

CAUTION This is a major spoiler for the practice of Vipassana meditation, and you should NOT read this if you are currently practicing or want to experience yourself. Reading this is dangerous if you cannot control your mind well as it may delude you during your practice. This is the most thorough outline I have seen that details how one achieves Nibbana and realize the Eightfold Noble's Path.

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Translator's Foreword _____ [\(Top\)](#)

To present to the reading public a treatise on Buddhist meditation needs no word of apology today. In wide circles of the West, Buddhist meditation is no longer regarded as a matter of purely academic or exotic interest. Under the stress and complexity of modern life the need for mental and spiritual regeneration is now

widely felt, and in the field of the mind's methodical development the value of Buddhist meditation has been recognized and tested by many.

It is, in particular, the Buddha's Way of Mindfulness (*satipatthana*) that has been found invaluable because it is adaptable to, and beneficial in, widely different conditions of life. The present treatise is based on this method of cultivating mindfulness and awareness, which ultimately aims at the mind's final liberation from greed, hatred, and delusion.

The author of this treatise, the Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw (U Sobhana Mahathera), is a Buddhist monk of contemporary Burma and an eminent meditation master. A brief sketch of his life is included in this volume. The path of meditation described in these pages was, and still is, taught by him in his meditation center called Thathana Yeiktha, in Rangoon, and is also set forth in his lectures and books in the Burmese language.

The framework of the treatise is provided by the classical "seven stages of purification" (*satta-visuddhi*), just as in Acariya Buddhaghosa's famous *Visuddhimagga*. On

gradually reaching these stages, various phases of insight knowledge (*ñāna*)

are developed, leading on to the stages of ultimate liberation. The approach followed is that of "bare insight"

(*sukkha-vipassana*)

where, by direct observation, one's own bodily and mental processes are seen with increasing clarity as being impermanent, liable to suffering, and without a self or soul. The meditational practice begins with a few selected subjects of body-contemplation, which are retained up to the very end of the road. With the gradually increasing strength of mindfulness and concentration the range widens and the vision deepens until the insight knowledges unfold themselves in due order, as a natural outcome of the practice. This approach to the ultimate goal of Buddhist meditation is called *bare insight*

because insight into the three characteristics of existence is made use of exclusively here, dispensing with the prior development of full concentrative absorption

(*jhana*).

Nevertheless, and it hardly needs mention, here too a high degree of mental concentration is required for perseverance in the practice, for attaining to insight knowledge, and for reaping its fruits.

As stated in the treatise itself (p.5), it is not the author's purpose to give a detailed introduction to the practice for the use of beginners. The foremost concern in this work is with a stage where, after diligent preliminary practice, the insight knowledges have begun to emerge, leading up to the highest crest of spiritual achievement, arahantship. Of the basic exercises, the treatise gives only a brief indication, at the beginning of Chapter I. Detailed instruction about these may be gathered by the student from the author's *Practical Insight Meditation* or the translator's book

The Heart of Buddhist Meditation.

Also a knowledge of the Buddha's original "Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness" (Satipatthana Sutta) will be indispensable.

This treatise was first written in the Burmese language and later, in 1950, a Pali version of it was composed by the author. As the treatise deals chiefly with the advanced stages of the practice, it was originally not intended for publication. Handwritten or typed copies of the Burmese or Pali version were given only to those who, with some measure of success, had concluded a strict course of practice at the meditation center. For the use of meditators from foreign countries, only a few cyclostyled sheets in English, briefly describing the phases of insight knowledge, were issued instead of the treatise itself. This was done to enable the meditator to identify his personal experience with one or other of the stages described, so that he might direct his further progress accordingly, without being diverted or misled by any secondary phenomena that may have appeared during his practice.

In 1954 the Venerable Author agreed to a printed edition of the Pali version in Burmese script, and after this first publication he also permitted, at the translator's request, the issue of an English version. He had the great kindness to go carefully through the draft translation and the Notes, with the linguistic help of an experienced Burmese lay meditator, U Pe Thin, who for many years had ably served as an interpreter for meditators from foreign countries. The translator's gratitude is due to both his Venerable Meditation Master, the author, and to U Pe Thin.

— Nyanaponika Thera
Forest Hermitage
Kandy, Ceylon,
On the Full-moon Day of June (Poson) 1965.

Introduction [\(Top\)](#)

[_____](#) *Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Enlightened One*

Homage to Him, the Great Omniscient Sage, Who spread the net of rays of His Good Law! These rays of His Good Law — His very message true — Long may they shed their radiance o'er the world!

This treatise explains the progress of insight, [1](#) together with the corresponding stages of purification. [2](#) It has been written in brief for the benefit of meditators who have obtained distinctive results in their practice, so that they may more easily understand their experience. It is meant for those who, in their practice of insight, have taken up as their main subject either the tactile bodily process of motion, [3](#) evident in the rising and falling movement of the abdomen, [4](#) or the tactile bodily process based on three of the primary elements of matter [5](#) evident in the sensation of touch (bodily impact). It is meant for those who, by attending to these exercises, have gained progressive insight as well into the whole body-and-mind process arising at the six sense doors,

[6](#)

and have finally come to see the Dhamma, to attain to the Dhamma, to understand the Dhamma, to penetrate the Dhamma, who have passed beyond doubt, freed themselves from uncertainty, obtained assurance, and achieved independence of others in the Master's dispensation.

[7](#)

I. Purification of Conduct [_____ \(Top\)](#)

Purification of conduct means here, in the case of male and female devotees (*upasakas* and *upasikas*), the acceptance of the precepts, and the proper guarding and protecting of their observance — whether it be the Five Precepts, the Eight Uposatha Precepts, or the Ten Precepts.

[8](#)

In the case of bhikkhus, purification of conduct is the well-kept purity of the fourfold conduct incumbent upon monks, beginning with restraint according to the disciplinary rules of bhikkhus, called the Patimokkha. Of that fourfold conduct, the restraint according to the Patimokkha rules is of first importance, because only when that restraint is pure will one be able to accomplish the development of meditation. [9](#)

The Method of Insight [_____ \(Top\)](#)

There are two kinds of meditation development, tranquillity (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassana*).

A person who, of these two, has first developed tranquillity, and after

having established himself in either access concentration or full concentration,

[10](#)

subsequently contemplates the five groups of grasping,

[11](#)

is called a

samatha-yanika,

"one who has tranquillity as his vehicle."

As to his method of attaining insight, the *Papañcasudani*, commenting on the Dhammadaya Sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya, says: "Herein, a certain person first produces access concentration or full concentration; this is tranquillity. He then applies insight to that concentration and to the mental states associated with it, seeing them as impermanent, etc.; this is insight." In the

Visuddhimagga,

too, it is said: "He whose vehicle is tranquillity should first emerge from any fine-material or immaterial jhana, except the base consisting of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, and he should then discern, according to characteristic, function, etc., the jhana factors consisting of applied thought, etc., and the mental states associated with them"

(*Path of Purification*,

XVIII,3).

He, however, who has neither produced access concentration nor full concentration, but from the very start applies insight to the five groups of grasping, is called *suddha-vipassana-yanika*, [12](#) "one who has pure insight as his vehicle." As to his method of attaining insight it is said in the same Commentary to the Dhammadaya Sutta: "There is another person, who even without having produced the aforesaid tranquillity,

applies insight to the five groups of grasping, seeing them as impermanent, etc." In the

Visuddhimagga,

too, it is said thus: "One who has pure insight as his vehicle contemplates the four elements."

In the Susima-paribbajaka Sutta of the Nidanavagga Samyutta, too, it is said by the Buddha: "First arises the knowledge comprehending the actual happening of things (*dhammatthiti-ñāna*) and afterwards arises the knowledge realizing Nibbana (*nibbane ñāna*)."

When purification of conduct has been established, the meditator who has chosen pure insight as his vehicle should endeavor to contemplate the *body-and-mind* (*nama-rupa*). In doing so, he should contemplate, according to their characteristics, [13](#) the five groups of grasping, that is, the bodily and mental processes that become evident to him in his own life-continuity (at his own six sense doors).

[14](#)

Insight must, in fact, be developed by noticing, [15](#) according to their specific and general characteristics,

[16](#)

the bodily and mental processes that become evident at the six sense doors. At the beginning, however, it is difficult to follow and to notice clearly all bodily and mental processes that incessantly appear at the six sense doors. Therefore the meditator who is a beginner should first

notice the perfectly distinct process of touch, perceived through the door of bodily sensitivity; because the

Visuddhimagga

says that in insight meditation one should take up what is distinct. When sitting, there occurs the bodily process of touch by way of the sitting posture and through touch sensitivity in the body. These processes of tactile sensitivity should be noticed as "Sitting _ touching _," and so forth, in due succession. Further, at the seated meditator's abdomen, the tactile process of bodily motion (that is, the wind, or vibratory, element) which has breathing as its condition, is perceptible continuously as the rise (expansion) and fall (contraction) of the abdomen. That too should be noticed as "rising, falling," and so forth. While the meditator is thus engaged in noticing the element of motion which impinges continuously on the door of bodily sensitivity in the abdomen, it becomes evident to him in its aspects of stiffening, of vibrating, and of pushing and pulling. Here, the aspect of stiffening shows the motion element's

characteristic nature

of supporting; the aspect of vibrating shows its

essential function

of movement; and the aspect of pushing and pulling shows its

manifestation

of impelling.

[17](#)

Hence the meditator, noticing the tactile bodily process of rise and fall of the abdomen, accomplishes the observation of the *bodily process (rupa)*, by getting to know the characteristic nature, etc., of the element of motion. Later when he has accomplished the observation of mind (*nama*) and the observation of both

body and mind

(nama-rupa),

he will also come to know the

general

characteristics of the processes concerned — their impermanence, liability to suffering, and their being void of a self.

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. After noticing them, he should turn again to the continuous noticing of the tactile process of the rising and falling of the abdomen, which is the basic object of mindfulness in this practice.

This is a brief sketch of the methodical practice of insight. It is not the place here to treat it in detail, because this is a brief essay on the progress of insight through the stages of purification; it is not a treatise explaining in detail the methodical practice of insight.

II. The Purification of Mind _____ [\(Top\)](#)

During the early part of the methodical practice, as long as the meditator's mind is not yet fully purified, wandering thoughts arisen by his thinking of objects of sense desire, etc., will also appear intermittently between thoughts of noticing (the objects of meditation). Sometimes the beginning meditator will perceive occurrence (of these

interruptions) and sometimes he will not. But even if he perceives them, it will be only after a short time has elapsed 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 practice 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, seeing, 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, as expressed in common speech; or, to be exact, he will notice the stray thought immediately after its actual arising. Then that stray thought will subside as soon as it is noticed and 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 his mind at that time is called "unhindered."

While the meditator is thus practicing the exercise of noticing with unhindered mind, the noticing mind will close in upon and fix on whatever object is being noticed, and the act of noticing will proceed without break. At that 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*. [18](#)

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 *Visuddhimagga*, in the explanation of the chapter relating to mindfulness of breathing, 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 object, one attends, in the same manner, to another that follows immediately; [19](#) again, having noticed that object, one turns to the next one, 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.

"Is not overcome by opposition": this means that the momentary concentration in its uninterrupted flow is not overwhelmed by the mental hindrances. [20](#)

"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. [21](#)

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." [22](#) 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, [23](#) and since it is the neighbourhood of the noble-path attainment concentration, [24](#) 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 understood 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 [\(Top\)](#)

[1. Analytical Knowledge of Body and Mind](#) [\(Top\)](#)

Endowed with purification of mind and continuing the practice of noticing, the meditator now comes to know body-and-mind analytically as follows: "The rising (upward movement) of the abdomen is one process; the falling (downward movement) is another; sitting is another; touching is another," etc. In this way he comes to know how to distinguish each bodily process that he notices. Further he realizes: "The knowing of the rising movement is one process; the knowing of the falling movement is another." In that way he comes to know each mental act of noticing. Further he realizes: "The rising movement is one process; 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 comes to know how to distinguish each bodily and mental process. All that knowledge comes from simply 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; seeing 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 thus: "They have the nature of going towards an object, inclining towards an object, cognizing an object." On the other hand, he knows analytically the material processes going on in the whole body — which are here described as "the rising and falling movements of the abdomen," "sitting," etc., knowing them thus: "These have *not* the nature of going or inclining towards an object, or of cognizing an object." Such knowing is called "knowing matter (or the body) by its manifestation of non-determining." For it is said in the

Mula-Tika,

the "Principal Sub-commentary" to the Abhidhamma

Vibhanga:

"In other words, 'non-determining' (as in the passage quoted) should be understood as having no faculty of cognizing an object."

Such knowledge as this, which analyzes 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 [\(Top\)](#)

2. Knowledge by Discerning Conditionality

[\(Top\)](#)

When purification of view has come to maturity, the conditions necessary for the bodily and mental processes 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 the 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 too 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 what occurs in every other instance (of mind-door cognition).

At that time, the meditator will generally experience many different painful feelings arising in his 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, a monk, a man, a house, a tree, a park, a heavenly mansion, a cloud, and many other such images 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 perceives 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 _____ [\(Top\)](#)

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, does there arise a subsequent process. For instance, only when the rising movement of the abdomen has come to an end, does there arise the falling movement; only when that has ended, is there again a rising movement. So also in the case of walking: only when the lifting of the foot has come to an end, does there arise the carrying forward of the foot; only when that has been completed, does there follow 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 each arising. Having seen how various painful feelings arise in continuous succession — how if one painful feeling ceases, another arises, and when that has ceased, again another arises — having seen that, he comprehends the respective objects as just 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 the 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 *Patis ambhidamagga*:

"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 a (co-present) object at the same moment. (This passage is the authority for the usage of the term "inductive insight.")

Also in the Commentary to the Majjhima Nikaya [25](#) it is said: "Because in the case of the realm of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, the insight into the sequence of mental factors belongs to the Buddhas alone and not to the disciples, he (the Buddha) said thus thereby indicating the insight by groups._" (This passage is the authority for the usage of the term "comprehension by groups.")

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**4. Knowledge of Arising and Passing
Away: _____ [\(Top\)](#)**

The Ten Corruptions of Insight 27

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 arise in him the wish to proclaim the Buddha's Teaching, joyous confidence in the virtues of those engaged in meditation, the desire to advise dear friends and relatives to practice meditation, grateful remembrance of the help received from his meditation master, his spiritual mentor, etc. These and many other similar mental processes will occur.

There arises also *rapture* in its five grades, beginning with minor rapture.

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When purification of mind is gained, that rapture begins to appear by causing "goose-flesh,"

tremor in the limbs, etc.; and now it produces a sublime feeling of happiness and exhilaration, filling the whole body with an exceedingly sweet and subtle thrill. Under its influence, he feels as if the whole body had risen up and remained in the air without touching the ground, or as if it were seated on an air cushion, or as if it were floating up and down.

There arises *tranquillity* of mind with the characteristic of quietening the disturbances of consciousness and its mental concomitants; and along with it appear mental agility, etc.

29

When walking, standing, sitting, or reclining there is, under the influence of these mental qualities, no disturbance of consciousness and its mental concomitants, nor heaviness, rigidity, unwieldiness, sickness, or crookedness.

30

Rather, his consciousness and its mental

concomitants are tranquil through having reached the supreme relief in non-action.

31

They are agile in always functioning swiftly; they are pliant in being able to attend to any object desired; they are wieldy, in being able to attend to an object for any length of time desired; they are quite lucid through their proficiency, that is, through the ease with which insight penetrates the object; they are also straight through being directed, inclined, and turned only towards wholesome activities.

There also arises a very sublime feeling of *happiness*

suffusing all his body. Under its influence he becomes exceedingly joyous and he believes: "Now I am happy all the time," or "Now, indeed, I have found happiness never felt before," and he wants to tell others of his extraordinary experience. With reference to that rapture and

happiness, which are aided by the factors of tranquillity, etc., it was said:

Superhuman is the bliss of a monk
Who, with mind at peace, Having entered a
secluded place, Wins insight into Dhamma.
When he fully comprehends The five groups'
rise and fall, He wins to rapture and to joy —
The Deathless this, for those who understand.

Dhammapada vv. 373-374

There arises in him *energy* that is neither too lax nor too tense but is vigorous and acts evenly. For formerly his energy was sometimes lax, and so he was overpowered by sloth and torpor; hence he could not notice keenly and continuously the objects as they became evident, and his understanding, too, was not clear. And at other times his energy was too

tense, and so he was overpowered by agitation, with the same result of being unable to notice keenly, etc. But now his energy is neither too lax nor too tense, but is vigorous and acts evenly; and so, overcoming these shortcomings of sloth, torpor, and agitation, he is able to notice the objects present keenly and continuously, and his understanding is quite clear, too.

There also arises in him strong *equanimity* associated with insight, which is neutral towards all formations. Under its influence he regards with neutrality even his examination of the nature of these formations with respect to their being impermanent, etc.; and he is able to notice keenly and continuously the bodily and mental processes arising at the time. Then his activity of noticing is carried on without effort, and proceeds, as it were, of itself. Also in adverting to the objects, there arises in him

strong equanimity, by virtue of which his mind enters, as it were, quickly into the objects of advertence.

32

There arises further a subtle *attachment* of a calm nature that enjoys the insight graced with the "brilliant light" and the other qualities here described. The meditator, however, is not able to discern it as a corruption but believes it to be just the very bliss of meditation. So meditators speak in praise of it thus: "Only now do I find full delight in meditation!"

Having felt such rapture and happiness accompanied by the "brilliant light" and enjoying the very act of perfect noticing, which is ably functioning with ease and rapidity, the meditator now believes: "Surely I must have attained to

the supramundane path and fruition! [33](#) Now I have finished the task of meditation." This is mistaking what is not the path for the path, and it is a corruption of insight which usually takes place in the manner just described. But even if the meditator does not take the "brilliant light" and the other corruptions as an indication of the path and fruition, still he feels delight in them. This is likewise a corruption of insight. Therefore, the knowledge consisting in noticing, even if quick in its functioning, is called "the early stage of (or 'weak') knowledge of arising and passing away," if it is beset and corrupted by those corruptions. For the same reason the meditator is at that time not in a position to discern quite distinctly the arising and passing away of bodily and mental processes.

V. Purification by Knowledge and Vision [____\(Top\)](#)

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 continuously 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 [\(Top\)](#)

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." It also 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 the 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 this insight and extends to adaptation knowledge (No.13).

5. Knowledge of Dissolution

[\(Top\)](#)

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 the shape of the hand, the foot, the face, the body, and so on, apparent to him. 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 falling movement 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, but only the final phase of ceasing and vanishing is 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 seems 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.; [34](#) and even up to the knowledge of arising and passing away, the idea of formations with their specific features [35](#) was always apparent to him.

Hence his mind took delight in a plainly distinguishable object consisting of formations, with its particular structure

[36](#) and its particular feature-idea. But now that his knowledge has developed in 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* of 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 meditator's mind does not take delight in it at first, but he may be sure that soon, after becoming familiar (with that stage of the

practice), his mind will 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, an objective factor 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 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 any object whatsoever and 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 the perfectly clear understanding of the dissolution of the 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 [_____ \(Top\)](#)

When that knowledge of dissolution is mature, there will gradually arise, just by seeing the dissolution of all object-and-subject-formations, awareness of fearfulness [37](#) and other (higher) knowledges, together with their respective aspects of fear, and so on.

[38](#)

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 just so it will break up also in the future, and that at the 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 _

[\(Top\)](#)

When he has realized 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 has arisen, all formations everywhere — whether among 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 vitalizing factor, [39](#) and unsatisfying. So he sees,

at that time, only suffering,
only unsatisfactoriness, only
misery. Therefore this state is
called "knowledge of misery."

8. Knowledge of Disgust [\(Top\)](#)

Seeing thus the misery in
conditioned things
(formations), his mind finds
no delight in those miserable

things but is entirely disgusted with 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 towards 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

[\(Top\)](#)

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 formations 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 his 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 wishes to escape from it.

10. Knowledge of Re-observation

(Top

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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 formations — 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 the formations. Though he wants to change his bodily posture, still he should not give in easily to that wish, but should endeavor 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 thoughts by applying the act of noticing to them, and he should go on with his task of continuously noticing the bodily and mental formations as they occur.

If he perseveres thus, his 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 unable 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 (T op)

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 to keep

formations before the mind or to understand them. After the completion of each single act of noticing, the object to be noticed will then 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 even though, in the present state too, the breaking up of formations which are dissolving more rapidly is closely perceived. Even if a painful feeling arises in the body, no mental disturbance (grief) arises, and there is no lack of fortitude in

bearing it. Generally, however, at this stage, pains will be entirely absent, that is, they do not arise at all. 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 "the 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*:

"Having discarded fear and delight, he is impartial and neutral towards all formations" (*Visuddhimagga*, xxi,62).

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 this it is said in the *Patisambhidamagga*: " 'The wisdom lasting long' is the knowledge present in the mental states of equanimity about formations." The Great Commentary to the *Path of Purification* explains as follows:

"This is said with reference to knowledge functioning in a continuous flow."

Now when noticing functions spontaneously as if borne onward 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
soon return to the usual
object to be noticed, and
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

[Top](#)

_____ (

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, having become keen, strong, and lucid, on reaching 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

is called "insight
leading to emergence."

40

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 Nibbana, which is the cessation of all formations, taking it as its object. Then there appears to him the stilling (subsidence) of all formations called

cessation.

This mode of realization of Nibbana has been mentioned in many discourses of the Master, for example: "The vision of truth arose: whatsoever has

the nature of arising is
bound to cease."

Herein the words
"bound to cease"
indicate the aspect of
realizing the stilling and
ceasing of all
formations which have
the nature of arising.

Also in the *Questions of King Milinda*

it is said: "His consciousness, while carrying on the practice of bringing to mind (i.e., noticing), passes beyond the continuous occurrence of phenomena and alights upon non-occurrence.

One who, having practiced in the correct manner, has alighted upon non-occurrence, O king, is said to have realized Nibbana."

The meaning is this: the meditator who wishes

to realize 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 them 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
practiced 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

_____ (

Top)

Here the knowledge
by way of noticing that
occurs last in the
series constituting
insight leading to
emergence, is called

"knowledge of
adaptation."[41](#)

This is the end of the *p*
urification by
knowledge and vision
of the course of
practice.

14. Maturity Knowledge

(Top

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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."[42](#)

VII. Purification by Knowledge and Vision [\(To p\)](#)

[15. Path Knowledge](#)

[\(Top\)](#)

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 is called "path
knowledge."[43](#) It is
also called
"purification by
knowledge and
vision."

16. Fruition Knowledge

(T

op)

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 is called
"fruition knowledge."

17. Knowledge of Reviewing

[\(Top\)](#)

The duration of that
threefold
knowledge of
maturity, path, and
fruition is, however,
not 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
the last phase of
noticing, the path

consciousness
entered into the
cessation (of
formations). This is
"knowledge
reviewing the path."

He also discerns that the consciousness abided in that same state of cessation during the intervening period between the path and reviewing. This

is "knowledge
reviewing fruition."

He further discerns
that the object just
experienced is void
of all formations.

This is "knowledge
reviewing
Nibbana."

In this connection it
is said in the *Path
of Purification*:

" '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';

44

thus he reviews the
Deathless,
Nibbana"
(Visuddhimagga,
xxii, 20).

Some meditators,
but not all, have
"reviewing of
defilements."[45](#)

After having
reviewed in this

way, the meditator still continues the practice of noticing bodily and mental processes as they become evident. But while he is thus engaged in noticing, the bodily

and mental
processes appear
to him quite coarse,
not subtle as before
at the time of the
knowledge of
equanimity about
formations. Why is
this so? This is so

because the
knowledge present
now has the nature
of the knowledge of
arising and passing
away. For when the
noble disciples
(namely,
stream-winners,

etc.) resume the practice of insight (by noticing), the knowledge of arising and passing away usually arises at the beginning. This is the usual course of order in

this respect.

However, when
some meditators
emerge from the
attainment of path
and fruition, great

faith, happiness,
rapture, and
tranquillity,
produced by virtue
of the attainment,
arise flooding the
whole body. Owing
to that, they are
unable to carry out

the practice of noticing anything apparent at that time. Even if they make double effort and attempt to proceed with the practice 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,
meditators feel as if
they were in some
such place as a
wide open space
suffused with
radiance and most

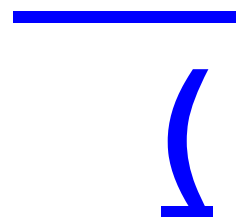
delightful. The
rapture and
happiness, of a
serene character,
that then arise are
praised by
meditators thus:
"Surely, I have
never before felt

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
they 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



[Top\)](#)

While he is thus
engaged in
noticing, his insight
knowledge will
gradually grow,

and soon will again reach the stage of equanimity about formations. If his power of concentration is still short of perfection, only the equanimity about

formations will go on repeating itself. But if his concentration has reached perfection, then, in the case of one who does the insight practice of

noticing with a
view of attaining
only to the first
path and fruition,
the fruition
consciousness of
the first path alone
reaches cessation
of formations by

way of the *attainm
ent of fruition.*

46

This occurs in
precisely the same
way as the path
and fruition
consciousness that
occurred earlier 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 a long
time, say for six,
ten, fifteen or thirty

minutes, or for an hour or more.

In one who applies himself to achieving the attainment of

fruition, knowledge
of arising and
passing away will
arise at the
beginning.

Advancing from
there in the due
sequence, soon
the knowledge of

equanimity about formations is reached. But when skill in the practice has been acquired, the knowledge of equanimity about formations will

arise quickly even
after four or five
acts of noticing. If
the power of
concentration has
reached
perfection, the
fruition
consciousness will

repeatedly become
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
resolved upon.
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

(To

p)

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 that 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, if
the spiritual
faculties 47 have

not yet reached
full maturity, it just
goes on repeating
itself. Though he
who has won (one
of the lower)
fruits 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
to elaborate it any
further.

Conclusion

(Top)

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
to making it easily
intelligible, in

many passages of
this treatise
relevant canonical
references have
not been quoted,
and there are
repetitions 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 well by
the wise. It is to

this that I would
invite the reader's
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 one who
has himself eaten
it, and not without
partaking of it, in
the same way, the
whole series of
knowledges
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 knowledges!
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 skillful,
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.

Notes

(Top

)

1. Here, and in the title of this treatise, the Pali term *ñāna* has been rendered by

"insight," as at
the outset the
word

"knowledge," the
normal rendering
of *ñā*

na,
might not be

taken by the
reader with the
full weight and
significance
which it will
receive in the
context of the
present treatise.

In all the following occurrences, however, this Pali term has been translated by "knowledge," while the word "insight" has

been reserved for
the Pali term
vipassana.

When referring to
the several types
and stages of
knowledge, the
plural

"knowledges" has
been used, in
conformity with
the Pali
ñānani.

2. In the canonical Buddhist scriptures, the seven stages of purification (*visuddhi*) are mentioned in

the Discourse on
the Stage
Coaches
(Majjhima Nikaya
No. 24). They are
also the
framework of the
Venerable

Buddhaghosa's *Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga),* where they are explained in full. (Translation by Ñāṇamoli Thera,

publ. by BPS.)

3. "Motion" (*vayo*,
lit. wind, air)
refers to the last
of the four

material elements

(dhatu),
or primary
qualities of
matter. The other
three are: earth
(solidity,

hardness), water
(adhesion), and
fire (caloricity).

These four
elements, in
varying
proportional
strength, are

present in all
forms of matter.
The so-called
"inner wind
element" which
applies in this
context is active
in the body as

motion, vibration,
and pressure
manifesting itself
in the passage of
air through the
body (e.g., in
breathing), in the
movement and

pressure of limbs
and organs, and
so on. It becomes
perceptible as a
tactile process, or
object of touch
*(photthabbaramm
ana),*

through the
pressure caused
by it.

4. The attention
directed to the

movement of the
abdomen was
introduced into
the methodical
practice of
insight-meditation
by the author of
this treatise, the

Venerable
Mahasi Sayadaw,
and forms here
the basic object
of meditative
practice. For
details see *The
Heart of Buddhist*

Meditation

by Nyanaponika

Thera (London:

Rider & Co.,

1962; BPS,

1992), pp. 94f.,

106. If preferred,

the breath itself

may instead be
taken as the
basic object of
meditative
attention,
according to the
traditional method
of "mindfulness of

breathing"
(anapanasati);

see

*Heart of Buddhist
Meditation,*
pp. 108ff.

*Mindfulness of
Breathing*

by Ñāṇamoli
Thera (BPS,
1982).

5. According to
the Buddhist

Abhidhamma
teachings, only
the three
elements of
earth, fire, and
wind constitute
the tactile
substance in

matter. The
element of water
is not held to be
an object of touch
even in cases
where it
predominates, as
in liquids. What is

tactile in any
given liquid is the
contribution of the
other three
elements to its
composite nature.

6. "Door" is a figurative expression for the sense organs (which, including the mind, are sixfold), because they provide, as it

were, the access
to the world of
objects.

7. The preceding
sequence of

terms is
frequently used in
the Discourses
(Suttas) of the
Buddha to refer
to those
individuals who
have attained to

the first
supramundane
stage on the road
to arahantship,
i.e., stream-entry
(*sotapatti*),
or the following
ones. See Note

33. The term
Dhamma
refers here to
Nibbana.

8. I. The Five

Precepts binding
on all Buddhist
laymen, are:
abstention from
(1) killing, (2)
stealing, (3)
unlawful sexual
intercourse, (4)

lying, (5)
intoxicants.

II. The Eight
Upasatha
Precepts are:

abstention from
(1) killing, (2)
stealing, (3) all
sexual
intercourse, (4)
lying, (5)
intoxicants, (6)
partaking of solid

food and certain
liquids after noon,
(7) abstention
from (a) dance,
song, music,
shows
(attendance and
performance), (b)

from perfumes,
ornaments, etc.,
(8) luxurious
beds. This set of
eight precepts is
observed by
devout Buddhist
lay followers on

full-moon days
and on other
occasions.

III. The Ten
Precepts: (1)-(6)

= 11, 1-6; (7) = 11,
7 (a); (8) = 11, 7
(b); (9) = 11, 8;
(10) abstention
from acceptance
of gold and silver,
money, etc.

9. The other
three items of the
monk's fourfold
pure conduct are
control of the
senses, purity of

livelihood, and
pure conduct
concerning the
monk's requisites.

10. Access (or

"neighbourhood")
concentration
*(upacara-samadh
i)*
is that degree of
mental
concentration that
approaches, but

not yet attains,
the full
concentration
(*appana-samadhi*
)
of the first
absorption
(*jhana*).

It still belongs to
the sensuous
plane
(kamavacara)
of consciousness,
while the jhanas
belong to the
fine-material

plane
(rupavacara).

11. *Pañcupadana*
kkhandha.

These five

groups, which are
the objects of
grasping, are: (1)
corporeality, (2)
feeling, (3)
perception, (4)
mental
formations, (5)

consciousness.

12. Also called *su
kkhavipassana-y
anika*.

13. Literally:
"according to
their true nature
and function."

14. This method
of meditation
aims at
"knowledge by
direct experience"
(paccakkha-ñāna), resulting
from mindfulness

directed towards
one's own bodily
and mental
processes. It is
for that reason
that here express
mention is made
of "one's own life

continuity."

Having gathered
the decisive
direct experience
from the
contemplation of
his own body and
mind, the

meditator will
later extend the
contemplation to
the life-processes
of others, by way
of inference
(anumana).
See, in the

Satipatthana
Sutta, the
recurrent
passage:
"contemplating
the body, etc.,
externally."

15. "Noticing" (*sal
lakkhana*)
is a key term in
this treatise. The
corresponding
verb in the Pali

language is

sallakkhetti

(*sam*

+

lakh),

which can be

translated

adequately as

well as literally by
"to mark clearly."

Though the use
of "to mark" in the
sense of "to
observe" or "to
notice" is quite
legitimate in

English, it is
somewhat
unusual and
unwieldy in its
derivations.
Hence the
rendering by
"noticing" was

chosen.

"Noticing" is
identical with
"bare attention,"
the term used in
the translator's
book

The Heart of

Buddhist Meditation.

16. The Sub-commentary to the Brahmajala

Sutta explains as follows: "Things in their true nature (*param atthadhamma*) have two characteristics or marks: specific

characteristics
and general
characteristics.

The
understanding of
the specific
characteristics is
knowledge by

experience
(*paccakkha-ñāna*
),
while the
understanding of
the general
characteristics is
knowledge by

inference
(anumana-ñāna).
"

The specific
characteristic, for
instance, of the
element of motion

(vayo-dhatu)
is its nature of
supporting, its
function of
moving; its
general
characteristics
are

impermanence,
etc.

17. The three
terms printed in
italics are

standard
categories of
definition used in
the Pali
Commentaries
and the *Visud*
dhimagga.
In the case of

mental
phenomena, a
fourth category,
"proximate
condition"
(padatthana)
is added. The
definition of the

element of motion
(or of wind)
occurs, for
instance, in the
Visuddhimagga
(XI, 93) and is
shown in this
treatise to be a

fact of direct
experience.

18. "Purification
of mind" refers to
mental

concentration of
either of two
degrees of
intensity: full
concentration or
access
concentration
(see Note 10). In

both types of
concentration, the
mind is
temporarily
purified from the
five mental
hindrances (see
Note 20), which

defile the mind
and obstruct
concentration.

19. The "other"
objects may also

belong to the
same series of
events, for
instance, the
recurrent rise and
fall of the
abdomen.

20. The five
mental
hindrances (*ni*
varana)
which obstruct
concentration,

are: (1)
sense-desire, (2)
ill-will, (3) sloth
and torpor, (4)
agitation and
remorse, (5)
sceptical doubt.
For details, see

*The Five Mental
Hindrances and
their Conquest,*
by Nyanaponika
Thera (BPS
Wheel No. 26).

21. Insight
reaches its
culmination on
attaining to the
perfection of the
"purification by
knowledge and
vision of the

course of
practice." See
Note 41 and the
Visuddhimagga,
XXI,1.

22. This passage
is translated in
*The Way of
Mindfulness*
by Soma Thera
(3rd ed., BPS,
1967), p. 104,
where, for our

term "access
concentration,"
the rendering
"partial
absorption" is
used.

23. When
occurring during
the practice of
tranquillity
meditation.

24. This is the
fully absorbed
concentration
(*jhana*)
achieved at the
attainment of the
noble paths and
fruits.

25. In the
Commentary to
the Majjhima
Nikaya No.111,
the Anupada
Sutta.

26. The *Visuddhi
magga*
says that both
terms,
"knowledge by
inductive insight"

and
"comprehension
by groups," are
names for the
same type of
insight. According
to the
Paramattha-manj

usa,
its Commentary,
the former term
was used in
Ceylon, the latter
in India.

27. The ten
corruptions of
insight (*vipass
anupakkilesa*)
are first
mentioned in the
*Patisambhidama
gga*

(PTS, Vol. II, pp.100f.) and are explained in the *Visuddhimagga* (XX, 105ff.). The names and the sequence of the terms as given in

this treatise differ slightly from those found in the above two sources.

28. The five
grades of rapture
(*piti*),
dealt with in the
Visuddhimagga
(IV,94) are: (1)
minor, (2)
momentarily

recurring, (3)
flooding, (4)
elevating, (5)
suffusing.

29. This passage

refers to the six
pairs of
qualitative factors
of mental activity,
which, according
to the
Abhidhamma, are
present in all

moral
consciousness
though in
different degrees
of development.
The first pair is
tranquillity (a) of
consciousness,

and (b) of its
concomitant
mental factors.
The other pairs
are agility,
pliancy,
wieldiness,
proficiency, and

uprightness, all of which have the same twofold division as stated before. These six pairs represent the formal, or structural, side of

moral
consciousness.
For details see
*Abhidhamma
Studies*,
by Nyanaponika
Thera (2nd ed.
BPS, 1985),

pp.81f.

30. These six
obstructions of
mind are
countered by the

six pairs of
mental factors
mentioned in
Note 29 and in
the following
sentence of the
text.

31. *Non-action*,
non-activity or
non-busyness,
refers to the
receptive, but
keenly watchful,

attitude of
noticing (or bare
attention).

32. *Advertence* is
the first stage of

the perceptual
process, as
analyzed in the
Abhidhamma. It
is the first
"turning-towards"
the object of
perception; in

other words,
initial attention.

33. The
supramundane
paths and

fruits are:
stream-entry,
once-returning,
non-returning,
and arahantship.
By attaining to
the first path and
fruition, that of

stream-entry,
final deliverance
is assured at the
latest after seven
more rebirths.

34. "Conceptual
objects of
shapes" (*sant
hana-paññatti*).
The other two
types of concepts
intended here
are: the concepts

of individual
identity derived
from the
continuity
of serial
phenomena
(santati-paññatti),
and collective

concepts derived
from the
agglomeration
of phenomena
(samuha-paññatti
).

35. "The idea of formations with their specific features": this phrase elaborates the meaning applicable here of

the Pali term *n*
imitta,
which literally
means "mark,"
"sign," "feature,"
i.e., the idea or
image conceived
of an object

perceived.

36. "With its
particular
structure" (*sa-*
viggaha):

the distinctive

(vi)

graspable

(gaha)

form of an object.

37. *Bhay'upatthana*. The word *bhaya* has the subjective aspect of fear and the objective aspect of fearfulness,

danger. Both are included in the significance of the term in this context.

38. This refers to the knowledges described in the following (Nos. 7-11).

39. *Niroja*. Lit.
"without nutritive
essence."

40. According to
the *Visuddhim*

agga, the
"insight leading to
emergence" is
the culmination of
insight, and is
identical with the
following three
knowledges:

equanimity about
formations, desire
for deliverance,
and knowledge of
re-observation. It
is called "leading
to emergence"
because it

emerges from the
contemplation of
formations
(conditioned
phenomena) to
the
supramundane
path that has

Nibbana as its
object.

41. The *Visuddhi
maggā*
says (XXI, 130):

"The knowledge of adaptation derives its name from the fact that it adapts itself to the earlier and the later states of mind. It adapts

itself to the
preceding eight
insight
knowledges with
their individual
functions, and to
the thirty-seven
states partaking

of enlightenment
that follow."

42. *Gotrabhu-ñāna*
a (maturity
knowledge) is,

literally, the
"knowledge of
one who has
become one of
the lineage (*gotra*)."

By attaining to
that knowledge,

one has left
behind the
designation and
stage of an
unliberated
worldling and is
entering the
lineage and rank

of the noble ones,
i.e., the
stream-enterer,
etc. Insight has
now come to full
maturity,
maturing into the
knowledge of the

supramundane
paths and
fruits. Maturity
knowledge
occurs only as a
single moment of
consciousness; it
does not recur,

since it is
immediately
followed by the
path
consciousness of
stream-entry or
once-returning,
etc.

43. "Path knowledge" is the knowledge connected with the four supramundane

paths of
stream-entry, etc.
Here, in this
passage, only the
path of
stream-entry is
meant. Path
knowledge, like

maturity
knowledge, lasts
only for one
moment of
consciousness,
being followed by
the fruition
knowledge

resulting from it,
which may repeat
itself many times
and may also be
deliberately
entered into by
way of the
"attainment of

fruition" (see No. 17).

44. That means that Nibbana has now become an

object of direct
experience, and
is no longer a
mental construct
of conceptual
thinking.

45. The
knowledge of
reviewing
defilements still
remaining, does
not obtain at the
stage of
arahantship

where all
defilements have
been eliminated.
It may occur, but
not necessarily
so, at the lower
three stages of
stream-entry, etc.

46. See Note 43.

47. The five
spiritual faculties

(indriya)
are: faith, energy,
mindfulness,
concentration,
and wisdom. For
details see
*The Way of
Wisdom*

by Edward Conze
(BPS Wheel
No.65/66).

The
Venerable

Mahasi Sayadaw

[\(Top\)](#)

Mahasi Sayadaw,
the Venerable U
Sobhana

Mahathera, was
the son of U Kan
Htaw and Daw
Shwe Ok of
Seikkhun village,
which is about
seven miles to
the west of

Shwebo Town, a one-time capital of the founder of the last Burmese dynasty. He was born on the third waning of the month of second

Waso in the year
1266 of the
Burmese Era (29
July 1904). At the
age of six, he
began his studies
at a monastic
school in the

same village, and
at the age of
twelve he was
ordained a
samanera
(novice). On
reaching the age
of twenty, he was

ordained a
bhikkhu on the
fifth waning of the
month of
Tazaungmon in
the year 1285 of
the Burmese Era
(23 November

1923). He then passed the Government Pali examinations in all the three classes of Pathamange, Pathamalat and

Pathamagyi in
the following
three successive
years.

In the fourth year

after his bhikkhu ordination, he proceeded to Mandalay — a former capital of Burma — where he continued his further studies in

the Khinmagan
Kyaung Taik
under various
monks of high
scholastic fame.
In the fifth year
he went to
Moulmein where

he took up the
work of teaching
the Buddhist
scriptures at a
monastery known
as Taung Waing
Galay Taik
Kyaung.

In the eighth year
after his
ordination, he
and another
monk left
Moulmein

equipped with the bare necessities of a bhikkhu (i.e., almsbowl, a set of three robes, etc.) and went in search of a clear and effective

method in the
practice of
meditation. At
Thaton he met
the well-known
meditation
instructor, the
Venerable U

Narada, who is also known as "Mingun Jetawun Sayadaw the First." He then placed himself under the guidance of the

Sayadaw and at once proceeded with an intensive course of meditation.

After this practical course of meditation he returned to Moulmein and continued with his original work of teaching Buddhist

scriptures. He sat
for the Pali
Lecturership
Examination held
by the
Government of
Burma in June
1941 and

succeeded in
passing
completely at the
first attempt. He
was awarded the
title of
Sasanadhaja Siri
Pavara

Dhammacariya.

In the year 1303
of the Burmese
Era (1941) and in
the eighteenth

year of his
bhikkhu
ordination he
returned to his
native village
(Seikkhun) and
resided at a
monastery known

as "Maha-Si
Kyaung" because
a drum
(Burmese: *si*) of
unusually big
(*maha*)
size is housed
there. He then

introduced the
systematic
practical course
of Satipatthana
meditation. Many
people, bhikkhus
as well as
laymen, gathered

round him and
took up the strict
practical course,
and were greatly
benefited by his
careful
instructions. They
were happy

because they
began to
understand the
salient features of
Satipatthana and
had also learned
the proper
method of

continuing the
practice by
themselves.

In the year 1311
B.E. (1949) the

then Prime
Minister of
Burma, U Nu,
and Sir U Thwin,
executive
members of the
Buddha
Sasananuggaha

Association,
requested the
Venerable
Mahasi Sayadaw
to come to
Rangoon and
give training in
meditative

practice. In his
twenty-sixth year
of bhikkhu
ordination, he
therefore went to
Rangoon and
resided at the
Thathana

Yeiktha, the headquarters of the Association, where since then intensive training courses have been held up to the present day.

Over 15,000
persons have
since been
trained in that
center alone and
altogether over

200,000 persons
have been
trained
throughout
Burma, where
there are more
than 100
branches for the

training in the
same method.
This method has
also spread
widely in Thailand
and in Sri Lanka.

Mahasi Sayadaw
was awarded the
title of
Agga-Maha-Pand
ita in the year
1952.

He carried out the
duties of the
Questioner (*pucc
haka*)
at the Sixth
Buddhist Council
(Chattha
Sangayana) held

at Rangoon for
two years,
culminating in the
year 2500 of the
Buddhist Era
(1956). To
appreciate fully
the importance of

this role it may be mentioned that the Venerable Maha-Kassapa, as Questioner, put questions at the First Council held three

months after the
passing away of
the Buddha. Then
the Venerable
Upali and the
Venerable
Ananda
answered the

questions. At the
Sixth Council, it
was
Tipitakadhara
Dhammabhandag
arika Ashin
Vicittasarabhivam
sa who answered

the questions put
by the Venerable
Mahasi Sayadaw.
The Venerable
Mahasi Sayadaw
was also a
member of the
committee that

was responsible,
as the final
authority, for the
codification of all
the texts passed
at the Sixth
Council.

He has written
several books on
meditation and
the following
notable works
may be

mentioned.

(1) *Guide to the
Practice of
Vipassana
Meditation* (in
Burmese) — 2

volumes.

(2) Burmese
translation of the
Maha-satipatthan
a Sutta, with
notes.

(3) Visuddhiñāṇa- *katha* (in Burmese and Pali).

(4) Burmese
translation of the
Visuddhimagga,
with notes.

(5) Burmese

translation of the
Visuddhimagga
Maha-Tika,
with notes — 4
volumes.

(6) *Paticca-Samu ppada* (Dependent Origination) — 2 volumes.

A large number of his discourses, based on the Pali Suttas, have been translated into English and published by the Buddha

Sasananuggaha
Association (16
Hermitage Road,
Kokkine,
Rangoon,
Myanmar
(Burma)).

Mahasi Sayadaw
passed away on
14 August 1982
following a brief
illness.

The Buddhist Perspective

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PUBLICATION SOCIETY

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Mawatha

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<http://www.bps.lk>