

# ***SATI*** and **THE YOGI**

An interview with Sayadaw U Pandita  
by  
Bhikkhu Visuddhacara

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MALAYSIAN BUDDHIST MEDITATION CENTRE  
Wesak Commemoration Issue  
1991



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*Sabbā danam dhammadanam jineti*  
The Gift of Dhamma excels all gifts



Published by  
Malaysian Buddhist Meditation Centre  
355 Jalan Masjid Negeri  
11600 Penang  
Tel 872534  
1991

Printed by  
Unique Printing System Sdn Bhd  
900 & 1, Perak Lane,  
11600 Penang



## FOREWORD

The Buddha frequently exhorted his disciples to practise meditation for it is the only way (*ekayano maggo*) to gaining that peace of mind that can liberate us from suffering.

On this Wesak day, we thought it would be apt that we publish an article on the subject of Vipassana (Insight meditation). It is an interview conducted by Ven. Visuddhacara with the Meditation master, Sayadaw U Panditabhivamsa of Burma. Ven. Visuddhacara, who is from the Malaysian Buddhist Meditation Centre, Penang, conducted the interview while he was staying with Sayadaw U Pandita at Panditarama Meditation Centre in Rangoon. The article was originally published in the April issue of Panditarama's newsletter.

This article addresses several questions that would be of particular interest to meditators, such as "how should a yogi go about his daily life after an intensive retreat", "what is the kind of *sati* (mindfulness) that is developed in intensive practice?" and "how are *kilesas* (mental defilements) abandoned by noting."

Sayadaw gives details . He talks about the need to practise *satthaka sampajañña* (clear comprehension of purpose/benefit) and *sappaya sampajañña* (clear comprehension of suitability) in daily life. He discusses the *lakkhana* (characteristic), *rasa* (function), *paccupatthana* (manifestation) and *padatthana* (proximate cause) of *sati* - which is in line with the commentarial (*atthakatha*) way of exposition. He explains at length on how a yogi is to note - by plunging straight into the object without being deviated by thoughts, etc. He speaks about

*tadanga pahana* - how *kilesas* are abandoned during noting, and *vikkhambhana pahana* - how they are abandoned even without noting.

Sayadaw uses Pali terms freely and some have been retained as besides providing a more accurate rendering, they also add to the "flavour" of the *Dhamma*, Pali being the language of the Buddha. The yogi would do well too to be acquainted with Pali terms.

Besides being of direct relevance to yogis, we think the general readers too would find the subjects discussed of interest. They would gain some understanding of the nature and benefits of the practice, and may be prompted to take it up. That would be a wonderful thing, for the Buddha wants us to inherit the essence of his teaching which can only be attained through the practice of Satipatthana Vipassana meditation. On our part, we of the Malaysian Buddhist Meditation Centre, extend an invitation to all who have yet to take up vipassana to do so and realise for themselves the benefits of practice.

May all beings be well and happy. May they attain the wisdom that can liberate them from all suffering.

Hoe Soon Ying  
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May 1991



## **SATI and THE YOGI**

*An interview with Sayadaw U Pandita  
by Bhikkhu Visuddhacara*

**BV:** Sayadaw, it may be easy for a yogi to be mindful in an intensive retreat but not so when he goes back to his work and normal daily routine. At a retreat, he is instructed to go slow and to be mindful of all his actions. But out of retreat in daily life, the pace is fast, even hectic. It is extremely difficult to maintain good mindfulness as one can do in a retreat. So what should a yogi do?

**SP:** There are a few things a yogi should understand here. What is important is his attitude. As much as he can he should try to be mindful and he should be happy with the fact that he is trying. For he cannot expect perfection, at least not until he is an *arahant*. Only an *arahant* can be mindful all the time.

The priorities of *Dhamma* and that of the world are very different. In a retreat, the emphasis is on the cultivation of *sati* (mindfulness) so that one can attain the highest wisdom of *Nibbana*. One notes diligently all bodily actions and mental processes. Continuous, successive notings lead to a build-up of *sati* until it becomes automatic, spontaneous, effortless. With this kind of powerful *sati*, one can see the arising and passing away of phenomena, penetrate the truths of *anicca* (impermanance), *dukkha* (suffering/unsatisfactoriness) and *anatta* (not-self) and realize *magga-phala-nibbana*, the cessation of conditioned phenomena. To the extent that we have understood the nature of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*, to that extent we will live wise, happy and meaningful lives. The *arahant* who has fully

understood the *Dhamma* having attained *arahatta-magga-phala* (arahatta path and fruition knowledges), is always calm and at peace. He is undefiled and unshakable. When he dies, he undergoes no rebirth. That is the end of suffering.

But the priorities of the world are different. There the yogis have various responsibilities to fulfil. They have jobs to accomplish and they have to do them fast. They have to relate with their spouses, their family members and fulfil various social obligations. Obviously, the emphasis is not on the cultivation of *sati* but on the accomplishment of their various responsibilities. Furthermore, they are bombarded by many sensual objects and attractions. Accordingly, they can't expect the kind of *sati* they can develop in a meditation retreat. Yogis have to understand and accept that. That is why it is important for them to come to retreats from time to time to cultivate deep *sati* and *samadhi* (concentration). Then when they go back to their daily life-routine, they bring back with them the wisdom they have directly perceived.

So, generally yogis find that their *sati* slackens once they go back to their normal routine. This is normal, natural. The *sati* developed in a retreat is *supatthita sati* - firm, well-established *sati*. When he goes back he is unable to note continuously, meticulously. *Sati* slackens. You can say it is ordinary, not unique. And even then, he cannot maintain this ordinary *sati*. There are a lot of lapses in noting in the course of the day.

**BV:** So what should a yogi do? How should he go about his practice?

**SP:** He should integrate the *Dhamma* into his daily life. He should try to note as much as he can - his daily activities, changes in mental states, etc. He should understand Dhammic principles and attitudes, and conscientiously apply them. He should find time for daily sittings, say in the morning or evening or at any convenient time. It may be 15 minutes, half-an-hour, an hour or more; he should make formal sitting part of his daily routine.

### *SAMMA SATI*

*Sati* is indispensable. In whatever you do you need *sati*, otherwise you won't do it well. But the kind of *sati* we are discussing here is *samma sati* (right mindfulness) i.e. the kind of *sati* that can penetrate the truths of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. It is the moral, wholesome kind of *sati* that makes the yogi steer away from *akusala* (unwholesome) deeds. If you want to lead a moral, wholesome life, this kind of *sati* is indispensable. This is the kind of *sati* we are emphasizing here. This is the kind of *sati* we must develop. This *sati* protects the yogi from danger. It is like putting on a mask when one goes into a burning smoke-filled area. It (the mask) helps to screen off the smoke. But even then some smoke would still penetrate through and he would still feel the heat of the flames. So too when a yogi cultivates *sati* out of his retreat. Because of the many distractions and conditions in the outside world, he would still feel the smoke and the heat of the *kilesas* (defilements of greed, anger, delusion, etc.). A lot of patience is needed here. He can't succeed overnight. It is therefore essential to apply *yoniso manasikara* (wise/proper consideration/attention) all the time. In this regard, it is important that the yogi cultivates *satthaka sampajañña* and *sappaya sampajañña*.



*Satthaka sampajañña* is clear comprehension of purpose/benefit. When he wants to say or do something, he should consider the purpose - i.e. whether there is any benefit in saying or doing so. Even if it is beneficial, he should consider whether it is suitable to do so at that time. This is *sappaya sampajañña* (clear comprehension of suitability). Sometimes, there may be benefit in saying or doing certain things, but it may not be appropriate to do it then. For example, it may be good to admonish a certain person but it may not be appropriate to do it there and then in front of others. One should tell him discreetly at a time when he is more amenable to instruction. If yogis can often apply these two *sampajaññas*, they will avoid a lot of problems and become skilled in relating with people.

These two *sampajaññas* together are also called *parihariya pañña* which means the wisdom to (1) carry out wholesome, beneficial deeds and (2) avoid unwholesome, unbeneficial deeds. It is also called *nepakka pañña* or matured wisdom.

If a yogi has made good progress in retreats, he will find *sati* coming on automatically now and then, especially when there is danger in breaking his precepts (non-killing, non-stealing, non-sexual misconduct, non-lying, non-indulgence in intoxicants, etc). He is like a person wearing white clean clothes - he would naturally steer away from dirt as he wouldn't want to soil his suit. A *sotapan*, for example, would never break his five precepts. He doesn't even have to make an effort to refrain from doing so; it comes naturally as he has no desire to break them. For those whose insight wisdom is still weak, they need to exercise special mindfulness to guard against breaking of precepts. Regular meditation practice is important. When *sati* becomes

habitual; it will act like a brake, restraining one from doing foolish, unwholesome things. As a yogi practises it will become easier and easier to maintain *sati*, more automatic or spontaneous.

### The old days and now

**BV:** Sayadaw, in the old days, people seemed to attain *magga-phala* (path and fruition knowledges or *Nibbana*) fairly easily even while going about their daily activities such as cooking and washing, etc. Might not yogis do so now too? Out of retreat while they are going about doing their chores and work? That is, if they are noting.

**SP:** No doubt, noting is the road to *magga-phala*. As long as he notes, the yogi is on the right track to *Nibbana*. But it would be extremely difficult nowadays for yogis to attain while going about their daily activities in daily life.

In the old days it was different. First of all, the Buddha was around to give just the right kind of instruction at the right time. Furthermore, those yogis had special *paramis* (perfections). They had laid the foundation in many previous lives. Their minds were pure and ready to absorb the *Dhamma*. Nowadays, people are generally continuously bombarded by defilements. They have many sensual distractions. Their minds are not quite pure. Their *indriyas* (the faculties of faith, energy, concentration, wisdom and mindfulness) are far from matured. So it would be very difficult for them to attain like those yogis of former days.

Nevertheless, no effort goes to waste. It helps if they make it a habit to note. Then when they come to a retreat, they can enhance their *sati* and make significant progress.

### *Sati's characteristics*

BV: Sayadaw, for the benefit of yogis, could we discuss here the kind of *sati* a yogi cultivates in an intensive retreat?

SP: Yes, *sati* is, as you know, mindfulness, awareness. We shall examine the nature of *sati*, *sati*patthana and how the yogi is to note or observe.

First, we should understand the *lakkhana* (characteristic), *rasa* (function), *paccupatthana* (manifestation) and *padatthana* (proximate cause) of *sati*. *Sati* has the *lakkhana* of *apilana*. *Apilana* means not floating; *pilana* being "floating". *Apilana* (not floating) means, in other words, sinking. If you don't float you sink. What is meant is that the *sati* sinks into the object. It does not stay on the surface, but it penetrates or sinks into it, just like if you throw a stone into the water, the stone doesn't float around but sinks right to the bottom. So this sinking into the object is the *lakkhana* (characteristic) of *sati*.

The *rasa* (function) of *sati* is *asammoha* (lit. non-confusion). Here it means that the function or work of *sati* is to ensure that the object does not disappear from sight. The mind that notes keeps tracking the object from beginning to end. Whatever arises is not missed. The mind spots and sinks into it. It hits the target. That is the function of *sati*;

to note the object without any miss, not to let it out of sight but to follow it from beginning to end.

The *paccupatthana* (manifestation) of *sati* is *visayabhimukha*. *Visaya* refers to the object and *abhimukha* means "to be facing the object, to be seeing it face to face". So *sati* is manifested as the seeing of the object directly, face to face, knowing it clearly, thoroughly. When the function (*rasa*) of *sati* is accomplished, then *sati* will automatically manifest as seeing the object clearly, face to face. Another manifestation of *sati* is *arakkha* (guarding, protection). *Sati* protects the mind from *kilesas* (defilements). No *kilesas* can enter when there is *samma sati* (right mindfulness). It is like closing the door to *kilesas* just as you would close the window from wind and rain.

The *padatthana* (proximate cause) of *sati* is *thirasañña* - continuous, firm perception. The stronger the perception on the object (with regard to its characteristics such as heat, cold, hardness, tension, etc) the stronger the *sati* will be. Perception here means to perceive the object, to know the object, to recognize it as it is in its true nature, not to mistake it for something else.

Now, let us look at the word "*satipatthana*". The word can be broken into *sati* + *pa* + *thana*. "*Sati*" means mindfulness. "*Pa*" here has the sense of distinction. It means extremely strong, intense, firm, outstanding, continuous, steadfast noting or mindfulness. "*Thana*" refers to the place for the establishing of mindfulness i.e. *kaya* (the body), *vedana* (feeling), *citta* (consciousness), and *dhamma* (mental and physical objects). So *satipatthana* can be interpreted as the strong and steadfast mindfulness that occurs without any break, plunging into whatever

objects that arise whether they be classed under *kaya, vedana, citta or dhamma*.

**No time for pausing -  
just plunge into the object**

We shall elaborate further. How should the yogi note? He should plunge straight into the object. As soon as the object arises (such as rising, falling, sitting, touching, tension, aches, etc) *sati* must plunge straight into it. It is like rushing in forcefully with great momentum. You can't afford to go slow or at a moderate pace. There is not a moment to lose and absolutely no time to think. There is no time to think such thoughts as "what is this? How is this? Why is this?" You just go straight in without thinking, speculating or analyzing. That's all! The moment you think or speculate, the momentum is broken and your *sati* is flawed. You won't hit the target. You'll miss the bull's eye. To give another simile, it is like a capture by sudden attack, like the police bursting in to make an arrest.

Furthermore, the *sati* not only plunges into the object but also spreads out and envelopes it. It covers the whole object, not just a part of it. Say if a yogi is noting rising and falling (of the abdomen), he narrows his observation to that area of the abdomen where the rising, etc. occurs and covers the whole area, being aware of tension, tightness or whatever may be prominent. Sometimes when the *sati* has become well-established, it can "cover" the whole body, i.e. it can be aware of phenomena as they arise and pass away in various parts of the body. (*For the Sayadaw's account on the experience of several yogis with strong sati, see appendix on "exceptional sati."*)

## Road to success

**BV:** Sayadaw, could you explain how *viriya*, *sati*, and *samadhi* are related to each other?

**SP:** Yes, but we ought to begin from before *viriya* and go beyond *samadhi*. First, the yogi ought to have *saddha*, i.e. confidence in this practice. The Buddha has declared that this *Satipatthana* practice is the way that leads to the purification of mind, to overcoming sorrow, lamentation, physical pain and mental suffering, to attaining *magga-phala* and realising *Nibbana*.

The yogi should appreciate that it is a good thing to purify the mind and that the results promised by the Buddha are totally desirable. He should have a certain degree of confidence that the Buddha, as a fully Enlightened Being, spoke from experience and knew what he was talking about. Once the yogi begins practice and attains results, his initial *saddha* (faith or confidence) is vindicated and will be fortified. Should he penetrate into the characteristics of *anicca*, *dukkha* and *anatta*, and attain *magga-phala-Nibbana*, his faith will be unshakable.

So the yogi should have initial confidence in this practice. After having this (initial) *saddha*, he must have the desire to get the promised results. When he has this desire, he should accordingly put in the necessary effort (*viriya*).

There are three stages to this effort:-

### 1. *Arambha dhatu* (the element of launching)

This is the initial effort the yogi has to put in to start the practice.

## 2. *Nikkama dhatu* (the element of boosting)

During practice, the yogi will encounter boredom, laziness, restlessness and other obstacles. So this is the effort to overcome laziness, etc.

## 3. *Parakkama dhatu* (the element of persistence)

This is the effort to persist and maintain the practice, ascending one *ñāna* (insight knowledge) after another until one reaches the goal. With this good effort, strong *sati* arises. His noting mind sinks into the object as it (the object) arises. When the *sati* is firm, the mind cannot wander; it stays put in the object. *Samadhi* (concentration) accordingly arises.

As his mind (supported by *virīya* and *sati*) stays concentrated on the noted objects, *samma-ditthi* (right view i.e. wisdom) arises. He knows the object noted as it is, whether it is heat, stiffness, tension, etc. Eventually he sees their common characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), unsatisfactoriness (*dukkha*) and not-self (*anatta*).

So if we are to recapitulate by going backwards, wisdom arises because of concentration, concentration because of steadfast mindfulness, mindfulness because of the effort put in, effort because of the desire for the promised results, desire because of initial faith or confidence in the *Satipatthana* practice.



## Four factors in developing *sati*

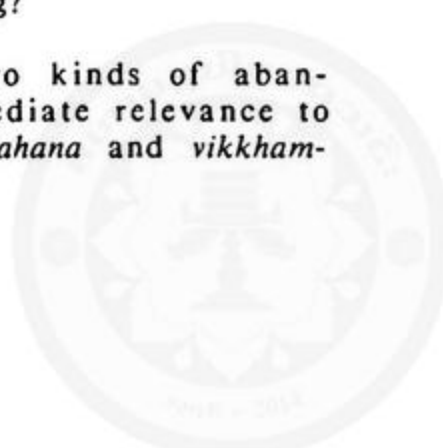
*Sati* plays a key role. When steadfast *sati* is present, *viriya* and *samadhi* will also be there. The three make up the concentration-group of the Noble-Eightfold-Path. There are four things that aid the development of *sati*:

1. Continuous noting. It arouses *sati* and leads to the strengthening of *sati* until it becomes habitual. Thus, a yogi must note all his actions and whatever objects that arise at his six-sense doors.
2. Avoidance of people who do not possess *sati*. If you take such people as your teachers, or as people to imitate, you will be in trouble.
3. Associating with people who possess *sati*. You could take them as teachers or people to imitate.
4. Inclining the mind towards *sati*. This means that you place care and emphasis on the development of steadfast *sati*. You take it seriously, not lightly.

## How noting dispels *kilesas*

**BV:** Sayadaw, could you elaborate on how *kilesas* (defilements) are overcome during noting?

**SP:** I will first explain the two kinds of abandoning of *kilesas* that are of immediate relevance to the noting yogi. They are *tadanga pahana* and *vikkhambhana pahana*.





*Tadanga pahana* means the abandoning of *kilesas* (i.e. defilements such as greed, aversion and delusion) during noting while *vikkhambhana pahana* is the abandoning of *kilesas* even while one may not be noting. First, one should understand the word *pahana*. It can be translated as removing, overcoming, discarding, abandoning. But in the present context, one must understand it is not the abandoning, removal or overcoming of something which is already in existence. It is not that the *kilesas* are already there and then you remove them. Rather, it is the not giving or denying of any opportunity for *kilesas* to arise. This is how it occurs: When a yogi is noting an object, his mind is absorbed, concentrated in the task of noting. He gets to know the true nature of the object. He knows the relation between mind and matter, the cause and effect, the arising and passing away, the characteristics of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* and *asubha* (loathsomeness) inherent in the object.

Let us say, he is noting a hot sensation as "heat, heat". His mind is focusing on this sensation. Eventually, he comes to understand that there are basically only two things involved here, the sensation of heat and the mind that knows it. This is the knowledge of the discrimination of mind-and-matter.

He understands the cause and effect. For example, he knows that because of the occurrence of heat, the noting mind comes about. Here heat is the cause and noting/awareness is the effect.

When he sees the heat arising and passing away in succession, he understands its impermanent nature, its unsatisfactoriness, its not-self nature (i.e. arising according to conditions, there being no ultimate controller).

He doesn't have to think to know all these things. Rather, the knowledge and understanding will come to him spontaneously and naturally in the course of noting. Thus noting and understanding in this way, *kilesas* have no opportunity to arise. If you do not note, then *kilesas* such as *abhijja* (covetousness) and *domanassa* (mental distress) can arise. For example, if the object is pleasant, greed can arise and if unpleasant, mental distress or aversion can arise. But when you are noting and absorbed in knowing the object as it is in its true nature, such *kilesas* cannot arise. For every moment of noting, there is no *kilesa* for that moment. Thus *tadanga pahana* is also called momentary or temporary abandoning of *kilesas*. It means that for as long as you are noting, *kilesas* cannot arise. If you note for 10 moments or 1000 moments or one hour uninterruptedly at a stretch, then for that long duration of time, *kilesas* cannot arise. This is *tadanga pahana*.

Futhermore, *kilesas* cannot arise because in the place where it can arise, you have installed mindfulness and knowledge, such as understanding of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, etc. Thus, *tadanga pahana* is also called overcoming or abandoning of *kilesas* by substitution of opposites, for you are substituting not-knowing (*avijja*) with knowing (*vijja*), mistaken perception of permanence (*nicca*) with correct perception of impermanance (*anicca*), mistaken perception of happiness (*sukha*) with correct perception of suffering (*dukkha*), mistaken perception of self (*atta*) with correct perception of not-self (*anatta*), mistaken perception of beauty (*subha*) with correct perception of loathsomeness (*asubha*).

The word *tadanga* can be separated into *tad* and *anga*. *Tad* literally means "that". It refers to that *kilesa* which can arise if there is no noting or

mindfulness. *Anga* means a limb, a part, a unit. Here it refers to the unit of noting which can overcome that *kilesa* in the sense of giving no opportunity for that *kilesa* to arise.

#### Abandoning by *vikkhambhana*

Now, when *tadanga pahana* has occurred for sometime in a stretch, *vikkhambhana pahana* arises. This means that even if the yogi may not be noting (for example, he may miss noting at intervals or he may have got up from his sitting), *kilesas* will still not arise. How? Because of the carrying over or residual effect of the *tadanga pahana*. Because of the earlier continuous noting and occurring of *tadanga pahana*, the yogi's mind becomes very fine and pure. At such a time, even if he does not note, *kilesas* cannot enter. Reaching this level of mind is *vikkhambhana pahana*. We can translate it as abandoning by suppression in the sense that *kilesas* have no opportunity to arise even in objects which are not noted. At this stage, the yogi might even think that he has totally overcome *kilesas* and that they cannot arise anymore. But, of course, this is not so. The freedom from *kilesas* is only temporary. When the effects of *vikkhambhana pahana* wears off (after he has stopped meditating for some time), he will find himself bombarded by *kilesas* again. To give a simile: If you put an iron ball in a fire and take it out when it is red hot, you can't touch the ball even though it is out of the fire. Similarly, *kilesas* cannot arise in the yogi when he stops noting because the residual effect of the *tadanga pahana* still remains. But when the heat subsides, you can touch the ball. So too when *tadanga pahana* wears off, *kilesas* can arise once again.

Finally, when *magga-phala* is attained, *samuccheda pahana* (abandoning by cutting off) occurs. This means that the *kilesas* are cut off permanently. They can never arise again. For the arahant, all fetters (*samyojana*) are uprooted, which means that no *kilesas* can ever arise again. For the *sotapan* (the person who arrives at the first stage of sainthood), certain *kilesas* can still arise as he has cut off only three fetters, namely personality belief (*sakkaya-ditthi*), clinging to mere rites and rituals (*silabbata-paramasa*) and sceptical doubts (*vicikiccha*). He is still susceptible to greed and anger but not the types that can lead him to rebirth in woeful states (*apaya*). The effects (*vipaka*) of previously done bad deeds which could have led him to such woeful rebirths have also been neutralised. Also he could never commit such kinds of bad deeds again.

Following this, there is *patipassaddhi pahana* (abandoning by tranquillization). This refers to the attainment of fruition knowledge (*phala-ñāna*) which follows automatically immediately after path-knowledge (*magga-ñāna*). To give a simile, it is like something being burnt by a fire and when the flames are extinguished, you further throw water to cool the burnt object. Similarly, *phala* has that kind of cooling effect on the person who has attained *magga*. When an *ariya* yogi (one who has attained *magga-phala*), re-enters *phala*, he enjoys the bliss of *Nibbana*.

Lastly, there is *nissarana pahana* (abandoning by escape). This applies only to arahants who have attained *arahatta magga-phala*. On attaining *arahatta magga-phala-Nibbana*, one escapes from *kilesa vatta* (the round of *kilesas*), *kamma vatta* (the round of action) and *vipaka vatta* (the round of effect). It means he undergoes no more rebirths; he is free from

*samsara* - the endless faring on in the sea of suffering.

### *Kilesas at varlous levels*

BV: Sayadaw, can you explain how a yogi benefits by being free of *arammananusaya kilesas* (defilements latent in object) as a result of noting?

SP: Before this, let me explain *vitikkama, pariyutthana* and *anusaya kilesas*. *Vitikkama kilesas* are defilements of transgression. It means *kilesas* which manifest at the bodily or verbal level, such as killing or lying. These are gross *kilesas*.

*Pariyutthana kilesas* are obsessive *kilesas* which occur purely at the mental level. They are the unwholesome thoughts which arise in the mind but had not been translated into action - bodily or verbally.

*Anusaya kilesas* are those that lie latent and will arise when conditions are favourable. They are always waiting to pounce at the first opportunity, and these opportunities are many in the course of a day.

That a yogi is free from all *kilesas* at the time of noting is clear but once he stops noting, because of the existence of *anusaya* (latent) *kilesas, pariyutthana* (obsessive-mental) and *vitikkama* (transgressive) *kilesas* will once again arise. Once you cut off the *anusaya kilesas*, both the *pariyutthana* and *vitikkama kilesas* cannot arise. There will be no bad thoughts and consequently no bad verbal or bodily deeds.

Now there are two kinds of *anusaya kilesas*, namely *arammananusaya* and *santananusaya kilesas*. A yogi cannot cut off *santananusaya kilesa* until he attains *magga-phala* but he can cut off *arammananusaya kilesa* by noting. First, let me explain *santananusaya kilesa*. *Anusaya* means the potential to arise while *santana* means the mind-body (*nama-rupa*) complex or continuity. So *santananusaya kilesas* are the defilements which have the potential to arise in the mind-body continuity. As long as one has not attained *magga-phala*, these *anusaya kilesas* (latent defilements) have not been uprooted and can arise at opportune moments.

*Arammananusaya kilesas* are those defilements that can arise with the objects that are noted. For example, if you are not noting with *vipassana* insight, then when you encounter a pleasant object, lust or craving may arise. Or when you encounter an unpleasant object, ill-will or aversion may arise. Even if *kilesas* do not arise then because you have been applying *yoniso manasikara* (wise reflection through thinking) at the time of encountering the object, still later on when you think back about the object, lust or craving, etc. may arise. This is called *arammananusaya kilesas*, defilements which have the potential to arise in objects which have not been observed with *vipassana* insight.

However, a yogi who has been noting with *vipassana* insight totally uproots *arammananusaya kilesa*. This means that not only at the time of noting the *kilesas* do not arise; even after that, should he recollect that object, no *kilesa* can arise. Instead only the knowledge that was present at the time when he had first noted the object will arise. That is why it is important to note the mental and physical phenomena that arise. In this way the yogi

cuts off *arammananusaya kilesas* in the noted object permanently and this is a unique kind of benefit that a yogi can attain even before he arrives at *magga-phala*. If a yogi can appreciate this benefit, he should strive to be vigilant and consistent in noting to cut off as many *arammananusaya kilesas* as possible.

In this regard, it is pertinent for the yogi to understand *nimitta-gaha* and *anuvyanjana-gaha*. *Nimitta* literally means "sign". Here it refers to that object which is the cause of *kilesas*. *Gaha* means apprehending or grasping. *Anuvyanjana* means "details" i.e. details of the object while *nimitta* refers to the object as a whole without yet going into the details.

### Seeing without grasping

Now, to give an example. Let us say a man sees a pretty woman (or the reverse example, i.e. a woman seeing a good-looking man, can also be given). First, the man looks at the woman as a whole. He cognises that it is a pretty woman and at that time *tanha* (lust, craving or desire) may arise. Next, he may start to take in the details of the object. He observes the woman closely, her features, her shape, her behaviour, etc. He thinks she has beautiful eyes, eyebrows, nose, ears, lips, breasts, limbs, etc. He may like the way she talks, the way she smiles or laughs, the way she walks or stands, the way she does her hair, the way she carries herself, the sound of her voice, etc. In this way, he studies the details. This is called *anuvyanjana-gaha* - apprehending or grasping (*gaha*) the details (*anuvyanjana*) of the object. Naturally, the *kilesas* (of lust, craving, etc.) arise even more strongly in one who studies the object in this manner.

Looking at the object as a whole (*nimitta-gaha*), the *kilesas* cannot yet arise so strongly. But if one does not stop there but goes on grasping the details, then one goes in deeper. To give a simile, it is like eating rice with various dishes. Taking the plain rice without any curries is like *nimitta-gaha*. But when you add in the various curries, vegetables, etc., it becomes more tasty. That is like *anuvyanjana-gaha*.

The yogi who is noting conscientiously grasps neither the form nor the details of the object. This is called *na nimitta-gaha* and *na anuvyanjana-gaha* ("*na*" is Pali for "not"). By grasping neither the forms nor details, *arammananusaya kilesa* is cut off. How does it occur? At the time the man (yogi) sees a person, he does not conceptualise it as a man or woman, pretty or ugly, etc. Instead, his mind being absorbed in noting according to ultimate reality, sees the object as it is, according to its true nature. He sees the object with insight knowledge of *nama-rupa* (mind and matter [as had been explained earlier], cause-and-effect relationship, *anicca, dukkha, anatta, asubha*, etc.). In this way even *nimitta-gaha kilesas* cannot arise, not to speak of *anuvyanjana-gaha kilesas*. This is the power of *sati*. It is merely to note (as seeing, seeing, etc) but it is very powerful and effectively cuts off *kilesas*.

Here is a relevant account which took place during the Buddha's time. King Udena once asked Venerable Pindolabharadvaja how young monks controlled their sensual desires. He observed that these monks were in the prime of youth, good-looking and at their age, would be susceptible to many sensual lures. How did they prevent *kilesas* from arising in their minds?



Venerable Pindolabharadvaja replied that the monks would look upon the womenfolk as their mother, aunt, sister, etc. They would put them in the place of their relatives. In this way, lust would not arise in them.

The King was not satisfied. He said that even then, the monks could go astray and delve in sensual thoughts. Ven. Pindolabharadvaja then replied that the monks would practise *asubha* meditation (contemplation of loathsomeness), i.e. they would in their mind break up the body into parts (such as head hair, body hair, nail, teeth, skin, etc.) and consider the foul aspects of the body. When one considers the intestines, liver, heart, kidneys and various organs of the body, excrement, urine, sweat, etc., one can see that there is intrinsically no beauty there. In that way lust would not arise.

Still the King was not satisfied. He said that the mind was very wily and difficult to control. Even while dwelling on the *asubha* aspects of the body, the King contended that the mind would still look at it as *subha* (beautiful and desirable).

Venerable Pindolabharadvaja then replied: "In that case, O King, the monks apply *sati* (mindfulness)". At this reply, the King was satisfied. He concurred because he himself had practised mindfulness and found it effective. He related how he found difficulty in controlling himself whenever he went to his women's chambers. He would be distracted by his queen and concubines. Being overcome by lust and desires, he can't concentrate on anything else. But when he applied *sati* *patthana*, he found that he could check his mind. He could stay cool in the midst of his harem without any lust arising!

So this practice of *satipatthana* is a very good practice for mind control which leads ultimately to the highest wisdom and liberation of *Nibbana*.

Yogis should find joy in this guarantee by the Buddha and practise with perseverance and enthusiasm. In conclusion, let me wish that yogis may practise diligently and find in not too long a time the happiness that they ardently seek.



## Appendix

### EXCEPTIONAL SATI

*When sati is exceptionally strong, especially at udayabbaya-ñāna (knowledge of arising and passing away of phenomena), some yogis can see the past, something going on in the present elsewhere, and the future. Sayadaw recounted the experiences of three exceptional yogis he taught some 20 years ago.*

"When *sati* becomes exceptionally strong, the yogi's mind and the noted objects also become very clear. At this stage, certain yogis can recollect past lives or events in their childhood which they normally cannot recollect. It is like playing back a film.

Some 20 years ago, there was a nine-year-old *samanera* (novice monk) who meditated under me. He could recollect details of his childhood to the extent of how he was conceived in the womb. He could relate how he was conceived and formed as a froth-like thing (in Pali "*kalala*" - the first stage in the formation of a foetus) in the womb of his mother. He described the development in detail of a reddish-like foetus, the appearance of the limbs, body, head, etc. He could feel discomfort when his mother moved around. When the mother ate hot and pungent food, he could also feel the effect.

When asked to relate again the following day, the *samanera* could initially not do so. But when instructed to make a resolution for recollection, he could once again relate in detail as he did the previous day. This is a kind of psychic ability but it is temporary. It lapses when the *sati* loses its extra-ordinary strength.

Then some yogis while meditating at the meditation centre could, when they thought about what was going on in their homes, see what was happening there. There was one such yogi who, when he saw what was going on in his home, looked at the clock and noted the time. Later, when his family visited him at the meditation centre, he asked them what they were doing at such and such a time. When the family told him, it was exactly what he had seen them doing while he was meditating at the Centre.

Another yogi, a Japanese man aged about 40, while meditating at the Centre (Mahasi Yeiktha in Yangon), had a thought that a Burmese friend would come and see him and talk about business matters. Soon after, he got up from his sitting and was on the way to the refectory when that very Burmese friend came and talked to him about business.

Also, he had a thought during his meditation that there would be a court case in connection with a piece of land his family owned in Japan. Shortly after he received a letter from his sister in Japan informing him of an impending court case with regard to the land."



*Wisdom springs from meditation,  
without meditation wisdom wanes.  
Knowing this two-fold path of  
progress and decline,  
let one conduct oneself  
so that wisdom may increase*

*Dhammapada 282*



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This is the only way for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the complete destruction of (physical) pain and (mental) distress, for the attainment of the Right Path (*ariya magga*), that is to say the four Foundations of Mindfulness.

—*Maha Satipatthana Sutta*



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