

The Progress of Insight

THE PROGRESS OF INSIGHT THROUGH THE STAGES OF PURIFICATION

A modern Pali treatise on Bhuddhist Satipatthana Meditation

by

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I. PURIFICATION OF CONDUCT:

Purification of conduct means here, the acceptance of the Moral Precepts. Restraint according to the rules is of first importance, because only when that restraint is pure, will one be able to accomplish the development of meditation.

Insight must be developed by noticing according to their specific and general characteristics (for example: the specific characteristics of the 4 elements: Earth, Fire, Air and Water. The 3 universal characteristics common to all phenomena are: *impermanence*, liability to *suffering* and their being *void of self*), the bodily and mental processes evident at the six sense doors. The meditator who is a beginner should first notice the perfectly distinct process of touch, perceived through the door of bodily sensitivity, because in Insight meditation one should take up what is distinct...

But while he is engaged in just noticing the rising and falling of the abdomen and other tactile processes, there will appear thoughts of desire, etc., feelings of pleasure, etc., or acts such as adjusting various parts of the body. At that time, these activities (of mind and body) must be noticed too. But after noticing them, he should turn again to the continuous noticing of the breath, which is the basic object of mindfulness in this practise...

II. PURIFICATION OF MIND:

During the early part of the methodical practise, as long as the meditator's mind is not yet fully purified, wandering thoughts arising by his thinking of objects of sense desire, etc. will also appear intermittently between thoughts of noticing (the objects of meditation). Sometimes the meditator will perceive these interruptions and sometimes he will not. But even if he perceives them, it will only be after a short time has lapsed after their appearance. For then the momentary concentration of his mind is still very tender and weak. So these wandering thoughts continue to hinder his mind while it is occupied in developing the practise of noticing. Hence these wandering thoughts are called 'hindering thoughts'.

When, however, the momentary concentration of his mind has become strong, the thought process of noticing becomes well concentrated. Hence when attending to the objects to be noticed - the abdominal movement, sitting, touching, bending, stretching, hearing, etc., - his noticing thoughts now appear as if falling upon these objects, as if striking at them, as if confronting them again and again. Then as a rule, his mind will no longer go elsewhere. Only occasionally and in a slight degree will this happen, and even in those cases he will be able to notice any such stray thought at its very arising. Then that stray thought will subside as soon as it is noticed, and it will not arise again. Immediately afterwards he will also be able to resume continuous noticing of any object as it becomes evident to him. That is why at this time his mind is called 'unhindered'.

While thus practising the exercise of noticing with unhindered mind, the noticing mind will get more close to and fixed at whichever object is noticed, and the act of noticing will proceed without break. At the time there arises in him, in uninterrupted succession "the concentration of mind lasting for a moment", directed to each object noticed.

This is called "*Purification of mind*".

Though that concentration has only momentary duration, its power of resistance to being overwhelmed by opposition corresponds to that of Access Concentration.

In the commentary to the *Visuddhi Magga*, in the explanation of the Chapter relating to Respiration Mindfulness, it is said thus: "‘Momentary unification of mind’ means the concentration of mind lasting only for a moment. For that (type of concentration), too, when it occurs uninterruptedly with its respective object in a single mode and is not overcome by opposition, fixes the mind immovably, as if in absorption." "It occurs uninterruptedly with its respective object" refers to the uninterrupted continuity of the thoughts engaged in noticing; after noticing one subject, one attends, in the same manner, to another that follows immediately; again, having noticed that object, one turns to the one following next, and so on.

"In a single mode" means: though the objects to be noticed as they present themselves, are numerous and varied, yet the force of concentration of the mind uninterruptedly engaged in noticing remains virtually on the same level. For, what is meant here is: just as the first object was noticed with a certain degree of concentration, so the second, third and other subsequent objects are noticed in each case with the same degree of concentration.

"It is not overcome by opposition": this means that the Momentary Concentration in its uninterrupted flow, is not overwhelmed by the Mental Hindrances.

"As if in Absorption": this means that the strength of the Momentary Concentration is similar to that of concentration which has reached full mental absorption. However such similarity of momentary concentration with fully absorbed concentration will become evident (only) when the methodical practice of Insight reaches its culmination

But is it not said in the Commentaries that the term ‘Purification of Mind’ applies only to Access Concentration and Fully Absorbed Concentration? That is true; but one has to take this statement in the sense that Momentary Concentration is included in Access Concentration. For in the Commentary to the Satipatthana Sutta it is said: "The remaining twelve exercises are subjects of meditation leading only to Access Concentration." Now, in the case of the subjects dealt with in the sections of the Satipatthana Sutta on Postures, Clear Comprehension and Elements, the concentration of one who devotes himself to these exercises will be definitely only Momentary Concentration. But as the latter is able to suppress the Hindrances just as Access Concentration does, since it is the neighbourhood of the Noble-path-attainment-concentration, therefore that same Momentary Concentration is spoken of by the name of Access (or Neighbourhood), and also the meditation subjects that produce that Momentary Concentration are called meditation subjects leading to Access Concentration'. Hence, it should be taken that Momentary Concentration, having the capacity to suppress the Hindrances, has also the right to the name ‘Access’ and ‘Purification of Mind’. Otherwise ‘Purification of Mind’ could not come about in one who has made Bare Insight his vehicle, by employing only Insight, without having produced either Access Concentration or Fully Absorbed Concentration.

III . PURIFICATION OF VIEW

1. Analitical knowledge of body and mind:

Endowed with the 'Purification of Mind' and continuing the practise of noticing, the meditator now gets to know body-and-mind analytically as follows: "The rising is one process, the falling is another; sitting is another; touching another, etc." In that way he gets to know how to distinguish each bodily process that he notices. Further: "The knowing of the rising movement is one process; the knowing of the falling movement is another." In that way he gets to know each mental act of noticing. Furthermore: "The rising movement is one proces; the knowing of it is another. The falling movement is one process; the knowing of it is another," and so on. In that way he gets to know how to distinguish each bodily and mental process. All that knowledge, indeed, comes from simple noticing, not from reasoning; that is to say: it is knowledge by direct experience arrived at by the mere act of noticing, and not knowledge derived from ratiocination.

Thus when seeing a visual object with the eye, the meditator knows how to distinguish each single factor involved: "The eye is one; the visual object is another, and knowing it is another." The same manner applies in the case of the other sense functions.

For at the time, in each act of noticing, the meditator comes to know analytically the mental processes of noticing, and those of thinking and reflecting, knowing them for himself through direct knowledge, by his experience.

Such knowledge as this, which analyses in each act of noticing both the bodily process noticed and the mental process engaged in noticing, according to their true essential nature, is called "Analytical Knowledge of Body and Mind"

When that knowledge has come to maturity, the meditator understands thus: "At the moment of breathing-in, there is just the rising movement of the abdomen and the knowing of the movement, but there is no self besides; at the moment of breathing out, there is just the falling movement of the abdomen and the knowing of the movement, but there is no self besides. Understanding it thus in these and other instances, he knows and sees for himself by noticing thus: "There is here only that pair: a material process as object, and a mental process of knowing it; and it is to that pair alone that the terms of conventional usage "being", "person" or "soul", "I" or "another", "man" or "woman" refer. But apart from that dual process there is no separate person or being, I or another, man or woman.

This is called "Purification of View".

IV. PURIFICATION BY OVERCOMING DOUBT

2. Knowledge by discerning Conditionality

When purification of view has come to maturity, the condition necessary for the bodily and mental process observed, will also become evident. Firstly, the consciousness that is the

condition of the (respective) bodily process will be evident. How? For instance, when bending arms or legs, the consciousness intending to bend these limbs is evident. So the meditator first notices that consciousness, and next he notices the act of bending, and so on. Then he understands by direct experience: "When there is consciousness, intending to bend a limb, the bodily process of bending arises; when there is consciousness intending to stretch a limb, the bodily process of stretching arises." And in the same way he understands other instances also, by direct experience.

Again he also understands by direct experience the condition for the mental process, in the following manner: in the case of consciousness desirous of running off the track, there arises first a corresponding consciousness giving initial attention (to the distracting object). If that consciousness is not noticed (with mindfulness), then there arises a consciousness that runs off the track. But if the consciousness of initial attention to the distracting object is noticed and known, no stray thought will arise. It is similar in the case of other types of consciousness, (for instance when taking delight or being angry, greedy, etc.). When both the sense-door of the eye and a visual object are present, there arises visual consciousness; otherwise visual consciousness will not arise; and so it is in the case of the other sense-doors. If there is a noticeable or recognizable object, then there arises consciousness engaged in noticing or thinking or reasoning or understanding, as the case may be; otherwise no such consciousness arises. Similarly he understands in the case of every other instance (of mind-door cognition).

At that time, the meditator will generally experience many and various painful feelings arising in the body. Now, while one of these feelings is being noticed (but without concern), another feeling will arise elsewhere; and while that is being noticed, again another will appear elsewhere. Thus the meditator follows each feeling as it arises and notices it. But though he is engaged in noticing these feelings as they arise, he will only perceive their initial phase of "arising" and not their final phase of "dissolution".

Also many mental images of various shapes will then appear. The shape of a Dagoba, monk, man, tree, park, heavenly mansion, cloud, and many other such images of various kinds will appear. Here too, while the meditator is still engaged in noticing one of these mental images, another will show itself; while still noticing that, yet another will appear. Following thus the mental images as they arise, he goes on noticing them. But though he is engaged in noticing them, he will perceive only their initial phase, not the final phase.

He now understands: Consciousness arises in accordance with each object that becomes evident. If there is an object, there arises consciousness; if there is no object, no consciousness arises.

Between sequences of noticing he also, by considering inferentially, comes to know thus: "It is due to the presence of such causes and conditions as Ignorance, Craving, Kamma, etc., that Body-and-Mind continue."

Such discernment through direct experience and through inference as described, when noticing Body-and-Mind with their conditions is called "Knowledge of discerning Conditionality".

When that knowledge has come to maturity, the meditator will perceive only body-and-mind processes occurring in strict accordance with their particular and appropriate conditions and he comes to the conclusion: Here is only a conditioning body-and-mind process and a

conditioned body-and-mind process. Apart from these, there is no person who performs the bending of the limbs, etc., or who experiences feelings of pain, etc.

This is called "*Purification (of Insight) by Overcoming Doubt*".

3. Knowledge of Comprehension:

When this "Purification (of Insight) by Overcoming Doubt" has reached maturity, the meditator will discern distinctly the initial, middle and final phases of any object noticed by him. Then, in the case of various objects noticed, he will discern distinctly that, only after each earlier process has ceased, there arises a subsequent process. For instance, only when the rising movement of the abdomen has come to an end, there arises the falling movement; only when that has ended, there is again a rising movement. So also in the case of walking: only when the lifting of the foot has come to an end, there arises the carrying forward of the foot; only when that has been completed, there follows the placing of the foot on the ground.

In the case of painful feelings, only after each single feeling occurring at its particular place has ceased, will another new feeling arise at another place. On noticing the respective painful feeling repeatedly, twice, thrice or more, the meditator will see that it gradually grows less, and at last ceases entirely.

In the case of the variously shaped images that enter the mind's field, it is only after each single image noticed has vanished, that another new object will come into the mind's focus. On noticing them attentively twice, thrice or more, he will see well that these mental objects which are being noticed, move from one place to another, or they become gradually smaller and less distinct, until at last they disappear entirely. The meditator, however, does not perceive anything that is permanent and lasting, or free from destruction and disappearance.

Seeing how each object, even while being noticed, comes to destruction and disappearance, the meditator comprehends it as *impermanent* in the sense of undergoing destruction. He further comprehends it as *suffering* (painful) in the sense of breaking up after arising. Having seen how various painful feelings arise in continuous succession; that, if one painful feeling ceases, another arises, and when that has ceased, again another arises,- having seen that, he comprehends the respective objects just as a conglomeration of suffering. Further he comprehends the object as consisting of mere *impersonal* phenomena without a master, in the sense of not arising of (or by) themselves, but arising subject to conditions and then breaking up.

This comprehension of an object noticed, as being impermanent, painful, and without a self (impersonal), through knowing its nature of impermanency, etc., by means of simply noticing, without reflecting and reasoning, is called "Knowledge by Comprehension through Direct Experience".

Having thus seen the three characteristics once or several times, by direct experience, the meditator, by inference from the direct experience of those objects noticed, comprehends all bodily and mental processes of past, present and future and the whole world, by coming to the conclusion: "They too, are in the same way, impermanent, painful and without a self." This is

called "Knowledge of Comprehension by Inference".

Alluding to this very knowledge it is said in the Patisambhida Magga, "Whatever there is of materiality, past, present or future, internal or external, coarse or fine, inferior or superior, far or near,- all materiality He defines as impermanent. That is one kind of comprehension," and so on.

Also in the Commentary to the Kathavatthu it is said: "Even if the impermanence of only a single formation (conditioned phenomenon) is known, there may be consideration of the rest by induction thus: "All formations are impermanent".

The words "All formations are impermanent" refer to an understanding by induction, and not to an understanding by perceiving an object at the same moment.

4. Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away

The ten Corruptions of Insight

When the meditator, in the exercise of noticing, is able to keep exclusively to the present body-and-mind process, without looking back to past processes or ahead to future ones, then, as a result of Insight, (the mental vision of) a *brilliant light* will appear to him. To one it will appear like the light of a lamp, to others like a flash of lightning, or like the radiance of the moon or the sun, and so on. With one it may last for just one moment, with others it may last longer.

There will also arise in him strong *mindfulness* pertaining to Insight. As a result, all the successive arisings of bodily and mental processes will present themselves to the consciousness engaged in noticing, as if coming to it of themselves; and mindfulness too, seems as if alighting on the processes of itself. Therefore the meditator then believes: "There is no body-and-mind process in which mindfulness fails to engage."

His *knowledge* consisting in Insight, here called 'noticing', will be likewise keen, strong and lucid. Consequently he will discern clearly and in separate forms all the bodily and mental processes noticed, as if cutting to pieces a bamboo sprout with a well-sharpened knife. Therefore the meditator then believes: "There is no body-and-mind process that cannot be noticed." When examining the characteristics of impermanence, etc., or other aspects of reality, he understands everything quite clearly and at once, and he believes it to be the knowledge derived from direct experience.

Further, strong *faith* pertaining to Insight, arises in him. Under its influence, the meditator's mind, when engaged in noticing or thinking, is serene and without any disturbance; and when he is engaged in recollecting the virtues of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, his mind quite easily gives itself over to them. There arises in him the wish to proclaim the Buddhas' Teaching, joyous confidence in the virtues of those engaged in meditation, the desire to advise dear friends and relatives to practise meditation, grateful remembrance of the help received from the meditation master, his spiritual mentor, etc., - these and many other similar mental processes will occur.

V. PURIFICATION BY KNOWLEDGE AND VISION OF WHAT IS PATH AND NOT-PATH

While engaged in noticing, the meditator either by himself or through instructions from someone else, comes to this decision: ‘The Brilliant Light and the other things experienced by me, are not the Path. Delight in them is merely a corruption of Insight. The practice of continuous noticing the object as it becomes evident - that alone is the way of Insight. I must go on with just the work of noticing.’ This decision is called Purification By Knowledge And Vision Of What Is Path And Not-Path.’

VI. PURIFICATION BY KNOWLEDGE AND VISION OF THE COURSE OF PRACTICE

After noticing these manifestations of Brilliant Light and the others, or after leaving them unheeded. He goes on continuously as before with the act of noticing the bodily and mental processes as they become evident at the six sense-doors. While thus engaged in noticing, he gets over the corruptions relating to brilliant light, rapture, tranquillity, happiness, attachment, etc., and his knowledge remains concerned exclusively with the arising and passing away of the processes noticed. For then, at each act of noticing, he sees: ‘The noticed object having arisen, disappears instantly’; and it becomes clear to him that each object disappears just where it arises; it does not move on to another place.

In that way he understands by direct experience how bodily and mental processes arise and break up from moment to moment. It is such knowledge and understanding resulting from the continuous noticing of bodily and mental processes as they arise and dissolve moment after moment, and the discernment, in separate sections, of the arising and passing away of each of them, while being free from corruptions, that is called ‘final Knowledge of Contemplation of Arising and Passing Away’. This is the beginning of Purification by Knowledge and Vision of the Course of Practice’ which starts from the Insight and extends to Adaptation Knowledge (No. 13).

5. Knowledge of Dissolution

Noticing the bodily and mental processes as they arise, he sees them part by part, link by link, piece by piece, fraction by fraction: ‘Just now it arises, just now it dissolves.’ When that Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away becomes mature, keen and strong, it will arise easily and proceed uninterruptedly as if borne onward of itself; also the bodily and mental processes will be easily discernible. When keen knowledge thus carries on and formations are easily discernible, then neither the arising of each bodily and mental process, nor its middle phase called ‘presence’, nor the continuity of bodily and mental processes called ‘occurrence as unbroken flux’ is apparent to him; nor are apparent to him the shape of hand, foot, face, body, and so on. But what is apparent to him is only the *ceasing* of bodily and mental processes, called vanishing, or passing away, or dissolution.

For instance, while noticing the rising movement of the abdomen, neither its initial nor middle phase is apparent, but only the ceasing or vanishing which is called the final phase, is apparent; and so it is also with the rise and fall of the abdomen. Again, in the case of bending an arm or leg, while noticing the act of bending, neither the initial nor the middle phase of bending is apparent, nor is the form of the limb apparent. It is similar in the other cases of stretching a limb, and so on.

For at that time each object that is being noticed, seems to him to be entirely absent or to have become non-existent. Consequently, at this stage of knowledge, it is to him as if he were engaged in noticing something which has already become absent or non-existent by having vanished; and the consciousness engaged in noticing appears to have lost contact with the object that is being noticed. It is for that reason that a meditator may here think: 'I have lost the Insight'; but he should not think so.

For formerly his consciousness normally took delight in conceptual objects of shapes, etc.; and even as far as up to the Knowledge of Arising and Passing away, the idea of formations with their specific features was always apparent to him. Hence his mind took delight in a plainly distinguishable object consisting of formations, with its particular structures and its particular feature-idea. But now that his knowledge has developed the way described, no such idea of the formations' features or structure, appears to him, still less any other, cruder, concept. At such a stage, the *arising* formations, that is, the first phase of the process, is not apparent (as it is in the case of 'Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away'), but there is apparent only the dissolution, that is the final phase, having the nature of vanishing. Therefore, the mediator's mind does not take delight in it at first, but he may be sure that soon, after becoming familiar with delight in the cessation (of the phenomena) too, which is called their dissolution. With this assurance he should again turn to the practice of continuous noticing.

When thus engaged, he perceives that in each act of noticing there are always present two factors, that is, an objective and a subjective one - the object noticed and the mental state of knowing it - which dissolve and vanish by pairs, one pair after the other. For in each single instance of a rising movement of the abdomen, there are, in fact, numerous physical processes constituting the rising movement, which are seen to dissolve serially. It is like seeing the continuous successive vanishing of a summer mirage moment by moment; or it is like the quick and continuous bursting of bubbles produced in a heavy shower by thick rain drops falling on a water surface; or it is like the quick, successive extinction of oil-lamps or candles, blown out by the wind, as these lights are being offered at a shrine by devotees. Similar to that appears the dissolving and vanishing, moment by moment, of the bodily processes noticed. And the dissolution of consciousness noticing those bodily processes is apparent to him along with the dissolution of the bodily processes. Also while he is noticing other bodily and mental processes, their, their dissolution, too, will be apparent to him in the same manner. Consequently, the knowledge will come to him that whatever part of the whole body is noticed, that object ceases first, and after it the consciousness engaged in noticing that object follows in its wake. From that the meditator will understand very clearly in the case of each successive pair the dissolution of the consciousness noticing that very object. (It should be borne in mind that this refers only to understanding arrived at through direct experience by one engaged in noticing only; it is not an opinion derived from mere reasoning.)

It is perfectly clear understanding of the dissolution of two things, pair by pair, - that is, (1) of the visual or other object appearing at any of the six sense-doors, and (2) of the consciousness noticing that very object that is called 'Knowledge of Dissolution'.

6. Awareness of Fearfulness

When that 'Knowledge of Dissolution' is mature, there will, just by seeing the dissolution of all object-and-subject-formations, gradually arise 'Awareness of Fearfulness' and other (higher) knowledges, together with their respective aspects of fear, and so on.

Having seen how the dissolution of two things - that is any object noticed and the Insight-thought engaged in noticing it - takes place moment by moment, the meditator also understands by inference that in the past too, every conditioned thing (formation) has broken up in the same way, that so it will break up also in the future and that present it breaks up, too. And just at the time of noticing any formations that are evident, these formations will appear to him in their aspect of fearfulness. Therefore, during the very act of noticing, the meditator will also come to understand: 'These formations are indeed fearful.'

Such understanding of their fearfulness is called 'Knowledge of the Awareness of Fearfulness'; it has also the name 'Knowledge of Fear'. At that time, his mind itself is gripped by fear and seems helpless.

7. Knowledge of Misery

When he has realised the fearfulness (of the formations) through the 'Knowledge of Fear', and keeps on noticing continuously, then the 'Knowledge of Misery' will arise in him before long. When it arises, all formations everywhere - whether amongst the objects noticed, or among the states of consciousness engaged in noticing, or in any kind of life or existence that is brought to mind - will appear insipid, without a vitalising factor, and unsatisfying. So he sees, at that time, only suffering, only unsatisfactoriness, only misery. Therefore this stage is called 'Knowledge of Misery'.

8. Knowledge of Disgust

Seeing thus the misery in conditioned things (formations), his mind finds no delight in those miserable things, but is entirely disgusted by them. At times, his mind becomes, as it were, discontented and listless. Even so he does not give up the practice of Insight, but spends his time continuously engaging in it. He therefore should know that this state of mind is not dissatisfaction with meditation, but is precisely the 'Knowledge of Disgust' that has the aspect of being disgusted with the formations. Even if he directs his thought to the happiest sort of life and existence, or to the most pleasant and desirable objects, his mind will not take delight in them, will find no satisfaction in them. On the contrary, his mind will incline and lean and tend only to Nibbana. Therefore the following thought will arise in him between moments of noticing: 'The ceasing of all formations that are dissolving from moment to moment - that alone is happiness.'

9. Knowledge of Desire for Deliverance

When through this knowledge (now acquired) he feels disgust with regard to every formation noticed, there will arise in him a desire to forsake these formation or to become delivered from them. The knowledge relating to that desire is called 'Knowledge of Desire for Deliverance'. At that time, usually various painful feelings arise in the body, and also an unwillingness to remain long in one particular bodily posture. Even if these states do not arise, the comfortless nature of the formations will become more evident than ever. And due to that, between moments of noticing, he feels a longing thus: 'Oh, may I soon get free from that! Oh, may I reach the state where these formations cease! Oh, may I be able to give up these formations completely!' At this juncture, his consciousness engaged in noticing, seems to shrink from the object noticed at each moment of noticing, and wish to escape from it.

10. Knowledge of Re-observation

Being thus desirous of escaping from the formations, the meditator makes stronger effort and continues the practice of noticing these very formations with the single purpose of forsaking them and escaping from them. For that reason, the knowledge arising at that time, is called 'Knowledge of Re-observation'. The term 're-observation' has the same meaning as 're-noticing' or 're-contemplation'. Then the nature (or characteristics) of the formation - their being impermanent, suffering and without a self - will be clearly evident to him; and among these three, the aspect of suffering will be particularly distinct.

At this stage too, there will usually arise in his body various kinds of pains which are severe, sharp and of growing intensity. Hence his whole bodily and mental system will seem to him like an unbearable mass of sickness or a conglomeration of suffering. And a state of restlessness will usually manifest itself, making him incapable of keeping to one particular posture for any length of time. For then he will not be able to hold any one position long, but will soon want to change it. This state, however, simply manifests the unbearable nature of formations. Though he wants to change his bodily posture, still he should not give in easily to that wish, but should endeavour to remain motionless for a longer period in the same posture and continue to carry on the practice of noticing. By doing so he will be able to overcome his restlessness.

Now his Insight Knowledge is quite strong and lucid, and by virtue of it even his painful feelings will at once cease As soon as they are firmly noticed. Even if a painful feeling does not cease completely, he will perceive that it is dissolving, part by part, from moment to moment. That is to say, the ceasing, vanishing and disappearing of each single moment of feeling will become apparent separately in each corresponding act of noticing. In other words, now it will not be as it was at the time of the 'Knowledge of Comprehension', when the constant flow or continuity of feelings of the same kind was apparent as a single unit. But if, without abandoning the practice, that feeling of pain is firmly and continuously noticed, it will entirely cease before

long. When it ceases in that way, it does so for good and will not arise again. Though in that way the Insight Knowledge may have become strong and perfectly lucid, still he is not satisfied with that much. He will even think: 'My Insight Knowledge is not clear'. He should, however dismiss such thought by applying the act of noticing the bodily and mental formations as they occur.

If he perseveres thus, this noticing will become more and more clear as the time passes in minutes, hours and days, Then he will overcome the painful feelings and the restlessness in being able to remain long in one particular posture, and also the idea that his Insight Knowledge is not yet clear enough. His noticing will, then, function rapidly, and at every moment of noticing he will understand quite clearly any of the three characteristics of impermanence, etc.

This understanding of any of the three characteristics of impermanence, etc., through the act of noticing which functions with promptness in quick succession, is called 'Strong Knowledge of Re-observation'.

11. Knowledge of Equanimity about Formations

When this 'Knowledge of Re-observation' is mature, there will arise knowledge perceiving evident bodily and mental processes in continuous succession quite naturally, as if borne onward of itself. This is called 'Knowledge of Equanimity about Formations'.

Now, in the act of noticing, effort is no longer required for keeping formations before the mind or for understanding them. After completion of each single act of noticing, the object to be noticed will appear of itself, and Insight Knowledge, too, will of itself notice and understand it. It is as if no further effort need be made by the meditator. Formerly, owing to seeing the dissolution of formations, there arose, in successive order, the aspect of fearfulness, the perception of misery, the aspect of disgust, the desire for deliverance, and dissatisfaction with the knowledge so far acquired. But now these mental states no longer arise; although also in the present state, the breaking up of formations which are dissolving more rapidly, is perceived closely. Even if a painful feeling arises in the body, no mental disturbance (grief) arises, and there is no lack of fortitude bearing it. Generally, however, at this stage pains will be absent entirely, that is to say they do not arise. Even if the meditator thinks about something fearful or sad, no mental disturbance will arise, be it in the form of fear or of sorrow. This, firstly, is the 'abandoning of fear', at the stage of 'Equanimity about formations'.

At the earlier stage, on attaining 'Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away, great joy had arisen on account of the clarity of Insight. But now this kind of joy does not arise, even though there is present the exceedingly peaceful and sublime clarity of mind belonging to 'Equanimity about Formations'. Though he actually sees desirable objects conducive to joy, or though he thinks about various enjoyable things, no strong feeling of joy will arise. This is 'abandoning of delight' at the stage of 'Equanimity about Formations'.

He cherishes no desire nor hate with regard to any object, desirable or undesirable, that comes into the range of his sense doors, but taking them as just the same in his act of noticing, he understands them (that is to say, it is a pure act of understanding). This is 'equable vision' at the stage of 'Equanimity about Formations'.

Of these three qualities just mentioned, it is said in the 'Path of Purification' (Visuddhi Magga): "Having discarded fear and delight, he is impartial and neutral towards all formations."

If he resumes the practice of noticing with the thought: “Now I will do it vigorously again!”, then, before long, the noticing will function efficiently as if borne onward of itself. From now onwards there is no need for the meditator to make further (deliberate) effort. Though he does not make a (deliberate) effort, his noticing will proceed in a continuous and steady flow for a long time; it will go on even for two or three hours without interruption. This is the ‘state of long-lasting (practice)’ of Equanimity about Formations; referring to which it is said in the ‘Patisambhida Magga’: “‘The wisdom lasting long’ is the knowledge present in the mental states of Equanimity about Formations.” The Great Commentary to the ‘Path of Purification’ (Visuddhi Magga) explains as follows: “This said with reference to knowledge functioning in a continuous flow.”

Now when noticing functions spontaneously as if borne onwards of itself, the mind, even if sent out towards a variety of objects, generally refuses to go; and even if it does go, it will not stay long but will resume continuous noticing. In this connection it was said: “He shrinks, recoils, and retreats; he does not go forth to it.”

12. Insight leading to Emergence

So, through ‘Knowledge of Equanimity about Formations’, which is endowed with many virtues, blessings and powers, he notices the formations as they occur. When this knowledge is mature, on having become keen, strong and lucid, and on having reached its culmination point, it will understand any of the formations as being impermanent or painful or without self, just by seeing their dissolution. Now that act of noticing any one characteristic out of the three, which is still more lucid in its perfect understanding, manifests itself two or three times, or more, in rapid succession. This called is called ‘Insight leading to Emergence’.

Thereupon, immediately after the last consciousness in the series of acts of noticing, belonging to this Insight leading to Emergence, the meditator’s consciousness leaps forth into (taking as its object) Nibbana which is the cessation of all formations. Then there appears to him the stilling (subsidence) of all formations called ‘cessation’.

This mode of realisation of Nibbana has been mentioned in many discourses of the Master, for example: “The vision of truth arose: that whatsoever has the nature of arising is bound to cease”. Herein the words “bound to cease”, indicate the aspect of realising the stilling and ceasing of all formations which have the nature of arising.

Also in the ‘Questions of Milinda’ it is said; “His consciousness while carrying on the practice of bringing to mind (=noticing), passes beyond the continuous occurrence of phenomena and alights upon non-occurrence. One who, having practised in correct manner, has alighted upon non-occurrence, O king, is said to have realized Nibbana.”

The meaning is this: the meditator who wishes to realise Nibbana, should repeatedly bring to mind, through the practice of noticing, every bodily and mental process that appears at any of the six sense doors. When he brings it to mind thus, his consciousness engaged in noticing - here called “bringing to mind” - will, until Adaptation Knowledge is reached, fall at every moment upon the (conditioned) bodily and mental formations called here ‘continuous occurrence’, because they go on occurring over and over again in an unbroken flow, like a river’s current. But in the last phase, instead of falling upon that ‘continuous occurrence’, consciousness passes beyond it and alights upon ‘non-occurrence’ (which is the very opposite of the bodily and mental formations

called here ‘occurrence’). In other words, it arrives at ‘non-occurrence’, that is to say, it reaches, as if it “alights upon”, cessation which is the stilling of the formations (or conditioned phenomena). When the meditator, having already before practised correctly and without deviation by way of the ‘Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away’ and the other knowledges (or by way of the Purification of Conduct, of Mind, of View, etc.), has in this manner arrived at ‘non-occurrence’ (by the consciousness alighting upon it), he is said to have ‘realized Nibbana’, he is called one who has made Nibbana a direct experience and has actually seen it.

13. Knowledge of Adaptation

Here the knowledge by way of noticing that occurs last in the series constituting ‘Insight leading to Emergence’, is called ‘Knowledge of Adaptation’.

This is the end of the ‘Purification by Knowledge and Vision of Course and Practice’.

14. Maturity Knowledge

Immediately afterwards, a type of knowledge manifests itself that, as it were, falls for the first time into Nibbana, which is void of formations (conditioned phenomena) since it is the cessation of them. This knowledge is called ‘Maturity Knowledge’.

VII PURIFICATION BY KNOWLEDGE AND VISION.

15. Path Knowledge

It is followed immediately by knowledge that abides in that same Nibbana which is void of formations since it is the cessation of them. This called ‘Path Knowledge’. It is also called ‘Purification by Knowledge and Vision’.

16. Fruition Knowledge

That again is immediately followed by knowledge that belongs to the final stage and continues in the course of its predecessor: it abides in that same Nibbana, which is void of formations since it is the cessation of them. This called ‘Fruition Knowledge’.

17. Knowledge of reviewing

The duration of that threefold knowledge of Maturity, Path, and Fruition is, however, not very long. It is very short and lasts for just an instant, like the duration of a single thought of noticing. Subsequently there arises ‘Knowledge of Reviewing’. Through that Knowledge of Reviewing’ the meditator discerns that the ‘Insight leading to Emergence’ came along with the

very rapid function of noticing, and that immediately after that last phase of noticing the Path Consciousness entered into the cessation (of formations). This is Knowledge of the Path’.

He also discerns that the consciousness was in that same state of cessation at the intervening period between the Path and the Reviewing. This is the ‘Knowledge of Reviewing Fruition.’

He further discerns that the object just experienced is void of all formations. This is ‘Knowledge of Reviewing Nibbana’.

In this connection it is said in the Path of Purification’ (Visuddhi Magga): “ ‘By that Path, indeed, I have come’, thus he reviews the Path. That blessing was obtained,’ thus he reviews the Fruition. ‘That state has been penetrated as an object by me,’ thus he reviews the Deathless, Nibbana.”

Some meditators, but not all, have ‘Reviewing of Defilements’.

After having reviewed in this way, the meditator still continues the practise of noticing bodily and mental processes as they become evident. While he is thus engaged in noticing the bodily and mental processes however, appear to him quite coarse, not subtle as before at the time of the ‘Knowledge of Equanimity about Formations’. Why is it so? It is because of the fact that the knowledge present now has the nature of the ‘Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away’. For when the Noble Disciples (namely streamwinners, etc.) resume the practice of Insight (by noticing), the ‘Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away’ usually arises at he beginning. This is the usual course of order in this respect.

When some meditators, however, emerge from the attainment of Path and Fruition, great faith, happiness, rapture and tranquillity, produced by virtue of the attainment-experience, arise flooding the whole body. Owing to that, they are unable to carry out the practise of noticing anything at apparent at that time. Even if they make double effort and attempt to proceed with the practise of Insight they fail to discern the phenomena clearly and separately, at the moment of their occurrence. They continue to experience only rapture tranquillity and happiness, which occur with great force. This state of mind, which is extraordinarily serene through the strong faith prevailing, lasts for one hour, two hours, or more, without break. Because of this fact, meditators feel as if they were in some such place as a wide open space suffused with radiance and most delightful. The rapture and the happiness, of a serene character, that arises then, are praised by meditators thus: “Surely, I have never before felt and experienced such happiness!” After two or three hours have passed, that faith, happiness, rapture and tranquillity will fade. The meditators can once again proceed with noticing the bodily and mental processes as they occur, distinguishing them separately, and will be able to discern them clearly. But at that time too, first the ‘Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away’ will appear.

18. Attainment of Fruition

While he is thus engaged in noticing, however, his Insight-knowledge will gradually grow, and will soon reach the stage of ‘Equanimity about Formations’ again. But if his power of concentration has reached perfection, then, in the case of one who does the Insight practise of noticing with a view of attaining only the first Path and Fruition, the Fruition consciousness of the First Path alone reaches cessation of formations by way of the *Attainment of Fruition*. This

occurs in precisely the same way as the Path and Fruition consciousness occurred before in the consciousness-sequence belonging to the initial attainment of the First Path. The only difference here is the capacity of the Fruition Attainment to last long.

One should also set one's mind resolutely upon the further tasks: to be able to repeat the achievement of Fruition Attainment, to achieve it rapidly, and, at the time of achievement to abide in it for a long time, say for 6, 10, 15 or 30 minutes, for an hour or more.

In one who applies himself to achieving the Attainment of Fruition, 'Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away', will arise in the beginning. Advancing from there in the due sequence, soon 'Knowledge of Equanimity about Formations' is reached. But when skill in the practise has been acquired, the 'Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away' will arise, soon, even after four or five acts of noticing. If the power of concentration has reached perfection, the Fruition consciousness will, repeatedly, get absorbed in cessation by way of Fruition Attainment. The mind can thus reach absorption even while one is walking up and down, or while taking a meal and the Fruition Attainment can remain for any length of time as resolved. During the Fruition Attainment, the mind will abide only in the cessation of formations, and will not be aware of anything else.

19. The Higher Paths and Fruitions

When the meditator has thus become skilled in achieving the Fruition Attainment, he should resolutely set his mind upon the task of attaining to the higher Paths and Fruitions. What should now be done by one who has set himself the task? Just as before he should carry out the practice of noticing (anything occurring) at the six sense doors.

Hence the meditator should notice any bodily and mental process that becomes evident to him at the six sense-doors. While he is thus engaged, he will see, at the stage of 'Knowledge of Arising and Passing Away', that the first objects consisting of formations appear to him rather coarse, and that his mind is not well concentrated. The development of Insight belonging to the Higher Paths is, in fact, not as easy as that of Insight belonging to the Fruition Attainment already achieved by the meditator. It is in fact somewhat difficult, due to the fact that Insight has to be developed anew. It is, however, not so very difficult as it was at the first time when beginning the practice. In a single day, or even in a single hour, he can gain the 'Knowledge of Equanimity about Formations'. This statement is made here, basing it on the experience usually gained by persons of the present day, who had to be given guidance from the start, and who did not possess particularly strong intelligence. Here it is applied, by inference, to similar types of persons in general.

But although 'Equanimity about Formations' has been attained it just goes on by repeating itself, if the Spiritual Faculties have not yet reached full maturity. Though he who has won (one of the lower) Fruitions may be able to enter into it several times within one hour, yet if his spiritual faculties are immature, he cannot attain the next-higher Path within as much as one day, two, three or more days. He abides merely in 'Equanimity about Formations'. If, however he then directs his mind to reach the Fruition already attained, he will reach it perhaps in two or three minutes.

When, however, the spiritual Faculties are mature, one who carries out the practice of Insight for attaining to a higher Path, will find that immediately after ‘Equanimity about Formations’ has reached its culmination, the Higher Path and Fruition arise in the same way as before (i.e., as at the time of the First Path and Fruition), that is to say, it is preceded by the stages of Adaptation and Maturity. After the Fruition, the stages of ‘Reviewing’, etc., that follow, are also the same as before.

Anything else concerning the method of practice for Insight and the progress of knowledge right up to Arahantship can be understood in precisely the same way as described. Hence, there is no need for elaborating it any further.

Now, the present treatise on the “Progress of Insight through the stages of Purification” has been written in a concise form, so that meditators can easily comprehend it. Hence complete details have not been given here. And since it was written with a view of being easily intelligible, in many passages in this treatise, canonical references have not been quoted, and there are repetitions in it and other faults of literary composition. But these shortcomings of presentation and the incompleteness of canonical references, may here be overlooked by the reader. Only the meaning and purpose should be heeded by the wise. It is to this that I would invite the readers attention.

Though in the beginning it was mentioned that this treatise has been written for those who have already obtained distinctive results in their practice, others may perhaps, read it with advantage, too.

Now these are my concluding good wishes for the latter type of readers: Just as a very delicious, appetizing, tasty and nutritious meal can be appreciated fully only by him who has himself eaten it, and not without partaking it, - in the same way, the whole series of developments of knowledge described here can be understood fully only by one who has himself seen it by direct experience, and not otherwise. So may all good people reach the stage of indubitable understanding of this whole series of knowledge-developments! May they also strive to attain it!

This treatise on the Purities and Insights,
For meditators who have seen things clear,
Although their store of learning may be small -
The Elder, Mahasi by name, in Insight’s method skilful, he
Has written it in Burmese tongue and into Pali rendered it.

The treatise on the Purities and Insights
composed on 22-5-1950
is here concluded.