

Dhammakaya Open University, California, USA



OBSTACLES IN MEDITATION PRACTICE AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM

MD 203E



Meditation III

MEDITATION OBSTACLES AND OVERCOMING THEM

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Foreword

This subject, MD 203E Meditation 3: Meditation Obstacles and Overcoming Them, is designed to shed light on the types and causes of meditation obstacles, such as, the five hindrances [*Nivarana*], distraction, tension, encouragement, acceleration, observation attentively and use of force to observe attentively, etc. In addition, it includes relevant and pragmatic teachings designed to lead students to apply knowledge to their meditation practice and be able to overcome their meditation obstacles. The committee that developed this course painstakingly gathered and organized the course content not only from the Buddhist Scriptures [*Tipiṭaka*], but also from lectures given by highly experienced teachers to help students comprehend meditation in both theory and practice. Students will gain knowledge of meditative improvement, together with increased confidence in their meditation practice for their benefit and the benefit of those related to them.

Though the committee repeatedly and assiduously prepared and proofread the contents of this subject, inevitably the contents may contain mistakes or imperfections. The committee sincerely welcomes feedback or advice to improve and develop the contents in the next version.

The Committee of the Meditation Subject Group
June 2006

Details of the Subject

1. Description of the Subject

MD 203E Meditation 3: Meditation Obstacles and Overcoming Them

To study the types and causes of meditation obstacles, such as, the five hindrances [*Nivarana*], distraction, tension, encouragement, acceleration, observation attentively and use of force to observe attentively, etc. To learn relevant teachings designed to lead students to apply knowledge during their meditation practice and be able to overcome their meditation obstacles.

2. Purposes of the Subject

1. To know and understand the meditation obstacles.
2. To know how to overcome the meditation obstacles.
3. To apply the knowledge for overcoming meditation obstacles in daily life.

3. List of Chapters

| | |
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| Chapter 1 | Meditation Obstacles |
| Chapter 2 | Sensual Desire [<i>Kāmachanda</i>] & Overcoming It |
| Chapter 3 | Malevolence or Ill-Will [<i>Byāpāda</i>] & Overcoming Them |
| Chapter 4 | Gloominess and Sleepiness [<i>Thīna-middha</i>] & Overcoming Them |
| Chapter 5 | Distraction and Worry [<i>Uddhacca-kukkucca</i>] & Overcoming Them |
| Chapter 6 | Doubt [<i>Vicikicchā</i>] & Overcoming It |
| Chapter 7 | Various Obstacles & Overcoming Them |

How to Study This Book

1. Preparation for Self-Study

When studying each chapter of this subject, Meditation 3: Meditation Obstacles and Overcoming Them, students should:

1. Spend one hour studying per day, and finish studying the whole book within 1-2 weeks.
2. At the beginning of each chapter, do the pre-study quiz to evaluate prior knowledge and understanding of the material in the chapter. Complete the assignments found in each chapter, focusing mostly on the specific activities described. At the end of each chapter, students should assess their degree of acquired knowledge and understanding of the contents by doing the post-study quiz.
3. Since practical experience is integral to meditation progress, focus not only on the theoretical aspects of each chapter but also on the practical exercises recommended for use on a daily basis.

2. Self-Assessment Before and After Studying a Chapter

Before starting each chapter, students should do the chapter's pre-study quiz in order to assess their knowledge of that chapter's subject matter. This will help students see the gaps in their understanding so they know on what parts of the chapter to devote particular attention. After completing each chapter, students should do the post-study quiz to see the areas where they have made improvements in their understanding. The post-study quiz can also help students know whether their knowledge is at a level sufficient to warrant starting the next chapter.

3. The Way to Study the Contents of Each Chapter

Prior to starting each chapter, students should read the chapter guidelines first. The guidelines summarize the sections of each chapter and enumerate the corresponding topics in each section. Also, the guidelines provide the key concepts and objectives of each chapter.

Upon finishing a chapter, students should complete the supplementary activities in the workbook before starting the next chapter. The workbook activities help students self-assess their degree of understanding. Since students can apply the material in each chapter to conduct themselves righteously in their daily lives and gain deep fulfillment, students should continually perform all activities by themselves.

4. Doing Activities

Students should note the main ideas in each chapter and do all the supplementary activities because doing the activities is the key to gaining a deeper understanding of meditation. Students should do all activities on their own before checking the answers.

5. Distance Learning via Satellite Broadcast and Electronic Media

With the advent of distance learning via satellite broadcast (commonly called Dhamma Media Channel or DMC) produced by Foundation for the Study of Dhamma for the Environment, students have easy access to clear and detailed teachings which they can readily put into practice. It is highly recommended that students reserve time for studying meditation via DMC and other electronic media provided by the University. Students are welcome to request further details about distance learning via DMC and related media from Dhammakaya Open University, using the address on your application form.

6. Attendance at The Inner Dream Kindergarten

To achieve a deeper understanding of meditation and study, hear about meditation from highly experienced practitioners, students should attend the Dhamma program called “The Inner Dreams Kindergarten,” a program broadcast on DMC. This program is broadcast from Monday to Saturday at 19.00 – 21.30 (Thailand Time) or at other specified times. Please contact your DOU office for the latest program schedule.

7. Examination

Student’s knowledge of this subject will be assessed using an examination, with both objective (multiple-choice) and subjective (descriptive) methods. Although the method for evaluating progress is a written examination, the way to determine mediation progress is each individual’s responsibility and dependent on each student’s diligence in putting the teachings into practice.

Chapter 1

Meditation Obstacles

Units in This Chapter

- 1.1 The Obstacles of a Concentrated Mind
- 1.2 What are the Hindrances [*Nivarana*]?
- 1.3 The Comparisons of the Five Hindrances
- 1.4 Mental Defilements [*Upakkilesa*]

Chapter at a Glance

1. Hindrances are medium level mental defilements affecting the mind making it unable to attain concentration and peace. There are five hindrances:

- 1) Sensual Desire [*Kāmacchanda*],
- 2) Malevolence or Ill-Will [*Byāpāda*],
- 3) Gloominess and Sleepiness [*Thīna-middha*],
- 4) Distraction and Worry [*Uddhacca-kukkucca*],
- 5) Doubt [*Vicikicchā*].

2. The five hindrances are similar to fine gold mixed with iron, copper, tin, lead and silver, causing the mind to become clouded and the meditator is unable to achieve a good inner experience. All five hindrances are compared to debtors, diseases, imprisonment, slaves and inconvenient travel.

3. Eleven mental defilements, in addition, are meditation obstacles, affecting the mind, rendering it unable to attain peace and one-pointedness.

Chapter Objectives

Students will gain knowledge and understanding as follows:

1. The obstacles of meditation.
2. The meanings and characteristics of the five hindrances and the comparisons of the five hindrances.
3. The meanings and characteristics of the eleven mental defilements.



Meditation Obstacles

The practice of meditation is not complicated. It can be done without preparing a lot of instruments. There is no need to travel far, search around the world or have a huge space, but it requires only the physical body, mental preparation and a small space to sit for the practice of meditation. However, the difficulty of meditation is to fight with moods, feelings, thoughts, images, stories or events, and an agitated mind. These are significant obstacles leading to a troubled meditation practice, and our minds are unable to attain serenity and concentration.

Meditators need to learn, know and understand the obstacles of mental concentration in order to apply themselves appropriately and overcome those obstacles.

1.1 The Obstacles of Mental Concentration

From studying, we found that our mind is naturally pure and clear. It becomes clouded because of the visiting defilements as stated in the following Buddhist Scripture:

“Bhikkhus! The mind is naturally clear, but is clouded as a result of the passing defilements.”¹

Living beings’ defilements are categorized into three types as follows:

1. **Coarse defilements** are immoral defilements coming out of body, speech and mind.
2. **Medium defilements** are worrisome defilements creating trouble and anxiety, such as from hindrances [*nivarana*].
3. **Refined defilements** are underlying tendencies [*anusaya*], that peacefully stay still inside the innate character of each person who still has those defilements.

The words “clear mind” define a mind with no visiting defilements and is freed from the five hindrances, categorized as medium defilements. But, this doesn’t mean having no defilements. If our mind possesses no defilements, all of us would have no need to eradicate all defilements. On the other hand, we have to remove all defilements since our mind retains visiting defilements, making a clear mind become a clouded mind or a clear mind that still possesses underlying tendencies [*anusaya*] leading to impurity.

The medium defilements are named “hindrances” as they are significant mental obstacles that impede the meditation practice. We should aim to learn and clearly understand how to meditate and improve our mind. If we can recognize the characteristics of those defilements well, it is easy to get rid of them, which is similar to the police who must initially know the name and face of the criminal to simply arrest that criminal. It would be difficult to arrest the criminal if he or she doesn’t know his or her face or biography. Or it is similar to

¹ ***Aṅuttaranikāya Ekanipāta***. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol.32, item 50, p.95

an intelligent doctor who must examine the root of the disease before giving a remedy. This resembles the practitioner who must first learn to recognize the characteristics of medium defilements that cause the mind to become clouded. Then, it would be easy to sometimes eliminate or fully remove all defilements, depending on each person's capability.

1.2 What Are the Hindrances [*Nivarana*]?

Visiting defilements that cause our mind to become clouded and impede wholesome achievement are called "hindrances."

Hindrances are the obstacles or obstructions described as the defilements that block the mind from goodness and meditation progress, causing the mind to become agitated and unable to deeply establish the condition of focused awareness. When our mind is obstructed by one of those hindrances, it cannot attain any righteousness, serenity and happiness, similar to overflowing water from a mountain that is obstructed by a dam. These types of hindrances and defilements block the mind from achieving righteousness and cause the mind to be unable to achieve a good inner experience. Additionally, the hindrances obstruct us from bliss and bring us suffering, which is just the same as a wrongdoer who barricades the road to commit robbery and assaults the drivers and passengers.

Hindrances can be divided into five types as follows:

1. Sensual Desire [*Kāmachanda*].
2. Malevolence or Ill-Will [*Byāpāda*].
3. Gloominess and Sleepiness [*Thīna-middha*].
4. Distraction and Worry [*Uddhacca-kukkucca*].
5. Doubt [*Vicikicchā*].

1. **Sensual Desire [*Kāmachanda*]**, the first hindrance, called "the lust for sensual pleasure" [*kāmarāga*] is in the strands of the five sensual pleasures [*kāmaguṇa*] - visible objects, sounds, odors, tastes and delightful touches to or from the opposite or same gender. Having a lot of sensual pleasure will reflect a mind that is preoccupied with and focused on loveliness and the five sensual pleasures, given that the mind is fascinated by the tastes of the five sensual pleasures and cannot give them up. When someone is infatuated with sensual pleasures, his/her mind will be burnt with anxiety and trouble. Thus, this defilement is named "the fire of lust" [*rāgaggi*], which burns the mind, causing it to feel anxious, and darkens it so that it is unable to understand Dhamma.

One whose mind is occupied with this fire will hardly seek happiness; but will encounter suffering, anxiety and troubles.

2. **Malevolence or Ill-Will [*Byāpāda*]**, the second hindrance, is conspiracy or a feeling of dislike, such as moodiness, indignation, unpleasantness, anger, revenge, abhorrence, pessimism, malice and one who views others as opponents. This feeling makes the mind become agitated and unable to become securely established in the condition of focused awareness, and is classified as a type of fire; a burning human mind that has become anxious and troubled. This type of fire is entitled "the fire of hatred" [*dosaggi*].

The development of this defilement is as follows:

At first, **irritation** [*paṭigha*] arises in the mind after **discontent** with any person or animal appears. If we are unable to remove the irritation, it will become **anger** [*kodha*]. In addition, if the anger is not eliminated, it will become **hatred** [*dosa*] that might lead a person to say abusive words or harm others who have annoyed him/her. If the hatred is not eradicated, it will become **malevolence or ill-will** [*byāpāda*]. Consequently, if the ill-will increases significantly, it will then look to seek revenge.

Malevolence or ill-will [*byāpāda*] differs from seeking revenge. Malevolence or ill-will [*byāpāda*] may disappear when one has a chance to punish the person who has harmed him or her. Conversely, the feeling of seeking revenge does not disappear even if one has the chance to punish the person who hurt him or her, and must destroy that person in every incarnation.

Malevolence or ill-will [*byāpāda*] is comparable to tying a rope that can be loosened easily. In contrast, seeking revenge is like tying a rope so tightly that it can only be loosened with great difficulty. Hence, seeking revenge is more severe than malevolence or ill-will [*byāpāda*]. Both of them are the fires or defilements impeding happiness arising in the mind. It is necessary for one to eliminate these hindrances first before achieving serenity.

3. **Gloominess and Sleepiness** [*Thīna-middha*], also known as Sloth and Torpor, are the third hindrances. *Thīna* differs from *middha*; but they always exist at the same time. The mind will be clouded as soon as both defilements appear. *Thīna* means discouragement or gloominess, disheartening, dullness and loneliness. *Middha* means laziness or drowsiness, sleepiness and sluggishness that occur in the physical body.

Those defilements will make us become unenthusiastic to perform any activity, will make us tiresome, will cause us to lack motivation and hope, and will cause us to not want to do anything. The person who feels depressed lacks endeavor to do anything; but he/she will let thoughts drift away and he/she will be unable to unite the mind into one-pointedness. It is similar to the fungi growing on a tree or on a vegetable that causes each to wither. Thus, while both defilements exist in the mind, the person will be disheartened to do goodness for him or herself and society.

We then notice that we get discouraged with our meditation practice or daily work. We often feel drowsy, even though we have obtained enough sleep, and we feel lazy and yawn. In the case where such a feeling has not been caused by the physical body, it has been caused by being attached to the fungi that are the two defilements, leading us to feel discouraged, unhappy, drowsy, and we do not feel like talking with others. There is a lack of joyfulness due to gloominess and sleepiness [*thīna-middha*] occurring and being trapped in our state of mind. These hindrances bring about a depressed and lazy feeling. We should remove these hindrances. If not, we will not be able to meditate well.

4. Distraction and Worry [*Uddhacca-kukkucca*], the fourth hindrances, are unwholesome defilements that always appear together. *Uddhacca* means mental restlessness or chatter without serenity and an agitated mind. *Kukkucca* means annoyance, anxiety, worry, irritation and suspicion. Generally, this person will always be annoyed, unhappy and frustrated when mental chatter arises. In addition, he or she will be annoyed if anyone speaks to him or her with the slightest insinuation, even if anyone talks nicely to him or her. He or she feels irritated as well because his or her mind has already been wandering. However, some persons get only wandering and clouding of the mind without annoyance, as *uddhacca* exists singularly; *kukkucca* does not exist at that moment. In contrast, both distraction and worry appear to some persons at the same time.

Both defilements are like a virus or a cold making us feel weak and lacking in energy. In daily life, they control the human mind the most, causing that person to be unable to seek daily happiness, and is mostly caused by an agitated mind. Moreover, these defilements cause many people in big cities to become neurotic, causing the government of such a country to build more institutions and mental hospitals because the people have been overwhelmed with many problems, such as, earning a living, dealing with society and others. Both defilements destroy human happiness more than any of the other hindrances.

If we know the characteristics of these defilements, we will be able to eliminate them easily. If we do not know and do not destroy them, they will exist in some peoples' minds everyday, causing them to become clouded, restless and worried and they will be unable to find mental happiness. Even though some people try to do good deeds, for example, giving [*dāna*] and keeping the Precepts [*sīla*] etc., one would think that they are more likely to create a happy mind, but they cannot eliminate these defilements since giving and keeping the Precepts are unable to remove these hindrances. Only meditation [*bhāvanā*] can end these types of defilements.

5. Doubt [*Vicikicchā*] is the fifth and final hindrance, and is one of the more significant obstacles to mental development. The word "doubt" in this category means to be uncertain about the practice of meditation, such as, whether sin and merit do exist, whether hells and Heavens do exist, whether our methods used to practice meditation [*kammatthāna*] is right or wrong, or whether our practice will result in an inner experience or not. These are issues of doubt.

Some people doubt their methods used to practice meditation or *kammatthāna*, for instance, whether the principles of practice that their teachers have taught them were right or not, or whether the mantra repetition is right or not, etc. Having doubt makes them become absent-minded and they refuse to practice meditation because they are afraid of losing benefits or becoming neurotic. Since they do not practice meditation, there is no meditation practice or mental development.

It seems like this person desires progress in life; but, he or she has doubt, not only about the way to live, but also he or she cannot decide what career to choose. For example, he or she has the desire to do business, but feels uncertain and is afraid of loss. He or she has the desire to do agriculture, but feels uncertain and scared that his or her agricultural products will not sell. He or she has the desire to work for the government or run his/her own business, but feels doubtful whether his or her job or

business will run well. Therefore, he or she refrains from having any career, stays home, and does nothing. Consequently, there is no progress in life because of doubt.

The one who has doubts about life and practicing meditation is comparable to a person who is standing at four crossroads in the middle of the forest. A human losing his or her way is unable to exit that forest, walks into the middle of it, reaching those four crossroads where there are four tigers, one standing at each direction. When the human looks at the East, he/she sees a tiger standing there. He or she then turns to the South seeing another tiger there. Next, he/she turns to the West and North seeing the tigers there. Therefore, he/she does not dare to go anywhere, staying at the same place, because the tigers are standing there. Similarly, the one who always has doubts in life and about his or her meditation practice will make no progress, since the hindrance named *vicikicchā*, or doubt, is like four crossroads that control the mind. Thus, one must eliminate this hindrance to achieve the improvement of mental quality.

These five hindrances are major factors destroying our happiness and serenity since they lead our mind to become clouded and not as clear as it should be.

1.3 The Comparisons of the Five Hindrances

The nature of mind is comparable to pure gold. Normally, genuine gold is pure, soft, beautiful and very precious. Gold is not pure, not soft and not beautiful and is less valuable when it is mixed with five adulterated things as stated by the Lord Buddha's words as follows:

The five defilements of gold, which make it not soft, not pliable, not bright yellow, breakable and hard to work with are:

1. Iron. [*Aṇḍa*]
2. Copper. [*Loham*]
3. Tin. [*Tipu*]
4. Lead. [*Sīḷḥ*]
5. Silver. [*Sjḥḥ*]²

Five things are mixed in gold causing it to become not beautiful, not soft, not pliable and not bright, just as our mind is normally bright; but it is disturbed by the five hindrances or the visiting defilements leading to sorrow and trouble. Therefore, Buddhism has taught us to eliminate the five hindrances by meditation.

The five types of hindrances are the defilements that very much destroy human prosperity, peace and happiness. In Buddhist Scripture, the five defilements have been compared as follows³:

1. Sensual desire [*kāmachanda*] is like a debtor.
2. Malevolence or ill-will [*byāpāda*] is like a disease.
3. Gloominess and sleepiness [*thīna-middha*] are like imprisonment.
4. Distraction and worry [*uddhacca-kukkucca*] are like slavery.
5. Doubt [*vicikicchā*] is like traveling to a remote area.

² **Upakkilesa Sutta. *Samyuttanikāya. Mahāvagga***. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol.30. item 467 p. 248, *Ariguttaranikāya Pañcakanipāṭa*, Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 36. item 23. p. 32

³ **Dīgha-nikāya. *Sīlakhanda-vagga***. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 11 item 126 p. 323

1. Sensual desire [*Kāmachanda*] is like a debtor.

A debtor is always worried about the creditor asking for the payment, a higher interest rate to repay, or if the debtor is unable to repay soon, that his or her properties will be foreclosed. Then, he/she feels unhappy and in trouble, similar to a person controlled by a hindrance and will probably be unable to find true peace.

Moreover, although the debtor has been asked for payment from the creditor, the debtor will not be able to argue; but he or she must be still as he or she is a debtor. However, if the debt is all paid, the benefit will be present and the feeling will be one of freedom and relaxation, resembling a person who can completely eliminate sensual desire from his or her mind and will probably achieve significant delight.⁴

2. Malevolence or ill-will [*Byāpāda*] is like one who has a disease.

Whatever disease one has, it causes discomfort, such as, a headache producing pain in the head, a stomachache causing pain in the stomach, and a foot ailment that brings pain to the foot, etc. Anywhere the disease occurs; it causes pain there. Happiness does not exist, similar to a person who has the disease of vengeance hindrance, destroying him or her. That person has a mental disease - the visiting defilement temporarily visits his or her mind.

In addition, one who has a disease, for example, one who has jaundice or liver disease, etc. forces him or herself to listen to the teachings of a Buddhist Preceptor (Instructor) who always wishes him or her well. If he/she will not listen to the teachings, that person is afraid that he or she might not maintain his or her celibacy. One who acts against his or her will of listening to the teachings of the Buddhist Preceptor will not understand or feel impressed with the teachings, resembling the one who is controlled by malevolence or ill-will hindrance and will be unable to find the taste of Dhamma and the happiness of meditation absorption [*jhana*].⁵

3. Gloominess and Sleepiness [*Thīna-middha*] are comparable to a prisoner.

Anyone who is imprisoned lacks freedom, has torment and worry without happiness and serenity, and resembles one, who is controlled by gloominess and sleepiness, and has no freedom, happiness and serenity. That person is unable to formulate mental progress.

Additionally, a prisoner in jail undoubtedly has no chance of being entertained by sight-seeing or watching the entertainment during a seasonal festival, similar to the person who is controlled by gloominess and sleepiness, and has no chance to know the taste of pursuing the Dhamma, or the happiness and peace arising from attaining jhana (the meditative absorption).⁶

⁴ Ibid., 457.

⁵ Ibid., 458.

⁶ Ibid., 458.

4. Distraction and worry [*Uddhacca-kukkucca*] are like a slave.

The slave is lacking freedom to go anywhere, but must follow his or her boss's orders. That person is unable to do what he or she wants. The boss forces him or her to work, makes him or her feel troubled and he or she lives with suffering. It is not necessary to mention about slaves in ancient times. In the present time, a servant is ordered to do whatever work without independence, which resembles a person who is controlled by distraction and worry, and is unable to seek happiness because the hindrance is the boss of the mind who can order him or her to do anything. The person lacks freedom due to being a slave of distraction and worry hindrance.

Furthermore, even though a servant takes a rest by watching a film, he or she must quickly return home since that servant is afraid that his or her boss will punish him or her. This resembles the Buddhist monk who has distraction and worry about monastic discipline [*vinaya*] and worries whether what he had done was right or wrong, immediately going to see a monk who is an expert in the monastic disciplinary code [*vinayadhara*] to purify his Precepts. Thus, he is unable to gain happiness from a life of peace and seclusion.

5. Doubt [*Vicikicchā*] is comparable to a person traveling to a remote area.

This person crosses the forest, streams, valleys and abysses, encountering wild animals and having various difficulties. Sometimes, he or she cannot sleep and has to endure hunger because it is a difficult pathway. In all likelihood, he or she will be cautious, be afraid of danger, get in trouble and will suffer all the way through. This resembles one who is controlled by doubt and will be unable to seek peace and happiness because of that doubt, which resembles the wild animals, valleys and abysses. He or she will have a difficult pathway obstructing the mind from achieving serenity and bliss.

Moreover, the obstacle of the journey exists when a human who has been traveling on that long journey feels scared of the robber resembling "doubt" that is mentioned in the Lord Buddha's Teachings:

"Doubt is the obstacle for a monk to attain sainthood."

If we are able to allow the mind freedom from hindrances, we will enable it to have serenity and stillness, until achieving the inner experience, the happiness, serenity, the cool body and mind, and eventually, we will attain the Triple Gem.

1.4 Mental Defilements [*Upakkilesa*]

While practicing meditation until achieving a certain level of concentration, someone sees a mental object - a Lord Buddha Image, a crystal ball or light. Later, that certain level of concentration might decrease, the mental object might disappear or the light might lessen or vanish because we have encountered obstacles other than the five hindrances, which are called mental defilements [*upakkilesa*].

Upakkilesa means mental defilements; they are things that make the mind become clouded. In this case, it means the defilements arising while practicing meditation. There are eleven types of mental defilements as follows⁷:

1. Doubt [*vicikicchā*]
2. Inattention [*amanasikara*]
3. Gloominess and sleepiness [*thīna-middha*].
4. Fear [*chambhitatta*]
5. Elation or excitement due to a feeling of jubilation [*ubbala*]
6. Gross, physical restlessness [*duṭṭhulla*]
7. Over-exertion [*accāradhaviṛiya*]
8. Under-exertion [*atīlīnaviṛiya*]
9. Longing [*abhijappā*]
10. Various thoughts, such as of past events, that arise while meditating [*nānattasaññā*]
11. Excessive fixation on the mental object/image [*rūpānṇatinijjhayitatta*].

When our Lord Buddha had been a bodhisattva (becoming a Buddha), and had not yet attained the full Dhamma, He practiced meditation attentively without heedlessness; He had encountered eleven mental defilements [*upakkilesa*] as well. Sometimes, He had seen a mental object and light, but later both of them had disappeared. Thus, He had considered and found that the preceding eleven mental defilements including doubt, ignoring the mental object and drowsiness had caused His concentration to shift and the mental object and brightness disappeared. Furthermore, He had considered that fear reflected an absence of concentration. It is comparable to a human traveling to remote areas and becomes injured at all pathways causing him or her to become fearful. When excitement begins, the mental object and brightness vanish, similar to the human who has discovered all five treasure troves at one time, and is excited because of the discovery of those five treasure troves. The Lord Buddha also found that physical restlessness resulted in the absence of concentration. Over-exertion resembles a human who holds two birds tightly making them die in his or her hand. Under-exertion is similar to a human who holds two birds loosely making them fly away from his or her hand. When He had removed those mental defilements, His level of concentration [*samadhi*] had improved.

Sometimes, He saw only a mental object while meditating. Sometimes, He saw only brightness all day and night. Sometimes, He saw the brightness regularly. Sometimes, He had repeatedly seen the mental object. He had considered and realized that these were a result of His concentrated mind. The more His mind had achieved a high level of concentration, the more He had seen the mental object and brightness. The less the mind had achieved a high level of concentration, the less He had seen the mental object and brightness. If His mind attained a low

⁷ **Upakkilesa Sutta. *Majjhimanikāya uparipaṇṇāsa***, Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 23 item 452-464 p. 131-136

degree of concentration, the degree of clarity in seeing the mental object and brightness would be low. A high or low level of concentration was affected by the eleven mental defilements.

Consequently, for the practice of meditation, we will notice that we have to try to train our mind, repeatedly exert our mind, and focus our mind with this tradition, and understand mental obstructions that impede the progress of our meditation. If we can follow these guidelines, our meditation will advance accordingly and eventually we will attain the inner Triple Gem.

Chapter 2

Sensual Desire [*Kāmachanda*] & Overcoming It

Units in this Chapter

2.1 The Characteristics of Sensual Desire [*Kāmachanda*]

2.2 The Causes of Sensual Desire [*Kāmachanda*]

2.2.1 The Perceptions of Beauty or What the Beautiful Attractive Objects of the Mind Are [*Subhanimitta*]

2.2.2 Reasons That Lack Reflection [*Ayonisomanasikāra*]

2.3 Methods for Overcoming Sensual Desire [*Kāmachanda*]

2.3.1 The Buddhist Scripture

2.3.2 The Principles of Practice

Chapter at a Glance

1. *Kāmachanda* means “lustful or sensual desire,” meaning the desire for the five sensual pleasures [*kāmaguṇa*], which are: visible objects, sounds, odors, tastes and delightful touches. This kind of hindrance causes the mind to have desires and pleasures and causes it to search for sensual pleasure. Anyone who is controlled by *kāmachanda* is unable to allow his/her mind to become peaceful even if he/she diligently practices meditation.
2. There are two causes of sensual desire:
 - A) The Perceptions of Beauty or What the Beautiful Attractive Objects of the Mind Are [*Subhanimitta*],
 - B) Reasons That Lack Reflection [*Ayonisomanasikāra*] That Make One Consider Things To Be Beautiful.
3. Methods to overcome sensual desire as illustrated in the Buddhist Scripture are:
 - A) Study Non-Beauty [*Asubhanimitta*],
 - B) Consider Non-Beauty Regularly [*Asubha-bhavana*],
 - C) Restrain the Senses [*Indriyaṣaṃvara*],
 - D) Estimation Regarding the Consumption of Food [*Bhojanemattaññitā*],
 - E) Have Good Friends [*Kalyāṇamitta*],
 - F) Speak Only with Suitable Speech [*Sappaya*] That is Not Involved With Sex or Sensuality.

In addition, one should always contemplate the truth about sensual disadvantages [*Kāmadīnvrī*], which will help to cease those types of hindrances.

Chapter Objectives

Students will gain knowledge and understanding, and be able to:

1. Define the meaning and characteristics of sensual desire [*kāmachanda*].
2. Identify the causes of sensual desire.
3. Identify the methods for overcoming sensual desire.



Sensual Desire [*Kāmachanda*] & Overcoming It

The obstacles of mental concentration, namely the five hindrances [*nivarana*] and the eleven mental defilements [*upakkilesa*] are mentioned in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 is about *kāmachanda*, one of the five hindrances. It focuses on the characteristics, causes and the overcoming of *kāmachanda* to lessen or eliminate the pleasure, love, desire, dream and enjoyment of the images or events that appear and cause our mind to be unable to attain stillness, peace and concentration. Thus, we should know these obstacles and find the methods for overcoming them, which will lead our mind to achieve serenity and increase the faculty of concentration.

2.1 The Characteristics of Sensual Desire [*Kāmachanda*]

Kāmachanda is sensual desire, and the enjoyment of the five sensual objects [*kāmaguṇa*], such as enjoyment of visible objects, sounds, odors, tastes and delightful touches.

Sensuality [*Kāma*] is divided into two types as follows:

1. **Objective Sensuality [*Vatthu-kāma*]** means visible objects, sounds, odors, tastes and delightful touches, for example, clothes, abodes, homes, lands, cities, countries, servants, pets, goats, sheep, chickens, elephants, cows, horses, money, gold and other material objects that bring about lust.¹
2. **Subjective Sensuality [*Kilesa-kāma*]** means affection, pleasure in the mind, desire, lust, sexual desire, passion, enjoyment, fascination, lustful acts, and adherence to sensuality.² The adherence to sensuality brings about the defilement of lust.

The human realm is entitled “the sensual plane or sensual world” because it’s the realm where humans enjoy consuming sensuality. Humans feel that sensuality is a beautiful thing that they intend to search for because they believe it creates happiness. *Kilesa-kāma* deeply resides in the human mind. When they meet pleasurable objective sensuality [*vatthu-kāma*], the sensual desire [*kāmachanda*] presents itself as an act of passion, sexual desire, the desire for food, abode, clothes, toys and renown, etc.

¹ *Khuddaka-nikāya Mahāvagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 65, no. 2, p.2

² Ibid. 2.

Sensual desire [*kāmachanda*] creates unsatisfactory results for the person meditating. According to ***Mahāsaccak Sutta Majjhimanikāya Mūlapaṇṇatta***, while the Lord Buddha was practicing meditation before His enlightenment, He had considered the following examples:

“Any group of Brahmins whose bodies are not departed from sensuality [*kāma*], are attached to sensuality [*kāma*], do not refrain from it and will not achieve serenity. Those Brahmins who receive or do not receive severe suffering will not be able to attain enlightenment just like fresh pieces of wood soaked with latex that a person has immersed in water. He/she needs fire, rubs the wood and hopes to produce fire, but he/she cannot yield fire. He/she only feels very fatigued because that wood is soaked with latex and is still immersed in water.”

This metaphor implies that whatever bodies cannot leave sensuality, the mind is attached to it and desires sensuality, that person is incapable of attaining enlightenment even if he or she puts or doesn't put much effort into it, similar to fresh pieces of wood soaked with latex that are immersed in water. Anyone who needs fire and tries to rub the wood cannot produce fire since that wood is soaked with latex and is still immersed in water.”

“Any group of Brahmins whose bodies are departed from sensuality [*kāma*], but are still fond of sensuality [*kāma*], will be unable to attain enlightenment even though they exert themselves severely or do not exert themselves, just like fresh pieces of wood soaked with latex that a man/woman put on land. Whoever rubs the wood hopes to yield fire. He or she cannot produce fire because that wood is soaked with latex, even though it is far away from water.”

This metaphor involves someone who has ordained and his or her body is departed from sensuality, but the mind still thinks of sensuality and is attached to five sensual objects [*kāmaguṇa*]: visible objects, sounds, odors, tastes and delightful touches. Although that person makes or doesn't make any effort, he or she cannot attain enlightenment as his or her mind is soaked with latex - that is, the defilements resembling fresh pieces of wood soaked with latex. Since the wood is soaked with latex, whoever attempts to rub the wood is incapable of obtaining fire even if it is placed on land.

“Any group of Brahmins whose bodies and minds are departed from sensuality [*kāma*], and have abstained from sensuality, their minds will achieve serenity. Those Brahmins who exert themselves severely or do not exert themselves, they will be able to attain enlightenment just like dried pieces of wood that are put down on land. A human needs fire and rubs the wood. The fire was lit because that wood was placed on the land and was dry.”

To achieve a good result from meditation, it can be seen that one must take the sensuality [*kāma*] out of his or her mind. No matter if they are ascetics or not, if their mind is away from the sensuality, they will gain a good inner experience.

Additionally, after thorough consideration, we will find that sensual desire [*kāmachanda*] is the significant root of desires in the mind. Those desires have dominated our lives. We don't feel satisfied because we think our possessions are not good enough. We often search for seeing more beautiful visible objects, hearing lovelier sounds, consuming tastier cooking and finding a better spouse. We want to be praised and loved by others more. Thus, we always try to search for more pleasant experiences. Those thoughts are inside our mind at all times. The problem has not developed from the things we want, but from the feeling of insufficiency inside, which makes us think that obtaining everything will lead to happiness inside of us.

Happiness and peace arising from sensual desire [*kāmachanda*] are unstable. They depend on the external environment that might make us feel pleasant temporarily, but then we get bored, unpleasant and moody, and search for new experiences.

Sensual desire [*kāmachanda*] causes our mind to seek future bliss and to ignore the present. We always think, "If we've got this and that, as follows,"

"If we've got enough money to travel incessantly and must not return home, we will be happy."

"If we've got a beautiful piece of land, we'll be blissful."

"If we've got a soft cushion to sit on for meditation, we'll be delighted."

We often extend the blissful times more and more without consideration of harm and suffering. Owing to the desire, and the way of such living, our happiness and serenity depend upon external things.

Sensual desire makes us seek out persons, animals and things. It is the feeling of insufficiency and dissatisfaction that interrupts and conflicts with our experience in the present time, which is different from the state of the concentrated mind where the feeling will be connected to the present, with no attachment, but with liberation.

Consequently, all human pursuits for happiness must have desire, which is the primary fundamental enemy of meditation.

2.2 The Cause of Sensual Desire [*Kāmachanda*]

Sensual desire, linked to the five sensual objects [*kāmaguṇa*], is a result of various factors. According to the Buddhist Scripture, sensual desire is caused by two main factors as follows³:

2.2.1 The Perceptions of Beauty or What the Beautiful Attractive Objects of the Mind Are [*Subhanimitta*]

The word “*Subhanimitta*” is composed of two words: “*Subha*,” which means “beautiful,” and “*Nimitta*,” which means “a sign, the object of mind or the image one forms in the process of recognition,” or “a perceptual image.” ***Subhanimitta* are the perceptions of beauty or what the beautiful attractive objects of the mind are.** In this statement, *Subhanimitta* implies imagining the visible objects, sounds, odors, tastes and delightful touches of someone of the opposite or same gender that are beautiful, for example, imagining that his or her body is beautiful.

Imagining the body’s beauty can be divided into two parts as follows:

- a) **Imagining that each organ is beautiful:** to imagine that the complexion, face, mouth, teeth, feet, fingers and nails are beautiful, etc. Those thoughts bring about sensual desire or *kāmachanda*.
- b) **Imagining that the whole body is beautiful:** to imagine that the whole body or body’s shape is beautiful. Such imagination creates lustful desire or *kāmachanda*. Hence, *Subhanimitta* is to imagine that a body is beautiful, becoming an enticement to the arising of lustful desire or *kāmachanda*.

It is a fact that sensual desire arises from thoughts. So, if one does not want sensual desire, one should simply stop thinking about *Subhanimitta*, which is the cause of sensual desire. Lustful desire would then not appear with the absence of *Subhanimitta*.

2.2.2 Reasons That Lack Reflection [*Ayonisomanasikāra*]

Ayonisomanasikāra is reasons that lack reflection. Unwise consideration arises by not applying wisdom [*pañña*] to realize the advantages and disadvantages. When one recognizes, hears or sees an unwise phenomenon, the defilements dictate and fascinate one’s thoughts. In Buddhist Scripture, unwise consideration represents the attention to impermanence as permanence, the attention to a dreadful thing as a blissful thing, the attention to non-self as self and the attention to a non beautiful thing as a beautiful thing.⁴

Unwise thoughts are the essential cause. Since when one perceives any mood from those visible objects, sounds, odors, tastes and delightful touches, those feelings [*vedanā*] grow into: 1) happiness, 2) suffering or, 3) no happiness or suffering. Happy feelings produce pleasure, fondness, acceptance, attraction, love and need. Feelings of suffering generate displeasure, dissatisfaction and a wish to escape. Feelings of non-happiness or non-suffering make us feel neutral and are only the acknowledgement of what has happened, without contentment or discontentment. This mood arises automatically without thinking about it. However, the neutral

³ *Aṅguttaranikāya Ekanipāṭa*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 32, no. 12, p. 46

⁴ *Dīgha-nikāya. Mahāvagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 14, p. 317

mind continues to perceive all other things and then thoughts may arise and move on. Thoughts that constantly occur may create the feeling of attachment to them or they might be only the acknowledgement of those attachments. On the other hand, several people have *ayonisomanasikāra* or unwise consideration. They always let their pleasure or enjoyment lead them to that attachment and sensual desire and they will always search for those things. Ultimately, their desire grows stronger to satiate their desired feeling.

For example, it is usual to see beautiful or non-beautiful images. However, if we want to see beautiful spouses, flowers, scenery, oceans, caves, or whatever is beautiful, or have the desire to own a beautiful house, our mind will be attached to those things. Thus, we will search for them by working hard to earn the money to get those attractive possessions.

In daily life, it is common to assess whether sound is beautiful or not. Lots of people spend all of their money to listen to music, singers and sweet sounds. Sometimes, they travel far and wide to listen to beautiful sounds, and no matter how expensive their stereos cost, they purchase them to get that beautiful sound, etc. Those examples identify reasons lacking in reflection where humans create a trap for themselves by being attached to ordinary things.

Additionally, the thought of sensuality [*kamasankappa*] arouses sensual desire [*kamachanda*] since the origin of all sensualities comes from thoughts. If there is no sensual thought - not thinking whether it is beautiful or not, sensuality will not exist in accordance with the Lord Buddha's dialogue in "*Mahaniddes*" (Buddhist Scripture) as follows:

"Look! Sensuality [Kama], I know the root cause of you. Thought is the root of you. I will not think of you anymore. Look! Sensuality [Kama], you will not happen to me anymore."⁵

2.3 Methods to Overcome Sensual Desire [*Kāmachanda*]

2.3.1 Methods to Overcome Sensual Desire as Explained in the Buddhist Scripture

According to the Buddhist Scripture, there are six methods to refrain from sensual desire as follows⁶:

1. Study Non-Beauty [*Asubhanimitta*].
2. Consider Non-Beauty Regularly [*Asubha-bhavana*].
3. Restrain the Senses [*Indriyasaṃvara*].
4. Estimation Regarding the Consumption of Food [*Bhojanemattaññitā*].
5. Have Good Friends [*Kalyāṇamitta*].
6. Speak Only With Suitable Speech [*or Sappaya Speech*].

⁵ *Khuddaka-nikāya. Mahāniddes*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 65, no. 2, p. 2

⁶ *Dīgha-nikāya. Mahāvagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 14, p. 318

1) Study Non-Beauty [*Asubhanimitta*]

The impurities [*asubha*] are subjects of meditation, as taught by the Lord Buddha, which focus on the inherent repulsiveness and loathsomeness of the body by contemplating and realizing the ugliness of our body and others, beginning with the feet up to the hair-ends, which are filled with impurity, dirt and non beauty. They are recommended as especially powerful antidotes to lust.

In fact, human bodies are filled with impurities inside that flow out of those bodies all of the time. There are nine channels to remove dirt from the body: 1) Mucous flows out of the two eyes, 2) Ear-wax runs out of the two ears, 3) Mucus flows out of the two nostrils, 4) Food residue between the teeth flows out of the mouth, 5) Blood flows out of the mouth, 6) Vomit flows out of the mouth, 7) Urine flows out of the urethra, 8) Stool flows out of the anus and 9) Sweat passes through pores. There are a total of 99,000 pores.

This body is occupied with assorted dirt and dead bodies that this human had consumed, for example, the corpses of ducks, chickens, shrimps, fish and cattle, etc. In addition, various kinds of germs resided there, were born, grew old, became sick and died in this body.

If we analytically reflect with wisdom [*paññā*], we can see clearly the impurities of the physical body, such as, if the body has not been cleaned for a day, especially in the summertime, it produces an unpleasant odor. The longer the period that we leave it like that, the more apparent it becomes, and the owner of that body wouldn't be fond of that. Due to outward appearances this body looks beautiful because it is covered with skin and clothes. But in reality, if there were no clothes and skin to cover it, it would be extremely dirty. The bodies of kings and outcasts are not different in that all are dirty and unpleasant. Contemplating that the body is not beautiful is called *asubhanimitta*; sensual desire [*kāmachanda*] can become tranquil by this method.

2) Consider Non-Beauty Regularly [*Asubha-Bhavana*]

Frequently practice *asubha*. Recollect on the ugliness and dirtiness inside the body, regularly enabling a boredom to arise along with a discontent of sensuality, which is the obstacle towards a peaceful mind.

3) Restrain the Senses [*Indriyasamvaro*]

Mindfulness controls the restraint of the senses. In this statement, *indriya* means external passages. There are six external passages in each human as follows:

1. Eyes.
2. Ears.
3. Nose.
4. Tongue.
5. Body.
6. Mind.

The body is similar to a home that has six passages. We know external things from those six passages. Good things that make our mind become peaceful, bright and clear come from the six passages and the things that make our mind become agitated and clouded also come from the six passages. All six passages are very important; therefore we should understand the nature of the six passages.

The Lord Buddha made a comparison of the six passages as follows⁷:

1. Human eyes are like snakes that are fond of secret places and undisclosed things. They like to see unrevealed things. The more they are hidden, the more they would like to see them. Whatever is disclosed and not a secret, their desire to see them is lessened.
2. Human ears are like crocodiles that are fond of cool places where they want to listen to cool words of admiration for them or where they like to listen to pleasing words that other persons speak to them.
3. Human noses are like birds in cages that are fond of struggling. When smelling something, they will search for the place where that smell comes from.
4. Human tongues are like rabid dogs, which are filled with saliva. They signify the habit of talking a lot, especially about unimportant things. When having free time, they like to gossip.
5. Human bodies are like foxes. They like to be in warm and soft places, and like to snuggle other persons.
6. Human minds are like monkeys. They are restless and always thinking about things, thinking about the past, or the future and are incapable of being still or of being peaceful.

Indriyasamvaro means restraint of the six external passages. Since we have realized the nature of those passages, we must be aware of and use mindfulness to control them. Whatever you should not see, do not see it. Whatever you should not listen to, do not listen to it. Whatever you should not smell, do not smell it. Whatever you should not taste, do not taste it. Whatever you should not touch, do not touch it. Whatever you should not think of, do not think of it. In case you see the thing that you shouldn't see and you can't prevent seeing it, just leave it, ending with only that. Don't keep on thinking that this lady is beautiful or that man is handsome. You must not imagine as your mental objects the whole body that is beautiful or that any part of the body is beautiful, such as beautiful eyes, mouth, arms and legs, etc.

Restraint of the senses or *Indriyasamvaro* or is a very important issue. We fight with the defilements and achieve victory or we lose at this point. If we possess restraint of the senses, the defilements can hardly influence us. Therefore, we are able to preserve our virtues as we intend to.

⁷ ***Samyuttanikāya. Sahāyatanavagga.*** Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 28, no. 348, p. 498

It is just like when we lock the doors and windows, but did not lock the cash drawer and file cabinet. They were just as safe because the thief could not enter to steal anything. However, if we lacked the restraint of the senses and we looked at the thing we should not look at, touched the thing we should not touch, thought of what we should not think of or vice versa, and even if we intended to preserve the virtues well, we could take a wrong step. It would be similar to the unlocked house and windows, even if we locked the cash drawer and file cabinet, they were not safe anyway. The thief could still easily enter and steal those things.

4) Estimation Regarding the Consumption of Food [*Bhojanemattaññitā*]

Food and drink regularly consumed aim to nourish the body. Without the restraint of diet, eating too much produces harm, for example, discomfort and illness enhances sensual desire as well. Thus, the Lord Buddha suggested that laymen and laywomen practice the Dhamma by keeping *Atṭha Sīla* or the Eight Precepts, as well as Uposatha, which is observing fasting on the Full Moon Day (or a Buddhist Holy Day). One of them refers to abstaining from eating after noon until the following dawn since the food will not be utilized at that time. Normally, the night time is the time to take a rest and the consumed food will be transformed into energy and stored as reserved energy. If the energy has not been used to perform any activity such as cultivating merits, it will be transformed into sensual energy in response to human defilements within our minds. Hence, the sages suggested to exercise restraint of the diet, and consume moderately, not too much or too little.

5) Have Good Friends [*Kalyāṇamitta*]

Kalyāṇamitta means a good noble Buddhist friend who guides one to the path of wholesomeness and the Triple Gem – the Lord Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. Having a *Kalyāṇamitta* connotes associating with good friends who dislike talking about sex, sensuality, affection, extravagance, beautiful dressing, and leading us to think, speak and act the same way. Moreover, they avoid by great distances, the places that cause roads to ruin [*apāyamukha*], pubs, bars, massage parlors and other entertainment places where sensuality is aroused.

6) Speak Only with Suitable Speech [*or Sappaya Speech*]

Speaking *sappaya* speech implies talking about physical repulsiveness that makes us realize the disadvantages of sensual enthusiasm as well as contemplating its harms. Furthermore, one should talk about simplicity or wanting little [*appicchata*], contentment or being happy with what one has [*santosa*], and as non-extravagant things surround us, they reflect in our minds to think, desire and search for only those types of things. Engaging in such talk may generate our minds to become serene, content and happy with what we own.

2.3.2 Methods to Overcome Sensual Desire as Explained by the Principles of Practice

Besides the Buddhist Scripture, we can utilize the following methods of practice to reduce sensual desire:

1. **Consider the world in accordance with the truth that sensual pleasures [*kāmaguṇa*] bring us more suffering, but less happiness.**

It gives us happiness when we first get it, which is like a decoy. Once we are trapped by those things, we will experience suffering. The more we feel greater indulgence, the more the suffering arises, for example, the suffering from earning more and more, the suffering from trying to keep those things, the suffering from guarding one's possessions zealously and the fear of losing those things. Once those things are lost, the suffering becomes more augmented because all treasured things must normally become parted from all of us.

Although sensuality brings us happiness and pleasure when we perceive desirable and pleasurable images, tastes, odors, sounds and delightful touches, several sensual disadvantages of sensuality were illustrated in the Buddhist Scripture, **The Mahadukkhakhandha Sutta**⁸ as follows:

- A) When a person earns a living diligently by employing many techniques, he/she has to experience various sufferings, such as, suffering from hard work, suffering from cold and hot climates, wind and sunshine, suffering from being bitten by mosquitoes and suffering from thirst and hunger, etc.
- B) If a person makes an effort to work, but he/she is not successful then he/she suffers. A person who is capable of working successfully will inevitably suffer from keeping his/her work free from any harm, such as, danger from criminals, royal punishment⁹, flood or friends and relatives that lead them to ruin. He/she feels agonized, sorrowful or regretful, and realizes that those things had belonged to him/her, but now they do not.
- C) Sensuality causes many wicked results, for example, it causes quarrels in many societies and levels of those societies: a king quarrels with another king, a country's leader quarrels with another leader: a millionaire quarrels with another millionaire; there are quarrels within a family: a father quarrels with a mother or a brother quarrels with a sister. Quarrels bring about killing and using weapons that cause injury and death. Additionally, sensuality also creates immorality, such as, unwholesome bodily action, unwholesome speech and unwholesome thoughts, due to the wicked outcomes of sensuality.

⁸ ***Majjhimanikāya Mūlapannāsa***. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 18, no. 194, p. 113

⁹ In this sentence, **royal punishment** means a penalty from a member of the royal family, such as from the king, queen, prince, princess or other royal family member.

Moreover, the Buddhist Scriptures indicate the disadvantages of sensuality by comparisons pointing out that sensuality results in very little happiness, and many ill-effects as follows¹⁰:

- 1) Sensuality is compared to a fatigued dog due to its hunger standing near the chopping block of a cattle killer or an assistant of the cattle killer throwing it a bone with no meat but just blood left on it. That dog gnaws on the bone without meat and only blood on it and is incapable of curing its tiredness owing to hunger. Sensuality is compared to a meatless bone that produces great suffering and trouble.
- 2) Sensuality is compared to a vulture or a hawk taking a piece of meat and flying away. Many vultures and hawks swoop down to snatch meat. If that vulture or hawk doesn't release the meat, it will die or nearly die because of struggling to keep that piece of meat. Sensuality is compared to a piece of meat creating serious suffering and trouble because we try to grab, quarrel and fight for it. Therefore, if there is no piece of meat, there will be no snatching. If there is no sensuality controlling our mind, we will be free and will not search for the sensual pleasures [*kāmaguṇa*], which are: visible objects, sounds, odors, tastes and delightful touches.
- 3) Sensuality is compared to a human holding a flaming torch and walking against the wind. If he or she doesn't release the flaming torch right away, his/her hand, arms or any other organs will be burnt. He/she will die or nearly die because of that flaming torch. Sensuality is compared to a flaming torch generating a great deal of suffering and trouble.
- 4) Sensuality is compared to a pit of burning charcoal that measures the length of a human's height. The pit is filled with burning charcoal, but has no flame or smoke. A person who loves his or her life doesn't want to die. He/she loves happiness; he/she hates misery. Two other strong men/women grab each of that person's arms and pull him or her into the pit of burning charcoal. That person doesn't want to be there because he/she knows that he/she may die or suffer and nearly die. Sensuality is compared to a pit of burning charcoal bringing about a lot of suffering and trouble.
- 5) Sensuality is compared to a person dreaming of a pleasant garden, a delightful forest, charming land or a lovely pool. When he or she wakes up, he/she sees nothing. Sensuality is compared to a dream causing much suffering and trouble.
- 6) Sensuality is compared to a human who borrows a treasure, such as one with precious stones and the finest earrings carried by a traveling merchant. He or she is encompassed by the borrowed treasure and walks to the market. Others see him or her and say, "Look at that person holding all of that treasure! We heard that any person who

¹⁰ **Potaliya Sutta. *Majjhimanikāya Majjhimaṇṇāsā***. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 20, no. 47-52, p. 81-84

owns such a treasure would use it like that.” Thus, wherever the owner of the treasure meets that person, he or she should take his or her own treasure back at that very spot. Sensuality is compared to borrowed things creating deep suffering and trouble.

- 7) Sensuality is compared to a huge forest not far from a village. The trees in the forest have plenty of tasty fruits, but there is no fruit falling to the earth. A person who desires the fruits comes and searches for them. He or she stops at the forest and sees the trees that have plenty of tasty fruits and thinks that those trees have plenty of tasty fruits, but there are no fruits falling to the earth. He or she knows how to climb the tree and thinks that he or she will climb that tree, eat moderately and bring more back home. Then, he or she gets on the tree, eats until he or she is full and packs more of them. At the same time, a second person who desires fruit carries a sharpened axe in search of fruit. He or she stops at the forest and sees the trees with plenty of tasty fruits, but there is no fruit falling to the earth. He or she thinks that he/she does not know how to climb the tree; so he/she decides to cut it down at the base of the tree, eat sufficiently and pack the rest to go. If he/she cuts it down at the base of the tree, the person who already climbed up the tree then very slowly comes down, because the tree may collapse and his or her hands, legs or other organs could break. That person may die or suffer and nearly die because of the tree. Similarly, sensuality is compared to significant amounts of fruits producing tremendous suffering and trouble.

2. Consider that things are always unstable.

The things that bring us happiness might give rise to suffering in the future, for example, a person who performs good deeds for us might become bored or unfriendly towards us. He or she might then perform many bad deeds towards us.

3. Consider the benefits of sensual liberation and meditation.

Happiness is more subtle, neat, light and comfortable. It is different from the sensuality that makes us feel burdensome. The one who feels happiness from meditation once will understand that it is beyond sensual happiness. It's the happiness we do not have to seek outside since it arises within us. There is no need to fight for it. We must not make a competition out of it or worry about it being stolen. It's the happiness that needs no objects to stimulate us and therefore, there is no expense.

All of those methods listed above are the ways to overcome sensual desire [*kāmachanda*] and eradicate it from the mind, even for a moment. If we always consider them and teach ourselves, the obstacles will not be able to impede our mind.

Chapter 3

Malevolence or Ill-Will [*Byāpāda*] & Overcoming Them

Units in this Chapter

3.1 The Characteristics of Malevolence or Ill-Will [*Byāpāda*]

3.2 The Causes of Malevolence or Ill-Will [*Byāpāda*]

3.3 Methods for Overcoming Malevolence or Ill-Will [*Byāpāda*]

3.3.1 Think of Loving-Kindness [*Mettā*] as a Disposition

3.3.2 Cultivate Loving-Kindness Continuously [*Mettā Bhāvanā*]

3.3.3 Consider That All Beings Possess Their Own Kamma

3.3.4 Have Much Consideration

3.3.5 Have a Kalyāṇamitta (A good noble Buddhist friend who teaches you about the Triple Gem)

3.3.6 Speak only with Suitable Speech [*Bhassa-sappāya*] to Help Others to Feel at Ease

Chapter at a Glance

1. *Byāpāda* is malevolence, ill-will and the desire to commit revenge. One who retains ill-will is like a sick person who cannot do anything he/she wants to do. Ill-will impedes self-goodness as well as other types of goodness. One who possesses ill-will can hardly allow his or her mind to come to a standstill.
2. The cause of ill-will is due to mental irritation that expands into anger, malice and ill-will or *byāpāda*.
3. As illustrated in the Buddhist Scriptures, there are six methods for overcoming ill-will:
1) Thinking of Loving-Kindness [*Mettā*] as a Disposition 2) Cultivating Loving-Kindness Continuously [*Mettā Bhāvanā*], 3) Contemplating That Each Human or Animal Has His or Her Own Kamma, 4) Contemplating and Realizing the Harm of Anger, 5) Associating with Good Friends Who Do Not Easily Get Angry, and 6) Speaking Only Suitable Words That Render the Mind to Remain Calm.

Chapter Objectives

This chapter should give students the knowledge and understanding to be able to:

1. Define the characteristics of malevolence or ill-will [*byāpāda*].
2. Identify the causes of malevolence or ill-will [*byāpāda*].
3. Identify the methods for overcoming malevolence or ill-will [*byāpāda*] therefore preventing them from arising while meditating.



Malevolence or Ill-Will [*Byāpāda*] & Overcoming Them

Various emotions pass through our mind daily. If we carefully notice, we will find the unpleasant issues pass through our mind many times each day. Discontent arises due to one's self, his or her colleagues, father, mother, brothers, sisters, climate, environment, animals and other things. Many things seem to make our mind frequently feel irritated. They affect our mind when we close our eyes to meditate and find the images and sounds we do not desire. We still continue to reflect gloomy emotions and suffering during our period of meditation, like we are carrying something on our back instead of relaxing and attaining happiness from meditation. Thus, we should recognize the meditation obstacle named ill-will [*byāpāda*], which is one of the five hindrances, in order for us to eliminate this impediment and support our mind to come to a standstill weightlessly, comfortably and much more quickly.

3.1 The Characteristics of Malevolence or Ill-Will [*Byāpāda*]

Byāpāda means the thought to harm others as well as possessing offensive feelings, such as irritation, discontent, anger, hatred, vengeance, pessimism, malice and viewing others as opponents. These feelings produce an agitated mind and render it unable to attain the faculty of concentration, and can be classified as a type of fire that burns the human mind with worry and anxiety.

The Lord Buddha said that ill-will [*byāpāda*] was like a disease that generated anxiety and suffering to the patients:

“Byāpāda is comparable to an ill man who is very sick, unable to eat and has no strength.”¹

A monastic explicator (one who studies and elucidates religious texts) explained that ill-will [*byāpāda*] was like an anxious and anguished person that became that way due to bile disease.² Even if he/she received loaf sugar and honey, he/she could not taste the sweetness and would complain that he or she was only experiencing the bitter taste because of the bile disease, similar to an ill-willed person. For example, a monk who is given a slight reprimand refuses to accept the discourses of his teacher or *upajjhāya*³ who always wishes him well, and the monk says that the discourses are annoying. He leaves the Buddhist monkhood and also is not capable of feeling the taste of Buddhist absorption due to his anxiousness caused by his anger, which resembles the man who cannot taste the sweetness of loaf sugar and honey, etc., because he is anxious due to bile disease. Thus, we must realize ill-will as a disease.

¹ *Dīgha-nikāya. Sīlakhandhavagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 11, no. 126, p. 321

² *Dīgha-nikāya. Sīlakhandhavagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 11, p. 457

³ *Upajjhāya* means Buddhist priest who officiates at an ordination.

We can notice that when someone has been repulsed by our presence and we want to harm him or her; but there is no opportunity to do so or weapon to carry it out. So, we bear him/her ill-will and plan to seek revenge on him or her in the future. This act is called ill-will [*byāpāda*]: the intention to harm or to ruin another, or another's fame, children, wife or husband, happiness or life.

Ill-will [*byāpāda*] prevents goodness from dwelling inside of us. It also prevents us from displaying our goodness outside. In addition, ill-will [*byāpāda*] impedes both past and present goodness. It obstructs new goodness because when ill-will [*byāpāda*] arises in the mind, the mind seems to be out of order or defected and not ready to receive that goodness. It is like when we have the flu and are not ready to taste delicious food. For example, before meditating, if we bear someone ill-will [*byāpāda*], our mind will not be vacant. While meditating, we should repeat the mantra “Samma-Araham” (pronounced Sah – Mah – Ah – Ra – Huhng), but we think of a torrent of abuse and the image of revenge instead. The mind should achieve a capacity to concentrate; however, the pictures fill the mind as troubled images. Ill-will [*byāpāda*] prevents us from recollecting past goodnesses since, when they arise in the mind, we are unable to demonstrate good actions; sometimes we demonstrate disadvantageous deeds, such as acting furiously and speaking sarcastically, etc.

Besides, no matter whom we bear ill-will to, it will not only impede us from his/her goodness, but from the goodness of any others, reflecting in us not being ready to receive goodness from others. It is like when we hate a person and then we close our eyes. We close our eyes in order not to see the person we dislike. However, in reality, closing the eyes makes us unable to see not only the person we dislike but others we don't dislike.

3.2 The Cause of Malevolence or Ill-Will [*Byāpāda*]

Mental Irritation [*Paṭighanimitta*] is the cause of malevolence or ill-will [*byāpāda*]. Since some human minds seem like minds with wounds, if anyone slightly scratches them or bothers them, stings will be felt because of the wounds. It is similar to the mind that is controlled by ill-will [*byāpāda*]. If anyone speaks in an accusatory manner his/her mind feels unpleasant and gets angry immediately. Irritation [*Paṭigha*] is the root of hatred [*dosa*] and ill-will [*byāpāda*]. In the *Samyuttanikāya Mahāvalavagga* (Buddhist Scripture), the Lord Buddha said,

“Bhikkhu! Mental Irritation [*Paṭighanimitta*] exists. If not performing much of wise contemplation of applying wisdom [*yonisomanasikara*] on that mental irritation [*paṭighanimitta*], this performance will nourish ill-will [*byāpāda*] that does not exist to exist and foster the growth of *byāpāda* that already exists.”⁴

The cause of malevolence or ill-will [*byāpāda*] is not only from mental irritation [*paṭighanimitta*] but when we study the cycle of these defilements, we will find that they begin from a tiny origin of discontent and gradually expand to irritation [*paṭigha*], anger [*kodha*], hatred [*dosa*] and ultimately ill-will, as shown in the diagram below:



⁴ *Samyuttanikāya Mahāvalavagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 30, no. 359, p. 188

Discontent or Dislike [*Arati*] is the origin of ill-will [*byāpāda*]. Dislike exists together with our mental desires: the desires to watch, listen, smell, taste, eat and sleep. When these desires are unsuccessfully met or impeded, discontent exists, for instance, the desire to wear beautiful clothes, but, the chosen cloth contains a burnt mark, making us feel unpleasant, etc.

Irritation [*Paṭigha*] and has resulted from discontent or *arati*. If our mind is annoyed, our thoughts do not flow and our actions appear to be rough, for example, we quarreled with our friends in the morning and could not do anything all day because our mind continually thought about the annoyance. If we can't release the annoyance, our mind will always feel irritated. Irritation [*paṭigha*] causes much more mental anxiety than discontent [*arati*]. When comparing discontent to a nose, when we smell a bad odor it makes our nose feel uncomfortable. However, irritation is like our nose was stuffed and we have to struggle to extract ourselves from this situation. If irritation can be suppressed, the mind will be calm. However, if irritation cannot be suppressed, the mind will develop into anger [*kodha*].

Anger [*Kodha*] is the boiling point of the mind. Normally, the mind works by thinking, which is divided into two types: receiving moods and releasing moods. The normal state of mind is when the mind allows the release of previous dispositions and gradually acquires a new and alternative disposition. When something interrupts the mind, such as, while one is reading a book, or a child is playing loudly, it causes the mind to feel discontent and irritation. The mind will slip away from a previous disposition and quickly replace it with a new one. Thus, his/her thought is confused. He/she thinks back and forth between reading and the child's action. The act of thinking too quickly causes the thoughts to become short and frequent like a beating drum – if a drummer beats slowly, the hand can be raised to the highest point, but, if the drummer beats the drum speedily, the hand is thus raised more shortly. It is the same as if a human mind gets angry, then the thoughts are short and frequent. This type of act is called boiling. When anger exists, the mind becomes hot because the frequency of thought is too fast, as if we rub the palms of our hands speedily therefore suddenly producing heat. However, anger is only the inside worry. If the anger grows very strongly, then one's body, hands and mouth may shake. If one practices to train the mind to be moderate, the anger can be suppressed. But, if the anger cannot be suppressed, the mind will create a thought to harm others, thinking to destroy the things that cause hatred or *dosa*.

Hatred [*Dosa*] is the thought to harm someone, for instance, the thought to destroy, to ruin, to kill, to sue, to confiscate or to set fire to a house. The occurrence of hatred [*dosa*] is hazardous to oneself and others. When *dosa* burns the mind, we view our friends, father, mother, son, daughter, etc. as enemies, and eventually, we dissatisfy ourselves. In addition, when a mind is controlled by *dosa*, any task assigned to it will result in irrational results and will therefore reflect upon surrounding people. *Dosa* is comparable to a bomb that first damages oneself and next, ruins other beings, materials, etc.

Ill-Will [*Byāpāda*] has resulted from hatred [*dosa*]. If a person is thinking to destroy someone, but he/she cannot do it immediately, then his/her mind desires to take revenge. This thought of revenge is called ill-will [*byāpāda*].

We can see that the root of ill-will [*byāpāda*] initially starts from discontent or dislike, as shown in various categories, for example, jealousy, annoyance, negative moods, anger, etc., which then presents itself as discontent of images, tastes, odors, sounds and delightful touches both physically and mentally.

Dissatisfaction and annoyance can arise even slightly within us. Additionally, when we cannot get what we desire, we blame external factors such as situations or other persons as the causes. We do not blame ourselves, but accuse other persons, which make them appear in our mind incessantly, and may cause our mind to get angry from a situation that has long passed. It devastates our present situation and abolishes mental serenity while meditating.

Accordingly, when we know that mental irritation [*patighanimitta*] has resulted from discontent and ultimately leads to ill-will [*byāpāda*], we must try to get rid of the origin of ill-will [*byāpāda*] from the start, at a little point, in order to ready our mind for increasingly better meditation experiences.

3.3 Methods for Overcoming Malevolence or Ill-Will [*Byāpāda*]

In Buddhist Scripture, a monastic explicator (one who studies and elucidates religious texts) stated that the methods for overcoming malevolence or ill-will [*byāpāda*] are listed in six items of Dhamma as follows:

- 3.3.1 Think of Loving-Kindness [*Mettā*] as a Disposition
- 3.3.2 Cultivate Loving-Kindness Continuously [*Mettā Bhāvanā*]
- 3.3.3 Consider That All Beings Possess Their Own Kamma
- 3.3.4 Practice Much Consideration
- 3.3.5 Have a Kalyāṇamitta
- 3.3.6 Speak only with Suitable Speech [*Bhassa-sappāya*] to Help Others Feel at Ease

3.3.1 Think of Loving-Kindness [*Mettā*] as a Disposition

This refers to thinking of the signs that support the arising of loving-kindness [*mettā*], for example, goodness and sublime states of mind [called *brahmavihāra*]: goodwill or loving-kindness [*mettā*], compassion [*karuṇā*], sympathetic joy [*muditā*] and equanimity [*upekkhā*]. Loving-kindness is the direct method to overcome ill-will [*byāpāda*]. In the *Samyuttanikāya Mahāvalavagga*, the Lord Buddha said,

“Loving-kindness [*Metta*] is the nutrient to prevent the existence of ill-will [*byāpāda*] that does not exist or eliminates *byāpāda* that already exists.”⁵

3.3.2 Cultivate Loving-Kindness Continuously [*Mettā Bhāvanā*]

The cultivation of loving-kindness [*mettā bhāvanā*] is a form of meditation by performing mental exercises of *mettā* by expanding loving-kindness in all directions specifically or non-specifically. This method enables us to be free from ill-will [*byāpāda*].

The methods of practice for spreading loving-kindness are explained in the Buddhist Scripture and according to the practices:

1. Methods for Spreading Loving-Kindness as Stated in the Scripture
2. Methods for Spreading Loving-Kindness According to the Practice

⁵ *Samyuttanikāya Mahāvalavagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 30, no. 359, p. 188

1. Methods for Spreading Loving-Kindness as Stated in the Scripture

***Mettā* or Loving-Kindness** is kind feeling, love, and goodwill towards humans and animals. It is a kind of nature that arises inside a mind that is absent from any anger towards beloved humans and animals.

Exhibiting the feeling of loving-kindness as a disposition for meditation can be categorized into two types as follows:

A) Loving-kindness is a general love, for instance, for family, relatives, friends and those we feel pleased with.

B) Loving-kindness arises from meditation. In the early state, while meditating by spreading loving-kindness, we can only spread loving-kindness to someone we love or like, generally those in type A (see below). **After practicing meditation and attaining Neighborhood Concentration [*upacaara-samaadhi*]⁶ then the mind is “almost steadfast.”** The mind can spread loving-kindness to all humans and animals, even ones who are our enemies and ones that we feel dislike or hate towards.

When we think of or view anyone with loving-kindness [*mettā*], (not from meditation), there is no abhorrence in our mind; however, there is only love and admiration. **There are two types of love and admiration as follows:**

Type 1) True love, admiration and goodwill that is without thinking about our personal relationship to whom we are spreading loving-kindness to, such as, that one is my father, mother, son, daughter, wife, husband, relative, brother, sister, friend or colleague, etc. When we feel no attachment to them, we will not be distressed if they move to other places far away from us, but wish them to be happy anywhere.

Type 2) Artificial love and admiration that we think the beloved persons are connected to us as our personal relationships. If they move away from us, we will feel unhappy or sorrowful. The state of mind that owns such love doesn't contain anger [*kodha*], but it is composed of the power of greed [*lobha*]. This kind of loving-kindness [*mettā*] is not as pure as in Type 1. It's a fake loving-kindness. Although, it's a fake loving-kindness, it's very useful. Practicing this frequently will support the existence of true loving-kindness.

⁶ **Neighborhood Concentration [*Upacaara-samaadhi*]:** is when the mind is able to stay at a standstill for more than five to ten minutes – but is not yet refined enough to reach the level of the absorptions. The mind still experiences no “magnetic” attraction inwards. The mind is “almost steadfast.”

Guidelines on Spreading Loving-Kindness

1) Persons Who We Should Not Spread Loving-Kindness to Are:

- 1.1) The ones we don't love (or the ones we dislike).
- 1.2) The ones we love very much to an extreme.
- 1.3) The ones we feel nothing for, we do not love them or hate them.
- 1.4) The ones we view as our enemies.

The reasons that we should not begin spreading loving-kindness to those four kinds of persons are:

- a) If a practitioner starts to think of the one he/she feels dislike for, his/her mind will become clouded, uncomfortable and stifled.
- b) If a practitioner starts to think of the one he/she loves very much to an extreme, and if he/she is experiencing difficulty, even just a little, the practitioner will also feel troubled with him/her.
- c) If a practitioner spreads loving-kindness to the one that the practitioner feels nothing for, not love or hate, the mind will not be joyful and powerful because this kind of person possesses no virtue to be loved or respected for and thus, it's hard to create loving-kindness. Whereas if there is love and respect, it creates loving-kindness.
- d) If a practitioner spreads loving-kindness towards enemies, then hatred [*dosa*] will initially and immediately develop and it is therefore hard to create loving-kindness.

2) Set the Priority to Whom We Should Spread Loving-Kindness to:

- 2.1) We should begin spreading loving-kindness to ourselves to witness that we wish for happiness and we hate suffering and that others feel the same way. Spreading loving-kindness to oneself before others causes the mind to become delightful since the love for other things, even if it is considerable is not the same as the love for one's own self.

When we think of our own self first, the wish for happiness, the fear of suffering, and the desire for comfort are inherent in us as well as a desire for a long life-span, and the desire for not dying, etc. exist more than usual and lead to loving-kindness easily and therefore the existence of loving-kindness is stable. When spreading loving-kindness to all humans and animals increasingly, Neighborhood Concentration [*upacaara-samaadhi*] and Attainment Concentration [*appanaa-samaadhi*] will probably appear.

- 2.2) After spreading loving-kindness to one's own self, spread loving-kindness to the ones we are fond of and have respect for in a normal way, such as, teachers or the persons who have equivalent virtue as we do, and they are the ones who we love, like, respect and admire. Recollect goodness that we received from those people, for instance, they are the ones who gave us knowledge [*vidyādān*], material gifts [*āmisadāna*] and the Lord Buddha's Teachings [*Dhamma*] and spoke to us with kind speech [*piyavācā*].

- 2.3) Spread loving-kindness to the persons we love so much, for example, our father, mother, son, daughter, husband and wife respectively.
- 2.4) Spread loving-kindness to the persons we feel nothing or neutral to, not love or hate.
- 2.5) Spread loving-kindness to the ones we feel anger toward.
- 2.6) When the practitioner feels that his/her loving-kindness [*mettā*] to all four kinds of persons are equal: a) to oneself, b) the one he/she loves, c) the one he/she feels nothing towards and d) the one he/she feels angry with, then, spread loving-kindness with three aspects: a) spread loving kindness non-specifically, b) spread loving-kindness specifically and c) spread loving-kindness in the entire ten directions, such as, to all living beings that are still in various realms. Spreading loving-kindness not specifically includes all living beings, such as, human and animals that still exist in these realms, etc. Spreading loving-kindness specifically includes towards men, women, noble monks [*ariya-puggala*], celestial beings, etc.

How to Spread Loving-Kindness to One's Own Self and Others

a) Spreading Loving-Kindness to One's Own Self

There are four items for spreading loving-kindness to one's own self:

Aham avero homi

May I be free from enmity (both inside and outside),

Aham abyā pajjho homi

May I be free from ill-will (anxiety and sorrow),

Aham anigha homi

May I be free from physical and mental affliction (danger),

Aham Sukhi attānam pariharami

May I live happily, free from all afflictions and dangers.

b) Spreading Loving-Kindness to Others

There are four items for spreading loving-kindness to others:

Sabbe sattā averā hontu

May all beings be free from enmity.

Sabbe sattā abyā pajjhā hontu

May all beings be free from ill-will (anxiety and sorrow).

Sabbe sattā anighā hontu

May all beings be free from physical and mental affliction (danger).

Sukhi - attānam pariha-rantu

May all beings live happily, free from all affliction and dangers.

In addition, we have to spread loving-kindness to the ones we know at present, the ones that we are fond of, the ones we work with, and the ones we stay with. Next, spread loving-kindness to those same persons we knew last month, last year, ten to fifty years ago, etc. Whoever we can remember; even the animals as well. Then, restart by spreading loving-kindness in reverse from the past to the present, and do this back and forth continuously. By the way, those are the ones we love ordinarily or extraordinarily, the ones we do not love or hate, and the ones we hate.

However, another problem is that it's not easy to spread loving-kindness to someone who has vengeance towards us. A mind cannot feel loving-kindness, but feels angry instead. Therefore, this problem must be solved by the following methods:

Restart by spreading loving-kindness in reverse from the ones we love ordinarily, for example, teachers, etc. Then, spread loving-kindness to the ones we have vengeance with again. If we are unable to do this and since our mind is still angry with them, let's practice as follows: educate ourselves that the Lord Buddha had taught that if there was a ruthless robber who cut small or big organs out of his or her victim and that victim felt angry with the robber, then this action on the victim's part means he or she is not following in accordance with the Lord Buddha's teachings, because the Lord Buddha taught that if anyone feels angry with us first, we should not return the anger to him/her. The one who returns an angry feeling is worse than the first one. When anyone is angry with us, we should be patient and should not feel angry with him/her; and this indicates gaining a great victory in the battle, which is difficult for any one of us to do. The one who doesn't return the anger behaves in a manner that is beneficial for both him or herself and beneficial to others. The one who is not angry possesses mental tranquility without trouble and anxiety, feels at ease physically and mentally, is admired by the wise, is loved by human and celestial beings, has little disease, has a fine complexion, does not age rapidly, will die with mindfulness and will go to Heaven after death. These are one's own earned self-benefits or merits. The person's other benefits include not being angry with the one who feels angry with us. Then, the one who felt angry initially will not harbor that feeling for long. Anger will be alleviated and his or her mind will feel more of a sense of ease.

If we can spread loving-kindness to the one we feel angry with or to the one we took revenge on, then we will be able to extinguish suffering from anger, and gain bliss from spreading loving-kindness. Therefore we will be able to develop a quality of mind known as high-mindedness.

2. Methods for Spreading Loving-Kindness According to the Practice

Besides the Scriptures, we can spread loving-kindness for a period before meditating to make our mind delightful and create loving-kindness that enables us to refrain from vengeance and harm in accordance with Phrarajbhavanavisudh's (Venerable Luang Phaw Dhammajayo's) recommendations as follows:

Spread loving-kindness filled with good wishes to all living beings. Spread loving-kindness by contemplating gently and comfortably stating; may all infinite living beings feel physically free and experience mental bliss while sitting, lying down, standing, walking, even falling asleep or waking up, all day, all night and at all times. May ones who possess suffering be free from suffering, may ones who possess happiness attain increasing amounts of happiness. Think comfortably and spread loving-kindness entirely. Imagine that the flow of our loving-kindness and good wishes are a light shining out of our body and mind as if our body and mind are the center of all living and non-living creatures. We then spread out the light. At first, we may feel that there is light emanating out from our center inside. Then, spread the light thoroughly as a refined and soft luminous glow, which is the energy of purity and good wishes like the light on a full moon day; but, it's as bright as the midday sun; and it's as cool as moon light bringing about joyfulness and a refreshing feeling to all living and non-living creatures.

Spread out light and good wishes and allow the mind to come to a standstill, and become vacant and spacious so it is suitable for attaining the Triple Gem. We should spread the light and good wishes out like this for around one or two minutes. Practice doing this and begin by having the feeling of possessing brightness, which is the energy of purity, luminously shining out from the center of our abdomen or our body and imagine it widening.

For the one who attains the Pathama Magga Sphere⁷ or sees inner bodies or the Lord Buddha Image, then expand the state of Dhamma that we have luminously achieved. Whoever attains the sphere, widen the sphere brightly as pure energy spreading out more broadly. Whoever attains the Lord Buddha Image, expand the bright light as the energy of good will and purity from the Lord Buddha Image. The Lord Buddha Image will also enlarge respectively. If attaining the inner Dhamma sphere, the sphere widens. That sphere is similar to transparent soap suds or shampoo bubbles that initially spread out in lesser sizes that are smaller than our body, then they become the same size as our body, then larger than our body, and then they keep expanding more boundlessly.

Create the energy of purity filled with good wishes to all humankind regardless of race, religion and tribe to all living beings that have two feet, four feet, plenty of feet, a few feet or no feet to all living beings that were born in one of the four birth modes⁸ in all three realms of existence. Let the energy of purity that shines out of our body brighten all directions as if we were sitting at the center of empty spacious sky and widen the energy of purity and brightness thoroughly and endlessly.⁹

If anyone diligently practices his/her mind to achieve loving-kindness [*mettā*] in accordance with the above technique, ill-will [*byāpāda*] will be eradicated because loving-kindness is an opponent of ill-will [*byāpāda*]. Hence, the person who easily gets angry or possesses ill-will is taught to spread loving-kindness frequently enabling him or her to calm ill-will. Moreover, the fruits of loving-kindness cause happiness, peace and other benefits, etc.

⁷ **The Pathama Magga Sphere** is a level of meditational attainment, which translated means "The Sphere of the Initial Path." In accordance with the Foundations of Mindfulness, it is referred to in Pali language as **'Dhammānupassanā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sphere'** and is equivalent to the first absorption [*jhāna*] in its elementary form. The sphere arises spontaneously at the center of the body when the mind is firmly settled and brought to a standstill.

⁸ According to the Lord Buddha's Teachings, rebirth can assume four different modes depending on the living being's overall Kamma, which dictates if it will assume a low, inferior birth mode or a refined, superior birth mode. These four birth modes include: 1) Being born from the womb [*Jalābuja*], 2) Being born from the egg [*Aṇḍaja*], 3) Being born from moisture [*Samsedaja*], and 4) Spontaneous arising into an adult form [*Opapātika*].

⁹ Phrarajbhavanavisudh's (Venerable Luang Phaw Dhammajayo's). **Meditation Teaching** - May 2, 1993

3.3.3 Consider That All Beings Possess Their Own Kamma

Consider the law of Kamma that all beings possess their own Kamma. Whoever performs an action [Kamma], he/she will receive the result of his/her actions. In case we experience a terrible occurrence, it was because of the past action [Kamma] we performed. For the one who committed awful deeds to us, he/she will inevitably get the result of his or her Kamma in the future. Also, we should teach ourselves that to be angry with others is like a person who wishes to touch burning charcoal, or extremely hot pieces of iron or excrement, etc. As far as the one who feels angry with us, he/she cannot do anything to us. He/she is a product of his/her Kamma and will proceed according to his or her own Kamma. The anger will return to him/her, just like killing a person who will then not kill him/her in return, or like throwing sand against the wind. We should feel sympathy for the one who performed a terrible act towards us and we should remind ourselves that he/she should not have done this to us. When he/she already performed a horrible action towards us, he/she will receive the retribution when the result or consequence of his/her Kamma catches up to him/her.

3.3.4 Practice Much Consideration

Select only good things to think about, view and realize that the one who made us feel unpleasant may not have had any intention to do this. He/she already did this because he/she may not have had far-sightedness; he/she may have misunderstood or was forced to do so. If he/she knew or if he/she could have chosen, he/she would not have done this.

Think of the truth that if we are close together with another, we sometimes may have a chance to make others feel discontented because no one could make others feel pleasant all the time; each and every one of us has made others feel dissatisfied. Therefore, it's normal when someone makes us feel displeased; we should not get angry or be vengeful with him/her as it will only lead to unhappiness.

Consider the benefit of forgiveness, which is a tremendous merit. We pay nothing by performing this merit.

Think that it is a practice to enable our mind to become stronger by overcoming our temptation and anger; and being grateful to the one who made us feel angry by giving us an opportunity to practice training the mind to enhance the perfection [*pāramī*] of patience [*khanti pāramī*].¹⁰

¹⁰ **Pāramī** means "Perfect" or "Perfection." In Buddhism, *Pāramī* refers to the perfection or culmination of obtaining certain virtues. These virtues are cultivated as a way of purification, such as purification of Kamma and assistance for the aspirant to live an unobstructed life, while achieving the goal of Enlightenment. The Ten Perfections are: 1) The Perfection of generosity or giving of oneself: *Dāna Pāramī*, 2) The Perfection of virtue, morality and proper conduct: *Sīla Pāramī*, 3) The Perfection of renunciation: *Nekkhamma Pāramī*, 4) The Perfection of transcendental wisdom and insight: *Paññā Pāramī*, 5) The Perfection of energy, diligence, vigor and effort: *Vīriya Pāramī*, 6) The Perfection of patience, tolerance, forbearance, acceptance and endurance: *Khanti Pāramī*, 7) The Perfection of truthfulness and honesty: *Sacca Pāramī*, 8) The Perfection of determination and resolution: *Adhitthāna Pāramī*, 9) The Perfection of loving-kindness: *Mettā Pāramī* and 10) The Perfection of equanimity and serenity: *Upekkha Pāramī*.

Teach ourselves that anger brings us to unfortunate realms. The reason why we would go to unfortunate realms is not caused by others who lead us to become angry; but from our own power of anger. The Lord Buddha said that not one person in this world had never been our mother, father, brother, sister, son and daughter before, therefore each person on this earth has, in one previous life or another, been a member of our immediate family. Thus, the one who feels vengeful to us in this world was one of close relatives in the past life, and we should not get angry with him/her.

Consider the harm of anger and vengeance as such that an angry person is like someone with kindling fire on him/her causing pain and anxiety. Also, his/her face would look unsightly and there is a risk of heart disease as well. So, only a fool or an insane person would be fixated on undertaking acts of vengeance. The consequence of anger, vengeance and revenge is a wound within our mind and body that is difficult to forget. There is an example of story about a father teaching his small child as follows:

A small child's face appeared unpleasant. His father, therefore, gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he got angry with anyone, he should hammer one nail into the fence in the back of their house. The first day, the small boy hammered 37 nails into the fence in the back of the house and decreased them day by day respectively. As days passed by, hammering nails into the fence were decreased more so because he felt that controlling his mood to be calm was easier than hammering the nails into the fence. Then, after he was able to control his mood more easily and was calmer than before, he went to meet his father and told him that he could already control his temper and wouldn't be rash and reckless like before. His father smiled and replied to his son, "If it's true, you must prove it to me; every time you are able to control your bad temper, take one nail out of the fence in the back of the house." Day after day, the small boy could take 1 or 2 nails out of the fence, then 2 to 3, and then finally all the nails were taken off. The boy was very glad. Then, he ran to his father and spoke to him, "I can do it! Finally, I can do it successfully!" His father did not reply, but held his son's hands and they went out to the fence in the back of the house. Then, he said to his son, "My son, you did very well. Look at that fence. The fence is not the same. It doesn't look like it used to be before. Son! Remember, whenever you do something with a foul temper, it causes wounds as if you were stabbing a sharp knife into someone. No matter how many times you say "sorry" to him/her, the pain is unable to be relieved and his/her wound cannot be removed." Consequently, be careful how you think, speak and act towards all friends or all persons close to you because we may say we are sorry, and ask for forgiveness but they may or may not forgive us. However, what has happened has been the sign of damage in our mind as well as in his/her mind that is hard to forget.

3.3.5 Have a *Kalyāṇamitta* ¹¹

We must always associate with a *kalyāṇamitta* who is calm, does not get angry easily, does not accuse others or gossip about others. Nevertheless, a *kalyāṇamitta* should love to practice Dhamma, love everyone, have good wishes for everyone, and usually not worry about trivialities. Then, we will assimilate those good characteristics that are reflecting upon us to be calm and have good thoughts towards others surrounding us, which make our minds bright and ready to practice at any time.

3.3.6 Speak only with Suitable Speech [*Bhassa-sappāya*] to Help Others Feel at Ease

The Lord Buddha used this technique to make the persons who met Him become tranquil. Once upon a time, there was a Brahmin and his wife who believed in Buddhism, liked to perform meritorious deeds, for instance, giving charitably; but the Brahmin did not have any faith. One day, they had a serious argument and in addition he referred to the Lord Buddha. The Brahmin got very angry, and thought that he had to do something to the Lord Buddha. Then, he picked up a sword and aimed to kill the Lord Buddha. The dialogue is interesting as follows:

The Brahmin asked the Lord Buddha,
“What should a person kill to make him/her sleep happily? What should be killed to obtain no sorrow? Dear Lord Gautama Buddha, What kind of Dhamma would you mainly prefer to kill?”

The Lord Buddha replied,
“A person who kills anger will probably sleep happily. Killing anger will doubtlessly achieve no sorrow. Brahmin! Noble monks admire killing the anger that’s root is poisonous and whose top is sweet. A person who is able to kill anger will feel no regret.”¹²

The Brahmin listened to the Lord Buddha and his faith arose. He asked for the Triple Gem as his refuge, ordained as a Buddhist monk and finally attained Dhamma as an Arahant, a holy one who has attained enlightenment. Afterward, the Lord Buddha used the same teaching to three Brahmins, the brothers of the first Brahmin. They ordained as Buddhist monks and attained the Dhamma as Arahants as well.

It can be seen that the Lord Buddha used the technique of correct speech to eliminate an opponent’s anger. This kind of conversation is categorized as “delightful words” [*sāppaya kathā*] that help the listeners who possess unwholesome minds to obtain wholesome minds.

¹¹ In Buddhist Scripture, *kalyāṇamitta* means virtuous friends composed of faith [*saddhā*], precepts [*sīla*] and wisdom [*paññā*], who are able to suggest their usefulness for this world and the next and their greatest usefulness in general. The greatest *kalyāṇamitta* indicated in Buddhist Scripture is the Lord Buddha; an Arahant is secondary, etc.

¹² *Samyuttanikāya Sagāthavagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol 25, no. 628-629, p. 196

Chapter 4

Gloominess and Sleepiness [*Thīna-middha*] & Overcoming Them

Units in this Chapter

4.1 The Characteristics of Gloominess and Sleepiness [*Thīna-middha*]

4.2 The Causes of Gloominess and Sleepiness [*Thīna-middha*]

4.2.1 Discontent [*Aratī*]

4.2.2 Laziness [*Tandī*]

4.2.3 Tiredness [*Vijambhitā*]

4.2.4 Intoxication from Food [*Bhattsamadha*]

4.2.5 Gloominess [*Cetaso Līnattaṇ*]

4.3 Methods for Overcoming Gloominess and Sleepiness [*Thīna-middha*] appear in the following Buddhist Scripture:

4.3.1 In the Nīvaraṇapahaṇavagga

4.3.2 In the Moggallāna Sutta

4.3.3 In the Atṭhakathā Dīghanikāya Mahāvagga

Chapter at a Glance

1. ***Thīna-middha*, also known as Sloth and Torpor**, means sleepiness, gloominess, and inertia. If these happen to anyone, it's like that person is imprisoned. Sleepiness leads to falling asleep, swinging movements from side to side and wanting to stop meditating due to the annoying feelings of sleepiness or the desire to sleep, and not sitting for meditation.
2. The causes of gloominess and sleepiness or *thīna-middha*, are displeasure, laziness, weariness and overeating. In addition, those causes have resulted from not having enough sleep and working hard all day.
3. Several methods to overcome *thīna-middha*, or gloominess and sleepiness, are to diligently practice the eight means for overcoming sleepiness according to Moggallana Bhikkhu who was advised by the Lord Buddha, or to perform the six means advised by the monastic explicator (a monk scholar who researches and interprets Buddhist Scriptures), that one should practice: A) Restrain Your Food, B) Adjust the Posture, C) Pay Attention to Bright Light, D) Stay Outdoors, E) Associate with Good Friends and F) Speak Only Words That Create a Sense of Ease.

Chapter Objectives

This chapter gives students the knowledge and understanding to be able to:

1. Characterize Gloominess and Sleepiness [*thīna-middha*].
2. Describe the causes of *thīna-middha*.
3. Explain the methods for overcoming *thīna-middha*.
4. Apply their knowledge to overcome the obstacles that arise during meditation practice.



Gloominess and Sleepiness [*Thīna-middha*] and Overcoming Them

Many meditators are used to falling asleep frequently while meditating. While falling asleep, some peoples' necks become bent - some people sway as if they are pine trees swaying gently in the breeze - and some snore while sleeping soundly. The practitioners may not have been conscious of their acts that would reflect new practitioners to think that sitting for meditation might be equivalent to sitting to sleep and gaining nothing. Also, swaying while sitting made the practitioners look like jokers to others who looked at them and thought, why did they have to make them feel uncomfortable? They would better off going to sleep. Being asleep while doing meditation is one of the five hindrances that is a significant problem for practitioners to solve. Once they resolved this problem they could create the mind to become still and concentrated, and create faith in meditation for new comers.

4.1 The Characteristics of Gloominess and Sleepiness [*Thīna-middha*]

Thīna-middha is composed of two words:

Thīna, which means gloominess, and *Middha*, which means sleepiness.¹

According to Phradhammakittivong, the Abbot of Wat Raja Orasaram, *thīna-middha* is defined as,

“Mental gloominess, discouragement, hopelessness and sorrow that causes despair, laziness, lack of enthusiasm, and one therefore lets the course of his/her life depend on his/her fate”².

Thus, the one who is controlled by *thīna-middha* will feel sleepy, gloomy and inactive, will lack enthusiasm to perform various activities, will lack courage and hope leading to boredom, will not feel like doing anything and will lack effort to do anything – but will just let thoughts appear continuously. Consequently, the mind is unable to be united into one-pointedness.

The Lord Buddha compared *thīna-middha* as “imprisonment in jail.” The one who is incarcerated in prison will likely have no chance to be entertained by watching films or shows, similar to the one who is controlled by *thīna-middha*, who will doubtlessly have no opportunity to taste Dhamma entertainment, which is the serenity of meditative absorption [*jhāna*].

¹ Phradhammakittivong (Thongdee Suratejo). **Dictionary for Buddhist Studies: The Series of Buddhist Temple Vocabulary**. Bangkok: Liang Chiang Publishing, B.E. 2548, p. 281

² Ibid., 281.

Phraprommolee (Vilas Nanavaro), the former abbot of Yannawa Temple, impressively clarified that ***thīna-middha* (or gloominess and sleepiness) are comparable to “prison.”** He expounded,

“Normally, criminals who were kept in prison as a punishment must stay in the prison and could not go out to watch any shows for amusement. Then, he was discharged and heard his friends talking about the performance from the day before that was extremely amusing. Also, the dancers were gorgeous. The singers’ voices were very sweet. They would have felt regret forever if they missed the show. The man who had just been released from being incarcerated heard the conversation, sat inertly and could not give any opinion because he had just been imprisoned the day before.

Similarly, the one whose mind has been controlled by gloominess and sleepiness, or *thīna-middha*, will always sway and fall asleep. Other ones who intend to listen to a Dhamma sermon that is comprised of excellent statements that enable the listeners to understand the Buddha’s teachings clearly, develop fear of danger in the cycle of existence and realize the significance of Nirvana. Nonetheless, that one had slept and could not hear the most valuable Dhamma sermon from the beginning, the middle and the end. Later, he/she woke up and heard others who had listened to Dhamma sermon said, “Oh! The Dhamma sermon was supreme. The monk demonstrated causes and metaphors notably. Listening to Dhamma made us understand the reality of life. If we had not listened to the Dhamma, we would be ignorant for a longer period of time.” The person who had been controlled by gloominess and sleepiness [*thīna-middha*] and was completely lost in sleeping, heard the conversations, sat inactively and could not exchange any ideas or knowledge with them because he had been imprisoned by *thīna-middha* and fell asleep. The Dhamma sermon could not pass through his ears. Whenever he meditates and is able to eliminate gloominess and sleepiness [*thīna-middha*], he will be the same as the prisoner who was discharged and exonerated.”³

Sleepy feelings may appear together with semi-consciousness, bodily swaying, or being startled. Sometimes, one sits for meditation and feels relaxed as if one loses his/her consciousness – he/she has not heard any sound and might think that he/she has not fallen asleep. However, when he/she becomes conscious, he/she hears sounds as usual. For someone who feels like he/she is lacking consciousness, he/she sits, and is half-asleep and eventually loses his/her consciousness.

When sleepiness appears, we often derive discontent from sleepiness, want to get rid of it and think that “we do not want to be sleepy and do not want to feel like this,” which makes us feel more tired and we don’t feel like we want to meditate anymore. Some persons might wish to sleep. He/she does not want to employ any energy, and allows himself/herself to fall under and ease into unconsciousness, which will affect him/her and cause him/her to cancel meditating.

³ Phraprommolee (Vilas Nanavaro). *Bhāvanādīpanī*. Bangkok: Kanpimphranakorn, B.E. 2544, p. 50

4.2 The Causes of Gloominess and Sleepiness [*Thīna-middha*]

A monastic explicator (interpreter of religious texts) illustrated that the causes of gloominess and sleepiness [*thīna-middha*] can be categorized into five types as follows⁴:

4.2.1 Discontent [*Aratī*]

Aratī implies discontent with work or meditation, etc. When one is dissatisfied, one's mind is discouraged, does not want to meditate or do anything, which leads him/her to feel sleepy and discouraged due to the existence of discontent or *arati*. The experiences appear because one's mind is not refined, he/she practices meditation less or he/she applies incorrect methods, in general, creating a coarse mind.

4.2.2 Laziness [*Tandī*]

If laziness arises in the mind, it will make the mind become discouraged and it will have no desire to perform any tasks or will have several excuses to refuse to practice meditation. The Lord Buddha stated eight excuses for the one who does not wish to practice meditation as follows⁵:

1. We have to work. We think that when we work, our bodies will be tired. We should go to sleep first. Then, we go to sleep and do not practice meditation in order to reach the Dhamma that should be reached, achieve the Dhamma that has not been achieved and attain the enlightenment that has not been attained.
2. After finishing work, we think that we already completed our work. After we work, we get tired. So, we think we should go to sleep first. Then, we go to sleep and we do not practice meditation.
3. We have to travel. We think that when we travel, our bodies will be weary. We should go to sleep first. Then, we go to sleep and we do not practice meditation.
4. We arrive at our destination. We think that while travelling, our bodies are exhausted. We think we should go to sleep first. Then, we go to sleep and we do not practice meditation.
5. We reflect that we searched for food and it was not enough. We felt fatigued from seeking our sustenance and felt we should sleep and should not do anything. Then, we go to sleep, and we do not practice meditation.
6. We reflect that we searched for the food and it was enough. Our body was heavy. We felt fatigued from seeking the sustenance that was similar to rotten beans since they were soaked for a long time. We reflect that we should sleep and should not do anything. Then, we go to sleep, and we do not practice meditation.
7. We get slightly sick. We think that we are slightly ill and should sleep first. Then, we go to sleep, and we do not practice meditation.

⁴ *Aṅguttaranikāya Ekanipāta*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol.32, item 14, p.46

⁵ *Dīgha-nikāya Pāṭikavagga*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol.16, no.3243, p.243

8. We get well. We think that we have just gotten well recently. Our bodies are still weak. We should not work, but we should sleep first. Then, we go to sleep, and we do not practice meditation.

Consequently, the delay in attaining the Dhamma has resulted from these excuses. These cases also involve the one who meditates less. He/she produces various excuses to go to bed. In reality, we should consider, “As soon as we sit cross legged to meditate, we should be determinedly mindful and allow the mind to be still at the center of the body. It doesn’t matter if we fall asleep, stay awake, get mental chatter or do not get mental chatter. It indicates that we hold one hundred percent success for attaining the Dhamma.”⁶

4.2.3 Tiredness and Stretching Oneself [*Vijambhitā*]

When tiredness exists, some persons stretch themselves. It is laziness. Then, sleepiness arises. It shows the feeling of gloominess existing in the mind and leads to discouragement. It also causes gloominess and sleepiness [*thīna-middha*].

4.2.4 Intoxication from Food [*Bhattsamadha*]

If one eats too much food, his/her physical body will get sleepiness. So, it is called “intoxication from food,” which normally happens to a body that consumes more than its needs. The digestive system has to work hard and needs more energy to digest. Consequently, it causes physical weariness.

4.2.5 Gloominess [*Cetaso Linattan*]

The state of being gloomy implies that the mind that feels discouraged, joyless, cheerless and depressed is due to dispiritedness.

It is illustrated that mental gloominess, discouragement or boredom had resulted from what we had done and did not get what we desired. The one who has always felt disappointed in his/her life, has always had pressure in his/her mind, has not gotten what he/she wants or cannot be as he/she wants to be or could not force himself/herself to be as he/she desired. It could also occur if it was necessary for one to force him/herself to stay in an event or stay with someone that he/she disliked and did not want this, but he/she could not avoid it and had to be patient with having to remain in that situation repeatedly. Although someone has endured living this way and has become familiar with it, he/she feels inner discomfort and derives less delight and joy in daily life. This person usually has a high level of pressure within his/her mind. Every time he/she gets the pressure in his/her mind, it means that he/she must frequently experience boredom or discouragement. And when these feelings happen repeatedly and they accumulate more often, they reflect that he/she gets bored even when he/she gets what he/she likes, does what he/she wants to do or gets what he/she wishes for.⁷

⁶ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** July 8, 1990

⁷ Porn Rattanasuwan. **Samadhi and Vipassanā in Daily Life**. Bangkok: Winyan Publishing Co., B.E.2538, p. 248

When boredom occurs over and over again in daily life it causes critical harm that always occurs in people in the present time. High ambitions and desire for necessities force him/her to have desires for some things and other things and cause him/her to feel unhappy all the time. Unhappiness is the cause of boredom.

One who has never been successful in doing anything, but always realizes failure is one who has a degree of low confidence. In addition, if failure occurs regularly, he/she will get accustomed to it and it will develop it as a habit, which causes him or her to have no patience to do anything for long and before you know it he/she will be bored. When there is an event forcing him/her to tolerate any act, he/she will experience more boredom. It will create a habit of feeling sleepy anytime when he/she is meditating even if he or she is getting enough sleep.

Additionally, in practice, we found another two causes of gloominess and sleepiness [*thīna-middha*] as follows:

1. **Not getting enough sleep.** It may cause one to go to bed very late or to have a dream while being asleep that makes one not sleep well and become weary when waking up.
2. **Physical fatigue.** It is caused from work that uses physical energy or from having too much perspiration or physical fatigue and also could be caused from exercising one's brain too excessively.

4.3 Methods for Overcoming Gloominess and Sleepiness [*Thīna-Middha*]

Methods for overcoming gloominess and sleepiness appear in the following Buddhist Scripture:

4.3.1 In the *Nīvaraṇapahaṇavagga*

The Lord Buddha stated the methods for overcoming gloominess and sleepiness are as follows:

“Bhikkhus! When a person has begun to exert themselves, *thīna-middha* (gloominess and sleepiness) that has not happened will not happen. *Thīna-middha* that has arisen will disappear.”⁸

Whoever experiences sleepiness, discouragement and slothfulness, but does not give in, resolutely makes an effort and has persistent progress; he/she can defeat the defilements. According to the Lord Buddha's resolution on the day of enlightenment, He formed a glass throne with a height of 18 cubits and seated himself cross-legged under the tree facing towards the north. He made a firm resolution:

“Even if my body should shrivel and die leaving only skin, sinew and bone, with my exertion, I will certainly not stop the exertion until achieving enlightenment as a fully-enlightened Buddha.”⁹

⁸ *Āṅguttaranikāya Ekanipāṭa*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 32, no. 19, p. 48

⁹ *Āṅguttaranikāya Dukkaṇipāṭa*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 33, no. 251, p. 297

This was His firm determination to begin the great effort of the Buddha. If the effort exists, gloominess and sleepiness [*thīna-middha*] will possibly vanish. Even if gloominess and sleepiness has arisen, it will definitely be removed by firm determination.

The Lord Buddha suggested there were eight causes of exertion in performing any activity as follows:

1. When we have to work, we think that we have to work. In addition, while working, it is not convenient for us to listen carefully to the Buddha's Teachings. We will make an effort to practice meditation in order to reach the Dhamma that should be reached, achieve the Dhamma that has not been achieved and attain the enlightenment that has not been attained.
2. After the work is completed, we think that we already finished the work. Also, when we worked, it was not convenient for us to listen thoroughly to the Buddha's Teachings. We will make an exertion to practice meditation in order to reach the Dhamma that should be reached, achieve the Dhamma that has not been achieved and attain the enlightenment that has not been attained.
3. Before we travel, we think that we have to travel. Additionally, when we travel, it is not convenient for us to listen meticulously to the Buddha's Teachings. We will make an exertion to practice meditation in order to reach the Dhamma that should be reached, achieve the Dhamma that has not been achieved and attain the enlightenment that has not been attained.
4. When we arrive at our destination, we think that we have reached our destination. Also, while traveling, it was not convenient for us to listen studiously to the Buddha's Teachings. We will make an exertion to practice meditation in order to reach the Dhamma that should be reached, achieve the Dhamma that has not been achieved and attain the enlightenment that has not been attained.
5. Think that we searched for food and it was not enough. Our body is light and it is suitable to work. We will make an exertion to practice meditation in order to reach the Dhamma that should be reached, achieve the Dhamma that has not been achieved and attain the enlightenment that has not been attained.
6. Think that we searched for food and it was enough. Our body has energy and it is suitable to work. We will make an exertion to practice meditation in order to reach the Dhamma that should be reached, achieve the Dhamma that has not been achieved and attain the enlightenment that has not been attained.
7. When we feel slightly ill, we think that we feel a bit sick. It's possible that the illness will get more severe. We will make an exertion to practice meditation in order to reach the Dhamma that should be reached, achieve the Dhamma that has not been achieved and attain the enlightenment that has not been attained.

8. When we get well, we think that we have just gotten recently better. It's possible that the illness could get more severe. We will make an exertion to practice meditation in order to reach the Dhamma that should be reached, achieve the Dhamma that has not been achieved and attain the enlightenment that has not been attained.

4.3.2 The Moggallāna Sutta¹⁰

The Lord Buddha suggested to Moggallāna Bhikkhu the ways to overcome sleepiness. Moggallāna Bhikkhu was the most accomplished of all the Buddha's disciples in the various supernormal powers and had been making an effort through meditation for the purpose of attaining enlightenment as an Arahant. However, the feeling of sleepiness was a problem that occurred while he was meditating. So, the Lord Buddha recommended eight ways to overcome sleepiness as follows:

1. **Achieve perception [*saññā*]**, which means to have mindfulness and self-awareness. The Lord Buddha said to Moggallāna that you should recognize whenever sleepiness appears. You should greatly perform mindfulness and self-awareness as well. But, if you are unable to get rid of the sleepiness, follow these subsequent methods.
2. **Think of the Dhamma that you heard in the past and consider that Dhamma constantly** to get rid of sleepiness. If sleepiness still occurs, follow the next recommendation.
3. **One should chant a prayer** that one has remembered. If sleepiness still exists, follow next recommendation.
4. **Put two of your fingers in your two ears and touch your body.** If sleepiness still occurs, follow the next recommendation.
5. **Stand up, wash your eyes, and look in all directions and at the twinkling stars.** If sleepiness still occurs, follow the subsequent recommendation.
6. **Think of bright light [*āloka saññā*].** At night, think of the midday or the brightness of midday. If sleepiness still appears, follow the next recommendation.
7. **Perform walking meditation [*cankama*] back and forth. Restrain the senses [*indriyasamvara*] and situate the mind inside the body.** If sleepiness still appears, follows the subsequent recommendation.
8. **Sleep on one's right side putting the left foot on top of the right one.** Be mindful and aim for sleep. Intend to make an exertion to meditate while drowsiness disappears.

From the above, we have to consider and realize all causes accordingly and should not sleep immediately, but should follow the above steps. Do not skip any of those steps or do not think about only going to bed while getting sleepy. We must accomplish these steps from the beginning of becoming mindful. If sleepiness does

¹⁰ *Āṅguttaranikāya Sattakanipāṭa*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 37, no. 58, p. 183

not vanish, recall and consider wholesome Dhamma that creates goodness, chant a prayer, wash your face and think of bright light. In addition, Phrarajbhavanavisudh (Venerable Luang Phaw Dhammajayo) recommended how to think of bright light as follows:

“We have to think of bright light. Continuously think of bright light as if there is a sun in the stomach all the time. Bright light will open the eyes. Although it is only our visualization, the sleepiness will disappear.”

Ultimately, if sleep is needed, find the cause for sleeping. If it is caused due to a physical body that gets inadequate rest or fatigue from work, we must let the body get a break by falling asleep or having a rest. Do not resist. Do not think of why we feel sleepy and also think that we do not want to get tired, which produces discontent, more fatigue and boredom to practice meditation. On the other hand, if it is essential to have a rest, Phrarajbhavanavisudh gave the following suggestions:

“If you got less sleep last night, just sit and sleep; but, don’t lay down to sleep. Just sit and sleep for a while. When feeling fresh, continue meditating. Just do this and only this and the sleepiness will disappear. When we achieve a comfortable feeling and the mind locates a suitably correct position, a sense of ease arises with no sleepiness. If experiencing a sense of comfort and bliss inside, sleepiness disappears. Have you ever noticed that whenever you meditate well, sleepiness didn’t exist and you could be able to sit up all night?”¹¹

In addition, in case we have to sleep, we must sleep intelligently:

“We must sleep like a wise sage. While falling asleep, we must accumulate merits. While sleeping, our mind must be pure. Sleeping may cause us to attain the Dhamma; that is to sleep by situating the mind at the seventh base level of the mind, the ocean of merits.”¹²

4.3.3 In the Atthakathā Dīghanikāya Mahāvagga ¹³

In Buddhist Scripture, the Atthakathā Dīghanikāya Mahāvagga also mentioned six points of Dhamma that are able to prevent *thīna-middha* as follows:

A. Restrain Your Food

Determine how much to consume in your diet by conducting the following practice: stop eating 4-5 spoonfulls before one is full. Then, consider that the aim of consumption is to be alive, but it is not that we live to eat. Also, if one eats too much, or more than what he/she needs, it will create a negative inner experience and ill health as well.

Sāriputta Bhikkhu suggested that the techniques to ingest moderate amounts of food was by ceasing to eat 4-5 spoonfulls before one was full, in addition to drinking some water as well. Then, one would be full.

¹¹ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** May 29, 1998

¹² Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** July 16, 2002

¹³ **Dīgha-nikāya. Mahāvagga**. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 14, p. 322

Sāriputta Bhikkhu said,

“When consuming foods, even fresh or dried foods, one should not be over fascinated. One should have a stomach that is not full, but has a moderate amount of food in it. Be mindful. Stop eating 4-5 spoonfulls prior to being full, but drink some water suitably.”¹⁴

Phrarajbhavanavisudh suggested,

“Eating properly is required. Then, sit and meditate subsequent to one hour of digestion. Next, change the posture by walking. The period of time to meditate in the afternoon is longer than in the morning. We may feel uncomfortable after eating a meal since the food is not completely digested. Otherwise we may get sleepy.”¹⁵

B. Adjust the Posture

Observe which posture makes us feel sleepy. Then, adjust the posture, for example, if we feel fatigued while sitting, we could stand up, wash our faces and go to the rest room for a while to create a sense of ease and come back to sit and meditate again, etc.

C. Pay Attention to Bright Light [*Āloka Saññā*]

Think of bright light.

D. Stay Outdoors

Don't stay in a dark or narrow room that contains insufficient air because it will cause gloominess, sleepiness and tiredness. Conversely, staying outdoors or at a place where the air circulates well will facilitate freshness to the physical body and remove sleepiness as well.

E. Associate with Good Friends [*Kalyāṇmitta*]

Always meet with good friends [*kalyāṇmitta*] who don't feel sleepy. If we like to associate with the ones who always feel somnolent, are fond of sleeping and are lazy, it will reflect in our behaviors becoming the same as theirs. Hence, we should search for the ones who diligently practice meditation, sit and meditate determinedly and hardly get sleepy, tired or gloomy. Then, ask them how to stay away from sleepiness to enhance our will power. So, we will then gain a role model and acquire the techniques of how to overcome our sleepiness.

F. Speak Only Words That Create a Sense of Ease

Talk about the diligent practice of meditation and meticulous meditation practices using various postures, which encourage us to meditate. An example of one who practiced meditation conscientiously was the Master Nun Khun Yai Ajahn Chandra Upasika Khonnokyoong. Once, the Master Nun Khun Yai Ajahn Chandra Upasika Khonnokyoong meditated at Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen. After the meditation session had ended, she achieved the enlightened state of Vija Dhammakaya (the highest state of consciousness that a human can achieve); even while she was outside of the meditation room, she also visualized

¹⁴ *Khuddaka-nikāya. Theragāthā*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 53, no. 396, p. 229

¹⁵ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** May, 1999

the Dhamma, and focused the mind at the center of the body continuously. However, when many other persons finished meditating, they often left the room, let their minds out of the center of the body, and chatted and enjoyed doing other things. Conversely, the Master Nun Khun Yai Ajahn Chandra Upasika Khonnokyoong always focused her mind at the center of the body. She said, **“Allowing the mind outside the body and simultaneously talking with somebody or gently holding the mind within while walking, we will definitely arrive at the dining hall. Therefore, it is better to tenderly focus the mind inside at the center.”**

Phramongkolthepmuni asked Khun Yai, **“Is your mind at the center of the body or not when you go out of the room?”**

Khun Yai answered, **“Yes sir, it is.”**

Consequently, if our mind gets bored, and sloth and discontent occur during the meditation period, we must eliminate feelings by opening the eyes or standing up and adjusting the posture or thinking of examples of the ones who are diligent meditators as well as considering the benefits of meditation, or using other techniques to get rid of sleepiness. All methods of meditation that help us to prevent sleepiness and attain mental concentration that are more refined and delicate should be considered and utilized.

Chapter 5

Distraction and Worry [*Uddhacca-Kukkucca*] & Overcoming Them

Units in this Chapter

5.1 The Characteristics of Distraction and Worry [*Uddhacca-Kukkucca*]

5.2 The Causes of Distraction and Worry

5.2.1 Not Bringing the Mind to an Internal Tranquility [*Cetasoavūpasama*]

5.2.2 Worries [*Palibodha*]

5.2.3 The Five Causes

5.3 Methods for Overcoming Distraction and Worry

5.3.1 The Buddhist Scriptures

5.3.2 The Practice

Chapter at a Glance

1. *Uddhacca-kukkucca* is distraction and worry. The Lord Buddha compared a person who has distraction and worry to a slave. Distraction occurs from images, sounds or both images and sounds. The low or high degree of mental agitation is different. No matter what types of distraction arise, they affect the mind, rendering it unable to attain peace, and the practitioners will not achieve success in their practice.

2. Distraction stems from a mind that lacks tranquility and leads to worry and fear, etc. As illustrated in the Visuddhimagga (a sacred Buddhist text, written by an enlightened Arahant monk), a wandering mind is caused by ten kinds of worry [*Palibodha*]: 1) Worry about one's Abode [*Āvās-Palibodha*], 2) Worry about one's Clan [*Kula-Palibodha*], 3) Worry about one's Luck, Income or Benefits [*Lābh-Palibodha*], 4) Worry about one's Groups of Associates [*Gaṇa-Palibodha*]: friends, students, teachers, subordinates, etc., 5) Worry about one's Work [*Kamma-Palibodha*], 6) Worry about one's Travels [*Addhān-Palibodha*], 7) Worry about one's Relatives [*Ñāti-Palibodha*], 8) Worry about one's Illness [*Ābādh-Palibodha*], 9) Worry about one's Education [*Gantha-Palibodha*] and 10) Worry about one's Mental Competence [*Iddhi-Palibodha*]. In addition, the Lord Buddha stated five causes of distraction that made Bhikkhus unable to achieve serenity and concentration: A) Lack of Restraint of the Senses [*Indriyasam vara*], B) Lack of Estimation Regarding the Consumption of Food, C) Lack of a Diligent Schedule of Awakening, D) Lack of Enlightened Attainment of Wholesome Dhamma, and E) Lack of the Practice that Leads to Enlightenment [*Bodhipakkhiya-Dhamma*] by Specifically Focusing the Mind at the Center of the Body All Day and All Night.

3. According to the Buddhist Scripture, there are five methods to overcome a wandering mind: 1) Listen to the Dhamma frequently, 2) Speak to and question knowledgeable ones, 3) Keep the Precepts [*sīla*], 4) Associate with good friends [*Kalyāṇamitta*] and 5) Speak only with suitable speech that makes the mind feel comfortable. Additional methods can be utilized to overcome a wandering mind during meditation practice: A) Watch our thoughts continuously, B) Visualize a crystal ball or Buddha Image, C) Repeat the mantra "Samma Araham," D) Follow the Seventh Base Level of the Mind pathway. When your mind gets too distracted, open your eyes to stop the wandering and then gently close your eyes or, consider the uncertainty of life or death (impermanence).

Chapter Objectives

Students will gain the knowledge and understanding to be able to:

1. Characterize distraction and worry [*uddhacca-kukkucca*].
2. Describe the causes of distraction and worry.
3. Explain the methods for overcoming distraction and worry and apply their knowledge to overcome the obstacles arising during meditation practice.



Distraction and Worry [*Uddhacca-Kukkucca*] & Overcoming Them

Both newcomers and seasoned practitioners have experienced significant obstacles, such as distraction, that prevents our mind from concentration towards coming to a standstill. Someone could have a greatly wandering mind from the start until the end of the meditation session. Some get distracted only at the beginning, then their minds gradually become still. Some get restless after meditating for a long period. All experiences happen to us more or less. Various thoughts appearing in the mind are serious impediments that cause many meditators get bored with meditation. Sometimes they feel like they gain nothing from meditation due to the arising of thoughts. Distraction or restlessness of the mind is one of the Five Hindrances, which we should understand and investigate how to overcome it.

5.1 The Characteristics of Distraction and Worry [*Uddhacca-Kukkucca*]

Normally, the nature of the human mind is to be agitated. It is agitated and sensitive to any emotion, such as, gladness or sadness. When the mind is agitated, it changes from clear, bright and pure to cloudy and impure and decreases mental efficiency. When the mind wanders, wisdom is also diminished and we are unable to consider or realize personal interests and the interests of others or both, and are incapable of realizing things in accordance with the truth.

An analogy in the **Sangāvara Sutta**¹ illustrates that a mind that is controlled by distraction and worry [*uddhacca-kukkucca*] is like water in a container ruffled by wind. Anyone who has good sight looks at his or her face in the water and cannot see his/her real face. In Pali, distraction and worry is called *uddhacca-kukkucca*, the Fourth Hindrance.

*Uddhacca-kukkucca*² is formed from two words:

Uddhacca means distraction, a wandering mind, an uncomfortable feeling, worry or anxiety. It produces frustration and moodiness. In Thai, the word *uddhacca*, when translated, signifies mental chatter and shyness.

Kukkucca means an irritated feeling or a case of nerves that creates distress, and uncomfortable feelings.

Uddhacca-Kukkucca implies distraction, distress and worry. They impede the development of integrity in the mind as well as the attainment of a virtuous mind.

The word *uddhacca* and *kukkucca* were described in **Abhidhammapiṭaka**³ **Dhammasaṅgaṇī**⁴ as follows:

¹ **Āṅguttaranikāya Pañcakanipāta**. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 36, no. 416, p. 193

² Phradhammakittivong (Thongdee Suratejo), **Dictionary for Buddhist Studies – Temple Word**. Bangkok: Leangcheang Press Co., 2005, p. 1384

³ **Abhidhammapiṭaka** is the Basket of the Higher Doctrine.

Uddhacca is mental distraction, and an agitated or perturbed mind.

Kukkucca is annoyance, as in being annoyed, and filled with anxiety and worry.

The Lord Buddha compared mental distraction to slaves⁵. Slaves must work under their masters' orders, for example, in an urgent case, the master orders them by spouting harsh words such as, "You slaves! Get those things done right away. If you work slowly, I will cut off your hands and feet." Having heard his instructions, they hurriedly act according to them without freedom. Although recreation is so enjoyable, they have no chance to engage in it like others since they are afraid of acting disobediently. They have no autonomy and must act according to their masters' instructions.

Similarly, anyone whose mind is controlled by distraction and worry [*uddhacca-kukkucca*] is like that. For example, when he/she wants to meditate, he/she enters a forest and goes to a meditation area, stays with other meditators and expects tranquility. Then, when he/she observes a little mistake done by him/herself or another meditator and he/she doesn't know whether it is harmful or not, it creates distraction and worry, and destroys calmness. Additionally, since he/she can't endure the experience, he/she then runs to the monk who specializes in the Buddhist disciplinary code [*Phravinayadhara*⁶] to evaluate his/her situation. He/she is unable to feel serene or gain the practice as intended, since he/she is controlled by distraction and worry. The monk then requires him/her to run around to release nervous energy or do another activity instead of meditation. However, if he/she meditates until he/she can overcome distraction and worry, he/she will be independent and not a slave.

Types of Mental Distraction

The nature of the human mind, while it is not coming to a standstill, is to wander. There are three types of mental distraction as follows:

1. Mental distraction appears as **images** and the stories of them are clear.
2. Mental distraction arises in the form of **sounds**. The mind thinks of some stories as if we are speaking to ourselves. Sounds arise as we recognize things from those recollections. The mind thinks according to our imagination.
3. Mental distraction appears in the form of **both sounds and images**.

⁴ ***Abhidhammapiṭṭaka Dhammasaṅgaṇī***. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, Vol. 76, no. 352, p. 442

⁵ Phraprommolee (Vilas Nanavaro). *Bhāvanāḍīpanī*. Bangkok: Yannawa Temple, Don Temple, Dhammakaya Temple, 2001, p.52

⁶ *Phravinayadhara* is Buddhist monk who is an expert in the disciplinary code.

Degrees of Mental Distraction

Degrees of mental distraction vary as follows:

1) Coarse Distraction

One cannot control coarse distraction. It appears as images, sound or both images and sound.

2) Refined Distraction

Refined distraction occurs when the mind comes to a standstill, but it starts to sense what to think about. Some think that if their mind experiences such stillness, why do they see nothing? They think they should have something to see and delight in or to see like others do. Also, they wonder about why they could achieve that or not and still doubt whether their mind is still or not. These are called refined distractions. Although the distractions within their minds are wholesome, they are still experiencing distractedness of the mind.

For new practitioners, the existence of a distracted mind is uncontrollable, accompanied by unanticipated thought. It may sometimes cause us to feel unhappy and experience racing thoughts. Thoughts flow continuously and they are accompanied by worry about the future or create stories and consequences that might not happen, leading to the feeling of fear about the future for two days, two weeks, two years or ten years. The mind recalls old memories that make us feel guilt, sorrow or irritation generating absent-mindedness and not able to focus on the present. Additionally, it may make us feel irritated and want to stop meditating, and unable to sit still although there is no fatigue.

When someone experiences enormous mental chatter along with a wandering mind, he/she always thinks continuously and gets into a muddle over thoughts unconsciously. However, he/she thinks that his/her mind has attained a good level of concentration (*samadhi*) because he/she was able to sit still for a long time and experience a sense of ease. When the meditation session is over, this type of person says that he/she thought of nothing and his/her mind was vacant. He/she says that he/she thought of nothing since he/she experienced considerable mental distraction and didn't know what he/she thought. It is similar to one who sleeps, gets confused over dreams, cannot remember them while awake, and thinks that he/she did not dream at all. Thus, the one who experiences such mental distraction misunderstands his/her amount of concentration and thinks that it is at a high degree.

5.2 The Causes of Distraction and Worry [*Uddhacca-Kukkucca*]

5.2.1 Not Bringing the Mind to an Internal Tranquility [*Cetasoavūpasama*]

In the Tipiṭaka or Pali canon, the Lord Buddha stated the cause of mental distraction:

“Bhikkhus! I haven't seen any Dhamma, which is the Dhamma that speaks of not being able to bring the mind to an internal tranquility [*cetasoavūpasama*] through development of tranquility [*samatha-bhāvanā*] and development of insight [*vipassanā-bhāvanā*]⁷, that the initiation of distraction and worry [*uddhacca-kukkucca*] that hasn't existed, as well as produced a greater force of distraction and worry [*uddhacca-kukkucca*] already has existed.”⁸

⁷ *Samatha-bhāvanā* is the development of tranquility. *Vipassanā-bhāvanā* is the development of insight.

⁸ *Āṅguttaranikāya Ekanipāṭa*. Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol. 32, no. 15, p. 47

Cetasoavūpasama implies not bringing the mind to an internal tranquility through development of tranquility [*samatha-bhāvanā*] and development of insight [*vipassanā-bhāvanā*]

Our mind is unable to attain serenity due to being frightened, distressed, thrilled, worried, disappointed and hurt. When they arise in the mind, it cannot be tranquil. They are like the ocean waves, devoid of calmness, but always having waves. The mind that is not serene generates distraction and worry [*uddhacca-kukkucca*].

5.2.2 Worries [*Palibodha*]

In the highly authoritative Buddhist text, written by an enlightened monk, and studied by Buddhist monks, known as the “*Visuddhimagga*,” worries or *Palibodha*⁹, the obstacles of meditation, cause a wandering mind and derive no results from meditation. There are ten kinds of worry or *Palibodha* as follows:

1. Worry about one’s Abode [*Āvās-Palibodha*]
2. Worry about one’s Clan [*Kula-Palibodha*]
3. Worry about one’s Luck, Income or Benefits [*Lābh-Palibodha*]
4. Worry about one’s Groups of Associates [*Gaṇa-Palibodha*]: friends, students, teachers, subordinates, etc.
5. Worry about one’s Work [*Kamma-Palibodha*]
6. Worry about one’s Travels [*Addhān-Palibodha*]
7. Worry about one’s Relatives [*Ñāti-Palibodha*]
8. Worry about one’s Illness [*Ābādh-Palibodha*]
9. Worry about one’s Education [*Gantha-Palibodha*]
10. Worry about one’s Mental Competence [*Iddhi-Palibodha*]

1. Worry about One’s Abode [*Āvās-Palibodha*]

Āvās Palibodha is worry about one’s residence, such as his/her bedroom or home. The abode is considered a worry, which one needs to be responsible for. As an example, it needs maintenance to preserve its good condition, which causes us to get attached to the material realm as well as stimulates us to keep various personal belongings. To practice meditation, one must get rid of the attachment to comfort. In the beginning, one must gain personal serenity and accept a lack of certain essential possessions.

The Disadvantages of Dwelling in a Home

In a section of the Pali Canon of Theravada Buddhism (the school of Buddhism based solely upon the words of the Buddha himself) known as *Buddhawongs*, a hermit named “Sumet” went out of his luxurious house to Dhammaka Mountain in the Himalayan Mountains aiming to practice meditation. There, he found one hut made of leaves, but he groaned that there were eight disadvantages of dwelling in a home. The monastic explicator (the monk scholar who interprets meanings of spiritual teachings from Buddhist texts) stated these disadvantages as follows:

⁹ *Palibodha* means worry giving rise to concern, an unclear mind, and we cannot escape from it either. It is the obstacle of both work and meditation practice or *Kammaṭṭhāna*.

1. Discovering and building a home causes difficulty.
2. A home always needs to be renovated.
3. One must offer a home to any elder monk.
4. A home weakens a body by preventing it from hot and cold weather.
5. A home gives an opportunity for a person to perform bad deeds.
6. A home causes greed because the mind always thinks that, “It is mine.”
7. Dwelling in a home is like having a friend who generates trouble for us.
8. Animals can also live in any home. Thus, a home is a place where any sort of animals can live in.

The Benefits of Staying Under a Tree Trunk

Next, he groaned that there were ten benefits associated with staying under a tree as follows:

1. It is easy to find a tree. It is essential to go to a tree.
2. You do not pay too much attention to it. One can sweep the ground and make it suitable for usage.
3. There is no disturbance.
4. It has no shelter, and a shelter may lead to committing bad deeds.
5. There is moderate sunshade under a tree trunk and the body is not exposed to the sunlight.
6. There is no consideration regarding being an owner of one.
7. The desire of marriage is eliminated.
8. There is no fence. So, it is a house where anyone can live.
9. The one who stays under a tree will possibly acquire happiness and contentment with what one has [*santosa*].
10. Meditators can easily find trees anywhere they travel. Therefore, there is no need to think about their dwelling.

The Statement of Sages

Sages said,

1. “And then I left a hut made of leaves filled with eight types of wickedness and went to a tree trunk that provided ten benefits.”
2. “I did not allow myself to plant or scatter seeds aiming for my meal, but the fruit falling down generated plenty of benefits for me.”
3. “I diligently practiced meditation by sitting, standing and walking. Therefore, I attained Supernormal Powers [*Abhiññā*] before the seventh day passed by.”

Meditation practice leads to true success for mind training. It is necessary to exert strong effort and be in an extremely tranquil place far away from groups of people who make loud noises and have a lack of serenity.

2. Worry about one's Clan [*Kula-Palibodha*]

A family or clan means one's relatives or supporters. Anyone who is close to their family, relatives or supporters may find that these relatives/supporters are an impediment because when one is involved intimately with relatives/supporters and if they are happy, he/she will also be happy; if they are suffering, he/she will also suffer. If there are no relatives/supporters, it is necessary to stay away from them and destroy the worry of thinking that when we finish meditation, we'll have to meet them again. Hence, we should destroy the worry. If one cannot destroy the worry, his/her mind will not attain peacefulness.

3. Worry about One's Luck, Income or Benefits [*Lābh-Palibodha*]

The four requisites are clothing, food, shelter and medicine. If anyone acquires them, he/she has to waste time with keeping and taking care of them. Sometimes, he/she has to join social activities all day that may impede meditation practice. Someone might think that if he/she meditates, the benefits from trading and money will be decreased. When he/she thinks like this, he/she will not come to meditate. So, it is essential to remove all worries about gaining luck, income and benefits [*Lābh*]. When we possess goodness and happiness in our mind, they will happen by themselves. In addition, these possessions are not one's true objective and may cause his or her harm.

4. Worry about One's Group of Associates [*Gaṇa-Palibodha*]

Another category is worrying about anyone who is involved with us, for example, a teacher who thinks about his/her students or an office worker who thinks about his/her colleagues. Sometimes, those persons we are involved with get sick and nobody takes care of them. This creates worry to the mind and the mind cannot achieve peacefulness. Therefore, we should remove these kinds of worries.

5. Worry about One's Work [*Kamma-Palibodha*]

The following responsibilities are essential duties that should be performed when a new building is to be constructed, such as designing, erecting and maintaining a new building. Anyone involved in this undertaking must know whether the carpenters and other workers have already done their work or not. He/she also must be busy with all of the phases and goings-on more to some degree. As a result, those tasks represent worries or *palibodha* that one must eliminate. Some people are farmers or vegetable growers and must concern themselves with thoughts of no rain and no water, and ascertain if their crops would be damaged. Merchants think that their profits will be lost. If they come to meditate, no one will take charge of their work. If there is little work to do, one should complete it quickly. If there is much more work to do or if it is municipal work, one should find the persons who possess enough capability and knowledge to fulfill the responsibilities instead so that they will have a chance to meditate. One should be able to get away from work, remove all concerns and not think about it while practicing meditation as they impede the tranquility of the mind.

6. Worry about One's Travels [*Addhān-Palibodha*]

Worry about one's travels implies that traveling a long distance creates fatigue and inability to perform meditation well. For example, preparing to travel out of your town or country creates the arising of concern regarding travel. The longer one travels, the more the worries increase. Hence, meditators must remove all worries about travel and the plans one must follow while engaging in travel while meditating.

7. Worry about One's Relatives [*Ñāti-Palibodha*]

This worry cannot easily be eradicated since all of us have fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters and relatives. When they get sick or experience hardships, worries or *palibodha* arise to practitioners with the growing concern about who will take care of their parents or relatives, etc. Accordingly, the practitioner should get rid of all worries and try to heal their sicknesses or eradicate their hardships. After they get well or settled, the practitioners should go to meditate.

8. Worry about One's Illness [*Ābādh-Palibodha*]

Illness should be healed immediately. Some illnesses cannot be cured due to their chronic nature. Some diseases should be healed first and then that person should come to meditate. However, for some diseases, it is impossible to wait until they are cured before coming to practice meditation. Our existence as a human being is ordinarily subject to illness. So, it is not always a viable obstacle to meditation. On the other hand, it will help us consider the Dhamma and clearly realize our uncertainty. Worry about illness can be an impediment towards meditation especially if one has a serious illness.

9. Worry about One's Education [*Gantha-Palibodha*]

Paying attention to or learning something by memorization generates worry. Additionally, sometimes, thinking about the assignments that teachers give us cause worry. We have to eliminate all worries by thinking that meditation will improve our education both in memory and thoughts.

10. Worry about One's Mental Competence [*Iddhi-Palibodha*]

The underlying nature of a person's mind is to be stable and remain steadfast. He/she possesses celestial ears and eyes as well as the ability to perform other intuitive powers. When these abilities are developed it draws people to him/her to ask for help and that causes worry.

If ten worries arise in the mind and we are unable to eliminate them, and we always try to meditate, our practice may not be successful.

Worry is a sort of hindrance [*nivarana*], which makes our mind agitated and causes it to wander. Thus, we have to get rid of those worries. Additionally, we should destroy small worries, for example, if your clothes are dirty, clean them; if your body is unclean, clean it to make your mind joyous; if a room is dirty, clean it; if the ground is untidy, arrange and clean it to make your mind feel pleasure while looking at it. Therefore, we should remove minor worries.

5.2.3 The Five Causes

In addition, as stated in the Buddhist Canon, the Buddhist monks who had heavy bodies and were unable to attain enlightenment signified that those Buddhist monks whose minds lacked calmness and concentration as well as could not attain the inner Dhamma, which the Lord Buddha indicated were due to five causes as follows:

1. Lack of Restraint of the Senses [*Indriyasamvara*]
2. Lack of Estimation Regarding the Consumption of Food
3. Lack of a Diligent Practice to Become Awakened
4. Lack of Enlightened Attainment of Wholesome Dhamma
5. Lack of the Practice that Leads to Enlightenment [*Bodhipakkhiya-Dhamma*]
All Day and All Night.

1. Lack of Restraint of the Senses [*Indriyasamvara*]

The absence of restraint of the senses connotes not being aware of things that pass through the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body, and then perceiving them in the mind. If we do not choose to receive only useful things into our mind, then our mind will become anxious. For example, if someone likes to see dreadful pictures that bring about a wandering mind, then when he/she stays in a dark place, he/she may imagine the dreadful pictures that he/she likes to see or may imagine a tree as a monster, etc.

There are six entrances of the senses: the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. The eyes must select the things to see; the ears must listen to the things that should be listened to; the nose must smell the things that should be smelled; the tongue must taste the things that should be tasted; the body must touch only the things that should be touched; the mind must receive only the things that should be received. If the things passing through the six entrances of the senses cause us mental distractions, we must avoid those things.

Venerable Phrarajbhavanavisudh (Venerable Luang Phaw Dhammajayo) clarified that when the mind perceives what should not be perceived, those things cause uncomfortable feelings. Thus, while meditating, they affect the mind to continuously seek bliss. He also said, “Why do you get a wandering mind? Why do you think of many things? The reason is that the mind is searching for a comfortable location and if it doesn’t find a pleasant location, it continues searching for it; it will stop searching once it finds a pleasant place, just as a bird jumps from branch to branch, and stops when it finds a satisfying place.”

Since our birth, our visions of the world have made us remember all those images inside our mind and while meditating, the visions appear. Venerable Phrarajbhavanavisudh called images of humans, animals, and things that we are accustomed to, to be worthless things. The things that we have remembered, that remain in our mind act as a “wandering mind,” despite its search for a resting point. Then, the mind wanders incessantly. Many images emerge of both living and non-living beings.¹⁰

While accumulating the images in our mind and simultaneously we don’t practice the mind at rest in the center, it causes difficulty, especially for adults, to direct the mind to be still at the seventh base during their meditation practice. Venerable Phrarajbhavanavisudh said,

“It is difficult since we are not familiar with bringing our mind to be situated at this position. The mind will probably go outside through the eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body, and will think continuously and aimlessly. However, at first, it would be difficult to bring the mind to be situated at the seventh base; it is difficult particularly for adults, but easy for children since children’s nervous systems of their bodies, speech and minds are still pure and are not preached to about thinking systems of what to do, how to do them, where to do them and who to do them with, etc. and those thoughts of what to do, where to do them and who to do them with creates a wandering mind. Wandering thoughts of various stories arise as the mind is trying to find a comfortable location. When being unable to search for a comfortable place, that search continues. It stops after it discovers a satisfying place, just as a bird jumps from branch to branch and stops when finding a pleasant place. Having excessive thoughts doesn’t mean that the mind cannot be trained. Since thought is one of the mental

¹⁰ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** July 4-16, 1994

processes, when a wandering mind surfaces, we may see the images that we are accustomed to, for example, humans, animals, both living and non-living beings, which have remained in the mind, or we may hear loud sounds. In fact, distraction is not a serious obstacle for meditation, since we are normal humans that must ordinarily encounter those experiences. If we understand them and do not pay attention to them as well as just still the mind, then a high degree of mental distraction will lessen to a low degree, a low degree of mental distraction will be eliminated, and shortly thereafter the mind will come to a standstill.”¹¹

2. Lack of Estimation Regarding the Consumption of Food

The absence of estimation for the consumption of food is another cause that brings about an agitated mind. If we eat too little, the mind will be agitated because of hunger. To the contrary, if we eat too much, our body will feel uncomfortable. The Lord Buddha suggested to King Pasaentikosol that he use the principle to decrease his food intake by one mouthful every day - while eating, when we feel that another single mouthful will make us full then we should stop eating. For the next meal, we should eat the same amount as the day before that was decreased by one mouthful and stop by one more mouthful before being full. We should reduce our intake like this until we get a comfortable feeling, and use this as a standard.

3. Lack of a Diligent Practice to Become Awakened

Normally, the one who is diligent by inclination will probably be devoid of mental distraction because he/she must concentrate on what he/she is doing. On the contrary, the lazy one wastes his or her time by doing nothing. His/her mind will wander and be confused. The Lord Buddha suggested that we practice diligently towards the habit of self-mindfulness at all times. When self-mindfulness exists all the time, mental distraction hardly exists.

4. Lack of Enlightened Attainment of the Insight of Wholesome Dhamma

The teachings of the Lord Buddha or Dhamma can be enlightened from our inner core through the practice he expounded. In the absence of Dhamma practice, no enlightenment insight of wholesome Dhamma will exist. When there is no enlightenment of wholesome Dhamma, then distraction will probably control the mind.

5. Lack of the Practice of Dhamma Conducive to Enlightenment [*Bodhipakkhiya-Dhamma*¹²] All Day and All Night

When we do not practice sitting diligently for meditation and focusing the mind at the seventh base of the body all day and all night it is known as *not practicing Bodhipakkhiya-Dhamma*.

¹¹ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** October 10, 2002

¹² ***Bodhipakkhiya-Dhamma*** is the Dhamma, states, qualities or requisites conducive to Enlightenment.

5.3 Methods for Overcoming Distraction and Worry [*Uddhacca-Kukkucca*]

The methods for overcoming distraction and worry were passed on from Buddhist Scripture and real practice.

5.3.1 The Buddhist Scripture

Six items of the Dhamma were mentioned in the Buddhist Scripture to overcome distraction and worry as follows:

1. Having Heard the Dhamma Repeatedly

In this statement, “Having heard the Dhamma repeatedly,” denotes one who has learned the Dhamma many times or one who is a *Bahussuta*. Additionally, in this statement, “Having heard and having learned the Dhamma”, one has focused on the study of Dhamma, which will assist us to understand our life and the nature of existence in accordance with the truth that the Buddha who was the knower of all worlds had known. Thus, this is the understanding of the path to eliminate suffering. The one who has heard the Dhamma many times will not let his/her mind wander out towards things in the world; but will look back inside him/herself in order to find the path to free him/herself from suffering through the search for happiness from stilling mind to reach true happiness as well as the highest happiness.

2. Inquiry

Inquiry implies that we should always meet with the ones who have virtues to ask questions to and they will reply to us with clarity, which will help us to remove our doubts and guide us to not dwell on various issues. When someone thinks about varied stories all day and night, those are images that occur continuously, rendering the mind absent from stillness and concentration. While sitting for meditation, many thoughts still appear. Therefore, asking the questions to the knowledgeable ones will cause us to get rid of our thoughts and doubts. When sitting for meditation, the mind will simply be in a state of concentration.

3. The Disciplinary Skills

In this statement, the discipline [*vinaya*] means Dhamma discipline of Buddhist monks, namely *pārisuddhi-sīla*¹³. In addition, Dhamma discipline of laypersons is called the Five Precepts [*sīla*] that control body and speech thoroughly as well as being the basis of concentration [*samādhi*]. Thus, if anyone is skillful and can apply the Precepts [*sīla*] or discipline [*vinaya*] into practice to control the body and speech effectively, that practice will be a foundation leading us to achieve mental peacefulness rapidly without distractedness of the mind. As a result our body and speech will be calm and we will not perform wrong deeds, for instance, killing, stealing and taking ownership of another’s belongings, sexual misconduct, telling lies and ingesting intoxicating drinks and drugs that lead to heedlessness, etc., and will most likely purify the mind to become tranquil. It is the path to easily attain concentration.

¹³ **Pārisuddhi-sīla 4** means *sīla* that leads to purity or pure conduct.

1. **Pātimokkhasamvara-sīla:** Restraint with regards to the monk’s Disciplinary Code.
2. **Indriya-samvara-sīla:** Restraint of the senses (*Indriya 6*): eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind.
3. **Ājīva-pārisuddhi-sīla:** Right livelihood.
4. **Paccaya-sannissita-sīla:** Contemplation before using of the four requisites: the monks’ robes, alms-food, dwelling places, and medicine.

4. Associating with Civilized Ones

The civilized ones refer to the ones who possess experiences, especially our seniors who have gained an abundance of worldly experience. Moreover, if he/she learned both mundane and Dhamma matters, he/she would have mundane and Dhamma knowledge, and would be a behavioral and virtuous role model enabling us to train ourselves from our admiration and respect of him/her. He/she can suggest good advice as examples to us. Besides, if he/she is refined by meditation and has achieved advanced results, this will inspire us to meditate to gain the highly developed results like him/her.

5. Having Good Friends [*Kalyānamitta*]

Good friends or *Kalyānamitta*, who guide us towards the Dhamma, will give us caution and good advice, particularly when we feel distracted with plenty of thoughts, and they can advise us as to how to solve problems.

6. Speaking Only What Makes Us Feel At Ease

The stories that create a sense of ease with no mental distraction to us are about or ought to be about how not to think, speak and act. As we attempt to perform an action, that image will arise in our mind. If we are surrounded by ones who speak only of good things they will persuade us to be satisfied with very little, to be pleased with whatever we own [*santosa*], to be fond of tranquility, to not remain in a bad group and to diligently practice meditation. That will result in our not allowing the mind to wander or to be in the absence of calmness. Moreover that will encourage us to guide our mind to be situated within ourselves.

5.3.2 The Practice

The above teachings originating from Buddhist Scripture elucidate the principles of practice that will create our non-distracted mind, which one is to observe and practice daily. However, during the practice of meditation, if various thoughts and emotions arise, the principles for overcoming those distractions and worries are as follows:

1. Continue Observing Without Thought

Venerable Phrarajbhavanavisudh gave verbal support to practitioners regarding the wandering mind stating,

“Abundant thoughts do not mean that the mind is incapable of being trained because thought is one of the mind processes.” When we understand this, he then said, “Observe constantly, as well as don’t think about what it is, what it is composed of, how it exists and where it is; just look continuously, do not ignore the apparent images and think of nothing along with letting the images change again and again.”¹⁴

In addition, he suggested,

“We are only normal humans and we must accept that we have to behave like normal humans. From the start of sitting for meditation, you will experience a high degree of mental distraction to a low degree of mental distraction and experience a low degree of mental distraction to no distraction. When mental distraction disappears, the physical body is vacant, spacious, weightless and comfortable; but, it is still dark. We keep on stilling the mind with a sense of ease.”

¹⁴ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** July 4, 1994

There is a poem written by Venerable Phrarajbhavanavisudh as follows:

"If any thought appears, just let it flow through.
Don't do anything against it and it will disappear if we pay no attention to it.
It is like a mirror showing our mind
what the mind looks like.
Sometimes, our minds aren't pure and bright.
Sometimes, our minds are pure and delightful.
Practice and learn diligently to comprehend.
There will be new things for us to see."

Venerable Phrarajbhavanavisudh gave further suggestions,

"In fact, distraction is not the obstacle if we understand it, pay no attention to it and allow the mind to become neutral and still as well as follow what I have suggested. Sooner or later, our mind will become still. It will be still at the center of the body with neutrality. When the mind comes to a standstill, it soon begins to be vacant, spacious and transparent. Then, it begins to feel a real weightlessness and comfort. This is the sense of ease that we've never touched before. It is also the reward that we gain from conquering happiness."¹⁵

Next, he suggested,

"Supposing we could conquer restlessness and bring the mind to a standstill, but it's still dark. Just be satisfied with the darkness that has no distraction. Do not think of why our mind is not still or that there should be something to see like others have seen, such as a shining light, a Dhamma sphere, an inner body or a Buddha Image. Do not think, sons and daughters. These thoughts should not be dwelled upon because they are refined distractions. It is not obvious until we know that it is mental distraction. Unconsciously, we think that we are not distracted. We feel very still and comfortable. We think there should be something to see. Concentrating on only this, the mind becomes coarse as our mind begins to think."¹⁶

2. Visualize a Mental Object: A Crystal Ball or Buddha Image and Repeat the Mantra

"For the one who has a disposition towards thinking and always engages in a wandering mind towards various matters, if having visualized a mental object to hang the mind on, for example, a clear crystal ball or a clear Buddha Image, this will help to prevent the mind from wandering in the direction of humans, animals, things and other situations; and instead the mind will focus on the crystal ball or the Buddha Image."¹⁷

If we can't stop thinking of other matters, repeat the mantra within the mind by letting the mantra sound emerge from the center of the body as a refined sound, like the sound of chanting or a favorite song. It is the refined sound that requires no force to recite, therefore repeat the mantra gently and slowly as well as steer the mind towards the mantra repeating "Samma-Araham, Samma-Araham, Samma-Araham" (pronounced Sah-Mah-Ah-Rah-Hahng) continuously until the mind comes to a standstill. **Samma** means righteous or righteous conduct with regards to the Noble Eight Fold Path. **Araham** which means the Buddha who is an Arahant is far from defilements or free from defilements. Arahant is the highest level of spiritual advancement that a human can achieve. "**Samma-Araham**" means the Lord Buddha is the righteous Arahant (and the righteous Absolute of Attainment, which any human being can achieve). Repeating Samma-Araham reminds us of the Lord Buddha's virtue.

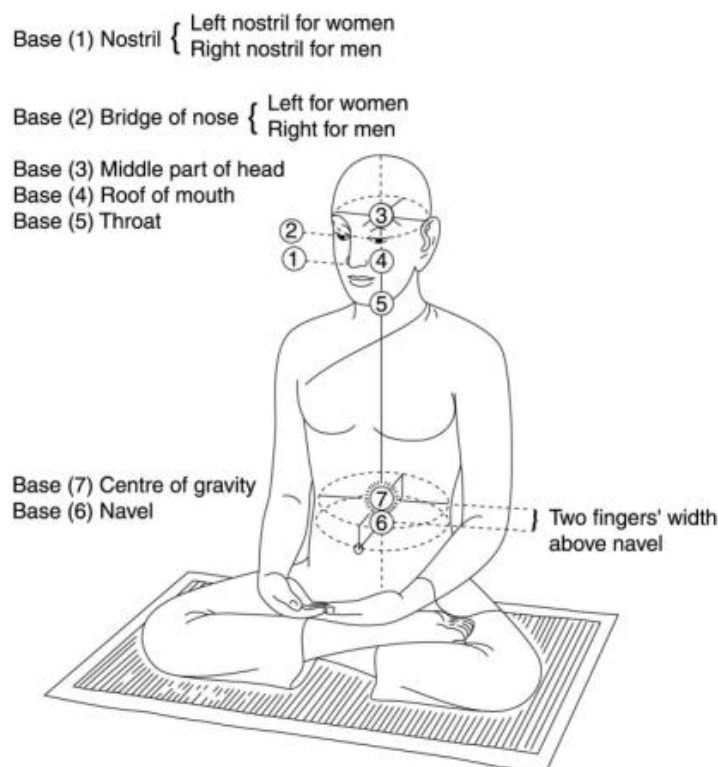
¹⁵ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** March 5, 1995

¹⁶ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** July 26, 2002

¹⁷ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** May 7, 1995

To visualize a mental object as an image of a crystal ball or Buddha Image will help the visualized image to replace the images of mental distraction and the mind will not be engrossed in other images. Repeating the mantra “Samma-Araham” will assist us to substitute the sounds of thoughts, create calm, and will aid us to stop and still mind to be capable of entering the inner self.

3. Go Through All Seven Bases of the Mind



“Someone can still get a wandering mind and think of varied matters even though he/she repeats the mantra. Follow all seven levels of the mind starting from the first to the seventh base – bring your focus and situate the mind at the 1st base, the nostril – the left nostril for ladies and the right one for gentlemen – repeat the words “Samma-Araham” three times and move the mind to situate it at the corner of the eye at the 2nd base, (where tears emerge) – the left eye for ladies and the right eye for gentlemen - repeat the words “Samma-Araham” three times and lift the eyes upward – let your mind ease back inside and situate it at the center of the cranium at eye level, which is the 3rd base - repeat the words “Samma-Araham” three times and move to the 4th base, the roof of the mouth - repeat the words “Samma-Araham” three times and move to the 5th base, the center of the throat, just above the Adam’s apple - repeat the words “Samma-Araham” three times and move to the 6th base at the level of the navel – be still at the 6th base - repeat the words “Samma-Araham” three times and move to the 7th base, 2 finger widths above the navel, at the intersection of two threads – one that stretches from the left to the right of the body and one that stretches from the front to the back of the body – intersecting at the exact center of the body.

While locating the mind at the 7th base, if the mind is still wandering, move back to the 6th base - repeat the words “Samma-Araham” three times and move back to the 5th base - repeat the words “Samma-Araham” three times, visualize a clear and pure crystal ball and move to the 4th base, the roof of the mouth - visualize a clear and pure crystal ball, repeat the words “Samma-Araham” three times and move back to the 3rd base - visualize a clear and pure crystal ball, repeat the word “Samma-Araham” three times and move back to the 2nd base, the corner of the eye - visualize a clear and pure crystal ball, repeat the word “Samma-Araham” three times and move back to the 1st base, the nostril. We can visualize this pathway as many

times as we desire from the 1st base to the 7th base and from the 7th base back to the 1st base - the practice that represents the path of the mind. If we frequently go through this pathway and become skillful at it, then we will prevent the mind from being restless.”¹⁸

4. Open the Eyes to See and then Close the Eyes

If facing a great deal of distraction, open the eyes and visualize a crystal ball, Buddha Image, or nature and trees. At night, gaze at and observe the darkness until you get a pleasurable feeling. Once mental distraction disappears, gently close the eyes and allow the mind to come to a standstill at the seventh base. Venerable Phrarajbhavanavisudh wrote the following poem:

“Experiencing a low or high degree of distraction isn’t problematic.
At this moment, I will tell the secret key to overcome this.
Just softly open the eyes.
Distraction will be defeated by merely opening the eyes.”

5. Contemplation to Understand the Truth of Life

Contemplate that all living and non-living beings arise, exist and cease to exist. All of them end up ceasing to exist. Humans, animals and other living things on earth end up decaying. When humans are born, they gradually grow old, slowly degenerate as part of a progression, and ultimately die and disintegrate. No matter how high the social status of men or women is, they are born and must completely pass away, similar to the trees that grow out of seeds, comprised of roots, trunks, branches, stems, leaves, flowers and fruits – they all grow old and decay. Similarly, animals are born, grow up and decay. All trees deteriorate. The sun, moon and stars in the sky arise, exist and decay. All living things decay. They are impermanent, they experience suffering and they are also non-self. Thinking like this helps us to understand that our life’s aim should only be to achieve stillness.

Or think that death may occur, and we may never know when. Suppose we are going to die now, what will we think of for our refuge [*saraṇa*] to help free us from suffering and achieve happiness, for example, to free us from suffering in the cycle of existence [*samsara*], or suffering from an unfortunate state (*khandha māra*¹⁹), etc. When considering things at this level, the mind will sooner go inside and accept the Triple Gem (the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha) as a refuge. However, don’t think about this all the time, just think about this enough to guide your feelings inside to the mid center level with a sense of ease and tenderness. While achieving stillness of the mind and a sense of neutrality imagine a clear crystal ball and repeat the mantra continually.²⁰

¹⁸ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** March 24, 1992

¹⁹ **Khandhas** mean groups or masses. This always refers to the **five Khandhas** that form a person:

- 1) **Body** [*Rūpa Khandha*].
- 2) **Feeling** [*Vedanā Khandha*].
- 3) **Memory** [*Saññā Khandha*].
- 4) **Thought** [*Sankhāra Khandha*].
- 5) **Consciousness** [*Viññāna Khandha*].

Māra means the evil one, the tempter, the destroyer and the killer.

Khandha māra comprises the body, feeling, memory, thought and consciousness, specifically a body or mind that is not healthy or whole. For example, illness and an unhealthy body that someone may experience would be the *marā* of their five Khandhas. Not eating punctually, sleeping very late and staying in the same posture constantly for a long period, for instance, are other illustrations. For example, as a result of sitting for a long period, the outcome could result in many aches and pains, weakening of the senses, slowing of the thoughts, slowing of the decision making process, etc. Those are all instances of *Khandha māra* that destroy our well-being.

²⁰ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** May 27, 1991

Chapter 6

Tension & Overcoming It

Units in this Chapter

6.1 The Characteristics of Tension

6.2 The Causes of Tension

6.3 Methods for Overcoming Tension

6.3.1 Methods for Overcoming Tension While Sitting for Meditation

6.3.2 Methods For Overcoming Tension Caused by Meditating along with Encouraging, Accelerating, Fixating the Eyes and Staring

6.3.3 Methods for Overcoming Tension While Squeezing the Eyes

6.3.4 Methods for Overcoming Tension at the Corner of the Eyes

Chapter at a Glance

1. Some practitioners may get tension while practicing meditation, for example, physical tension, sinus tension or a headache, even though there is no illness. Tension might cause the practitioners to become tired and bored with meditation.

2. There are many causes of tension: forcing the mind, using the eyes to look at the center of the body, encouraging, accelerating, fixating the eyes, staring, desire, forcing the body, which have resulted from fear of not seeing anything.

3. There are various methods to overcome tension: forgetting the body, allowing the mind to come to a standstill and developing a sense of ease by not visualizing any image, and just thinking that we are sitting for relaxation. If encouraging, accelerating, fixating the eyes and staring occur, situate the mind comfortably, observe whatever happens with ease and don't hasten the experience. In case that the eyes are squeezed, practice seeing with half-closed eyes or continually move the mind from the first to the seventh base of mind or think that the center of the body enlarges to the size of the sky.

Chapter Objectives

This chapter should give students the knowledge and understanding to be able to:

1. Define the characteristics of tension.
2. Identify the causes of tension.
3. Identify the methods for overcoming tension and apply their knowledge to remedy tension that arises during meditation.



Tension & Overcoming It

All of us know that the practice of meditation brings us happiness, ease, relaxation, serenity and stillness. However, many people are incapable of achieving these experiences. They get fatigued and discouraged with meditation since they feel that the more they sit for meditation, the more the suffering augments - then the more the tension enhances and their faces look older every day. These indicate that they are performing the wrong methods of practice. Hence, we should investigate suffering, tension and incorrect approaches towards meditation in order to search for the methods to overcome those experiences.

6.1 The Characteristics of Tension

Tension is known as relentless suffering for many meditators. It always arises at the start of meditation practice. Some people get tension after meditating for a long period of time. Some continue to get tightness for many years. From the study of tension, we found that some meditators are able to visualize a mental object, but it is hard, coarse and unrefined, they feel unhappy. If they are trying to increasingly visualize the image, physical tension will appear consequently beginning at the eye socket, eyebrow, forehead, head and whole body, and the fingers will be bent up and not be in the correct position (the tip of the right index finger should be touching the tip of the left thumb, while the right hand rests on top of the left). The shoulders would raise and the abdomen would be tight. In addition, uncomfortable feelings would arise while sitting and consequently a feeling of boredom from sitting would grow.¹

Some people get headaches from sitting. After they start to sit and close their eyes, they should feel weightlessly at ease, but they get a headache instead. Some people feel queasy and vomit despite having no illness. In addition, they take analgesics to relieve the pain. Some people become sick. It is noted that these symptoms create feelings of boredom, fatigue and lead to a cessation of meditating. Thus, we should understand the causes of tension respectively.

6.2 The Causes of Tension

There are numerous causes of tension as follows:

1. A person can know that the practice of meditation brings about benefits. Then, he/she creates an excessive determination that leads to uneasiness due to the forcing of his/her mind.
2. A person can get accustomed to forcing the eyes to look inside the abdomen. Since the seventh base is at the center of the abdomen, he/she thinks that he/she should look inside at that location, as the other places in the body are not the right places to look. However, he/she doesn't know how to look inside and squeezes the eyes, which produces tension in the muscles and nervous system. When one grows tense, one sits and becomes tired and unhappy. After his/her meditation practice is over,

¹ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** June 6, 2002

he/she also feels uncomfortable, fatigued and stiff. In addition, he/she gets worried and upset to hear that the inner experience of others is good, but, he/she still practices with the same tense and serious approach. Someone may see a mental object, such as a crystal ball or Buddha Image, but when he/she comes out of the meditation room, he/she feels tense and squeezes the eyes to look at that mental object. That act then results in further tension.

3. While imagining a mental object, a person visualizes and forces his/her mind in an attempt to give rise to the image of a crystal ball or a Buddha Image at the center of the body. Forcing the mind provokes the physical effect of tightness or stress.
4. Typically, when a person who is responsible for mundane work practices meditation, he/she will earnestly meditate since he/she thinks that it is a duty. Then he/she tries to create the concentration to generate a serene mind and force an image to be clear, which generates tension in the muscles and nervous system.
5. A person forces his/her body and tries to sit in a graceful posture resembling a standard meditative posture. He/she focuses on the posture rather than on the mind. Therefore, he/she tries to sit by tensing the stomach, tensing the hands, straightening the back, and raising the shoulders to form the most precise sitting posture; but, forgets that the key to success for meditation is the mind. So, he/she develops tension.
6. Tension also results from longing. Longing can be divided into the following categories:

6.1) Longing arises before meditating. One realizes that meditation is good and brings about merits, beauty and joyfulness as well as a bright complexion, which leads him/her to exhibit a great exertion before meditating. Then, he/she urges the mind towards stillness and sits rigidly by not moving. Those gestures definitely would not make the mind come to a standstill. The more one sits for meditation this way, the more one will feel stiff, tense and will feel unhappiness as well.

6.2) Longing arises during the time one is meditating: It possibly appears after meditating for a while. When the mind begins to feel at ease then one can notice his/her inner experience. So, he/she wants to know what the clear or vague mental image being seen is. Next, what will it be? He/she will try to do better than this or try to do the best he/she can.

When a person desires to see the mental object clearly, he/she has a very strong desire to obtain that due to his/her realization of the benefits. Furthermore, having seen other persons attaining the mental objects, they have inspired him/her to acquire experiences like the others. Then he/she exerts too much earnest effort, which formulates tension in the muscles and nervous system. The eyes are closed tightly and he/she forces them to look downwards. The eyelids are closed steadfastly as if the person is squinting from closing his/her eyes too firmly. The eyes are squeezed tightly and pointing downwards. It indicates applying force through the muscles and nervous system that causes more tightness. Tightness doesn't produce progress in meditation.²

² Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** October 5, 1997

7. Tension is caused by encouraging, accelerating, fixating the eyes, and staring as follows:

7.1) Encouraging

Encouraging refers to forcing inner experiences to happen, for example, the mind is focused, and one encourages or forces his/her mind to enter the center of the body. There are many levels of mental encouragement as follows:

- 1) When a beginner starts practicing meditation and is unable to see or experience anything, he/she encourages the mind with a desire to see an image.
- 2) When seeing a mental image dimly, one encourages the mind with a desire to see it more clearly.
- 3) When seeing a mental image clearly, one encourages the mind due to a longing to see the image even clearer than with his/her eyes opened.
- 4) When seeing a mental image clearer than with his/her eyes opened, one encourages the mind with a desire to enter the center of the body.
- 5) When one's mind can enter the center of the body, one encourages the mind with a yearning to go inside the center more rapidly.
- 6) When one's mind can enter the center of the body more rapidly, one encourages the mind with a desire to enter inside more deeply and more expansively.
- 7) When one's mind is able to achieve that level, one also wants to achieve the level that one has heard about.
- 8) For the one who is used to achieving the inner Dhamma, the Dhamma disappears due to his/her heedlessness. Longing to achieve the Dhamma makes him/her encourage the mind with an expectation to reach the same level of inner Dhamma. Once the inner Dhamma cannot be achieved, he/she feels frustrated and angry.

Some people meditate and feel tranquil with no thought; however, there is nothing to observe. The mind is still, but there is no feeling of bliss. It is at a standstill without being distracted, but it is not tender.

7.2) Accelerating

When you “see” a blurred image, you rush or accelerate the mind so that the image rapidly becomes clearer.

7.3) Fixating the Eyes

For example, you try to turn your closed eyes downward to look at an image instead of trying to see it with your mind. On the other hand, when one fixates the eyes to observe a mental image it causes an eye-ache.

7.4) Staring

For example, when a Buddha Image appears, you try to stare at it instead of just glancing at it. You should just keep your mind soft and relaxed and the image will become sharper on its own. Inner experience is refined and cannot be gained by using force.

8. Some have a deep worry inside, for instance, from being afraid of not seeing, being afraid of seeing too slowly, being afraid of the inability to accomplish this in his/her life and being afraid of achieving the inner Dhamma slowly. Therefore, one accelerates mental concentration as a substitute for actual growth.

6.3 Methods for Overcoming Tension

There are various methods to overcome the tension that has resulted from longing, excessive determining and applying the wrong technique. The suggested methods to succeed in dealing with tension are in accordance with the causes of tension.

6.3.1 Methods for Overcoming Tension While Sitting for Meditation

1. Trying to imagine a mental object may cause tension. So, don't imagine any mental object, but allow the mind to be still. While the eyes are closed without thought, tension still exists since one can't help concentrating his/her mind at the abdomen; just close the eyes and think of nothing. While thinking of nothing, one can't help contemplating the center of the body and then tightening still arises. Just shift the mind to another point, which will produce a sense of ease. In addition, imagine that the location of where the mind is situated is creating a comfortable feeling in the center of the body. Just think this way even if your concentration is not in the center of the body. Wherever a sense of ease appears, just merely situate the mind at that point first³.
2. For the one who exercises extreme determination, which results in tightness, he/she should allow the mind to feel relaxed, should not visualize any image, should rest the hands gently as well, and quietly inhale as if his/her breath and the universe are united as one. Do not imagine any image. Calmly situate the mind anywhere and be still. Position the eyes at the same place, be still and disregard that we even have eyes. Moreover, forget that we have a body. Just allow the mind to be still.

If you are unable to do that, try this - comfortably imagine that the hair on your head and hair on your body are removed and each is on an alternate side of the body. Imagine that your head hair is located on one side and your body hair is on the other side. Imagine that you have no fingernails and toenails. Imagine that your skin is removed and put on one side. Imagine that you have no flesh, tendons, blood vessels and nerves. Imagine that

³ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** July 9, 1997

your organs are removed and only the skeleton remains. Imagine that your skull is on one side and your teeth are on the other side. Imagine that your neck bone is on one side. Situate your backbone, collarbone, arm bone, leg bone, hip bone and finger bone on a different side until you feel that there is no body, but that there is only a tranquil mind that generates no tension. Wherever the mind comes to a standstill, situate the mind there and return to the seventh base later⁴.

3. A person can get tense while thinking of the center inside his/her body. He/she can't help but force the eyes to look down there. Simply think that you are in the center of the body. Suppose that your body is as clear as a diamond, or is a Buddha Image that is as clear as a diamond and sit still at the center of the body. Then imagine that your center enlarges to the size of a room and then expands to the size of the entire sky as well.
4. If you want to see it and try to force the image, it causes tension. If you do not want to feel tense, just simply feel that you have a Buddha Image or crystal ball inside the body even if you cannot see anything; just feel like you have that. Do this both in and out of the meditation room⁵.
5. Do not think that you are intending to sit for meditation and must create concentration. Do not think that way. Simply think that you are going to sit for relaxation, relax as virtuously as the noble monks relax – the monks who are capable of removing all responsibilities out of their minds and can stay in their personal private space where their bodies are two meters in length and one palm to one's elbow width apart, which is their private world⁶.
6. Do not practice in terminal intensity. Just be still. Do not observe attentively or force yourself to observe attentively, but you should just sit and smile joyfully, relax the muscles and there will be no stress. Do not anticipate seeing a mental object or image. Think that seeing an image is a by-product of meditation. Just basically allow the mind to come to a standstill⁷.

Phrarajbhavanavisudh wrote the following poem as follows:

“Easily and cozily relax. Don't be stressed or don't use force to create an image.
Simply be cool and calm, soon you will see. Allow the mind to feel at ease.”

“I have told you prior not to anticipate. It leads to a stressful mind.
A stressful body also generates unsatisfactory results.
Only have acceptance to sit and to sit tolerantly.
It creates no inner experience to see as others have seen.

Just sit still.
Did you remember to feel at ease from the teachings you have heard before?
How did you feel when you gently and calmly situate your mind?
Resume easily with a relaxed mind.”

⁴ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** July 17, 2002

⁵ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** July 9, 1997

⁶ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** March 2, 2002

⁷ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** March 24, 1992

6.3.2 Methods For Overcoming Tension Caused by Meditating along with Encouraging, Accelerating, Fixating the Eyes and Staring

1. Tenderly Still the Mind with a Sense of Ease

The mind can become tranquil as if it was forced to do so. Therefore, there is nothing new. It is only a form of stillness that does not generate happiness. This kind of stillness leads to a state of no distraction; however, it contains no tenderness. Create a gentle and light mind. After a while, it will speedily move inside and enlarge boundlessly and continuously. If the mind is at a standstill without it wandering, but no happiness is accompanying it, and nothing new arises, it is recognized that the mind is still being forced. However, we meditate with intention. Therefore, try to create gentleness and stillness of the mind.

2. Don't Worry about Seeing an Image

Don't worry about seeing an image. Don't think that seeing an image refers to making progress in meditation, or having heard a person's inner experience and thinking, why can't we see an image the way he or she does. We want to see it as he/she sees it. Simply focus on mental adjustment. Don't alter an image. Just observe with the mind at a standstill. After tenderness grows in the mind, the mind will become at ease. At this point, comfortable feelings arise. Although seeing nothing, there is no unhappy feeling. That is the correct method. Contentment in that period has inspired meditation for the next period. Meditating that way during each period fulfills your wishes.

3. Still the Mind at the Center of the Abdomen Where You Feel Confident That You are at the Seventh Base

While seeing an image of a crystal ball, it's possible to encourage, accelerate, observe attentively and use force to observe attentively. Although having the ability not to perform them, one refuses to do so. As a result they cause headaches and pains in the whole body. So therefore, don't think of the image. Still the mind at the center of the abdomen where you feel confident that you are at the seventh base.

4. Focus on Mental Stillness Instead of a Mental Image

"With feelings of comfort, weightlessness, an expanding body and an occasional vision of a sphere or a vague Buddha Image, Luang Phaw⁸ believes that having embarked on the right path, even if it is not as fast as we wish, it will probably produce a correct long-term outcome and will be our refuge. We will be happy with the practice of meditation once we perform the right method. Then, the image will appear correspondingly. It is the by-product that must be perceived due to the occurrence of brightness, which has resulted from a properly still mind at the right position. A properly still mind at the precise point arises when we practice correctly with the right method. It appears slowly for us, but in fact, it is really rapid.

In contrast, we could be able to visualize a Buddha Image or crystal ball, but the image could appear rigid and rough. We could also get a headache and a frown every time, as well as no new inner experience occurring. Seeing a rough image not only produces no progress but also generates boredom. Getting started with the wrong method might seem to be good at first, but in the long term, it generates

⁸ Luang Phaw in this sentence refers to Venerable Phrarajbhavanavisudh (Luang Phaw Dhammajayo)

no progress and as we sit, it creates boredom. Moreover, it makes us not believe that other persons could attain the inner Dhamma or that they can see other images. We cannot believe it. It seems like it is rapid, but in reality, it is slow.

On the other hand, if we begin with the right practice, it seems slow, but it is fast. Although there aren't any shortcuts, a short cut will appear automatically if we practice the correct method. The period of practice will inevitably become shorter. Consequently, we should concentrate on the mental practice, allow the mind come to a standstill and gain relative happiness any time we practice, or at least, we will not feel unhappy, drowsy, stressed in the muscles and bored from sitting. We have to practice to that extent at least. It is good to gain happiness any time we practice; even if it's for a very short moment. If we acquire happiness each time that we sit, even if it is not long, it is confirmation that we applied the right approach. In addition, it indicates that we are definitely on the right track along with increasingly achieving better inner experiences. My sons and daughters, you have to focus on this matter. Greatly focus on this.”⁹

5. Allow the Mind to Come to a Standstill and Watch Whatever Happens Without any Thought

“Allowing the mind to stay still and thinking of nothing suits the one who does not know how to visualize an image. A headache may appear whenever a crystal ball or Buddha Image is visualized since one should not force any image to appear, but one could not help oneself, which creates headaches and does not invoke joy from the practice of meditation. Moreover, it causes boredom with meditation and makes us think that we have not received a positive outcome, so an image should not be forced to appear.”¹⁰

Venerable Phrarajbhavanavisudh wrote a poem to teach us about the practice of meditation as follows:

“If there is a desire to sit, it is OK to continually sit.
Could you do a favor for your father?
Stop encouraging, accelerating, fixating the eyes and staring.
Just let it be whenever you see any new thing.
Be amenable to all thoughts.
Then, your mind will become spacious, transparent and light with no distraction.
Sons and Daughters, you'll find a good thing. Oh, it's a Miracle.
This is a reward for having done a favor for your Father.”

Keys to Success: Prevent Encouragement

1. If the mind is not ready to produce an image, don't imagine anything. Just allow the mind to be still and neutral. Wait calmly and situate the mind at a comfortable location.
2. How to hold onto a mental image is to watch it with a still mind. Although the mental image disappears, just let it be and keep stilling the mind.
3. Watching a mental image with a still mind will facilitate a better inner experience respectively.
4. Be satisfied with what has been seen.

⁹ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** June 6, 1998

¹⁰ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** May 20, 1997

5. Observe whatever appears. Keep on witnessing with a sense of ease and think of nothing.
6. We are obliged to observe, not to be a movie director. Do nothing.
7. Don't observe attentively. Memorize only what can be memorized. It's not necessary to remain in your mind one hundred percent. Ten percent gets memorized. Then, imagine comfortably, but don't worry too much about the visualization.

6.3.3 Methods for Overcoming Tension While Squeezing the Eyes

1. **Adjust How to Close Your Eyelids and Practice How to Observe Inattentively**

"If you are squeezing your eyelids, close your eyes as if you are sleepy or keep your eyes half-closed. Slowly lift the eyelids a little and look inattentively. Modify them this way for every session, every day, until the eyes are not forced. Looking at the center of the abdomen means merely to feel the center of the abdomen."¹¹

2. **Practice Shifting the Mind from the First to the Seventh Base**

Venerable Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro or Luang Phaw Wat Paknam) has taught techniques that help to prevent us from squeezing the eyes or looking downward. He taught us to begin by situating the mind at the nostrils. This way, we can realize that it is easier to situate the mind at the nostrils rather than in the abdomen. At the nostrils, he taught us to begin to visualize a pure and clear sphere that resembles a diamond. The reason we are taught to begin at that point is because it is close to the eyes and easy to imagine. Then, repeat the mantra "Samma Araham" (pronounced Sah – Mah – Ah – Rah – Huhng) three times at the nostrils and shift down to the seventh base at the center of the body.

"After the eyes are closed, as if one is drowsy or after one creates half-closed eyes and it does not work, start surveying all seven bases by beginning at the 1st base and notice where the mind feels at ease. Suppose that we start from the 1st base at the nostrils regardless of the left nostril for ladies and the right one for gentlemen. Just be still and notice whether the mind attains a sense of ease or not. If not, slightly open the eyelids to see the 2nd base with drowsy eyes. Don't close the eyes tightly, just close the eyes halfway and continue down to the 7th base. Return from the 7th base back up until reaching the 1st base again.

Or move from the nostril, the left nostril for ladies and the right one for gentlemen. Move down to the second, third, fourth, fifth, etc. and select one base to situate the mind at where a sense of ease arises. First situate the mind there. The mantra "Samma Araham" can either be repeated, along with keeping your mindfulness, or not be repeated, which is fine. Just feel at ease¹²."

¹¹ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** June 24, 2002

¹² Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** July 7, 2002

3. Imagine that Our Body Is As Clear As a Diamond in the Center of the Body that Boundlessly Expands to the Size of the Sky

We can imagine whether our bodies are in the center of the body at the 7th base or that our bodies are at the 7th base and then we can imagine that it widens to room size and then to the ends of the sky. Imagine that the center of our body spreads out. Then, suppose we are the center of all things, in the 7th base that has already expanded. At that point our body is as clear as a diamond or as clear as a Buddha Image¹³."

4. Have a Still Mind at the 7th Base

We can be in the center of our body or realize that the center of the body is inside us. The major point is to feel at ease or to make the body feel comfortable and allow the mind to be serene. This will lead to brightness, the inner Dhamma sphere, inner Bodies and Dhammakaya. Simply do this with ease. The Buddha's Teachings are profound, but they can be attained effortlessly through the right method of practice. Be mindful, at ease and proceed steadily and continuously. Gently rest the mind.

6.3.4 Methods for Overcoming Tension at the Corner of the Eyes

1. First, feel at ease and simply think of a crystal ball. Do not think that you are meditating. Just use your imagination to create leisure such as sitting and joyously thinking of something.
2. Wherever your mind achieves a sense of ease that is the center of the body. Don't worry that the mind must precisely be located two finger's breaths above the sixth base, which could initiate tension. Create the feeling that your center of the body expands to the size of a room. Wherever the mind establishes itself, it is the center of the body. Wherever you situate the mind, it is the center of the body. Wherever a sense of ease arises, situate the mind there.
3. Start to feel as if you see the image before you expand the center of the body to the size of your body or the size of a room. Additionally, feel as if the sphere is widening and expanding to the size of your body similarly to when you close your eyes and sit inside a room. You will then feel that you are in a room. We can't see the room since our eyes are closed, but we realize that we are sitting in a room such as during the time when we could not see the sphere. However, we feel that we are sitting in the center of the sphere. Whether or not we see a sphere, we feel that we are sitting at the center of the sphere. Imagine that as we expand our mind it creates more relaxation and comfort.

All methods in this chapter are guidelines for overcoming tension, tension which has resulted from incorrect methods of practice. Therefore, for the one who is experiencing stress and boredom when trying to meditate, try to apply the above methods instead and adjust the mind to achieve happiness and joy for the future and for subsequent meditation sessions.

¹³ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** June 24, 2002

Chapter 7

Various Obstacles & Overcoming Them

Units in this Chapter

7.1 Darkness

7.1.1 The Characteristics of Darkness

7.1.2 Overcoming Darkness

7.2 Worrying About the Breath

7.2.1 The Characteristics of Worrying About the Breath

7.2.2 The Connection Between the Mind and the Breath

7.2.3 Overcoming Worrying About the Breath

7.3 The Sight of Mental Images

7.3.1 The Characteristics of Transient Mental Images

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7.4 The Sight of Mental Images Outside of the Body

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7.5 Doubt

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7.7 Elation

7.7.1 The Causes of Elation

7.7.2 Overcoming Elation

7.8 Uncomfortable Feelings

7.8.1 The Characteristics of Uncomfortable Feelings

7.8.2 The Causes of Uncomfortable Feelings

7.8.3 Overcoming Uncomfortable Feelings

Chapter at a Glance

1. Darkness is a normal occurrence in meditation practice. When darkness appears, allow the mind to feel comfortable and watch the darkness with a neutral feeling.
2. In connection with your breathing, opposing or discomforting feelings arise. Stop worrying about breathing, and just follow the breath to the end of the inhalation at the center of the abdomen and situate the mind there.
3. Observe the arisen mental image. If the mental image is misleading, don't be interested in it or don't follow the mental image. Watch the mental image with a sense of neutrality. If the mental image appears outside of the body, initially just situate the mind there. When the mind feels at ease, gently allow the mental image inside of the body.
4. Doubt occurs during the practice of meditation. Not only does one experience the uncertainty of seeing a mental image but also the uncertainty of meditation methods that have resulted from not applying wisdom [*paññā*] to consider things in accordance with truth. They occur in addition to experiencing other knowledge gained from listening, reading and self-misunderstanding. To overcome these problems, consider meditation sensibly by applying wisdom [*yonisomanasikāra*] and be confident of your practice. In addition, whatever experiences arise, continue to practice with confidence.
5. Fear and anxiety that is caused by inner experiences indicate that the mind has been developing from a coarse type to a refined one. Just observe it neutrally. Don't be afraid of it. Don't be nervous. Behave as an experienced person would.
6. Uncomfortable feelings lead one to not being in the mood to meditate and also the mind is not tranquil. Consider the causes and overcome them: before sitting, adjust your physical body to feel at ease, wear light clothing or stretch the body to feel relaxed.

Chapter Objectives

This chapter will give students the knowledge and understanding to be able to clearly explain:

1. The characteristics of darkness and meditation methods to overcome them.
2. The characteristics of breathing and proper methods of meditation to achieve it.
3. The characteristics of floating and experiencing outside mental images, and overcoming them.
4. The characteristics and causes of doubt in meditation practice and overcoming them.
5. The characteristics and causes of fear, anxiety and uncomfortable feelings in meditation practice and overcoming them.



Various Obstacles & Overcoming Them

7.1 Darkness

7.7.1 The Characteristics of Darkness

While practicing meditation, the first image that appears to most practitioners is darkness. It starts as an intense, medium or slight darkness. It also begins to become faint, resembling the break of dawn, and then an image will emerge. It might be one of our familiar images, such as a human, an animal, an item or an insignificant thing, etc. Thoughts that remain in the mind will appear and make us think that meditation practice produces no results, or that the mind cannot achieve concentration, which subsequently brings about boredom and a desire to stop meditating.

7.7.2 Overcoming Darkness

1. Do not expect anything. Do the best you can do today. Comfortably do whatever you need to do to attain the inside Dhamma gradually. Welcome and be a friend to darkness. With love and contentment be willing to accept darkness with satisfaction. Accept the indistinct vision of the Buddha Image or sphere or whatever you are familiar with willingly.

Be still with darkness. Be still with brightness. Be still with the image you see. Just be still. Allow the mind to be still inside, deeply and continuously. It is essential to understand this and sit joyously for a long time.

2. Remind yourself that as soon as your eyes are closed, the first image you will see is darkness. Don't be worried if darkness exists during your meditation session. Allow your mind to be comfortably still and neutral. Be still and soon that darkness will subsequently begin to appear, little by little, like the light of dawn. Then the light will become increasingly brighter the way it appears at 5 PM, 6 PM, 7 PM or midday. The more that darkness exists the more it indicates that it will soon be bright and that darkness is not unusual. However, darkness is a good foundation towards inner brightness. While we sit in darkness and can soon see brightness at the center of the abdomen, we can be sure that brightness and Dhamma really exist inside.

3. Sometimes, we sit and see nothing. There is no image emerging, but only darkness. Just let it be and let the mind feel at ease. Just let it be, whether it is dark or bright, but allow the mind to be still and neutral. If our mind feels comfortable with no worry of why it's not bright or why we see nothing, sooner or later darkness will gradually begin to fade and light will be generated.

4. When the mind is not totally stopped, darkness, vagueness, dimness or lack of clarity will be present. However, if we do not get discouraged, but try to practice continuously every day, darkness will transform increasingly into light, little by little, before long. Ultimately, the light of Dhamma will fully appear when we exert continuous effort.

5. In the case where the mind has come to a stop, but no image has emerged; do not be disappointed because it will cause the mind to become coarse. We have to allow the mind to stop neutrally like that and remain still even if it is dark. Just still the mind there, at the center of darkness. Later, light will occur and then increase, but we must continuously be still.

6. Allow the mind to be still and tender although you might not see anything at the beginning. If you perform continuously, the light will appear automatically. It is the light from within. The light is different from outside light. It is soft and cool to look at. Bright light arises from the center of stillness similar to sunshine that appears as the sun rises in the morning at 6 AM, 7 AM, 8 AM or 9 AM continuously through until noon. Additionally, nobody accelerates this phenomenon by asking the sun to rise like it does at midday. The method occurs as a natural process, where darkness disappears and brightness reveals itself little by little.

7.2 Worrying About the Breath

7.2.1 The Characteristics of Worrying About the Breath

Some practitioners used to practice meditation utilizing various methods, for example, they practiced the mindfulness of breathing [*ānāpānasati*] technique. As they practiced meditation through visualizing a crystal ball or Buddha Image and situated the mind at the center of the body, some practitioners concurrently repeated the mantra “Samma Araham.” They then felt that the mantra, alongside with the inhalation and exhalation, created a fear inside of them that they were practicing incorrectly as well as unconsciously blocking them from reaching a deeper place inside. It also occasionally made the breath become coarse in addition.

Some people got frustrated, since their regular breathing was to breathe in a short breath, and breathe out a long breath, or breathe in a long breath and breathe out a short breath. Moreover, it would sometimes feel to them that their breath was going to stop. So, a fear of death would result.

7.2.2 The Connection Between the Mind and the Breath

A study found that when humans breathe, the air of inhalation and exhalation doesn't end at the lungs, but it ends at the center of the abdomen. The air of the breath starts from the nostril, then passes through the six bases and ends at the seventh base, which is the location of the mind. Therefore, the air of inhalation that goes to the mind at the seventh base is called the breath.

Although the air of the breath is coarse, it has a connection with the state of the mind. Despite the coarse breath passing through the mind, the refined mind will purify the air and will be released out of our body as refined air. If the air of the breath goes inside a hot-tempered mind, exhaled air will be hot as well. When the mind is refined and attains concentration, the air of the breath is refined and sometimes it seems like the breath has become immobilized.

7.2.3 Overcoming Worrying About the Breath

1. If we do not pay attention to coarse breath, it will vanish correspondingly. Allow the mind to be still and neutral with ease; the air of the breath will gradually become refined. Eventually, we will forget about breathing.
2. Situate the mind at the end of the breath, which is at the center of the body. Do not follow the inhalation and exhalation.
3. In case that the air flow of the breath is ceasing, don't be afraid, because it implies that the mind is going to stop. The air flow of the breath will stop since the mind has stopped and the Dhamma sphere will appear.

7.3 The Sight of Mental Images

7.3.1 The Characteristics of Transient Mental Images

While practicing continuously, some meditators see the mental image as a story or not as a story. Sometimes, the images display several situations that are very obvious and similar to the arising of knowing and seeing [*Ñānadassana*]. Some practitioners see a Buddha Image or a sphere for a moment and then it changes into various images. They feel attached to these images and think that the images are the real story. They feel like their meditation practice has no progress or happiness, but instead has a sense of being stifled. They tell this to others and that may lead to their misunderstanding also.

7.3.2 An Understanding of Mental Images

At present, there are three methods of meditation practices throughout this world as follows:

Method I: Focusing the Mind Outside of the Body

When focusing the mind outside of the body, we will usually see transient mental images. Sometimes, the images produce delight [*pīti*], such as images of the Buddha, brightness, spheres, or male/female celestial beings. Sometimes, the images are unattractive and cause worry, fright and fear as the images are unpleasant and horrible, which are the opposite of what beautiful images cause. This is Meditation Method I that is practiced in this world.

Method II: Focusing the Mind Inside of the Body

Focusing the mind inside the body means to bring the mind inside of the body and situate the mind inside of the body – usually on one or other part of the body. For this type of practice, the masters have taught us not to bring the mind outside since focusing the mind outside causes transient mental images. There are arisen mental images that are not real and can be categorized as misleading mental images that should not remain in the mind. If you continue to practice bringing the mind within, the mind will go inside, leading you to see brightness or a bright sphere inside. Whatever mental images arise, practitioners will not pay attention to them. They need to bear only brightness within. Their minds are powerful, joyful, fresh and mindful as well as being filled with wisdom, more so than if they were focusing the mind outside the body. There is no existence of transient mental images inside. However, when seeing real

mental images within, they do not realize it and consider all of them as transient mental images. For this kind of practice, when the mind is not concentrating, they should reflect and detach their bodies by contemplating the Three Characteristics of considering that all things arise, perpetuate and decay. They are impermanence [*aniccatā*], suffering [*dukkhatā*] and not self [*anattā*]. All those characteristics are truths that we should not be attached to. Even as far as the Dhamma inside is concerned we should not be attached to it. Detach from everything. After you detach, brightness will be obtained. Happiness will appear within the brightness and purity of the mind until you feel that there is no attachment in this world, the celestial realms or the three planes.¹ In addition, you will think that this life is the ultimate life. This is Meditation Method II that has been practiced in this world.

Method III: Focusing the Mind at the Center of the Body

This method of meditation not only focuses the mind inside the body, but specifically at the center of the body or the seventh base level of the mind. This practice initiates the emergence of Dhamma Spheres and Inner Bodies that are not illusory since the seventh base level of the mind is the place of birth, death, sleep and awakening as well as the path leading to the Paths and Fruits of Nirvana [*Magga, Phala and Nibbana*] and to the true refuge inside every human body, namely the body of enlightenment or Dhammakāya.

When the mind is brought to a standstill at the seventh base level of the mind properly, a bright Sphere that is known as the Pathama Magga Sphere will appear. Phramongkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro or Luang Phaw Wat Paknam Basicharoen), the Discoverer of Vijja Dhammakaya said,

“The Dhammānupassanā-Satipaṭṭhāna Sphere, also called the Pathama Magga Sphere is the path that leads to the Paths and Fruits of Nirvana [*Magga, Phala and Nibbāna*]. To reach the Paths and Fruits of Nirvana is to focus the mind at the center of only that particular sphere. Only this path can lead to it. There is no other path. The Buddhas and Arahants merely utilized this path to attain Nibbana.”²

Additionally, Phrarajbhavanavisudh (Luang Phaw Dhammajayo) explained that while seeing Pathama Magga as a clear sphere, the sphere is as bright as the midday sunlight, but as cool as the moonlight on the full moon day. It comes together with great bliss that we’ve never experienced before. It’s the boundless bliss that also creates the purity of a mind freed from all defilements. The feelings of bliss, freshness, joy and liveliness occur and the mind remains steadfast, and firmly still without a distraction.

¹ The three planes are the Sensual Plane, the Form Plane and the Formless Plane.

² Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro or Luang Phaw Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen). **The Path to Magga- Phala: The Method of Samatha and Vipassanā Meditation**. Bangkok: EakpimThai Co. Ltd., April 29, B.E. 2551, p. 23

“When the Pathama Magga Sphere is already observed, allow the mind to stay still at the center of that sphere. As soon as the mind is properly at a standstill at the precise point, inner Dhamma Spheres will be perceived. Then there are Dhamma Spheres inside the Dhamma Spheres, starting from the Morality Sphere (Sīla Sphere), Concentration Sphere (Samādhi Sphere), Wisdom Sphere (Pañña Sphere), Liberation Sphere (Vimutti Sphere), and the Insight Sphere (Vimutti-Nānadassana Sphere). In addition, there are Inner Bodies inside the Inner Bodies. The Inner Bodies are more supreme than the Outside Bodies, and are sitting in a crossed-legged position or “meditative posture.” The faces of the inner bodies are facing the same direction as ours - starting with

The Refined Human Body (Dream Body), which is inside the Coarse Human Body.

The Coarse Celestial Body is inside the Refined Human Body. There is a Refined Celestial Body inside the center of the Coarse Celestial Body.

The Coarse Form-Brahma Body (Rūpa Brahma) is inside the Refined Celestial Body. There is a Refined Form-Brahma Body (Refined Rūpa Brahma) inside the center of the Coarse Form-Brahma Body (Rūpa Brahma).

The Coarse Formless-Brahma Body (Arūpa Brahma) is inside the Refined Form-Brahma Body. There is a Refined Formless-Brahma Body (Refined Arūpa Brahma) inside the center of the Coarse Formless-Brahma Body (Arūpa Brahma).

The Coarse Dhammakāya-Gotrabhu is inside the Refined Formless-Brahma Body. There is a Refined Dhammakāya-Gotrabhu inside the center of the Coarse Dhammakāya-Gotrabhu.

The Coarse Dhammakāya-Sotāpanna is inside the Refined Dhammakāya-Gotrabhu Body. There is a Refined Dhammakāya-Sotāpanna inside the center of the Coarse Dhammakāya-Sotāpanna.

The Coarse Dhammakāya-Sakadāgāmi is inside the Refined Dhammakāya-Sotāpanna Body. There is a Refined Dhammakāya-Sakadāgāmi inside the center of the Coarse Dhammakāya-Sakadāgāmi.

The Coarse Dhammakāya-Anāgāmi is inside the Refined Dhammakāya-Sakadāgāmi Body. There is a Refined Dhammakāya-Anāgāmi inside the center of the Coarse Dhammakāya-Anāgāmi.

The Coarse Dhammakāya-Arahatta is inside the Refined Dhammakāya-Anāgāmi Body. There is a Refined Dhammakāya-Arahatta inside the center of the Coarse Dhammakāya-Arahatta.

Those Bodies are inside Bodies as a pair of Coarse Bodies and Refined Bodies. There are 18 Inner Bodies in total.”³

³ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** July 17, 2011

The Eighteen Inner Bodies⁴

| | |
|---|--|
| 1. Coarse Human Body | 2. Refined Human Body (Dream Body) |
| 3. Coarse Celestial Body | 4. Refined Celestial Body |
| 5. Coarse Form-Brahma Body (Rūpa Brahma Body) | 6. Refined Form-Brahma Body (Rūpa Brahma Body) |
| 7. Coarse Formless-Brahma Body (Arūpa Brahma Body) | 8. Refined Formless-Brahma Body (Arūpa Brahma Body) |
| 9. Coarse Dhammakāya-Gotrabhu | 10. Refined Dhammakāya-Gotrabhu |
| 11. Coarse Dhammakāya-Sotāpanna | 12. Refined Dhammakāya-Sotāpanna |
| 13. Coarse Dhammakāya-Sakadāgāmi | 14. Refined Dhammakāya-Sakadāgāmi |
| 15. Coarse Dhammakāya-Anāgāmi | 16. Refined Dhammakāya-Anāgāmi |
| 17. Coarse Dhammakāya-Arahatta (Arahant) | 18. Refined Dhammakāya-Arahatta (Arahant) |

“The ultimate inner body, the 18th inner body, namely the Refined Dhammakāya-Arahatta, with a size that measures 20 wa in width (or the equivalent of 40 meters) and 20 wa in height (or the equivalent of 40 meters), appears so magnificently, clearly and purely, freeing one from all defilements and containing only purity. There is nothing to do except to stay in deep meditation or in the attainment of the stage of cessation [*Nirodha Samapatti*]. This body is liberated from the control of the Tempters [*Māra*] that force one into the transmigration into the cycle of existence [*Samsara*] in three planes: the Sensual Plane, the Form Plane and the Formless Plane. When one is liberated from the three planes, then Nirvāṇa [*Nibbāna*] is the dwelling of those who are liberated from those three planes and the cycle of existence [*Samsara*]. This knowledge only exists in the Teachings of the Buddha. All of us can train our minds to come to a standstill at the same point that all Buddhas attained enlightenment at as well as attain the enlightenment as the Buddhas achieved it, accordingly, with the aid of our accumulated merits and Perfections that we performed in this life and in our past lives.”⁵

7.3.3 Overcoming Transient Mental Images

What we should do when illusory mental images appear:

1. Do not pay attention to transient mental images as they do not create progress. Moreover, if we pay a lot of attention to them, the mental images will disappear and we will feel regret.
2. Do not follow transient mental images. Simply be still and neutral and they will vanish. Be still, neutral and observe them continuously, resembling viewing the scenery. It is as if we are sitting in a car and looking at the scenery, the sky, clouds, mountains, peoples, rivers, the sea, etc. We view it constantly with a sense of ease and without thinking. It is important to think of nothing. If we can meditate this way it will increasingly progress.

⁴ Phramonkolthepmuni (Sodh Candasaro or Luang Phaw Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen). **The Path to Magga- Phala: The Method of Samatha and Vipassanā Meditation.** Bangkok: EakpimThai Co. Ltd., April 29, B.E. 2551, p. 20-35

⁵ Phrarajbhavanavisudh. **Meditation Teaching** July 17, 2011

3. If the images occur as a story, we should look at them neutrally. Do not attach yourself to the emotions of that story or do not have any questions in your mind such as whatever they are or whether they are real or not, where they have come from, why they have come or how they have appeared. Do not pose any questions. They are only transient mental images that arise when the mind begins to come to a standstill level, but they are not real. Do not search for explanations. Look neutrally. Just observe them. Do not attach yourself to the emotions of them. Look at them naturally with normal feelings that contain neither content nor discontent, but contain only neutrality. Whether they are images of people, animals or things, observe them neutrally.

7.4 The Sight of Mental Images Outside of the Body

7.4.1 Mental Images Outside of the Body

You may see a mental image such as a crystal ball, Buddha Image or other mental image such as a bright light, a star or a sun appearing in front of you at eye level. Or perhaps you may feel like you are seeing a mental image but you don't know where it is, however it is not inside the body.

7.4.2 Overcoming Seeing Mental Images Outside of the Body

Do not worry if a mental image is outside and not inside the body. Just be able to observe it first. Then, after we allow the mind to come to a standstill at a precise point, the mental image will move into the center of the body automatically.

Do not force the mental image inside. It will disappear if we use force. The correct technique is to allow the mind to come to a standstill with neutrality at the center of the body. Suppose that the mental image is in front of you. Let the mind become still and neutral, and also notice the state of your body and mind at that moment. If the body is empty, weightless, comfortable and joyful, the mental image will be clearer and more evident as well as being more refined. At this stage, the mental image will move down inside without any effort.

Seeing the mental image outside doesn't mean we are exercising the wrong technique, since everyone knows that our aim is the seventh base, which can start from outside. Phra Mongkoltepmuni (Luang Phaw Wat Pak Nam) stated that we could begin with a sphere outside of the body and then move it inside. When we feel at ease there, just let it remain until we perceive that the mental image is soft. Then, bring it inside.

Seeing the mental image outside of the body is the beginning point. It is not the real point though. However, if that beginning point initiates comfort to us, then it is not an incorrect method. If we express to others that it is the wrong method, then they will become confused and uncomfortable. What we have just practiced must not be erroneous; however, it is not quite correct. It also is similar to a person who stands outside a room and is not ready to come in. So, they stand there comfortably and look at flowers and trees. After feeling contented, they enter the room. It is not strange to stand outside first, and we only stand there temporarily. Also, our objective is to come inside the room.

Say that it is not wrong, but it is not entirely correct. Our duty is to act correctly and then gradually and tenderly bring it in. When we do it this way we will achieve our objective. Do not forget that we must not say to others that they are “wrong.” Explain it another way. Say something more appropriate that will make them feel at ease. When everything is comfortable, anything is easy.

7.5 Doubt

7.5.1 The Characteristics of Doubt

This hindrance is called doubt [*vicikicchā*]. This refers to doubt about general Dhamma, for example, having doubts as to whether heaven or hell really exist, having doubts as to whether merit or sin (negative kamma) truly exists, etc. Additionally, the kinds of doubt that arise during the practice of meditation are:

1. While seeing any mental image, doubt occurs with the question of “what was that.” Thus, the image disappears.
2. Sometimes, while sitting tranquilly, there is nothing to see. Doubt arises with a question of why this stillness is strange. It may be the incorrect method.
3. Someone is able to visualize a mental image, but wonders whether the image happened by itself or not and doubts whether it is a real image or not.
4. Someone situates the mind at the center of the body, but doubts whether it is really the center of the body or not.
5. Someone wonders whether he/she should visualize a Buddha Image, a crystal ball or allow the mind to be still, and doubts whether he/she should visualize a large or small Buddha Image, a clear one or a bright one and where the image should be located. Each inner experience is inconsistent and does not resemble what one has heard, etc.

7.5.2 The Causes of Doubt

The Lord Buddha stated, “Bhikkhu! There is Dhamma that produces doubt [*vicikicchā*]. Performing with many reasons that lack reflection [*ayonisomanasikāra*] leads to doubt.

It is also the fuel that develops doubt to emerge, that did not exist, as well as increases doubt that has already transpired.”⁶ *Ayonisomanasikāra* is the root of doubt [*vicikicchā*]. It refers to the reasons that lack reflection, not applying wisdom [*paññā*] and analytical thinking of considering things according to the truth. Applying wisdom to consider the state of Dhamma or the truth is called “applying *yonisomanasikāra*.” Someone who does not understand anything will not ask a Knowledgeable One. Moreover, he/she does not even consider the reason in accordance with the truth. Then, doubt occurs accordingly, for example,

⁶ *Samyuttanikāya Mahāvāraṇagga*, Bangkok: Mahamakut Buddhist University Press, vol.30, no. 467, p.248

having doubt about merit and sin (negative kamma), heaven and hell or the practice of an object of meditation [*kammatthāna*] as well as having doubts as to whether his/her practice was correct. Not applying the wisdom [*paññā*] to consider the cause and effect certainly causes doubt, which impedes the practice of meditation. In other words, the obstacle in meditation is from doubt about the methods of practice, which has been affected by *ayonisomanasikāra* or not applying the wisdom to consider things.

Besides, as a result of practice, we found that doubt arose when the practitioner compared his/her knowledge with his/her experience in practice and tried to interpret it, which created confusion. Despite practicing meditation comfortably, he/she engages in the research and commentary as well as considers his/her level of concentration that inhibits the mind from attaining concentration. Consequently, we can summarize and categorize the causes of doubt [*vicikicchā*] as follows:

1. Doubt that Arises from Listening

This kind of doubt begins with longing to gain inner experiences from the practice, and longing to hear and learn about the inner experiences of those who meditate well. They cause the meditator to anticipate listening directly to or actually listening to others or asking the ones whom he/she thinks already knows, which generates false knowledge and causes one to witness false images as well as is the inability to achieve his/her inside Dhamma. Once he/she meditates, he/she tries to practice like those persons since he/she misunderstands that meditation practice is similar to learning at school - when hearing and listening, he/she is able to imagine, which initiates confusion and frustration and uncertainty in Dhamma. Additionally, he/she thinks that it is not a real experience. He/she will exaggerate his/her experiences when speaking about them, which leads to a deterioration of faith, which includes discouragement and discontent leading one not to continue the practice of meditation.

2. Doubt That Arises from Reading

After reading, he/she thinks that he/she knows. Then, he/she acts as a researcher or criticizer instead of a practitioner, for example, researching and criticizing the experiences that he/she is unable to perceive, has not seen or is unable to achieve.

When he/she meditates, he/she merely thinks about the theory and that causes an agitated mind. Therefore, it creates not only a lack of result from meditation but also stress from meditation since he/she thinks that it is impossible and may lead to the wrong thought until he/she becomes a Wrong View (*Miccha Dhitthi*) person.

3. Doubt That Arises from Misunderstanding

Doubt arises from a lot of reading or listening since one has summarized what he/she read or listened to and was confident that he/she was well-rounded. While practicing, he/she was engrossed in criticizing or considering and comparing his/her inner experience with what he/she read and listened to as well as classifying the level of his/her practice.

7.5.3 Overcoming Doubt

In Buddhist Scripture, the Lord Buddha mentioned that wise consideration [*yonisomanasikāra*] causes the elimination of doubt and leads one to apply wisdom while searching for the reasons as to what is doubtful, for example, is it doubtful whether we have to be reborn after death, is it doubtful whether a son or daughter is indebted to his/her mother and father or is doubtful whether the practice involving meditation objects [*kammatthāna*] is correct. It is necessary to search for the truth by asking the well versed ones or by applying wise consideration and proving the success of our meditation practice by ourselves. Doubt [*vicikicchā*] will then disappear.

From meditation practice, if any doubt arises during the practice of meditation, we can overcome doubt as follows:

1. Still the mind by not visualizing anything.
2. When someone sees a mental image and is doubtful whether he/she imagined it, he/she is doubtful whether that image really existed. Those questions indicate that the mental image seen was only a visualized image [*uggaha-nimitta*] or a conceptualized image [*patibhaga-nimitta*]. However, when the real mental image has been attained, those questions will not occur and we will know the answers ourselves without any explanations. Additionally, when we have attained it, there will be no doubt. On the other hand, doubt still remains because the mental image is unclear and unstable, and it is a mental image that we should feel neutral about seeing for that moment. Do not pose any question to search for the answer about whether it is correct or not. If a real mental image is attained, there should be doubtlessness.
3. Be confident as to what you have seen and what you continuously keep seeing. The sight will be clearer than it would be with your eyes wide opened.
4. When there is the occurrence of doubt about the center of the body, whether the mind is situated at the correct location or not, we already know the location of the seventh base is at the center of the abdomen. Practically, do not waste time searching for the seventh base or try to pinpoint its location. Searching for an hour or two will waste time, make the mind become coarse and gain nothing. Therefore, just remember that the seventh base is in the center of abdomen - two finger widths above the navel. In practice, we should focus and stop 1) Perception, 2) Memories, 3) Thoughts and 4) Knowingness on the part of the practitioner that the one-pointedness exists at the seventh base.
5. Whatever image may appear, just still the mind. We have a duty to observe our inner experiences that are occurring at the time of meditation. Watch them with neutrality. While watching neutrally, do not think. No thoughts should interfere. If we feel doubtful, our mind will not be united by one-pointedness [*Ekaggatā*]. Watch the phenomenon as one who is wise in the ways of the world. Observe it with a normal feeling. Have neither contentment nor discontentment. If your inner experience is observed with a still mind, it will be very good.

6. If your mind is unable to be completely still, your inner experience will not change step by step accordingly. Do not worry about your inner experience even though it does not develop step by step. Observe it first. Observe it constantly. The mind will become increasingly pure. Its stillness will continuously improve. When the mind is still at the right position, it will develop step by step. There is no short cut pathway. When the mind is still you will see the difference between the inner experiences that happen step by step and the inner experiences that do not happen step by step.

7.6 Fear

7.6.1 The Characteristics of Fear

While meditating, many practitioners have various experiences. Some practitioners feel like they are falling from a high place into an abyss. Some feel like they are pulled down inside. Some feel like their bodies expand. Some feel like their bodies are heavy or are getting uncomfortable. Sometimes, they feel like they cannot breathe and are going to die. Sometimes, they feel that their bodies are higher, wider, smaller, are turning over forward, falling over backwards, spinning, falling from a high place or their hair is standing on end, having teardrops, having hearts beating strongly, etc. Those experiences make them frightened because they do not know what is inside them. They might think that they are going to die or some bad thing might happen to them and those experiences make them afraid of meditation.

7.6.2 The Causes of Fear

The above experiences indicate that the mind is beginning to attain refinement. The state of mind has changed from coarseness to refinement. It is starting to reach more concentration.

7.6.3 Overcoming Fear

1. While the mind is entering inside, observe it neutrally. Accept death once willingly and then accept rebirth as a Dhammakaya (one who has reached enlightenment). That indicates that you should not feel worried, sit and meditate comfortably, do not pay attention to life, take out all mental distraction, drowsiness and stress.
2. Act as one who is wise in the ways of the world, and as one who observes the situation as it is happening with a normal neutral mind and feels neither contentment nor discontentment.
3. Don't be afraid. Don't move. Don't push. Stay neutral. Then, your mind will be clear and bright.
4. What should we do when the mind cannot be completely still, for example, when it feels like it is becoming higher, expanding, becoming smaller, or it is turning over forward, falling over backwards, spinning, falling from a high place, when it feels like our hair is standing on end, when tears are dropping or when hearts are beating strongly? Whatever happens, be still

and neutral. Do not act against those experiences. Do not pose any questions or search for any answers. It implies that you haven't gotten used to those inner experiences. Ignore whatever happens, and in addition, be still and neutral and see what the next experience will be. No matter how elevated or extensive the experience is, observe it neutrally, while you remain at a standstill. Consider that it is natural. Do not think that it is unusual because it must occur in this manner.

5. When a feeling of heaviness in the body arises, do not open the eyes, do not move and do not be afraid of anything. It is a heaviness that will transform into the greatest weightlessness. First, the eyes must not be opened. Second, do not move. Third, do not be afraid. Apply those three guidelines with a still mind. Whatever appears, just ignore it. Although it is heavy, simply be still.

7.7 Elation

7.7.1 The Causes of Elation

Elation always occurs to the practitioners who are knowledgeable about their state of mind as it is happening step by step, which they have studied or listened to repeatedly. When one of those experiences arises and is similar to one that they have learned, they will feel elated and excited causing their mind to be unable to attain stillness and one-pointedness.

7.7.2 Overcoming Elation

1. Excitement caused by feeling elated occurs while seeing an image of the Buddha or sphere in the mind that leads the images to disappear. "Simply and neutrally situate the mind."
2. As soon as breathing is going to cease, it causes slight discomfort. Simply and neutrally be still. It is going to turn out well.
3. While getting excited, one should realize that this experience has already existed. Feel that it is ordinary. Then, the excitement will gradually vanish and the images will become clearer. Conversely, one must prevent the occurrence of joy [*piti*], and instead observe the images with a neutral and still mind until the mind becomes motionless, in addition to getting used to those experiences. The faster the mind comes to a standstill, the faster the images will become clear. The slower the mind comes to a standstill, the more slowly the images will become clear. Select which one you prefer - whether to see a clear image quickly or slowly.

7.8 Uncomfortable Feelings

7.8.1 The Characteristics of Uncomfortable Feelings

Someone who sits for a long time gets uncomfortable, feels unready and physically out of order, for example, feels sickness, exhaustion, hunger, sleepiness, feels overly replete, uncomfortable, fatigued, frustrated and wants to stand up. Sometimes, sitting for a long period may cause mental fatigue and discouragement, etc.

7.8.2 The Causes of Uncomfortable Feelings

Uncomfortable feelings have resulted from sitting in a poorly ventilated environment, the wrong posture or from wearing improper clothes, for example, wearing an excessively tight or thick pair of jeans, or wearing an excessively short or long shirt as well as wearing extremely neat clothes that make us overly careful of sitting and unable to still the mind serenely.

7.8.3 Overcoming Uncomfortable Feelings

If sitting creates strong discomfort and one desires to stand up, it shows that incorrect methods have been practiced from the start. Stand up and adjust the posture or mood to become comfortable before sitting. For example, sit only for relaxation, either open-eyed or closed-eyed. Simply close the eyes at ease when the mind is ready. If you are easily getting achy, stretch out your physical body for relaxation and sit down once again. If discomfort has resulted from your clothes, you should wear neither excessively loose nor excessively tight clothes. You should not wear clothes that need special care so that the mind will not be concerned about this.

While having sat for meditation well for a long period of time and discomfort emerges, it indicates that the mental state is going to be adjusted. It is the junction where breath is adjusting to become refined breath. Don't stand up. It will be successful if you are able to pass through this step. However, if you give up when the mind is focusing towards a good juncture, this kind of experience will disappear. You will be stuck at this point and will not be able to make any progress.

All of the above mentioned problems are obstacles followed by suggestions on how to overcome them. All meditators should investigate whether there is any obstacle that needs to be overcome via the correct approaches. You will soon achieve brightness and the Dhamma Sphere as well as Inner Bodies as desired.