomena void, ungraspable and unreal. Not that there is nothing, for that 'nothing' which people think of is a concept of nothingness. Transcendence here must lead to total transcendence. This is what detachment to all conditioned existence mean, to go beyond all conditionings. It does seem paradoxical at first, but practically it is not. It is the limited nature of thinking that makes it seem so!

And so, one's intuition inside propels another till one is lifted above to ever higher and finer states. Finally, it has to shed away all these layers of formations to expose an emptiness that is freedom. The development of tranquility comes about in a buildup of momentum as the jhanic factors that culminate in absorptions. But in this case, the buildup is based on the insights into the nature of existence, like a light that becomes brighter and brighter until it lights up everything.

*Wave upon wave, the currents rise,
Light upon light, illumination dispels illusions.*

The buildup is explained in the 16 insight knowledges and its functions as the seven purifications.

Generally speaking, the transcendental process of the experience of the three universal characteristics is a cyclic thing. The more and sharper the insight into impermanence is, the clearer will be realized, the unsatisfactory nature of conditioned states. That will in turn, build up stronger detachment to these conditioned phenomena and thus, will lead to further manifestation of 'non-self'. Like a washing machine that turns around those soiled clothes repeatedly, more and more dirt will be removed.

There will come a moment when the insight matures to bring about a turn in the Consciousness powerful enough to rocket away from the formations, and sharp and transcendental enough to perceive the nature of the unconditioned. That is where the link with the 'other side' is made, and once known cannot be erased. That is when delusion's shell is cracked and the king's soldiers and men no matter how many, cannot put it back again a stupid, indulgent and negligent 'HUMPTY DUMPTY'. Such is the wonder of transcendental insight. Once seen, it will always be within until it completely takes over. There is no turning back and that is just as well! Would you want to return to suffering? Some would think so for the sake of compassion. Would that be possible? It seems it is possible to delay it but not for too long. Some are so compassionate that they would not risk the chance of leaving out any poor beings. **To each its own!**

The *Vipassana* Dragon is not only invisible and formless. It is also signless (*animitta*). It is a creature of the beyond and so untouched by worldly defilements and notions. Yet, it finally overcomes everything!

The *Abhidhamma* calls the thought process as 'The Path and Fruition' thought process. There are four of these and they are being called:

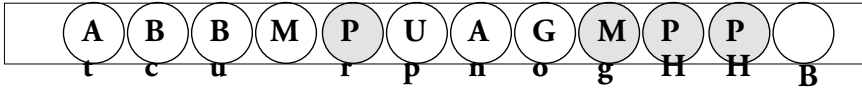
1. Stream Winner's process (*Sotapanna*) – This is when one experiences the unconditioned element for the first time and wrong views and skeptical doubts are eradicated radically.

2. Once Returner's process (*Sakadagami*) – This is when one experiences it clearer subsequently and more defilements are radically eradicated.
3. Non Returner's process (*Anagami*) – This is when the experience is strong enough to eradicate radically sensual craving (*kamaraga*) and ill will (*patigha*).
4. The process of the Worthy One (*Arahatta*) – This is when the unshakeable deliverance of mind is established and delusion and all the other defilements left can no longer arise. With this, one also knows that there is no more rebirth.

Diagrammatically, they are represented as:

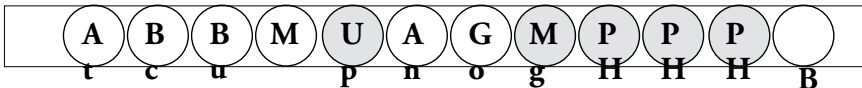
The Path and Fruition dragon's thought processes.

a. One of Average Faculties



- i. Life Continuum (*bhavanga*)
- ii. Vibrating bhavanga (*bhavanga calana*)
- iii. Arresting bhavanga (*bhavanga upaccheda*)
- iv. Mind Door Adverting (*manodvaravajjana*)
- v. Preliminary (*parikamma*)
- vi. Access (*upacara*)
- vii. Conformity (*anuloma*)
- viii. Change of Lineage (*gotrabhu*)
- ix. Path (*magga*)
- x. Fruition (*phala*)
- xi. Fruition (*phala*)
- xii. Bhavanga

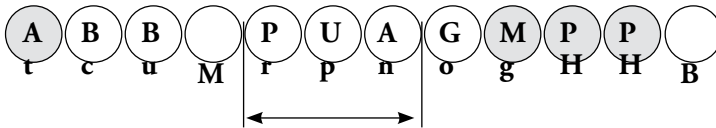
b. One of Keen Faculties



- i. *Bhavanga*
- ii. Vibrating *bhavanga*
- iii. Arresting *bhavanga*
- iv. Mind Door Adverting
- v. Access
- vi. Conformity
- vii. Change of Lineage
- viii. Path
- ix. Fruition
- x. Fruition
- xi. Fruition
- xii. *Bhavanga*

Notice the difference between the two. One of keen faculties approaches directly to access without the preliminary. Also, an extra Fruition Consciousness arisen makes up the 12 moments.

Path and Fruition Thought Process



Object: formation (*sankhara*) and
then one of the three universal

Ten Fetters:

1. False View
2. Doubts
3. Adherence to Rites/Ceremonies
4. Avarice
5. Hatred
6. Attachment to Sensual Pleasures
7. Attachment to Existence
8. Envy
9. Pride
10. Ignorance

Legend:

- At** : Atita Bhavanga Past Consciousness
Bc : Bhavanga Calana Vibrating Consciousness
Bu : Bhavanga Upaccheda Arresting Consciousness
M : Manodvaravajjana Mind-door Consciousness
Pr : Parikamma Access
Up : Upacara Registering Consciousness
An : Anuloma Conformity
G0 : Gotrabhu Change of Lineage
Mg : Magga Path
PH : Phala Fruition
B : Bhavanga Bhavanga

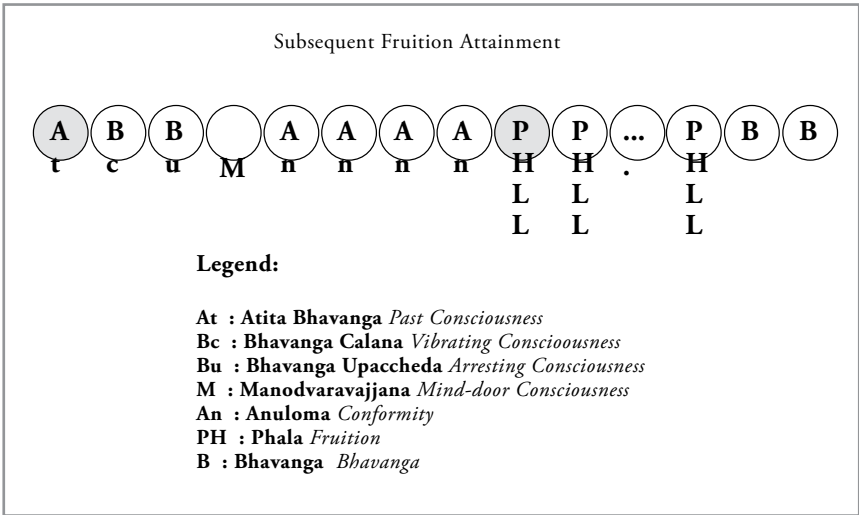
We are also told that once the Path and Fruition process has occurred, the experience of the unconditioned can be repeated by a process of replay. It is done by making resolutions to bring back the supramundane occurrence. What happens usually will be the repetition of the ‘Fuition Consciousness’ which corresponds to the Path one had traversed, that is they are in the order:

- 1). Stream Winner’s Fruition Consciousness
- 2). Once Returner’s Fruition Consciousness
- 3). Non Returner’s Fruition Consciousness
- 4). *Arahatta* ’s Fruition Consciousness

One thing to note is that we are told that each of the Path Consciousness occurs only once in a person’s existence but the Fruition Consciousness can repeat itself many times and for as long as a week continuously. Only when the higher Path had occurred, then only does it gives way to the higher Fruitions.

So these dragons can also be millions of thought moments long!

The Fruition thought process.



Chapter 7

BIRTH AND DEATH



The well-known Buddhist Mahathera and preacher was known as “Chief” by Buddhists all over Malaysia. When he passed away, a memorable funeral was given. This funeral pyre marks the end of the body of this great monk and yet the actual moment is in the passing away of the “*Cuti Citta*”, the last Consciousness of an existence. And unless one is a skilled clairvoyant as the Venerable Anuruddha at the *Parinibbana* of the Buddha, one would not know that very brief but decisive moment.

Chapter 7

THE RIVER OF LIFE AND DEATH, THE CYCLIC SEA OF EXISTENCE

*The river of life, the sea of existence,
One is linear, the other is cyclic,
Where it ends, there it begins,
Life and Death are part of the same process.
The question is not about where and how but about here and now,
The choice is between repetition of mistakes and freedom from suffering.*

In a chapter of the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* is a chapter of the “Process freed”. It covers areas where the Consciousness flows without interruption by any thought processes. There are different types of these types of Consciousness, and they form the continuum of life in individuals. There, 19 types are described therein. They are also called “*bhavanga cittani*”. To repeat, they are resultants of past *kamma* and they arise because of past *kammic* actions. They arise when in deep sleep, in between thought processes, at the moment of birth (that first moment in the new existence) and death (the last moment). But who really knows and remembers all that? There will be those who claim to be able to, but really? This is where faith, blind or otherwise, comes into the play; this is where discrimination or skeptical doubts will determine the answer to the question, “So What?”

So we learn and acknowledge that where one moment ends, the other begins. On a greater scale, when one day ends, another begins. But there will be those who will not see another tomorrow. For believers, the faithful and the intuitive, one may also say with a difference, “Where one life ends, another begins”. They are thought moments that follow immediately one after another. The last thought moment in one’s life is called the “*Cuti Citta*” or “Death Consciousness”. Its function is to cut off one existence. It is a natural phenomenon of ending, like when the battery is gone, the machinery stops. When the craving for existence is still present, another resultant

from the kammic forces arises to give rise to another life continuum. With this, one will find oneself in another life, in another world and where it will be, will depend on the type of resultant.

It is like a code, a computer program where one may get access to the different objects that we experience. They are like stations where we can get to other stations. The better ones can access many interesting channels and sites; the lesser ones are limited and yucky sites.

(A) DEATH

Game over - now let's take count of the stocks. How much debit and credits, how many pluses and minuses and with that the Lord Justice, Dr. Kamma, will decide what you deserve. Unlike theistic creeds, the Kammic Law is impersonal, and also not as simple as simple mathematics. Many factors come into play. One gets the bill or interest in manifold experiences whether you can do the calculations or not, whether you like it or not, you still have to pay or get paid!

Death, we are told, comes about when the conditions for life cease. In this sense, we are given four situations:

1. When the material/physical life faculty ends (that is, the wick of the lamp has been completely burnt off).
2. When the mental life faculty is expired (that is, the oil for the lamp has been completely used up).
3. When both the material and mental life faculties have ceased (it has all gone bust).
4. When a wind blows out the flame (that is, the intervention of destructive *kamma*).

Can one tell exactly when this will happen? Some can expect it coming to some extent, like the numerals of your age, or a doctor's prognosis. We all have it coming for us for sure and it can come anytime. Most, however, rather not talk or even think about it. "Ignorance is bliss, knowledge is terror", so they would rather see not, hear not, think not about such dark matters which after all, what can one do about it?

Such people will die unprepared. Contemplation of death has many benefits. One of them is having a good platform for the next scene on the stage, besides other things like appreciation of life while it still hangs on.

What happens then?

Cultures have many descriptions as to what may happen to one after death.

When I was young, I was told that if you are good, to heaven you will go (up), if you are wicked, it is down to hell. It sounded reasonable to me at that time, but I asked myself, who really knows? Later I came across the idea that one does not really die, but ends up elsewhere. Just before going to the next stage and opera, one must first look into the mirror which plays back one's whole life like a video that shows the types of good or evil deeds one has done. Then the judges on the hearing may send you to be punished in hell, enjoy in paradise or return to Earth again for another trial. But before that, you will have to walk a long journey and just before the end, you will find a lady serving tea. However, on drinking, one will forget everything. On hearing this, I was quite determined not to drink it should I meet her.

As I grew up, I thought all these were really stupid imaginations but then, later I decided they are not entirely wrong. They are perhaps expressed in a way so that even simpletons and Simpsons can understand that THE JUDGEMENT DAY WILL COME!

Many religions have their way of telling people to be careful, and even with grades of merit and demerit. What are they based on? For Buddhists, it is based on *Kamma* and that has to do with the nature of creation by the Consciousness. It is quite 'scientific' in the sense of being rational and experiential although science as we know is materialistic.

Then, there are those who claim they can recollect past lives. Understandably these are Asian stuff – Hindus and Buddhists. They have their own set of descriptions and explanations of what will happen. Even among the Buddhists there are many versions.

An 'authoritative' source, it seems, is the "*Tibetan Book of the Dead*", treated with veneration by many Asian and Western Buddhists. Of course, I read it with interest but I keep an open mind because I do not go along with blind belief. Generally, I do not have any major objections because it involves being mindful and detached no matter what happens. As for details, one will have to 'wait and see'.

Now we can come to see what the *Abhidhamma* has to say.

There are many possibilities but let us just take two. One is, it comes suddenly like when one is driving along the highway as any other day, then SLAM, and it is all over. The other one takes time, slowly but surely, like the cancer that slowly eats into one, like old age that slowly weakens each sense faculty and organ, like the river turning into a rivulet and then to a stream and then to a trickle and then to a desert. Which one would you say is better? Wouldn't it be the second where one has some time to prepare? But we should be prepared any how shouldn't we? Be careful of what you wish, it may come true.... that slow death, like something squeezing your neck slowly and suffocate you indefinitely before finishing you off definitely.

The point is, do be prepared! When one is prepared for death, then one is prepared for everything.

There are certain signs that indicate death's approach – the bell that tolls for thee. Some obvious ones have already been mentioned.

1. Age - If you are above 50 and you can still do something worthwhile, do it. If you are above 60, you are damn lucky. If you are 70....
2. State of health - Once something is detected and stays on, it is a warning. When it becomes chronic, it means you are being cornered. Once you have been diagnosed with some debilitating illness like diabetes, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's then death already has you in his list. If something worse pops up one not so fine day, like terminal cancer and the like, then your days are numbered.
3. If danger and death are screaming around you - Like gunfire, bombs, flying knives and arrows, poison pills and gas and all the harbingers of destruction as one finds plentifully in a war, then it is quite likely that you will end up

being exploded or cut up into pieces mercilessly.

4. Mental images which arise out of *KAMMA* can also be a clear premonition - These are not ordinary images that one sees or dreams of. They, I think, are more lucid and often persistent. It has a reality of its own.

Let's take the second case. Someone, say a fairly old lady or gentleman, is seen getting weaker and weaker. What happens to the mind? The sense faculties withdraw and fail. Life's purpose and enthusiasm wanes. Slowly, one is confined to the bed and Consciousness lapses off more and more often. Often dream-like phases take over which includes life's events whizzing by quickly.

I remember my own grandmother when she was dying. She was talking and at times laughing and at other times scolding. When asked what was happening, my mother said that she was reliving her life. If she was pleased, she would laugh, if she was angry, she would scold.

I also remember reading Elizabeth Kubler Ross's five stages of dying – (1) Denial, (2) Anger, (3) Bargaining, (4) Depression, and (5) Acceptance. She also states that this process also occurs with any misfortune in life and the ability to cope with it also determines how quickly the process passes to the last when death approaches.

Sooner or later, death arrives and the life faculty ceases. It is strange, but one can actually feel that something vibrant is no longer there. The body then is but 'a useless piece of log'. For the dead, of course, but for others, it could be food. Have you considered being a vegetarian or vegan?

There is a difference between the period near Death and the 'near Death thought processes

What happens in both do affect where one goes after death. But the second one is very brief and passes on quite uncontrollably and naturally. What affects greatly will be what will be happening say a week, day or minutes before death takes place. Those states of mind, those objects that run through indicate a certain direction, suggest certain habits and thus, can bring out the corresponding types of *kammic* results and its objects.

On the other hand, the 'Near-death thought process' occurs only as the last process, processes just prior to death. They would have been influenced to some degree by the first type, but because being closer in these last seconds or so, have also a great influence on what will happen next.

(1) One thing apparent is physically one is weak and so the materialities born of *Kamma* are also weak, ending with the death.

(2) Volitional actions in the impulsion process may not be strong but may be supportive of actions that give the resultant in the next life.

What are of interest here are the objects arising. Here, there are mentioned three types of objects:

a. The *Kamma Arammana* – The Object of *Kamma*.

When this arises, it is like one is experiencing a replay of an action. Someone was reciting texts, another was scolding, yet another was feeding chickens. They also do involve physical actions such as movement of hands or spoken words. It reflects the kammic force done influencing what is to happen.

b. The *Kamma Nimitta Arammana* – The Sign of *Kamma*.

When this arises, objects connected with the actions done arise. It may be movies one has seen before, or songs heard, or tastes from your favorite dish or someone you have missed very much and at that time will seem very real. It is like some would see their dead relatives coming to receive them to the new existence.

c. The *Gati Nimitta Arammana* - The Sign of Future Life.

This depends on where the kammic resultants which may ripen will bring one to. They are like premonitions or trailers for the next major change of the cinema. In a text, there is mentioned that if one sees fire, it may be hell; in case of darkness, the ghost world; in case of jungle, the beast; in case of flesh, humans; in case of celestial mansions, heaven.

1. *Bhavanga Citta* (Life Continuum)
2. *Atita Bhavanga* (Past Continuum)
3. *Bhavanga Calana* (Vibrating Continuum)
4. *Bhavanga Upaccheda* (Arresting Continuum)
5. *Pancadvaravajjana* (Sense Door Adverting)
6. *Pancavinnana* (Sense Door Consciousness)
7. *Sampaticchana* (Receiving Consciousness)
8. *Santhirana* (Investigating Consciousness)
9. *Votthapana* (Determining Consciousness)
- 10-14 *Javana* (Last Impulsion Phase in This Life)
15. *Cuti Citta* (Death Consciousness)
16. *Patisandhi* (Relinking Consciousness)*- new existence begins from here.
17. *Bhavanga 1* (Continuum of New Life)
18. *Bhavanga 2*
- 19-33 *Bhavanga 3* –16
34. *Manodvaravajjana* (Mind Door Adverting)
- 28 –34 *Javana* (First Impulsion Phase in New Life)



Please note that in the case of the mind door death process, the fifth would be the Mind Door Adverting Consciousness followed by sixth to twelfth as the last impulsion of that life.

There are differences of opinion as to the nature of object during the change of existence. Is it a past object or present object? For most of us, it is not important and best left to experts in Abhidhamma. What concerns most is to be very mindful when the time comes.

The Process after the Death Consciousness – Birth and the New Life

It would be clear by now that death means the end of one existence and this is identified with the occurrence of the Death Consciousness (*cuti citta*). Clinical death is something else and this explains for the survival of people thought to be dead. The reason is that the kammic force for this life is still present in so weak a state that physical signs are not detectable. It would also mean that there have been people pronounced dead and then burnt or buried alive.

The Tibetan tradition talks about the Bardo state. Even some Theravadins talk about the '*antarabhava*' a state where the being may exist between one life and another. Then one may ask, in what form? Is there the Consciousness present or not? Well, whatever the case, the rebirth will eventually take place and suffering and *samsara* continues. So why the big discussion?

So I would rather not talk about this as this is not my field of interest. What matters more is what happens next. And that depends on what type of *Kamma* ripens. That, in turn, is influenced by the circumstances. Here, we learn of four types of ripening depending on weight of *Kamma*:

1. The heaviest type is called 'weighty kamma' (*garukakamma*). When there is this type, only this comes to produce unwholesome resultants in the woeful states. The weighty unwholesome *kamma* mentioned are: patricide, matricide, killing of an *Arahant*, wounding of a Buddha and causing schism in the *Sangha*. Also included by some are certain strong wrong views, such as that there is no such thing as wholesome, unwholesomeness *kamma* and its

resultants. What about the wholesome side? Maybe one can include those that come with strong practice of right concentration, right view and sacrifice.

2. Death proximate *kamma* (*asannakamma*) may be the next in consideration. These are *kamma* (bodily, verbal or mental) done near the moment of death. Certainly thoughts definitely influence subsequent thoughts and mental states. So if one is angry or fearful at the moment close to death, then it is likely that the next change will be a horror movie. If one was meditating and then died, on waking up from absorption, then an absorption-like state is likely to occur.
3. Habitual *kamma* (*acinnakamma*) comes next because of its quantity. Habit is a strong conditioning force. When no strong *kamma* arises, this type will automatically arise. So if you have not gotten rid of your bad habits, it is about time. Pessimistically speaking, it may be too late. Optimistically speaking, it is better late than never. Realistically speaking, do so now! And so, please practice mindfulness continuously, especially before you sleep, do meditate. If you do not die that night, then at least you will have a good sleep and sweet dreams. Life after all is but a dream.
4. Reserve *kamma* (*katattakamma*), the least likely heir to the seat of rebirth are the odds and ends done once in a while but quite forgotten. Yet one cannot deny they are still around in the hidden corners of the mind. Where none else comes to play its part, this one arises like a wild card. Will the horse be white or black?

Generally, we can summarize the types of *Kammic* Consciousness that ripen:

- 1) Eleven Unwholesome Consciousness (minus the restless consciousness rooted in delusion because of its weakness) give rise to unwholesome rebirth.
- 2) Eight Great Wholesome Consciousness give rise to wholesome rebirth in the sensual realm.
- 3) The Five Wholesome Form/Fine Material *Jhanas* give rise to rebirth in the Form Brahma realms.

4) The Four Wholesome Formless/Immaterial *Jhanas* give rise to the rebirth in the Formless Brahma realms.

If unwholesome *kamma* ripens, the next birth will be in one of the four woeful states (*apaya bhumi*):

- 1) Hell (of which there are eight major hells and around each there are eight minor hells)
- 2) The worlds of ghosts (*peta*)
- 3) The *Asuras*
- 4) Animal kingdom

The Relinking Consciousness in this situation is identified as a Rootless Consciousness – Investigating Consciousness with indifferent feeling which is a resultant of unwholesome *kamma*. As for human birth, the birth is a result of wholesome *kamma* and nine possible types of Consciousness are identified – eight great resultants (pleasurable/indifferent feeling x with wisdom/without wisdom x prompted/unprompted) + Investigating Consciousness with indifferent feeling.

In the case of the planes of Brahmas, it will depend on the level of absorption they have attained.

PLANES OF EXISTENCE

Having said about death, what continues will be said about birth. The question of rebirth is still something raw for the Western mind to accept although it is becoming commonly known and an accepted possibility. Is there anyone who remembers his past life to tell me about it? Even if there is someone who will open his mouth, would you believe him? This is something difficult to prove. Once in China, a friend was asked about this dilemma. He answered with a counter question, “Is there a past, present and future?” I suppose in India during the earlier days and maybe sometimes nowadays, it is easier to prove this phenomenon where people profess to be able to recall their past lives, and sometimes they are traceable to their past relatives. The Tibetan tradition with its Dalai Lamas, Rinpoches and Tulkus endorses all these together with claims as to being their predecessors. Well, I wonder what scientific

paranormal psychology has to say about that. When people ask me this question, I answer that I do believe in it based on observation of mental processes and its *kammic* consequences. It is not something that can be used as an infallible evidence but I have no intentions of convincing skeptics about this. In any case, it is not an absolute necessity for one to begin the practice and to reach the insight into conditioning that leads to further insights. What is necessary is that which leads to the insight into the three universal characteristics. Being a king or pauper, a man or a woman, a mouse or a rat, are but concepts of beings and egos that cravings identifies with. Seeing the nature of non-self itself discards this obstacle.

What is obvious in our study here is that on the dissolution of the basic condition of one existence, that is, the life continuum, another takes over. The linkage is made possible by that craving for existence (*bhava-tanha*) and that linkage itself is the Resultant Consciousness from a past *kamma* that ripens. To repeat, the *Abhidhamma* enumerates 19 kinds:

1 : The unwholesome resultant Investigation Consciousness with indifferent feeling in the Woeful states.

2 : The wholesome resultant Investigation Consciousness with indifferent feeling.

3–10 : The Eight Great Resultants of the Sensual sphere.

11–15 : The Five Fine Material Resultant Consciousness giving rebirth in the Fine Material planes.

16–19: The Four Immaterial Resultant Consciousness giving rebirth in the Immaterial planes.

From here, we also find mentioned what some writers call ‘The Buddhist Cosmology’. There are 31 planes of existence although in Mahayanist classification, they claim 32. They are in brief from the highest down:

A. The Immaterial /Formless Plane

1. The realm of Neither Perception Nor Non-Perception
2. The realm of Nothingness
3. The realm of Infinite Consciousness
4. The realm of Infinite Space

These are results of the Immaterial/Formless absorptions at its active phase. Here, there are no material qualities and so no form or space.

B. The Fine Material/Form Plane

1. The Fifth *Jhanic* Plane
 - a. The Five Pure Abodes where beings reborn here have to be Non-Returners (*Anagami*) with all the Five *Jhanic* attainments.
 - b. Durable realm
 - c. Great Reward realm
 - d. Non-Percipient realm
2. The Fourth *Jhanic* Plane
 - a. Steady Aura realm
 - b. Infinite Aura realm
 - c. Minor Aura realm
3. The Second and Third *Jhanic* Plane
 - a. Radiant Lustre realm
 - b. Infinite Lustre realm
 - c. Minor Lustre realm
4. The first *Jhanic* Plane
 - a. *Maha Brahma realm*
 - b. *Brahma's Ministers realm*
 - c. *Brahma's Retinue realm*

These four are results of Fine Material/Form *Jhanas*/Absorptions at the active phase where the second and third absorptions give rebirth in the second plane. Here in these planes being detached from the sensual desires, do not arise with the tactile, olfactory and sense of taste.

C. Sensual Planes

1. Six Celestial Realms

- a. *Paranimmitavasavatti*
- b. *Nimmanarati*
- c. *Tusita*
- d. *Yama*
- e. *Tavatimsa*
- f. *Catummaharajika*
- g. Human realm

These seven are results of wholesome Sensual Sphere kamma.

2. Woeful Planes

- a. *Asura*
- b. *Peta*
- c. Animal
- d. Hell

These last four are resultants of unwholesome kamma.

In a way, they are worlds that one experiences around one when one is reborn. My teacher tells me that these planes (*bhumi*) are to be considered as mental planes. What one experiences of the world, after all, are based on the resultant conditionings brought about by the life continuum. I would like to think it as a point in the whole web of conditions that one is able to access to as its sphere of objects. I would also think of it as some basic formula or program where when fitted with certain conditions/variables, bring about certain situations. After that, one may also act or respond accordingly to them. As to how much one can respond also depends on the capability allowed by the basic life continuum.

The relinking process is thus brought about by the *Kamma* from the past. The first Consciousness does the function of linking the past existence, with the present existence and thus, it is called the Relinking Consciousness (*Patisandhi Citta*). Of course, depending on that specific type of *kamma* that ripens, it will have its own

special, individual qualities. Coming with it will be the other materialities derived from *kamma* (*kammaja rupa*), some arising at the very same instant as the arising of the Relinking Consciousness while others may arise later. From then on, the other material qualities derived from seasons, Consciousness and nutriment will arise. I leave out all the details as knowing it is not so essential to the practice that we do at the moment. What is more important is to realize that at this final conclusion, how much the ultimate realities that give rise to the world around us is dependent on the creative actions of the Consciousness which may be occurring in the same moment or from the past as in *Kammic* conditionings.

The other thing the life continuum does is also to maintain the continuity of that one existence but the relinking also means a continuation of *Samsara*. However, there is a difference. It is a different type of *bhavanga* that has arisen from a past *kammic* action. This gives rise to a new individual being.

Finally, the birth of the being in its appearance to the new world can be:

1. Womb birth
2. Egg birth
3. Moisture birth
4. Spontaneous birth

It seems that birth in the human realm, all four types can occur although now it is usually from the womb. In the earlier periods of the eon, they were like deities and so were born spontaneously. I suppose you can imagine the egg, of which the human ovum is actually one. The moisture birth is a little strange, but some, including an important disciple, Ambapali, was reported to be born from a tree. If we take test-tube babies, well there is quite some moisture there. The interesting point here is that it needs not the fertilization of the ovum with the spermatozoa to give rise to a birth. As for other types of birth in other realms, I will leave you to read about it or **find out for yourself**.

And so the next story begins. Haven't we been through all this before? Why, have you forgotten?

CONTEMPLATIONS ON DEATH

Needless to say, the contemplation of death comes with many benefits and also understandably, also viewed by many with apprehension. One may consider it a morbid subject, another may think of it as strange, and a third may comment that there are subjects of meditation that are more pleasant. Pleasure? Is that what meditation is for? I would rather you consider your purpose, otherwise, it may turn out to be an object of attachment. Although there may be some queasy feelings in one's stomach when one first approaches a usually avoided topic, but eventually it becomes peaceful with increasing acceptance and tranquility.

The benefits of the contemplation on death are not lacking. 'The Path of Purification' states these:

"He acquires the perception of disenchantment with all becoming, he conquers attachment to life, he condemns evil, avoids storing, has no stain of avarice. The perception of impermanence grows in him, following that the perception of suffering and non-self. Fear, etc. will not affect him and he will die undeluded. If he had not attained to the Deathless yet, he will be bound for a happy state."

Ways of contemplation

There is more than one way to go about this. As this is not a book specially meant for this form of practice, I will go only as far as to come up with some simplified methods.

Firstly, let's see some from the texts.

1. Mindfulness of Death I

The Buddha said (as quoted in the *Anguttara Nikaya*):

"These monks live indolently and they slackly make mindfulness arise for the destruction of cankers."

One who thinks thus, Surely if were I to live but one day and night, and I were to ponder over the word of the Exalted One, much indeed would be done by me;

.... for one day only;.... for half a day;.... long enough to eat one alms-meal;...long enough to swallow 4 or 5 morsels of food.

But he who cultivates mindfulness of death thus: Were I to live long enough to swallow one morsel of food...; or to breathe in after breathing out...; Only these monks are said to live diligently.”

Anguttara, Arthaka Nipata

2. Mindfulness of Death II

When the day declines and the night sets in, a monk reflects thus,

“Many are chances of death for me. A scorpion or centipede may sting me and cause death. I might stumble and fall; the food eaten might make me ill; bile might convulse me; phlegm may choke me; winds may cut me; men or non-humans may attack me and cause my death.

Are there any evil or wrong states not put away that would be a hindrance if I die tonight?

On consideration and there are, then put away those evil or wrong states of mind with intense resolution, effort and struggle. Mindfulness and clear comprehension must be made just as a man whose turban is on fire, whose hair is burning.

But if there are no such states to be put away, then he lives in joy and gladness training himself day and night in ways of righteousness.

And when the night is spent and the day breaks, he must reflect in the same way...

Mindfulness of death when so cultivated and developed is very fruitful, of great advantage, merging and ending in the Deathless.”

Anguttara, Arthaka Nipata

3. Mindfulness of Death III

Five Things to be Contemplated

“These are five things that ought to be contemplated by man, woman, householders or by one gone forth:

- i. Old age comes and I have not overcome old age.*
- ii. Sickness comes and I have not overcome sickness*
- iii. Death comes and I have not overcome death.*
- iv. Whatever is near and dear to me, is subjected to change and separation.*
- v. Kamma is my true property, true inheritance, true birth, true relative, true refuge. Whatever good or evil I have done, I shall be the heir.”*

This contemplation also comes from the Anguttara Nikaya, Pancaka Nipata.

To this I have included the line after each item saying, *“When old age, sickness, death, etc. comes, I will accept it and be at peace.”*

4. Mindfulness of Death IV

These are verses or phrases found in the texts when one contemplates on Death. It can be recited with visualizations to arouse concentration with mindfulness, detachment and acceptance.

- i. “Before long, this body will lay cast upon the earth like a useless charred log.”*
- ii. “All beings have died, are dying and will die, I too will die likewise; doubt on this does not arise in me.”*
- iii. “Life is not lasting, death is sure, life eventually ends in death, life is uncertain, death is certain.”*
- iv. “All formations are impermanent, they are a flux, having arisen, they cease, their cessation is bliss.”*

v. *The Life faculty will be cut off! Death will come!*

5. Mindfulness of Death V

In the chapter of the Contemplation on Death, ‘The Path of Purification’ (*Visuddhimagga*) describes the contemplation firstly, by thinking of someone who had died, preferably not one who had been close to one or one whom one disliked. Rather someone who has died. If I may add, someone that one knew before when alive and is quite a figure or character Bringing to mind that person with words such as, “The life faculty will be cut off, death will come” repeatedly can bring the mind to access.

If one does not get far, one can try to recollect on death in another eight ways:

- i. Death as having the appearance of a murderer.
- ii. Death as a ruin of success.
- iii. By comparing oneself with others of great fame, power, merits, understanding who have died.
- iv. By the sharing of one’s body with many beings such as worms, etc. which may eventually kill one.
- v. As to the frailty of one’s body in that many causes can cut short one’s life.
- vi. As signless, because death can come anytime, anyplace to any one without giving a sign.
- vii. The limited lifespan. For example, at this era, one very rarely encounters a centenarian.
- viii. Shortness of the moment. This last contemplation that considers the momentary nature of mind and bodily processes that makes up life brings the contemplation into the actual insight practice.

6. Mindfulness of Death VI

“The passing away of beings out of the various orders of beings, their passing away, dissolution, disappearance, dying, completion of time, dissolution of aggregates, laying down of the body – this is called Death.....

With the arising of birth there is Aging and Death. With the Cessation of Birth, there is Cessation of Aging and Death. The Way to the Cessation of Aging and Death is this Noble Eightfold Path, namely, Right view.....Right concentration.

When the Noble disciple has thus understood Aging and Death, the Origin... the Cessation...the Way to the Cessation... he here and now makes an end of suffering."

Discourse on Right View ascribed to Sariputta, Middle Length Discourses.

7. Others that are Not Textural

Besides these, there have been other methods used by people.

I will present some of them.

i) What to do on impending death

Imagine that one is going to die in:

- a. a month
- b. 2 weeks
- c. 1 week.
- d. 3 days
- e. next day
- f. next hour
- g. in a minute
- h. NOW!

When one having been given the one month grace, what would one do? Write one's last will and inheritance, set to rest all disagreements, ask for forgiveness or give forgiveness whenever there is any, do and say the most important things to one's loved ones, how to dispose of one's dead corpse.... Then make all the necessary physical preparations needed, for example, doctors and nurses, if necessary, and then go into solitary contemplation or meditation (this should not be delayed).

- ii) From time to time, I will recollect the people who I once knew but have now died. The number has reached way over a hundred and is getting closer to people of my age. I find this effective in arousing energy and in keeping good relationship with friends.
- iii) Visits to any cemetery that I can find are also very calming and reassuring. If you do, take note of each grave, the person when he died and at what age. Meditate there. Every cemetery has their particular shade of effect on the contemplation. The Huge Cemetery at Olhdsdorf, Hamburg has a very forgiving atmosphere. The one in Milan is very poetic on different aspects of death as sculptures on their graves. The Auschwitz War Memorial strikes deeply and arouses compassion for the insane and cruel things Man has inflicted on himself. The huge mounds and gravestones in the Chinese cemetery of my origins bring me back to reflect on the sufferings and tribulations of the simple folks in life and the great patience needed for a little peace.
- iv) Work in a hospice. The turnover of people dying in a hospice can be quite alarming if you know it. If one lends service to such a place, the reality of death imprints deeply into one's Consciousness. One can take anyone there who have just died or are dying soon and there you will find the contemplation well supported.

Besides these, I have also collected some of my thoughts in short notes and poetry which can be helpful to others in this respect. I hope that someone will like it.

(B) THOUGHTS ABOUT DEATH

- (1) Someone once asked me, "How does death look like?"

I answered, death has many forms.

- Imagine Andreas Bachmann ripped off all his skin and flesh with only bones remaining.
- Imagine *Bhante* dressed all in black with a heavy hood over his head.
- Imagine the face that you see in the mirror except that it is much paler without the pupils of the eyes

- (2) When asked, "How does death take one away?" I answered,
- If unmindful, death will clutch a strangling hold onto one's throat, drag one helplessly along the streets and throw one down a bottomless pit.
 - If mindful, for example, meditating on death, death will give one a stinging kiss with his cold white lips (and look out for that smell of formaldehyde, it is unmistakable), then fling one over his shoulders like a robber who has just stolen a new bride and carry one away into the clouds of unknowing.

Death, O Death, when will you claim me?

- (3) Death wrote a poem and asked me to let you read it.

*'How much do I love thee, let me count the ways.
I love thee like the falling autumn leaves,
I love thee like the last rays of the winter sun,
I love thee like the frost that bit the late flower bud before it could bloom,
I love thee like the grandma who did not wake up ever again since she slept last night,
I love thee like the cat that killed the rat and also the rat that did not even cry
when the cockerel pecked out its eyes.'*

I will leave out the rest as it is becoming really morbid.

But we can be certain that death really love us all. He thinks of us all the time and you can be sure he is very eager to see us and have us with him as soon as it is possible. Actually, he is spying on us all the time.

- (4) The color of death, if there, is to be a special one, will be white, not black. Black has more to do with grief and mourning, catastrophes and evil, such as Black Death, Black Heart. Death is just an end of a process, quite natural although it can be shocking. That is because one is unmindful.

Imagine the color of whitened bones strewn across old forgotten graves, - very impersonal.

Imagine the color of bleached hospital sheets covering a corpse as it is transferred to the mortuary – very practical.

Imagine the faultless calico blossom, death's favorite flower – very beautiful and elegant.

Death can be a wonderful thing, but it is up to us to make it so.

So, MEDITATE DILIGENTLY!

- (5) *"Before long, this body will lie cast upon the earth bereft of Consciousness, like a useless charred log."*

The sick monk became an Arahatta after he heard this from the Buddha's lips.

- (6) I once read something like this –

"Hail and cheers to Death, he who frees the prisoner from the cell and the nun from her vows."

In the *Dhamma*, death is a divine messenger. He reminds us that we need to live life mindfully, compassionately and wisely otherwise heedlessness will lead us to woeful states.

"Hail and cheers to Death, he shall be my best friend."

A meditator also said that death is his best teacher, better even than Sayadaw U Pandita.

- (7) The poet wrote:

*The mind has a thousand eyes
The heart but one
Yet the light of the whole life dies
When love is done.*

*Death replies:
 Life has a thousand cries,
 Death but one,
 Yet the world cries on
 Even when Death is done.*

But death adds, at least, he leaves behind one of the most silent things on earth – the dead man’s mouth. The dead man tells no tales, unless coaxed by the forensic expert. Then at least, maybe, he can rest in peace.

(8) The Dream Team

The dream team usually means a team made up of people who work very well together. But here I mean something else. I mean a team that makes dreams. There are three main members involved: a) Birth b) Life-Aging c) Death.

Birth makes dreams begin. Life makes dreams continue. Death ends them.

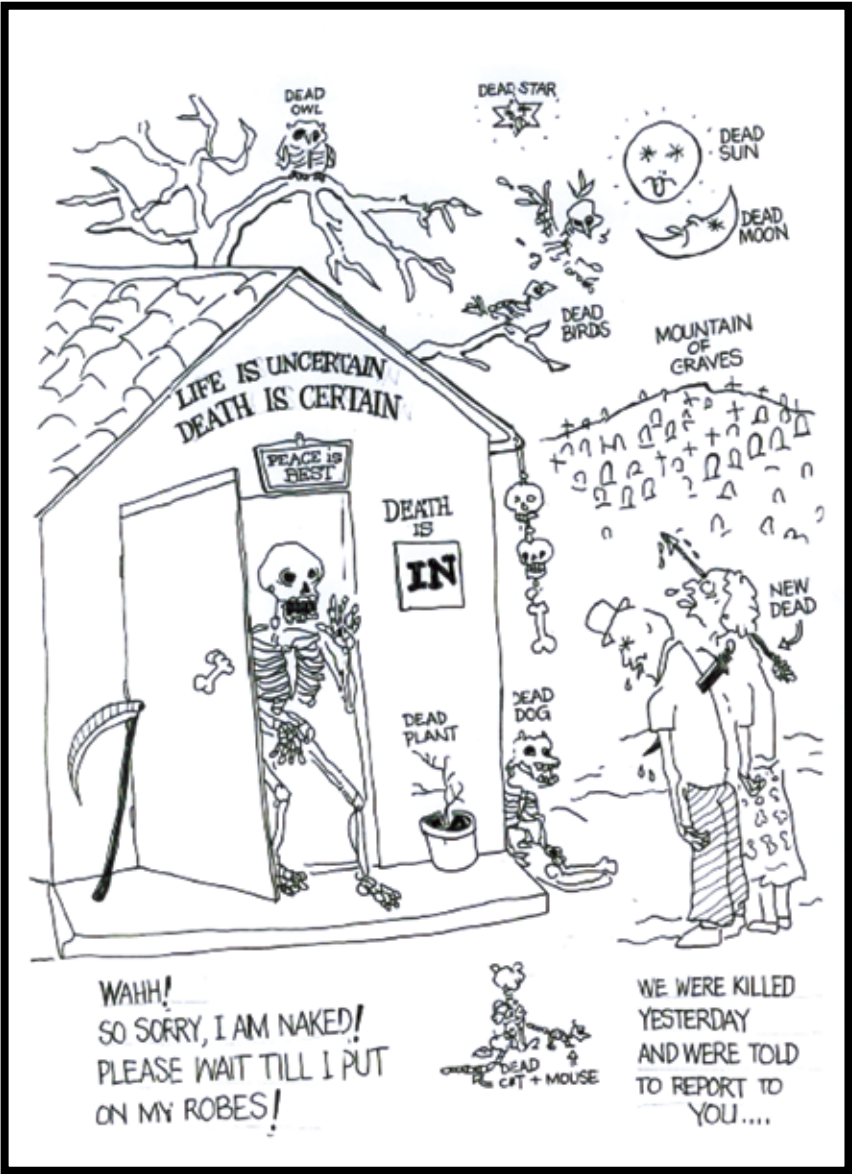
When you can see life as an illusion, then birth is the beginning of a long story and it can be a tearful one. Life is a continuous struggle of making ends meet, making the best of things, building-up something which will eventually fall apart. When nothing works, death then steps in to end the story. In this sense, death is the most sensible and reasonable of the three, yet it is often most feared. That is because people cling to dreams, no matter even if it be a nightmare. So the saying goes, “The wise do not fear Death, they fear Birth.”

- (9) When my father died when I was 10, I did not cry because I was not attached to him. When my mother died, I did not cry because I knew better. When my best friend died, I felt sadness. But when he visited me in the form of a spirit, sadness left me. When someone close to us dies, we feel sad and think that we shall never see this loved one again. We often feel this way is because of attachment. How can we feel sad for him when we do not know his destiny? He may have ended up in a happy place in which case we should rejoice. If he ended in a worse state, grieving will not help, compassion may.

Feeling sad then is a kind of non-acceptance, an aversion.

Enough of grief and sadness! We will all meet again in *Samsara* until one of us attains *Nibbana* in which case we should rejoice!

- (10) On a moonless night, go to a lonely spot and whisper, "Hush, hush...." 10 times. Then keep silent for 5 minutes. After that whisper, "Death, death...." another 10 times, then listen attentively. If he is present, then he will give an indication. It may be a cough, a low moan, and a falling star of extraordinary brightness or even a glowing specter. But one thing is unmistakable, the smell of formaldehyde or of rotting flesh. Then you can ask him for what your heart desires. But please remember that Death is very busy and he has a price. Every minute of the appointment may cost you from a few weeks to a few months of your own life. And depending on what you ask for, it may cost you a few years to a few decades of your life. And it may not even be granted! But there is one thing you must never ask for, and that is your own death; because if you do, you will be thrown straight to the hellish realms for being so stupid. Human life is precious. Never gamble with Death, he has always the upper hand. It is pointless to wish for a grave that is already yours. Make the best of the sun while it shines.
- (11) The window to the mind is the mind door and it is also through this where you can see death clearest.
- (12) The wish to live is closely linked to craving for existence. The wish for death is closely linked to the craving for non-existence. The *Arahatta* is said to have done away with craving. They live out of compassion for the world.
- (13) Derrick wanted to find out more about Death and so he summoned him. Death came and asked him to give him his hand but Derrick refused. "Are you frightened?" Death asked. "Well..." Derrick stammered. Then Death spoke, "How can you find out about Death when you are frightened of him?" "You have to trust me. If you cannot trust Death, who can you trust, life?"



Death naked

(14) O If Only

*If only you could count the days,
Before Death calls on you,
If only you know what lies beyond that door,
You would be very mindful
Of every breath you take,
Of every rise and fall*

*If only you know of the dangers,
If only you know of the possibilities
The mind can create,
Those Worlds not without hate,
Those lives not without tribulations*

(15) Creatures of Death

*Have you held a hand devoid of blood and pulse,
Too cold to touch,
Have you been touched by Death's icy feel?
Have you seen his face, pallid and stoned
Eyes just white, mouth opened wide?
You can smell his rotting flesh,
You can kiss his lips and taste Death's insipid taste,
Hear him in somebody's last cry, final sigh,
Hear him call someone every night.
O yes! we are creatures of Death, O Yes we are!
WE ALL DIE!*

*Death is the lord and master.
When he arrives, our heads touch the earth.
But remember always to smile as you remember Death's eerie smile.*

(16) On this visit to the hermitage at Kota Tinggi, I see every one growing old before me, some of them already preparing for death. As for others, I can see

their vitality quickly fading. They tell me I do not seem to grow old, but I know that it is not true. I can feel age eating into the body, especially at the bones. Maybe apparently I am aging at a slower rate. It does not mean that I will die later. It also does not mean that I will not have a terrible death. How death takes you does not depend on how you look, it depends on how you live.

- (17) A friend who lives in a lovely place in Florence told me this:

One day when walking in this lovely place a thought occurred to her, "I must be in paradise. So I must be dead." And looking around she saw people and thought, "These people here must also be dead."

It is quite true. We have all died and are dying and will die. We were someone before, are being someone else and will become others. So to overcome birth and death, we try to be nobody, nothing and be nowhere.

- (18) Think of Death

*Think of Death,
Think hard,
Think as you never thought before,
Think again and again,
Think until Death comes,
Then you can look straight at him in the eye.*

- (19) Not funny

Once I wrote about Death that he is always around to catch those unaware and pasted the message in a retreat. Someone wrote back saying that he has not seen him and he does not exist. He thinks it is funny, but certainly death is not. He may laugh now but when death comes, he will cry.

- (20) When Death comes

*When Death came today, Michael Jackson went,
So too many others less known,
When Death comes,
Even immigration officers cannot stop him,
He has no visas and he does not need any,
Death is the King of the living.
When he comes,
Even Queen Elizabeth of England,
Or Obama or George Bush will have to go down on their knees.
That's one of the few times when all men and women are equal.*

(21) Life and Death

*The living are dying,
The dying are still alive,
They who are about to die
Are most alive,
They who are alive,
Can be like unto the dead,
As for those who have died,
They are more than dead.*

(22) Measuring Time

*You are as old as you think,
I have been told, but I think
I am still in my sweet sixteen.
The mind is timeless, reason explains,
And that the body is but a measure
Of a passing dream.*

*You may measure as many do,
Old age by the date of birth,
Or is it better by the look on your face?
My preference however,*

*Is the proximity to Death,
 But when will he come to claim,
 Who can know?
 Such uncertainty is a matter of Life,
 Not Death,
 The cause of that is Ignorance,
 Not Knowledge.
 But the body is a telling sign
 And the mind, a finger pointing
 To where one will go.*

*Once Old Age used to measure itself
 By the number of missing teeth,
 Until they fixed dentures.
 Once Old Age manifested itself
 By the graying of hair,
 Until they used dyes and wigs.
 Once Old Age appeared
 with sagging wrinkled skin,
 Until they painted and pasted themselves
 With super cosmetics.
 People are always trying to cheat
 Old Age and Death,
 At best they can only delay and hide behind illusions.
 The sooner one accepts them the better,
 Happier is one without illusions*

Prague, 28 July 2009

23) Death and the Four Postures

a. Death and Walking Meditation

When we walk, do we always end up where we want to go? Not always. So where will we eventually end up? For every step we take, no matter where we want to go - school, shopping malls, homes....

finally, we are taking a step closer to death. But it just does not stop there. It takes one beyond to the next life and where that will be depends on how mindful one can be. So walk mindfully through death's door!

*He who walks mindfully reaches the heavens and beyond,
He who is negligent trips and falls to the lower realms.*

b. Death and Standing Meditation

We stand out of respect when the teacher steps into class. We stand up out of respect for the national flag or anthem. But we also stand up and watch the coffin bearers walk pass. We stand up and watch the dead get buried. As we stand, we can also watch the mind and body processes pass by and vanish into the past. In this way, we are also standing within watching the ultimate death happening every moment. One day, we may also be mindful even when death comes while we are in the standing posture.

c. Death and Lying Down

After talking about contemplation on death, I heard someone muttering to himself on the bed, "I am going to die, I am going to die...." It sounded amusing but it is not funny, people have died in their sleep. We can never be totally certain that we will wake up to another day. If life passes off while bad dreams are occurring, it may mean an unfortunate rebirth. So it is important that we sleep mindfully. Contemplating on death before sleep may actually help in this manner. In fact, it is one of the meditations that can help to counter sloth and so we actually would sleep less, wake up earlier and mindful to continue with our spiritual practice. It is not unusual that yogis who contemplate before they sleep arrive at insight knowledges.

d. Death and the Sitting Posture

I am still held in wonder when I hear someone dies in sitting meditation. It demonstrates considerable concentration. Such a person must have had ample training. This is no simple matter because when death comes the body is weak and so the usual posture is lying down. Since death is such an important transition, it is important to be very mindful and one usually is so while in sitting meditation. One may, therefore, say that it is the posture more ready for death. If one is prepared, then put all else aside and go into a meditation retreat. When death comes, one may actually detect the signs. Sometimes it comes with one's will to let Nature take its course. If one has indeed reached desired levels of concentration, death may come while one is doing sitting meditation. If one's body is greatly weakened, it may help to prop the body up into the sitting posture. It definitely will make a difference to the level of mindfulness.

24) Death can come to anyone, anywhere and anytime.

- a. Executions are often done before dawn, but they are not the only ones, there are also others who will leave before another sun.

One early hour before daybreak, someone wakes you up. Well, it is Death himself with his skeletal face and frame.

He draws near and whispers, "It's time to go...."

And you reply quite dazed, "Give me a moment..."

But he says, "There are no moments, there is only the NOW!"

- b. One fine day, someone knocks at your door. On opening and looking out you see Death standing beside a black limousine. He opens a door and invites you, "Please step in."

And you reply, "Can you wait a moment? Let me get something and leave a note."

But he replies, "But sir, you don't need to bring anything and you can't, all that you need, can be found on the other side. Besides, it is not possible for you to leave any note. It is too late."

- c. By the road you decide to pick up a hitchhiker. When he/she is seated beside you, it becomes clear from the fleshless face that it is Death himself. And he asks, "Can you take me to where I want to go?"

And you will have to reply, "At your service, please show me the way."

- d. On the airplane, you discover that the passenger seated beside you has no face. He asks you, "Sir, do you know where you are going?"

And so you reply, "I am going where you are going."

- e. One day a child brings his friend to see you. It is a little skeleton stained with blood. And that child says to you. "My friend here says he has come to take me to a beautiful place."

You quickly grab the child and say, "Please don't go." But he slips off your arms. You should have said, "Good bye, and I love you." At least you had made a good parting, done your last bit, and said your last word. There are things that when they come, cannot be avoided.

- f. When you see someone old and gray, staggering as he walks, you also see your days drawing near. When you see someone sick and groaning in pain, you also see your decay quickening. When you see someone dying or dead, quickly look around. If you see someone else, then that is Death.

- g. When taking a swim in the sea, you noticed that the sky had quickly darkened and lightning bolts have begun to crackle across to the horizon. A boat comes near to pick you up, but you noticed that they are dressed in ancient costumes.

And you ask, "Is this a fancy dress party?"
 And someone on board replies, "No sir, there is no fancy party here.
 You have come into a timeless zone, sir!"
 And so you request, "Please give me a hand, I'm sailing with you."

- h. When Death comes, and he can come at anytime,
 any place to anyone..... me included.
 Then accept his cold hand with a warm heart.
 Listen to his silent voice with a peaceful heart.
 Follow his footsteps as if in walking meditation.
 And never, never ask where he is taking you.
- i. While meditating, someone taps you on your shoulders and whispers
 into your ears saying, "I am Death, I have come to take you."
 But you tell him, "But sir, I am on my way to *Nibbana*."
 Then he can reply you in one of two ways.

- i) "O NO, you are not. You are coming with me."

In such a case, you reply, "If I must, then I go in peace."

- ii) "Can I follow you?"

And you tell him, "But sir, *Nibbana* has no place for Death." Then
 you can expect what he will do next. Probably he will drag you along
 as you scream. Unless and of course, if you are already an *Arahant*.
 Then Death will bow. Death bows only to an Arahant.

Falling short of that, it is you who must bow –

So bow 3 times

Bow 300 times

Bow 3 million times

Bow as many times as you have to die again and again until you have
 got yourself out of *samsara*.

Chapter 8

CONDITIONAL RELATIONSHIPS



Droplets of crystal clear dew glimmer and illuminate a spider's finely woven web which would otherwise be invisible and so captures unsuspecting prey. The connections reflect the complicated relationships in this world of beings and formations which practitioners of insight try to comprehend and thus free themselves.

Chapter 8

CLOUD NINE GREAT CONDITIONINGS – WHEN CLOUDS MEET AND PART

*When clouds meet, they melt and fuse,
When clouds part they spread and diffuse,
What keeps them together? What keeps them apart?
Great conditionings –
Invisible threads, obvious ties,
Apparent forces, unseen influences,
Such is the world made, so too our paths,
They appear and vanish in various ways
Like clouds in the sky.*

When I first came across this subject, my *Abhidhamma* teacher described them as kinds of forces. I have kept this view with increasing fascination for it deals with the ‘whys’ and ‘why-nots’ at the level beyond concepts, as well as the different forms and effects it can take. As a simile, we can say that there are many kinds of clouds – cumulus, stratus, cirrus just to name a few. Some bring rain while others don’t and there are also other atmospheric phenomena that signal the onset of weather change. In the ‘*Book of Individuals*’, we find the simile of ‘clouds that thunder but do not rain, those that do not thunder but rain, etc.’ referring to those that speak but do not act, those that act but do not speak, etc. We can also compare someone’s mood like that sometimes, for example, ‘there is a storm in their relationship’, or ‘there is calm before a storm’. The interesting thing is that we look at these relationships operating at the level of ultimate realities and so the reasons will not be the same as in conventional logic. Even in usage of Buddhist terms, many translators have rendered *Kamma* as The Law of Cause and Effect. In fact, *Kamma* is only one of the 24 types of conditionings.

On another occasion in Burma, when I reported on my experience while watching feelings, my teacher then, the Sayadaw U Javana, commented that I was watching the three types of sufferings (*dukkha*): suffering of pain (*dukkhadukkha*), suffering of alternation (*viparinamadukkha*) and suffering of formations (*sankharadukkha*) all in one. That struck me as something very interesting. Later, I realized that it was a matter of conditioning operating at three levels in existence from the conventional to the level of ultimate realities and transcendental reality. These invisible forces sure get around and inside things!

In the beginning of the chapter on this topic in the Manual of *Abhidhamma* by Anuruddha Thera, he states, “I shall explain here, in a fitting manner the detailed analysis of conditioned states (*sankhatadhammanam*), and of those states (*dhamma*) which are their conditions and how.”

First, the analysis takes us into just two things (*dhamma*):

1. Conditioning states (*paccaya dhamma*)
2. Conditioned states (*paccayuppanna dhamma*)

The second is obviously conditioned, like from A arises B and so the existence of B depends on A.

But it is not so simple, because in our case of study, A can arise together with B and we cannot say one which comes before if at all. In this set, all ultimate realities are conditioned states with the exception of *Nibbana*, the unconditioned.

In the first regarding conditioning states; it includes everything with the inclusion of *Nibbana*. That is to say, it does influence matters of *Samsara* and in marvelous ways – such as ‘off with the hair but not the head!’

This topic of conditioning is usually dealt in the last part and its profundity is regarded as a sign of the omniscience of a *Sammāsambuddha*. According to the story, the Buddha contemplated on the *Abhidhamma* after his enlightenment and only when he came to this last part, his body shone with lights of different colors which have now been used as colors in the Buddhist flag.

Nyanaponika Thera in his write up on this topic says that this part on conditional relationships is the teaching of synthesis as compared to analysis in the first part which is involved with discrimination. Just as to understand the workings of a machine, one has first to take them apart and then piece them together. Putting them together again makes one understand how the whole thing works, that is, one gets the whole picture. That second part is synthesis.

I remember an incident in university when I was learning about an engine. We had to take it apart, but after we had put it together, we had still some screws left. Where do these come from? We obviously did not understand it perfectly and those few left out pieces may decide that it won't work much longer.

It will take many years of study to understand at least intellectually this topic and I can only say with humility that I have only edged onto this abstruse subject and have much to learn and question. But since this is at best an introduction to an introduction to an introduction...., I have only included it in a very simple form, leaving many nitty-gritty details which unless one is familiar with the basic classifications, would end up wondering what are all these about. At best, I say, they are only what would be useful for practice for one with some knowledge on the topic. Finally, I must say I cannot leave it out altogether if this book has to have a semblance of wholeness.

I have first given generally what each type of conditioning means, what are the conditioning factors and what are, thereby, conditioned. This type of rationality is at the level of ultimate realities or at least at the conceptual study of it. Of these, I will leave out much details as it would confuse further the readers targeted for this book. These specific *Abhidhamma* relationships will not specifically apply to everyday conventional experiences of reasoning although the reflections of such conditionings are definitely there. Here, I do not hesitate to put in some as is also found in *Suttas*.

There are stated these 24 types of conditional relationships:

1. Root conditioning (*Hetu paccayo*)
2. Object conditioning (*Arammana paccayo*)
3. Predominance conditioning (*Adhipati paccayo*)

4. Proximity conditioning (*Anantara paccayo*)
5. Contiguity conditioning (*Samanantara paccayo*)
6. Conascence conditioning (*Sahajata paccayo*)
7. Mutuality conditioning (*Annamanna paccayo*)
8. Support conditioning (*Nissaya paccayo*)
9. Decisive Support conditioning (*Upanissaya paccayo*)
10. Prenascence conditioning (*Purejata paccayo*)
11. Postnascence conditioning (*Pacchajata paccayo*)
12. Repetition conditioning (*Asevana paccayo*)
13. Kammic conditioning (*Kamma paccayo*)
14. Resultant conditioning (*Vipaka paccayo*)
15. Nutriment conditioning (*Ahara paccayo*)
16. Faculty conditioning (*Indriya paccayo*)
17. Jhana conditioning (*Jhana paccayo*)
18. Path conditioning (*Magga paccayo*)
19. Association conditioning (*Sampayutta paccayo*)
20. Dissociation conditioning (*Vippayutta paccayo*)
21. Presence conditioning (*Atthi paccayo*)
22. Absence conditioning (*Natthi paccayo*)
23. Disappearance conditioning (*Vigata paccayo*)
24. Non-Disappearance conditioning (*Avigata paccayo*)

1. Root Conditioning: (*Hetu Paccaya*)

X : Conditioning factors: the six roots (*Hetu*)

a) Unwholesome roots:

- i) attachment (*lobha*),
- ii) aversion (*dosa*)
- iii) delusion (*moha*)

b) Beautiful roots:

- iv) non-attachment/detachment (*alobha*)
- v) non-aversion/ acceptance (*adosa*)
- vi) non-delusion/ wisdom (*amoha*)

Y : Factors conditioned by the six roots

a) 71 rooted consciousness and its 52 mental factors (with the exception of the delusion factor of the two consciousness rooted in delusion),

b) materiality born of rooted consciousness (*sahetuka cittajarupa*), materiality born of rooted rebirth consciousness (*sahetuka patisandhi kammajarupa*).

A point to note is what is meant by 'roots' here. The *Abhidhamma* defines it as 'those states that give rise to results/fruits, establish and develop those results in the object.

Results that arise from roots are the bodily, verbal and mental actions which may be moral, immoral and unmoral. Ho, ho! Now you know that every object that strikes your mind sends roots deep into your Consciousness, and quite a forest we have within us!

The simile given here is the tree whose roots run deep into the ground to give rise to the trunk, branches, twigs, leaves, flowers and fruits. And as for that tree of existence, such an immense wonder it is. It has been growing since time immemorial and will continue to do so unless something happens to stop it. Bring in the chain saw!

For those who meditate and deal with the mind it is obvious how deeply it runs in the Consciousness. It is not difficult after some observations to see that they are key factors that link up the mental states as to its detrimental downfall or growth. They are like major branches of growth, be they in the unwholesome or beautiful way. Most importantly, I think is their part as roots of existence as well. When watching the hindrances, they can link them all up here. It will be more obvious as to their part played in quest of extinction of defilements. The Perfected One (*Arahatta*) has no unwholesome roots. It is also interesting to note that the beautiful roots are still present but not wholesome Consciousness. It all goes to say that it all links the meaning back to what is Truth and Reality. This gives us an idea as to why they possess this particular type of conditioning force.

Knowing thus, one may single out these when they arise and one thus gets control

of the situation. Just like one keeps track of and then cut off the lines of supply and infiltration of dacoits, much victory is ensured and much trouble eliminated.

Studying the nature of this with mindfulness comes under the ‘Hindrances’ section of the *Satipatthana Sutta*. It is also included in the beginning of the section on mindfulness of Consciousness (Consciousness rooted in lust, aversion, delusion...). It also goes to say that one watches it intently not just to get rid of it but to understand deeply its natures – the conditions and conditions around them.

All of the *Samsaric* cycle is rooted in by the three unwholesome roots of attachment, aversion and delusion; and of the three, delusion can be considered the main culprit. One can also suspect and rightly so that the three beautiful roots are also in some way related to them. Non-greed, non-Aversion and Wisdom roots can come about only when the unwholesome counterparts are absent. In a developed form, they are wholesome and can reach transcendental/supramundane levels. As for its conditioning in the practice of insight, then it is obvious that the development in overcoming mundane existence would have to grow by way of insight practice. The roots then grow deep in the direction of reality, breaking apart the boulders of delusion.

2. Object Conditioning (*Arammana Paccaya*)

X : Conditioning factors: 89 Consciousness, 52 Mental Factors, 28 Materiality, *Nibbana*.

Y : Conditioned Factors: 89 Consciousness, 52 Mental Factors.

A more detailed explanation would be:

Again, the key to understanding this is what is meant by the ‘Object’. There are the usual two definitions:

- a) Delighting in
- b) Hanging onto

These refer to the dependence or inclination of the Consciousness and mental factors to its objects. So, it is a particular relationship between these phenomena that enable the phenomenon of experiencing to exist.

Usually we know full well that the Consciousness and its object are dependent on each other. But what kind is it? It is this kind. It makes it very interesting because this kind of conditioning influences worlds of diversity and reactions although there are clear laws as to what and how it will be. Since to know something, the Consciousness must have an object, it is a very basic and pervasive kind of force and way of connecting phenomena. More important is how? Then, we can understand to a great extent what is happening when we experience things.

If one can remember Alice in Wonderland walking into the mirror and finding herself quite lost, then we get the point. Except that from one mirror one enters within it to the next and the next. It is like waking from one dream and finding oneself in another. Objects and Consciousness are related and so the experience is as if one is with/in the object. From object it connects to other objects and so we go from one world to the next, one life to countless lives. Put two mirrors parallel to each other and what do you get? On one hand it is amazing; on the other hand it is frightening. Will you be able to get out of this maze?

The answer is getting through the right doors (that is, objects in this simile). The *Vipassana* object, of course! But ask again, what really is it? We are taught first to have that *Vipassana* mindfulness, then turn away from concepts to ultimate realities, first their specific characteristics and then to the universal characteristics. We have also been told about the three universal characteristics as the object of insight meditation. Interesting enough, this object is 'free and open'. Depending on the level of insight, what is experienced is different. When perfected, then it is the one and only Truth of the unconditioned state.

In the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* analysis of objects, we find some interest points.

Although there are many objects and Consciousness, some Consciousness arise only with specific objects while others not. This has to do with the sphere where it functions. In the mind door, however, everything is there, it depends whether one has the power to access to them and for certain things, they need very precise and developed forms of Consciousness. So the object is an indicator although not always a foolhardy one. It depends much on the mindfulness and discrimination powers to know these pathways and signs.

a) The five sense Consciousness (seeing, hearing, etc.) can take only their respective sense objects (color, sound, etc.)

b) At the mind-door sense, all five sense objects of past, present and future can be taken. Besides these, also those that cannot be taken at the sense doors: subtle materiality, Consciousness and mental states, concepts and *Nibbana*.

As for tranquility meditation, they have their own conceptual objects that are developed as 'signs' (*nimitta*) until it reaches its refined form and then it gets into absorption. This object is created by the Consciousness itself which then becomes conditioned by it in the process.

In *Vipassana*, however, the object is not developed but discovered which eventually reflects onto the observer Consciousness which then gets transformed by it.

A special note is given on the objects on the approach of Death and had been described in a previous chapter. It then leads one to be the object and base for the life continuum, the basic consciousness in the subsequent life. Therefore, it is like particular types of windows or doors whereby the results of *Kamma* kick one into.

3. Predominance Conditioning (*Adhipati Paccaya*)

This type of conditioning seem to refer to the power to dominate and overcome the Consciousness, mental states and lead one into actions and results. There are two types mentioned: X and XX with this dominating influence although quite different by themselves

a) Objective Predominance

X (conditioning states): Objective Predominance - Objects that are highly esteemed and regarded; that is, all the objects except Consciousness and associated mental states rooted in aversion and delusion and that Consciousness with bodily pain.

Y (conditioned states): Eight Consciousness rooted in attachment, eight

wholesome and eight functional Consciousness with wisdom in sensual realm, eight Supramundane Consciousness and 45 mental factors.

It is obvious that repulsive objects do influence one's actions greatly, but the argument is that when given a choice, the preferred one dominates. So it is not what that influences greatly, but which one can dominate more when given a choice by the individual. This is interesting because usually people want pleasure and not pain and so the advertisements, salesmen do their job of presenting what attracts others. Also, the saying that mildness controls better than aggression is relevant.

b) Conascence Predominance

XX: The four predominant factors—Wish-to-do, Energy, Investigation (Wisdom) and Consciousness (in 52 impulsions). These are also the bases of success.

YY: Classes of consciousness and mental states associated and material qualities produced by them.

In this case, the success of the dominating condition is by way of wholesomeness. What is wholesome can develop much more than unwholesome states not that they cannot be powerful. In the same way, it is a question of how more powerful can it be in the highest possibilities. Obviously, it refers back to the practice and thus we come back to the group of enlightenment factors of the same name. These then are like the General that leads the army and eventually becomes the King.

An interesting issue here is that at one time, only one of them can be the predominant conditioning factor. So, even if one does have more than one of these mental states, only one eventually dominates and becomes such a conditioning force.

Do you know which is yours? If you don't have one, make one. I would think I worked with the first, but as time went by, another takes over. The best will come when the investigation or wisdom factor plays the role of the wise ruler.

This part related to the teachings of the bases of accomplishment in the *Suttas*.

The first is one of strong wish or we could say the drive. This pushes the will to achieve farther. In the *Dhamma*, it would be *Dhammacchanda* which is akin to faith. When it comes with craving, then the purpose of achievement in the worldly sense also apply but would not reach the levels of spiritual heights and satisfaction.

There are also those that achieve because they are very diligent and hardworking. These are those that are patiently ploughing through day and night for months, if not years. This comes under the second case, energy.

As for the third Consciousness, Ledi Sayadaw in his ‘Exposition of The Factors of Enlightenment’ describes it as the mind that becomes thoroughly absorbed in its work. Those with these would always have the task in their mind and so becomes a potent driving force.

Lastly, the state of investigation which comes with reasoning and discrimination is one that comes with wisdom. This by far is the best and safest but is not easy to come by. It may, however, develop with practice.

4. Proximity Conditioning (*Anantara Paccaya*)

X: Preceding 89 Consciousness and 52 Mental States (except the Death Consciousness of *Arahatta*)

Y: Succeeding 89 Consciousness and 52 Mental States

This type of relationship occurs only in the stream of Consciousness and does not apply to material phenomena. One Consciousness arises and ceases and is followed by another. We can consider it as a flow that is so fine and subtle that if not looked properly has a semblance of no change and hence, the wrong view of permanence of self as is often identified with the Consciousness. This change from one Consciousness to another is so subtle that it is considered as within the field of Buddhas. But the ‘force’ is there and hence, we can consider the Consciousness as a process. What often noticed with mindfulness and concentration are bulks of it.

5. Contiguity Conditioning (*Samanantara Paccaya*)

X: Preceding 89 Consciousness and 52 Mental States (except the death consciousness of *Arahatta*)

Y: Succeeding 89 Consciousness and 52 Mental States

This is considered essentially the same as above but distinguished in the nature of how the process runs, for example, which Consciousness comes after which. For example, the Path Consciousness conditions the Fruition Consciousness by way of contiguity, or the Mind Adverting Consciousness conditions the first Impulsion Consciousness by contiguity. It is about precision in the analysis of the process, but essentially it is the same in the sense of 'force of flow'.

An interesting comment on this is about this relationship goes on even if the material processes are interrupted as in the cessation attainment of *Anagamis* and *Arahants* (*Nirodhasamapatti*), or in case of Mindless Brahmas beings (*Asannasatta*). Time from processes is two-fold – mental and material. Here in these cases, the flow of matter goes on and thus material time is present with it but the Consciousness itself is not there, but the flow of Consciousness time goes on and this is because of this conditioning/force. It seems absent because of the difference in terms of matter and mind in this conditioning connected with time.

Another point brought up is that the two types of relations have an exception, that is, in the case of the Death Consciousness (*Cuticitta*) of the *Arahant* who will not be reborn. Hence, the continuity of *Samsara* ceases. Interesting enough, *Samsara* has no traceable beginning but has an end.

The commentary gives an interesting simile to illustrate the difference between proximity and contiguity conditionings. The first is the Universal Monarch who renounces the world and thus, his son takes over. In the second case, the Universal Monarch dies and thus, his son succeeds him on the throne.

6. Conascence Conditioning (*Sahajata Paccaya*)

X: the four mental aggregates between themselves; mental aggregates and heart base at rebirth; four great essentials between themselves and to the derived elements;

that Consciousness that co-exist with, to material qualities born of *kamma* and mind (only at nascent moment).

Y: as above

Conascence means arising together and when doing so, is related to other phenomena that arise together with it. The example given is the candle flame which comes with the light and heat produced. It is like they are part of each other but can be experienced as distinctly different but seen more in terms of ultimate realities. Between the four mental aggregates, it is easy to understand but as to materiality, one needs to be more careful. The conascent conditioning (with regards to all materiality) occurs only with materiality which are mind and *kammic* produced matter, not with those derived from nutrition and seasons. So, at the Rebirth Consciousness moment, it is related in this manner to the three *kammic* derived materiality (at five sense realms), and later the arising sub-moment with the subsequent arising of each Consciousness with the mind produced matter. However, this relationship with matter is not mutual, as it is so between primary elements with its derived matter although they may be conascent.

For the sake of interest it would be good to note the five different forms of conascent conditioning of:

- a) Mentality and mentality
- b) Mentality and materiality
(but they are not mutual in case with mind produced matter)
- c) Mentality and mentality-materiality
- d) Materiality and materiality
- e) Materiality and mentality
(only in case of rebirth with materiality arising in conascence)

The case of co-incidence, however, has much to do with this as well, but it is of a later mentioned one – the Presence conditioning. This is more of co-incidence arising. On a more conventional level sometimes we do meet with somebody or come across something that makes a difference. It would be good to enquire into this. If it repeats the same way in co-incident arising, then the connection is not just accidental. More deeper connections underlie it. I do take special notice of this when

I go to a new place and certain people appear. Since I am involved in meditation, they may also have the inclination. On the other hand, it may not be wise to push forward things if signs warn you.

7. Mutuality Conditioning (*Annamanna Paccaya*)

Concomitants here should be arising at stage of genesis

X: The Consciousness and Mental States, Four Great Elements and Heart Base at Rebirth Moment.

Y: 89 Consciousness and 52 Mental States; Four Great Essentials (mutually)

This relationship is similar to conascence and is in fact a form of it. The difference is that they are mutually supportive. The example is a tripod which stands up because of the three legs. If one goes, the other two will also have to go.

Unlike the conascence conditioning where the primary elements arise simultaneously with its derivatives but are not mutual, that is, the latter need not occur always together, for mutual conditioning it is a must, as in the case between the four primary elements.

An interesting idea behind this is again, the phenomenon of co-incidence. Although this is not the same when we include the world of concepts, nevertheless, there is still something to it, especially when *kammic* and mind causes are involved with what is happening. For example, there is the telling of the birth of the Bodhi Tree coincides with the birth of the *Bodhisatta* on his last birth. The simultaneous birth of twins? I read a story about two identical twins and they married another two identical twins and they also gave birth to babies on the same day. There must be something more than mere coincidence. So we have to be more aware of coincidences especially when moments are critical or repetitive. What does one do then that may make a great difference, like taking the road less travelled?

8. Support Conditioning (*Nissaya Paccaya*)

This kind of conditioning seems to be rather wide. Definitions usually just say

that one thing depends on another to arise, as earth to the tree and canvas to the painting.

It gives two, three or even four types of this kind of conditioning, but here is given just three (which is complicated enough)

a) Conascence Support

X : Same as conascence conditioning, but has to be as base and support.

Y : ditto

b) Base-Prenascence Support

XX - a five material bases + heart base

YY - seven elements of cognition; Consciousness at the heart base making heart base as an object

c) Base-Objective Prenascence Support

XXX : Heart base which is used as an object of the Consciousness

YYY : Those Consciousness that are conditioned by the heart base which is also as object and acts as base.

The conditioning factor here will have to be a base (*vatthu*) which is materiality. They are like offices where work is done and produced. Build a house and you will end up accumulating lots of stuff. Buy a computer and you will be grounded on the chair as well. If you cannot tear yourself from it, then at least get one of those chairs specially designed for computer addicts. Get one also for your kid. It seems it helps in the posture and that in turn helps in the health. This is also matter conditioning matter which later conditions the mind. But which type of conditioning? Please tell me.

9. Decisive/Strong Support Conditioning (*Upanissaya Paccaya*)

As in the above conditioning with difference that it is strong and faultless. But there are differences. There are three forms of this type:

a) Objective Decisive Support

X: Same as Object conditioning

Y: ditto

Here, there is a difference with object predominance where it is one of the four bases of accomplishment makes the object strong; in this case it is the nature of the object that strongly causes the arising of the mental aggregates affected.

b) Proximity Decisive Support

XX: Proximity Decisive Support - same as Proximity conditioning

YY: ditto

Here, it is the same as proximity conditioning except that in the case of proximity conditioning, the preceding state conditions the subsequent state, whereas in proximity decisive support, the dependence is on the ceasing of the preceding states.

c) Natural Decisive Support

XXX: Strong Past 89 Consciousness, 52 Mental States, 28 Materialities, some Concepts.

YYY: Later 89 Consciousness, 52 Mental States

Here, the meaning is tied up with two words, (a) natural (b) strong. Natural (*pakata*) as given here means 'done properly', that is, when conditions internally and externally are right. It is like hitting the conditions at the right moment and way, and so that something desired happens. It also means 'natural' in the sense it does it by its own nature and not by the previous two (proximity, objective). Just like strong greed or faith can produce results without any influence from the object or preceding state. There are also given that there can be combination of the three types as in moments of realization.

A note has to be taken that ‘concepts’ do not come into consideration. Secondly, materiality cannot be the conditioned states in this case. Thirdly, this is applied in *Abhidhamma* cases to ultimate realities. In *Suttas*, it does not have to apply.

I would think that this implies an important cause or condition that makes things happen. The Buddhas are often quoted as Natural Sufficing Conditions, and taking it further, parents for the newborns. It may also include mental states as when the Buddha had ascribed ‘jealousy and avarice’ for the breaking up of a society, or even inanimate things like meditation centers for mental development or even a shady tree for an ascetic.

10. Prenascence Conditioning (*Purejata Paccaya*)

This form of conditioning is more simple and direct. What arises after is a support for what arises later. Parents come to this world before their children and provide for them, or the sun arises first to support the plants that arise after. There are two types, base prenascence and object prenascence.

a) Base prenascence

X: Base Prenascence: six Material Bases

Y: 85 Consciousness (minus four immaterial resultants) and 52 Mental States

Here, the six bases (*vatthu*) arises first and gives support to the Consciousness and mental states that occur later dependent on them. The heart base, however, does not act as such at the rebirth relinking moment to them in this way except at the next moment.

Base prenascence is the same as base prenascence support conditioning.

b) Object Prenascence

X: Object Prenascence - Present 18 Concrete Materialities (*Nipphannarupa*)

Y: 54 Sense Sphere Consciousness, two Direct Knowledge Consciousness, 50 Mental States (minus two Illimitables)

In this case, it takes into account the moment of meeting between the five sense objects at five sense bases and thus, Consciousness occurs. This is so only at the static moment (*thiti khana*) that they act as conditioning factors. In the case of mind door which takes objects at three periods, only the objects of the present period are objective pre-nascence. Note that Consciousness and mental states do not come in as they are too momentary to be a present conditioning state of this type.

In a more conventional level, we can say one needs certain bases before certain mental activities can arise. A healthy body, for example, is helpful to meditation. Some even say that nowadays one needs money to go for a retreat.

11. Postnascence Conditioning (*Pacchajata Paccaya*)

After the arising of the bases, the Consciousness that arise dependent on them then becomes a conditioning factor to help them carry on. The simile given is:

- a) The rain replenished vegetation existed before it.
- b) The milk of the mother nourishes the baby born prior to it.
- c) The son who looks after the parents when he has grown up.

It should not seem strange when one knows the power and capability of the mind. For example, there is this saying, “Mind over Matter”. People with deeper concentration who can keep the body alive without food for some time, and so maintain the material bases existed before.

On a conventional level, we can make certain preparations for old age. For example, pensions that have matured maintain many elderly when they retire. In meditation, what concentration one gets may help recover other levels attained earlier but lost somewhere along in time. Making resolutions that arouse past experiences can fall under this category.

X: 85 Consciousness (minus four *Arupa* resultants) from first Life Continuum

Y: Materiality arising along with preceding Consciousness after Rebirth-Linking.

It has a detail on the four types of matter dependent on derivatives. In the case of humans, the first life continuum relates two caused matter (*kamma, utu*) and the

second life continuum to three caused matter (+ *citta*). Only when nutrition is taken in, then it relates to four caused matter (+ *ahara*).

12. Repetition Conditioning (*Asevana Paccaya*)

One Consciousness arising gives force to the next but in many ways. Proximity causes it to arise, natural strong support causes it to arise strongly but repetition increases its power. Like one who starts repeating a mantra gathers momentum and force as one does it ardently. Without mindfulness, it may end up with quite a frenzy, especially if there is an excess in energy. Frequent entering into concentrated states helps to make it more powerful and deeper, and thus pave the way to longer and deeper absorptions. Even the repetitive penetration by insight also makes it cut deeper into illusions. In ordinary life, we also know habituation is a powerful factor for the continuity of our actions, but strong will and determination make attainments possible.

This condition is one where **only Consciousness** is concerned. Its repetition means the repetition of the **same type** of consciousness and **occurs only in its impulsion phase** and so in the *Kammic* Consciousness as well as the functionals of an *Arahant*. In the case of the sense sphere where seven thought moments of impulsion are involved, the conditioned state does not include the first, while the conditioning state would not include the last. The conditioned state would be the one prior to one of them. The same would apply with the *Jhanic* Consciousness impulsions with similar exception of the first and last ones. The link between Path and Fruition Consciousness do not apply to this type of conditioning because of the dissimilarity and being resultants. Also interesting is the note that the same type in the impulsion may take different objects and still belong to this form of conditioning.

X: 47 mundane impulsions except for the last Consciousness in the line of impulsion, 52 mental states associated.

Y: Following 51 impulsions except for the first in line of impulsion and fruition impulsions.

In daily life this type of conditioning is reflected in the power of habitualization.

It becomes powerful as well as quite unconscious. Keep repeating an action and one will find one doing it unintentionally. It becomes more pronounced when it is done in an accentuated momentum such as reciting a mantra. Do it in melodic rhythm adds pleasure and the buildup of the force increases geometrically. Finally, one may end up in frenzy and hysteria or if done so with mindfulness, ends up in concentrated absorptions.

13. Kamma Conditioning (*Kamma Paccaya*)

There are two types here:

- a) Conascent *Kammic* Conditioning
- b) Asynchronous *Kammic* Conditioning
- a) Conascent *Kammic* Conditioning

Conascent *Kammic* Conditioning is where the volition at that moment conditions the conascently arisen phenomena of Consciousness, other Mental States and Materiality.

X: Conascent *Kammic* Conditioning State - Volition in the 89 Consciousness

Y: 89 Consciousness, 51 Mental States (minus Volition), Conascent Materiality

This part is like some of the other type of conditioning such as root conditioning, but here the volitions involved are highlighted. Volitions function in the sense of encouraging and acting. Just as the actor begins his play, his body, voice and mental states change. It is in the creation of what is happening and the show begins. Many other external things also happen at the same time, the curtain rises, lights come out and the audience wows. The show has begun! Similarly, body, vocal and mental actions begin with the volition together with other material phenomena.

- b) Asynchronous *Kammic* Conditioning (*Nanakhanika*)

Asynchronous *Kammic* Conditioning includes those volitions, wholesome and unwholesome, that gives rise to the *Kammic* resultants and their mental states and materiality born of *kamma* which may arise at the relinking moment or after.

XX: 33 Past Wholesome and Unwholesome Volitions

YY: 36 Resultants Consciousness, their Mental States (38), and All Materiality born of Kamma.

The interesting point of this part is that the conditioned states arise after the conditioning states have ceased. However, it leaves behind an invisible force, a latency that is capable of bringing about the resultants when conditions favor it, which could be immediately after as in the Fruitions after the Paths and in which case it has been given a special name called ‘proximity/immediate *kammic* conditioning’, or much later in the next or future lives unless rendered defunct. An example given is the loan once borrowed must be repaid either as a whole or in stages. One may say that in conventional business, the contract holds the obligation to repay, but here a force remains in a latent form. Many are confounded by this because they think that these forces must appear in some concrete form in the Consciousness or body. But conditionings operate also as properties and forms that one cannot grasp, such as latent tendencies. Perhaps I may add, it is found in that ‘emptiness of a universe that is not the unconditioned’ and it is also the very meaning and substance of the sphere of conditioning itself.

Kamma and its results are very much part of the teachings of the Buddha himself. To deny it amounts to certain wrong views (*niyata micchaditthi*) which if held, will certainly lead one to woeful states in the next existence. If one observes one’s Consciousness, one can see all the creating activities in operation, be they moral or immoral. It can be frightening if one thinks of the innumerable forces generated daily and often unintentionally. Although quality is important, we cannot ignore quantity. The answer to this would then be frequent reminders and from that continuous and habitual practice.

What life holds for us is what *Kammic* conditionings bring, wrapped up in a package or in installments of payment. Your pages of life will show much of what your past deeds require of you not only in this existence. That store, ‘O what a store that faceless Creator, *Kamma* can use to make us smile or be really sick!’

I remember that many years ago I read with interest the compilations of true stories where people recounted their life experiences and it became clear that *Kammic*

conditioning had taken place. They were collected in a Thai magazine called '*Law of Kamma*'.

One story tells of a friend who tried to help another by robbing someone else's one and only cow. After some time, he encountered a strange object which happened to be an explosive. In his dying moments, he told his friend that the cow which he had stolen and killed was attacking him. When it reached him, he died.

The Abhidhammattha Sangaha in its chapter on Kamma explains the twelve-fold kamma which gives us a good idea of its workings. They are grouped into groups of four. In brief they are:

a) By Way of Function

- i) Productive
- ii) Supportive
- iii) Obstructive
- iv) Destructive

There are many of these kammic forces and they interact with each other. Destructive here means that the lifetime is prematurely ended such as a youth who dies in a car accident or a grave illness.

b) By Order of Ripening

- i) Weighty
- ii) Death-Proximate
- iii) Habitual
- iv) Reserve

In this group, the order of the force given priority in ripening is given. Weight refers to the gravity of the *kammic* force, death-proximate by its position near death, habitual by its frequency and reserve as the other odds and ends or what one may call, a wild card.

c) By Way of Ripening

- i) Immediately effective (in this lifetime)
- ii) Subsequently effective (in next lifetime)
- iii) Indefinitely effective (in lifetimes from the one after the next)
- iv) Defunct (whose results will not ripen).

This part refers to the time or lifetime when the resultants will manifest.

d) By Plane of Ripening

- i) Unwholesome *kamma* (ripens in woeful states)
- ii) Sense-sphere wholesome (ripens in the sense sphere happy realms)
- iii) Fine material sphere wholesome (ripens in the *Rupabrahma* planes)
- iv) Immaterial sphere wholesome (ripens in the *Arupabrahma* planes)

This final part refers to the different planes of existence the resultant will take place.

14. Resultant Conditioning (*Vipaka Paccaya*)

In this case, the conditioning state is the Resultant Consciousness from past *Kammic* conditioning. They are deemed passive, effortless, subtle and tranquil. This is because the active phase has expended that active force and what matured finally as a result is tranquil, such as in the deep sleep in man. The resultants of the sense cognitions are also sort of effortless and passive. Even the sleep of animals which are the unwholesome resultants, one can see that they are passive and tranquil. This imparts such nature to its conascent mental states and materiality. And I may also add, all things around it and afterwards. What could a good sleep do? Many things although that sleep itself seems inactive. Having rested, we are ready to take on the world again. The body too, recovered and revitalized is able to work again. In terms of Fruition attainments, they can certainly make lives more tranquil besides acting as a base for further Paths. Make use of the resultants of your good *kamma* while you can. Get to know it, especially the nature of one's life continuum, also the mind door and it can be very useful knowledge.

X: 36 Resultant Consciousness, their 38 Mental States and Conascent Materialities

Y: The above Resultant Consciousness + Mental States + Materiality born of *kamma* and Consciousness.

15. Nutriment Conditioning (*Abhara Paccaya*)

Nutriment conditioning is supportive, like a pole that maintains a tent, like fertilizers that one feeds to a plant so that it grows and maintains itself.

Nutriment conditionings are of two types:

- a) Material Nutritive Conditioning
- b) Mental Nutritive Conditioning

a) Material nutritive conditioning - They are again of two types:

- i) Concerning food eaten and digested in the body to give rise to other material qualities
- ii) The nutriment materiality that is present in all material groupings (*kalapa*).

It would seem that in any matter, there is a potential to support other matters. Whether it does so or not depends on other conditions. After all, they are all the elements. As they say, one man's meat is another man's poison. Things too hard has to be cooked, food otherwise, toxic can be detoxified. Putting it into the belly is only one part of the story. Whether one can digest and assimilate it is another. What other effects will occur one can see it only later. I suppose many have died testing what is edible in the course of history.

There seems to be a lacking in this in Theravada Buddhism concerning food values. Much can be found in other Hindu systems such as Aryurveda or in the Daoist adepts of China who seek immortality. I suppose, the Theravadins are more concerned with something 'higher' than to leave a legacy of food matters such as healthy recipes.

X : Material Nutrition Conditioning

- (i) Nutritive essence in food
- (ii) Internal nutritive essence born of four causes

Y : Materiality of same and other groups

b) Mental Nutritive Conditioning - There are 3 factors here:

- i) Contact - From contact arises feelings and thus keeps the train line of dependent origination running. This first part shows the link from where arises the processes of creation before what reactions that follow. Without this there is no feeding station. Without food things die.
- ii) Volition - From volition all the other actions arise and so all *Kammic* activities and their results that nourish the cycle of Samsara. This on the other hand is feeding into the stream of conditioning itself. That is, it keeps that invisible latent force which we call asynchronous *kammic* conditioning viable. Such fuel, one may consider it as stored in a place where no thief can rob, where no king can confiscate, and at the same time, one cannot empty it as one likes as trash from the basket into your neighbor's backyard.
- iii) Consciousness - Consciousness (*Vinnana*) being the base where arises all the other activities in one's lifetime and so in this way nourishes the continuity of the cycle. Actually, this is the base for all the works and all to happen in one lifetime. How much can one take? In a simile, the Suttas tell of a man pierced by a thousand spears in the morning, in the day and again at night. Such is the food that has been allowed as one gets into the cycle again.

XX - Mental Nutritive: Contact, Volition, Consciousness

YY - 89 Consciousness, 52 Mental States, Materiality Conascent with each nutriment

The world is very much obsessed by food. Some, however, do not have enough. When I was in the States, I was amazed at their super-doo-bee-doo-markets. Someone from starvation prone countries would die of a heart attack if he gets into one. Asia on the other hand, had been working on it for centuries before white man landed

onto the New World. As people get wiser, they go for health food and so various food theories come about. Then they admit that the mind too must be considered and that is getting wiser but not any easier. It is like, as they say, what is healthy does not taste nice, what is not healthy tastes like heaven. It has its counterpart in the mental nutrition. Objects are one thing but what is important is what type of Consciousness that goes along with it. See what the televisions other publicities feed you. As they say, you are what you eat.

16. Faculty Conditioning (*Indriya Paccaya*)

Faculties/controlling faculties are those phenomena that control its conditioned states. They are compared to ministers who control their respective fields but not others in the sense of producing, developing and continuing. Therefore, there have been mentioned the twenty two faculties. This type of conditioning are of three types:

a) Base Prenascent Faculty Conditioning

This refers to the conditioning by the five sense bases that arose before its conditioned states, the sense cognitives and its mental states. The sixth, the heart base for the Consciousness, however, is not a controlling faculty conditioning factor. What arises at the mind door is not controlled by it.

X: Prenascent Faculties - Five Material Sensitivities

Y: Ten Sense Consciousness + Seven Universals

b) Material life Faculty Conditioning

The material life faculty arises after the relinking and when arisen, continues to control by support, etc. with regards to the nine materialities born of *kamma* by this type of conditioning (but only at the static phase, therefore, cannot be regarded as coascent). Also interesting is that it has been given the simile of a wet nurse. The mother of these *Kammic* derived materialities being the *Kammic* forces, but they are of the past and now they are maintained by this faculty.

XX: Material Life Faculty : Material life Faculty at Rebirth and Existence.

YY: Kammic born Materiality Conascent with Material Life Faculty.

A note given which may be of interest is that the two sex faculties are not of the controlling faculty conditioning since they are not present and do not control the nine kammic derived matter although they are responsible for the masculine and feminine qualities of the body. In this sense, they are like genes that determine these sexual characteristics but does not produce, develop, maintain those that give rise to them.

c) Conascent Controlling Faculty Conditioning

Conascent Controlling Faculty Conditioning refers to the remaining eight mental states and they condition their conascent arising mental states. For example, feeling controls the arising of Consciousness and mental states conascent with it.

XXX: Conascent Faculty: Eight Mental Faculties - Psychic life faculty, Consciousness, feeling, confidence, energy, mindfulness, one-pointedness, wisdom which includes the I-shall-know-what-I-did-not-know faculty, higher realization faculty, He-who-has- known faculty.

YYY: 89 Consciousness, 52 Mental States and Materiality Conascent with Faculties.

With respect to the difference between the Predominance Conditioning, this type is more limited to its respective field, like ministers with their own portfolios unlike the king who controls over everyone.

This idea of control is something to tackle with. For one, Buddhists talk about non-self (*Anatta*) as absence of a controller. But it does not mean there cannot be control. Secondly, it is often associated with freedom. To be free is often taken to be able to do what one desires which can also end up as something disastrous. It should be doing something that gives one real peace in which case you would need to be mindful. But as you see, it is about something else here. It is more like control stations that man certain aspects of the mind and matter. Of course it is all non-self and with the help of mindfulness, realizes how to make full use of them.

17. Jhana Conditioning (*Jhana Paccaya*)

Jhanic conditioning refers to the conditioning by fixation. There are the five *jhanic* conditioning factors (initial application, sustained application, joy, feeling and one-pointedness) of which in the case of absorptions, the feeling would then be happy feeling for the first four and indifferent for the fifth. They condition the conascent states to act in line by being firm in the direction of their aim/object. One can compare to this of a diver, who, seeing that beautiful pool of water below him, is motivated to take the plunge and when he does takes the appropriate bodily posture, or like one who is very interested in meditation would drag along his whole family if he must, to the center. Since this firm and fixed directional nature is not limited only to absorption (*jhanic*) form and formless states, they are present in all actions that require a mind that has some strength, and this includes taking a step. It includes also immoral actions.

X: Five Jhanic Factors: Initial Application, Sustained Application, Joy, Feeling, One-Pointedness in 79 Consciousness (minus 10 Sense Consciousness)

Y: 79 Consciousness and 52 Mental States + Conascent Materiality.

There have been much said about absorptions and they are concerned with concentration. The factor involved is the one-pointedness and so when developed all else move into the direction of the object. I think that if one wants to get into say, absorption of light, one's mind would turn towards everything that is bright; internally too, like bright perception, clear feelings and externally should even prefer to wear white.

However, as conditioning factors, they work and collect together to gather a forceful flow that drives the whole mental conditions to plunge into the object thus resulting in a state of strong drive and concentration.

18. Path Conditioning (*Magga Paccaya*)

Path means that which is capable of leading one to a destination. In this sense, the *Dhamma* speaks of the Right (Noble) Path with its respective Path factors that

lead to *Nibbana* and the Wrong Path with its contrasting mental states which lead to the woeful states. They have been compared to chariots that take one to happy or unhappy states, hence, the importance of roots in this conditioning.

X: Twelve Path Factor

- a) Right Path: Wisdom (Right View), Initial Application, Three Abstinences, Energy, Mindfulness, One-Pointedness;
- b) Wrong Path + Wrong View (only in Wrong Path), Wrong Thought, Wrong Concentration. (Those Wrong Action, Speech and Livelihood and Wrong Mindfulness as they do not come under any ultimate realities and thus, do not come under this type of conditioning.)

Also to be noted is that the 18 Rootless Consciousness and the Indeterminate (functional) states do not come under this category.

Y: The Conascent 71 Rooted Consciousness + Mental States associated with Rooted Consciousness.

We learn that the Noble eightfold Path has three levels and each with three parts. The three parts being:

- i) Morality
- ii) Concentration
- iii) Understanding

Each one of them leading to the other which in turn (understanding) fortifies again the former (morality). And so, the forces build up in its three levels.

The three levels are:

1. Root level where the main part of the practice is morality with an edge into wisdom. Practice of Vipassana in daily life belongs to this level. One should have at least the first insight knowledge of discrimination into mind and matter, otherwise, there is no inkling of the direction out of the cycle of Samsara.

2. The Preliminary level where the main part of the practice is concentration with more edges into wisdom. When one immerses oneself into the practice of meditation, especially in a more intensive manner, then concentration levels are bound to rise. Such concentration as the access level is needed for deeper insights to arise.
3. The Noble Path is where the main part played is wisdom and it continues to spur quality into the two former levels. In this last part, the wisdom has reached the supramundane level.

But one must not forget the key factor to this buildup of the Path and that is the Nature of the *Vipassana* object. This again will depend on one's wise attention (*yoniso manasikara*).

On the whole, one may say it is like a stream or river flowing to the sea. The difference between the *Jhanic* conditioning is that it flows into that deep pool of *Samadhi* while the Path takes one out of the cycle of *Samsara*.

19. Association Conditioning (*Sampayutta Paccaya*)

Association conditioning occurs between the Consciousness and the mental states. Their nature is of arising together, ceasing together, having the same base and same object. It is saying that at one moment of occurrence one cannot really separate them. They have been compared to waters of the different rivers when they enter into the ocean. One cannot really say this part of the river comes from River A and that part from River B. Thus, that ability to discriminate them has been described as the territory of omniscience. This is what Arahant Nagasena said in a reply to King Milinda.

This brings us back to the simile of the spider. First one sees the spider, then one sees the spider's different parts – those eight hairy legs, that soft abdomen, those beady eyes, those things that bite, its venom.... And then we see the spider again, with more detail as to how it spins its web, catches its prey, kills and eats it, and finally give rise to more spiders. Well, if you would like the whole story of the Black Widow Spider, there is a nasty part about copulating with its little male partner and then finishing him off! That is just what *Abhidhamma* does, help you to get a clearer picture of the Consciousness and make a noble man or lady out of it.

X: 89 Consciousness, 52 Mental States.

Y: As above

One more thing of interest is that the material groupings (*kalapa*) although they arise and cease together they are not associated conditionings because not all four of conditions are satisfied, for example, materiality does not take any object. So such type of conditioning occurs only with mental phenomena.

20. Dissociation Conditioning (*Vippayutta Paccaya*)

This, however, is a case that although they may coexist at one moment of time, they are different. ‘Conascence dissociation’ is when they arise together but are not associated. This is the case where the Consciousness and the mind produced matter arise together; similarly it is so between the Rebirth Consciousness and the *Kammic* produced materiality. A simile for this is oil and water. Although they are together and liquid but they are certainly different things.

‘Conascence Prenascence’ is when one arises before another, that is, the material base that has arisen first is the conditioning state for the mental aggregates that will arise only after and Post Nascence is when the conditioning state arises only after as the mental aggregates that arise after the material base has already arisen.

X: Conascence Dissociation Conditioning Factors - 75 Consciousness (minus four Immaterial Resultants, 10 Sense Consciousness, Arahatta’s Death Consciousness)

Y: Conascent Materiality

XX: Prenascence Dissociation Conditioning Factors: Same as Prenascence Support condition.

YY: ditto

XXX: Postnascence Dissociation Conditioning Factors - same as Post Nascence Conditioning.

YYY: ditto

A note given in a commentarial guide quotes that this conditioning does not apply with the five sense bases and the five sense cognitions because they are external. It explains that the conditioning here is expounded when things appear to be associated.

In the conventional sense, there is a lesson in this. Things are never always the same. That is what the world is made of, different things yet we are connected in some way. So the first thing is we have to accept others as they are. Killing them is often not the best solution. Living or let live is better but if situations get worse, try to survive without more evil *kamma* than what we already have. The saying that ‘we agree to disagree’ helps us to live in the sense of dissociation in a peaceful way. But as stated, this is not precisely meant in *Abhidhamma* terms but merely a reflection of the idea behind it.

21. Presence Conditioning (*Atthi Paccaya*)

This one is quite general. It is as one teacher described, a matter of coexistence. What is present in terms of its three sub-moments – origination, continuation (stasis) and cessation give support to those phenomena present at that time. For small details, the conditioning it seems is effective only in its static phase. As such, there are several types – seven of them which we will not go through here.

X: Conascence Presence - same as Presence conditioning.

Y: ditto

XX: Prenascence Presence same as Prenascence Conditioning

YY: ditto

XXX: Postnascence Presence same as Post Nascence Conditioning

YYY: ditto

XXXX: Nutriment Presence same as Material Nutriment Conditioning

YYYY: ditto

V: Faculty Presence same as Mental Life Faculty Conditioning

J: ditto

A note for more advanced practitioners is that *Nibbana* which is also a conditioning factor does not fall under this conditioning. The reason being that this conditioning is meant only for phenomena which have the three phases of the moment; that is, the conditioned characteristics (*sankhata lakkhana*).

It clears from the synthesis of conditions that the presence plays a role that includes many conditions, including that of the path conditioning. So to be present or be in the presence can bring about much conditioning power. Even this is in some way linked with objective conditioning that covers all of one's experiences.

22. Absence Conditioning (*Natthi Paccaya*)

This is the opposite of Presence conditioning in the sense that its relation to the conditioning factor applies only by its absence. As such, it is similar to Proximity and Contiguity conditioning, that is, the absence of the previous Consciousness gives room to the next consciousness.

X: Same as Proximity Conditioning

Y: ditto

23. Disappearance Conditioning (*Vigata Paccaya*)

In this sense, a teacher told me that this conditioning occurs at the very moment of its completion of the last cessation moment. So it makes sense when they say that it is the same as Contiguity condition where the absence of the previous conditioning conditions the arising of the next.

It is the same as the above.

X: Same as Proximity Conditioning

Y: ditto

24. Non Disappearance Conditioning (*Avigata Paccaya*)

This again is the opposite of Disappearance Conditioning. It differs from the Presence Conditioning in that it takes all the three moments in the conditioning function.

X: Same as Presence Conditioning

Y: ditto

From the synthesis of conditions, all conditions are included in four:

1. Objective - Object predominance, Base-Object-Prenascence Support, Object Prenascence, Dissociation.
2. Decisive Support - Object Predominance, Base-Object – Prenascence Support, Object Prenascence, Asynchronous *Kamma*, Dissociation, Proximity, Contiguity, Repetition, Absence, Disappearance.
3. *Kamma* - Asynchronous *Kamma*
4. Presence - Object Predominance, Conascence Predominance, Conascence Support, Base-Prenascence Support, Base-Objective - Prenascence Support, Base Prenascence, Object Prenascence, Conascent *Kamma*, Dissociation, Root, Conascence, Mutuality, Result, Nutriment, Faculty, *Jhana*, Path, Association, Non-disappearance, Postnascence.

Finally, one may say that everything is linked in some way. So here it is; the *Abhidhamma* web which is also a maze. It is not just a three dimensional puzzle, it is four dimensional and more. Now, one has to tame that spider to be one's loyal servant and guide. After all, who can move along better in such a web other than a super-doo-bee-doo-spider. Take that line which is the Path Conditioning; move towards with the Objective Predominance which has its field touching to the saving hands of *Nibbana*.

Chapter 9

BON VOYAGE



The journey is far and uncertain, so not many will venture far. But never mind, small is beautiful and the wonder awaits. Hop on board!

Chapter 9

BON VOYAGE

Tracing the Footpaths of the Divine Snail through the Wild, Wild Mists of Mount Illusion.

As explained in the previous chapter, many things work in combination to give the result. We are fortunate to have all the workings of the ship explained to us ‘on a silver plate’ and our teachers fed us with ‘a golden spoon’. So let us see how we can try to look into how these parts work together.

They say that a man’s last words are very important. The Buddha renounced the rest of His lifespan three months before the decided end. He had sufficient time to say enough last words and the last and longest discourse of the *Digha* collection, recounted it in fair detail what happened in these three months. Here, He delivered a good summary of what He taught, from the external conditions that conduce to realization to the final details in the Consciousness’ elements. But the gist of it is given as the Thirty Seven Factors of Enlightenment arranged in seven groups. Each of these groups gives a different aspect in terms of the practice and so, on the overall, we get a very good picture of the whole practice in more ways than one. In other words, we have a good knowledge of the workings of the ship. And the journey itself is water based, because the *Vipassana* object eventually is the Three Universal Characteristics, the flowing process of mind and matter.

The 37 Factors of Enlightened in their groups are:

A) Four Foundations of Mindfulness

1. Foundation of Mindfulness of Body
2. Foundation of Mindfulness of Feelings
3. Foundation of Mindfulness of Consciousness
4. Foundation of Mindfulness of Phenomena

B) Four Supreme Efforts

1. Effort to overcome unwholesome states arisen
2. Effort to avoid unwholesome states not arisen
3. Effort to arouse wholesome states not arisen
4. Effort to maintain wholesome states arisen

C) Four Bases of Accomplishment

1. Wish/Desire
2. Energy
3. Consciousness
4. Investigation.

D) Five Controlling Faculties

1. Confidence
2. Energy
3. Mindfulness
4. Concentration
5. Wisdom

E) Five Spiritual Powers

1. Confidence
2. Energy
3. Mindfulness
4. Concentration
5. Wisdom.

F) Seven Factors of Enlightenment

1. Mindfulness
2. Investigation of *Dhamma*
3. Energy
4. Joy
5. Quietude
6. Concentration
7. Equanimity.

G) Noble Eightfold Path

1. Right View
2. Right Thought
3. Right Speech
4. Right Action
5. Right Livelihood
6. Right Effort
7. Right Mindfulness
8. Right Concentration

One can also consider that they are basically the same thing because each of these sets, have also been described as the '**one and only way**'. However, in each case a certain aspect of the practice is highlighted and so on going through them, one learns more of the various aspects of the practice. Therefore, we can consider each of them as such, different descriptions of the Path.

A) The Four Foundations of Mindfulness – The Way of the Spider

The spider, as described by Ven Anuruddha who excelled in the practice of the Four Foundations, weaves a net so fine that it captures the subtlest of defilements, and then kills them with insight. One can see it in two aspects; one as mentioned, is used to catch pests that torture us, which can be very subtle and clever like mites that bury themselves in our skin and lice that which dig burrows in your scalp, and so ones mindfulness has to be thorough and all pervasive. Spinning this wonder web is no easy matter, making it continuous is another thing. There will have to be lots of it since it will have to cover the whole world. The whole world? Is that possible? In terms of external spacious world, it will indeed be intimidating, but if you consider the inner world, then the possibility is there, although it may take some time, perhaps more than one lifetime.

That web will be no other than that Mindfulness of the Four Foundations that leads to insight. It is the substance that makes possible greatness and penetration. Collected, and it becomes concentration; sharpen it and it becomes insight. This type of mindfulness is none other than that which can build that vehicle to cross over the sea of sufferings.

I can imagine that the spider will first have to fix the main threads onto something solid such as in twigs of trees or rocks which generally are more stable. And so we can equate this as the first foundation, the body since it is grosser and easier to follow. One can start with the main body postures and go on to the minor postures. When appropriate, one can develop deeper concentration into narrower fields like the breath, rising-falling of abdomen or very slow walking. Then as it goes finer and more adept, it connects all the other parts into a strong functioning web, and these are the other three foundations. This happens because when the material phenomenon is clear, the mental phenomena will also become clear. Feelings will be noticed more often next and then one proceeds to that very subtle and elusive Consciousness. They are, after all, interconnected although the forms of relationships may vary. Finally, it becomes skilled enough to make the subtlest object a *Vipassana* ground. Since *Samsara* is very extensive, the training of mindfulness will need to be done systematically. One has to master the Four Foundations step-by-step patiently.

Each of these foundations is like bases, one connected to another. Like climbing up the mountain, one may approach it on more than one side. Although one of them is sufficient to take one across, usually more or all are used. As they say, Jack of all trades but master of one. Why not a master of all? The judge of that will be whether the function of release is served.

Finally, it stays in the center of the web. Why? Merely it is because of strategy. Which will it be? One may jump to the conclusion, the Consciousness of course! Wait a minute. I would rather think it will be that which one is most skilled in. Mindfulness is still the priority. Without strong mindfulness, even strategy can turn to be 'wishy-washy'. If one is skilled in all four, then it will have to be the last, the DHAMMA, which includes even the Supramundane. Secondly, one can look at the mindfulness as a painter that carefully fills up each part of the picture like a jigsaw puzzle. The finer each stroke of the brush is the clearer will be the outcome. What are we capturing? What are we painting?

An interesting part of it is the spider killing the pest. Not exactly a nice thought, but nasty things are best done away with. At least in this case, it does not involve the breaking of the first precept of killing, since we are not dealing with a living being as an object. So it is more like purification or healing, like getting rid of viruses. Here,

it does so by getting to its roots of existence, those which go into the deep truths of Nature which is beyond the reaches of the defilements themselves.

THE CAVE OF LIMITLESS WEBS

The opening of this cave is formless. One may call it circular like the moon-gate the Chinese Feng Shui masters construct in gardens for romance and prosperity, but actually it is formless. It is more like an entry point, an ethereal opening, as one can will it if one knows how to. At times it looks like a mirror, at other times like a gate that leads to countless gates. The *Abhidhamma* masters call it the Mind Door which is also one aspect of the Consciousness, one of its functional aspects. That would make it seem simple enough and the door is always available at the heart, but do not think it too soon, for it often is hidden behind the ten thousand things that arose from duality.

Once inside, people find countless things, as one teacher commented, "Everything is there". But for the true seeker of the way such as the Divine Snail, one who is ever careful and attentive, it knows that webs come with spiders, countless spiders live here preying on slips of negligence of their victims onto their sticky, poisonous webs that can be so fine as if they are invisible.

The spider to look for is the '**Dhamma Spider**' which will look the same as any of the other spiders. In fact, they are mirror images of each other.

"You don't look like a prospective victim like the others," said the spider, eyeing the snail.

"And what do you see that makes the difference."

"Well, for one thing, you move slowly and carefully. Secondly, you are very sensitive and attentive to dangers and possibilities. Yet most of all there is that 'light' around your awareness as you move. These are signs that you are a seeker of the Way. In that case, I am the spider you have been looking for and I will tell you the secrets of this cave."

The snail listened carefully and noticed that this spider is indeed amazing. Its

eyes emit glows and penetrate into its own. It uses telepathy to a large extent in their communication which establishes a link to what all their existences have been since time immemorial. True, there had never been 'you' or 'I', 'here' or 'there'. All existences are just ephemeral formations that shift and change rapidly hinged on by moments of contiguous conditionings.

The message was clear; the webs are those linkages of existence. For the unwary, they are traps and they are chains, they are labyrinths without end and they all lead to the DEAD ENDS. But if one is really mindful, then they tell one of how the endless story of existence is wrought and from there, develop understanding as to how they work, and thus one can find freedom.

"That light that you carry will tell and lead the way. That stickiness of the web is craving, the poison is anger and its invisibility is delusion. Never be without the light of insight and you can travel along these lines freely. The only thing you have to remember is your time is limited." Having said this, the spider paused awhile and indicated to the snail to follow him. "Let me show you some important webs. The Enlightened Ones drew out these and so it would be good that you bear them in mind."

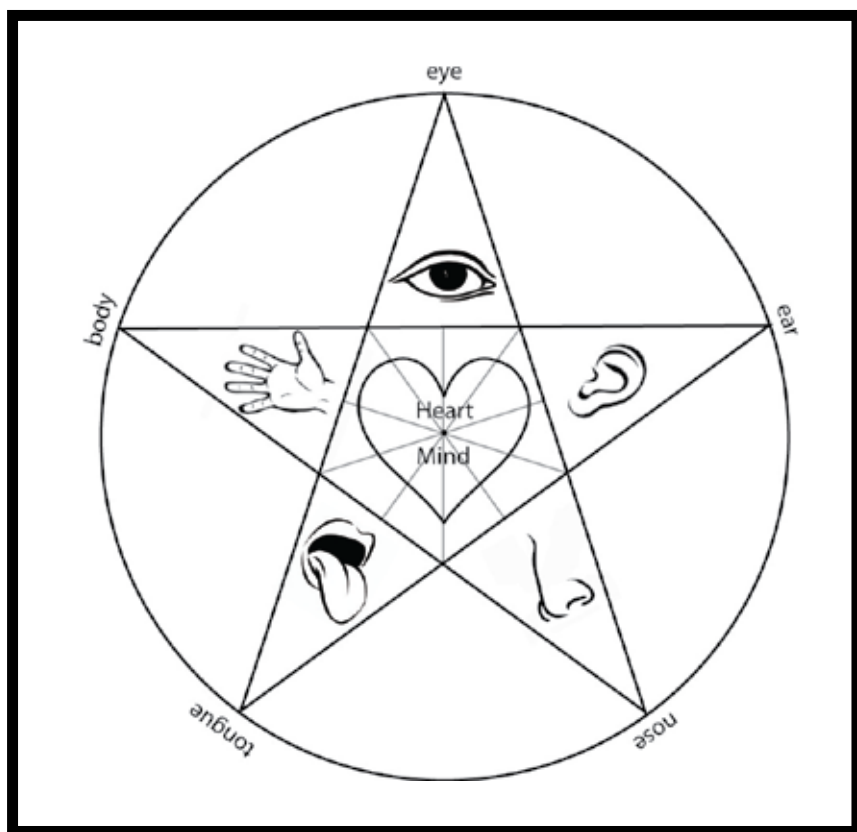
There were countless webs so very interwoven and the connections were so thick that it is a miracle if one does not get caught. But the spider was right, the base for safety comes with the first part, the wholesome feature of mindfulness and it has to be very strong. But the snail knew that this mindfulness is indispensable and even Death should not stop its influence. It is that that makes the webs the Way, otherwise, it is doom.

"This," pointed out the spider to a tangle of webs, "is a simplified version of the whole cave you are now in. Observe carefully!"

And as the snail sent out its sensitive multiple 'eyes', it noticed a system built into this seeming jumble of threads woven to give one an idea of a circular globe. "Now that looks like America with the Statue of Liberty still standing tall, and that with the Victoria Falls must be Africa, and the other part with the golden pagoda shining, Burma, Asia. But on further observation, he could discern that there were also you, I,

me and the whole world of beings. Interesting enough at a yet deeper level there are actually five systems connected to a main one, and so it makes six in all.

“Yes,” the spider continued, “these are none other than the six sense avenues and their processes, so simply pieced out and explained by the Enlightened Ones. In life they are so interconnected; these sense doors, sense objects and Consciousness that they seem to be one inseparable mass. And so beings think they and their world is such a wonderful creation, which is actually an amazing phenomenon, but what and where will they finally end up with is pathetic. There is actually no real end here, only DEAD ENDS unless you see through the whole complex of conditioning.”



Web of the six sense bases

“And how does one get out of it then?” the snail asked the obvious question. The answer, however, was not what he expected, at least not all of it.

“All of these threads are links and they can all be severed. But there are those that are more vulnerable while there are those that are really tough. Some, for example, are more likely to be caught up in the web of visions, while others in the web of sounds.”

“True,” the snail said softly as he looked into the web of visions. There seem to be many ‘insects’ caught in it. Looking deeper, he saw young buddy mesmerized in the video game of ‘angry birds’, while his parents glued to the television series called ‘The Man in the Net’. Then, there are artists and art collectors glued to paintings and so on. And yet the whole web is just a play of colors of the spectrum, so very delightful and pretty. Caught in the web of sounds which are intrinsically just vibrations densely knitted together, the beings that do not see it thus, such as Beethoven and Mozart, Rock singers and rappers are all stuck in them, wallowing in delight, their minds jumping like jumping beans, hands waving like maestros of orchestras. However, the web of tastes looks funny. The ‘insects’ seem to be balls hanging down on clothes lines. Wow, the victims are fat like piggies, consuming more sticky, sugary web substance made of tastes.”

“But the mind base, the middle one is most complicated.” The snail looked deeply into it and the beings caught up in it seem to be floating in a void. They seem to include philosophers, intellectuals as well as spiritual people donning robes of various traditions.

“It is here that one must find the center of all the links in this maze and only when found and severed by the light of insight, can one be free. It is the most difficult part, for the web there is darkest and finest. It is as they say, “The darkest cannot be seen, it is limitless; just so, one must also come out with the brightest light which is so bright that it cannot be seen, for it transcends the world. When these two meet, the unconditioned will be as it has always been!” And with that last word, the spider bared out its fangs that sent out shudders into every cell and electrified every flow of mucilage of the snail. For the fangs were made of a laser so powerful that penetrates everything in the universe. This was what that separates it from other spiders. It is invincible and incorruptible.

“Come; let us proceed to the next level of network, the web of Dependent Origination with its 12 links.”

“But how? They seem to be intertwined”

“That is why the Enlightened One said that He had unraveled a ball of knotted strings so difficult to unravel. We are fortunate that it is available now for us to study before the Dispensation disappears. From the six sense bases and six Consciousness, try to follow their movements and tracks. It shows that these webs are intrinsically ever moving, changing, and far from static. When we move along them, it is like moving onto carousels, moving belts and lines, or as the ancients say, sailing along the river. The idea is to keep afloat or balanced!”

“But... I am slow...”

“Never mind, hop on my back, and I’ll piggy-back you. Just remember clearly all that you see and what I tell you.”

And with that, the spider hopped and lifted up himself with a fine luminous thread up onto the webs of visions with agility and skill then sped along certain lines towards the central web. Along the way he described the different objects around and connections.

“Take a look at these nonsense, some pretty, some ugly, but they are classified as ‘very worldly’. They lead you further and further to those DEAD ENDS. Make a couple of wrong turns and you are bound to meet with something beyond your abilities to handle it, as we spiders say, ‘there is more in your mouth than you can chew’. Follow those objects that have spiritual connections. These are like signposts that lead to other sign posts. The simple ones tell more than the ornate ones. For example, the original spiritual art forms are simpler and the latter are complicated. Take for example the Roman and Baroque churches, or the Buddha images of the Chiengsen and Ayuthya styles of Thailand.”

Along the way they passed through more beings caught by odorous objects, then suddenly, there was a loud noise, **‘CRUNCH’** and a scream....



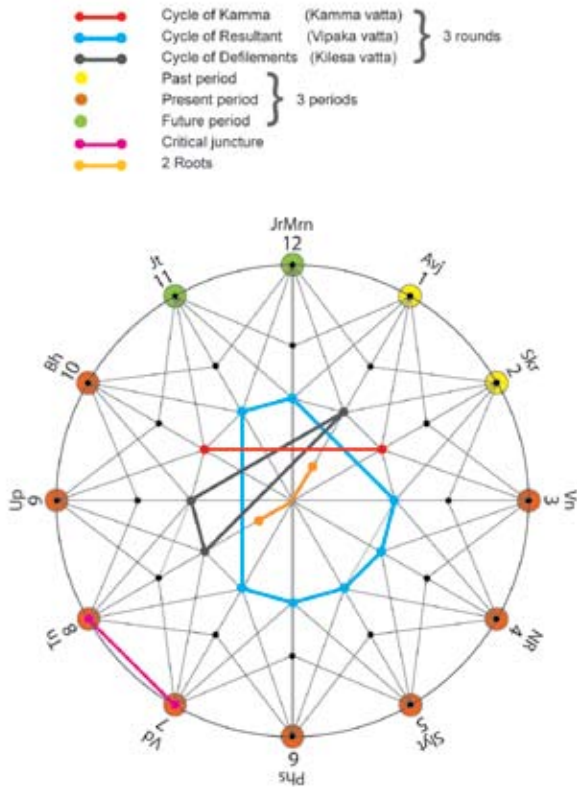
The Black Widow Spider

“What is that?”

“Oh, it is just the black widow consuming one of her victims. You do not happen to like Black Widows do you? They are really SEXY!”

All the way, it pointed out to the snail that how in various ways this visual web is linked to the main web called in short, ‘Myweb’. The changes that run through these links are like electrical serpents that speed around and dart in sparks. How quickly they sped and spread around the whole cave made it even more dazzling. To add to that, they are self-generating, multiply, replicate and COMPLICATE, often exploding like giant fireworks only to start all over again.

“There are twelve links in this chain. They turn wheels within wheels, like a monster generator that lasts for eternity. This cave of webs is indeed a monster computer, a matrix of possibilities, of ‘may be’s’, ‘could be’s’ with many ‘buts’ in between just like commas. The hub of it is none other than the three evil roots – greed, anger and delusion.



Web of the 12 Links of Dependent Origination:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) Delusion (<i>Avijja</i>) | 2) Formations (<i>Sankhara</i>) |
| 3) Consciousness (<i>Vinnana</i>) | 4) Mind and matter (<i>Namarupa</i>) |
| 5) Six sense bases (<i>Salayatana</i>) | 6) Contact (<i>Phassa</i>) |
| 7) Feeling (<i>Vedana</i>) | 8) Craving (<i>Tanha</i>) |
| 9) Clinging (<i>Upadana</i>) | 10) Becoming (<i>Bhava</i>) |
| 11) Birth (<i>Jati</i>) | 12) Old Age, Death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, despair
(<i>Jaramarana sokaparideva dukkha domanasupayasa</i>) |

A: Outer circle: 12 links and 3 periods (yellow-past, orange-present, green-future)

B: Inner circle: 3 cycles/rounds

Red line: Active cycle (*Kammavatta*);

Blue lines: Resultant cycle (*Vipakavatta*);

Dark brown lines: Defilement cycle (*Kilesavatta*)

C: Central light brown line – the two roots: delusion and craving

Purple connection: Critical position of *Kammic* response

“Consider that the beginning is delusion itself. Rather than linear, it is cyclic and concentric. Delusion has been placed first as it is subtlest and most radical. There is actually no ultimate beginning to the whole thing since beginning itself is a concept. It is the root conditioning and delusion is the root of roots. So be always on the lookout for the blind and black spots of existence. All you need is just an unmindful slip and you fall into something terrible.”

After a brief pause, the spider sped on explaining how the processes grow through the next linkages and finally at the point of contact and feelings, he stopped to explain.

“As you can see, that is, in here at such junctures that the webs connect and shoot at different directions. It is a junction when even the object when remain similar, the mental alterations take on different directions and creations. How one responds determines a whole different set of conditions. In other words, the whole web structure undergoes changes. So the map is not one that can be put on a piece of paper. It is more like a mathematical formula that can be represented in a four dimensional computer screen with graphs and coordinates changing rapidly. If you can see into people’s minds, then you know what I mean”.

The snail took a peep into the spider’s mind and it was an amazing sight. It was very bright and clear with vibrations that zap and zit forming manifold patterns but always leading to and connected with a central point of indeterminable certainty. It seems like a void yet not, it seems totally dissociated yet still exerts influences on the whole inner system. Is this what the mind of a realized person is about?”

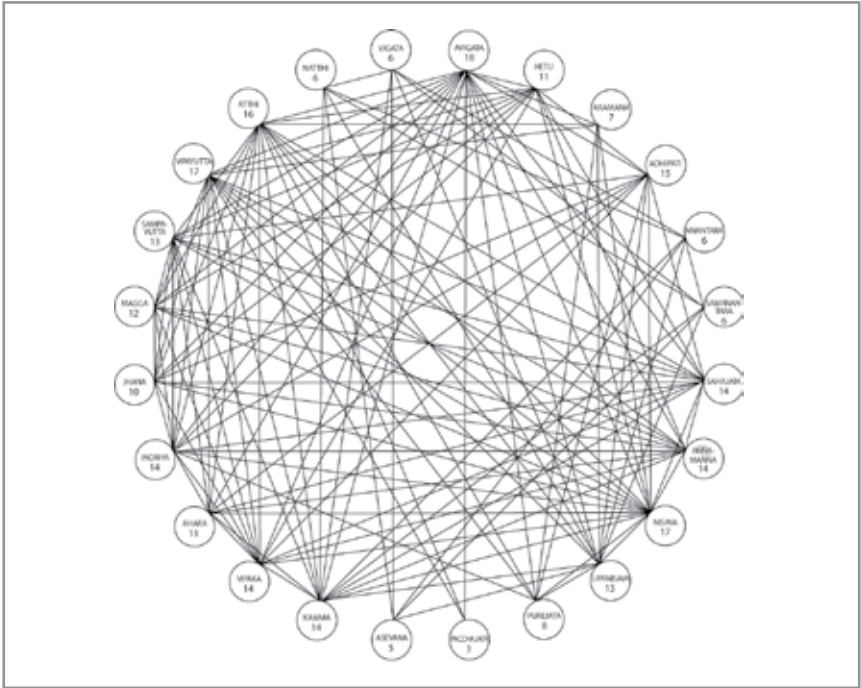
“That will become clear later when you yourself have arrived at realization”. He continued to explain, “Here what that matters are the way one looks at the object with right mindfulness. They call it wise attention, *yoniso manasikara*, in Pali. There are different levels of this. The first is when the attention is mindful in the sense of wholesomeness. Then, there is wise attention in the sense that the spiritual and transcendental attention is meant, one that directs the Consciousness into transcendence and to the unconditioned element. Then the path will be speeded up. What after all is shorter than the straight line? And straight means direct – RIGHT HERE WHERE REALITY IS! Wise attention and the will is that which are the

main basic factors that generate the Path, otherwise, the unwise attention leads one to the wrong paths, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, despair and the whole mass of suffering”.

Having digressed enough on this web of dependent origination, it was ready for the next.

“Now it is time to jump to the next level and next web, also called the web of invisible forces.”

At this point, the spider ran up and down different parts of the web as the web complex kept changing. As a result, it is like having multiple objects within a single object, like being with two objects at the same time. When it became clearer, the parts of the web waned and instead, there was just change. What changes? These forces behind the change, and they seem to be invisible because they are in a stage of transcendence.



Web of 24 Conditionings (24 Patthana)

“When the wind blows on the lake, waves and ripples flow. Why they do such is because of the unseen winds and undercurrents. These conditional relationships are those invisible forces working behind that keep the webs going. It takes quite something to recognize them, not to mention to be able to analyze the different types. Look properly at each type and their connections and you will come up with the web of invisible forces of universal cohesion.”

“How does one see something invisible?” The snail asked.

“They come with the ultimate realities themselves. In a way, one may say they are not really ultimate, and only *Nibbana* is ultimate. So the usual translation of the word ‘*Paramattha*’ is inadequate. Instead, one may say that they are part of a bigger picture, but when you try to get it, they seem to disappear. That is because the ‘ultimate realities’ are not ultimate. So the focus and perception must be more open and in a deeper way. It is again like a microscope, when looked into a leaf, sees instead many cells. Except that here it is changing within the qualities. More like seeing the ripples on a river; on focusing one sees ripples within ripples and finally it is just a flow. Doesn’t that contiguous conditioning seem familiar now? It is actually a step further in the process of transcendence by way of the characteristic of impermanence. Similarly, the conascent conditioning brings about the sense of non-substantiality which is also another translation of *Anatta* (Non-Self). So now the meaning of Suffering of Formations also becomes clear, because the whole mass of the web changes so fast and violently, it looks like a great vortex and whirl pool that sends everything to the bottomless pit of eternal darkness.”

There was a silence as the spider left the snail to concentrate deeper into the Web of 24 Conditionings. Starting with the root conditioning, it saw the various phenomena changing as they follow the root, which in this case, is the wisdom root, which itself was changing in acceleration into an object. Finally, all turned into a great vortex spinning deep into the unknown.

As the story continues, the spider than explains the nature of the Noble Eightfold Path. The snail follows its lines and reaches realization. This part of the story will have to wait to be told at the last part of this chapter.

B) The Four Supreme Efforts – The Flight of the Sacred Crane

The Four Supreme Efforts are:

1. Effort to overcome what is unwholesome
2. To avoid what is unwholesome
3. To arouse what is wholesome
4. To maintain what is wholesome

Effort is like the flapping of wings, or the movements of the feet when one runs. The elaboration of the Fourfold Right Effort describes clearly where its destination is. One moves from darkness to light and beyond. And so, I equate it to flapping of the wings of the sacred crane as it lifts one up higher and higher, farther and farther until it reaches the other shore. Of the four they can be summarized as the third which arouses the wholesome states not yet arisen, namely the Supramundane Paths and Fruitions.

It sounds tiring, doesn't it? It is not as bad as it seems, because after some time, it becomes automatic and that is when it seems effortless. More correctly, it should be described as Right Effort that has become habitual and free flowing. The non-self characteristics also become clearer as it develops. That is also when things happen.

Looking at the different groups, energy occurs in all of them and so it works into the different aspects of the practice. It is like a basic fuel needed to accomplish all these functions. Seeing again into the conditionings involved, it also lends force to the connections and influences.

MAY THE FORCE BE WITH YOU!

Have you not, as I did before in those early days, watched planes fly and had the wish to fly too. Even before the plane was invented, man had been envious of birds that take off into the air as they wished. Only in the last century, the plane was invented and then followed by the rockets. When will space travel be as convenient as hopping on jets? It seems, man had done it before, by means of levitation, a phenomenon considered a miracle by some and witchcraft by others. Things arise

from conditions, and when their conditions cease, those things also cease. Again, the law of dependent origination comes into the picture. 'It is all quite scientific', I have heard some speakers say, but science has yet to explain many things, especially when the Consciousness is involved.

And so, when the snail one day looked up and he saw birds fly, he thought, "O well, if I had wings I would fly. It seems an easier and quicker way to travel." But on second thought, "But the inner journey is within, and it seems that it is a case of 'more haste means less speed', still there needs to be much energy if patience is to find its fulfillment."

Just then, it looked aside and it saw a beautiful and elegant white crane with a golden crest standing on a rock of a precipitous ridge eyeing him. It must be more than a coincidence. As they say, "When your time is ripe, the Master will appear", or my teacher once said, "If your *Kamma* is good, even the Buddha will come to your aid". Certainly then, it must be really good spiritual *kamma*. What if the master is not coming, which is most often the case; one must then try to fulfill the perfections of right *kamma* by looking for the master. Have you thought of the Master within? The texts have more than once said, "Take refuge in oneself and none other, take refuge in the *Dhamma* and none other... and how? By the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness."

And so the snail worked its way to the crane which did not move but just eyed him intensely as if ready to peck the hell out of the snail. But the snail was not frightened, because it had heard before of this divine bird and divine birds don't eat divine snails!

"Tell me, great bird of the skies, you travel so far around the world and beyond, where do you get all that energy?"

"Well, we have to eat like you do. Nutrition replenishes and we have to feed often, is not this also mentioned in the book of conditioning, about Nutrition Conditioning? But here, there is more than one type as you know, traditionally known as edible food, contact food, volition as food and Consciousness as food. These tell of what makes the world go round. For example, the lyrics of a song,

“Love is a many a splendored thing...it gives a reason to be living”, which would fall under volitional activities. Then there is also the saying, “food for thought”, which refers to objects connected and then it would have to be ‘contact’. But we are talking of spiritual food, which is essentially the same except it is meant for the spiritual purpose; all except may be Consciousness which serves as the relinking process in the new existence, which in *Vipassana* aims to do away with it (that is, existence in *Samsara*).

“Please enlighten me on the subject, please...”

“Tell me then, what makes one practice in the first place?”

“Well, the seed of spiritual practice has been mentioned as faith and it is further enhanced as wisdom arises.”

“There you are you hit the nail on the head. Faith, that faculty that is the harbinger of energy and its fulfillment is the end of the Path. Surely you must have also heard of the Blessed One’s words, “Faith is the key to the treasure house of the *Dhamma*,” and “Opened are the doors to the Deathless for those who have faith.”

“But what do you think when they prefer the word ‘confidence’?”

“Well, it is being more specific in that it requires some experience and understanding before one can call it that. However, it can also be limiting for more simple folks who with some guidance can do the same, if not better. What is important for furthering ones practice is that faith in the beyond, in the Truth. This, of course is, developed as one grows, but can also be present in the beginning, preferably with some guidance. It would be conceit if one says one does not need one.”

“So there is where contact comes in.”

“Yes, contact with objects that give rise to faith, inspiration as well as those that give the sense of urgency. There is, however, one important thing for you to know. The physical energy has to be replenished regularly by edible food, but mental energy is always there as a mental factor in the Consciousness. So it is more of reactivating rather than replenishing.”

“But then, this faith is not present all the time, especially when the Consciousness isn’t wholesome?”

“The craving for existence is indisputably a strong factor behind it, but then, which of the seven Universals which are present could act in its place?”

“I see it now, it is that ‘feeling’; that pulse that occurs at the simplest level of Consciousness, one can tap into that inexhaustible source of energy!”

Quickly, at the opportunity, the crane added, **“Yes, that immense inner fire that have been fueling and maintaining the universe and existence can be accessed to.** Some tap into it unmindfully and they can go freaky. Look at the kids nowadays, who suffer from ‘Attention Deficit Syndrome’, they are just on the surface of it. Then, there are worse cases of maniacal proportions. Energy itself is unmoral; one just needs to use it wisely. All along the Path, the faculties have to be developed and so more energy has to be developed and so has to be controlled. Faith arouses it, and is responsible for it to be limitless. Mindfulness controls it, Concentration concentrates it and Wisdom uses it wisely.”

“So it is the contact that makes it all possible. Faith reaches for and opens it, and with the wise attention and volition, one draws it out.”

“Precisely, and to be efficient, one has to apply it frequently which means also frequent practice.”

Having said this, the crane gave a cry of ecstasy and glowed.

“MAY THE FORCE THAT BRINGS SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION AND FULFILLMENT BE WITH YOU!”

With that last exclamation, it opened its wings, gave a few powerful flaps, lifted itself high and vanished into the void.

C) The Four Bases of Accomplishment – All for the Love of ‘You’

The *Iddhipada* are:

1. Wish (*chanda*)
2. Effort (*viriya*)
3. Mind (*citta*)
4. Investigation (*dhammavicaya*)

These have also been described to some extent under predominance conditioning. They are like generals that lead the army forward. In the *Suttas*, they have been described as ‘endowed with wish/energy/mind/investigation concentration of the formations of striving’. It would then seem like these factors dominate the other co-factors by gathering them together to work towards the goal. Since only one can dominate at one time and so it is the active leader. Certainly, he will have to be very motivating, inspiring, convincing to get all his soldiers and ministers working together relentlessly. Is he then the King? If not, who is the King? The Consciousness, of course! In another sense, YOU! In a deeper sense NON-SELF. This is where the functioning of these factors count to strive and work with commitment and patience.

The first one that is called wish or sometimes desire, is motivation. Our reason is to be free from all suffering and gain the everlasting peace. It is all in ‘oneself’, ‘you’ in the more conventional language; truth being the deeper meaning. So, do you love yourself enough? No, I do not mean selfish love, but a love that seeks fulfillment in existence.

Once this is present, then for some, the dominant leading factor can be effort. These are the bulls. Fatigue is not in their vocabulary, even if it means DEATH.

Consciousness as a factor here seems tricky. The Venerable Ledi Sayadaw refers it to the wholehearted single purpose of the mind. It seems reasonable as there are those who once are into it, forget about all else. The ability to be so shows determination and will. It is like the king himself is now also the Generalissimo at the head of the army.

The last factor is the investigation. The Pali word is ‘*vimamsa*’ which means investigation, reflection or consideration. The *Abhidhamma* identifies this with the wisdom factor. It seems to indicate thinking, etc. These do occur with those students who are more discriminative. They are those who want to be doubly sure of what is

happening before taking any chances. In this case, he is like the experienced and wise minister that takes into consideration all the facts and since he is trusted by the king, is left in charge. The message is, when the general is loyal, steadfast, well trained and knows what to do then, the task is half accomplished. Do you have a good general?

THE ACCOMPLISHED TRAIL BLAZER

With a lightning spin, he flew up and bashed the demon into pieces, then sped following another mercilessly. Nothing must stop the noble quest. He is none other than Sun Wu Kung, also known as the Monkey King that led the historical Hsuan Zhang to India in quest of the sacred scriptures. This story comes from the Chinese classic called '*Annals of the Western Journey*'. Told many times and also shown with many versions, is a religious satire, apparently, with Buddhist roots, have appealed greatly to the masses as well as to scholars. I, myself, find it very interesting, not because of the fantasy which has been one of my childhood dreams to meet with the Lord Sun himself, but now more out of spiritual analogies. What, I ask, does he represent, he who was born from the bolt of a lightning when it struck a rock; he who whipped up a storm in heaven that drove the Jade Emperor to be so desperate as to find refuge under tables and chairs; he who even drove the Daoist sage, Lao Tzu, to shame when the fire of *Samadhi* could not get rid of him? It was only the Buddha who overcame him, and the Bodhisatta's compassion that turned him into a saint after directing the famous pilgrim to India to receive the sacred scriptures and spread it to the world (China then) out of compassion. On looking at the whole picture, he seems to play the role of the active Consciousness, full of energy and wit, and ever attentive. He, however, has to be controlled on and off by right concentration. Whatever it is, he is certainly a trail blazer, one which the pilgrim can do very well to have around.

There were many vibrations and tremors on the ground. It seems to be quite an entourage coming this way, and so the snail withdrew into its shell under the cover of tall grass and camouflage of colored shale.

"They do sound like gross creatures, and gross creatures cannot spot little things like snails." So the snail presumed mistakenly. It was apparent when suddenly all fell silent. That Lord Sun, the Monkey trail blazer, had sensed a spiritual being around. Could it be another of the demons who wanted to devour the Master's flesh to attain

immortality? And so he looked deeply and for a long time with his divine eye and then discovered the extraordinary snail hiding under a black piece of shale.

“Aha! What is this strange thing doing here? It won’t be difficult to crush it with my toe.”

“O MI TO FO!” the Master interrupted, “Please have compassion, even demons suffer unnecessarily. Many can still be transformed when given a chance to repent. You, yourself, are an excellent example.”

For a moment, he looked back at the Master with a little disgust at the Master’s soft heart, but he was right and so he took an extra look at the snail.

“Well, well, a little snail you are, and certainly not an ordinary one. What have you got in mind?”

“Well, well, Great Monkey, can’t you see that I am harmless?”

When the Lord Sun, looked deeper, he found out it was true. The snail’s mind was softer than cotton, smoother than silk and as tender as the first shoots of early spring of the Kunlun ranges. Moreover, there was that glow that emits whenever sincere purity is present. In fact, it reminded him of the Master’s heart which he knew so well.

“It looks like we have a friend here, but please excuse me for my impulsiveness as well as my frankness; you certainly look very vulnerable in this trek full of demons.”

There we are; there is some similarity in terms of analogy of the two characters – the Master pilgrim and the Snail. Both are in a sense, pilgrims and both are representations of pure faith that seeks liberation. The difference is that the snail moves alone slowly, apparently, without a capable assistant and the great Buddhist scholar and pilgrim has an accomplished trail blazer.

“It is a great honor and *kamma* to meet with such a great spiritual monkey. With you around, the master will surely reach the holy land of the west in no time.”

“No time? Ha, ha!” so chuckled the monkey, then took the snail in his hand and sniffed out a grin. “I don’t think you will make us a great meal. Ha, ha!” he threw out a big laugh. “O you poor little slow snail, Ha, ha, ha! It is well for you when there is NO TIME! The wonderful thing about it is, it is true!” the monkey continued to giggle, but the snail was puzzled and realized that different people find humor in their own ways.

The Master then drew near and gave a short discourse to the snail as well to his other disciples – the Pig, the Sand Spirit, and the White Horse.

“Time matters and time does not. It depends on who and what you are. In this spiritual journey through Mount Illusion, time catches many like victims on the Black Widow Spider’s web. When you are time freed, still lurks other dangers. The important thing is to keep going, and to keep going no matter what stands in the way. That single mindedness of purpose has driven many into excellence be it in worldly or spiritual matters. The crucial factor that comes with it is the goal and purpose. It, when properly understood, churns out great desire and motivation. Even psychic potencies have been achieved and the Lord Buddha emphasized it as the first base of spiritual accomplishment, Enlightenment.”

At this point, the monkey grinned baring his teeth at the Master, for he knew that he himself was here because of this factor. In fact, he is an embodiment of this factor. Wherever he goes, the rest of the jin-gang follows. The only flaw is, active and energetic as he is; he sometimes slips into negligence of being too hasty and impulsive, so much so the clear and quick comprehension fails. There is when the Master, the Consciousness, has to be nearby to supply the factors such as wisdom and investigative capabilities to the front.

We are told that in the Predominance conditioning, only one takes to the function at one time. This is so also in a longer spell when temperaments play their part. However, I think that at other times, another may play that part. Having more generals than one is helpful, although it is only one that gives orders at a time. Spare tires, is an idiom that is not complimentary and so may be extra generals up ones sleeve may sound better even though unconventional. Surely different situations require different generals. But then there are grades and levels in terms

of its individual arising and conditionings. That desire (*chanda*) has to be there first although it may be taken over in importance in the role by others, such as energy, investigation and Consciousness.

So it is true, that this monkey usually is in the forefront and as in the role of the factor of predominance, leads the rest, the co-factors of striving into a concentrated form to roll along the Way.

“Call out that trail blazer in you,” continued the Master. “One way is by making frequent aspirations, resolutions. Used wisely, it efficiently arouses those mental states that you require in concentrated form and direction. Let the resolution sink deep as you allow the Consciousness to settle into its subtler levels. This wish must be embedded deep enough in the Consciousness to link the development into all aspects of one’s life. It is concentrative, integrative besides directional.”

There was a pause and then they made resolutions to be freed completely from all defilements. The Master then made vows to save all beings from *Samsara*. At this point the snail wondered, “Save all beings from *Samsara*.... Who is going to do that? ME? Let me be enlightened first.”

The monkey took a side glance at the snail, grunted and then rolled up its eyes and mumbled, “Little snail, smaller vehicle.” Then he chuckled. But the snail remained unaffected.

Then the Master continued, “But nothing is better for this than to be in constant practice. That strong tendency for support must be developed; that which is strong supportive conditioning as well as post nascent and repetitive conditioning. Then it is like an undercurrent that flows and sweeps away the deeper defilements.”

At this point, the monkey shifted his gaze to the snail and gave a wink. The snail immediately knew what he meant and so winked back. They have become friends, or in another sense, became part of each other. The snail allowed the monkey, who with his powers, shrank in size and was able to enter into the ‘house’ of the snail as a guest and had many cups of coffee, tea and pieces of banana cakes and ‘Banana Dim Sums’.

“Tell me Lord Sun, what is the most important point in trail blazing?”

“The point is, knowing the point, one’s aim and goal. After that it is a matter of flexibility, ingenuity and persistence.”

“But for a beginner, he can hardly imagine what the unconditioned is like, so what can he do?”

“Well, there are distant goals and immediate goals. In the case of the distant goal of *Nibbana*, they have to have faith based on wisdom of what right understanding that they started with. The short term goals are not difficult to find in meditation.”

“Being so accomplished, what have you to say about that final part of the ‘signless’?”

Lord Sun scratched his head; he looked up towards the sky, as if into something infinite then replied. “The Signless has no indications, it is just there; it cannot be imagined or looked for with normal perceptions, it has just to be arrived at by previous conditioning of dispassion to signs.”

“And Lord Sun, you are now well known for spotting out demons. How do you recognize them?”

“HEE, HEE, HEE...” He grinned, baring his teeth as he eyed the snail cheekily and said, “As they say, ‘To catch a thief you have to be a bigger thief’, at least before reformation. I was quite a terror before the Buddha took compassion on me. Even in the Heaven of The Thirty Three, the Jade Emperor was out of his wits in trying to subdue me.” He then looked at the snail slyly and remarked with a hiss, “You, with your many eyes, don’t you look like one yourself?”

The snail shrunk a little out of embarrassment, then replied, “Reformation and purification is in the process, with your help Lord Sun.”

Thus, the snail inherited the spirit of the trail blazer in its shell.

D) The Way of the Republic

Next, the five controlling faculties are:

1. Confidence
2. Energy
3. Mindfulness
4. Concentration
5. Wisdom

They are controlling faculties because they exercise control over their respective domains. Again, this has been explained in the chapter of Conditionality as Faculty Conditioning. Unlike the previous case which is like the sole leader, this group has their own circumscribed domains. But they work together to make a strong, harmonious republic.

Thus, Confidence governs over the matters of devotion and faith, like a minister of religious affairs; Energy will be like the minister of labor; Mindfulness will be the careful Prime Minister; Concentration, the minister that musters all strengths together into the purpose, perhaps also the defense minister; Wisdom, the minister of knowledge which would most probably include education as well as the strategist.

This, of course, is making things too simple, but the key to it is the control as with controlling knobs in the key panel. The volume...not so loud, softer please; don't step in too much petrol or you will throw us overboard; more headlights please, it is getting very dark, and so on. Finally, it will have to work together for that very purpose of liberation. Mindfulness, of course, will be the chief player in this game of chess. It is he who will also have some 'control' over the others. Sharpened, he also has a hand in wisdom. So as the saying goes, 'All men are made equal, but some are more equal than others'.

In practice, the balancing of these faculties plays a very important part in the practice. As this is not a meditation book, I will only make a brief mention.

In the beginning, the critical factor is faith. It is like the spark plug that incites

action. Once the engine works, then energy is aroused and it has to keep going. As it is in the saying, 'no petrol, no go'. If all goes well with guidance, mindfulness arises, matures, and this in turn gives rise to Right Concentration and then to Insight. Too much devotion, however, can turn it into gullibility; too much (mundane, thinking) wisdom can turn into skeptical doubts. There has to be enough faith to spur one until some results come in and there has to be some discrimination to avoid mistakes and charlatans. Once it gets going, then the balance between energy and concentration becomes critical. Too much energy leads to restlessness and too little of it, sloth. Similarly, too much concentration leads to stagnation while too little of it to distraction. A balance is obvious when the mindfulness practice goes on smoothly and stably as the concentration and insight deepens. It is all in the mind, and it means experience counts. The point of balance is also very individual. If it is a wild horse, it will need much restraint; if it is a tortoise, it will need much encouragement. So know your vehicle and all its parts well.

THE PERFECT COMPANION

They say that birds of a feather flock together. They also say that great men think alike and fools seldom differ. Similarity of behavior and interests bring people together. And so they establish clubs, associations, governments as well as partisans and rebel groups. After some time matters get worked up and other things begin to appear and there will come a time when it cannot be stopped.

Once, two very angry and bad tempered monks came together. All the others could sense a big battle brewing, but instead, they became great pals. Then there are those who make a business of match-making. They list out all their clients' qualities, preferences and try to match couples to be married happily ever after. What criteria do they look for and what will be the result? Coming to the point, I would say that one needs to distinguish the different qualities of the partner for your purpose. Is it a spouse? Even then, there are different types of spouses - one that mothers you, one that develops your patience, one that insists on equality immediately when you show signs of forgetfulness and one that wakes you up to meditate at 5.00 am every day. Which type would you choose to live with for the rest of your life? Even if you are one who prefers to remain single, or become a renunciate, there will still be people whom you will have to live with. It is better to make friends than enemies. So what

is it that will make one a good comrade, or as referred to in the texts, a good spiritual friend (*kalyanamitta*)? I would say trust, sincerity and loving kindness and, of course, that indispensable wisdom.

Rain poured down like cats and dogs. The snail worked itself up a small tree and stayed still. In a distance it saw a mound, or what could also be a boulder. As it rained on, it did not move and yet it seems alive. It sensed a Consciousness abiding within; it was very still and unshaken by the thunder and lightning shooting across the sky.

“Such is the inner strength of tranquility. A steadfastness unshaken by thunderstorms tells of a formidable Consciousness behind it. But that bulk... it looks really heavy and clumsy.”

It was a sunny day the next day on grassland on a plateau somewhere midway in Mount Illusion. The snail patiently worked his way where stood a bulky creature. It wore thick, hard armor and on its nose was a huge shining silver horn. It was a giant rhinoceros feeding on the rich pastures. The snail tried to avoid it but it was too slow. The rhinoceros kept munching as he moved and if not for a squeak by the snail, it might have stepped on it.

“Watch it big fella!”

“Oh, so very sorry, sir! My eyes are rather small so I don’t see well. I imagine I must have crushed more than one snail like you to bits in my lifetime.”

Despite the fact of the great size and clumsy gait, the snail noticed that the rhino’s heart is actually tender and kind. “Never judge the book by its cover”, the snail reminded itself, and so proceeded to get to know better its new acquaintance.

It seems that the rhino was also working its way up Mount Illusion. Another truth seeker like the snail except that it has very different qualities. One may say that it is one who uses Consciousness as the base of accomplishment. For one thing, it is direct. There is that goal, so go for it. Aim the horn, then charge. With all that bulk and weight, even the king of beasts, the lion has to step aside.

Once the initial formalities have been done away with, the directness of the rhino impressed the snail. He wanted to know more about the strategies and skills that can be used along the Way.

I have wondered how often and how many people can share about their practice. Often I would rather be silent because people are very often attached to the way they practice and think that their way is the only way, and if not, then it is the best. Their trump card would be that 'my teacher is better than yours' conceit. Truth seekers should know better. As for those who practice *Vipassana* which emphasizes on non-self they should not allow conceit to step in. But say what you like, there are only very few whom one can frankly discuss such matters with. Then, there is the skill in communication. Languages and cultures keep us apart. People communicate in different ways. Directness, if acceptable, saves time. Diplomacy will work better but some time may be needed to iron out the rough edges. Finally, the Loving Kindness and Compassion can step in to have its part played.

In the case of the snail and rhino, they work in an ideal set up. No fuss about traditional politics, no hierarchical levels or grammatical misunderstandings since it is all telepathy between pure minds. And so they spoke their hearts and were indeed overjoyed to find a friend in the Path.

These two friends had found themselves as counter parts.

The snail is soft, the rhino is hard,

The snail is small, the rhino is large,

The snail senses all around, the rhino what is in front,

The snail moves slowly, the rhino moves quickly,

And yet,

Both have armors, have the same aim, have pure hearts, and have loving kindness and compassion.

If one would look into what they could represent in the Consciousness and its faculties, then one can tell how they can complement each other.

The softness of the snail will complement the hard, toughness of the rhino.

The opened sensitivity of the snail complements the direct concentrated narrowness of the rhino.

The quick and highly energetic rhino complements the slow, hesitant movements of the snail.

The large size of the rhino that permits more aggressive action complements the smaller snail which is more suitable for passive and hiding skills.

As far as the faculties go, the rhino represents that energetic concentration that balances well with that softer open mindfulness. The first would be more towards directed mindfulness while the second to choiceless awareness.

It is more of a question of when to use which. As they say in ancient times, “There is a time to be sowing and a time to be reaping”. Clear comprehension is needed for this purpose and for it to be present there is the need for development of maturity in wisdom in all aspects.

And so the snail told the rhino that it would be good to slim down and be more flexible while the rhino advised the snail to harden its shell and start learning to walk faster. It is unthinkable if one thinks of it in the conventional sense, but as mental faculties, balancing is of utmost importance. The balance between the energy and concentration faculties and the balance between the wisdom and faith faculties are needed if the development of insight is to progress smoothly and quickly.

Minds do influence minds and so it is best we choose our associations, if it is possible. Association with the wise has always been praised. The *Mangala Sutta* tells us that it is a great blessing. In another *sutta*, it is noted that the meeting with the wise and listening to their discourse are the first two of four limbs of stream winning. Recognizing the good qualities in ourselves and how to balance them out

to make a more efficient practice means also being a good friend to oneself in the complementary sense.

In this case, it can be noticed that the partnership is a matter of balance of the faculties (*indriya paccaya*), while in the former with the monkey, it is directional (*adhipati paccaya*).

THE MEETING OF A SNAIL AND A RHINOCEROS

*Although they are very different but they are brothers,
They tread the same path to freedom in their own stride,
They met, the hard metallic rhinoceros, ever ready to charge
With the soft divine snail, fragile and slow,
At the shrine of crystals and glass,
Watched by three wise owls and two magic parrots.
What did they say, what were they discussing?
Power and speed,
Flexibility and sensitivity,
Which strategy is superior?
Which technique is better?
For the first, the correct objective and direction is critical,
For the second, ample time is required for time to be forgotten.
Conditions and situations can change and vary quickly with individuals,
It's best if we can combine and manage both skillfully and suitably.*

*"I too have horns", said the snail,
"and they are super sensitive and so, I feel my way".
"I too have a shell", said the rhino,
"and a very tough one to protect me from dangers".*

*And so they finally became great pals with the owls and parrots cheering!
When the snail and the rhinoceros can work together,
So can mindfulness and concentration,
Energy and patience, faith and discrimination,
Timeliness and timelessness.*

E) The Way of the Warrior

The image of the warrior is ancient. Man has always been battling odds and ends, if not with himself, then with others. As to this, may we be reminded by the saying of the Buddha,

“Though one may conquer a million men in a battlefield, yet he indeed is the noblest who has conquered himself.”

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Life in a way is making ends meet. First, one has to stay alive and then later one may get further into something more worthwhile. All the way there are hurdles and obstacles. That is also the very nature of an impermanent and imperfect world. So we have to be a warrior to overcome all odds. That is what the ‘Powers’ are about. Since they involve spiritual matters, one can qualify it further by calling them spiritual powers that can overcome the opposite, the defilements. One can also consider them genuine strengths since the unwholesome forces are actually powerful weaknesses.

They are essentially the same as the controlling faculties, except that the strengths and powers to overcome their opposites are emphasized. They are:

1. Confidence that overpowers skeptical doubts
2. Energy that overpowers sloth
3. Mindfulness that overpowers negligence
4. Concentration that overpowers restlessness
5. Wisdom that overpowers delusion

I find that this warrior image, although very real, can be somewhat aggressive. So there is a term used nowadays – The Peaceful Warrior, that suits this purpose. As is in the world, it is also not so easy. There has to be structure, determination, courage to the point of being fearless. It has been said in a samurai quotation that a warrior is one who is fearless of Death. That is, pain and death is not as important as overcoming your foe!

THE POWER OF POWERS

There they were, the great generals of the army of righteousness seated in front of what looks like a painting of a dragon. They seem to be in a discussion when the divine snail interrupted. Since it had asked for an audience with them before, they stopped to attend to it. One of them took it in his powerful hands and gently placed it in the middle of a large round marble table.

“Well, I am called General Faith, and I command the forces of confidence. With me, the skeptical doubts vanish and the door to the *Dhamma* is open. As they say, ‘faith moves mountains’, and if I may add, mountains are no longer obstacles, they become part of the lovely path.”

Thus, did they begin to introduce themselves.

“I am humbly, General Effort. I mobilize all the powers to move to achieve the aim. Energies as the word itself implies, is force and power that supports or obstructs. All obstacles are blown away or burnt off by its fire and one speeds to the goal.”

“And I am General Mindfulness, I bring order and control and thus guide the strengths to work in a certain manner. With proper assessment, thoroughness and carefulness, keen observation, it is order over chaos, goodness over evil, light over darkness. It is the power that is essential to transform the unwholesomeness to wholesomeness”

“I am, little sir, General Concentration. You may say that any force that becomes concentrated also becomes more potent. I gather them to charge at one point, the object and goal. It eventually enters the object, overcomes it then changes or transforms it. It can become so powerful that many supernormal feats are possible.”

Finally, the one with a long beard with really sharp eyes introduced himself, “Excuse me, I am General Wisdom, and my force is this shining sword that cuts through everything and especially useful in insight which cuts through the knots of conditioning knitted by the Dark Lord himself.”

“I have also heard that you are the head of the group, are you not?”

“Well, but it only seems so. Just as a general is only so if he has an army, I only seem to be the head because they made it possible. We all work together in harmony as our armies are those of harmony. Order and control wins over chaos. Without one of us, the most powerful combined force is weakened. You may say that I determined which strategy to employ. For example, the armies take on the formation of the crane to pierce apart the thick, formidable dark clouds. Faith arouses the energies. With Faith and a quantity of energies then rendered well trained and tempered by mindfulness and driven to the goal by concentration, finally, I cut through it. In the case of spies and dispersed dark clouds, I employ the formation of the tortoise, a strategy which surrounds and leads them into traps and finally, I cut through it with this blazing sword.”

“Ahh, so it is the harmonious working together that makes you powerful. Together we win, apart we fall. I have, however, one more question, what does that dragon behind you represent?”

At this all raised their thumbs and hailed, “Bravo!” and added, “Just watch us.”

They all stood up and created a formation called the five pointed star formation which revolved around an empty center. As they did so, they were transformed into what may be called a dragon and a very mystical one indeed! At close scrutiny, its looks are androgynous; its color rapidly changes from black to white and so looks gray. Its coils and movements soon swirl around till it is obvious that it is just a force, an energy that pulsates so fast that it also is able to take any form it desires. **This is the most powerful force possible in this universe – THE POWER OF TRANSFORMATION!**

Nature has many ways to adapt and protect itself. Take the way of the camouflage of the chameleon and the mimicry of the moths helping them to remain unseen. The lethal poison of tiny frogs, the sharp thorns of the succulent cactus also keep at bay many enemies. Man, however, have been upgraded in the food pyramid by the ingenuity that has been bestowed him by the developed brain. In another level, they are just a different type of formations that are able to overcome other formations. And if one can take any formation that is suitable as one wishes, then one has the

power to overcome everything. This is what the Dragon represents. The *NAGA* is a creature that is able to manifest in any form it wishes. This, as one can guess, comes with the volition. But in cases of powerful battles in the inner arena, wholesome mental states can be more powerful than the darker, unwholesome forces, as the hierarchy of Consciousness of *Abhidhamma* indicates. But alas, all is impermanent; and so even the golden ages of great kingdoms and dynasties fall. However, this mystical dragon is special, because the sword cuts through into the heart of darkness and the wheel of *Samsara* falls apart. And that is also because it becomes a formless force that is 'signless' which the King of Death sees it not, the claws of craving cannot hold it and web of delusion cannot trap it; it is also that element of ultimate cessation that puts an end to all formations.

F) The Angel of Light – The Seven Factors of Enlightenment

The word '*sambojjhanga*' means they are limbs or factors that partake Realization (*Sambodhi*). In this sense, as a simile, it is the wisdom light that dispels the darkness of delusion. I have mentioned before how deep delusion runs in the veins of beings and so that the light that dispels it will have to be even more potent. A laser beam may give a better idea than street lamps because it penetrates through very solid substances. But that is just materiality. Mental stuff can be more subtle and also more difficult. As for *Vipassana* which is the development of insight, it certainly is the Way of Light. One, however, has to be clear about what this light means. Certainly it is not that one sees with the fleshly eyes but the inner eye of clarity – the Wisdom factor of the Consciousness. The seven factors are:

1. Mindfulness
2. Investigation of the *Dhamma*
3. Energy
4. Joy
5. Quietude/tranquility
6. Concentration
7. Equanimity.

Of these, the first two make up the base.

Mindfulness, of course, comes first. This must again be stressed as not just the

ordinary mindfulness but one that transcends. It can be experienced clearly when insight has arisen. That is when one notices that this non-conceptual mindfulness keeps on observing the present state of phenomena clearly, has a life of its own. 'WE' are completely out of the picture. The Three Universal Characteristics of mind and body processes are clearly going on by itself and the mindfulness makes its way into the formations whilst clearing up the mess. As such, mindfulness itself also blends into the nature of the flow, arising and dissolving moment-to-moment, but unlike the defilements, the process makes it even more potent and transcendental.

When it begins to observe to the extent of penetration and revelation of the deep natures and truths, then the second factor, investigation of the *Dhamma* has arisen. This mental factor has the quality of delving deeply, searching and exploring into the objects of contemplation. A kind of a detective, one may say, except that it is intuitive, non-conceptual and not thinking. So it is the inquiring aspect of wisdom which would later become the cognitive aspect of knowing deep natures. This searching mind has to be present, otherwise, insight will not arise. Usually insights have to be developed in their own special way.

After that, the energy comes in to give the extra boost; the joy gladdens to lift it up further to higher states; quietude/tranquility comes with other wholesome qualities to make it more flexible and light to be able to perceive ever more subtler-quickly-changing processes. In more developed levels, concentration magnifies and strengthens the 'light' further and equanimity stabilizes it and allows greater detachment. Therefore, mindfulness holds the torch of wisdom, supported by the other five factors; it is the angel of light showing and leading the way to the liberation of Consciousness from all illusions and thus, also all sufferings.

THE NOBLE DIMENSIONS OF THE WHITE CONDOR

Finally, the divine snail has arrived at the peak of Mount Illusion. The sky is clear and the sun shines brilliantly with golden rays. No smog pollutes the air, no noise disturbs and true enough, at a large flat rock as prophesized, sits the greatest of white condors.

My friend protests, "There are no white condors."

“Sez who?” I replied.

He is right in the zoological sense but one never really knows if there existed one long time ago. Albinos are a phenomenon that occurs in nature and condors should not be exempted. But I am speaking not of biological species, I am instead referring to the greatest of birds. In ancient texts, there are often references of a great bird in Indian mythology called the Garuda, now the emblem of the Indonesian airlines. The Chinese also have its counterpart, called the ‘Phen’. They even gave the dimensions as wide as several kilometers in wing span. Imagination such as this is not surprising before the advent of planes, but big birds are a reality. The question is then the size in terms of reality. But then, size, we learn is also a concept. As a mental phenomenon, a mental state, the whiteness represents its purity, the size, its greatness. And here in our context, the condor itself represents the Consciousness with equanimity, that enlightenment factor that is the peak of the group of seven.

When the snail saw the condor, it was impressed. Immediately it understood the significance. Equanimity after all is the peak of all the seven factors of enlightenment. This white condor is indeed a magnificent manifestation of that developed mental state – that extreme softness and subtlety, that sagacious composure and stable mental equilibrium, a clear suggestion of the far reaching possibilities of a developed Consciousness.

Just as immediately the 10 kinds of equanimity as explained in Buddhagosa’s ‘*Path of Purification*’ arose in its mind.

1. Six Factored Equanimity (*Chalangupekkha*) – that is, at the six sense doors.
2. Divine Abode Equanimity (*Brahmaviharupekkha*) – that is, with regards to all beings.
3. Enlightenment Factor Equanimity (*Bojjhangupekkha*) – that is, as an enlightenment factor.
4. Energy Equanimity (*Viriyupekkha*) – where energy faculty is even and balanced.
5. Equanimity of Formations (*Sankharupekkha*) – neutrality about apprehending and reflexion with regards of formations.

6. Indifferent Feeling (*Vedanupekkha*) – feelings which are neither happy nor painful.
7. Equanimity of Insight (*Vipassanupekkha*) – neutrality about insight.
8. Equanimity as Specific Neutrality (*Tatramajjhata*) – the wholesome mental state of balance.
9. Equanimity of Fixation (*Jhanupekkha*) – equanimity in the highest bliss, that is, the third absorption.
10. Equanimity of Purity (*Parisuddhi upekkha*) – the purifying factor with regards to all factor opposing, that is, the fourth absorption.

As these thoughts passed through his mind, he quickly understood that it is something other than the 2nd, 4th, 6th, 9th, and 10th kinds. And since the mental factor does occur in tranquility absorptions, it may include 2nd, 9th and 10th kinds in its field. As for feeling and energy, they can come into its field only if wholesome. Then, its analysis went onto the wholesome aspects associated with insight. These come with the 3rd, 5th and 7th. The 3rd as that enlightenment factor that this condor represents, the 5th its overall balance that comes with detachment as a result of insight and the 7th to the practice of insight itself.

That leaves two; the six factored equanimity which represents perfection of restraint as a prerequisite and the possibility of deep insight, and the coefficient of neutrality which is the mental state behind all these. These two also has to be included in the field.

Such is the condition and inner dimension possibilities of the condor!

And as if having read its mind, the condor which has been looking imperturbably at the snail, stretched out its wings and the snail amazed the snail till it exclaimed, **“WOW!”**

Having paid its respects, the snail began to ask, “Great condor of equanimity, pray tell me with that peace and stability you are endowed with, does joyful acts such as loving kindness interfere and weaken the higher states?”

Its answer was, “Highest state? The *Dhammapada* itself has stated that

‘Dispassion (*Viraga*) is the highest state’, and that comes associated also with joy, love and compassion. Equanimity with its stability enhances and strengthens concentration and sharpens subtle perception and hence, also insight. The final lift off comes with the power of dispassion.”

“Sadhu, and well said, but surely there seems to be something more than this!”

“There is, of course something, about equanimity with regards to unlimited possibilities. Being so subtle and powerful, it has a quality of exceeding limits imposed on by grosser characteristics. It has a sort of free and far reaching influence, like a story without a conclusion, like a bird that flies on without a fixed destination, like a dive into the bottomless ocean. When a sky is cloudless; what is one’s limit? When feelings have reached great equanimity, no waves obscure the clear waters of Consciousness.”

“Yes, but surely there is something more than that which can be explained if one is to understand how one can reach the other shore.”

“That again, is where the *Vipassana* insight of Path and Fruition Knowledges come in. Knowledge of Equanimity of Formations can be a platform for the final lift off only when one has passed thoroughly through the insights into the suffering of formations, otherwise, that dispassion is insufficient. The concentration developed thus can then help one to discern into the subtlest of formations to remove all latent tendencies of attachment to these wonderful phenomena. Many people who have reached some concentration, insight and detachment think they can fly far, but certainly not to the unconditioned. **Only when the earlier conditions of the Path are fulfilled then the wings of equanimity can extend beyond limitless boundaries to the Noble terrain.** Would you like to take a ride on my back and see it for yourself?”

As the snail has often along its climb up Mount Illusion looked often over the slopes, watched great birds soaring and gliding pass over higher clouds, this invitation pleased it greatly. But it quickly remembered that if it is to fly on this great white condor, it must summon up all the concentration and detachment from the understanding of the suffering of formations to be on par with it.

Having said that, it further addressed the snail, “I have been here for snails like you. Hop on to me and I will bring you across to the Great Unknown.

Thus, it was a great lift off. Those enormous wings with limitless dimensions rose to great heights and with just a flap or two, soon they were gliding with high velocity, although very stably in a straight bee-line to a limitless horizon. The concepts of space and time were left far behind, so too any thoughts of ego or self-centrism. The mental states and Consciousness continued to expand in all dimensions till they lose their meaning. Only the purpose remained as the direction, that which leads on ‘based on seclusion, dispassion, cessation, and ending in relinquishment’ as has often been repeated on the Great Chapter of the Collection of Sayings of Factors of Enlightenment.

G) The Noble Eightfold Path – Up the Mountain Illusion and Beyond

The Path has been called the Noble Path because it is the realm of the Nobles (*Ariya*), the highest category of humans which has been held in contrast to the Brahmins who considered themselves, as members of the priestly cast, to be foremost. Unlike the classes by birth, the class of *Ariya* is spiritual. The ‘Path’ itself refers to the Supramundane Consciousness that eradicates radically the defilements. The parts of this Consciousness have been pieced out so that one can practice and develop them from the root stages to the Noble levels. As such, we have been taught that the Path occurs in three levels – the root level where discipline is the critical factor, the Preliminary level where concentration becomes the main factor and lastly, the Noble Path where Supramundane wisdom is the most important factor together with the nature of the unconditioned object. The three parts – morality, concentration and wisdom are developed one upon another, each eradicating more defilements in deeper levels and thus all sufferings. Morality purifies verbal and bodily actions, concentration purifies at the mental level and wisdom purifies the mind from latent defilements. In practice, one may say that mindfulness purifies the first ‘root’ level by its discipline, at the preliminary levels it purifies it through concentration, and with the Noble path, purification occurs at the latent level through insight.

The eight parts of the Path when explained in terms of the practice of mindfulness are:

1. Right View – the wisdom developed to realize the Four Noble Truths
2. Right Thought – the mindfulness that brings one to see the true nature of the object
3. Right Speech – that mindfulness that restrains one from wrong speech
4. Right Action – that mindfulness that restrains one from wrong bodily action
5. Right Livelihood - that mindfulness that restrains one from wrong livelihood
6. Right Effort – that mindfulness that strives for the Liberation
7. Right Mindfulness – that mindfulness that is employed to develop insight
8. Right Concentration - that mindfulness concentrated onto the *Vipassana* object

Usually the texts describe the Truths under four headings:

1. The Noble Truth of Suffering
2. The Noble Truth of the Cause of Suffering; that is, craving
3. The Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering
4. The Noble Truth of the Way to the Cessation of Suffering

These are like the compass of the map of spiritual practice. It is also a statement of choice. Notice that it is all about being realistic and pragmatic. The emphasis is on the last Truth. All the other three are present anyway whether one knows them or not but it is the fourth that makes all the difference.

And so, it is the vehicle or means that leads one to the noble destination. What are you waiting for?

BITING ONE'S WAY INTO THE HEART OF THE THOUSAND PETALLED LOTUS

Coming back to the story of the snail and the spider on the practice, we have now the snail after having realized, sat meekly in front of the spider, listening to what more it has to say.

“There,” said the spider, “You have come across and was thrown into the invisible web of conditioning. Fortunately for you, you went by way of the wisdom root that led you directly to the unconditioned.

The invisible web is actually not very easy to get through. It is guarded by the invisible black spider that quickly kills anything that comes into its range. And the only way is to see into the suffering nature of conditioning and that can be done only by the transcendental nature of *Vipassana* insight.”

With that said, the spider continues to explain the classical practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness as preached by the Buddha as explained clearly in the texts. How one proceeds from establishing mindfulness on the body, to the feelings, to the Consciousness and finally, to all phenomena; it goes to explain an important discourse, ‘The Analysis’ where the Buddha asked, “what is the Four Foundation of Mindfulness”? The answer He gave was – “dwelling ardent, mindful and clearly comprehending the body, feelings, Consciousness and phenomena, having overcome covetousness and grief.” He then analyses what is the development of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness? The answer was – “mindful of the origination, dissolution, origination-dissolution, externally, internally, externally-internally the body, feelings, Consciousness and phenomena.” Finally, the analysis goes further by asking what is the way to develop the Four Foundations of Mindfulness leading to the cessation of suffering. Here, the answer is, “The Noble Eightfold Path with its eight path factors”.

After this the spider expounds the workings of the practice in terms of their functional aspects, that is, firstly, clearing of the defilements, then strengthening of the wholesome states of mindfulness with right concentration, the sharpening of mindfulness into wisdom that cuts through the defilements and sets one free.

Lastly, it expounds also the way by which the *Satipatthana* can be practiced in a holistic manner into one’s life so that there are connections that builds up the forces in an integrated way, thus also called integrative mindfulness practice.

With that, the snail understood fully well what it has to do. He saw how this *Dhamma* spider itself had developed to the point of the final battle with the Lord of Darkness. It was there in that invisible web of conditioning forces that the two great spiders met – the invisible dark spider of doom with the ungraspable, signless, void spider of transcendence; there they met in the battle of titans. The final meeting was all in just a moment and yet it seemed like eternity. Darkness and light, existence and

non-existence met and fell apart and then there was just silence, a peace which the sages of old described as ‘non-occurrence’.

Aha! The snail then knew the significance of the *Dhamma* Spider. It is what the Buddha had meant when he said, “Let the *Dhamma* be your refuge and none other, Let the *Dhamma* be your refuge and none other; let yourself be the refuge and none other, and that is, the practice of the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.”

So there stood the spider on its web in a blinding glare of light. There it was a manifestation of the True *Dhamma* preached by the Blessed One to lead beings out of the deadly cycle of *Samsara* even when He Himself has attained *Parinibbana*.

Practicing, thus, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the snail eventually also reached the highest realization. When asked by his students how it is like, he replied that it is like eating ones way through the lotus petals into the heart of the flower.

“This”, he explained, “The opening of the heart is like the opening of the flower. That thousand petal lotus which some say is at the crown cakra, is actually found deep in the mind door, the Consciousness. All things are found in there, wouldn’t you agree? Moreover, all things are interconnected like the spider’s web. But with mindfulness and insight, all become clear and transparent, all becomes the folds of knowledges. Insight is like seeing into the three universal characteristics of all these phenomena. Going through each one is like eating into a particular lotus petal. Sumptuous! The taste of these knowledges has no equal. One then sees all else, including absorptions’ ecstasies as pretty illusions. As ones insights deepen, the cessations become even clearer, that is, one eats closer to the heart of the lotus. Finally, in the heart of the lotus there one finds the Deathless which is also the Unborn. That is, when the whole cycle stops spinning.”

With that said, it took a deep breath and retreated into its shell while the other little snails looked on in awe.

Nice story isn’t it?



Perceptions change, and so too what we see. This beautiful mosaic work from the museum in Cagliari, Sardinia illustrates clearly the great web of conditioning in its dynamic change. It also becomes The Magic Lotus whose central core is seen as the Four Noble Truths.

2. Hop on Board the Ship of Mindfulness

In the words of the songster John Denver, “All my bags are packed and I am ready to go, I am standing here, waiting outside the door.”

As for the rest, I will leave it out. Time to go, and I may add, JUST GO! Better not knock on the door or even say good-bye for there is no time to waste. Whoever opens the door may be the devil himself with the face of your beloved. She would look so pitiful (after all, you are also responsible for this) with eyes pleading you to change your mind. Then, let the *Suttas* remind you that we have shed enough tears to fill the great oceans, we have died enough times to have our skeletons heaped into mountains. These rather melodramatic similes sound like those preached by over enthusiastic evangelists, but that ardent spirit was such in the early days and it was precisely because of this seriousness that much more had been achieved. O yes, if you do ever come back, forget about that wedding ring. She would have found another or would have deteriorated into an aged gargoyle of Notre Dame.

Now is the jet age era. People travel far with jet planes. It is faster and often more economical than trains and ships. But in my mind still, long voyages are represented by sea fare. Also metaphorically the Path is a waterway because of the flow one sees as the nature of conditioning. So with satisfaction, I recall one of my first compilation of translations of *Satipatthana* essays as “Hop on Board the Ship of Mindfulness”. How the idea came about has also an interesting story.

Once while traveling with my Thai *Abhidhamma* and meditation teacher on a ferry crossing the channel from Penang Island to the Mainland Peninsula, I was thinking about the ferry as a comparison to the voyage of crossing over *Samsara*. We are like ‘crossing the stream’, which actually is underscored. It is actually much greater than a stream. My teacher seemed to have read my thoughts and told me, “This boat is made from teak, good material found only in Thailand and Burma.” This is precisely what this chapter is about, the materials and the workings of the ship of mindfulness. After the chapter about the twenty four types of conditionings, it will give you an idea of how things work, that is they work together in harmony. Everyone has its part to play, be it the axle, the screw, the sail or the skipper.

This flow is well illustrated in the ‘Repetition of the River Ganga’ (Ganga Peyyalo) found at the end of each chapter of the *Mahavagga* of the *Samyutta* collection, and each chapter is a collection of discourses regarding each of these seven groups of enlightenment factors.

“It flows, slides, inclines to, dependent on renunciation, on seclusion, on cessation, ending in relinquishment.”

Nekkhamma nissitam, vivekha nissitam, nirodha nissitam, vosaggaparinamim

The direction is clear, so set your compass and coordinates right from the start. It is about giving up, not accumulating; it is about seclusion, not company; it is about selflessness, not selfishness. Finally, it is also about *Nibbana*, not all things *Samsaric*. It actually summarizes the practice and I will just state it briefly again so as not to be redundant.

In *Vipassana*, once one has reached right concentration after putting aside

concepts, one arrives at the first insight knowledge where one sees that ultimately everything that one experiences is natural phenomena which is not self. This means that there is no self with big or small letters. There is no place for any EGOISTIC constructions, extensions be it mundane or divine.

On further observation, the three universal characteristics become clear and everything is then just processes, the 'flow'. The difference here is that the ship itself is also 'a flow'. The transcendence occurs with both the mind and its object. This can happen only when there is that 'letting go and letting be', with the reminder that the mindfulness must be that *VIPASSANA MINDFULNESS* which leads to transcendence. And so, those who do not experience impermanence cannot be said to be on the way of insight. It also does not mean just seeing changes here and there, but the moment-to-moment change that are the basis of conditioning which has to be perceived clearly. Suffering is also a very important characteristic that has to be perceived and this is the suffering of formations, suffering that is that moment-to-moment change. Only then will one be able to develop that detachment towards the conditioned. This, itself defines the essential nature of the Path, that ultimate letting go of conditioned nature.

As for the ship, we can perhaps try to think of the parts in accordance to the various groupings of the thirty seven factors of enlightenment.

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness – the basic substance, material, like the wood to make the boat.

The Four Supreme Efforts – the fuel to drive the boat, it may be the wind, wood, the petrol or even men who paddle it.

The Four Bases of Accomplishments – the main driving forces towards the goal. The captain or admiral.

The Five Spiritual Controlling Faculties – the main controls, steering wheels, sails, rudder, etc.

The Five Spiritual Powers - the strength of the ship such as engine power to overcome obstacles.

The Seven Factors of Enlightenment – the things that make one see and know, such as the lights, detectors, radars, etc.

The Noble Eightfold Path - that which leads one onwards step-by-step, so perhaps this is the navigator.



The flag of the Ship of Mindfulness

This paper cutting which I did many years ago for a friend was meant to illustrate symbolically the 37 factors of enlightenment. I can now regard it as the flag for the ship of mindfulness. The various groups are represented by: -

The four tongues of the dragons as the four foundations of mindfulness.

The coils of the dragon as the four supreme efforts.

The four heads of the dragons as the four bases of accomplishment.

The five claws held down as the five controlling faculties.

The five claws held out as the five powers.

The seven eyes at each dragon head as the seven factors of enlightenment.

The eight tipped star in the central circle as the Noble Eightfold Path. There is also a whorl with eight lines which is the transcendental path which leads to the center which represents the goal of the ultimate peace.

At the border are also symbols of the rabbit and peacock as well as lotus blossoms which represent the wholesome deeds which act as perfections (*paramis*) which are the wholesome *kamma* that act as the base that helps one to cross to the beyond.

There is a circle of white clouds in the center which represents the beautiful and subtle mental formations of a developed mind which also has to be penetrated.

There is also a reason why I used the colors of blue white and yellow. My friend for whom I had made this cutting, happens to be color blind to green and red.

Finally, let me include into this chapter a summary of a talk about integrative practice of Insight meditation as it would include the practice of it in daily life.

INTEGRATIVE INSIGHT PRACTICE**

Integrative practice is:

1. Linking of the very beginning of the practice and leading to realization of the final destination, is the purpose, an established resolution (*Adhitthana*) which would have to be frequently reconfirmed especially at its early stages and when Right View (*Sammaditthi*) is a correct map, critical and essential to keep one on the track.

Often we are not clear why we started meditation. It is only when the Noble aim is clear then can one consider that the journey had begun. That is why yogis make aspirations at the beginning of their sittings for at least once a day. It has also been said that any wholesome deed done without this noble aim of liberation in mind, its *kammic* force will not lead or conduce one to the goal.

2. Right Mindfulness (*Sammasati*) is to be understood through direct experience, its continuity maintained leads to Right Concentration (*Sammasamadhi*), deeply ingrained; creates an entrenched flow that continues even beyond the conscious levels. This is often necessary to overcome many difficult situations. Although one does not begin exactly with that particular quality in mindfulness that leads to insight, it is the first important thing to get right. All the rest of the development depends on it.
3. The continuity of Insight Practice depends on one's ability to maintain the *Vipassana* Mindfulness through all situations which includes all types of objects. The *Satipatthana Vipassana* practice is a systematic way of achieving this end.

It is easy to say that one has just to be mindful of things as they really are, let go of all cravings and expectations and let things be. Reality after all is always there. Easier said than done! The Consciousness with all its atrocious habits and tendencies does not go to that point and direction against the currents of the world by just living quietly in a place. To get to a higher state to realize these subtle states one's will has to be strong to develop the higher Consciousness. With all the complicated whims of inner and outer conditions, a systematic structure makes this possible for many people.

4. Thus, besides keeping at bay the Five Hindrances (*Nivarana*) and Three Evil Roots (*Akusalamula*), one has to remove the boundaries that confine the Consciousness to the conventional and mundane spheres. For this, there has to be flexibility, openness, sensitivity and courage to discover areas one never had been, never thought of was possible, never dared to venture into before.

Having access concentration that overcomes the hindrances itself is not an easy thing for many. This gives one some peace but not insight. For that one has also to leave behind the conceptual and conventional realities to arrive at the level of ultimate realities. It is a new world altogether and for first timers can seem very strange. One has, therefore, to be courageous and open, if not also adventurous. To advance one has to also be more sensitive to these objects.

5. Conventional (*Sammuti*) and ultimate (*Paramattha*) realities are like water and waves, its boundary is a thin wavy gray line that changes moment-to-moment

and often imperceptible. To be able to walk on it and skip to either side whenever suitable or appropriate, one's perception of Non-Self (*Anatta sanna*) has to be clear and sharp, one's clear comprehension (*sampajanna*) must be quick and intuitive.

From frequency one gains familiarity and from there one develops the needed perception and skill. There are many skills to learn on the way, one of them which helps to maintain continuity is the skill to switch objects and levels of Consciousness without breaking the flow of mindfulness.

6. While concentration magnifies the objects and stabilizes the practice, while it is a necessary and catalytic condition, it is actually the acuteness of mindful perception that gives rise to insight, and it is the nature of *Vipassana* mindfulness that determines it as transcendental. Thus, concentration is supportive rather than primary, and it is not needed in great depths, at least not in everyone for advancement to the higher Paths. I would advise those lacking in time to engage in serious practice not to spend too much emphasis on this.
7. The sharpness of mindful perception is at first discriminative, then plays the part of synthesis. First, one must perceive clearly all ultimate realities have their own specific characteristics then only their common characteristic in the sense of "Non Self" which when made clearer brings out clearer the other two universal characteristics of Impermanence and Oppressiveness. These three Universal Characteristics eventually are again seen as one in the sense that Reality they stand for is essentially the same thing; and the purpose of the initial until the final purpose is transcendence.

It is too easy to assume that one is observing the characteristic of change. It is also often the excuse to run into concentration saying the part involving suffering can be skipped. It is also easy to fall into the trap of subtle and extended ego-centric beliefs. It is also so easy to think that these are universal characteristics that one had experienced and what there is to be done has been fulfilled but that is not true. The depth and profundity is often underestimated. The mistake is, therefore, a mistake of the proliferations also called the higher defilements or imperfections of insight (*upakkilesa*).

8. So there are the confines and boundaries between:

- a. Wholesomeness and unwholesomeness – the factor determining their difference is the presence or absence of mindfulness.
 - b. Conventional and ultimate realities- the factor determining their difference being conceptualization and clear, direct experience.
 - c. Specific and universal characteristics - the factor determining the difference between them being precision of the presence.
 - d. Conditioned/mundane and unconditioned/supramundane - the factor determining them being the completeness of dispassion (*viraga*).
9. The development of insight is first exploratory, then cognitive and finally transcendental. It is like climbing the rungs of a ladder, first reaching for, then holding onto, and finally letting go. Its growth can be expansive, horizontal as well as in depth, vertical. One is quantitative while the other is qualitative. Generally, the quality depends on the quantity for in this case the former is the raw material, basic building blocks of the pyramid.

There are knowledges and there are knowledges of knowledges, there are also knowledges that transcend and render other knowledges superficial. Knowledge and insight are the means to the end and not the end itself. If one attaches or be proud, and even if that knowledge is real, one is again held back. There should not be anything in the way of that unshakeable freedom.

10. An important factor of the crossing over the confines is Reflective Knowledge (*Anumananana*) Properly exercised, this knowledge links the conceptual, rational mind to the non-conceptual intuitive direct knowledge. When properly used, one is able to recognize at the conscious level, the ultimate realities in the conventional and vice versa. So too, it is with the confines between specific and universal characteristics, etc. Being able to do so, one can then very easily cross over these boundaries whenever and wherever one wishes.

Thinking is not always bad. It is only that when higher concentration and insight is to arise, then all those thinking has to be put aside at least for a time.

When one returns to the normal state, right thinking and reflection is necessary to help to establish it in our daily life. We have to think sometimes and we try our best to think mindfully.

11. After that it is a matter of energy and patience that works on the soil of the Consciousness that overcomes the negative, unwholesome latencies and stirs up and increases the positive, wholesome faculties.
12. The other unknown factor is *Kamma* done by oneself. I am sure that after some practice you know to some extent what you have to deal with. Dealing with a complete unknown is one thing, working with something partly known is a little better, making what type of unknown known is yet another matter. *Kamma* includes all these and **more**.

BEYOND THE BEYOND

In the beginning, the gist of *Abhidhamma* mentioned for the beginner has in short been summarized by the four groups of ultimate realities – Consciousness, mental states, materiality and *Nibbana*. So as a post script, I will say the little I know of the last. That could not be left out, could it? It's just what the yogi works towards and as for the others, at least to give some idea as to what is necessary for the purpose of Right View.

To begin with, I will quote an occasion when a man was quite disturbed regarding this issue. He said that *Nibbana*, an unconditioned infinity cannot be perceived by a conditioned, finite Consciousness. What went wrong in his deductions was that *Nibbana* is not conceptual; finite and infinite are also concepts as well as what he thinks is conditioned and unconditioned. Such limited concepts are not applicable to the beyond.

In another case, a man who claimed to have had realization said he was often in deep agony (psychological problems). In that case, I question the authenticity of his experience. Then that he called an experience of *Nibbana* does not eradicate suffering.

I also remember what my *Abhidhamma* teacher commented about *Nibbana*. He told us that if someone asks us, 'Is *Nibbana* mind or matter?' Then one should answer, 'Mind'. If asked again, 'Really?' The answer will have to be 'No'.

If such be the case, should one say or think anything about it? The answer will be 'OF COURSE'! Concepts are just the means to an end and we use it as a convenience to communicate. Some even claimed that the Buddha did not say anything about *Nibbana*. It's true that he did keep noble silence more than once but at other times he did mention it in more than a couple of words. So let's see what you think about what I think about something that is like absolutely nothing. And please bear in mind that what I write are just thoughts and not claims of having stepped across borders.

In the *Abhidhamma*, *Nibbana* is the name given to the unconditioned element, also called the 'Unborn', 'Deathless', etc. It has been defined as the cessation of craving in the first Sutta; it has also been defined as the cessation of mind and matter. It is realized at the mind door through the Path Consciousness when one's insight has matured sufficiently. It certainly is not 'Nothing' and is certainly a Reality, and more real than all the other conditioned and conventional realities that people know. It is also certainly not so distant as to have nothing to do whatsoever with conditioned phenomena because it does condition phenomena although it itself is not conditioned, when made an object of the Consciousness.

It has also been said that *Nibbana* has the characteristic of peace (*santilakkhana*). An important choice of description, one may add. Peace is better than joy, and it has also been described as a happiness of peace, which is something other than joy, and also further qualified as a happiness that is not feeling, which eliminates further the neutral feelings. Texts also explain that it is peaceful from the incessant arising and passing away of formations, which one can consider as 'noise'.

Another way of description has also been given after having been delivered through the three doors of liberation (*tivimokkha*) –

1. The Signless (*animitta*) which occurs in one predominant in faith that notices clearly the impermanence characteristic just before the Path and Fruition thought process. Since the lines of conditioning define description and perception of formations, the unconditioned is indescribable and beyond the mundane perception.
2. The Ungrasping/Undirected (*appanihita*) which occurs for one predominant in concentration and sees clearly the characteristic of suffering. There is nothing that is to be wanted or that wants in the unconditioned, thus it is something that is after one has let go, something beyond any seeking. It is by itself complete.
3. The Void (*sunyata*) which occurs for one predominant in wisdom and sees clearly the characteristic of non-self. Here is where is to be found the unconditioned reality. Void? Void of formations and certainly anything of concern of the self or SELF.

The realization of this state purges radically the Consciousness of its defilements. This comes about through the Supramundane Path knowledges. They are four such Paths and with the arising of them, the defilements are radically eradicated in stages until finally at the last Arahant Path when the realization brings about the perfect liberation. After each level of realization, one may recall the experience and these are called the Fruitions. So the four Paths, four Fruitions and the unconditioned element of *Nibbana*, these together have been grouped together as the Nine Supramundane states (*lokuttaradhamma*). The word '*lokuttara*' means beyond the world, which is to say, beyond defilements, beyond concepts, beyond conditioned phenomena. Since the word 'beyond' is also a concept, I renamed them as 'beyond the beyond' which by the way, adds two more words.

First let us return to the beginning and consider what we call as 'ultimate realities' (*paramattha dhamma*). The usual translation of this is 'State' but a more recent one is 'Phenomena'. Another that can be considered is 'Existence'. In all cases, when we read, we already have a concept in our minds. But it is just a guide, a pointer to something more real. And so, I consider a definition for something such as this to be good is best if it is lesser of words and meanings implied and more of an instruction. As in the Zen saying, 'Do not look at the finger pointing, look at the moon'. It is like when someone describes a Mr Strange whom you have not met before, you can only imagine or read about him. You may even get a picture of him, but still it's just a picture. The better way will be to be brought to him and meet him personally. In the case of *Nibbana* it is more so, but the description you get from the *Suttas*, assuming them to be genuine and first hand, will help you put away all that are not and get closer to what is.

So we can say that *Nibbana* is a phenomenon that can be experienced by the Consciousness. Firstly, it's the Supramundane Consciousness that takes it as an object. The Path and Fruition Consciousness do not take anything else as their object. And since they occur only in the fixed state of impulsions, there cannot be any thinking, comparison and reflections about it, for such mental activities only imply active sense sphere thought processes. Often absorptions are described as 'blackouts' which is as good as not knowing anything – a dangerous occurrence according to some psychologists. But according to *Abhidhamma*, the Consciousness is still there with its object, *Nibbana* or whatever. It is the 'conscious' and rational mind that relates to it

that is not present unless the thought processes occur following it. So how does one know if it is the real thing? No wonder many fall into that great mistake and start to think that realization has occurred, especially when one has felt a certain kind of voidness and peacefulness on emergence.

However, there is automatically following the realization of the Path and Fruition process, another process called the reviewing knowledge process which is a sensual realm mind door process. This process also takes the Path, Fruition and *Nibbana* as its object. This goes to say that one knows as in a waking state the nature of these Supramundane states. Just as one on waking up from sleep can recall a dream, similarly the Supramundane states impresses upon the mind door what had just occurred.

Of course, it is all a matter of realization by each individual for himself. One does not need confirmation for that and it is possible that claims can also prove false. So how does one make sure this does not happen? A skilled and experienced teacher can help in this matter although I think this is not an easy find. Another approach suggested is to question every experience one has and understand what it really is. The *Suttas* and *Abhidhamma*, especially the latter speaks something that helps. But I think it is one's sincerity of the search that finally counts.

There is, however, an important point here, that is, insight is a means to the eradication of defilements and thus also suffering. If that 'insight' does not perform that function, then it is as good as useless. The continued presence and appearance of the defilements is indeed a clear reminder that there is more to be done. As to this, I remember some people who came to the center extolling the special powers of their teacher. When told that we practice to be rid of greed, anger and delusion, they were silenced. That was obvious because that teacher of theirs had quite a harem.

Then there are those who were impressed by the profundity and peace of their experience. One has just to ask why does one think that it is 'IT' when there are so many other states that are profound and peaceful. I also once asked a monk who claimed thus, why then will the defilements not arise again when the Noble Paths have occurred? He poured out sweat and wiped his forehead and then insisted that it was IT and that was IT! Whether it was or not is not my business. I only know that

in the position of the teacher (since he still considered me as his student then), I must warn him against pitfalls. After that I practice equanimity – ‘To each its own’.

It is an interesting note that in the first lines on the chapter of conditioning, it says that all *dhammas* are conditioning factors and all formations are conditioned’. That is one way to state that *Nibbana* is the only state which conditions but cannot be conditioned. It, one may say, is a one way street of no return. It can do things to you (which is after all, good stuff), and you or the Consciousness thus conditioned can do nothing about it, except maybe delay the process. It is like a delete button that cannot be undone. This type of conditioning occurs after the Noble Path has occurred, and the results can be felt some good time after. Everything and system gets rearranged and relocated. “O my goodness, what is it doing? It has done away with all those things I once thought as dear and precious!”

It is actually ‘packing up’ for what is inevitable, that final graceful exit from *Samsara*. If you can, helping him to get rid of all that yucky stuff can very well hasten the process. And so one might as well accept and get used to it. Finally, it’s the peace that matters. As a saying tells, “The less the better.”

There is a story that there was a monk who came about what he considered as realization. And so, he decided that he still needed instructions to further his progress to the higher Paths. He also found out that what his teacher had to say was lacking and what the books said were not much. It is certainly better to get it first hand from one who knows. And so he went to Burma where the Masters, he presumed, can still be found. In the attempt, they laughed and ridiculed him, but finding him to be sincere, did impart certain instructions, although sparingly and similar to what was already written. But knowing them as firsthand information, made a difference. Finally much is up to his own private research.

There is an important lesson to learn from this episode. Firstly there is a rule that forbids a *bhikkhu* to claim in any way a realization. As often quoted, ‘He who knows will not claim, he who does not will do so’, and as in an English proverb, ‘Empty vessels make the most noise’. One man, however, went as far as condemning this rule as a great obstacle to progress. If one considers the situation as to how the rule came about, then one can understand. These realizations cannot be proven!

There are no certificates to confirm that so and so is already a *Sotapanna* or *Arahatta*. But the other side is true, that one may not know who is an *Arahatta*, but one may know who is not. There is also the reason to prevent false claims, which the Buddha describes as the greatest robbers, for they rob what rightly belongs to the Nobles. Then there are the cases of ‘over estimations’.... So I think it is best to be practical about this, as said by a teacher – ‘It does not matter it is or not, just keep on practicing and that is more important.’ So it is back to square one – Suffering and the Way of Practice - that leads to the end of it. If there are still defilements, keep on practicing. The Lord of Darkness still has his hands on your throat and Death is not yet smiling. Look carefully, he is still grinning mockingly.

Usually when one has been considered having gone through the ‘First Course’, then one will be given instructions how to go further. Notice that they use the term ‘First Course’ instead of the ‘First Noble Path’. Through this diplomatic change of words one can define more broadly what may be considered as having passed the First Course. To name one, one will have to have successfully executed a series of resolutions to demonstrate clearly that the various stages of insight starting from the first insight of discrimination into mind and matter to the repetition and lengthening of the period of the Fruition Knowledge that had occurred. But certainly this is not a confirmation; it only helps one to decide one’s position in the practice. This would also serve as a base for the growth of further insights of the higher paths. There is also a further resolution to put away past Fruition attainments so as to step further into higher Supramundane levels.

When these instructions have been given, one is left on one’s own. Is that all? I think, certainly with some more help, it would make things much easier. For example, it has been quoted that Sariputta, Buddha’s chief disciple in wisdom often brings disciples into the First Path and Mogallana, chief disciple in psychic potencies, follows up with deeper instructions. I suppose one will also be able to find some instructions if one looks deeply into the scriptures but it also looks like it is not easy to get them directly from someone nowadays.

And please don’t ask me. Go ask the spider, the snail or the winds that sailed passed and played with the leaves of the MahaBodhi (tree) by the River Naranjara, as if they were heavenly chimes on that Vesak full moon night when our Lord attained unshakeable emancipation.

So this is where begins the “REAL NO MAN’S LAND”.

This is also where the scope of the book ends.

FOOTPATHS IN THE CLOUDS

The way spirals upwards
A trekker into the unknown,
The unknown thus shall be made known;
His footpaths wander lost in clouds
Mark the way, the beyond on the other side.
Spin, my spider thy slender web,
Help me pass those chasms deep
Betwixt life and death;
Raise thy wings fair Oriole wild,
Thy path of songs I shall follow
Over mountains of desires,
To where I shall not want;
And that light,
A star shining afar,
Let me see yonder,
Wonder beyond twilight dreams,
To sail through;
My most trusted guide,
The heart that’s free,
Shall I forever abide.
By and by,
Time gone never to return;
You and me,
Dust to dust,
Nothing left to keep;
Smile thy last,
Thy destiny shall be realized.



You are already on your way.

***** **THE END** *****

APPENDICES

.....

These are charts used by *Abhidhamma* texts to show the analysis of the Consciousness and mental factors. I leave them as they are. Please bear in mind that they are guides. How much it makes sense depends on how well one comprehends these phenomena through experience. I do not, however, say that they are foolproof but do exercise one's discretion before jumping into conclusions.

KAMAVACARA (54)

AKUSALA (12)

In the sensuous sphere, there are 12 types of akusala citta(unwholesome consciousness) that have roots:-

AHETUKA (18)

There are 18 types of rootless consciousness:-

SOBHANA (24)

There are 24 types of beautiful (sobhana) cittas of the sensuous sphere:-

Lobha (8)

a) Cittas rooted in attachment (i.e. with their base or foundation in attachment):

- | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Citta, unprompted | connected with wrong view | accompanied by pleasant feeling |
| 2. Citta, prompted | | |
| 3. Citta, unprompted | not connected with wrong view | accompanied by indifferent feeling |
| 4. Citta, prompted | | |
| 5. Citta, unprompted | connected with wrong view | accompanied by pleasant feeling |
| 6. Citta, prompted | | |
| 7. Citta, unprompted | not connected with wrong view | accompanied by indifferent feeling |
| 8. Citta, prompted | | |

Akusala Vipaka (7)

a) Cittas which are unwholesome result:

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. body consciousness accompanied by unpleasant feeling | accompanied by indifferent feeling |
| 2. ear consciousness | |
| 3. nose consciousness | |
| 4. tongue consciousness | |
| 5. eye consciousness | accompanied by indifferent feeling |
| 6. receiving consciousness | |
| 7. investigating consciousness | |

Kusala (8)

a) Cittas which are wholesome consciousness (kusala):

- | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Citta, unprompted | associated with wisdom | accompanied by pleasant feeling |
| 2. Citta, prompted | | |
| 3. Citta, unprompted | dissociated with wisdom | accompanied by indifferent feeling |
| 4. Citta, prompted | | |
| 5. Citta, unprompted | associated with wisdom | accompanied by pleasant feeling |
| 6. Citta, prompted | | |
| 7. Citta, unprompted | dissociated with wisdom | accompanied by indifferent feeling |
| 8. Citta, prompted | | |

Patigha (2)

b) Cittas rooted in ill-will or aversion:

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 9. Citta, unprompted | accompanied by unpleasant feelingconnected with ill-will |
| 10. Citta, prompted | |

Kusala Vipaka (8)

b) Cittas which are wholesome results:

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 8. body consciousness accompanied by pleasant feeling | accompanied by indifferent feeling |
| 9. ear consciousness | |
| 10. nose consciousness | |
| 11. tongue consciousness | |
| 12. eye consciousness | accompanied by pleasant feeling |
| 13. receiving consciousness accompanied by indifferent feeling | |
| 14. investigating consciousness accompanied by indifferent feeling | |
| 15. investigating consciousness accompanied by pleasant feeling | |

Vipaka (8)

b) Cittas which are wholesome result (kusala vipaka):

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 9. Citta, unprompted | associated with wisdom | accompanied by pleasant feeling |
| 10. Citta, prompted | | |
| 11. Citta, unprompted | dissociated with wisdom | accompanied by indifferent feeling |
| 12. Citta, prompted | | |
| 13. Citta, unprompted | associated with wisdom | accompanied by pleasant feeling |
| 14. Citta, prompted | | |
| 15. Citta, unprompted | dissociated with wisdom | accompanied by indifferent feeling |
| 16. Citta, prompted | | |

Moha (2)

c) Cittas rooted in delusion or ignorance:

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 11. Citta, connected with doubt | accompanied by indifferent feeling |
| 12. Citta, connected with restlessness | |

Kriya (3)

c) Functional (kriya) cittas:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 16. five sense-door adverting consciousness accompanied by indifferent feeling | accompanied by pleasant feeling |
| 17. mind-door adverting consciousness accompanied by indifferent feeling | |
| 18. smile producing consciousness (of an arahant) | |
| 19. investigating consciousness accompanied by pleasant feeling | |

Kriya (8)

c) Cittas which are neutral (kriya):

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 17. Citta, unprompted | associated with wisdom | accompanied by pleasant feeling |
| 18. Citta, prompted | | |
| 19. Citta, unprompted | dissociated with wisdom | accompanied by indifferent feeling |
| 20. Citta, prompted | | |
| 21. Citta, unprompted | associated with wisdom | accompanied by pleasant feeling |
| 22. Citta, prompted | | |
| 23. Citta, unprompted | dissociated with wisdom | accompanied by indifferent feeling |
| 24. Citta, prompted | | |

Appendix (i)

CITTA (89)

RUPAVACARA (15)

There are 15 types of form sphere moral consciousness (rupavacara) of the meditative absorptions:

Kusala (5)

a) Cittas which are wholesome consciousness:

1. First Jhana citta with initial application, sustained application, joy, happiness and one-pointedness
2. Second Jhana citta with sustained application, joy, happiness and one-pointedness
3. Third Jhana citta with joy, happiness and one-pointedness
4. Fourth Jhana citta with happiness and one-pointedness
5. Fifth Jhana citta with equanimity and one-pointedness

Vipaka (5)

b) Cittas which are resultant consciousness:

1. First Jhana resultant citta with initial application, sustained application, joy, happiness and one-pointedness
2. Second Jhana resultant citta with sustained application, joy, happiness and one-pointedness
3. Third Jhana resultant citta with joy, happiness and one-pointedness
4. Fourth Jhana resultant citta with happiness and one-pointedness
5. Fifth Jhana resultant citta with equanimity and one-pointedness

Kriya (5)

c) Cittas which are resultant (kriya) Consciousness:

1. First Jhana kriya citta with initial application, sustained application, joy, happiness and one-pointedness
2. Second Jhana kriya citta with sustained application, joy, happiness and one-pointedness
3. Third Jhana kriya citta with joy, happiness and one-pointedness
4. Fourth Jhana kriya citta with happiness and one-pointedness
5. Fifth Jhana kriya citta with equanimity and one-pointedness

ARUPAVACARA (12)

There are 12 types of formless sphere moral consciousness (arupavacara citta) of the higher meditative absorptions:

Kusala (4)

a) Cittas which are wholesome consciousness:

1. Jhana citta dwelling on the 'Infinity of Space'
2. Jhana citta dwelling on the 'Infinity of Consciousness'
3. Jhana citta dwelling on the 'Nothingness'
4. Jhana citta dwelling on the 'Neither Perception nor Non-Perception'

Vipaka (4)

b) Cittas which are resultant consciousness:

1. Resultant Jhana citta dwelling on the 'Infinity of Space'
2. Resultant Jhana citta dwelling on the 'Infinity of Consciousness'
3. Resultant Jhana citta dwelling on the 'Nothingness'
4. Resultant Jhana citta dwelling on the 'Neither Perception nor Non-Perception'

Kriya (4)

c) Cittas which are functional (kriya) consciousness:

1. Kriya Jhana citta dwelling on the 'Infinity of Space'
2. Kriya Jhana citta dwelling on the 'Infinity of Consciousness'
3. Kriya Jhana citta dwelling on the 'Nothingness'
4. Kriya Jhana citta dwelling on the 'Neither Perception nor Non-Perception'

LOKUTTARA (8)

There are 8 types of moral supramundane consciousness (lokuttara citta). These are the cittas of one who is experiencing unconditioned reality, Nibbana:

Magga (4)

a) Cittas which are supramundane path consciousness (maggacitta):

1. Sotapanna path consciousness
2. Sakadagami path consciousness
3. Anagami path consciousness
4. Arahatta path consciousness

Phala (4)

a) Cittas which are resultant supramundane Consciousness (phalacitta)

1. Sotapanna fruit consciousness
2. Sakadagami fruit consciousness
3. Anagami fruit consciousness
4. Arahatta fruit consciousness

The 52 Mental Factors at a glance

ANNASAMANACETASIKA 13

***Sabbacittasadharana* 7**

- (1) *phassa*
- (2) *vedana*
- (3) *sanna*
- (4) *cetana*
- (5) *ekaggata*
- (6) *jivitindriya*
- (7) *manasikara*

***Pakinnaka* 6**

- (8) *vitakka*
- (9) *vicara*
- (10) *adhimokkha*
- (11) *viriya*
- (12) *piti*
- (13) *chanda*

AKUSALACETASIKA 14

***Sabbacittasadharana* 4**

- (14) *moha*
- (15) *ahirika*
- (16) *anottappa*
- (17) *uddhacca*

***Pakinnaka* 10**

- (18) *lobha*
- (19) *ditthi*
- (20) *mana*
- (21) *dosa*
- (22) *issa*
- (23) *macchariya*
- (24) *kukkucca*
- (25) *thina*
- (26) *middha*
- (27) *vicikiccha*

ETHICALLY VARIABLES 13

Universals 7

- (1) Contact
- (2) Feeling
- (3) Perception
- (4) Volition
- (5) One-pointedness
- (6) Life faculty
- (7) Attention

Occasionals 6

- (8) Initial application
- (9) Sustained application
- (10) Decision
- (11) Energy
- (12) Zest
- (13) Desire

UNWHOLESOME FACATORS 14

Unwholesome Universals 4

- (14) Delusion
- (15) Shamelessness
- (16) Fearlessness of wrong
- (17) Restlessness

Unwholesome Occasionals 10

- (18) Greed
- (19) Wrong view
- (20) Conceit
- (21) Hatred
- (22) Envy
- (23) Avarice
- (24) Worry
- (25) Sloth
- (26) Torpor
- (27) Doubt

Appendix (ii)

SOBHANACETASIKA 25

Sobhanasadharana 19

- (28) *saddha*
- (29) *sati*
- (30) *hiri*
- (31) *ottappa*
- (32) *alobha*
- (33) *adosa*
- (34) *tatramajjhata*
- (35) *kaya-passaddhi*
- (36) *citta-passaddhi*
- (37) *kaya-lahuta*
- (38) *citta-lahuta*
- (39) *kaya-muduta*
- (40) *citta-muduta*
- (41) *kaya-kammannata*
- (42) *citta-kammannata*
- (43) *kaya-pagunnata*
- (44) *citta-pagunnata*
- (45) *kayujjukata*
- (46) *cittujjukata*

Virati 3

- (47) *sammavaca*
- (48) *sammakammanta*
- (49) *samma-avija*

Appamanna 2

- (50) *karuna*
- (51) *mudita*

Amoha 1

- (52) *panna*

BEAUTIFUL FACTORS 25

Beautiful Universals 19

- (28) Faith
- (29) Mindfulness
- (30) Shame
- (31) Fear of wrong
- (32) Non-greed
- (33) Non-hatred
- (34) Neutrality of mind
- (35) Tranquility of mental body
- (36) Tranquility of consciousness
- (37) Lightness of mental body
- (38) Lightness of consciousness
- (39) Malleability of mental body
- (40) Malleability of consciousness
- (41) Wieldiness of mental body
- (42) Wieldiness of consciousness
- (43) Proficiency of mental body
- (44) Proficiency of consciousness
- (45) Rectitude of mental body
- (46) Rectitude of consciousness

Abstinences 3

- (47) Right speech
- (48) Right action
- (49) Right livelihood

Illimitables 2

- (50) Compassion
- (51) Appreciative joy

Non-Delusion 1

- (52) Wisdom faculty

The 89 and 121 cittas at a glance

LOKIYACITTANI

Kamavacaracittani

Akusalacittani

(1)-(8)

(9)-(10)

(11)-(12)

Ahetukacittani

(13)-(19)

(20)-(27)

(28)-(30)

Kamavacara-sobhanacittani

(31)-(38)

(39)-(46)

(47)-(54)

lobhamulacittani

dosamulacittani

mohamulacittani

akusalavipakacittani

kusalavipaka-ahetukacittani

ahetukakiriya-cittani

kamavacara-kusalacittani

kamavacara-vipakacittani

kamavacara-kriyacittani

Rupavacaracittani

(55)-(59)

(60)-(64)

(65)-(69)

rupavacara-kusalacittani

rupavacara-vipakacittani

rupavacara-kriyacittani

Arupavacaracittani

(70)-(73)

(74)-(77)

(78)-(81)

arupavacara-kusalacittani

arupavacara-vipakacittani

arupavacara-kriyacittani

LOKUTTARACITTANI

Lokuttara-kusalacittani

(82) or (82)-(86)

(83) or (87)-(91)

(84) or (92)-(96)

(85) or (97)-(101)

sotapatti-maggacittam

sakadagami-maggacittam

anagami-maggacittam

arahatta-maggacittam

Lokuttara-vipakacittani

(86) or (102)-(106)

(87) or (107)-(111)

(88) or (112)-(116)

(89) or (117)-(121)

sotapatti-phalacittam

sakadagami-phalacittam

anagami-phalacittam

arahatta-phalacittam

Appendix (iii)

MUNDANE CITTAS	81
Sense-sphere cittas	54
Unwholesome cittas	12
(1)-(8)	Greed-rooted cittas 8
(9)-(10)	Hatred-rooted cittas 2
(11)-(12)	Delusion-rooted cittas 2
Rootless cittas	18
(13)-(19)	Unwholesome-resultant 7
(20)-(27)	Wholesome-resultant 8
(28)-(30)	Rootless functional 3
Sense-sphere beautiful cittas	24
(31)-(38)	Sense-sphere wholesome 8
(39)-(46)	Sense-sphere resultant 8
(47)-(54)	Sense-sphere functional 8
Fine-material-sphere cittas	15
(55)-(59)	Fine-material-sphere wholesome 5
(60)-(64)	Fine-material-sphere resultant 5
(65)-(69)	Fine-material-sphere functional 5
Immaterial-sphere cittas	12
(70)-(73)	Immaterial-sphere wholesome 4
(74)-(77)	Immaterial-sphere resultant 4
(78)-(81)	Immaterial-sphere functional 4
SUPRAMUNDANE CITTAS	8 or 40
Supramundane wholesome cittas	4 or 20
(82) or (82)-(86)	Path of Stream-Entry 1 or 5
(83) or (87)-(91)	Path of Once-Returning 1 or 5
(84) or (92)-(96)	Path of Non-Returning 1 or 5
(85) or (97)-(101)	Path of Arahantship 1 or 5
Supramundane resultant cittas	4 or 20
(86) or (102)-(106)	Fruit of Stream-Entry 1 or 5
(87) or (107)-(111)	Fruit of Once-Returning 1 or 5
(88) or (112)-(116)	Fruit of Non-Returning 1 or 5
(89) or (117)-(121)	Fruit of Arahantship 1 or 5

Classification of Material Phenomenon

28 MATERIAL PHENOMENA (§§ 2-5)	16 CLASSIFICATIONS (§§ 7-8)																	
	Essentials	Derived	Internal	External	Base	Non-Base	Door	Non-Door	Faculty	Non-Faculty	Gross, Etc.	Subtle, Etc.	Cling-to	Not Cling-to	Taking Objects	No Objects	Inseparable	Separable
Earth																		
Water																		
Fire																		
Air																		
Eye																		
Ear																		
Nose																		
Tongue																		
Body																		
Form																		
Sound																		
Smell																		
Taste																		
Tangibility																		
Femininity																		
Masculinity																		
Heart-base																		
Life faculty																		
Nutriments																		
Space																		
Bodily intim.																		
Vocal intim.																		
Lightness																		
Malleability																		
Wieldiness																		
Production																		
Continuity																		
Decay																		
Impermanence																		
	4	24	5	23	6	22	7	21	8	20	12	16	18	19	6	23	8	20

Relationships between Cetasikas

Group (Abbr.)		Cetasikas	Mental States	Related to other Cetasikas	Comments
A		SABBACITTA SADHARANA	Universal (7)	51	Sabbacittasadharana together with Pakinnaka is called ANNASAMANAS (Abbr, An)
	1	PHASSA	Contact		
	2	VEDANA	Feeling		
	3	SANNA	Perception		
	4	CETANA	Volition		
	5	EKAGGATA	One-Pointedness		
	6	JIVITINDRIYA	Psychic Life		
	7	MANASIKARA	Attention		
B		PAKINNAKA	Particulars (6)		
	8	VITAKKA	Initial Application	51	Except itself, related to all other Cetasikas
	9	VICARA	Sustained Application	51	Except itself, related to all other Cetasikas
(Abbr.Adhi)	10	ADHIMOKKHA	Decision	50	Except itself & Vic, related to others
(Abbr.Vir)	11	VIRIYA	Effort	51	Except itself, related to all other Cetasikas
(Abbr.Piti)	12	PITI	Joy	46	Except itself & Doc, related to others
(Abbr.Chan)	13	CHANDA	Conation	50	Except itself & Vic, related to others
C		AKUSALA	Immorals (14)		(Abbr. Aksl)
	14	MOHA	Delusion	26	13 An & 14 Aksl minus itself
Mocatuka	15	AHIRIKA	Shamelessness	26	13 An & 14 Aksl minus itself
Delusion	16	ANOTTAPPA	Fearlessness	26	13 An & 14 Aksl minus itself
(Abbr.Moc)	17	UDDHACCA	Restlessness	26	13 An & 14 Aksl minus itself
Greed	18	LOBHA	Attachment	21	13 An & 14 Aksl minus itself, Doc & Vic
Lotika	19	DITTHI (Abbr. Dit)	Misbelief	20	13 An & 14 Aksl minus itself, Doc, Vic & Mana
(Abbr.Lot)	20	MANA	Conceit	20	13 An & 14 Aksl minus itself, Doc, Vic & Dit
Hatred	21	DOSA	Hatred	20	13 An & 14 Aksl minus itself, Doc, Vic & Piti
Docatuka	22	ISSA	Jealousy	19	13 An & 14 Aksl minus itself, Lot, Vic, Piti & Thi
(Abbr.Doc)	23	MACCHARIYA	Avarice	19	13 An & 14 Aksl minus itself, Lot, Vic, Piti & Thi
	24	KUKKUCCA	Worry	19	13 An & 14 Aksl minus itself, Lot, Vic, Piti & Thi
Thiduka	25	THINA	Sloth	25	13 An & 14 Aksl minus itself & Vic
(Abbr.Thi)	26	MIDDHA	Torpor		13 An & 14 Aksl minus itself & Vic
Vic	27	VICIKICCHA	Doubt	14	13 An minus Adhi, Vir, Piti & Chanda plus 4 Moc

Appendix (vi)

Group (Abbr.)		Cetasikas	Mental States	Related to other Cetasikas	Comments
D, E, F & G (Abbr.Sobh)		SOBHANA SADHARANA (D alone Abbr. SS)	Beautiful (19)	37	13 An 25 Sobh minus itself
	28	SADDHA	Confidence		
	29	SATI	Mindfulness		
	30	HIRI	(Moral) Shame		
	31	OTTAPPA	(Moral) Dread		
	32	ALOBHA	Non-Attachment		
	33	ADOSA	Goodwill		
	34	TATRAMAJJHATTATA	Equanimity		
	35	KAYAPASSADDHI	Tranquility of mental states		
	36	CITTAPASSADDHI	Tranquility of mind		
	37	KAYALAHUTA	Lightness of mental states		
	38	CITTALAHUTA	Lightness of mind		
	39	KAYAMUDUTA	Pliancy of mental states		
	40	CITTAMUTDUTA	Pliancy of mind		
	41	KAYAKAMMANNATA	Adaptability of mental states		
	42	CITTAKAMMANNATA	Adaptability of mind		
	43	KAYAPAGUNNATA	Proficiency of mental states		
	44	CITTAPAGUNNATA	Proficiency of mind		
	45	KAYUJJUKATA	Rectitude of mental states		
	46	CITTUJJUKATA	Rectitude of mind		
E		VIRATI	Abstinences (3)		
	a	LOKIYA		33	13 An Plus 19 SS plus Pan
	b	LOKUTTARA		35	13 An plus 19 SS plus Pan plus 2 Virati
	47	SAMMAVACA	Right Speech		
Virati	48	SAMMAKAMMANTA	Right Action		
Abstinences	49	SAMM-AJIVA	Right Livelihood		
F		APPAMANNA	Illimitables (2)		13 An plus 19 SS plus Pan
(Abbr. Appa)	50	KARUNA	Compassion		
	51	MUDITA	Appreciative Joy		
G		PANNINDIRYA	Wisdom (1)		13 An plus 19 SS plus 3 Virati plus 2 Appa
(Abbr.Pan)	52	PANNA	Faculty of Wisdom		

A double coincidence of the Snail and Spider

Not too long ago I met Andrea Cullata at a talk which I gave to a group in Milano who meets once a month for Vipassana meditation. It came to my knowledge through Massimo that he carries along with him his ‘pets’, a toy snail and a spider. It seems to me quite a coincidence and so I asked him to narrate how he came to take to them. Coincidence? May be there’s some link to the conditionings found in chapter 8.

Da: Andrea

Data: 01 novembre 2014 18:41:51 CET

A: Massimo Bonomelli

Oggetto: Re: Lumaca e ragno

Hi Bhante and Massimo,

Here is a picture of me with Leone the snail and Pinza the spider (that is: “Leo” and “Claw”) .



Appendix (vii)

Leone first appeared to me in 2012 in a dream. I immediately realised it was me crawling over life and carrying my shell of rationality and math and geometry to use as a delusional shelter for my soft self. This revelation struck me deeply, as in my teens I used to think of myself as an eagle, and later as an eagle-who-thinks-to-be-a-chicken. The next morning I rushed off to the nearest toy shop where Leone had been waiting so long to be picked up.

Pinza started its career as the adornment of a Halloween chocolate-box (thus its funny colour). Being a snail, I have always admired spiders: their ability as climbers for sure, but mostly their seemingly infinite patience that will instantly switch into ruthless aggressiveness. Pinza usually dwells in the depicted metal pillbox that is marked with the Deutsche Boerse logo.

I am now looking forward to reading your story about the snail and the spider.

See you soon

Andrea

