

Seeing Is Believing

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Introduction

The following translations are instructional Dhamma talks on practice by three Burmese teachers. I do not know much about their personal lives. These Dhamma talks were offered to me by Upāsikā Daw Lay Thwe of New Zealand, including Dhamma talks by Mogok Sayadawgyi. Therefore, I am able to share the Dhamma with others.

I give the title to Sayadaw U Ñāṇabhāsa as “**Seeing Is Believing,**” because the talk is about the yogi’s experiences in practice. This is not meant in the worldly sense of viewpoint and experience. Seeing the Dhamma is seeing with a purified mind; such seeing will never deceive the yogi. With the ordinary five senses and an impure mind, however, seeing can deceive us. For example, when we see a hill from a distance, it may appear to be a mountain, but when we come closer, it turns out to be quite different.

In the same way, all worldlings have distortions (*vipallāsa*) because of defiled minds. Therefore, they perceive, see, and view the world (*loka*) with distortions, and their actions and behaviours become unskillful. With material development (so-called progress), human beings become more greedy and deluded. They seek the essence of life in the external world, pursuing gratifications of all kinds, but they will never find it. Instead, they become more and more discontented and confused.

They do not see the many dangers that gratification can bring to human societies because they do not understand sensual pleasures, material forms, and feelings, as explained in the **Mahādukkhakkhandha Sutta** (sutta no. 13) of the *Majjhima Nikāya (MN. 13)*.

It was like a fish that only sees the bait and not the hook.

There was a conversation between a primitive cannibal and a modern man, as follows:

Modern man: You eat human flesh! It’s quite disgusting!
Cannibal: Oh! Wait a minute. We kill human beings for food, but why do you modern men kill humans without eating them? So you modern men are more disgusting!

(Some world leaders and politicians should reflect on this point.)

The general outline of Buddhist practice is to cultivate *sīla* (virtues), to overcome the five hindrances, and to develop the seven factors of enlightenment by establishing mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). Therefore, it is very important to know the nature of the five hindrances and the seven factors of enlightenment.

In the *Bojjhaṅga Saṃyutta*, the Buddha mentioned them. I will only mention their gist here.

The five hindrances are unskillful or unwholesome dhammas, so they defile the mind. They are makers of blindness, causing lack of vision and lack of knowledge, detrimental to wisdom, tending to vexation, and leading away from Nibbāna. (The seven factors of enlightenment are the opposite of this.)

The five hindrances are the corruptions of the mind. (The seven factors of enlightenment are non-corruptions.)

The nutriment for the hindrances are as follows:

For sensual desire, the sign of the beautiful, frequently giving unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*) to it, is the nutriment for the arising of unarisen sensual desire and for the increase and expansion of arisen sensual desire.

For ill will, the sign of the repulsive (*paṭigha*) is the nutriment.

For sloth and torpor, these are discontent, lethargy, laziness, stretching, drowsiness after meals, and sluggishness of mind.

For restlessness and remorse, this is unsettledness of mind, and frequently giving unwise attention to it.

For doubt, there are things that are the basis for doubt, and frequently giving unwise attention to them.

With unwise attention (*ayoniso manasikāra*), the five hindrances arise; and with wise attention (*yoniso manasikāra*), the seven factors of enlightenment arise. According to the Buddha, someone who has not developed and cultivated the seven factors of enlightenment is called an unwise dull person. But one who has developed and cultivated them is called wise and alert.

Therefore, according to the Buddha's standard, all worldlings are unwise and dull, while practising yogis and arahants are wise and alert people. This is also one

of the reasons there are many problems and much suffering in societies and around the world.

In Singapore, Sayadaw U Uttama (Sagaing) gave a Dhamma talk on “The Exhortation of Buddhas and the Power of Mindfulness.” The exhortation of the Buddhas is found in the *Dhammapada*, verses 183–185.

Verse 183:

Not doing any evil,
the performance
of what is skillful,
the cleansing
of one’s own mind—
this is the teaching of the Awakened.

Verse 183 has three factors: not doing any evil (unskillfulness, unwholesomeness), the doing of what is skillful (wholesomeness), and the cleansing of one’s own mind. We can combine all the Buddha’s teachings into these three factors. Therefore, it can be said to be the heart of the teaching.

Like *paṭiccasamuppāda*, one of the fundamental right views of the Buddha is the law of kamma; without it, we cannot understand and appreciate the whole Dhamma.

Why does the Buddha ask humans not to do any evil (unskillful, unwholesome), to perform what is skillful (wholesome), and to cleanse one’s own mind?

The Buddha wants humans to be free from suffering, to have happiness, and to make the mind powerful and capable of developing wisdom. All worldlings have latent defilements in their minds, which can give rise to problems and suffering when the causes are present.

There are three kinds of actions (*kamma*): mental, verbal, and bodily actions. Therefore, unwholesome thinking leads to unwholesome verbal and bodily actions, which give rise to the results of suffering. In the same way, wholesomeness gives rise to the results of happiness.

Another important teaching of the Buddha is the power of mindfulness, which can prevent unwholesomeness from arising. Mindfulness also develops wholesome dhammas and purifies the mind. Therefore, *sati* can perform the duties of not doing evil, doing good, and cleansing the mind.

The Buddha taught that the five hindrances are a heap of the unwholesome, and the four *satipaṭṭhānas* are a heap of the wholesome. In some places, he also said that the establishment of the four *satipaṭṭhānas* develops the thirty-seven wings of enlightenment.

So here we see the importance of mindfulness, which is equivalent to *appamāda*—ever mindful in doing meritorious deeds.

Therefore, we cannot find true happiness, peace, or essence in the external world, which only leads to suffering and never ends.

Tipiṭakadhara Yaw Sayadaw explains the essence of the last words of the Buddha in two verses:

“*Vayadhammā saṅkhārā,*
Appamādena sampādetha.”

“Conditioned things are subject to decay;
Strive on with heedfulness.”

Vayadhammā saṅkhārā shows the nature of impermanence that causes beings great fear.

Appamāda dhamma expresses the essence of life.

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Seeing Is Believing

Dhamma Talks by Sayadaw U Ñāṇobāsa

Talk 1: On Meditation

Close your eyes. These are *pasāda*, kammic eyes—made by kammic results, that is, sensitive matter (*pasāda-rūpa*). Except for physical form, they cannot see anything. They cannot know or contemplate mind and body, nor can they contemplate cause and effect. They cannot discern the characteristics of arising and falling, the knowledge of disenchantment in all formations (*nibbidā-ñāṇa*), nor the ending of formations and the Path Knowledge. They can see only with the knowledge eye.

The knowledge eye will open by closing the kammic eyes.

At the beginning of sitting, one is unable to discern arising and falling because there is not yet *samādhi*. Therefore, according to the purification of mind (*citta-visuddhi*), establish *samādhi* by noting the in-breath and out-breath.

Pay attention at the entrance of the nostrils, but not at the tip. When breathing in, the air goes inside by touching the entrance of the nose; when breathing out, it goes out by touching the entrance of the nose. Note them as “going in” and “going out” until the mind calms down.

When *samādhi* is established, it will possess the three factors of *samādhi* (*samādhi-magga*), namely *sati*, *virīya*, and *samādhi*.

After that, contemplate the characteristics of the objects. This will become clear by noting the touching of the in-breath and out-breath. By training to know or discern the non-existence of the air after it goes in and out through the nostrils, one sees that all of them vanish at the touching point after the in-breath and out-breath.

You will then discern the arising and falling of them. This is done by using the in-breath and out-breath from the beginning to the end, which then become the primary object (*mūla-kammaṭṭhāna*).

If one is only able to note the in-breath and out-breath, but is unable to contemplate the arising phenomena when moving around and doing things—whatever arises from the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind (that is, the six sense doors)—then defilements will enter the mind, and the practice will take a longer time. Therefore, I will explain the practice taught by Sāriputta and Mogok Sayadaw, which will help to further develop the practice.

“Kāyaṃ imaṃ sammasatha, parijāṇātha punappunaṃ;
Kāye sabhāvaṃ disvāna, dukkhassantaṃ karissatha.”

“Imaṃ kāyaṃ” refers to the present sitting aggregate of the body (that is, the *khandha*). At the time of moving, it is the moving *khandha*; at the time of sleep or lying down, it is the lying-down *khandha*, and so on. *Sammasatha* means observing with knowledge (*ñāṇa*).

This meditation is taught by Sāriputta and supported by the Buddha. According to the texts, it relates to the five *khandhas*. In daily life, this is experienced as the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind (at the heart area). These are called the six sense bases and are also known as the extension of the rounds of existence (*saṃsāra*).

(We should read or listen to the Buddha’s teachings attentively, because through contemplation we can understand their profundity and essence.) This body aggregate is fixed with six clear, mirror-like doors.

If you see physical form with the eyes, contemplate it as seeing-consciousness. After its seeing, it passes away. You have to watch and observe it at the place where it arises. Mogok Sayadaw said that if you do not discern it, then you did not truly watch and observe it.

In the Dhamma teaching of Venerable Nāgasena to King Milinda, it is compared to a tiger hiding behind a bush: when prey comes, it jumps on the prey (for example, a deer). If the tiger chases its prey but cannot catch it, it fails. In the same way, the six sense doors are the places where the “prey” comes—representing the arising and passing away of phenomena.

Whatever arises due to causes, watch and catch it. Just observe it when it arises as arising, and when it vanishes as vanishing.

Therefore, the task of insight practice is the task of observing, that is, the contemplation of impermanence. It is the task of watching one's own death. Watching other people's death is *samatha*. One's seeing-consciousness, hearing-consciousness, and so on—these are one's own death. You can see them only while you are still alive; when you die, you will not see them.

Therefore, you must have good *sati*, with good health, while still alive, in order to discern them.

Parijāṇātha punappunaṃ means watching and contemplating again and again. This repeated contemplation is one of the important factors for development.

During the period of sitting, most phenomena arise at the body and mind. Sounds arise at the ear; smells arise at the nose. Sometimes you have to contemplate them in order to discern the arising and falling of phenomena again and again. Insight (*vipassanā*) means *bhāvitā-bahulīkata*—development through repeated and frequent contemplation.

Only through such repeated observation will the obsessional defilements (*pariyuṭṭhāna kilesa*) not arise, and the latent defilements (*anusaya kilesa*) gradually become thinner and thinner, and eventually be cut off. Our defilements are very thick. These *kilesa* have been with us for many lifetimes, and even in this present life they remain strong. Many defilements arise from family duties and responsibilities.

During the contemplation of impermanence, one must actually discern phenomena and contemplate them as arising and falling. You cannot merely recite them without seeing them. Only by discerning them with one's own knowledge do they become visible here and now—*sandiṭṭhiko*.

What, then, is the benefit of contemplating again and again?

Kāye sabhāvaṃ disvāna—this becomes clear discernment and knowledge of the impermanent nature of the bodily *khandha*. After some time, the shape and form of the body disappear; only the nature of arising and passing away is seen, and the shape and form vanish. Through one's own knowledge, only the intrinsic nature appears.

Wrong view (*ditṭhi*) falls away through contemplation. If you discern a great deal of inconstancy (*anicca*), you become a *cūḷa-sotāpanna*. You will not fall into the dangers of woeful existence (*apāya*) for one or two lives. If you continue the practice, it will close the doors to woeful existences—such as hell, the animal realm, and the hungry shades.

Mogok Sayadaw gave an example for this. If you hold a cup of water and tilt it slightly up and down, then straighten it again, and repeat this again and again, your attention is only on the tilting and straightening phenomena, and you are no longer aware of the water in the cup. In the same way, when the mind stays attentive to inconstancy, it is no longer aware of the body; it sees only arising and passing away. This is called *kāye sabhāvaṃ disvāna*.

What is the benefit of seeing in this way many times? It knows and discerns the truth of *dukkha*.

This discerning knowledge is the truth of the Path. The non-arising of *kilesa* is the truth of the cause. If one continues contemplation, it leads to disenchantment with *anicca*, followed by dispassion and non-clinging. At last, with the cessation of impermanence, Nibbāna arises.

The task of the yogi is to contemplate impermanence without fail. The development of knowledge depends on repeated contemplation. *Dukkhassantaṃ karissathā* means that one will realize, with knowledge, the ending of *dukkha*, which is Nibbāna.

Talk 2: Realization and Proper Attention

According to Mogok Sayadaw, a teacher should not teach a new yogi the contemplation of inconstancy (*anicca*) at the very beginning. Instead, the teacher should first teach the yogi the correct way of contemplation.

Only with proper attention (*yoniso manasikāra*) will the discernment of *anicca* be correct. Even if one discerns *anicca* with improper or unwise attention, that discernment is unable to lead to the realization of Dhamma.

An example is Venerable Channa. He practised on his own without anyone's help. Although he saw *anicca*, he did not know what he should rely on, nor did he know where to take refuge. Later, he began searching for refuge.

At that time, he was already over eighty years old. Other monks tried to help him through teachings, but without success. He then remembered Venerable Ānanda, who was staying at Kosambī, and went there for help. Ānanda questioned him about his practice and understood that he held wrong view and was clinging to the self.

Venerable Ānanda then gave him the teaching that the Buddha had taught to the monk Kaccānagotta. First, Venerable Channa had to dispel wrong view through intellectual understanding—*ñāta-pariññā*. Therefore, the first requirement is proper attention; the second is contemplation of inconstancy. After that, a suitable teaching was selected for him. Eventually, Venerable Channa became an arahant.

Note:

[For Venerable Channa's practice, see *Khandhasaṃyutta*, Sutta No. 82 (Channa).

For the teaching given to Venerable Kaccānagotta, see *Nidānasāṃyutta*, Sutta No. 15 (Kaccānagotta).

Another important sutta concerning wrong view and doubt is the *Mahāpuṇṇama Sutta*, Sutta No. 109, *Majjhima Nikāya*.

From these texts, we can see that dangers and problems arise from wrong view and doubt—not only in the canonical texts, but also in modern times. We can discern their results in yogis' experiences, as well as in the destruction and

suffering found in societies up to international levels, its worst results are woeful births.]

Therefore, proper, wise, and right attention is of primary importance. Eyes exist, but seeing-consciousness does not exist by itself; it is a phenomenon that does not exist independently. In the same way, hearing, smelling, tasting, body-consciousness, and thinking or planning minds do not exist by themselves.

The sense doors, or the internal six sense bases (*āyatana*), exist in the body (as explained in section two of the Dependent Arising cycle). With the six base elements, the external object elements, and the six elements of consciousness, phenomena arise.

The base elements are subject to aging, sickness, and death (as aggregates, *khandha*), and there is no need to contemplate them as permanent, including external objects. Instead, you must contemplate the arising of seeing-consciousness and hearing-consciousness at the moment they arise—through the contact of the base element and the object element.

The physical consciousness of pleasant or unpleasant sensation is related to materiality (*rūpa*), such as hardness, tightness, motion, pressure, and so forth (the earth and air elements, etc.).

You must observe the *anicca* aggregate that is now appearing through the Dependent Arising process. In this aggregate, there is no essence. The physical body must grow old, become sick, and die—where, then, is its essence? This is the truth of *dukkha*.

The arising of seeing-consciousness, hearing-consciousness, and other consciousnesses is also impermanent (*anicca*) and unsatisfactory (*dukkha sacca*). Where is their essence? There is nothing reliable that exists; all phenomena are truly non-self.

Let us observe arising phenomena. They do not exist before they arise. Taking them as arising from external sources is wrong view. If one believes that they exist before arising, this becomes eternalist wrong view (*sassata-dit̥ṭhi*). If one believes that they appear by themselves, without conditions, this becomes causeless wrong view (*ahetuka-dit̥ṭhi* or *uccheda-dit̥ṭhi*). They do not arise without causes.

Taking these phenomena as “I,” “mine,” or as entities is the wrong view of personality belief (*sakkāya-ditṭhi*). Therefore, I will explain the proper attention needed for seeing-consciousness, hearing-consciousness, etc.

Hearing-consciousness does not exist beforehand; only the ear exists. The ear is the base (a passive element), and sound is the object (an active element). When they meet together—when sound strikes the ear-base—hearing-consciousness arises. Sounds exist in many places, but if they do not strike our ear-bases, or if these conditions do not meet, we do not hear them.

Thus, hearing-consciousness arises through meeting together, that is, through conditioning. With their contact, in a brief moment, hearing-consciousness appears. Does it exist beforehand by itself? The answer is no. Does it appear from outside? There is no hearing-consciousness outside; only sounds exist. Only matter (*rūpa*) exists. The ear-base element is also matter.

When the two elements—the ear and sound—meet together, hearing-consciousness arises momentarily. Therefore, it does not come from outside. It comes from an unseen place and disappears at an unseen place. The Buddha taught us to understand it in this way.

According to Mogok Sayadawgyi, it does not come from anywhere and does not go anywhere. It arises here and disappears here. This point is very important.

For example, hearing-consciousness and seeing-consciousness arise at the ear and the eye respectively. They do not come from inside or outside. They arise at the point of contact and disappear at the same place, without moving anywhere. You must contemplate this point carefully.

The Buddha gave a simile of the sound of a lute. The sound or music is not in the strings of the lute, nor is it in the fingers that pluck it. The music appears through the contact of both.

Another example is a mirror. A mirror is a clear element or base element, similar to the clear elements of the eye and ear. If you stand in front of a mirror wearing red-colored clothes, the red color appears in the mirror. With the contact of the body and the mirror, an image appears. There is no image in the mirror beforehand, and there is also no image in the body.

The body has a visible form. With two causes present, a shadow appears (here, the body and the mirror are the main causes, along with other supporting

conditions). When one of the causes changes, the shadow disappears. It appears at the base element and disappears at the same place. It arises here and vanishes here—arising instantly and vanishing instantly.

In the same way, at the base elements of the eye, ear, and so forth, when objects of sight, sound, and other sense objects come into contact, seeing-consciousness, hearing-consciousness, and the like appear. To say that they come from “here and there” is wrong. To say that they arise without any cause is also wrong. Being able to see phenomena in this way—free from these wrong views—constitutes right view and right attention.

Another example is a gas lighter. The small stone is the base element, and the small wheel is the striker element. Neither of them has fire by itself. When they strike together, a spark of fire appears between them and then quickly vanishes. Did the fire already exist there? Did it happen by itself, or did it arise by me or by others? No, it did not. When causes combine, it arises and vanishes.

Another example is a bell and a wooden striker. When the striker hits the bell, the sound “dong” appears. The sound does not exist in either of them beforehand, nor does it come from them independently. Through these examples, you can understand the process. Now let us examine the body.

In the suttas, the Buddha explains two causes, and in the commentaries, four causes. With the contact of the eye and visible form, seeing-consciousness arises. It does not arise by “me,” by others, or by itself—these are the wrong views of personality belief (*sakkāya-ditṭhi*) and annihilationism (*uccheda-ditṭhi*).

Does it exist before it arises, remain afterward, or move from somewhere else? These are eternalist views (*sassata-ditṭhi*). After its arising, it does not stay anywhere permanently. Nothing is left behind in the process. When one hundred moments of consciousness arise, all one hundred moments vanish.

If you are able to contemplate with right attention that dhammas arise due to causes and conditions, and that resultant dhammas also arise accordingly, then your understanding becomes right. You are free from *sakkāya*, *sassata*, and *uccheda* views. This is the correct understanding of the Dependent Arising process.

According to Mogok Sayadawgyi, if one does not understand Dependent Arising and does not know the aggregates (*khandhas*) as objects for contemplation, correct insight cannot develop.

If you contemplate the present body merely as a body (*conceptual khandha*) is incorrect. If one does not understand the *khandhas*, one's contemplation will also be incorrect. The inconstancy of all conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhāra anicca*) will not appear if one merely contemplates the head, body, feet, or hands.

Seeing-consciousness, hearing-consciousness, and so forth are conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhāra*). They arise through conditioning. Discernment of *anicca* occurs through seeing the arising of phenomena (*dhamma*). With the cause of dhamma, the result of dhamma arises; when the cause vanishes, the result also vanishes—arising here and vanishing here.

In brief, do not look at the present physical body as a fixed entity. Observe this body as processes. When the eye and visible form, the ear and sound, and so forth come into contact, seeing-consciousness, hearing-consciousness, and other consciousnesses arise. After their arising, they vanish; yet the eye, ear, and other sense bases remain intact. If they were to vanish completely, there would be no basis for practice. What, then, are we watching and observing? We are observing the arising of new *khandhas*.

What is the benefit of observing these impermanent *khandhas*? One will attain insight knowledges. With the attainment of knowledge, craving, clinging, and action cease. Impermanence is the truth of *dukkha*; the fading away of craving is the truth of the cause. With the cessation of the *anicca* process, one realizes Nibbāna.

With the clearing away of wrong views, one sees Nibbāna. When craving dies away, one sees Nibbāna. Therefore, the important point here is to be free from wrong views and to establish proper attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). When *anicca* is seen correctly, wrong view (*diṭṭhi*) is removed. With right understanding of impermanence, disenchantment knowledge arises. With the maturity of knowledge, Nibbāna is realized.

Only by seeing Nibbāna are the doors to woeful planes (*apāya*) closed.

Whatever arises is just its intrinsic nature. It arises due to causes; after arising, it vanishes. If the causes are still present, it arises again; when the causes cease, it vanishes again. In this way, one should continue the development of contemplation.

Talk 3: A Simile of a Spider

The spider staying in the middle (center) of the cobweb is likened to the primary object of meditation. This object is suitable for everyone and is always present. First, one must practise *samatha* (*samādhī*). Pay close attention (*sati*) at the entrance of the nostrils in order to know the in-breath and out-breath. Do not follow the air inward; instead, simply know the air going in and out at the nostrils.

In this way, the mind remains with the three factors of *samādhī*—*sati*, *virīya*, and *samādhī*. After some time, the mind becomes calm and stays where it is directed. After about twenty or thirty minutes, *samādhī* is gained. Now, with *samādhī*, the mind contemplates the characteristics of the in-breath and out-breath. The in-breath touches and then vanishes; this cessation is *anicca*. One must observe its nature with knowledge (*ñāṇa*). The out-breath is also observed in the same way. This cannot be seen with the normal eye, but only with the *ñāṇa*-eye.

Seeing the beginning and the ending is *anicca*—destruction and vanishing (that is, *khaya* and *vaya*). Seeing the beginning is *samatha* (*samādhī*), and seeing the cessation is *vipassanā* (insight). Knowing both constitutes the Path factors (*maggaṅga*). When one sees the ending or cessation, affection, love, or lust does not arise. This is the dying away of craving, or *samudaya* (the cause of *dukkha*).

Note: Venerable Ānanda mentioned four ways of realization in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, Book of Fours, Sutta No. 170 (*Yuganaddha*). Among them, the *yuganaddha* method is the third. According to Mogok Sayadawgyi, in some of his talks he explained this teaching to lay people as the *yuganaddha* way—driving two oxen together, that is, *samādhī* and *paññā*.

If you do not wish to contemplate touching (sensation) and knowing, you can also contemplate the mind. By watching, contemplate the wanting to breathe in and the wanting to breathe out in the mind. You will find that the “breathing-in mind” and the “breathing-out mind” also vanish.

You may also contemplate feeling (*vedanā*). Contemplate whatever you prefer. You have to contemplate whatever mind arises—seeing, hearing, smelling, and so forth. If there is nothing arising, contemplate the primary object of the in-breath and out-breath. In this way, this is similar to the “spider method.”

If you are able to contemplate whatever object is clear enough to discern, then it is the object suitable to your character. For example, feeling, according to Mogok Sayadaw, is a *khandha* that is easy for the yogi to discern.

Insight shown by the *khandha* arises faster and in greater numbers, and thus has stronger power. Insight observed by oneself (the yogi) is good only if defilements do not intrude during the practice. This is still weak *samādhi*.

When the insight shown by the *khandha* becomes prominent, it can help one finish the practice more quickly. There are two stages of insight: insight that comes through watching and observing, and insight shown by *dhammas* under one's own knowledge (*ñāṇa*). The yogi's duty is to practice a great deal in watching and observing.

With stronger *samādhi*, *dhammas* reveal their nature more clearly.

[Note: see my translation of Mogok Dhamma Talks, Part 6—“Two Views on Insight.”]

If the mind becomes purified, light may appear. One may ask: since the mind has no bodily matter, how could it emit light? The mind depends on the blood (the water element) of the heart (the earth element), which emits light because of mental factors (*cetasikas*).

With a greedy mind, becomes bright red; with anger, it becomes dark red; and with delusion, it becomes reddish as mixed with water (light red).

With non-greed, it emits colorful brightness; with loving-kindness (*mettā*), it emits white light; and with non-delusion (*ñāṇa*), the blood in the heart becomes clear. The eyes and the body become bright. The mind and body become clear. Even when the yogi has the eyes closed, there is no darkness; there is light.

[Note: The following information is from Phā-Auk Sayadaw's talk on insight practice.]

The yogi must establish the fourth *rūpa-jhāna samādhi* until it becomes firm and produces shining bright light. From the insight knowledge of rise and fall (*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*) onward, light appears. The Buddha taught that both *samādhi* and *vipassanā* possess the light of knowledge. Divine eyes (*dibba-cakkhu*) also have light. All *kaṣiṇa* meditations (colored disk objects) have light. *Upacāra* and *appanā samādhi* also have light. Among the ten corruptions of insight, one of them is light (*obhāsa*).

Consciousness-born matter (*cittaja-rūpa*) has color (*vaṇṇa*), which can be bright. These groups of consciousness-born matter (*kalāpa*) include the heat element (*tejo-dhātu*). They produce new material phenomena, so that light not only appears internally but can also penetrate externally. The degree of brightness depends on the power of *ñāṇa* (knowledge).

Although it is called the “light of knowledge,” it does not occur directly in the mind. It is produced by *cittaja-rūpa*, specifically heat-element or temperature-born matter (*utuja-rūpa*), which possesses brightness. Mind-born and temperature-born material phenomena exist throughout the whole body. Therefore, other material phenomena—kamma-born matter (*kammaja-rūpa*) and nutriment-born matter (*āhāra-rūpa*)—also become bright, because all of them are mixed together and their colors (*vaṇṇa*) become bright as well.

When the yogi is purified from defilements and freed from pollution, there is no difficulty in contemplation. Contemplation proceeds with a calm mind. The mind and its objects become refined.

The strength of contemplation also becomes strong; the mind no longer moves. With good *samādhi* power, contemplation becomes stable. When the mind is well established, it becomes stable, clear, and free from pollutants. Then the mind settles in stability, clearly knowing the rising and falling (*anicca*).

With sloth, torpor, and restlessness, one cannot realize the Dhamma. When the mind has *samādhi* strength and calmness, it is like the pendulum screw of a clock, which swings from side to side rhythmically in order to function properly. The tightness of the screw is like *samādhi*, and the rhythmic movement of the pendulum is like rising and falling. Therefore, in the realization of the Dhamma, *samādhi* is necessary.

Talk 4: The Nature of Feeling

At the beginning of sitting, no extraordinary feeling arises yet. There is merely the feeling of sitting comfortably. This is a pseudo-pleasant feeling, not a real one. After half an hour or an hour, the body becomes painful, with aches and discomfort. This is the arising of unpleasant feeling with a suffering nature. It is also a pseudo-unpleasant feeling.

The yogi experiences it as suffering because there is not yet discernment of rising and falling. After some time, the pain becomes unbearable. Therefore, the yogi does not focus attention on it, but instead returns attention to the nostril, focusing on the breath again. As a result, the painful feeling becomes bearable.

According to the texts, this is called *domanassa-upekkhā* (equanimity toward displeasure). In truth, feelings are impermanent (*anicca*). When one has not yet discerned their nature, they become unbearable and lead to displeasure and sadness, causing suffering of mind and body.

Therefore, the yogi sends the mind back to the nostril and practices *ānāpāna* again, or contemplates the rising and falling of the in-breath and out-breath. This is called pseudo-indifferent feeling (*upekkhā*).

After overcoming the three pseudo-feelings, the yogi will encounter the true feelings: pleasant, painful, and neither painful nor pleasant. This requires the help of a teacher; otherwise, one cannot clearly see it. Feeling never exists as a solid lump or substance. If the yogi does not see impermanence (*anicca*), the yogi will say, “I am not seeing it.”

To give an example, it is like *nadisota-viya*, a river flowing continuously. To the eye, it appears unbroken, without gaps. However, if one fixes attention on a single point, one sees the water flowing away one by one, successively. Through the connection of cause and effect, the old water passes away and new water arrives. In the same way, mind-and-form phenomena proceed so rapidly that they appear like a solid mass.

Another example is *dīpajāla-viya*, the flame of an oil lamp. It appears as a single, continuous flame. In reality, the flame burns moment by moment through the substitution of fuel, as the oil is consumed. In the world, apart from the

Nibbāna element, there is nothing stable. Even path and fruition knowledges eventually cease.

Three Ways to Discern Impermanence (*Anicca*) in Feeling

There are three ways to discern impermanence in feeling:

1. The Same Kind of Feeling with Different Strengths

Within one type of feeling, its strength varies—from extreme pain, to moderate pain, to slight pain. If one observes carefully and intensely, one can discern these differences in strength. This is discerning impermanence.

2. The Same Kind and Strength at Different Places

This refers to the same type of feeling arising at different locations. For example, an itch arises on the face; after it disappears there, a new itch arises on the head. This, too, is discerning impermanence.

3. The Same Kind and Strength at the Same Place but at Different Times

For example, an itch arises continuously on the face for some time. When the whole process is known, one sees that knowing occurs successively—itching known by one mind moment, then itching known by another mind moment, with gaps in between. This, too, is discerning impermanence.

The moments of knowing do not occur at the same time; they arise in many separate moments. It is like second by second—now arising and now passing away. They arise instantly and pass away instantly. If one does not see this through these three ways, it means one is not paying attention to them.

I will now speak about the true feelings after the pseudo-feelings.

By following and observing the arising phenomena of impermanence (*anicca*), one can discern many of them. At that stage, the yogi does not see feelings as solid entities, but only as transparent processes of rising and falling. When this occurs, the blood of the heart becomes clear. As it becomes bright, one of the ten corruptions of insight (*vipassanūpakkilesa*)—light—arises.

The body becomes light, as if shrinking into a small, bright form. The mind and body experience happiness. This is genuine happiness. Some mistake this happiness for Nibbāna, believing it to be true happiness. However, Nibbāna is not feeling (*vedanā*); therefore, it cannot be happiness in the ordinary sense.

[The Buddha mentioned to the brahmin Māgandiya: “Nibbānaṃ paramaṃ sukhaṃ”—Nibbāna is the supreme bliss. This must be understood in a metaphorical sense (Māgandiya Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya, Sutta No. 75).]

Do not forget the practice by indulging in this happiness. It is not true Nibbāna yet, but only a pseudo-Nibbāna. The yogi must observe the impermanence of this pleasant feeling and follow it to its end. Do not take pleasure in it. Contemplate continuously to see its vanishing.

When the time of true bliss approaches, the yogi may be able to remain without food. In this way, disenchantment (*nibbidā*) toward impermanence arises. The body becomes weaker, and the face appears older. Therefore, changes appear on the face of a yogi near the realization of the Dhamma.

Once, when I went to a place to teach, a senior monk asked me, “Are there any changes in the faces of your students?” I immediately replied, “The faces are just these faces.” He then said to me, “It doesn’t mean that.” At that moment, I understood what he meant.

I said, “Do you refer to *nibbidā-ñāṇa*?” He replied, “Yes.”

When the yogi arrives at this insight knowledge, the temples and eye areas appear sunken, like those of an aged person. Near the time of realization, the yogi appears like a dead person, with no desire for anything. There is wearisome disenchantment, free from desire and clinging. With no desire toward the *khandhas*, the yogi appears like a sick person. The face changes when the yogi reaches this knowledge.

At this stage, the yogi encounters the true suffering of *dukkha*. In the yogi’s mind, it feels good that this suffering is coming to an end. Therefore, the yogi continues contemplation with equanimity toward *dukkha*.

The yogi cannot turn away from the Dhamma process. The process of impermanence (*anicca*) reveals its nature clearly to the yogi, without any need to deliberately search for it. During sleep it is also seen; during eating it is the same. The yogi may be unable to sleep or eat. Ordinary people sleep without seeing it.

With *ñāṇa-hetu* (the root of non-delusion), *bhavaṅga-cittas* cannot intervene—no defilements arise in between. A sleepy or torpid mind cannot enter this state, and there is no desire to eat. The yogi’s mind abides in rapture (*pīti*). There is no wish to speak, and worldly matters become wearisome and even repulsive.

Contemplating impermanence and separation matures into contemplation with equanimity (*upekkhā*), specifically equanimity toward formations (*saṅkhārupekkhā*). Here, impermanence reveals itself forcefully.

Mogok Sayadaw also taught that if one does not want to observe it, it will naturally come to cessation. Knowledge itself makes the conclusion. It is not correct to deliberately intend one’s own cessation.

I have asked yogis who have had these experiences. It appears that knowledge (*ñāṇa*) itself asks, “Do you still want to see it?” The yogi replies through *ñāṇa*: “Enough is enough; there is no desire to see it.” After that, impermanence comes to cessation as a brief blip.

The ending of desire may occur either through resting or through a change of object (*ārammaṇa*). Only upon arriving at equanimity toward formations is there true equanimity. After cessation, there are no feelings anymore.

When feelings are contemplated to their end, with the cessation of feeling and craving ceases (*vedanā-nirodha, taṇhā-nirodha*). With the cessation of craving, Nibbāna arises (*taṇhā-nirodhā Nibbānaṃ*).

With the arising of Nibbāna, path and fruition knowledges appear (*magga-ñāṇa* and *phala-ñāṇa*). Nibbāna is not a kind of happiness that belongs to feeling (*vedayita-sukha*). It is not a pleasant feeling that becomes the best or highest experience. Experiences of pleasant feeling or pleasure are quite limited.

For example, if one likes pork, one must search for money to buy it, and then expend effort cooking it. This is very tiring. Such happiness exists only in speech; in reality, it is suffering.

(Human sensual pleasures are momentary, like a drop of honey on the tip of a razor blade. To enjoy these low and ignoble pleasures, humans must exert great effort, whether in skillful or unskillful ways. All such efforts are *saṅkhāra-dukkha*. Suffering is extensive and without limit.)

Talk 5: Three Types of Dukkha

By listening to Dhamma talks, one gains the truth-knowledge (*sacca-ñāṇa*). While listening to the Dhamma and directing attention toward the *khandhas*—by knowing their arising and passing away (*anicca*)—the yogi gains functional knowledge (*kicca-ñāṇa*). Only the yogi who possesses these two knowledges can attain the knowledge of the ending of suffering (*kata-ñāṇa*).

The wanderer Jambukhādaka approached and questioned Sāriputta about the truth of suffering (*dukkha-sacca*). There are three types of suffering, and only by understanding them is a yogi able to practice correctly. These are:

1. Dukkha-dukkhatā

Suffering due to pain—painful bodily and mental feeling. Unpleasant feelings (*dukkha-vedanā*) such as numbness, aches, and pains are called *dukkha-dukkhatā*. This type of suffering is known to everyone; even animals know it. Through this knowledge alone, one cannot realize the Dhamma. Only through understanding the second and third types of suffering can *dukkha-sacca* be realized.

2. Saṅkhāra-dukkhatā (Suffering Due to Formations)

All newly arising conditioned phenomena within the *khandhas* belong to this type of suffering. Because they are oppressed by arising and passing away, they are *saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*. For example, when the eye comes into contact with a visible object, seeing consciousness arises. This arising itself is *saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*. The same applies to ear and sound, and so forth. All sense processes should be understood in this way.

These are *sabhāva-khandhas*—aggregates of intrinsic nature. They have no fixed form, shape, or substance that can be touched or measured. Not everyone can see this. Only through discerning the *khandhas*—rather than reacting like a barking dog—does one become a noble one (*ariya*).

This is also called the result-aggregate (*vipāka-khandha*) or the aggregate of dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppanna-khandha*). These phenomena truly

exist only as arising and passing away. When the yogi sees the arising of suffering in this way, three *samādhi* factors are established.

3. Vipariṇāma-dukkhatā (Suffering Due to Change)

The yogi, through watching and observing, sees the arising of *saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*. When the yogi discerns its vanishing, *vipariṇāma-dukkhatā* is known.

Knowing painful feeling within the *khandhas* is *dukkha-dukkhatā*. Knowing dependent origination is *saṅkhāra-dukkhatā*. Seeing the vanishing of *saṅkhāra-dukkhatā* is *vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*. Not everyone can know these distinctions.

To understand the *khandhas* thoroughly, one must discern arising and passing away. When this is seen, identity view (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) falls away. There is no notion of a person or a being—only the knowing of pain as arising suffering. By seeing arising, the view of annihilationism (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*) falls away; by seeing vanishing, the view of eternalism (*sassata-diṭṭhi*) falls away.

According to Mogok Sayadaw, observation of feeling reveals its arising and vanishing as *paramattha-dhamma*. Although these phenomena are extremely unstable, they are objects suitable for observation. What perishes is the arising of intrinsic phenomena, not the physical body. The body does not perish instantly; it ages gradually.

Therefore, one must clearly understand the distinction between the body-aggregate and the arising mental aggregates. In this way, one discerns both *saṅkhāra-dukkhatā* and *vipariṇāma-dukkhatā*. Aging, sickness, and death are bodily forms of suffering (*rūpa-dukkha*).

Beyond these, there are innumerable forms of suffering arising each second within one's life. These are the arising *khandhas*.

Conventional Death and Insightful Death

Death is only one event in a single lifetime-- conventional death (*sammuti-maraṇa*) which is known by everyone. Insightful death (*vipassanā-maraṇa*), however, is not known by everyone. This is momentary death (*khaṇika-maraṇa*),

which is known through penetrating insight. Contemplation of conventional death is beneficial for development because it leads to a sense of urgency (*saṃvega*).

The present body does not continue through craving, clinging, and action; rather, only newly arising *khandhas* are connected through these processes. We cannot control the aging, sickness, and death of the present body, but we can control the future arising of new *khandhas*. Before insight arises, we create new actions out of affection, craving, and clinging; therefore, we receive new *khandhas* as a result.

With insight contemplation of seeing, one discerns the arising and passing away of seeing consciousness. This seeing no longer connects with craving, clinging, and action, and thus the dependent origination process is cut off. It is like changing railway lines: one line leads to woeful births, while another leads to Nibbāna.

With seeing comes affection and clinging; with hearing comes affection, and so forth—leading onward to the *apāyas*. However, when seeing is followed by its vanishing, and hearing is followed by its vanishing, the process leads instead toward Nibbāna. With right knowing comes right perception, right understanding, and right view; all wrong views and defilements disappear.

Knowing Dukkha Through Insight

Painful suffering (*dukkha-dukkha*) is known by everyone. Only those who possess *samādhi* can know arising suffering (*saṅkhāra-dukkha*). Only those with wisdom can know changing suffering (*vipariṇāma-dukkha*).

Merely knowing the arising of feeling still leads to greed, anger, and delusion; this knowledge is not yet right. When one knows the arising and passing away of feeling, knowledge becomes right. Therefore, one must discern the universal characteristic (*sāmañña-lakkhaṇa*).

The ultimate phenomena (*paramattha-dhamma*) arise and perish, this is its nature.

Talk 6: Six Elements Meditation

In the whole body there are six elements. Earth and water elements form one group; fire and air elements form another group. The space element consists of gaps, holes, and spaces in objects. The final element is the knowing element—the mind or consciousness element (*viññāṇa-dhātu*).

Except for discerning arising and passing away (*anicca*), a mind dominated by sloth and torpor or by restlessness is not truly meditating.

A heavy or corpulent yogi has more earth and water elements. These combine into heavy material phenomena (*rūpa*). Fire and air elements can also combine; when fire exists, air also exists, as fire burns with air. These are light elements that move upward. A thin yogi has more fire and air elements. A heavy person tends to nod off while sitting; a thin person tends to have excessive fantasy and imagination.

Therefore, a heavier yogi should breathe out longer, breathing in fully and breathing out fully. The yogi prone to nodding off should lengthen both inhalation and exhalation, breathing in longer and breathing out longer, sometimes tensing the nerves or lightly biting the teeth. Nodding occurs due to excessive *samādhi* and insufficient effort. If the mind is restless, one should breathe faster and count more. After adjusting the four elements in the body, one continues insight practice.

The hardness of the earth element does not appear continuously; it arises in gaps. Its magnitude varies—small, medium, or great hardness. Everything has space. There is space between phenomena during the stages of arising. Yogis contemplate in order to discern this space.

To contemplate space together with knowing is to contemplate the mind element (*viññāṇa-dhātu*). At this stage, contemplation of the six elements is complete: the four great elements, space, and mind—during the discernment of impermanence.

The ending of one material phenomenon (*rūpa*) or one mental phenomenon (*nāma*) is impermanence. Before the next one begins, there is a gap—space. Because of the rapidity of phenomena, it is difficult to discern the ending instantly. However, by seeing gaps, impermanence becomes clearer.

After a phenomenon ends and the next has not yet begun, there is space. By discerning space, the yogi understands the nature of ending—impermanence. With the discernment of more and more short gaps, it becomes closer to see the ultimate cessation of Nibbāna.

Seeing Impermanence Through Gaps

Seeing impermanence (*anicca*) is seeing the short gaps. Mental phenomena also have gaps. One should contemplate in order to see them. For example, seeing consciousness contains many short gaps. It continues by arising one after another with gaps in between.

Hearing consciousness should be understood in the same way; this is even clearer, as one sound follows another. In this way, yogis can see many short gaps. At the time of cessation, the knowing of the six sense doors comes to a stop. *Ñāṇa* directly experiences the phase of cessation, that is, Nibbāna. This experience is known as the “long gap.”

Discerning short gaps is seeing impermanence. Seeing the long gap is seeing the constant—Nibbāna. Not starting again, or not continuing, is the long gap that transcends time and space. When cause and effect are cut off, the gap becomes long and limitless.

Talk 7: Why There Is No Realisation

In short, the reason for non-realisation is the failure to discern arising and passing away (*anicca*). The cause of not discerning impermanence is that the mind is covered by the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*). These are:

1. **Sensual desire** (*kāmacchanda-nīvaraṇa*)
One is thinking about sensual pleasures. The mind is occupied with family matters, business, and worldly affairs.
2. **Ill will** (*vyāpāda-nīvaraṇa*)
There is no endurance or patience toward oneself or others. The mind is angry, wild, and covered by anger and displeasure.
3. **Sloth and torpor** (*thīna-middha-nīvaraṇa*)
The mind is dull and drowsy, without clarity about what is happening.
4. **Restlessness and remorse** (*uddhacca-kukkucca-nīvaraṇa*)
The mind is obsessed with and oppressed by restlessness and regret.
5. **Doubt** (*vicikicchā-nīvaraṇa*)
One is unable to make a decision in a situation.

When these five are combined, they reduce to two basic types of mind: a restless mind and a drowsy mind.

Regarding the four restless hindrances (1, 2, 4, and 5), the mind runs outward toward objects and is unable to make clear decisions about them. The remaining hindrance (3) relates to excessive *samādhi*, in which objects fade and vanish within the mind. Although there are five coverings, they can be condensed into these two.

Two Ways to Prevent the Hindrances

For a restless mind, there are two preventive approaches: the way of *samādhi* and the way of insight.

The Samādhi Way

This is contemplation with effort focused on the in-breath and out-breath (*ānāpāna*). One must firmly determine not to allow other objects to intrude, persevering and sticking continuously to the *samatha* object. This is called *ārammaṇūpaniijhāna* (absorption by holding to the object).

The Insight Way

This is contemplation of whatever object arises. At the contact of a sense base and its corresponding sense object, the yogi must contemplate without fail. This is called *lakkhaṇūpaniijhāna* (stability on the characteristic of phenomena). Continuous connection with insight objects prevents the mind from becoming restless.

(This is mentioned by Mogok Sayadaw as the mind becoming in sigleness—ekaggatā—with the insight objects.)

Regarding drowsiness, this occurs due to low effort—laziness and disinterest—rather than excessive *samādhi*. Some yogis develop this habit of nodding and drowsiness for months or even years. (There was a Western monk in Thailand who had this habit. At the beginning of sitting, after only a few minutes, he would fall into drowsiness. Before becoming a monk, he had used drugs.)

Samādhi connects with the three kinds of seclusion (*viveka*). These are:

1. Bodily Seclusion (*kāya-viveka*)

During sitting meditation, the body should not move. It must remain stable, without corrections or adjustments. The causes for realization of the Dhamma include confidence, good health, practice with a straightforward mind. The yogi must have patience and endurance, together with a straightforward mind.

The yogi must also be free from wrong view, such as “this happens according to my desire.” Instead, one must observe phenomena according to their own nature. With patience and endurance, the yogi observes their oppressive nature.

There is a saying that patience and endurance lead to the realization of Nibbāna. This point is evident in the success of some yogis (for example, in the autobiography of Thae Inn-gu Sayadaw, *Two Sides of a Coin*). Bodily seclusion succeeds when the yogi is able to let go of the physical body.

2. Mental Seclusion (*citta-viveka*)

As mentioned above, both *samatha* and *vipassanā* are methods for calming the mind. First comes *samatha*, and later insight. When impermanence (*anicca*) is discerned, the mind arrives at calmness. At that time, the mind does not incline toward other objects.

With the strength of *samādhi*, the mind naturally turns toward observation of the *khandhas*. In my own experience, when the mind had strong *samādhi*, there was no shortage of sounds. Sounds from far and near, subtle and refined, were all present. Without *sati* and *samādhi*, one is unaware of their existence.

(This is true even in a very quiet and peaceful environment; the mind can still hear subtle sounds, such as radio waves.) Likewise, within the *khandhas*, sensations of heat and cold are always present. With *samādhi* and calmness, we come to know them directly for ourselves.

Before this stage, the yogi must apply a great deal of mindfulness and persistence in practice. At the time of discerning impermanence (*anicca*), persistence becomes less effortful, and impermanence together with the path factors (*magga*) fit naturally into the practice. The yogi can no longer think about various unrelated matters. Whatever appears is only arising and passing away, revealing itself directly. It does not transform into other kinds of objects.

Even if the yogi thinks of home, it appears merely as brief blips of arising and passing away. He cannot think about external objects in a conceptual way. As the mind turns inward, objects such as the hands, feet, and head are experienced as bursting and vanishing in rapid blips. This is impermanence fitting together with the path factors. The yogi knows this directly for himself. Mental seclusion becomes successful, and he must continue with it.

When the yogi arrives at *paṭisaṅkhā-ñāṇa* (the knowledge of reflective contemplation), concentration of the mind changes. The discernment is no longer the same as before. Previously, the arising and passing away were coarse; now

they are refined and minute. There are many impermanences and many types of them.

An example can be given. When the sun is hot, all the doors of a house are closed, and it becomes dark inside. At that time, one can see only large objects, but not minute ones. If a small hole is made in the wall with an iron nail on the side facing the sun, sunlight enters through that hole. What can be seen in that sunlight? One can see fine, minute dust particles floating in the beam. Before the light enters, one cannot see them—only the coarser objects.

In the same way, with clarity and the light of insight, the yogi observes the *khandhas* and cannot find any empty space, not even as small as the eye of a needle. At that time, many impermanences are seen. With the eyes closed, when the mind is still dark, only coarse impermanences are seen. When the mind becomes bright and the body feels light, clear brightness appears, and the yogi sees a great number of impermanences.

After this, the mind becomes wearisome and disenchanted. There is no more affection. One clearly sees the truth of suffering. The mind no longer wishes to look at or delight in phenomena. Then impermanences come to cessation.

The burdened load of the *khandhas* falls away. As the load is put down, the mind becomes cool and at ease. This is the third type of seclusion: seclusion from acquisitions (*upadhi-viveka*).

Talk 8: The Three Seclusions and the Process of Inconstancy

Those who wish to realize the Dhamma must follow what is now being explained. One may say, “I have come here for the Dhamma,” but in order to attain the Dhamma, one must practice and cultivate the five spiritual powers (*balāni*). These are: confidence, persistence, mindfulness, concentration, and discernment.

The power of confidence must be strong (*saddhā-bala*). Ordinary effort is insufficient; therefore, one must also cultivate the power of persistence (*viriyā-bala*). The power of mindfulness enables continuous contemplation without lapses, even in fine details. The power of concentration (*samādhi-bala*) must exceed the others, and the power of discernment (*paññā-bala*) must be capable of deep and analytical contemplation.

By practicing with full persistence, these powers develop naturally. This is why the Buddha taught them. Without this training, yogis tend to practice in easy and relaxed ways that do not lead to realization.

One must have the courage to quarrel with craving (*taṇhā*), which behaves like a tailor—constantly stitching and making connections, foremost in relationships. For example, when the leg aches, craving in the heart makes connection with you. This is your legs, how can it be better if you don’t adjust it? Only you’ll suffer! So, you have to lift your legs. If one follows the wishes of craving, one will never attain the Dhamma, but only the truth of suffering (*dukkha-sacca*).

The three seclusions succeed only when one has the courage to confront and abandon *taṇhā*.

The Three Kinds of Seclusion

There are three processes that bring calmness and peace:

1. Bodily Seclusion (*kāya-viveka*)

During sitting meditation, the yogi must abandon making bodily adjustments.

2. **Mental Seclusion (*citta-viveka*)**

The yogi must calm the mind.

3. **Seclusion from Acquisitions (*upadhi-viveka*)**

When both mind and body are calmed, the yogi is able to realize the cessation of mind and body—Nibbāna.

The yogi must abandon attachment to the *khandhas* connected with sensual pleasures. In relation to this point, there are two types of persons: those holding the eternalist view (*sassata-diṭṭhi*), and those holding the annihilationist view (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*).

A person holding the eternalist view (*sassata-diṭṭhi*) does not dare to commit unwholesome actions that lead to painful existences. Such a person is content with human and celestial pleasures and has no desire for Nibbāna.

A person holding the annihilationist view (*uccheda-diṭṭhi*), if required to act, does not care about the future results of existence. If such a person turns toward the Dhamma, he may even give up his life for the practice leading to Nibbāna. In this situation, he has no clinging to other things. Therefore, even people of very poor moral background can realize the Dhamma.

(In the following Sayadaw talks on the causes of non-realization). It is emphasized that without giving up sensual pleasures and without a teacher to guide the practice, realization cannot be attained. This may lead one onto the wrong path. Practicing in a relaxed manner—without persistent effort and without sufficient strength in practice—does not lead to realization.

When a person grows old, both mind and body weaken, and the practice becomes difficult to sustain. If one is unable to overcome these limitations, one may have to abandon the practice, especially when the aging body can no longer follow it. With old age, sickness inevitably arises. Therefore, one must practice diligently while still capable. However, many people become complacent as death approaches.

Mogok Sayadaw urged his disciples to practice quickly; otherwise, sickness and death would overtake them.

Those who are **strongly attached to wrong views**, and who cannot abandon or change those views, cannot realize the Dhamma. Only at the stage of arahantship it is completely right. Even a stream-enterer is not right yet because he

could only abandon eight of the twelve inversions (*vipallāsa*). As long as defilements (*kilesa*) remain, complete rightness has not yet been achieved. The mind will still arise in accordance with defilements. It will become completely right only when all defilements come to an end.

Practical Advice Given by the Sayadaw

The Sayadaw offers the following practical guidance:

1. Making a Determination before a Buddha Image

In front of a Buddha image, one should offer one's *khandhas* to the Buddha and make a firm determination (*adhiṭṭhāna*) regarding a specific time frame for sitting practice—for example, one hour or two hours. Later, the duration can be increased gradually: one hour and fifteen minutes, one hour and thirty minutes, and so on.

Sayadawji also gave the same advice previously. There is nothing impossible if one practices properly and gradually increases one's effort in the practice.

The yogi must restrain the sense faculties. Do not move when mosquitoes bite. When the weather is hot, simply endure it; when it is cold, endure it in the same way. The yogi must have this kind of courage; otherwise, success is not possible. One must also have perfect determination. Whatever the reason may be, one must decide: "I will not move. I will watch and observe in order to know the nature of the Dhamma."

If one has this kind of spirit, there will be peace and calmness with regard to the body. Otherwise, there will be constant changes of posture, by scratching when the body with itches, etc. Sayadawji compared this type of yogi to a bull with a bad habit—it never stands still.

The Buddha taught: "Khantī paramaṃ tapo titikkhā"—patient endurance is the highest austerity. Therefore, during sitting meditation, patient endurance brings great benefit. A yogi can succeed if he has the courage to struggle with craving (*taṇhā*).

2. Calming the Mind

One must also calm the mind, not allowing other mental states to enter, maintaining only a single state of mind. The mind must continuously discern the perishing of phenomena.

There are two ways to do this: *samatha* and *vipassanā*. If the mind does not calm down, even if one practices for an entire lifetime, realization will not occur.

Note: In the Wings of Awakening (*bodhi-pakkhiyā-dhammā*), there are seven sets:

1. Four Establishments of Mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*)
2. Four Right Efforts (*sammappadhāna*)
3. Four Bases of Spiritual Power (*iddhipāda*)
4. Five Faculties (*indriya*)
5. Five Powers (*bala*)
6. Seven Factors of Enlightenment (*bojjhaṅga*)
7. Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya-magga*)

Among these, energy (*viriya*) is mentioned nine times; mindfulness (*sati*) eight times; and wisdom (*paññā*) and concentration (*samādhi*) five times each. This shows the great importance of *sati* and *viriya* in purifying the mind and leading to *samādhi* and *paññā*.

For further study, I would like to refer readers to *Bodhi-pakkhiya Dīpanī* by Ledi Sayadaw. It is a very useful book for practice.

Samatha and Vipassanā Approaches

In the *samatha* approach, the mind must contemplate closely a single object. The mind must become stable with the in-breath and out-breath. The yogi must begin with this approach when impermanence (*anicca*) is not yet clearly seen.

In the *vipassanā* approach, one contemplates in order to discern the vanishing characteristic of the in-breath and out-breath. Contemplation is done by paying careful attention to the breath, allowing it to become the primary object.

When the mind gradually becomes calm, the whole body reveals its nature: itching, pain, warmth, coolness, movement, sound, smell, and so forth.

The yogi also comes to know the changes of the knowing mind. He discovers the rising and falling of phenomena as they show their nature. Before this stage, the yogi has to follow the in-breath and out-breath and contemplate their characteristics. Now, because of strong samādhi, the discernment of rising and falling is shown directly by phenomena themselves. Impermanence (*anicca*) becomes more prominent in the aggregates (*khandha*), without expectation or deliberate effort; it happens naturally under the yogi's knowing.

Eventually, the entire body becomes filled with impermanence, and the perception of a solid khandha-body disappears. Its intrinsic nature becomes clear to the yogi. Impermanence appears very rapidly through objects, in great numbers. With repeated discernment of impermanence, the mind becomes weary and disenchanted.

At this stage, the five spiritual faculties become strong and mature into powers (*bala*). To have impermanence (*anicca*) and the path (*magga*) fit together is not easy; one must practice very diligently to reach this level.

How to Know Whether *Anicca* and *Magga* Are Fitting Together

How do we know whether impermanence and the path are properly aligned? One must examine the mind: does it stay close to the khandha and contemplate it, or not? If the mind still wanders here and there, it is not yet correct.

Previously, careful and deliberate contemplation was required. Now, there is no need for excessive concern or deliberate attention. Impermanence reveals itself automatically; it shows itself by its own nature. There is no need to force attention onto objects. When impermanence and the path are properly aligned, the yogi knows this directly for himself, and the mind becomes calm.

At that time, if thoughts of external objects still arise—such as robes and alms bowls for a monk, or family members, possessions, and other concerns for a layperson—and these can still be clearly thought about and perceived, then the mind has not yet fully fitted into impermanence.

When impermanence and the path are fully aligned, the mind cannot engage with external objects. Thoughts vanish moment by moment in brief flashes. If one tries to force the mind to think at this stage, what happens is similar to being struck by an electric shock: a very painful feeling arises.

Because of much seeing of impermanence (*anicca*), defilements become thinner and thinner, changing from heat to coolness. If the mind returns back to defilements (*kilesa*), heat and a painful feeling appear in the body. I myself experienced this before and did not know what was happening. Later, I searched for it in the commentary on the *Majjhima Nikāya* in Pāli and found the explanation.

If you pour boiling water into a very cold glass, it cracks instantly, because the glass cannot withstand extreme heat when it is too cold. In the same way, when the mind returns to defilements, painful feeling arises. After that, yogis do not dare to think further. “Enough is enough.” They remain with coolness and stop all thinking.

Note: It is very important for every human being to understand well the power of the mind—wholesome (skillful) and unwholesome (unskillful)—and the law of kamma. If not, we create many problems and much suffering for ourselves, for others, and for nature.

The blood in the heart becomes light and bright after impermanence and the path fit together for one or two hours. The eyes become clear, and painful feeling disappears from the aggregates (*khandha*). The body becomes light, and gladness and happiness arise. At that period, the ten corruptions of insight arise, and yogis may experience them and mistakenly take them to be Nibbāna dhammas.

Teachers should remind students about these experiences. Yogis must experience them in practice; otherwise, it is not yet right. The mind (*ñāṇa*) becomes sharp and gains the light element. With clear blood, brightness appears. The yogi must return this *ñāṇa* to the *khandha* process.

Previously, the yogi discerned coarse and middling phenomena. Now, with the light element, refined phenomena are discerned. Therefore, the yogi must make it clear and continue the practice; it does not take long when the practice fits this process. However, it is also difficult for it to arise because of the hindrances.

If the practice fits into this process, it will succeed. With much discernment, the mind becomes wearisome. At last, impermanence comes to an end (cessation), and path and fruition knowledges arise.

Talk 9: The Hidden Element

(Some Western philosophers think that they understand *dukkha*. Einstein discovered mass–energy, $E = mc^2$, but he did not discover mind energy which is more important. In the same way, chemists will never discover the hidden element. This foremost element cannot be discovered by a defiled and polluted mind. Do not say that they can discover it, even with the strongest “superglue” of *diṭṭhi* and *taṇhā*, to understand and appreciate the Buddha-Dhamma is very difficult for them.)

There are two types of phenomena: conceptual and ultimate (*paññatti* and *paramattha*). There are two kinds within the ultimate: conditioned and unconditioned (*saṅkhata* and *asaṅkhata*). We cannot yet see the unconditioned element, Nibbāna, because it is covered by the conditioned elements of the aggregates (*khandha*).

The unconditioned element cannot yet appear because the aggregates have not yet ceased. Again, concepts cover up what cannot see the conditioned clearly. The concepts of a person or a being cover up the aggregates, and the aggregates, in turn, cover up Nibbāna.

The usages of human society—together with wrong perception, wrong knowing, and wrong viewing (the twelve inversions), as well as wrong views (*diṭṭhi*)—cover up the aggregates and make them impossible to discern.

Only by removing these two coverings can one discern Nibbāna. How does one strip off concepts? It is through discerning the conditioned. The yogi has to observe newly arising phenomena of the aggregates. As knowledge of mind and body develops, concepts fall away. By knowing the arising intrinsic nature of phenomena, the concepts of a person and a being disappear.

By knowing the arising and vanishing of dependently arisen dhammas, concepts drop off.

Nibbāna is realized by uncovering what covers the conditioned. This is the most difficult task. At the end of the conditioned, Nibbāna exists.

The yogi must contemplate in order to discern the rise and fall of conditioned phenomena. This is momentary Nibbāna, also called momentary cessation (*khaṇa-nirodha*). He has to contemplate for a longer period. If he still cannot see momentary cessation, he will be unable to discern the cessation of the whole process leading to Nibbāna.

With much seeing, knowledge becomes mature, and he comes to understand more deeply. He will understand the truth of *dukkha*, and knowledge of not wanting it will arise. (Sayadaw gives the example of eating the same food every day—for instance, pork—until it becomes wearisome.) Then all the rise and fall (*anicca*) come to cessation. With the cessation of all rise and fall, the unconditioned element appears. Nibbāna appears, which has no rise and fall. This is at the end of the conditioned; the unconditioned Nibbāna exists.

(Sayadaw gives an example from the experience of a yogi.) This yogi, upon arriving at the knowledge of disenchantment, did not want to see further, yet the Dhamma process continued to present itself to him. It was unavoidable. It was as though something were asking him, “Do you want to see it?” The mind (*ñāṇa*) answered, “I really don’t want to see it.” Then, in the quickest way, impermanence came to a stop.

After that, gladness arose, and he bowed to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha many times. Before this, it had been quite difficult for him to bow even once. The yogi’s experience matched the texts.

(Luang Por Chah taught the monks: when you come out of the kuti, bow to the Buddha. When you enter the sālā, bow to the Buddha; when leaving, bow again. When going outside the monastery, bow; when returning, bow again.)

Mogok Sayadawgyi also said that when the yogi arrives at *nibbidā-ñāṇa*, one cannot stop it by desire. It comes to a stop through the decision of *ñāṇa* itself. Whether path knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*) is correct or not is confirmed by fruition knowledge (*phala-ñāṇa*). The yogi has to enter the fruition state.

As long as conceptual coverings remain, they cover the person’s mind, and there is no true contemplation.

Talk 10: Experience of the Unconditioned

With much contemplation on the rise and fall of conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhata*), when knowledge (*ñāṇa*) becomes mature, the yogi will see the unconditioned (*asaṅkhata*) at the ending of rise and fall. The unconditioned does not exist beforehand; it appears only with the disappearance of the conditioned.

I give this talk based on the sutta references of arahants and the experiences of some yogis. Why do I have to speak about these matters? Some people are practising Dhamma and can discern impermanence and its ending, yet they do not recognise it as unbinding—Nibbāna. Because they lack the opportunity to approach the noble beings (*ariyas*). For example, Mahānāma the Sakyan did not know himself to be a stream-enterer.

King Milinda asked Venerable Nāgasena about the experience of Nibbāna. At first, the knowing mind discerns the rise and fall of phenomena; later, transcending the ending of rise and fall, it abides in the Nibbāna element.

The yogi must take great care: he must know precisely every arising and vanishing phenomenon. Other mind states must not be allowed to enter the mind. As the contemplative mind becomes closer to Nibbāna, it later arrives together with the cessation of rise and fall. I will analyse the process of cessation, because it is very important. In the Buddha's teachings, this is the highest and most profound Dhamma.

Some say the mind depends on the brain; this is not entirely correct. It exists as depending on the blood of the heart. Consider the story of a young monk who was eaten by a tiger. When the element of consciousness (*viññāṇa-dhātu*) arrived at the heart area, it came to cessation. When there is trembling or fear, the heart beats faster; strong emotions have the same effect.

Roots, Light of Knowledge, and the Disappearance of the Body

Depending on the state of mind, the heart blood changes. There are six roots of consciousness, and one must understand them. When the root of greed—

wanting, affection, liking, and attachment—arises, the heart blood becomes bright red. The colour depends on the state of mind.

The root of hatred is sadness, disappointment, aversion, irritation, and related states. When this root arises, the blood of the heart becomes murky. The root of delusion is nodding, doubt, confusion, and indecisiveness; when it arises, the blood of the heart becomes reddish. These three are the unwholesome roots.

Let us now continue with the three wholesome roots. The root of non-greed is giving, generosity, and sharing; when this root is present, the blood of the heart emits a colourful brightness. The root of non-hatred is goodwill, kindness, and friendliness; then the blood emits a clear white colour.

The root of non-delusion is the knowing mind that discerns impermanence (*anicca*). When this root arises, the blood of the heart becomes clear, like the surface of glass. How extraordinary this is: with the cause of a purified mind, form itself becomes luminous, shining like a diamond light.

With a clear mind, the eye, ear, nose, and other sense faculties also become clear. Mind is the principal factor; therefore, the yogi must make the mind clear. The body too gains lightness and brightness. With the clarity of the ears, even distant sounds—such as birds far away—can be heard. These are yogis' experiences. When there is no dust or pollution of unwholesomeness entering the mind, light arises when *anicca* and *magga* fit together.

When looking at the body with this light, everything in the body can be seen clearly.

[In one of Sayadaw U Candimā's talks, he gives very detailed explanations of all the internal organs of the body and their functions—quite remarkable. This comes from his direct seeing and the light of knowledge.]

In darkness, one can see large objects but not small ones, because there is not enough light. If a small hole is made in a wall facing the sun, when sunlight enters, tiny particles floating in the air become visible. This is due to light. In the same way, when a yogi has the light element and the knowing mind observes the body, many instances of impermanence are seen. *Āloko udapādi*—light arises in the yogi.

With extensive discernment of impermanence, weariness develops. True weariness arises when the whole body seems to crumble and disappear. Once, while I was teaching at a certain place, a layman said to me, “Venerable sir, you speak about rise and fall—phenomena arising and vanishing in blips—but I have never experienced this.” I replied, “You are talking to others with your eyes open—how could you see it?”

After hearing my exhortation, he practised accordingly. He practised continuously for three to four days without fail—sitting, not talking, and keeping his eyes closed. He discerned impermanence and said, “Bhante, I have now seen the blips.”

If one practises persistently, seeing the body disappear, discerning impermanence with knowledge, and continuing effort with disenchantment toward impermanence, eventually it leads to cessation and final ending.

Three Types of Defilements and Their Extermination

Here it is necessary to explain the three types of defilements. These are:

1. **Latent defilement (*anusaya*)**
2. **Obsession by defilement (*pariyuṭṭhāna*)**
3. **Transgression (*vitikkama*)**

Latent defilements exist within the round of existence (*saṃsāra*). The mind carries them along through the continuous processes of cause-and-effect connections. When the appropriate causes are present, such as greed or anger, they will arise.

Newly arising defilements are called obsession by defilements. If these obsessions grow stronger, they lead to transgression, which manifests through bodily or verbal actions.

Which defilement is eradicated by the knowledge that discerns impermanence (*anicca*)? It eradicates obsession by defilements (the second type).

According to the Dependent Arising (D.A.) process, discernment stops the connection between section two and section three (see the Mogok D.A. chart). Craving (*taṇhā*), clinging (*upādāna*), and action (*kamma*) cannot enter the mind.

This is called non-arising cessation (*anuppāda-nirodha*)—cessation through non-occurrence.

With the five path factors—mindfulness (*sati*), energy (*virīya*), concentration (*samādhi*), right view, and right thought—defilements are eliminated so that obsession and transgression no longer arise. Therefore, two types of defilements are eradicated, while the latent tendency is gradually weakened.

Latent defilements have been carried through many lives, but as obsession weakens, the latent defilements also become thinner. The five path factors have a profound effect on the path leading to Nibbāna.

The result ceases because the cause is eradicated. Therefore, it is important to understand the two modes of eradication: eradication of the cause and eradication of the result, respectively.

What does eradication of the cause look like? It is like a tiger or a lion killing the enemy itself.

Eradication of the result, by contrast, is like a dog that attacks the stone thrown at it. If a stone is thrown at a tiger, it does not react to the stone; rather, it is harmed by the person who threw it. If the person is killed, no more stones are thrown, and no further problems arise. When the cause is eliminated, the result ceases to arise. A dog fears the person who throws the stone, not the stone itself.

Extermination of Cause and Result (Continuation)

It is angry, but it does not dare to bite him. This is similar to exterminating only the result. When the cause still exists, more stones will continue to be thrown. I will explain to yogis for the understanding of these two types of extermination.

For example, different mind states and feelings arise. A yogi has to know the arising when it arises, and to know its vanishing when it vanishes. If one discerns the *paramattha dhammas* of now born and now die, craving (*taṇhā*), clinging (*upādāna*), and kamma do not arise because their causes are not present. Therefore, discerning impermanence (*anicca*) in arising phenomena is the extermination of the cause.

The other way is when painful feeling arises and one merely notes it and tries to make it comfortable so that it goes away. This is conditioning feeling and is

connected to the round of existence. This is an attempt to exterminate only the result, because feeling (*vedanā*) is *vipāka-vatta*, the result within the round of existence.

By exterminating only the result, the process will never end. (This point is very important, even for world leaders and politicians when dealing with international problems and suffering, such as climate change and conflicts. It seems to me that they follow the simile of the dog.) Even if changes occur, they are only temporary.

Then how should one practise? Contemplate to discern vanishing phenomena—impermanence (*anicca*) and the path (*magga*). In this way, the path factors arise, and craving cannot arise (see the D.A. chart). The mind will not follow desire. Dhamma is non-self; it follows its own nature.

The nature of pain is simply painful. When ears exist, sounds will be heard. The yogi must use wisdom (*ñāṇa*) to contemplate their nature. If one is able to discern them correctly, practice becomes successful.

Now yogis understand the three types of defilements and the extermination of the cause. What remains to be understood is this: after seeing many rise-and-fall processes, the process itself changes. The impermanence process increases and decreases; arising becomes faster and then slows down. It is as if the process plays itself out.

In the texts, this is referred to as *vūṭṭhānaḡāminī*. In ordinary language, it means that strength is required for the cessation of phenomena. Impermanences are already in the process of cessation.

A simile is given: crossing a large trench by jumping. A man walks toward a trench that is wide. He cannot cross it with an ordinary jump. So he must walk backward to gain momentum and strength. Even then, it may still be impossible. He must walk back further—twenty paces may not be enough; he may need to walk back thirty paces.

After that, by running forcefully toward the trench, he is able to jump over it and reach the other side.

Cessation, Coolness, and the Verification of Nibbāna

The *khandhas* are the result of the round of existence, moving onward within the whole cycle of existence. Therefore, near the end of their impermanence (*anicca*), the arising becomes faster and then slower, like the example given above. This stage requires strength and force for cessation. At last, it happens very quickly and stops.

If the yogi discerns this clearly—when the process stops—he may take it as Nibbāna. Then how does one check this? Mogok Sayadaw also said the following:

“Seeing is peaceful and staying is coolness.”

Seeing with peacefulness means that the instantaneous process of impermanence (*aniccas*) stops in a single blip. (See my translation of *Mogok Talks*, Part 10, *The Four Noble Truths*, section on *Nirodha Sacca*.)

If you ask the yogi, “Where have the impermanences gone?” he will answer: “They have not gone anywhere; they stop under knowledge.”

Seeing peace means seeing the Unborn. Staying in coolness means that the path and fruition minds arise internally. They extinguish the extremely hot fire of woeful existence—wrong view and doubt.

Human beings are continually building woeful existences from this human world. When greed is very strong, hatred is intense, and cruelty is extreme, these become their future destinations. Yet they can also destroy these from here.

In the texts, the experience of Nibbāna is described as being like pouring a thousand pots of cool water over the body. Mogok Sayadaw said that “staying in coolness” does not mean cold like ice water. It is like putting down a heavy burden—there is a sense of coolness and lightness.

The yogi continues contemplating impermanence and suffering (*dukkha sacca*), not only for one or two days but for many days, until their ending. Now there is nothing left to contemplate. The burden of suffering has fallen away; the heat becomes cool and peaceful.

In the following, the Sayadaw mentions certain pseudo-Dhamma experiences that yogis may encounter. There are two kinds of these:

1. Seeing that is not peaceful, but accompanied by staying in coolness.

2. Seeing that is peaceful, but without staying in coolness.

Pseudo-Cessations and the Verification of True Cessation

1. Cessation with sloth and torpor

Because impermanence (*anicca*) is not truly seen, mindfulness only returns momentarily in a blip. The yogi may think that impermanence has come to cessation or an end. In fact, he is nodding. In his mind it seems peaceful, but his abiding is not cool. The defilements (*kilesas*) are still present and burning hot.

2. Cessation driven by effort

The yogi wants cessation to come quickly and becomes impatient. This state of mind should not be present during practice. While sitting, he must contemplate and allow *anicca* and *magga* to fit in naturally. Do not let desire arise—wanting cessation and wanting to see Nibbāna. This takes time. Without patience, the contemplation becomes incorrect and impermanence cannot be discerned. This is cessation driven by effort. It is important to recognise this as a pseudo-Dhamma.

3. Cessation accompanied by rapture (*pīti*)

When impermanence becomes strong, light and rapture arise, and the body feels light. The yogi's mind sinks into these pseudo-Dhammas and does not truly discern impermanence.

4. Cessation accompanied by tranquillity (*passaddhi*)

Mind and body become tranquil. Seeing is not yet peaceful, but abiding feels cool. The yogi still discerns impermanence. Only by overcoming this stage will he see Nibbāna. The yogi can check whether this is real cessation or not.

He sits in front of a Buddha image and makes a resolution to know the cessation. If it is a real cessation—namely, Path Knowledge—then Fruition Mind will arise and he can enter the fruition state. By making a further resolution, “Blessed One, may I experience again the cessation that occurred before,” he may experience it again.

When he makes a one-hour resolution for sitting, the process begins again from impermanence. It is not like before the cessation, where impermanence increased and decreased. Instead, the yogi sees impermanence for a period, and

then it comes to a stop in a natural way. Path Knowledge cuts off the defilements (*kilesas, samuccheda*). Fruition Knowledge extinguishes the remaining heat that still lingers.

It is like a piece of burning charcoal. When water is poured on it, the red glow turns black. Yet the black charcoal still contains heat inside. If you pour more water on it, it cools down completely. This is like the function of Fruition Knowledge.

Path Knowledge eradicates the coarser defilements; Fruition Knowledge addresses the more refined ones.

After putting down the heavy burden of the *khandhas*, it becomes cool and still, like a statue. The yogi should not be satisfied with this and stop. He should test it by increasing the duration—one hour, two hours, three hours, four hours, and so on. He may even test it by sitting for an entire day without food.

If it is a true cessation of *dukkha*, the yogi can maintain it. If it is a false cessation, he cannot—and his condition may even worsen.

Further Verification of Fruition and the Intrinsic Nature of Emptiness

With further testing, the experience becomes more significant, confirming whether it is genuine.

Sayadaw once related an incident involving a female yogi who was a schoolteacher attending a retreat. She reported her success to him. He did not say whether it was right or wrong, but simply told her to check it for herself. After some time, pain arose and she began moving around again. In this way, the experience revealed itself.

If someone is able to enter the Fruition state, his or her pupils do not move when the eyes are open. When someone is merely discerning impermanence, the pupils continue to move. In the Fruition state, the in-breath and out-breath are cool, and this coolness pervades the entire body.

Mosquitoes may bite people in ordinary states, but not someone abiding in the Fruition state.

[I have heard a related story concerning the Guang Qing Old Monk (1891–1986): people around him noticed that mosquitoes bit them frequently, but did not bite the old monk.]

This is related to the absence of defilements (*kilesas*), which otherwise emit smells that attract mosquitoes.

(Ancient texts also mention two kinds of bodily scent in women: a virtuous and noble woman is said to have a lotus-like fragrance, whereas a lustful woman is said to have a fishy smell.)

Talk 11: Intrinsic Nature of Emptiness

Suññatā means voidness or emptiness of something. *Sabhāva* means intrinsic nature. What, then, is the intrinsic nature of emptiness?

It is empty of a person, a being, a man, a woman, bodily form, and so on. When one contemplates natural phenomena and discerns that there is no person and no being—only phenomena occurring according to their nature—then, with the cessation of all conditioned *sabhāva-dhammas*, one sees Nibbāna.

What is the element of Nibbāna? It does not exist as a person or a being. The notion of a “self” itself is only one of the conditioned *sabhāva-dhammas*. In the contemplation of insight, it is impossible to realise this without the process of Dependent Origination.

Seeing Consciousness, Sabhāva-Dhamma, and Anicca-Lakkhaṇa

With the contact of the eye-door and visible form (object), eye-consciousness arises. The eye-door, or visual sensitivity, is a pure element, and the visible form is also a light element. Seeing consciousness (mind) is a *sabhāva-dhamma*—the intrinsic nature of a phenomenon—without bodily form or shape, and without a person. It is merely the arising of the seeing nature.

The cause-dhamma is *sabhāva-dhamma*, and the result-dhamma is likewise *sabhāva-dhamma*. With the two causes of *sabhāva-dhamma*—the sense base (*āyatana-dvāra*) and the object—a resultant dhamma arises. All these phenomena are manifestations of Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda-dhamma*) occurring at the level of the aggregates (*khandha*, the body-mind aggregate). (See Section 2, Dependent Origination chart.)

If the yogi knows this directly, he attains *sacca-ñāṇa*, the knowledge of truth.

We can analyse this as follows: *anicca-dhamma*, *anicca-lakkhaṇa*, and *anicca-lakkhaṇa-ñāṇa*.

Anicca-dhamma refers to the arising of conditioned phenomena. The cause is *anicca-dhamma*, and the result is also *anicca-dhamma*.

How do these phenomena appear in knowledge (*ñāṇa*)? They appear as rising and falling. After one phenomenon vanishes and is replaced by another, that too vanishes, and so on. All of these manifestations are *anicca-lakkhaṇa*, the characteristic of impermanence.

If the yogi discerns this clearly, he attains *kicca-ñāṇa*, functional knowledge. The characteristic of conditioned phenomena is precisely this: rising and falling. Knowing this characteristic is *anicca-lakkhaṇa-ñāṇa*.

If we differentiate further: *anicca-dhamma* and *anicca-lakkhaṇa* are objects of contemplation and must be directly seen and observed. The knowing dhamma is contemplative knowledge.

If the yogi only knows *anicca-dhamma*, it remains within *samatha-dhamma* (associated with the three concentration factors). Knowing the characteristic (*lakkhaṇa*) constitutes insight (*vipassanā*), associated with the five path factors.

Knowing the arising of phenomena is knowledge of mind and form—*nāma-rūpa-pariggaha-ñāṇa*.

Knowing the causal relationship between cause and effect is *paccaya-pariggaha-ñāṇa*.

Knowing and discerning the characteristic (*lakkhaṇa*) of phenomena is knowledge of rise and fall—*udayabbaya-ñāṇa*.

When *nāma-rūpa* and conditionality (*paccaya*) are known correctly, these two knowledges together culminate in *sacca-ñāṇa*. *Lakkhaṇa-ñāṇa* is functional knowledge.

Contemplative knowledge arises dependent on the object of contemplation. Does the object of contemplation exist beforehand? No, it does not exist beforehand. What about contemplative knowledge—does it exist beforehand? It also does not exist beforehand. Objects arise due to causes; contemplative knowledge arises due to the ability to contemplate, which itself is conditioned.

Objects, Knowledge, Suññatā, and the Abandoning of Wrong Views

Therefore, objects (*ārammaṇa*) and knowledge (*ārammaṇika ñāṇa*) do not exist beforehand by themselves. If one takes them as existing beforehand, independent of causes, this becomes *sassata-diṭṭhi* (eternalism). If one assumes they exist without causes, this becomes *uccheda-diṭṭhi* (annihilationism).

If one assumes they exist because of “me” or “my contemplation,” this becomes *sakkāya-ditṭhi* (personality view).

All these views are incorrect. Objects and knowledge must be understood as *suññatā*—empty of self—so that wrong views do not adhere to yogis and they can follow the Middle Way.

We must examine the entire process. For example, a sensation arises instantaneously. If one observes it, it disappears and is seen as no longer present. This is like wild animals or birds: if you catch them and then release them, wild animals return to the forest and birds fly back into the sky.

In the same way, whatever phenomenon arises within the aggregates (*khandha*) has the nature of perishing. This was stated by the Buddha. Most yogis discern *suññatā* in objects, but still cling to wrong view in relation to the knowing mind (*ñāṇa*). They think, “I contemplate it, so I see it, and I know it—there is an observer.” This is *sakkāya-ditṭhi* clinging to the knowing mind, and such a yogi will not realise Dhamma quickly; or realisation will take a long time. This point is supported by evidence in the suttas.

Mogok Sayadaw instructs yogis as follows: **Observe mind and body with *ñāṇa***. This makes sense for practice: it means there is no person and no being in mind, body, or knowledge. Therefore, yogis should not include a person or a being in either the object or in *ñāṇa*.

Only those who can discern *anicca* in all objects and in the knowing mind will realise Dhamma quickly.

In a talk on Venerable Channa, Sayadaw said: “Behind impermanence (*anicca*), do not include ‘I’ or ‘mine’. If you include it, you become attached to *sakkāya-ditṭhi*.” (For example: “I am contemplating,” “I am knowing,” and so on.)

All objects and *ñāṇa* are conditioned phenomena and therefore lack stability (*sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*). Only the Nibbāna element, which has no impermanent nature, is stable.

Continuity of Knowledge, Dependent Arising, and the Maturing of Insight

Path knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*) and fruition knowledge (*phala-ñāṇa*) are also impermanent, because they arise in dependence upon one another. Even supramundane knowledges vanish; therefore, there is no need to speak separately about the impermanence of insight knowledges. For this reason, yogis must practise very carefully.

The yogi knows both the arising and the vanishing of phenomena. Both are forms of *ñāṇa*, but they possess different qualities. With the continued purification from wrong views and doubt, contemplation proceeds. All yogis must clear away wrong views in their minds with regard to both objects (*ārammaṇa*) and knowing (*ñāṇa*). There is no person and no being in either of them. Practising in this way is practising in accordance with the Dhamma (*dhammānudhammapaṭipatti*).

This is the path that accords with Nibbāna. The practice is completed when one understands dependent co-arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*, the D.A. process).

For example, contemplate the first arising object together with the first knowing (*ñāṇa*). After both the object (*ārammaṇa*) and the knowing (*ārammaṇika ñāṇa*) vanish, contemplate the second arising object together with the second knowing. When those vanish, the third object arises, and so on. To know phenomena in this way is called *bhāvitā-bahulīkata*—repeated and sustained contemplation.

With much contemplation, the yogi understands that apart from the arising and passing away of phenomena, nothing truly exists. This is the understanding of *suññatā*, *anattā*, and related truths. Seeing many instances of impermanence (*anicca*) becomes wearisome and leads to disenchantment. However, the yogi must endure patiently and continue contemplation. As *ñāṇa* matures, true knowledge arises—the genuine knowing of not wanting or desiring. The knowledge of “I truly do not want this” cuts off craving (*taṇhā*), and latent defilements are eradicated.

[Note: The insight process can be compared to a relationship between a couple. At first, seeing the aggregates (*khandha*) arise is like a couple who see no faults in one another. Then, as arising and passing away are clearly seen, faults begin to appear. When only passing away is seen, disenchantment arises. After becoming disenchanted, it is like not wanting to see each other anymore. Separation resembles the arising of Path Knowledge, and thereafter peace appears.]

(Some greedy leaders—politicians, economists, businesspeople, and others—continually think about and search for power, money, and wealth. Instead, they should contemplate their own aggregates (*khandha*). If they do so, it will create a peaceful society and protect the natural world.)

From the Ending of Anicca to Path and Fruition

Mogok Sayadaw said that, at the end of the practice, the yogi no longer wishes to see phenomena. At that point, knowledge that arises from contemplating impermanence (*anicca-dhamma*) turns toward the state where there is no impermanence. The seeing of “no anicca” is Nibbāna. When knowledge clearly knows the ending, this is Path Knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*). After that, Fruition Knowledge (*phala-ñāṇa*) arises.

Generally, yogis can make a mistake at this stage. They may be clear about the knowledge that discerns impermanence in the object, but then the contemplative mind begins to think, “I have contemplated for quite some time now.” This becomes *sakkāya-diṭṭhi* and *sassata-diṭṭhi*—wrong views. Object (*ārammaṇa*) and knowing (*ārammaṇika ñāṇa*) are a pair of impermanent phenomena. This stage is called the knowledge of knowing the truth of dukkha (*dukkhe ñāṇa*).

With further contemplation, this knowledge matures into the knowledge of seeing cessation—the cessation of impermanence and dukkha (*dukkha-nirodhe ñāṇa*). This is arriving at the ending of dukkha (*dukkhasantam kārissatha*), which is Nibbāna. The Buddha gave us reassurance: if one practises in the morning, one will realise it in the evening; if one practises in the evening, one will realise it in the morning. Therefore, persistence in practice is essential.

Talk 12: Dying Aggregates and Intrinsic Aggregates

This is the first day that I will teach you the basic Dhamma. To understand the basics, we must begin with the aggregates (*khandha*). These include the aggregates themselves, the sense bases (*āyatana*), the elements (*dhātu*), and the Four Noble Truths (*sacca*).

People may wish for Nibbāna, but without thoroughly knowing the aggregates, they cannot reach it. If we condense the phenomena of the thirty-one realms of existence, we can summarise them into two: the aggregates (*khandha*) and their cessation (*nirodha*). The aggregates constitute the thirty-one realms of existence. Nibbāna is an element that transcends them.

When these are brought together, they are called *khandha-nirodha-nibbānaṃ*—the cessation of the aggregates is Nibbāna. Where there is cessation of the aggregates, there is Nibbāna; where there is no cessation, there is saṃsāra.

Beginning from the Aggregates (Khandha)

Therefore, one must begin with the aggregates (*khandha*); only through them can Nibbāna be realised. *Khandha* means “that which is combined.” They are the combination of form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. Together they are called the five aggregates, or simply mind and body (*nāma-rūpa*).

For practice, it is necessary to understand that the aggregates can be approached in two ways. According to the dependent-arising process (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), “ignorance conditions formations” (*avijjā-paccayā saṅkhārā*). In past lives, not knowing the truth, we performed wholesome and unwholesome actions. As a result, in this life we have obtained the human aggregates—five aggregates, or mind and body.

These aggregates have been conceived in the womb and are carried along together with ageing, sickness, and death. The presently existing aggregates are already accompanied by ageing, sickness, and death. This was taught in the Wheel of Dhamma as suffering—birth, ageing, sickness, and death. Although not

explicitly named as “aggregates” there, they were explained as existing phenomena (*dhamma*) characterised by suffering.

We have the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. The eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body are material phenomena (*rūpa*). As mental phenomena (*nāma*), we have four: feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. Together, these constitute the six internal sense bases (five material bases and one mental base).

Do we need to contemplate this already-existing aggregate—the body seen with ordinary eyes? No. Rather, we must understand that with time this aggregate inevitably becomes old, sick, and dies. This shows that the aggregate itself is the truth of suffering. However, for insight practice, what we contemplate repeatedly is not the existing aggregate as a whole, but the arising phenomena occurring at the sense bases.

This existing aggregate possesses base elements internally, and when external contact elements—such as sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and mental objects—come into contact with them, each sense door meets its corresponding object. At that moment, a new phenomenon arises at that sense base.

This arising phenomenon did not exist before in either the sense base (*dvāra*) or the object (*ārammaṇa*). It arises only because of conditions. For example, consider a stick and a bell. The bell is like the base element; the stick is like the element of contact. The sound of the bell does not exist in the bell alone, nor does it exist in the stick. When each exists separately, no sound arises. But when the stick strikes the bell, sound arises.

Where does the sound come from? It does not come from the stick, nor from the bell. Through their contact, sound arises dependently between them.

Arising Aggregates, Suññatā, and Sabhāva Khandha

In the same way, the six sense bases are base elements. When each of them meets its respective contact element, an arising aggregate (*khandha*) comes into being. The bell and the stick both have mass—that is, material form—but the sound does not have mass. Likewise, seeing consciousness—the arising aggregate

element—has no mass. Hearing, smelling, tasting, and other consciousnesses are known in the same way. They have no form, no shape, and no image.

For this reason, these phenomena are called *suññatā-dhamma*—void of entity, void of a person or a being.

Let us explain *suññatā* further. *Sabhāva* (or *sabhāvam*) means a particular intrinsic nature. Seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and knowing—all of these are *sabhāva dhamma*. These are *sabhāva khandha*, newly arising aggregates, and are also called arising aggregates.

These arising aggregates have the nature of arising and passing away. Therefore, they are called rise-and-fall aggregates, or impermanent aggregates (*anicca-khandha*). These aggregates cannot be stopped by one's wish or desire, and they do not belong to anyone. If the causes are present, they arise; if the causes cease, they vanish.

After an arising aggregate has arisen and is observed, it is no longer there—that is its impermanence. The existing aggregate, namely the whole body subject to ageing, sickness, and death, is a mass of aggregates. The arising aggregate, however, is a *sabhāva khandha*. Therefore, there are two layers of aggregates.

If we see the *sabhāva khandha*, we will see arising and passing away. Insight meditation is precisely the task of observing the arising *sabhāva khandha* and its vanishing.

Observe the in-breath and out-breath in a natural way. Depending on the strength of concentration (*samādhi*), one will discern the rise and fall of the arising aggregate accordingly. The existing aggregate—the body—exists due to past causes. This is not only related to past lives, but also connected to present-life causes of kamma: mind (*citta*), temperature (*utu*), and nutriment (*āhāra*). These conditions, although operating now, are also counted as past causes in relation to the present moment.

Therefore, when the aggregate is contemplated wrongly, it becomes a clinging aggregate (*upādāna-khandha*). After an arising aggregate appears and its vanishing is not seen, it becomes an object aggregate for craving, clinging, and action—namely, craving (*taṇhā*), clinging (*upādāna*), and kamma (see Section 3).

Existing Aggregates, Arising Aggregates, and the Continuity of Saṃsāra

It is not the existing, old aggregate that connects to action. This aggregate is called the *pañcakkhandha* according to the *Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha*. Rather, it is the newly arising aggregate—the *sabhāva khandha*—that connects to the process (see Section 3 and the Dependent Arising chart).

For example, when it is hot and one desires comfort, one fans oneself. The pleasant feeling is experienced as “nice,” and then it passes away. However, one is not aware of the whole process. By fanning oneself again, the experience connects to action. If this experience is not contemplated, it must connect to the dependent-arising process.

If one simply leaves it there, feeling conditions craving, and craving connects to action. In this way, the newly arising aggregates—seeing, hearing, and so on—connect to affection, clinging, and action. One has to know them in this manner. We are continuously producing the causes that, after death, give rise again to aggregates characterised by ageing, sickness, and death. When will this end? There is no end to it. The incalculable continuity of ageing, sickness, and death will persist.

According to Mogok Sayadaw, this is like endlessly producing spare parts for corpses (something human beings uniquely manufacture, without any copyright). He even says that this is equivalent to committing suicide again and again for oneself.

Therefore, if one can discern the impermanence—the rise and fall—of the newly arising aggregates, there is no affection or clinging. Craving, clinging, and action then cease. The arising aggregate is to be known simply as arising and passing away—not as an existing entity. When it is known in this way, it becomes *anicca* and *magga*—that is, the five path factors of the mundane path (*lokiya-magga*), the truth of mundane path factors.

The yogi must develop these mundane path factors. Supramundane path factors—the Noble Eightfold Path—are not something to be developed deliberately; they arise only for the direct seeing of Nibbāna. If an arising phenomenon is known as arising, and a vanishing phenomenon is known as vanishing, the yogi must always discern them through observation. He will then

know that there is only arising and vanishing dukkha occurring continuously. Therefore, he cannot take them as affection or craving.

Before practice, there is *dukkhe-aññāṇaṃ*—not knowing phenomena as dukkha. Because of this, they are taken with affection and clinging. With practice, this becomes *dukkhe-ñāṇaṃ*—the knowledge of knowing dukkha. The path factors arise in the heart, and craving, clinging, and action come to cessation.

There are two kinds of cessation:

1. Cessation through arising (*uppāda-nirodha*)

Here, the yogi can contemplate up to craving, clinging, and mental action (*cetanā*), so that verbal and bodily actions become impossible.

(This point is explained in several of Mogok Sayadaw’s talks.)

2. Cessation through Non-Arising (*Anuppāda-Nirodha*)

This is the discerning of the arising dhamma as impermanent, such that craving, clinging, and related defilements do not arise.

If the yogi is able to contemplate continuously without interruption, *anuppāda-nirodha* becomes established—meaning that no defilements arise in between moments of contemplation. As the Buddha and the Sayadaw explained, if one practises in the morning, realisation may come in the evening, and vice versa.

When craving (*taṇhā*) arises and the yogi is able to contemplate it, this is still cessation through arising. However, if craving arises and defilements intervene in the practice, completion will take longer. If there are many gaps in continuity, the process becomes longer; if there are fewer gaps, it becomes correspondingly shorter.

These points were mentioned by the Buddha to Prince Bodhirājakumāra (Majjhima Nikāya, Sutta No. 85). In the minds of the Buddha and the arahants, whatever arises—seeing, hearing, and so forth—their knowing is merely knowing itself, not connected to defilements. Therefore, for them, the arising aggregates are *anuppāda-khandhas*—aggregates that do not give rise to defilements.

If one cannot yet discern *anicca*, one should re-establish samādhi by re-noting the in-breath and out-breath. Sayadawgyi also emphasised this point repeatedly.

Not seeing *anicca* directly by oneself, but merely knowing about it from teachers, is called *anubodha-ñāṇa*—knowledge derived from another. *Paṭivedha-ñāṇa* means knowing the aggregates directly through penetration and practice. Only through the appearance of a Buddha into the world can we come to know such wisdom. If one understands these points correctly, becoming a stream-enterer is not difficult.

There is still time to emphasise an important principle: the newly arising aggregate did not exist before. After it arises, it does not continue to exist. Therefore, the aggregate is nothing other than arising and passing away.

Emptiness (*Suññatā*), Intrinsic Nature (*Sabhāva*), and Reflection on Cessation

Therefore, there is no being (*nisatta*), no living entity (*nijjīva*), and no soul.

The *suññatā-khandha* is void of a person or a being, whereas the *sabhāva-khandha* possesses an intrinsic nature. It exists in accordance with causes, and when those causes cease, it no longer exists. The yogi must observe the aggregate as both existing and not existing—that is, as a process of rise and fall.

This is the nature of *suññatā*: emptiness or voidness. One should not take this to mean that nothing exists at all, as that would fall into conceptual thinking, a misunderstanding held by some Buddhists. Such a view becomes *natthi-bhāva-paññatti*—a concept of absolute non-existence. This point is very important.

For example, when hearing consciousness arises with the contemplation it no longer present, what remains? The nature of inconstancy remains. The knowing knowledge also vanishes; it is not knowing continuously. This, too, is the process of knowing and vanishing. As the contemplated objects vanish, the observing knowledge also vanishes.

Reflections on Cessation through Arising and Non-Arising

There is a talk by Mogok Sayadaw on this subject, which I translated in Part 10 under the title *Craving and Suffering*. Some scholars interpret the Burmese system as merely passive observation. This is not correct; they only see part of the whole picture.

If we study the works of Ledi Sayadawgyi, we will understand the importance of both contemplation and reflection. Many scholars and practising yogis continue to study his treatises and apply them in their teaching and practice. However, yogis themselves must understand how to apply these teachings skillfully according to different situations.

This is one of the important reasons why we study the suttas: to gain skillful means for dealing with defilements in daily life and during meditation practice.

Those who study the suttas together with Mogok Sayadaw's talks will understand the importance of discerning *anicca*. Therefore, Burmese teachers emphasize this point—not because they teach only passive observation, but because they emphasize correct discernment.

An Extract from Sayadaw's Teaching

“Always reflect that all *dukkha* comes from *taṇhā*. During observation, do not reflect on what will happen if you reflect. Otherwise, it becomes *cintā-maya-ñāṇa* and not *bhāvanā-maya-ñāṇa*. Reflection and direct observation are different; they should not be mixed.”

The Difference between *Cintā-maya Ñāṇa* and *Bhāvanā-maya Ñāṇa*

What is the difference between *cintā-maya ñāṇa* and *bhāvanā-maya ñāṇa*?

When *cintā-maya ñāṇa* is predominant, more *bhavaṅga cittas* tend to arise; when *bhāvanā-maya ñāṇa* is predominant, fewer *bhavaṅga cittas* arise. *Bhavaṅga*

cittas take objects from the past. *Cintā-maya ñāṇa* involves thinking, planning, and reflecting.

Therefore, one should allow time for reflection and also allow time for direct observation. Practised in this way, progress becomes quicker. Reflecting on one's own aggregates and on the truths of the Dhamma is *cintā-maya ñāṇa*, whereas the direct contemplation of impermanence is *bhāvanā-maya ñāṇa*. When these two practices are used appropriately, defilements do not easily intrude into the practice.

What, then, is the difference between having more *bhavaṅga cittas* and having fewer?

A person who is *dukkha-paṭipanna*—one whose practice is difficult—experiences more *bhavaṅga cittas*. These have a close connection with defilements. When contemplation is carried out without reflection, realisation proceeds slowly.

How should *cintā-maya ñāṇa* and *bhāvanā-maya ñāṇa* be used?

Mogok Sayadaw stated that *cintā-maya ñāṇa* is helpful in preventing defilements from entering during vipassanā practice. He encouraged yogis, before sitting, to reflect on *dukkha* or on the dangers of *taṇhā*—this is *cintā-maya ñāṇa*—and then to sit for *bhāvanā-maya ñāṇa*. An increase in *bhavaṅga cittas* indicates either the presence of stronger defilements or greater difficulties in practice.

Talk 13: The Beginning of the Unborn

I will now speak about conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhārā*), which is an essential topic. If one does not understand *saṅkhārā*, one cannot attain the Dhamma. In the Buddha's teaching, this is one of the most important principles.

Aniccā vata saṅkhārā—all conditioned phenomena are impermanent. This statement does not refer merely to the impermanence of human beings, heavenly beings (*devatā*), or other living beings, but to conditioned phenomena themselves. Whatever arises due to conditions is *saṅkhāra*, and its perishing is *anicca*. Only when a yogi discerns one conditioned phenomenon together with its impermanence does insight knowledge arise.

Memorising this by heart is not difficult; true understanding is. According to Mogok Sayadaw, with only conventional or worldly knowledge, people cannot attain the Dhamma. Only those who encounter the Ariya disciples of the Buddha are able to understand it properly. In the Pāli texts, *saṅkhārā* are often presented together with impermanence, as in *aniccā vata saṅkhārā*.

Another formulation is *sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā*—all conditioned phenomena are impermanent. The Buddha taught us to contemplate and observe this repeatedly. The contemplation of the thirty-two parts of the body (*asubha*) reveals the unattractive nature of the body. Within these thirty-two parts, there is no person and no being.

[This practice can be samatha or vipassanā, depending on how it is used. Thai forest monks employ it for both samatha and vipassanā, and Burmese traditions, Thae-Inn Gu system, also use it in both ways.]

Even in the body itself, impermanent phenomena are present; this, too, concerns *saṅkhārā*. At the time of the Buddha's passing away, he emphasised this point with the words: *vayadhammā saṅkhārā, appamādena sampādettha*—all conditioned things are subject to decay; therefore, strive on with diligence, mindfulness, and alertness.

The Three Worlds (*Loka*)

There are three worlds (*loka*).

1. **Okāsa-loka** — the world of location or space, the inanimate world in which beings live. Seeing its arising and perishing is a form of conceptual impermanence.
2. **Satta-loka** — the world of living beings, where all beings are subject to death and dissolution. This, too, is conceptual impermanence.
3. **Saṅkhāra-loka** — the world of conditioned phenomena, which are not living beings and are not defined by form or shape as entities. They are known only by their intrinsic nature (*sabhāva*) and emptiness (*suññatā*). These are also impermanent, but here impermanence is *paramattha anicca* —the impermanence of mind and matter at the ultimate level.

If impermanence is perceived as something stable, it becomes a concept; if it is seen as arising and vanishing moment by moment, it is *paramattha dhamma*. Examples include painful feeling or the feeling of heat—phenomena known directly through their intrinsic nature.

Conditioned Phenomena and the World of Saṅkhārā

Cold and heat are concepts. These are not concepts of non-existence, but concepts taken as existing. Human beings, *devatā*, *brahmā*, all living beings, mountains, forests, and so forth are all seen as stable by the ordinary eye. Therefore, all of these are concepts.

Whatever arises through conditioning is *saṅkhāra*. After arising, it vanishes immediately—this is the nature of the world (*loka*). Therefore, this is called *saṅkhāra-loka*, the world of conditioned phenomena.

If one can discern this *saṅkhāra-loka* with the knowledge-eye—that is, with a purified mind-eye—one will attain the Dhamma. The process of dependent co-arising is the explanation of *saṅkhārā*. If one sees *saṅkhārā*, it only is *samādhī* (i.e. *samatha*), this is not yet insight. Insight arises through seeing the vanishing of *saṅkhārā*.

Understanding this point is extremely important. In practice, when yogis observe whatever arises—whether material form (*rūpa*) or mind (*nāma*)—and then observe again, they must understand that these phenomena are newly arising. What existed before has already vanished. Before the arising of mind and form, the previous mind and form have already disappeared.

This is expressed in the teaching *eka-citta-dhammayutta*: a new mind can arise only after the preceding mind has vanished. The arising and vanishing occur so rapidly that the yogi cannot ordinarily see their connection. When *samādhi* develops, this process becomes clear.

With the ending—that is, the cessation—of impermanent conditioned phenomena (*saṅkhāra-loka*), there is the Unborn (*Nibbāna*). Therefore, knowledge of *saṅkhāra-loka* is the beginning of the path leading to Nibbāna. Understanding conditioned phenomena is the most important foundation.

Through seeing the impermanence of conceptual worlds—the world of locations and the world of beings—one develops a sense of wise urgency (*saṃvega*). By discerning the impermanence of the world of conditioned phenomena, one realises the Dhamma. This discernment itself is insight knowledge.

Talk 14: The Nature of the Unborn

The *Sagāthāvagga*, the book of verses in the *Samyutta Nikāya*, contains the Buddha’s teachings. Some people take Nibbāna—the Unborn—to be a golden city, a paradise, or a place that exists somewhere. Even the Buddha was still alive, people had doubts with it.

A *devatā* from the Tāvatiṃsa Heaven once came to the Buddha and asked the question: “Where does Nibbāna exist?” (This was the *devatā* Rohitassa.)

The Buddha replied to him: “Do not ask me in that way.”

It cannot be said where Nibbāna is. Instead, the Buddha asked him: “How do you search for it with the desire to arrive there?”

According to Rohitassa, he had searched for Nibbāna by travelling on foot, by vehicles, by making merits, and by using supernormal powers (see *Devaputtasamyutta*, Rohitassa Sutta). Wherever he went, he found only ageing, sickness, and death. Having *khandha* in any realm of existence, he encountered nothing but ageing, sickness, and death.

The Buddha then answered him that he could not find Nibbāna in these ways. Not finding Nibbāna means that ageing, sickness, and death will never come to an end. Therefore, one must arrive at Nibbāna.

Rohitassa then asked the Buddha how he should look for it. The Buddha answered that he must search with knowledge (*ñāṇa*). Within this very body—measured at two armed lengths—he must search with knowledge.

If we examine the *khandha*, we will see the truth of dukkha, the truth of the cause of dukkha (*samudaya sacca*), and the cessation of dukkha, which is Nibbāna. To discern these truths, one must practise insight meditation. All Four Noble Truths are found within the *khandha*.

If one does not practise, one possesses only two truths: the truth of dukkha and the truth of the cause of dukkha. Everyone has these two. Through practice and the discernment of impermanence (*anicca*), these two truths are transformed. This is the arising of the path (*magga sacca*).

Before practice, there are two truths: dukkha and its cause. With practice, there are again two truths: dukkha and the path. Therefore, when impermanence is clearly discerned, the cause of dukkha no longer exists. At the ending of dukkha, both dukkha and its cause disappear, and the yogi stands in the two truths of cessation (*nirodha*) and path (*magga*), that is, the Eightfold Path.

Even though the Buddha explained this, the devatā was still not clear about it.

The Buddha then said that Nibbāna does not exist within the *khandha*, nor did it exist there before. If it had existed before, there would be no need to search for it. Nibbāna cannot exist where the *khandha* exists.

The *khandha* itself has two aspects: one is the *khandha* of ageing, sickness, and death; the other is the *khandha* of rising and falling.

Does Nibbāna Exist Outside the Khandha?

Does Nibbāna exist outside the *khandha*? It does not exist as either inside or outside the *khandha*. According to the Abhidhamma texts, Nibbāna is an external *dhamma*, but it is not related to a self.

The Unborn element realised by many Buddhas and arahants (including *paccekabuddhas*) existed at the places where they entered total cessation (*parinibbāna*). Mogok Sayadaw explained that when speaking of “external Nibbāna,” this refers to the Nibbāna realised by others. Nibbāna exists only in accordance with one’s own practice.

When an object (*ārammaṇa*) and a sense door (*dvāra*) make contact, consciousness arises. For example, when a visible object and the eye meet, seeing-consciousness arises. All these are newly arising *khandhas*. The six sense doors themselves are part of the presently existing *khandhas*.

Yogis must contemplate these newly arising *khandhas* with insight. By watching and observing the impermanent *khandhas*—their rising and falling—they discern the truth of dukkha. After repeatedly seeing this, it becomes wearisome, and at last it comes to an end. Every beginning has its ending.

Do not say, “Nothing is happening yet in my practice.” If one knows how to contemplate, one will discern impermanence (*anicca*) and realise the truths of dukkha and the path (*magga saccas*). Yogis must apply effort and make it strong. By continuously discerning impermanence, unwholesome and wholesome mental states are unable to enter the practice.

We should not be satisfied merely with merit-making (as many Buddhists are). Upon truly encountering the Buddha’s teachings, we must practice to end dukkha—the great suffering. At that time, neither unwholesome nor wholesome minds can enter; only knowledge-based minds (*ñāṇa*) arise. As a result, the blood of the heart becomes clear and bright, and the body experiences lightness.

Previously, the yogi discerned only the coarser forms of impermanence. Now, he begins to discern the middle and refined forms. This is the discernment of many impermanences.

On Meditative Light and Personal Experience in Practice

If I speak of my own experience during practice, I once saw colourful, bright light and went to inform my teacher. He replied that this was not yet the appropriate stage. He explained that such experiences arise due to *saddhā* (confidence).

If one is able to contemplate continuously for three or four days, such light may appear. The light of wisdom (*ñāṇa*) is described as white, clear, and cool, like moonlight. I continued my practice, and after one or two months the light became truly bright. Whenever I closed my eyes, it appeared clearly, even without any intention to see it.

This was clarity of *ñāṇa*, and its brightness continued until cessation. It can last for a long time, but reaching this stage requires considerable effort. Calming the mind is not an easy task.

Cakkhuṃ udapādi, ñāṇaṃ udapādi, āloko udapādi — vision arose, knowledge arose, light arose. That is, the knowledge-eye and the light element arise together. The Buddha mentioned this in the first discourse describing his own experience.

There are two kinds of light: samādhi-light and insight-light. Samādhi-light does not last long, whereas the light associated with absorption (*jhāna*) lasts longer. According to the texts, the jhānic light of the hermits Devila and Ālāra spread upward into the sky for a distance of twelve miles.

Defilements (*kilesa*) do not enter the mind so that it becomes clear and luminous. The light arising from insight-knowledge is superior.

Note on the Luminous Mind

In some suttas, the Buddha speaks of the “luminous mind,” for example in suttas 51 and 52 of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (the Book of the Ones). The fourth jhānic mind, or luminous mind, does not refer to the mind itself possessing light. Rather, this is a direct reference to clarity of consciousness.

Just as the eyes see and the ears hear, seeing-consciousness arises at the eye-sensitivity (*cakkhu-pasāda*), and mind-sensitivity (*mano-pasāda*) is based at the heart-base. For practical purposes, this is spoken of as “the eye sees.”

The mind itself does not possess light or colour. The appearance of light arises from material elements (*rūpa-dhātu*) produced by the *bhavaṅga-citta*. These include *cittaja-rūpa* (mind-produced matter), which contains colour, and *utuja-rūpa* (temperature-produced matter), which also contains colour. Due to these, the mind appears bright.

On Light, Discernment, and the Path of Insight

These colour elements arise at the *mano-pasāda*, through the contact of *cittaja-rūpa* and *utuja-rūpa*, light may appear. (*Extracted from a talk by Phā-auk Sayadaw*)

If yogis follow the light, they tend to move toward samatha practice. When the light becomes bright, a yogi may be able to make the body appear small or large according to desire. In the Kammatṭhāna of Kanni system, yogis use samādhi-light to see distant objects or other realms of existence.

However, one should not follow the samatha line. There is nothing worthy of clinging to. Curiosity arises from defilements, whereas the ending of *dukkha* is the most important aim.

When a yogi attains the light element correctly, he discerns the whole body as a mass of disintegration—continuous rising and falling. This is described as discerning many instances of impermanence. With repeated discernment, it does not take long before the experience becomes wearisome.

Do not stand up or abandon the contemplation. Yogis must continue contemplating until the burdened load of the aggregates (*khandha*) falls away. (This is an important point that Mogok Sayadaw often emphasized when warning his students.)

With the arising of weariness and disenchantment (*nibbidā*), the path-knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*) arises.

Progression of Insight

1. **Before practice:** only *dukkha* and *samudaya* are present.
2. **With discernment of impermanence (*anicca*):** *dukkha* and *magga* become evident.
3. **With the seeing of cessation:** *nirodha* and *magga-ñāṇa* arise.

The difference between *magga* and *magga-ñāṇa* lies in their associated factors.

- *Magga* refers to the five path factors—*samādhi* and *paññā*.
- *Magga-ñāṇa* refers to the Noble Eightfold Path—*sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*.

On Nibbāna and the Aggregates

Nibbāna (the Unborn) does not exist together with the aggregates (the Born), nor does it exist separately from them. It exists only in dependence upon the correct cessation of the aggregates' process.

Therefore, it is difficult to know the UNBORN.

Talk 15: The Ways of Cessation

Among practicing yogis, experiences of cessation are not the same. Although all yogis make effort in the practice with the aim that cessation will occur, the manner in which cessation is experienced may differ from person to person. These differences arise from the knowledge of appearance, which varies among individuals (in Burmese: *athim ñāṇa*).

Based on practice, let us discuss the different ways of cessation. Practice is grounded in satipaṭṭhāna samādhi. Whether one bases practice on form (*rūpānupassanā*), feeling (*vedanānupassanā*), or other foundations, these contemplations concern phenomena such as contact, feeling, and knowing. They are all rooted in the nature of the four satipaṭṭhānas. If the practice is correct at the beginning, the middle and the end will also become correct.

When one contemplates a single aggregate (*khandha*), the other aggregates are implicitly included. To establish a clear target, a yogi must contemplate the object that is most distinct to him. If form (*rūpa*) is clear, he contemplates form; if feeling is clear, he contemplates feeling, and so forth. Whatever object is taken, in a human being all five aggregates arise together and vanish together.

After seeing that an object arises and vanishes—knowing that this is a single moment of mind—the yogi continues contemplation and observes that the object is no longer present. Previously, the object was seen; now it is no longer seen. If the target object is form (*rūpa*), contemplation reveals impermanence (*anicca*); if the target is feeling, contemplation likewise reveals impermanence, and so on.

According to Mogok Sayadaw's instruction, if a yogi contemplates form and no longer sees it, but instead discerns impermanence, the practice is correct. If the yogi still discerns form, feeling, and so forth as substantial entities, this remains merely knowledge of mind and matter (the five aggregates). Only through the discernment of impermanence (*anicca*) does the practice succeed.

After discernment of impermanence, appearances still arise. Therefore, the Buddha taught contemplation as perceiving as impermanent, knowing as impermanent, and viewing as impermanent. Discernment itself is impermanence, yet the object of appearance remains unstable for the yogi—this instability is the appearance of impermanence.

If the yogi sees this instability as unsatisfactory, it becomes the characteristic of suffering (*dukkha-lakkhaṇa*). In this process, there is nothing that belongs to “me,” nothing related to “me,” and nothing that follows my desire. What occurs unfolds purely as a process of cause and effect.

Characteristics Leading to Cessation

The characteristic of non-self (*anattā-lakkhaṇa*) appears to the yogi, but the seeing itself remains impermanent (*anicca*). Mind-and-form phenomena are now seen as newly born and newly dead—arising and vanishing moment by moment. As a result, they appear unattractive to the yogi (i.e., *asubha*). Although this is still impermanence, it now appears differently to the yogi.

According to Mogok Sayadaw, if a yogi discerns the nature of rise and fall in this very life, the practice can be completed in this life, culminating in stream-entry. Impermanence (*anicca*) is compared to the footprint of an elephant, the largest of animals: whatever footprints other animals leave will fall within the elephant’s footprint. In the same way, all insight characteristics are encompassed within impermanence. Therefore, for a practicing yogi, cessation will eventually be reached. For this reason, it is important to understand the different characteristics that lead toward cessation.

All phenomena arising from the body are moving toward dissolution; nothing among them fails to perish. If a yogi sees phenomena as stable, that vision is incorrect. Taking them as permanent constitutes eternalism (*sassata-diṭṭhi*). From this wrong view, feeling conditions craving (*vedanā-paccayā taṇhā*), and one then acts according to the demands of craving.

Here, two possibilities must be understood. Ordinarily, phenomena are misconceived either as existing or as non-existing afterward. Mistaking non-existence as absolute non-being is known as annihilation view (*natthibhāva-paññatti*). Correct discernment, however, sees the transition from existence to non-existence as included within the characteristic of impermanence (*anicca-lakkhaṇa*). If the yogi discerns this correctly and continues contemplation based on the sense bases, insight deepens.

Initially, phenomena appear unstable in the mind. Subsequently, remaining with them becomes unbearable. By discerning one characteristic clearly, the others

naturally follow. At the moment of cessation, the process ceases together with one characteristic. In the yogi's experience, this appears as arising suffering and vanishing suffering. This direct seeing is the characteristic of suffering (*dukkha-lakkhaṇa*).

From Repeated Suffering to Cessation

After that stage, one no longer wants these instances of suffering (*dukkha*) to arise. Yet they still arise. One does not want them to persist, yet they persist. One does not want the body to experience pain and aching, yet pain and aching occur. This does not happen according to desire; it happens according to causes and effects. In this way, the characteristic of non-self (*anattā-lakkhaṇa*) appears in the yogi's mind.

Then the process repeats: phenomena arise again and again and cease again and again. The characteristic of unattractiveness (*asubha-lakkhaṇa*) appears to the yogi, together with the perception of momentary death (*khaṇika-maraṇa*). Seeing this, Mogok Sayadaw advised: *do not deliberately contemplate impermanence, suffering, non-self, or unattractiveness as concepts*. If one truly discerns rise and fall, the practice will naturally reach completion.

Now let us speak about cessation and the four characteristics. With sustained contemplation of arising and vanishing, knowledge matures. The yogi clearly discovers instability. At times the process becomes faster and faster; at other times it slows down more and more. In this way, the process unfolds, until suddenly it happens very quickly and then stops instantly.

Only when impermanence (*anicca-lakkhaṇa*) ceases clearly within knowledge is cessation properly realized. The phase known as *voṭṭhana-gāminī javana* occurs as the process repeatedly approaches cessation, or crosses over toward it. This is like the simile of jumping across a wide trench. The trench is slightly too wide to cross immediately. One must step back to gather strength; then, with sufficient momentum, one leaps across to the other side. In the same way, cessation occurs through acceleration. This is cessation through impermanence.

The yogi experiences it as an instantaneous stopping. I have asked some yogis about their direct experience. The preceding knowledge seems to pose a question to the following knowledge: *“Do you want to see this again?”* The impermanence

process comes to an end through not wanting to see it again. In Mogok Sayadaw's talks, he explained: *If you no longer want to see it, it will come to an end.*

According to some yogis, the impermanent aggregates (*anicca-khandhas*) converge and cease together. It is beneficial to understand this. In the world, there is nothing that is not good to know—only things that are not good to do.

At the moment of cessation, the seeing is peaceful, and the heart becomes cool. Both occur together in the heart. Path knowledge (*magga-ñāṇa*) cuts off what must be cut off, and fruition knowledge (*phala-ñāṇa*) extinguishes the heat of the defilements (*kilesa*), bringing about complete coolness.

Cessation in Relation to the Characteristics and the Elements

The cessations related to the characteristic of suffering (*dukkha-lakkhaṇa*) may appear to yogis in relation to the cessation of the earth, water, fire, and wind elements, respectively, as these elements are experienced as oppressive.

The cessation related to the **earth element** may feel as though the entire body is being pressed by a massive rock, then breaking apart into fragments in rapid moments.

With the **water element**, it may feel as if the body becomes liquid and flows outward, such as mucus or other bodily fluids being released.

With the **fire (heat) element**, it may feel as though the whole body is burned down into ashes, followed by cessation.

With the **air (wind) element**, the whole body may tremble and shake violently, as if possessed by an unseen force, and then suddenly cease.

These experiences correspond to the cessation of oppression (*dukkha*), as conditioned through the elements.

Cessation and the Characteristic of Non-Self

The cessation related to the characteristic of non-self (*anattā-lakkhaṇa*) occurs when the processes of arising and vanishing come to cessation and no

impermanence is discerned. To the yogi, it may appear that the knowing mind itself has not ceased.

However, in reality, each moment of knowing consciousness ceases one by one, vanishing successively. They are not a single knowing entity. Each knowing moment knows its object separately. Some moments may know many instances of impermanence; others may know only a few.

Therefore, the yogi must know:

- the impermanence of the object, and
- the impermanence of the knowing consciousness itself continuously.

If the yogi understands cessation in this way, it is called cessation in terms of non-self (*anattā-lakkhaṇa-nirodha*).

(Here, the cessation of non-self may not yet be completely clear to some practitioners. ??)

Illustrative Case: Anattā-Cessation in Practice

Note: In what follows, I present an example of a yogi's experience related to the cessation of non-self, extracted from a Dhamma talk by Venerable Ādiccaramsī Sayadaw (U Sun Lwin).

He mentioned an Italian practitioner named Eduardo, who practiced ānāpāna (mindfulness of breathing) for two hours of sitting meditation every day over a period of about two years. Later, he travelled to Burma in search of a teacher. Under the teacher's guidance, he practiced diligently and discerned impermanence, which he described as *seeing emptiness (suññatā)*.

The teacher recognized his spiritual development and instructed him to continue contemplating in greater detail, for example during walking meditation, so that insight could mature further.

Experience of Anattā-Cessation and Fruition

One night, during an interview, he presented his experience to the teacher. He said that whenever the seeing of emptiness (*suññatā*) arose, he felt an urge to “jump into it,” yet he could not do so. This tendency was due to clinging and wrong view.

Then he asked himself: “Who wants to jump into it?” “There is no ‘I’ and no ‘me’ who can jump.”

At that moment, he abandoned wrong view and turned directly to experience. As soon as he contemplated non-self (*anattā*), the entire aggregate (*khandha*) disappeared in an instant, as if in a sudden explosion. Immediately, path consciousness (*magga-citta*) arose, followed by fruition consciousness (*phala-citta*), occurring twice. (In some cases, for those with keen faculties, three moments of fruition consciousness may follow.)

Then the teacher asked him, “Are they the same?” He replied, “No. They are similar, but not the same.”

The teacher then said to him, “I think you have come to the end. But do not believe what I have said. You must verify it for yourself.”

After that, the Venerable teacher instructed him further on how to enter the fruition state (*phala-samāpatti*). He succeeded in the test and continued to develop his practice after returning to Italy.

(The experience of Sayadaw U Candimā may also be understood as a case of cessation in terms of non-self (anattā-lakkhaṇa-nirodha). See my translation of his autobiographical talk, The Noble Search, Thae-in Gu Dhamma.)

Cessation Related to Asubha

The cessation related to the characteristic of unattractiveness (*asubha-lakkhaṇa*) occurs close to cessation itself. At that time, the appearance of an asubha form—such as a corpse—may arise to the yogi. He sees it as gradually perishing and finally coming to cessation.

Here, cessation occurs together with the appearance of asubha in the knowing mind. The yogi directly experiences the complete fading away of that object.