

Basic lessons in contemplation

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LESSON I

Beginning

The disciple should try to keep his mind on his abdomen. He will then come to know the movement of 'rising' and 'falling' of his abdomen. If these movements are not clear at the beginning, one or both hands should be placed on the abdomen. After a time the upward movement due to in-breathing and downward movement due to out-breathing will become clear. Then a mental note, such as 'rising' for the upward movement and 'falling' for the downward movement should be made as each movement occurs. Every effort should be made, to know clearly each movement as it occurs. It may be thought that this kind of exercise will simply lead to knowing the form of the abdomen and not the manner of actual moving upward. One should not dwell on such thoughts but proceed with the exercise. For the beginner it is the only easy method of developing the faculties of Sati (attentiveness), Samadhi (Fixedness of Mind) and Nana (Insight) in contemplation. As he gains practice, the manner of movement without the form will be clear. The ability of knowing each successive occurrence of Nama-Rupa (Mental and Physical processes) at each of the six sense organs can be acquired only when the Contemplation (Vipassana) is fully developed. However, for a beginner whose Sati (attentiveness) and Samadhi (Fixedness of Mind) are still weak, it is difficult to keep his mind on each occurrence as it takes place successively. He may be at a loss to know how to keep his mind on each. Or he may be losing time in trying to search for his mental objects. The movement of 'rising' and 'falling' are always present and there is practically no need to look for them. It is very easy for a beginner to keep his mind on these movements. For this reason this first lesson is prescribed as a basic exercise in the course of this training. Further exercises to be taken up by the disciple as he progresses in the practice will be described later on. The disciple should keep on with this exercise of knowing the movements of the abdomen as 'rising' and 'falling'. It may be mentioned that it is necessary to make a mental note of each movement as 'rising' and 'falling' so as to keep time with each movement. The disciple should on no account *repeat by mouth*. The disciple should avoid breathing deeply and quickly; the disciple will soon feel tired and will not be in a position to proceed with his exercise. It must therefore be emphasized that the disciple should proceed with his exercise of knowing the movements of his abdomen as they occur in the course of normal and natural breathing.

LESSON II

While being occupied with his exercise of knowing each movement of 'rising' and 'falling', other moments of mental activities, such as thoughts, intentions, ideas, imagining, etc., may also occur between each noting of rising and falling. These mental activities should not be disregarded but must be followed up as soon as each occurs. A mental note of each by whichever term it is known should be made as it occurs.

Contemplation

If you imagine, make a mental note such as 'imagining'. If you are thinking of something, make a mental note such as 'thinking'. If you reflect - 'reflecting'; intend - 'intending'; understand - 'understanding' and so on. If you find your mind wanders from the object of meditation - 'wandering'. If in your imagination you go to a place - 'going', reach the place - 'reaching'; meet a person - 'meeting'; speak to him - 'speaking; argue with him - 'arguing'. If you have a vision of image, light, colour, etc., - 'seeing'. Such mental vision should be noted repeatedly until it passes away. After their disappearance you proceed with the first lesson of knowing the 'rising' and 'falling' regularly and without relaxation. While being occupied with this exercise if you intend to swallow saliva make a mental note - 'intending', 'intending'; while in the act of swallowing - 'swallowing; again if you intend to spit - 'intending', 'intending'; while in the act of spitting, - 'spitting', 'spitting'. Then go back to your original exercise of knowing 'rising' and 'falling'. If you intend to bend your neck - 'intending', 'intending', while in the act of bending - 'bending'. Again if you intend to straighten your neck - 'intending', 'intending', while in the act of straightening - 'straightening', 'straightening'. The actions of bending and straightening the neck should be carried out very slowly. After these actions you should proceed with the exercise of knowing 'rising' and 'falling'.

LESSON III

As the disciple has to carry on with his contemplation in one definite posture (either sitting or lying down) for a long time, he may have an intense feeling of tiredness or stiffness in his body or limbs. In such case, he should keep his mind on the place where such feeling occurs and carry on with his contemplation such as, 'tired', 'tired', or 'stiff', 'stiff' in a regulated manner - neither slowly nor quickly. Generally such feeling will become feeble gradually and cease altogether. On the other hand, such feeling may grow stronger and stronger until it becomes unbearable any longer. In such cases, if he intends to change his position, he should first make a mental note, such as 'intending', 'intending' and then proceed with his movements in changing his position; each detail of which should be contemplated in the respective order of movements.

Illustration

If you intend to lift the hand or leg, 'intending', 'intending'; while in the act of lifting, 'lifting', 'lifting'; while in the act of stretching, 'stretching', 'stretching'; while in the act of putting down, 'putting', 'putting'; as it touches, 'touching', 'touching'. The above actions must be carried out slowly. As soon as the disciple is settled in a new position, he should proceed with his usual contemplation of 'rising' and 'falling'. If again in his new position he feels hot in any part of his body and intends to change his position, the disciple should carry on with his contemplation in the same manner as mentioned above.

If the disciple feels any itching sensation in any part of his body, he should keep his mind on the spot, making a mental note such as 'itching', 'itching' in a regulated manner - neither slowly nor quickly. If the itching sensation disappears in the course of thus making a mental note, the disciple should then proceed with the usual exercise of knowing the 'rising' and 'falling'. If however, the disciple feels that the itching becomes unbearable and he intends to rub the spot, he should first make a mental note of his intention such as 'intending', 'intending'; then he should lift

his hand slowly, making a mental note such as 'lifting', 'lifting', when his hand touches the spot, he should make a mental note such as 'touching', 'touching'; then he should rub slowly, at the same time making a mental note such as 'rubbing', 'rubbing'; on the ceasing of the itching sensation, if he intends to stop rubbing he should make a mental note such as 'intending', 'intending'; then he should draw back his hand slowly at the same time making a mental note such as 'withdrawing', 'withdrawing'; when his hand rests at its usual place touching the limb, he should make a mental note such as 'touching', 'touching'. Then the disciple will proceed with the original exercise of knowing the 'rising' and 'falling'.

If the disciple feels any other kind of painful sensation, he should keep on the spot where such sensation occurs, making a mental note such as 'painful', 'painful'; 'suffering', 'suffering'; 'aching', 'aching'; 'pressing', 'pressing', 'tired', 'tired'; 'giddy', 'giddy' and so on. The mental note must be made in a regulated manner - neither slowly, nor quickly. The disciple may feel that the painful sensation ceases a while. Or on the other hand he may feel that the pain is increasing. If he feels that the pain is increasing he should not be alarmed at this, but must proceed with his contemplation resolutely. If the disciple carries on in this manner the pain usually ceases. If however, the disciple after some time finds that the pain increases and becomes unbearable he must ignore the pain and proceed with the contemplation of 'rising' and 'falling'.

In some cases, the disciple may feel unbearable sensations of pain as soon as he gains certain progress in his attentiveness. At times he may feel a choking or stifling sensation, or he may feel the painful sensation of being poked by a knife or a sharp-pointed stick, or he may feel a burning sensation of being pricked by sharp needles or he may feel an unpleasant sensation as if small insects were crawling all over the body. At times he may also feel strongly the sensation of itching, biting, intense cold etc. As soon as the disciple stops the contemplation he may feel that these painful sensations cease; and again on his proceeding with his contemplation he may feel them as soon as he gains his attentiveness. As a matter of fact these painful sensations are neither serious nor are they any form of disease. They are common factors and are always present in the body. As in the normal condition the mind is always occupied with more conspicuous objects, these trifling factors become obscure. With the development of contemplation, the mental faculty becomes keener and the disciple is therefore in a position to know these sensations until he has overcome them and until they cease. By resolutely proceeding with the contemplation, the disciple will not come to any harm. If the disciple feels timid and wavers in the contemplation by stopping, he may encounter them again and again as soon as his contemplation is developed. If however, he proceeds resolutely with his contemplation, he will overcome these painful conditions. He may not again come across this kind of painful state in the course of his contemplation.

If the disciple intends to sway his body, he should make a mental note such as 'intending', 'intending' and while in the act of swaying - 'swaying', 'swaying'. In some cases it may also happen that the disciple while being occupied with his usual contemplation, finds his body swaying to and fro. He should not be alarmed or worried about this. At the same time he should not be pleased with it and wish for it. On the other hand he must bear in mind that swaying will automatically cease if he keeps his mind firmly on this 'swaying'. He should thus make a mental note such as 'swaying', 'swaying' in a regulated manner - neither slowly nor quickly till the swaying ceases. If he finds that the swaying becomes intense in spite of his making a mental note he should lean against a wall or post or lie down on his bed and then proceed with his

contemplation. The disciple should act in the same manner if he finds himself shaking or trembling.

LESSON IV

After having spent some time in the course of this training, the disciple may feel lazy in his work when he considers that there is no good progress in his training. He should then contemplate such as: 'lazy', 'lazy'. Before he can gain sufficient strength in Sati (attentiveness), Samadhi (fixedness of mind) and

Ñāna (insight), the disciple may feel doubtful about the correctness and usefulness of the method of the training itself. In such cases he should proceed with the contemplation such as 'doubtful', 'doubtful'. At times he may expect and wish for a good result. In such case he should proceed with the contemplation such as 'expecting' or 'wishing'. At times he might try to remember or think of the way or manner of his having carried out his training. In such cases he should proceed with the contemplation of 'remembering' or 'thinking'. At times he may be trying to examine whether the object of contemplation is Rupa (matter) or Nama (mind). In such cases he should proceed with the contemplation such as 'examining', 'examining'. At times he may feel sorry because he does not find any improvement in his contemplation. In such case he should proceed with the contemplation such as 'sorry', 'sorry'. At times he may feel happy when he thinks that his contemplation is improving. In such case he should proceed with his contemplation such as 'happy', 'happy'. In this manner he should make a mental note of every moment of mental behaviour as it occurs, and then proceed with his contemplation of 'rising' and 'falling'. The period of the contemplation is from the time of waking until the disciple falls asleep. Thus the disciple should be occupied incessantly with his contemplation throughout the day and night. There should be no relaxation whatever. On reaching a certain stage of developed contemplation, the disciple will not feel sleepy at all and will be able to carry on with his contemplation day and night.

Summary of Lessons.

Whether good or bad, the disciple should contemplate on each mental occurrence. Whether small or big, the disciple should contemplate on each movement of his body and limbs. Whether pleasant or unpleasant, the disciple should contemplate on every sensation of his bodily feelings. Whether good or bad, the disciple should contemplate on every mental object or impression. If there is no special thing, the disciple should be fully occupied with the contemplation of 'rising' and 'falling'. If he has to go on any business the disciple should contemplate on each step as 'walking' or 'left', 'right'; while taking an exercise in walking, the disciple should contemplate on each step by three sections such as: 'up-forward-down'. The disciple, who is thus occupied fully with his contemplation throughout the day and night will be able to develop his concentration in order to gain the desired stage of Udayabbaya Ñāna (initial stage of the fourth degree of Insight) in no long time, and other higher stages of Vipassana-Ñāna up to the Final Achievement.