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Pilgrimage in Sri Lanka

by

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Chapter 1.

Introduction.

“Buddhism in Daily life” was the theme of a Buddhist seminar held in Sri Lanka. Do we really practise the Buddha’s teachings in our daily life? Aren’t we often forgetful of them? When we are impatient, where are the loving kindness (mettā) and compassion (karuṇā) the Buddha taught? In theory we know about the different ways of wholesomeness he taught. We think that we have understood how to cultivate wholesome deeds, wholesome speech and wholesome thoughts, but most of the time we are forgetful of wholesomeness.

A schoolteacher in Sri Lanka told me that he does not teach the children in a theoretical way, but that he teaches them how to apply immediately what they have learnt. I felt like a child who has been taught how to apply the Dhamma, the Buddha’s teachings, in the different situations of life. I found out that I overlooked many things which are taught in the suttas, such as kindness, gentle speech, speech at the right time, patience and many other ways of wholesomeness. We think that we have understood the Dhamma, but we have not really understood it. It was most helpful to be reminded of the practice of the Dhamma and to discuss the Dhamma with many new friends we made in Sri Lanka.

I was reminded to live in the present moment, not in the past or the future, and to “study” the present moment with mindfulness. “If there is no study of the present moment, right understanding (paññā) cannot grow”, Khun Sujin reminded us every day.

In the past, satipaṭṭhāna¹ was taught and widely practised in Sri Lanka by monks, nuns and layfollowers. Countless people in Sri Lanka attained arahatship. They attained because they were mindful of any reality appearing at the present moment through eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodysense and mind-door.

Captain Perera of the Buddhist Information Center in Colombo organised a five week seminar of Dhamma discussions which were held in Colombo, Anurādhapura and

¹ The development of mindfulness and understanding of all mental phenomena and physical phenomena of our life as they appear through the senses and the mind.

Kandy. Ms. Sujin (Acharn Sujin) and Ms. Duangduen had come from Thailand, Sarah from England and I from Holland. We all met in Sri Lanka on the occasion of this seminar. The venerable Bhikkhu Dhamma-dharo and the venerable Bhikkhu Jetananda had come from Thailand several months ago and Samanera Sundara arrived at the same time as Acharn Sujin.

The seminar was opened in Colombo by the venerable “Mahā Nayaka” (the chief monk) with the traditional lighting of the oil lamp. The sessions were held nightly in the form of discussions. During the day we met our Sinhalese friends in their homes and discussed Dhamma in a more personal way. All through those five weeks we spent in Sri Lanka we enjoyed the wonderful hospitality of the Sinhalese while we stayed as guests in their houses. They gave us every day delicious curry luncheons and dinners, there was no end to their generosity. Captain Perera looked after us throughout our stay and when we had problems with visas or other matters he just smiled and said, “All wounds get healed.”

The Buddha visited Sri Lanka three times and during these visits he went to sixteen different places. Relics of the Buddha have been enshrined in several stupas (dāgabas) and a sapling of the original Bodhi Tree in Gaya was brought over in olden times. It was planted in Anurādhapura where it is still growing today. A new sprout developed recently from this tree. Is this not a hopeful sign that the Dhamma is still flourishing in Sri Lanka?

I became interested in the history of Sri Lanka and started to read the “Mahāvāyśa”, an old chronicle, compiled at the end of the fifth or the beginning of the sixth century A.D. After the third Council, which was held in India during the reign of King Asoka (250 B.C.), missionaries were sent out to different countries ². The arahat Mahinda, King Asoka’s son, was sent to Sri Lanka together with four other monks, a samanera (novice) and a lay-disciple. They went to Mahintale where they met the Sinhalese King Devānampiya Tissa while he was hunting deer. The King laid aside his bow and after Mahinda had tested him on his readiness to hear the Dhamma he preached to him the “Lesser Discourse on the Simile of the Elephant’s Foot Print” (Middle Length Sayings I, no 27). This sutta describes the life of a bhikkhu who abstains from ill deeds through body, speech and mind, who “guards the six doors” through mindfulness, develops jhāna (absorption-concentration) and finally attains arahatship.

The following day Mahinda and the other monks went to Anurādhapura where the King presented Mahinda with the royal park. This place became the “Mahā Vihāra”

² At the first Council held shortly after the Buddha’s passing away, the texts of the Vinaya, the Suttanta and the Abhidhamma were recited by five hundred arahats. The second Council was held one century later dealing with the wrong interpretation of the rules of the Vinaya by heretical monks. At the third Council, held 268 B.C. the canon of the texts in the Pali language was finally redacted.

(Great Monastery), a famous center of Buddhism. The monastery of Cetiya-pabbata and many other monasteries were established as well.

Mahinda had brought the “Tipiṭaka” and the commentaries to Sri Lanka and these were translated into Sinhalese. Many Sinhalese wanted to lead the “homeless life” and were ordained monks. Women wished to become bhikkhunīs, nuns, and bhikkhunī Saòghamittā, Mahinda’s sister, came to Sri Lanka in order to ordain bhikkhunīs. She brought the sapling of the Bodhi tree from India to Sri Lanka. During the reign of King Devānampiya Tissa the “Thupārāma Dāgaba”, the oldest stupa in Sri Lanka, was also constructed and in this stupa the relic of the Buddha’s right collarbone was enshrined.

The Buddhist teachings declined in India, but they were preserved in Sri Lanka. However, when one studies the history of Sri Lanka one sees how difficult it must have been to preserve them. Invading kings and also local kings who did not support the Sangha threatened the survival of the teachings.

After an invasion by Tamils, King Dutthagāmanī (about 150 B.C.) restored the position of the Sangha and started to build the “Ruvanvelisāya”, the great and famous stupa of Anurādhapura, which contains relics of the Buddha and which is together with the Bodhi Tree the center of worship in Anurādhapura up to today.

Not only wars, also famines have threatened the survival of the teachings which were not yet committed to writing. Many people died during those famines and the arahats who survived on roots and fruits continued to recite the teachings with heroic fortitude. When they had no more strength to sit up, they continued reciting while lying down.

Wars, famines and also the introduction of wrong beliefs and wrong practice made it difficult to preserve the teachings. Finally, in 89 B.C., the teachings were committed to writing. Five hundred monks undertook this great enterprise in the cave of Aluvihāra (Alulena) which we visited during our pilgrimage.

Several centuries later (410 A.D.) Buddhaghosa Thera came from India to Sri Lanka. Here he composed his famous “Path of Purification” (Visuddhimagga). He edited all the commentarial material he found in Sri Lanka and translated these commentaries from Sinhalese into Pāli. The commentaries to the Vinaya, to most of the Suttanta and to the Abhidhamma were translated and edited by Buddhaghosa. The “Atthasālinī” (Expositor) is the commentary to the first book of the Abhidhamma, the Dhammasaṅgāhī. Sri Lanka, where the Tipiṭaka and the commentaries were preserved, is an inspiring country to visit in order to recollect the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. The fact that numerous arahats lived in this country proves that the Dhamma was truly practised in daily life.

Despite a decline of Buddhism and even persecution, the Singhalese have maintained many wholesome traditions which were originated in the olden times, such as the presenting of dāna to the monks, the celebration of “Uposatha Day”³ and many other ceremonies. The Singhalese of today see the relevance of the Buddhist teachings in their daily life. Numerous books on the Dhamma written by learned bhikkhus and layfollowers and also a Buddhist Encyclopedia are being published today. Many Singhalese are well versed in Pāli and they are able to chant texts from the teachings. Our hostess in Colombo would spend the evening of Uposatha day in her shrineroom, chanting in Pali the “Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta”⁴ and other parts of the scriptures. One of our hosts who had invited us to luncheon recited in the car the “Karaṇīya Mettā Sutta”, the sutta about the development of loving kindness, while his wife was driving. We noticed that people did not only think about mettā but that they also practised mettā. Their mettā appears in their generosity and their thoughtfulness for the guests they receive into their homes.

Shortly after our arrival in Sri Lanka it was “Uposatha Day” (Poya Day). We saw many people clothed in white who observed eight precepts⁵. Even small children observed these until six at night. We were taken out to the Kelaniya temple which was the focal point of the Buddha’s second visit to Sri Lanka. Near the temple is a stupa in which relics of the Buddha have been enshrined and there is also a Bodhi Tree. We heard the sound of drums and all around on the temple grounds people were sitting in small groups, reciting the “ Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta” and other texts. Oil lamps were lit, incense was burnt and flowers were offered.

The abbot of the temple explained to us that people in Sri Lanka , before offering flowers, take off all the green parts. They do not keep them in water but let them dry out. It is the course of nature that flowers have to wither. Elderly people are not afraid of ageing and death because they realize that they cannot escape from them, just as flowers cannot avoid withering.

The stanza which is recited in Sri Lanka when one offers flowers is a beautiful reminder of impermanence. Our host who took us around on that day chanted it for us:

“With diverse flowers, the Buddha I adore;

And through this merit may there be release.

³ Fasting day, kept on the days of full moon, new moon and sometimes on the days of the first and last moon-quarter.

⁴ The sutta about the four Applications of Mindfulness: of body (all physical phenomena), of feelings, of cittas and of dhammas. These include all physical phenomena and mental phenomena that can be objects of mindfulness and right understanding.

⁵ In addition to the five precepts there are others, such as refraining from eating after midday, from lying on soft beds, from entertainments and from adornments.

Even as these flowers must fade,
So does my body march to a state of destruction.”

I found the discussions during the seminar very useful. We spoke about the many kinds of kusala the Buddha taught. Dāna (generosity), sīla (morality) and bhāvanā (mental development) can be practised in daily life. We read in the “Sigalovāda Sutta” (Dialogues III, no 31 ⁶) that the Buddha, when he was staying in the Bamboo Wood near Rājagaha, at the Squirrels’ Feedingground, spoke to Sigāla about good qualities to be developed in daily life. We read, for example, that the Buddha said to him:

“Who is wise and virtuous,
Gentle and keen-witted,
Humble and amenable,

Such a one to honour may attain.
Who is energetic and not indolent,
In misfortune unshaken,
Flawless in manner and intelligent,
Such a one to honour may attain.

Who is hospitable and friendly,
Liberal and unselfish,
A guide, an instructor, a leader,
Such a one to honour may attain.

Generosity, sweet speech,
Helpfulness to others,
Impartiality to all,

⁶ I am using the translation by Ven. Narada, Wheel Publication 14, B.P.S. Kandy, Sri Lanka.

As the case demands.

These four winning ways make the world go round,
 As the lynchpin in a moving car.
 If these in the world exist not,
 Neither mother nor father will receive,
 Respect and honour from their children.

Since these four winning ways
 The wise appraise in every way;
 To eminence they attain,
 And praise they rightly gain.”

When we read these words of advice they may seem simple to us, but how difficult it is to follow them all the time. There are more conditions for unwholesome moments of consciousness (akusala cittas) than for wholesome moments of consciousness (kusala cittas) in a day ⁷. The more one sees one’s lack of kusala, the more one realizes that it is important to know oneself, to know precisely the different moments of consciousness which arise.

Kusala citta and akusala citta arise because of their appropriate conditions and nobody can cause the arising of kusala at will. Understanding can be developed so that they can be seen as they are, as non-self. This understanding will eventually lead to the elimination of akusala.

⁷ What we take for ‘our mind’ are different moments of consciousness, citta, which arise and then fall away immediately, succeeding one another. Cittas can be kusala, akusala, vipāka (result of kamma), or kiriya (neither cause, namely kusala or akusala, nor result).

Chapter 2.

Kusala and Akusala.

The Buddha taught many different ways of kusala and one of these ways is generosity (dāna). We should cultivate generosity, but do we know when there is true generosity?

Generosity does not last. There is no abiding mind, no self who is generous. There are only fleeting moments of consciousness which change all the time. Citta, a moment of consciousness, arises and falls away immediately, and then it is succeeded by the next citta. Many different types of citta arise and fall away, succeeding one another. Generosity arises with kusala citta, wholesome consciousness, and this does not stay; it falls away immediately, to be succeeded by the next citta. Akusala citta, unwholesome consciousness, may follow shortly after the kusala citta, but we do not notice this. Akusala citta cannot arise at the same time as kusala citta, because only one citta can arise at a time. Attachment or clinging, which is unwholesome, and generosity cannot arise at the same time, but attachment may follow shortly after generosity has fallen away.

There is very little generosity in a day. From the time we are waking up until we go to sleep we are trying to obtain things for ourselves. How few are the moments we are giving things away instead of trying to obtain them for ourselves. Do we know exactly at which moment there is generosity? We may take for generosity what is actually attachment. Do we know when attachment arises to the person who receives our gift, attachment to the thing we give, attachment to our wholesome deed? We cling to the pleasant feeling we derive from giving and we do not even notice that there is clinging. We may cling to an idea of “my giving”, we take kusala for “self”.

Many more moments of attachment arise than we could imagine. We may think that attachment arises only when we want to possess things, when we are greedy. But there are many forms of attachment, some of which are gross and some more subtle. Don't we very often, after we have seen something, cling to what we have seen? Do we cling to seeing or to our eyes? We would not want to part with an eye or lose the ability to see. That shows that there is attachment. Attachment is bound to arise after we have seen, heard, smelt, tasted, and experienced objects through the bodysense, and also when we experience objects through the mind-door.

One may wonder what the term “door” means. A door is the means through which citta experiences an object. Seeing experiences visible object through the eye-door. The eye-door is the eyesense, a physical phenomenon, rūpa, which is capable of receiving visible object. Eyesense itself does not see but it is a condition for seeing. There are six doors of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodysense and mind-door. There is no self who experiences objects through these doorways. There are only different cittas, succeeding one another, which experience an object through one of the six doors.

Attachment, aversion and ignorance can arise on account of what is experienced through each of the six doors. Often we take akusala citta for kusala citta. For example, I was helping someone to get buckets of water for an old lady. While I was helping I talked about the Dhamma, but many moments of attachment arose to “my kusala”. When people in the temple wished me well and showed their appreciation of kusala, I appreciated their generosity, but I was immediately attached to these kind people and to “my kusala”. Since different cittas succeed one another so rapidly, it is extremely difficult to know precisely when the citta is kusala and when akusala. It is the function of paññā, wisdom, to know this. We are so ignorant, and ignorance covers up the truth. When the citta is kusala, there is no attachment, no aversion and no ignorance.

When we come to know ourselves more, we learn that even kusala such as dāna can condition attachment. We can come to know when we cling to a pleasant result of our good deed, such as a happy rebirth. Or we may realize when conceit arises about our good deed: we may think ourselves better than other people. One has to develop right understanding in order to know the difference between kusala and akusala.

Right understanding or wisdom does not always accompany kusala citta. For example, one may help others because it is one’s nature to do so, without there being right understanding with the kusala citta. One may not know precisely when kusala citta arises and when akusala citta. Someone may offer food to the monks or offer flowers in the temple because these are good traditions he was taught to observe, but the kusala citta may not be accompanied by right understanding. Kusala citta does not stay. It falls away and then akusala citta is bound to arise. It is difficult to know this without right understanding of kusala and akusala. Someone may think that kusala cittas arise all the time when he is in the temple or when he is helping others, but in reality many moments of akusala cittas arise without our knowing it.

During the sessions we spoke about mettā, loving kindness, and karuṇā, compassion. We may think that there is pure loving kindness while there are actually many moments of attachment to people. Are we sure when there is true compassion? We may take for compassion what is aversion. For example, when we see someone kicking a dog, aversion is bound to arise. When true compassion arises, there cannot be aversion at the same time. The kusala citta with compassion is without attachment and without aversion.

Venerable Dhammadharo said that it is a “healthy shock” to see that akusala citta arises more often than kusala citta. More knowledge of the truth about ourselves shakes us up and it reminds us to develop right understanding in order to know more precisely when kusala citta arises and when akusala citta.

Sīla, morality, is another way of kusala the Buddha taught. Abstaining from ill deeds through body, speech and mind is kusala sīla. Paying respect to those who deserve respect and helping others are included in sīla as well. Especially during the sessions

in Anurādhapura people asked many questions concerning the practice of sīla. Someone who had a military profession asked whether it is akusala to follow up the order to kill. Acharn Sujin asked him, “Did you want to kill, or did you have to kill?” There is a difference here. Killing is akusala kamma, an unwholesome deed, but akusala kamma has many degrees. When one wishes wholeheartedly to kill, the degree of akusala is higher than when one follows up orders.

Those who have not attained enlightenment, should not believe that they will never neglect the five precepts. The tendencies to all kinds of akusala are latent in us and when an opportunity presents itself, we may commit akusala kamma. Someone may for a long time not be in a situation to kill, but when he is in very difficult circumstances, does he know for sure that he will not kill? One may, for instance, kill insects because guests are coming to one’s house.

A police officer asked whether he could do his duties with kusala citta. Acharn Sujin said that in his profession there are many opportunities for helping: helping to keep order, helping people who are in trouble. A judge asked whether one commits akusala kamma when one has to condemn someone to death. One has to follow the law. While someone signs the verdict he commits not necessarily akusala kamma, but he is likely to have akusala citta at such a moment.

One afternoon the judge and his family had come to meet venerable Dhammadharao while we were sitting under a tree in the area of the “Mahā Vihara”, the Great Monastery, which is between the “Ruwanelisāya”, the Great Stupa, and the Bodhi-Tree. We found this place where the Dhamma was discussed in olden times very suitable for a conversation about the Dhamma. Venerable Dhammadharo spoke about the danger of ambitions in life. They may cause the arising of many akusala cittas and even akusala kamma, such as telling a lie in order to attain one’s goal. The receiving of pleasant objects such as honour and esteem are the result of kusala kamma; they can never be the result of akusala kamma. Without right understanding we do not know when kusala citta arises and when akusala citta, and we do not know how to develop kusala. Thus, we are enslaved to our many defilements.

The judge gave some money to a poor woman who came around to our group. Acharn Sujin said: “This moment of giving is conditioned. If there were no conditions for giving there could not be any giving.” It is useful to be reminded that there is no “self” who gives, that there is no person in the giving. At the moment of generosity there is only a citta that arises because of conditions. Giving in the past is a condition for giving today. The citta that is generous arises and then falls away, it does not stay. However, that moment of generosity is a condition for generosity again, later on. Since each citta conditions the succeeding one, good and bad tendencies can be carried on from moment to moment, from life to life.

Abstaining from wrong speech is a form of sīla. We understand this in theory, but do we remember it in our daily life, when we are about to say something unpleasant? For

example, someone may suggest a plan to us which does not conform to our wishes. Are we impatient and do we say straight away that we do not like his plan, or are we patient and do we abstain from unpleasant speech out of consideration for his feelings? We may know that when we shout there is wrong speech; that is very obvious. But do we realize that there is also wrong speech when we speak with lack of consideration for someone else's feelings, even though we do not shout? Showing one's dislike through speech is speech motivated by aversion. How can that be right speech? Even not saying anything, but keeping quiet with aversion when we do not agree with someone else is not kusala citta abstaining from wrong speech.

In the suttas we read about gentle speech. For example, in the "Lesser Simile of the Elephant's Footprint", the sutta Mahinda preached to King Devanampiya Tissa, we read about gentle speech:

"... Abandoning harsh speech, he is one who abstains from harsh speech. Whatever speech is gentle, pleasing to the ear, affectionate, going to the heart, urbane, pleasant to manyfolk, agreeable to the manyfolk- he comes to be one who utters speech like this..."

Venerable Dhammadharo told me about an event which I find an excellent reminder to be patient in one's speech. One night the bhikkhus had no microphone during the Dhamma session and whenever they wanted to speak they had to wait for the microphone being handed over to them. They all found this waiting very helpful. If one speaks straight away one may speak with akusala citta when one does not agree with someone else's words. If one has to wait one has time to collect oneself. How difficult it is to always speak with kusala citta. Even when the topic is Dhamma one may have attachment to one's own words and ideas, one may be proud of one's knowledge, or one may have aversion towards what others say. When akusala citta motivates our speech, we cannot be of great help to others, even when the topic is Dhamma. Thus we see that right understanding of our different cittas is most helpful for the development of kusala.

Chapter 3.

Tranquil Meditation.

Dāna and sīla can be performed without right understanding or with right understanding. When they are performed with right understanding they are of a higher degree of kusala. Bhāvanā, mental development, is another way of kusala, but mental development is not possible without right understanding.

There are two kinds of mental development: samatha bhāvanā or tranquil meditation, and vipassanā bhāvanā or the development of insight. For both forms of mental development right understanding is indispensable, but the right understanding in samatha is different from the right understanding in vipassanā. Samatha and vipassanā have different aims and their ways of development are different. The aim of samatha is calm. In samatha defilements are temporarily subdued, but they cannot be eradicated.

Samatha is a way of cultivating kusala citta. Those who see the disadvantage of akusala want to develop more conditions for kusala. There are not always opportunities for dāna and sīla, but if one has understood how to develop samatha, there are conditions for calm, even in one's daily life.

What is calm? Is it enjoyment of nature, listening to the bird's song, being in quiet surroundings? What we in conventional language call "calm" is not the same as the calm that is developed in samatha. The calm that is developed in samatha has to be wholesome; samatha is a way of mental development. When attachment arises, there is no calm. One may have attachment to silence and if right understanding is not developed, one is likely to take for wholesome calm what is not really wholesome calm. One may think, when there is neither pleasant feeling nor unpleasant feeling, but indifferent feeling, that there must be calm. Indifferent feeling can arise with kusala citta, but also with akusala citta. It can arise with the citta that is rooted in attachment (lobha-mūlacitta) and it arises always with the citta that is rooted in ignorance (moha-mūlacitta). Since it is extremely difficult to know exactly when the citta is kusala and when it is akusala, a fine discrimination of one's citta is necessary for the development of samatha. Thus, we see that right understanding is indispensable.

Calm arises with every kusala citta. When we are generous or observe sīla, we are free from attachment (lobha), aversion (dosa) and ignorance (moha), and that is calm. If someone has right understanding of the characteristic of calm there can be conditions for more calm and, thus, calm can develop. The understanding that is needed in samatha is not merely theoretical understanding. One has to know the characteristic of calm when it appears and one has to know precisely when the citta is kusala and when it is akusala.

During the sessions we discussed many times the word "meditation". This word is misleading. Generally people think that sitting in a quiet place and trying very hard to concentrate is tranquil meditation or samatha. One may try very hard to concentrate, but which types of citta arise at such moments? Does one concentrate with aversion, because concentration is hard to achieve? Does one concentrate with attachment and with ignorance? Wrong view may arise when one thinks of "my concentration".

We should remember that concentration or "one-pointedness" (ekaggatā cetasika) arises with every citta. Its function is to focus on one object. When seeing arises,

there is concentration on visible object. When aversion arises, there is concentration on the object of aversion. When someone performs dāna or observes sīla, there is concentration on the objects or dāna or sīla. When someone develops samatha, there is concentration on the subject of samatha. Right understanding of the meditation subject of samatha can be a condition for more calm, and then there will be concentration which is kusala. There will be a higher degree of concentration, without the need to strive for concentration. If someone strives for concentration he is bound to have attachment or aversion. If a person is able to develop samatha this is due to conditions.

Calm has many degrees. In the Buddha's time many people had conditions for the attainment of jhāna, absorption concentration. At the moment of jhānacitta sense-impressions do not arise, and attachment, aversion and ignorance are temporarily subdued.

Can calm arise in daily life? When someone does not lead a secluded life and he does not have accumulated skill for the attainment of jhāna, he can still have moments of calm in daily life. The "Visuddhimagga" (Ch IV-XII) describes forty meditation subjects of samatha. It depends on the inclinations of the individual which of these subjects can be a condition for calm.

The contemplation of a corpse, which is among the subjects of of samatha, can for some people be a condition for aversion. But if one thinks of this subject with right understanding there can be conditions for kusala citta with calm. We may realize that our body now is not different from a corpse: it consists of rūpas, physical phenomena, which do not know anything and which are impermanent.

Mindfulness of breath is another subject among the forty meditation subjects (kammañhāna). The "Visuddhimagga" explains that this subject is extremely difficult, one of the most difficult subjects. One should have right understanding of breath, otherwise calm cannot arise. What we call breath is rūpa which is conditioned by citta. Bodily phenomena can be conditioned by kamma, by citta, by temperature or by nutrition.

We cling to life, to our body, to our possessions. However, our life depends on breath, which is only a rūpa. So long as we are breathing in and out we are alive, but when we breathe out for the last time that is the end of this life. Of what use are then our possessions to us, of what use are all the things we are clinging to? If one has accumulated conditions to be mindful of breath with right understanding there can be moments of calm. Depending on one's accumulated skill, jhāna can be attained through the development of this meditation subject. However, if mindfulness of breath is not developed in the right way it is not bhāvanā. Without precise knowledge of the moments of akusala citta and of kusala citta, one is bound to take for bhāvanā what is not bhāvanā. Do we like our breath and do we have desire to watch it, because that gives us a pleasant sensation? That is not calm but clinging. Breath is

very subtle and not everyone is able to be mindful of it. It is hard to know when it is breath, the rúpa conditioned by citta, which appears, and when it is something else we take for breath. Breath can be perceived where it touches the nosetip or the upperlip. Following the movement of the abdomen is not mindfulness of breath. If one has no conditions to develop calm with this meditation subject, one should not force oneself to develop it. For the development of samatha one should choose the right subject, that is, the subject which can condition kusala citta with calm. It depends on the individual which subject is suitable. That is why there are forty meditation subjects of samatha.

The recollection of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha are also subjects of samatha. One may pay respect to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha because one has been taught to do so, without right understanding of the virtues of the Buddha and of his teaching. The citta may be kusala, but without right understanding there is no mental development. Right understanding of the object of calm is necessary for its development. Right understanding of the Buddha's virtues and of his teachings are conditions for citta to be calm, free from lobha, dosa and moha. Such moments can occur in daily life, it is not necessary to go to a quiet place. It is right understanding which is indispensable, and if this is lacking, a quiet place will not induce calm. If one sits in front of a Buddha statue and repeats the word "Buddha" without right understanding, kusala citta may arise, but this is not mental development, bhāvanā.

The "brahmavihāras" (divine abidings) of loving kindness (mettā), compassion (karuṇā), sympathetic joy (muditā) and equanimity (upekkhā) are subjects of samatha, but they cannot be developed without right understanding of the characteristics of these virtues. One may recite the "Karaniya Mettā Sutta" in the morning, but, if one does not develop mettā when one is in the company of other people, can one know the characteristic of mettā? If one does not know the characteristic of mettā how can one develop it as a subject of samatha?

When we are in the company of other people we should develop mettā and we should find out when there is attachment which is akusala and when there is mettā which is kusala. The difference between attachment and metta should be known very precisely.

One may wonder whether it is possible to develop mettā towards one's relatives. Is attachment to them not bound to arise? We can develop mettā towards them if we do not see them as members of "our family" who belong to us, but as human beings whom we would like to treat with kindness and thoughtfulness.

When true loving kindness, true compassion or the other brahmavihāras arise, calm can be developed with these subjects and then calm can increase. That is bhāvanā.

Another meditation subject is "Parts of the Body": "Hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin..." Are there no parts of the body appearing during the day?

Instead of having attachment or aversion right understanding of this subject can be developed so that there are conditions for calm. We are attached to the body and we think that it is beautiful, but when we consider the “Parts of the Body”, we can be reminded that what we take for “our beautiful body” are only elements. When we wash our hair or cut our nails, moments of calm can arise while considering “Parts of the Body” as mere elements that do not belong to us.

We may have thought that calm can be developed only when one leads a secluded life. We read in the scriptures that many monks in the Buddha’s time lived in the forest. This does not mean that everybody has to go to the forest or to a secluded place which is quiet in order to develop calm. Monks who lived in the forest did so because it was natural for them, it was their inclination. They developed samatha to a high degree and they could attain jhāna because they had conditions for such a high degree of calm. Before the Buddha’s enlightenment samatha was the highest form of kusala. The Buddha taught people to understand jhānacitta as a conditioned element which is not self.

It is beneficial to consider the meditation subjects of samatha. Some of them can condition moments of calm in daily life. However, there is no rule that everybody has to develop calm. It all depends on the individual whether or not he has conditions for the development of calm. Right understanding is necessary in samatha. The right understanding in samatha knows the difference between kusala citta and akusala citta very precisely and it knows the right conditions for calm. Samatha is a way to be temporarily freed from lobha, dosa and moha but through samatha defilements are not eradicated. Only the right understanding developed in vipassanā sees realities as they are: as impermanent, dukkha (suffering) and anattā (non-self). Through vipassanā the wrong view of self and the other defilements can be eradicated.

Chapter 4.

Realities and Concepts.

The right understanding which is developed in vipassanā sees realities as they are: impermanent, dukkha and anattā. This understanding has to be developed, it cannot arise without conditions.

We have accumulated such a great deal of ignorance and wrong view during countless lives. From the teachings we have learnt that seeing is not self, that hearing is not self, that all realities are not self. However, when seeing has arisen, do we know it as it is, or do we still have an idea of self who sees? Is it still “my seeing”? Do we still have an idea of my hearing, my thinking, my feeling, my attachment, my kusala?

The Buddha spoke about all the phenomena which are experienced through the six doorways of eyes, ears, nose, tongue, bodysense and mind-door. He spoke about seeing and visible object, hearing and sound and about all the other phenomena.

We read in the “Kindred Sayings”(IV, Saïāyatanavagga, Kindred Sayings on Sense, Ch III, § 23):

“Monks, I will teach you the all. Do you listen to it. And what, monks, is the all? It is eye and object, ear and sound, nose and scent, tongue and savour, body and things tangible, mind and mental objects (dhammas). That, monks, is called ‘the all’.

Whoso, monks, should say: ‘Rejecting this all, I will proclaim another all’- it would be mere talk on his part, and when questioned he could not make good his boast, and further would come to an ill pass. Why so? Because, monks, it would be beyond his scope to do so.”

Besides the realities which can be experienced through the six doors, there are no other realities. We read in § 25 of the same section:

“I will teach you a teaching, monks, for the abandoning of the all by fully knowing, by comprehending it. Do you listen to it. And what, monks, is that teaching?

The eye, monks, must be abandoned by fully knowing, by comprehending it. Objects... eye-consciousness... eye-contact... that pleasant feeling, unpleasant feeling or neutral feeling... that also must be abandoned by fully knowing, by comprehending it.

The tongue, savours... The mind... mindstates... that pleasant feeling, unpleasant feeling or neutral feeling... that also must be must be abandoned by fully knowing, by comprehending it.”

All these phenomena are elements which arise and fall away, they are not beings or things which stay. Seeing is not a person, not self, it is a moment of consciousness, a citta, which arises, performs the function of seeing and then falls away immediately.

We are not master of seeing, seeing does not belong to us. Seeing can arise only when there are the right conditions for it. Eyesense is a condition for seeing. If there is no eyesense, seeing cannot arise. Are we master of our eyesense? Did we create our eyesense? Visible object is another condition for seeing. When there is no visible object there cannot be seeing. All phenomena in ourselves and around ourselves can arise only when there are the appropriate conditions for their arising. Without the right conditions they cannot arise. We cannot control phenomena. Do we think that we are master of our mind and of our body? Can we prevent them from changing all the time? What we take for mind are only mental phenomena which arise because of

conditions and fall away immediately. What we take for body are only different bodily phenomena which arise because of conditions and fall away again.

What we call “life” or “the world” are only mental phenomena, *nāma*, phenomena that can experience objects, and physical phenomena, *rúpa*, phenomena that cannot experience any object. Seeing is a mental phenomenon, it experiences visible object. Feeling is a mental phenomenon, it feels. Visible object is a physical phenomenon, it cannot experience any object.

Someone asked whether one cannot call *nāma* “subject” and *rúpa* “object”. *Nāma* can also be an object that is experienced. *Nāma* can experience both *nāma* and *rúpa*. *Nāma* can experience another *nāma*. For instance, can attachment or feeling which are *nāmas* not be noticed by another *nāma*? Thus, the terms “subject” and “object” cannot be of any use to understand *nāma* and *rúpa*.

It may seem complicated to classify all the phenomena within ourselves and around ourselves as *nāma* and *rúpa*. But is this actually not more simple than all the different names and values we attach in conventional language to these phenomena? “Satipaṭṭhāna, mindfulness of *nāma* and *rúpa* ‘uncomplicates’ our life”, Venerable Dhammadhara said.

We try to build up a synthetic vision of Buddhism, “our vision”. We try to fit our own philosophy or the scientific terms we have learnt into Buddhism. Don’t we try to make Buddhism into something which matches our view of life and “our world”? Why don’t we forget for a moment all we have learnt, all these thoughts, and study through direct experience any reality which appears now? Only in that way can we verify what is real.

All phenomena are either *nāma* or *rúpa*. Theoretical understanding of *nāma* and *rúpa* is not enough, it does not bring detachment from the concept of “self”. We have to know *nāma* and *rúpa* as they are through direct experience. What does that mean? We have to know them when they appear, one at a time, right now. That is the only way to see them as they are, as not self.

What should be known in vipassanā through direct experience? Can a person be known through direct experience? Can hardness be known through direct experience? These are important questions which we discussed.

Hardness can be directly experienced through the bodysense when it appears. Is there no hardness now, impinging on the bodysense? We do not have to think of hardness or name it in order to experience it. Hardness is real, it is a physical phenomenon, a *rúpa*, which can be directly experienced.

Can a chair be experienced through the bodysense? We think that we can touch a chair, but what is actually experienced? Hardness or softness can be directly experienced. A chair cannot be directly experienced, it is only an idea we form up in

our minds. Thinking can think of many objects, it can think of realities and also of concepts which are not real. When we think that we see a person, it is not seeing, but it is thinking of a concept. Only visible object can be experienced through the eyesense. When we touch what we take for a person, what appears? Hardness, softness, heat or cold can be directly experienced through the bodysense, not a person. The Buddha taught that there is no person, no self. But we have accumulated so much ignorance and wrong view that it seems that we see and touch people.

We may find it difficult to understand that there are in the absolute sense no people. There are no people, but this does not mean that there are no realities. What we take for people are different mental phenomena and physical phenomena which arise and fall away. There are realities such as seeing, thinking or generosity, but they are not people; they do not stay. When we think that a person is generous, it is in reality a moment of consciousness which is generous. It arises because of conditions and then it falls away. "Why do we always insert a person in the giving when giving occurs", Acharn Sujin said.

When seeing arises, no person sees, only a moment of consciousness arises and falls away. Venerable Dhammadharo said: "Seeing has no father or mother, it has no name or address, it cannot walk or sit." This simple example makes it clear that it is very unrealistic, even foolish, to believe in the existence of a person.

Through vipassanā one can come to know what is real and what is not real. Concepts are not objects of mindfulness in vipassanā since they are not real. A person or a chair is a concept we can think of, but it is not a reality that can be directly experienced. Seeing is a reality with its own inalterable characteristic that can be directly experienced when it appears. One may change the name seeing, but its characteristic cannot be altered; it experiences visible object, no matter how one names it. The same is true for visible object, attachment or generosity. They are realities, not concepts and when they appear one at a time right understanding of them can be developed.

What is mindfulness in vipassanā? This was another topic of our discussions. Is being mindful of an object the same as being conscious of an object? For example, when one is conscious of hardness does that mean that one is mindful of hardness?

Mindfulness, in Pāli: sati, arises with every sobhana citta (beautiful consciousness). Sati is wholesome, it is non-forgetful of what is wholesome. There are many levels of sati. There is sati of the level of dāna. The kusala citta that performs dāna could not arise without sati. There is sati with sīla. When kusala citta arises which observes sīla it is accompanied by sati. The kusala citta which develops samatha is accompanied by sati which is aware of the object of samatha.

The kusala citta which develops vipassanā is accompanied by sati. Sati in vipassanā is mindful of nāma or rūpa which appears right now through one of the six doors. The

object of mindfulness in vipassanā can be visible object, seeing, sound, hearing, thinking, or any other reality which appears at the present moment. We should first have more understanding of the object of sati so that the function of sati in vipassanā will become more evident.

Sati in vipassanā is mindful of the reality appearing at the present moment. What is the meaning of “present moment”? When hearing arises, hearing itself is not accompanied by sati, it has only the function of hearing. But when it has just fallen away, the characteristic of hearing can be the object of mindfulness. Can there not be mindfulness of hearing right now? Mindfulness accompanies kusala citta, but even akusala citta can be the object of mindfulness. For example, citta with dislike can be the object of mindfulness. The dislike has fallen away when the citta with mindfulness arises, but can the characteristic of dislike not appear to sati? Dislike is different from like or from seeing.

Being mindful of a reality is not the same as being conscious of an object. When, for example, hardness impinges on the bodysense, a citta arises which merely experiences hardness, it has the function of experiencing hardness. This type of citta does not like or dislike the object, neither can it have right understanding of it. Shortly after this citta has fallen away, akusala cittas or kusala cittas arise. If there are conditions for kusala citta with mindfulness of the object, the characteristic of that object can be investigated, so that right understanding can develop. Right understanding cannot arise immediately, it has to be developed little by little through mindfulness. We used to study only by reading, listening or thinking. Study with mindfulness is different: it is study through the direct experience of the characteristics of nāma and rūpa as they appear one at a time. Acharn Sujin often said: “Without study paññā (wisdom) cannot grow”.

Only one reality at a time can be the object of sati. Can we experience more than one object at a time? It seems that we can see and hear at the same time. But each citta which arises can experience only one object and then it falls away, to be succeeded by the next citta. Seeing experiences visible object through the eye-door and then falls away. Hearing is completely different from seeing, it experiences sound through the ear-door and then falls away. Since cittas arise and fall away very rapidly it seems that seeing and hearing last for a while and that they can occur at the same time, but that is not so.

Is there no seeing or hearing now? There is often forgetfulness, no “study” of any reality. Hardness impinges on the bodysense time and again, but hardness is not investigated so that it is known as only a reality, a kind of rūpa. When we touch something which is hard we have no doubt that it is hard; even a child can know this. But is the characteristic of hardness understood as only a rūpa, not mixed up with a concept of a finger or a chair which is hard? When we think that we experience a “whole” such as a finger or a chair, it shows that there is no mindfulness of a reality as it appears through one of the six doors. We may experience hardness many times

with attachment, with aversion and with ignorance. Sometimes sati may arise and then the characteristic of hardness can be investigated so that right understanding can develop. From the foregoing examples we can see that mindfulness or awareness in vipassanā is not the same as what we mean in conventional language by “awareness” of something or being consciousness of something.

Chapter 5.

The Objects of Mindfulness.

Any reality which appears now can be the object of mindfulness in vipassanā. Does seeing arise now? That can be object of mindfulness. Does hearing arise now? That can be object of mindfulness.

We had many discussions about seeing, visible object and thinking of what is seen, because we all are inclined to confuse different realities. In vipassanā a very precise understanding of the different realities has to be developed.

Seeing is a mental phenomenon, it experiences visible object. Visible object is that which is seen, which is experienced through the eyesense. We can call it visible object or colour, it does not matter how we call it, but its characteristic can be known when it appears through the eyes. When we pay attention to the shape and form of what we see, when we perceive a person or a particular thing, it is not seeing. Because of remembrance of past experiences we form up concepts such as “person” or “chair”. It seems that there is a long moment of seeing and that seeing sees people

and things, but seeing falls away immediately and it is succeeded by other types of cittas. Cittas succeed one another very rapidly.

When we recognize different colours such as red and blue, it is again remembrance of concepts. Seeing is only the experience of what appears through the eyesense. This does not mean that visible object is without any colour. When visible object is the object of mindfulness, it does not change into something else. It is visible object that appears. “It appears now”, Acharn Sujin reminded us time and again.

Visible object appears now, when our eyes are open. We may think of something or someone, but that is not the experience of visible object, since visible object appears through the eyesense. Do we believe that we see a chair or a person? Venerable Dhammadharo remarked that visible object has no arms or legs, that one cannot carry it away. Visible object can only be seen, it cannot be touched.

When visible object appears, there must also be seeing. Seeing is a mental phenomenon, it is a type of nāma that sees. There is no self who sees. Seeing can only see, it cannot hear, it cannot think. Seeing which is a mental phenomenon is different from visible object which is a physical phenomenon. Mindfulness can be aware of seeing or visible object, but only of one reality at a time. In that way their different characteristics can gradually be known as they are.

Several people found the discussions about seeing and visible object, hearing and sound too academical. Why do we have to know these realities?

Are seeing and hearing not part of our life? We see and hear pleasant and unpleasant objects, and soon after seeing or hearing has fallen away, attachment, aversion and ignorance are bound to arise. We are very ignorant of seeing, hearing and all the other phenomena of our life. If there is no understanding of realities such as seeing and visible object we shall continue to cling to concepts of “I” and of “this or that person”, and that will cause us much trouble.

Venerable Dhammadharo said: “We think of that terrible man next door, but if a brief moment of mindfulness can arise, we shall know that what is seen is not that man, only visible object.” In reality no person exists. Through the eyesense only visible object can be seen. When we touch someone, hardness, softness, heat or cold may appear, but no person. All these characteristics can be investigated in order to know them as they are: only fleeting elements, devoid of self.

We read in the “Lesser Discourse on the Simile of the Elephant’s Footprint” (Middle Length Sayings I, no. 27) about the monk who is mindful:

“... Having seen visible object with the eye, he is not entranced by the general appearance, he is not entranced by the detail. If he dwells with this organ of sight uncontrolled, covetousness and dejection, evil unskilled states of mind might predominate. So he fares along controlling it; he guards the organ of sight, he comes

to control over the organ of sight. Having heard a sound with the ear... Having smelt a smell with the nose... Having savoured a taste with the tongue... Having felt a touch with the body... Having cognized a mental object with the mind, he is not entranced by the general appearance, he is not entranced by the detail. If he lives with this organ of mind uncontrolled, covetousness and dejection, evil unskilled states of mind might predominate. So he fares along controlling it; he guards the organ of mind, he comes to control over the organ of mind. If he is possessed of this ariyan control of the (sense-) organs, he subjectively experiences unsullied well-being.”

When we hear the word “control” we may think of a self who controls. How-ever, sati, not self, “guards” the six doors.

Should one prepare for vipassanā? Should one sit in a quiet place in order to become calm first, before one can study the nāmas and rūpas which appear? We have seen that there is calm in samatha and that right understanding of the meditation subject can condition calm. In vipassanā there is also calm and it is conditioned by right understanding. The right understanding in vipassanā is different from the right understanding in samatha. Through the development of vipassanā one will see nāmas and rūpas as they are, as not self. When there is right understanding of the reality which appears calm arises at that moment, there is no need to strive for it. Trying to become calm as a preparation for vipassanā is not the right condition for the arising of mindfulness and understanding of the realities that appear. Intellectual understanding of nāma and rūpa and of the development of vipassanā can be a condition for direct understanding of realities later on.

Intellectual understanding of nāma and rūpa is different from the direct experience of their characteristics and one should know this difference. It is important to know when there is sati and when there is no sati. If we have correct understanding of sati, it can develop.

Many realities are appearing, such as seeing, hearing, attachment, hardness or heat, but mostly there is forgetfulness, no study of realities. When there are the right conditions for sati, it may arise, just for a moment, and it can begin to be aware of one reality at a time. We may try to explain in many ways what sati is, but it can only be known from experience, when it has actually arisen already. Sati is not self, we cannot be master of sati. Sati cannot arise when-ever we want it to arise, and for as long as we wish, it is beyond control. It can arise only when there are the right conditions for its arising. When we listen to the Dhamma as it is explained by the good friend in Dhamma, when we consider what we have heard, ask questions and discuss Dhamma, our intellectual understanding will grow and this can condition right mindfulness. We should know that also intellectual understanding is not self, that it arises because of conditions. It can arise only when we have listened to the Dhamma already and pondered over it for a long time, and when there is steadfast remembrance of what we have heard.

We read in the “Gradual Sayings” (Book of the Tens, Ch VIII, § 3) about ten ‘helps’, helpful conditions, to obtain ten desirable aims:

“Energy and exertion are helps to getting wealth. Finery and adornment are helps to beauty. Seasonable action is a help to health. A lovely friendship is a help to virtues. Restraint of the sense-faculties is a help to the Brahma-life. Not quarreling is a help to friendship. Repetition is a help to much knowledge. Lending an ear and asking questions are helps to wisdom. Study and examination are helps to dhammas. Right faring is a help to the heaven worlds.

These are the ten helps to these ten things which are desirable, dear, charming, hard to win in the world. “

We see that listening and asking questions are important for the development of wisdom. In the same sutta it is said: “Not to lend an ear and ask questions is an obstacle to wisdom”. Study and examination are helpful conditions for dhammas. The commentary to this sutta, the “Manorathapúraní” adds that by “dhammas” is meant the nine lokuttara dhammas, namely the eight lokuttara cittas and nibbāna⁸. If one continues to investigate the realities that appear, paññā develops and eventually enlightenment can be attained.

Venerable Dhammadharo remarked that we should not cling to an idea of self who is going to practise and will then attain enlightenment quickly. He said: “Then we are stuck with the idea of self. We cannot say, come on sati, come on paññā.” Are we not sometimes behaving as if we could induce them?

Even if sati arises we cannot keep it, it arises and falls away. “It may be followed by excruciating doubt”, venerable Dhammadharo said. Who knows the next moment? Realities arise because of conditions and then fall away. We never know what will happen the next moment. How could we then plan to have sati and how could we plan what to be aware of?

It is unpredictable when sati will arise and of what it will be aware. When we recognize something there must have been many different cittas which arose and fell away. Seeing which experiences only visible object is one reality, it is different from recognizing someone. When we recognize someone we think of a concept, but there must also be seeing in order to recognize someone. One may wonder whether sati should not be aware of seeing first and then of thinking. There is no rule, no specific order. We cannot plan of what object there will be awareness, sati is not self.

Seeing is different from visible object and one may wonder how one can separate seeing from visible object, they seem to appear together. There is no self who can

⁸ At each of the four stages of enlightenment two types of lokuttara cittas arise: the magga-citta or path-consciousness, which is lokuttara kusala citta, and the phala-citta or fruition, which is lokuttara vipākacitta. These eight lokuttara cittas experience nibbāna.

separate seeing from visible object. Sati can be aware sometimes of seeing, sometimes of visible object. One characteristic at a time can be investigated and in that way right understanding can know the difference between nāma and rúpa. If one thinks that one can experience seeing and visible object at the same time it shows that there is no mindfulness. When one thinks of a “whole” of impressions, the object is a concept, not a reality.

The impermanence of nāma and rúpa, their arising and falling away, can be known by paññā only after a more precise understanding of them has been developed. One may wonder why the arising and falling away of realities cannot be experienced before nāma can be distinguished from rúpa. Why should one first distinguish visible object from seeing or sound from hearing? Many different realities appear and disappear. Seeing arises and then hearing, and then other realities appear and disappear. Is that not the experience of impermanence?

That is only thinking about impermanence, not the direct understanding of the arising and falling away of nāma and rúpa. “If one still takes seeing and visible object together, as a ‘whole’, what arises and falls away?”, Acharn Sujin asked. What exactly arises and fall away? Is it seeing or visible object? Only one object can be experienced at a time.

The first stage of insight is directly knowing the difference between the characteristics of nāma and rúpa. The arising and falling away of nāma and rúpa can be realized at a later stage. First their different characteristics have to be investigated. “If you do not ‘study’ seeing and visible object now, don’t think that you can become a sotāpanna”, Acharn Sujin said.

Chapter 6.

Right Understanding.

In Kandy the venerable Piyadassi Thera was leading the discussions with mettā and a great deal of patience. He understood which terms used in the discussions people would find difficult and therefore he asked for more precise definitions. “Right understanding” was one of the terms he asked us to explain.

What is right understanding? There are many levels of right understanding, in Pali: sammā-diñhi, which is the cetasika (mental factor) of amoha (non-delusion) or paññā. When we are generous, the kusala citta may arise with or without right understanding. We may give because it is our nature to give, without any understanding of what kusala is, what kamma and vipāka (deeds and their results) are. We may also give with right understanding of cause and effect. It is the same with the kusala that observes sīla: it may arise with or without right understanding.

As we have seen, the citta which develops samatha must always be accompanied by right understanding. One should have right understanding of the meditation subject of samatha. This subject should be the right condition for the citta to become calm, to become temporarily free from attachment, aversion and ignorance. Right understanding of the level of samatha knows the difference between kusala citta and akusala citta and it knows when these types of citta arise. However, it does not know kusala citta, akusala citta and the other phenomena as they are: as elements devoid of self.

The right understanding developed in vipassanā is of a higher level: it sees nāma and rūpa as not self. This kind of understanding will be able to eradicate wrong view and

the other defilements. Right understanding developed in vipassanā sees, for example, visible object as only a reality, no thing or being in it. It sees visible object as not self. The belief in a “self” is wrong view. So long as paññā has not eradicated wrong view we are inclined to take realities for self.

We may have intellectual understanding of the truth but it is still difficult to realize visible object as only a rūpa when it appears. We have to be mindful of visible object when it appears, of seeing when it appears and of all the other phenomena over and over again, during countless lives. We may remind ourselves that it is not a person, not a thing which is seen. That is intellectual understanding and we should know that it is not direct understanding of the reality that appears. Intellectual understanding arises because we listened to the Dhamma; it is conditioned, not self. Intellectual understanding is a condition for the arising of sati. When sati arises, the realities which appear can be investigated. Acharn Sujin reminded us many times: “Is there no seeing now? Study it. Otherwise paññā cannot grow.”

The word “study” is a translation of the Pāli term “sikkhā”. Sikkhā can also be translated as “training”. The word “study” can remind us that the reality appearing at the present moment should be investigated so that it can be seen as a mere conditioned dhamma, a nāma or a rūpa. The word “study” can be a reminder that right understanding is only beginning to develop and that realities have to be studied countless times before realities can be seen as they are. There are many degrees of right understanding and it develops very gradually.

We should not be discouraged that mindfulness and understanding seldom arise. The fact that we are interested in the Dhamma today and that we listen today shows that we have conditions for further development of right understanding. We are likely to have listened in former lives.

Acharn Sujin said: “All those people who listened in the Buddha’s time and did not attain enlightenment, where are they now?” They had conditions for the development of paññā, but paññā needed more development; it had not yet been developed to the degree necessary for the attainment of enlightenment. We may have been one of those who listened to the Buddha, and now paññā needs to be developed more.

When we were walking along the beach one of our friends remarked that he was worried that he could not become a sotāpanna in this life. Those who have not attained enlightenment run the risk of an unhappy rebirth. Rebirth may occur in a plane where one cannot develop satipaṭṭhāna. I had been preoccupied with the same question.

Acharn Sujin answered:

“Today we are in the human plane and we are discussing Dhamma. We may have had births as an animal, but that is forgotten now. Sati which is accumulated today is

never lost. It is a condition for future development. There can be unhappy births again, but why should we worry about it?"

She spoke about the Bodhisatta's horse Kanthaka. He had carried the Bodhisatta outside the palace, after he had renounced worldly life. Kanthaka could not develop wisdom in that life since he was an animal. But he was reborn in a deva plane where he developed wisdom and attained enlightenment. We cannot control anything which happens, but when there are conditions for right understanding to develop, it will perform its function.

"What are realities?", this was a question some people asked. Reality is not a concept, it is not something abstract. Reality is that which can be directly experienced, now. Is there no seeing now? Seeing is a reality, it can be directly experienced. When mindfulness arises, its characteristic can be investigated in order to know it as it is.

Visible object is a reality, it can be experienced when it appears, now. Hearing is a reality, sound is a reality. Hardness, softness, heat and cold are realities; they can be directly experienced through the bodysense when they appear. Do they not impinge on the bodysense now? If there is no forgetfulness, understanding of realities can be developed. This is the way to know them as they are: elements which are devoid of self.

"Person" is not a reality, it is only a concept or idea we form up in our minds. We cling to people and we take them for permanent and for "self". We can think of old age and death, but we have not penetrated the characteristic of impermanence, the arising and falling away of realities. We should remember that what we take for self or person are only *nāma* and *rūpa* which arise and fall away all the time. Thus, birth and death actually occur at each moment.

What we call "life" is in reality one short moment of cognizing an object. This moment falls away and is succeeded by the next moment. When a *citta* arises which experiences visible object, our life is seeing. At another moment our life is hearing or thinking. All these moments fall away as soon as they have arisen. Thus, we can say that life exists only in one short moment, this very moment.

Nāma and *rūpa* are realities, they can be experienced. Instead of the word reality we can use the word "dhamma". Dhamma does not only mean the Buddha's teaching, it has other meanings as well. Everything which is real is dhamma or "paramattha dhamma", which is translated as "ultimate reality". *Nāma* and *rūpa* are paramattha dhammas.

There are two kinds of conditioned *nāma*: *citta*, consciousness, and *cetasika* (mental factor arising with *citta*). Seeing and hearing, for example, are *cittas*. Attachment and

mindfulness are cetasikas which can accompany citta. Citta is always accompanied by several cetasikas, at least seven.

Nibbāna is the unconditioned nāma. It does not experience an object, but it is the object experienced by lokuttara (supramundane) citta.

Summarizing the paramattha dhammas, they are:

citta

cetasika

rúpa

nibbāna

Ultimate realities are different from “conventional truth”, concepts or ideas we can think of but which are not real in the ultimate sense. We need to use concepts such as person, brain, society, in our contact with our fellowmen. We use these concepts and we would find it difficult to do without them. However, we should remember that they are not realities which can be directly experienced when they appear at the present moment, such as seeing, visible object, hearing or sound. Paramattha dhammas can be objects of mindfulness in vipassanā.

Chapter 7

The Right Conditions for Sati.

Nāma and rúpa appear one at a time through the six doors. They have different characteristics and these characteristics should be known. “Characteristic” was another term people asked us to explain.

Each reality has its own specific characteristic by which it can be distinguished from other realities. Visible object has a characteristic which is different from sound. Visible object is experienced through the eyesense, it cannot be experienced through the earsense. Sound is experienced through the earsense, it cannot be experienced through the eyesense. Visible object has a characteristic which is different from seeing. Visible object is rúpa; it does not know anything, it cannot see. Seeing experiences visible object, it is nāma, different from rúpa. We are inclined to “join” seeing and visible object into a “whole”, instead of being mindful of their different characteristics as they appear one at a time. So long as we do not distinguish the different characteristics of nāma and rúpa, we cling to the concept of person or self and we are ignorant of realities. Is there an idea of “I” who sees, or is there a person or thing in the visible object?

The specific characteristics (*vīsa lakkhaṇa*) of nāma and rúpa can be known more clearly when we are mindful of them when they appear. Nāma should be known as nāma and rúpa as rúpa. Later on, when *paññā* is more developed, the general characteristics (*sāmañña lakkhaṇa*) of nāma and rúpa can be realized and these are:

the characteristics of impermanence, dukkha and anattā. Before the general characteristics can be penetrated, the specific characteristics of realities should be known. When sati is mindful of visible object and this is known as rūpa, understanding begins to see it as not self. It is rūpa, not a person or thing which is seen. When sati is mindful of seeing and this is known as nāma, understanding begins to see it as not self. It is nāma which sees, not “I”.

Sati and right understanding are accumulated little by little. “Accumulation” was another term people requested us to define. Someone found it difficult to understand how a tendency such as lobha can be accumulated. Each citta which arises falls away completely, how then can a tendency be accumulated?

Each citta which arises falls away completely, but it conditions the next citta, it is succeeded by the next citta. That is the reason why good tendencies and bad tendencies are carried on from moment to moment. When we are fast asleep and not dreaming lobha does not arise. When we wake up lobha arises again. Where does it come from? It must have conditions for its arising. It can arise because lobha has been accumulated and it is carried on from one moment to the next moment. Our attachment today is conditioned by attachment in the past, and attachment today conditions in its turn attachment in the future.

We have accumulated many defilements such as attachment, aversion, ignorance, jealousy and stinginess. We have also accumulated good inclinations. Today we take an interest in the Dhamma, we like to listen to the Dhamma. Where does this interest come from? It must have conditions, we must have listened to the Dhamma in the past. What we learn is never lost. If a moment of right understanding can arise now, it can condition the arising of right understanding later on.

One of our friends remarked that he used to think that only kamma, good and bad deeds, could be accumulated. He did not think that good and bad inclinations could be accumulated.

It is true that good deeds and bad deeds are accumulated. When we commit a bad deed such as killing, the akusala citta is accompanied by the cetasika volition or intention which motivates that deed. Kamma is actually the cetasika volition, cetanā. The volition or kamma which motivates that evil deed falls away together with the citta. But since each citta conditions the next citta, kamma, the evil volition, is carried on from moment to moment. That is why kamma can produce its appropriate result later on. Akusala kamma can produce an unpleasant result, which may be an unhappy rebirth, or, in the course of life, an unpleasant experience through one of the senses. Kusala kamma which is accumulated brings a pleasant result.

Thus, kamma is accumulated and it can produce its result later on. Kamma is one type of condition: kamma-condition (kamma-paccaya). Kamma-condition is not the only type of condition, there are twentyfour classes of conditions.

Not only kamma, also unwholesome and wholesome inclinations are accumulated. These inclinations which are carried on from one moment of citta to the next moment are the conditions for the arising of akusala citta and kusala citta later on. This type of

condition is different from kamma-condition. When we refer to kamma-condition we speak about kamma which produces result.

The way different types of conditions operate is very intricate. We can verify that not only kammās, but also our good and bad inclinations are accumulated from one moment to the next moment. Lobha can arise at any time, and thus, it must have conditions. It is conditioned by lobha in the past which has been accumulated. Sometimes generosity or kindness can arise, and these are conditioned by generosity and kindness in the past which have been accumulated. Evenso, when right understanding of realities has been accumulated, it can arise more often.

In Anurādhapura we had discussions about kamma and vipāka. Someone remarked that he found it unjust that a deed committed in a former life can cause suffering in this life. The person who suffers today is not the same person anymore as the being in the past who committed the bad deed which produces an unpleasant result. Why then do we have to suffer today because of deeds committed in a past life?

Kamma produces vipāka. Each cause produces its appropriate result. This is the law of cause and effect which operates, no matter we like it or not. When we suffer from pain it is the result of kamma. We may be inclined to think: “Why does this have to happen to me?” But why do we think of “me”? There was no being in a former life who committed deeds, neither is there a being in this life who experiences results. Only realities, nāmas and rūpas, are arising and falling away.

Different types of cittas experience objects and each moment of citta falls away completely. Some cittas are cause: they can motivate good deeds and bad deeds which can produce their appropriate results. Some cittas are the results of good deeds and bad deeds, vipākacittas. Cittas which experience pleasant or unpleasant objects through the senses, such as seeing or hearing, are vipākacittas which arise throughout our life. Vipākacitta arises because of conditions and falls away immediately; there is no self who experiences a pleasant or unpleasant object. When we suffer from pain, this is only a short moment of experiencing an unpleasant object through the bodysense. It is unavoidable, because it arises because of conditions. It falls away immediately. When we think of the pain with aversion, not only one citta with aversion arises, but seven cittas with aversion arise in succession. That is the order of the cittas arising in a process⁹. Pain is unavoidable. Life is birth, old age, sickness and death.

The understanding of the Dhamma can help us to cope with problems in life. We met a business man who complained about the nationalisation of property. He had lost many of his possessions. After he had studied the Abhidhamma and pondered over it he worried less about his lost property and he thought more about the development of kusala. This showed that he had accumulated right understanding.

⁹ Cittas which experience objects through the six doors arise in processes of cittas. Within a process akusala cittas and kusala cittas arise in a series of seven cittas.

We should remember the sutta about the “marvel” of the Dhamma. We read in the “Gradual Sayings” (Book of the fours, Ch XIII, § 8, Marvels):

“Monks, on the manifestation of a Tathāgata... four wonderful, marvellous things are manifested. What four? Monks, folk take pleasure in the habitual (sense-pleasures), delight in the habitual, are excited thereby. But when Dhamma contrary to such is taught by a Tathagata, folk are ready to hear it, they lend an ear, they apply their minds thereto... Monks, folk take pleasure in pride... folk take pleasure in excitement...

Monks, folk are come to ignorance, are become blinded, overcast by ignorance. But when Dhamma controlling ignorance is taught by a Tathāgata, they are ready to hear it, they lend an ear to it, they apply their minds thereto. This, monks, is the fourth wonderful, marvellous thing manifested when a Tathāgata, Arahat, a fully Enlightened One is manifested....”

When there are conditions for the arising of sati it is mindful of the present reality, appearing through one of the six doors. However, because of our ignorance we may easily mislead ourselves. We may think that awareness and understanding of the present object have arisen when we are actually thinking with attachment, aversion and ignorance. For example, hardness or softness may impinge on the bodysense. Instead of developing understanding of these characteristics I found myself thinking of the places where the impact occurred. This shows that there was no understanding, only thinking about the body, about concepts. When hardness presents itself, we can gradually come to understand it as a kind of rūpa. We can learn that there is no “place of impact” in the hardness, no “body” in the hardness. When the characteristic of hardness is the object of mindfulness, no other object is experienced at that moment.

I looked at the colourful saris the ladies were wearing and I noticed that lobha arose as soon as I looked. I was watching “my lobha”. Thinking about one’s lobha or watching it is not mindfulness of its characteristic. Once, while I was eating and enjoying my food, Acharn Sujin asked me whether there was mindfulness. I said: “Lobha”, without being mindful of its characteristic. Acharn reminded me that lobha has its own characteristic and that it can be directly known when it appears. In that way it can be realized as only an element, not self. There is no need to think about it or to name it.

Someone remarked that one should practise satipaṭṭhāna methodically, otherwise there would not be any result.

If one tries to be mindful according to a certain method, who is trying? There is a concept of self who tries to direct sati to a particular object. That is thinking, not mindfulness.

We never know whether attachment, anger, seeing or doubt will arise, or whatever other reality. How can we then direct sati or follow a certain method?

Sati is not self, it arises only when there are the right conditions for its arising. “If sati does not arise, nobody can be aware at that moment”, Acharn Sujin said. Do we still

believe that we can control sati? If one tries very hard to have sati, one will become tense, it will not be of any help. One of the monks remarked that he found it such a relief that one does not have to try to make sati arise.

The present reality is here and now. We obstruct the arising of sati and right understanding if we think that we have to sit in a room and practise methodically. Inside the room and outside only seeing, hearing, hardness and other realities appear one at a time, through the six doors.

Acharn Sujin said that at this moment of seeing, hearing or thinking we should have the courage to find out whether awareness arises of the present reality or not yet. Seeing is real, it sees. Visible object is real. It is different from seeing. Right understanding of these objects can be developed in our daily life, during our activities, so that they are known as they are.

Chapter 8.

The Object of Sati.

“Is sati being conscious of all one’s actions, such as eating or driving a car?” This was another question asked during the sessions.

When someone thinks of himself as eating or driving a car, it is not sati but thinking of concepts. Eating is not a reality, driving a car is not a reality. Sati is a wholesome cetasika and it accompanies all wholesome cittas. Sati of satipaïhãna is mindful of realities, of nãmas and rúpas. It is mindful of one reality at a time. Sati can be mindful during activities such as eating or driving a car.

While one eats there are hardness, flavour or thinking. These are realities and they can be known one at a time, as only different elements, no “body”, no self in them. When mindfulness of realities arises, right understanding of them can be developed. When there is no mindfulness one is bound to cling to one’s body and one’s mind.

We read in the “Satipaïhãna Sutta” (Middle Length Sayings I, no. 10) in the section on postures ¹⁰ :

“A disciple while walking, understands ‘I am walking’; while standing, he understands ‘I am standing’; while sitting, he understands ‘I am sitting’; while lying down, he understands ‘I am lying down’. He understands every position his body assumes.

Thus he lives contemplating the body internally or externally or both internally and externally.

He lives contemplating the arising nature of the body, or the perishing nature of the body or both the arising and perishing nature of the body....”

¹⁰ I am using the translation of the Venerable Nãrada Thera.

Should we be aware of walking? We should read the whole context of the sutta in order to understand its meaning. We cling to the body that assumes different postures, but this is only a concept, not a reality. What we take for the body are only different elements which arise and fall away. Hardness, softness, heat, cold, motion or pressure, no matter whether they are internal or external, should be known when they appear one at a time. In this way one will know later on the arising and falling away of these elements. Right understanding will eventually lead to detachment. This sutta reminds us to be aware of any reality which appears, when we are walking, standing, sitting or lying down.

Is it possible to give simple instructions for the development of vipassanā? This was a question asked during the discussions.

It would be very easy if a teacher could tell us what to do first and what next, and if by following these instructions we could be sure of attaining enlightenment. However, the Buddha taught us not to follow a teacher blindly, but to develop the Path ourselves. A good friend in Dhamma can explain the right way of development. We should listen, consider what we have heard, and then study with mindfulness any reality which appears. We have to develop the Path ourselves, right now; nobody else can do that for us.

It is right understanding, not “self”, which will eventually see things as they really are. We may wonder how paññā, understanding or wisdom, can ever know impermanence, dukkha and anattā, and how it can realize nibbāna.

“Don’t underestimate the function of paññā”, Acharn Sujin often said. It is not self who will know realities, it is paññā. The present moment is very precious. If realities are considered and investigated, paññā will work its way.

Sati arises only when there are conditions for its arising, and nobody can cause its arising. Should we not make an effort to have sati? When we hear the word effort we are so used to thinking of a self who exerts effort. Effort is a cetasika, not self. Effort arises with many types of cittas, though not with all types. Effort arises not only with kusala citta, but also with akusala citta.

When sati is aware of any reality which appears now right effort has arisen already; we do not have to think of making an effort. When we think of effort there is bound to be akusala citta with desire. Akusala citta is accompanied by wrong effort.

We read in the “Analysis of the Truths” (Saccavibhaṅgasutta, Middle Length Sayings III, no 141) about four right efforts:

“And what, your reverences, is right endeavour? As to this, your reverences, a monk generates desire, endeavours, stirs up energy, exerts his mind and strives for the non-arising of evil unskilled states that have not arisen... for the getting rid of evil unskilled states that have arisen...for the arising of skilled states that have not arisen... for the maintenance, preservation, increase, maturity, development and completion of skilled states that have arisen. This, your reverences, is called right endeavour....”

When do these four right efforts arise? We read in the Gradual Sayings (Book of the Ones, Ch VI):

“Monks, I know not of any other single thing of such power to cause the arising of good states, if not yet arisen, or to cause the waning of evil states, if already arisen, as earnestness. In him who is earnest, good states, if not yet arisen, do arise, and evil states, if arisen, do wane.”

Earnestness, mindfulness of *nāma* and *rúpa*, conditions the development of wholesomeness and it leads to the elimination of unwholesomeness. Right understanding of the eightfold Path, which is developed in being mindful of *nāma* and *rúpa*, conditions right effort of the eightfold Path. If one still clings to an idea of self who makes an effort, there is *lobha*, not right effort of the eightfold Path.

At the sessions, people were still wondering what could be done in order not to sit in idleness and wait for the arising of *paññā*.

There is no self who is “not doing anything”. Each *citta* which arises performs a function. Even when one thinks that one is not doing anything *sati* can arise and be mindful of thinking as not self. When there is right understanding of the object of mindfulness, there cannot be laziness. When there are conditions for *sati*, it arises before one has any intention to be aware. If someone has the intention to be aware he is bound to have attachment.

We may find it very difficult to be mindful. What should we do during all those moments when there is no mindfulness of *nāma* and *rúpa*? Is there not bound to be a great deal of *akusala*?

The Buddha taught us many different kinds of *kusala*. Sometimes we have an opportunity for *dāna*, sometimes for *sīla*, and sometimes for calm, for example, when we think of the Buddha’s virtues or when we develop *mettā*. Sometimes mindfulness of *nāma* and *rúpa* may arise. We cannot move the *citta* from one kind of *kusala* to another kind of *kusala*. It depends on conditions which kind of *kusala* arises at a particular moment. Knowing about the different ways of *kusala* and seeing their value prevents us from laziness.

As we have seen, intellectual understanding can condition the arising of *sati*. That is why we had discussions about realities such as seeing, visible object, hearing or sound. We still have many misunderstandings about *nāma* and *rúpa*. We talked about hearing and paying attention to the meaning of words we hear. Paying attention to the meaning of words is not hearing, it is thinking of concepts. We remember concepts. Remembrance, *saññā*, is a mental factor which arises with each *citta*. There is remembrance all the time of visible object, sound and other realities, and also of concepts.

Acharn Sujin used the name “Elizabeth” in order to show that while this word is pronounced, different sounds are heard that arise and fall away. The *cittas* that hear these different sounds arise and fall away. Ignorance may arise after hearing sounds,

or there may be mindfulness of *nāma* and *rūpa*. When we recognize these different sounds, it is not hearing, but remembrance of concepts. Memory conditions thinking of the person Elizabeth. Each one of us thinks of the person with this name he or she knows. We think of her appearance, her voice, or the letters she wrote. Thinking conditions different feelings: pleasant feeling, unpleasant feeling or indifferent feeling. In reality there is no Elizabeth, one only thinks of the concept of Elizabeth.

This example reminded me that there can be ignorance and wrong view even in between pronouncing the sounds of a word. When there are conditions *sati* can arise instead of ignorance, even in between the recognition of different sounds. *Sati* is aware of the characteristic of the reality that appears at the present moment and we do not need to think of the rapidity of the processes of *citta*.

“When there is mindfulness of *nāma* and *rūpa* one truly lives alone”, Acharn Sujin reminded us. There may be many people around, but in reality there are no people. Visible object, seeing, sound, hearing, many different realities arise which can be the object of mindfulness, one at a time. They do not belong to anyone. If one thinks of one person, of two or more people, there is the world of people. But in reality people do not exist; only *nāmas* and *rūpas* arise and fall away. Life exists only in one moment of experiencing an object.

Sarah said that she found it difficult to know the difference between the moment of just seeing and the moment of paying attention to shape and form. Paying attention to shape and form is not seeing.

Acharn Sujin answered that right understanding is not a matter of catching the moment a particular reality appears. If we believe that there is a particular order in the appearing of realities, we think of concepts instead of being aware of whatever presents itself. Sometimes the object of mindfulness is seeing, sometimes thinking, sometimes visible object. There is no rule with regard to the object *sati* will be aware of.

We all are inclined to try to know the difference between seeing and paying attention to shape and form, and this is clinging. Venerable Dhammadharo asked, “Who is trying?” and I answered, “Self wants to know”. He replied that people usually give the correct answer, but, do they realize the truth? We forget to be mindful of clinging when it appears. When we keep on thinking of seeing instead of being mindful of seeing which appears now, seeing cannot be known as it is. When we have doubt about characteristics, or when we are discouraged about our lack of *sati*, these moments should also be studied. Any reality can be the object of mindfulness, no matter whether we like that object or not.

Chapter 9.

Rebirth.

Our journey was a pilgrimage. We visited several places of worship in order to recollect the Buddha's virtues and the virtues of the arahats who lived in Sri Lanka and had practised satipaïhãna until all defilements were eradicated. Khun Sujin encouraged us to keep on studying realities and developing satipaïhãna. "It never is enough, it never is enough until one has attained arahatship", she said.

In Anurãdhapura we stayed in the Government Agent's residence, a peaceful place with trees all around it, in the old city of Anurãdhapura. His house is within walking distance of the "Ruvanvelisãya", the great stupa (dagaba) which King Dutthagãmani started to build. Relics of the Buddha have been enshrined in this stupa. It is illuminated every night and there are always people walking around it and reciting stanzas. We visited the stupa several times and on one occasion, while we were walking around it, Acharn Sujin spoke to our hostess about satipaïhãna. She reminded us to be mindful of only one reality at a time, as it appears through one of the six doors. We should not mix up the six doorways. We cannot know visible object and tangible object, a reality appearing through the bodysense, at the same time. She said: "When a reality appears, it does so only through one doorway. Leave the other doorways alone." Don't we try to think of many "things" instead of being aware now?

While walking on the stone precincts around the stupa, one may form up the idea of floor. That shows that there is no mindfulness. Through the eyes only visible object appears, through the bodysense hardness may appear. If we do not mix up the different doorways, we shall find out that there is in reality no floor; there are only different nãmas and rúpas which appear one at a time.

We are inclined to take seeing and other realities for permanent. Acharn Sujin reminded us:

"Each reality which appears falls away. The hardness now is not the same as hardness a moment ago. Seeing now is not the same as seeing a moment ago. If we think that it is the same it shows that there is no awareness."

Acharn Sujin remarked:

"If sati is not accumulated now, it is not possible to attain enlightenment. Enlightenment can be attained. In the Buddha's time many attained it. The

development of sati is very natural; it is not too difficult if we are not forgetful. But when sati does not arise, we should not have regret. When regret appears there can be mindfulness even of regret.”

While one walks around the stupa and different realities are “studied”, the past time when arahats walked here and taught satipaïhãna seems very near. They were never forgetful of realities.

The Bodhi-tree in Anurãdhapura which is near to the “Ruvanvelisãya” is another place of worship we visited. The sacred tree stands on a high terrace and it is surrounded by a golden rail. Generally one does not have access to the tree, but one of the monks who was in attendance allowed us to go up to the terrace, in order to pay respect. One night the same monk arranged for about a hundred white lotus flowers which we placed all around the tree. The monks who were leading the procession around the tree chanted stanzas, and we had an opportunity to look at the new sprout of the tree that had grown recently, several months ago. It seems that we are far away from the Buddha’s time, but so long as satipaïhãna is taught and practised we are not far away.

The old city of Anurãdhapura and its surroundings are full of stupas, old monuments and places of commemoration. One of our hosts took us in a jeep to Tantirimale, which is not far from Anurãdhapura. Saògamitta and her retinue who brought the sapling of the Bodhi-tree from India, stopped in Tantirimale for a rest, on the way to Anurãdhapura. A shoot of the Bodhi-tree was planted in this spot. Today one can still see this tree which grows on a rocky ground where nothing else will grow. In the olden times several saplings of the Bodhi-tree were planted in different places, and later on thirty-two saplings were distributed all over the island.

Many relics of the Buddha have been brought from India to Sri Lanka. The relic of the Buddha’s right collarbone has been enshrined in “Thupãrãma”, which is situated in Anurãdhapura.

A few families in Sri Lanka are in possession of very small particles of the Buddha’s relics. One of our hosts in Anurãdhapura had in his shrineroom a particle of a relic of the Buddha and also a relic of an arahat which had been given to him by his aunt. It is said that so long as one practises the teachings the relics in one’s house will not vanish. But when one neglects the teachings they will disappear. Our host showed us the relics, and this was the first time he had shown them to people outside his family. He took the relics out of their caskets and we payed respect with flowers, incense and candles. We looked at the relics, thinking of the Buddha’s exhortation to be mindful of the reality appearing now. Again we found that the Buddha is so near while one studies the present reality.

The Tooth relic of the Buddha which came to Sri Lanka in the fourth century A.D. had been enshrined in different capitals in the course of time. Today the relic is in the “Dalada Maligawa” in Kandy. Once a year a replica of the casket which contains the relic is carried around in procession: the “Kandy Perahera”. An elephant with a

curled tusk, a “Tusker”, carries the casket around. The relic itself can never be taken outside the temple.

The sanctuary where the relic has been enshrined is generally not open to the public, but we obtained permission to enter.

Afterwards we walked around the shrineroom three times, paying respect at the “four quarters”. All these places of worship in Sri Lanka are occasions to recollect the Buddha and his teachings and to be mindful of the present reality. Through mindfulness we can learn that life is only one moment of experiencing an object.

I had offered some money and I expressed the wish: “May I have less stinginess.” Acharn Sujin reminded me that one may have clinging even while one is expressing such a wish. One may cling to the idea of “my stinginess or “my generosity”. This shows how *keena pañña* must become. Otherwise one does not see one’s clinging and one takes *akusala* for *kusala*. Even when we do good deeds *akusala cittas* are bound to arise shortly after the *kusala cittas*.

During our stay in Kandy, our host, who was so kind to drive us around every day, took us to a village school, outside Kandy. Most of the children of this school came from very poor families. The principal, a person with great patience and perseverance, had built up the community of this school in spite of many difficulties. His device was: “Don’t grumble about what you don’t have. Make every difficulty into a challenge.” Nobody at this school grumbled.

We had a Dhamma session in the school and one of the teachers translated English into Sinhalese. Many of the questions dealt with rebirth. How can one prove that there is rebirth and how can one prove that there are heavenly planes and hell planes?

We explained that today we do not doubt that there was yesterday. Just as today follows upon yesterday, tomorrow will follow upon today. Evenso the different *cittas* (moments of consciousness) which arise and fall away succeed one another. The preceding *citta* is completely gone, but there are conditions that this *citta* is immediately succeeded by the next one. The last *citta* of this life will be succeeded by a following *citta*, which is the first *citta* of the next life: the rebirth-consciousness.

The first *citta* of this life was the rebirth-consciousness. It could not have arisen without conditions for its arising. Its conditions were in a past life; it succeeded the last *citta* of the previous life.

If we want to know what our next life will be, we should know our present life. In this life there are mental phenomena and physical phenomena arising and falling away, and so it will be in the next life. The present life will be the past life in the next existence. It depends on *kamma* (our accumulated good deeds and bad deeds) in which plane of existence there will be rebirth. Rebirth in a happy plane is the result of a good deed, *kusala kamma*, and rebirth in an unhappy plane is the result of a bad deed, *akusala kamma*.

People wonder about the body in the next life. So long as there are conditions for rebirth, *kamma* will produce bodily phenomena at the moment of rebirth-

consciousness ¹¹ . Our body that was yesterday is completely gone, but today there are again new bodily phenomena we call “our body”. We have no doubt that at this moment bodily phenomena arise. Why then do we doubt about rebirth? Bodily phenomena arise and fall away all the time.

One may perhaps be inclined to prove rebirth by examining cases of people who claim to remember former lives. Scientific proof and reasoning will never eradicate doubt and wrong understanding. Neither are they of any help to take away one’s anxiety about what will happen to the “self” after death. Doubt and wrong view can only be eradicated by right understanding which sees phenomena as they really are.

In Colombo we also had a few sessions with children. We used the “Sigālovāda Sutta” (Dīgha Nikāya, Dialogues of the Buddha III, no 31) as an example of the teaching of different kinds of kusala we should practise in daily life. In this sutta we read about such good qualities as kindness, generosity, humbleness and patience. Acharn Sujin spoke about patience. When we have aversion about an unpleasant object it shows that there is no patience. But do we have patience when the object is pleasant? We are attached to pleasant objects and when we are attached there is no patience. Acharn Sujin said: ”When the food is very delicious today, do you have patience? Will you eat just enough to sustain the body, or will you eat more, because you like the food? Then there is impatience.”

The children wanted to hear “Jātaka” stories, stories about the former lives of the Buddha, and, thus, I explained that the Jatakas teach us about the many virtues of the Buddha which he accumulated during innumerable lives. Acharn Sujin asked the children: “You like to hear stories, but what about your own story?” We like to hear about the story of someone else, but do we really know ourselves? We should find out more about our “own story”.

Chapter 10.

¹¹ Unless rebirth occurs in a plane of existence where there is no rūpa, bodily phenomena.

Patience.

I read in “History of Buddhism in Ceylon”, by Walpola Rahula, that in olden times pilgrimages in Sri Lanka were favored by the monks for various reasons. One of the benefits was traveling with a teacher so that one could discuss topics of the Dhamma. During our pilgrimage it was also for us very beneficial to discuss the Dhamma in a personal way and learn to apply it in the situation of daily life. In theory we know what is kusala and what akusala, but in our daily life we forget to apply what we have learnt.

The Buddha taught us to be patient. This may seem simple to us, but we are impatient when things are not as we would like them to be and when people do not behave as we would expect them to. Patience was often a topic of our conversations. The “Exhortation to the Pātimokkha” (Ovāda-pātimokkha)¹², recited by the monks, starts with patience:

“Forbearing patience is the highest austerity...”

(Khantīparamaṃ tapo tīkkaṃ....)

We may talk at length about patience without realizing when there is patience and when there is not. When one is on a journey, things do not always happen the way one has planned. We had expected to climb the “Siripada” (Adam’s Peak), a place the Buddha had visited. We had to cancel this trip twice because the time was not convenient and the rainy season had started. We always think that we can control situations by planning, but whether a plan comes true or not depends on conditions. We cannot force conditions by insisting on our own plans. In such situations we have to cultivate patience. If we understand that there are only nāma and rūpa, whether we are on a mountain or in the city, it helps to be patient.

We should be patient in our speech. Even when we speak about the Dhamma kusala citta does not arise all the time. We may speak with impatience, at the wrong time. We may speak with attachment to our own words, and at such moments we have no mettā, no patience.

We read in the ‘Discourse on the Parable of the Saw’ (Middle Length Sayings I, no. 21) that the Buddha spoke about different ways of speech:

“... Monks, when speaking to others you might speak at a right time or at a wrong time; monks, when speaking to others you might speak according to fact or not according to fact; monks, when speaking to others you might speak gently or harshly; monks, when speaking to others you might speak about what is connected with the

¹² The Pātimokkha is the Code of Discipline for monks.

goal or about what is not connected with the goal; monks, when speaking to others you might speak with minds of friendliness or full of hatred. Herein, monks, you should train yourselves thus: ‘Neither will our minds become perverted nor will we utter an evil speech, but kindly and compassionate will we dwell, with a mind of friendliness, void of hatred; and we will dwell having suffused that person with a mind of friendliness; and beginning with him, we will dwell, having suffused the whole world with a mind of friendliness that is far-reaching, widespread, immeasurable, without enmity, without malevolence.’ This is how you must train yourselves, monks.”

We should speak at the right time, not at the wrong time. We have to be considerate of other people’s feelings. When it is not the right time for Dhamma discussion, we can talk about other topics with kusala citta. Acharn Sujin said to me: “We apply Dhamma, also when we do not speak about Dhamma.”

I used to think that talk about flowers, fruits, nature, children and grandchildren was always motivated by akusala citta; that it was “animal talk”, mentioned in the “Vinaya”(Sutta-Vibhaḍḍa, Pacittiya 85), such as “Talk of kings, of thieves, of great ministers, of armies....” This is talk monks should not engage in.

Venerable Dhammadharo explained to me that even talk which is mentioned among “animal talk” can sometimes be motivated by kusala citta. For example, when one talks about a king, saying that even kings have to die, the citta which remembers the impermanence of life is kusala citta.

We can speak about the things other people are interested in with mettā and karuṇā (compassion), with consideration for their feelings. Acharn Sujin explained to me that pleasing other people is not necessarily motivated by attachment; it can be motivated by kusala citta. For instance, when we say: “What a beautiful garden you have”, it can be said with attachment, but it can also be said with kindness or with sympathetic joy (muditā). It all depends on the citta which motivates the speaking. At the moment of sympathetic joy there is no envy. It is precisely when we are with others that we should cultivate the virtues which are the brahmavihāras of mettā, karuṇā, muditā and upekkhā (equanimity).

I asked Venerable Dhammadharo what I should say when others tell me stories with akusala cittas. He remarked: “What a splendid opportunity to cultivate mettā and karuṇā at such moments.” When mettā and karuṇā arise, the kusala citta will know what to say.

We visited someone who had great aversion towards harsh sounds. He was angry with people who amused themselves with firecrackers on the occasion of the New Year. I could sympathize with him because when there is a radio which is too loud I have aversion immediately. We do not like aversion and unpleasant feeling, but have we really understood the cause of dosa (aversion)? When we have problems do we think of the cause of our problems in the right way? The cause is always within ourselves: our own defilements. The arahats have no more problems.

We like pleasant objects and we dislike unpleasant objects. Attachment conditions aversion. I knew that in theory, but I had to be reminded of it when there was aversion. Acharn Sujin emphasized that when aversion arises it shows that the attachment which conditions it must be very strong. That made me see how ugly akusala is. At the moment of aversion we have no patience, no calm.

It is helpful to consider many aspects of akusala and of kusala. If one aspect does not help us at a particular moment, another aspect may be useful. Thinking of kamma and vipāka can help us to be more patient. When we hear an unpleasant sound and we have aversion, we should remember that the hearing of the unpleasant sound is the result (vipāka) of an unwholesome deed (akusala kamma) we performed. The hearing has been conditioned already and nobody can change it. Hearing experiences the unpleasant object just for a moment and then it falls away immediately, it does not stay. But we keep on thinking about vipāka with aversion and that is akusala.

Whenever we have an unpleasant experience through one of the senses it is vipākacitta. When we complain, for example, about hot weather, we are impatient, and we forget that the experience of heat through the bodysense is only vipāka, caused by kamma.

When we are impatient, there is ignorance; ignorance covers up the truth. Right understanding sees the disadvantage of akusala, and that is the condition for the cultivation of kusala.

Patience can be developed with regard to many seemingly unimportant events in our daily life. When we receive a gift such as a book we do not like, we should develop patience, for example, in thinking of the kindness of the giver.

I had a cold and could therefore not wash my hair for many days. Acharn Sujin reminded me to develop patience even with regard to this. I am inclined to overlook such facts, but are details not important? So many moments of our life pass unnoticed.

Kusala citta and akusala citta condition our appearance, they condition different facial expressions. Is it not lack of consideration for others if we look sullen? If we remember this it can help us to please others, even when we feel tired. Our hostess in Anurādhapura always kept smiling, even when we had to wait a long time for a car. Her conduct taught me to be more thoughtful, also in small matters.

When we are tired we usually have aversion. This is conditioned by attachment to our health, to our bodily wellbeing. We may think: "Well, I can't help having aversion, it is conditioned." What kind of citta thinks in that way? Even though we say that aversion is conditioned we may still regard it as "my aversion" and then we make it into something very important. We make the fact of its being conditioned into an excuse for giving in to a bad mood. When the characteristic of aversion appears it can be known as only a reality, not self.

Kusala of the level of right understanding may not often arise, but we should see the value of cultivating all the different ways of kusala. When we were visiting an old

lady who lived alone, in a secluded place, a friend was cutting her hair and the white flakes of hair were falling down. At one moment there may be conditions to consider “Parts of the Body”: “Hair of the head, hair of the body, teeth, nails... etc.”, and this can condition calm. There is no need to think beforehand that one should cultivate calm with such a subject, but when there is right understanding of calm it can arise naturally. At another moment one may develop mettā while one helps the old lady or while one looks at the many ants on her doorpost. At another moment again there can be “study” of visible object as only visible object.

Is it necessary that we have calm first, before mindfulness of nāma and rúpa can arise? Are the sections of the ‘Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta’ (Middle Length Sayings, no 10) about Mindfulness of Breath, Parts of the Body and Corpses not an indication for this?

When we read the whole context of the sutta we see that the Buddha did not teach that samatha should be developed first, before one develops vipassanā. This sutta and all the other suttas teach us that sati can be aware of any reality appearing at the present moment, no matter what one is doing, walking, standing, sitting or lying down, cultivating moments of calm or being engaged in any other activity. Even akusala citta, as we read in the “Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta”, in the section on mindfulness of citta, can be object of mindfulness.

The citta which develops calm of samatha can also be object of mindfulness. At the moments of calm do nāma and rúpa not arise? When, for example, a corpse is the object of calm, sati of vipassanā can arise and be aware of any reality which appears. That is the way to eventually see nāma and rúpa as they are. There is no other way.

As we have seen, right understanding of samatha is different from right understanding of vipassanā. Right understanding of samatha does not know the true nature of visible object, seeing, sound or hearing which appear now. Right understanding of samatha cannot “automatically” change into right understanding of vipassanā.

All kinds of kusala are of great value. We cannot determine which type of kusala arises at a particular moment. Every type of kusala, every reality, can be the object of mindfulness in vipassanā.

Sometimes we feel unable to cultivate any type of kusala. When we are tired or sick, don't we attach great importance to the way we feel and don't we make this into an excuse not to develop kusala? Clinging to ourselves conditions many kinds of akusala.

“Forgetting about oneself conditions the cultivation of kusala”, Acharn Sujin said. It is inspiring to be with people like Acharn Sujin and Khun Duangduen who are so kind, patient and considerate. Khun Duangduen knew that small gestures of kindness are important, she did not overlook such things. Every day she spoke with Acharn about giving: what would they give today and to whom? They had brought from Thailand many useful gifts for the monks. Khun Duangduen looked with kindness at

other people and she was ready to help at any time. I still think of her generosity as an inspiring example. Someone's example can be more helpful than words.

Acharn Sujin pointed out that the development of generosity helps us to have less attachment to our possessions. If we do not develop generosity, how can we ever become detached from the five khandhas, from our body and our mind? We cling most of all to our body and our mind, we do not want to lose them.

If we do not develop kusala now, there are more conditions for akusala, she said. When we are patient lobha, dosa and moha do not arise.

Venerable Dhammadharo reminded me that we have to develop patience when we are with people and when we are alone. When we are in the company of people we are bound to have attachment or aversion. Then there is no patience. We should develop mettā and karuṇā instead of having attachment or aversion. When we are alone we may be attached to being alone, or we may dislike being alone. In that situation we also have to be patient. If there is mindfulness of any reality which appears, it does not matter whether we are with people or without them. What difference does it make? In reality there are no people, only nāma and rūpa. All that matters is being mindful of them in order to see them as they are.

Are we impatient when we do not seem to be making progress in wisdom? Mindfulness of nāma and rūpa should be developed with patience, in the course of many lives. If we develop patience in all the situations of daily life, we shall also have more patience as regards the development of vipassanā. We shall have patience to study with mindfulness any reality which appears now. We shall not be tired of studying nāma and rūpa over and over again. It never is enough!

The last day I spent in Sri Lanka was the day the Sinhalese celebrated Vesakha: the day of the Buddha's birth, of his enlightenment and of his parinibbāna. Many people, including children, were wearing white clothes and observed eight precepts at home or in the temple.

In Sri Lanka I came to appreciate the observance of the eight precepts, and on Vesakha Day we also observed them, inspired by the example of the Sinhalese. One of our hostesses told me that she observed eight precepts once a month in her home, and if the "Uposatha Day" was not convenient for her she would observe them on another day.

Observing the eight precepts is a way of cultivating patience. When one observes these precepts one realizes how much one clings to eating at any odd time. Aren't we impatient also with regard to food? On such a day we are reminded that we are attached to many things we take for granted in daily life, for example, lying on a soft bed, or sitting on one's easy chair. These moments usually pass unnoticed, we are not mindful of them.

The Buddha praised the observance of the eight precepts because on such a day one follows the example of the arahats. We read in the "Gradual Sayings" (Book of the Eights, Ch. 5, §1, The Observance) :

“Monks, the Observance day, when observed and kept with eight qualifications is very fruitful, of great advantage, very splendid, very thrilling.

Monks, how is it so observed and kept?

Herein, monks, and ariyan disciple reflects thus: “All their lives arahats abandon taking life and abstain therefrom; they dwell meekly and kindly, compassionately and mercifully to all beings, laying aside stick and sword. I, too, now, during this night and day, will abandon taking life and abstain therefrom. I will dwell meekly and kindly, compassionately and mercifully to all beings, and lay aside both stick and sword. So, in this way, I shall follow the example of arahats and keep the Observance....”

The same is said about the other precepts.

When we observe eight precepts, we have an opportunity to recollect the excellent qualities of the Buddha and of the arahats who were without clinging. Clinging is bound to arise, but if we are mindful of it when it appears, we shall learn to see it as it is, as a conditioned nāma.

On Vesakha Day we offered food to the monks in the “Buddhist Information Center” and afterwards we visited a few temples. In one temple we saw tiny fragments of the Buddha’s bowl which had been excavated from the ruins of Sopara Stupa, near Bombay. In another temple we visited, relics of Sāriputta and Moggallāna had been enshrined. In Sri Lanka there are many opportunities to recollect the excellent qualities of the Buddha and of the arahats. In the afternoon a Dhamma discussion was held in the Information Center. The topics were visible object, seeing, hearing and the other realities which appear. It seems difficult to know the characteristic of seeing, we are inclined to think that it is different from seeing at this moment. Acharn Sujin said:

“Study it, this very moment. When hearing appears, the element which hears should be studied, not the element which sees. When we are forgetful, not aware, there is ignorance. When awareness arises, right understanding begins to develop.”

Acharn Sujin said that right understanding of the object of mindfulness is very important. For example, we should know what seeing is. Often it seems that we see people and things, but that is not seeing. It is paying attention to shape and form, which is thinking of concepts. We should not be discouraged about our ignorance. The characteristics of the realities which appear have to be investigated with great patience so that understanding can grow. Gradually we can learn that seeing is not paying attention to shape and form, and that seeing is different from visible object.

When awareness arises, it is aware of only one object at a time; at that moment one is not confused as to the distinction between different objects. One does not confuse seeing with visible object, or seeing with paying attention to shape and form.

Captain Perera and Sarah saw me off at the airport. On the way to the airport we saw the illuminations and the statues people had put up for the celebration of Vesakha. At

the airport Sarah reminded me that when we think of the people we are attached to and of the country we like, we think of concepts and our attachment conditions unhappiness. But if we realize that life exists in only one moment of experiencing an object and that this moment falls away immediately, we have more understanding of reality. Sarah said:

“Sri Lanka and all the people we are attached to, all the last five weeks, it is all in just one moment now, one thought now, and then gone.”

Life exists in only one moment, the present moment.
