

Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta

A Discourse on
Mahāsatiṭṭhāna Sutta

มหาสติปัฏฐานสูตร

Mahāsī Sayādaw

พระมหาสี สยาคอ

Mahāsī Sayādaw

SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF THE VENERABLE MAHĀSĪ SAYĀDAW

The Venerable *U Sobhana Mahāthera*, better known as *Mahāsī Sayādaw* was born on 29 July 1904 to the peasant proprietors, *U Kan Taw* and *Daw Ok* at *Seikkhun* Village, which is about seven miles to the west of the town of *Shwebo* in Upper *Myanmar*, once the capital of the founder of the last *Myanmar* dynasty. Sayādaw's name was *Mg Thwin*.

At the age of six he began his studies at a monastic school in his village, and at the age of twelve he was ordained a *Sāmaṇera* (novice) receiving the name of *Sobhana*. On reaching the age of twenty, he was ordained a *bhikkhu* on 26 November 1923. He passed the Government *Pāli* Examinations in all the three classes (lower, middle and highest) in the following three successive years.

In the fourth year after his *Bhikkhu* ordination, he proceeded to *Mandalay*, noted for its preeminence in Buddhist studies, where he continued his further education under various monks of high scholastic fame. In the fifth year he went to *Mawlamyaing* where he took up the work of teaching the Buddhist scriptures at a monastery known as “*Taung-waing-galay Taikyaung*”

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

In the eighth year after his *Bhikkhu* ordination, he and another monk left *Mawlamyaing* equipped with the bare necessities of a *bhikkhu* (i.e. almsbowl, a set of three robes, etc.) and went in search of a clear and effective method in the practice of meditation. At *Thaton* he went to the well-known Meditation Teacher, the Venerable *U Nārada*, who is also known as “*Mingun Jetavan Sayādaw the First*” He then placed himself under the guidance of the *Sayādaw* and at once proceeded with an intensive course of meditation.

He had progressed so well in his practice that he was able to teach the method effectively to his first three disciples in *Seikkhun* while he was on a visit there in 1938. These three lay disciples, too, made remarkable progress. Inspired by the example of these three, gradually as many as fifty villagers joined the courses of intensive practice. The Venerable *Mahāsī Sayādaw* could not stay with the Venerable *Mingun Sayādaw* as long as he wanted as he was urgently asked to return to *Mawlamyaing* monastery. Its aged head monk was gravely ill and passed away not long after the Venerable *Mahāsī Sayādaw*'s return. The Venerable *Mahāsī Sayādaw* was then asked to take charge of the monastery and to resume teaching the resident monks. During this time he sat for the *Pāli* Lecturership Examination on its first introduction, and passed on the first attempt in 1941 and was awarded the title of “*Sāsanadhaja Siripavara Dhammācariya*”

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

On the event of the Japanese invasion, the authorities gave an evacuation order to those living near *Mawlamyaing* at the *Taung-waing-galay* Monastery and its neighbourhood. These places were close to an air field and hence exposed to air attacks. For the *Sayādaw* this was a welcome opportunity to return to his native *Seikkhun* and to devote himself whole-heartedly to his own practice of *Vipassanā* meditation and to the teaching of it to others.

He took residence at a monastery known as *Mahāsikyauṅ*, which was thus called because a drum (*Myanmar-si*) of an unusually large (*mahā*) size was housed there. From that monastery, the *Sayādaw*'s popular name, *Mahāsī Sayādaw*, is derived.

It was during this period, in 1945, that the *Sayādaw* wrote his great work, *Manual of Vipassanā Meditation*, a comprehensive and authoritative treatise expounding both the doctrinal and the practical aspects to the *satipaṭṭhāna* method of meditation. This work of two volumes, comprising 858 pages in print, was written by him in just seven months, while the neighbouring town of *Shwebo* was at times subjected to almost daily air attacks. So far, Volume I and Chapter V of Volume II have been translated into English and are published under the titles "A Practical way of (Insight Meditation) Volume I" and "Practical Insight Meditation: Basic and Progressive Stages".

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

It did not take long before the reputation of *Mahāsī Sayādaw* as an able teacher of Insight Meditation (*Vipassanā*) had spread throughout the *Shwebo-Sagaing* region and attracted the attention of a prominent and very devout Buddhist layman, Sir *U Thwin*, who was regarded as Myanmar's Elder Statesman. It was his wish to promote the inner strength of Buddhism in *Myanmar* by setting up a meditation centre to be guided by a meditation teacher of proven virtue and ability. After meeting *Mahāsī Sayādaw* and listening to a discourse given by him and to the meditation instructions given to the nuns in *Sagaing*, Sir *U Thwin* was in no doubt that he had found the ideal person he was looking for.

In 1947 the *Buddha Sāsana Nuggaha* Organization was founded in Yangon with its objectives of furthering the study (*pariyatti*) and practice (*paṭipatti*) of Buddhism, with Sir *U Thwin* as its first President. In 1948 Sir *U Thwin* donated five acres of land at Bahan Township, Yangon, to the organization for the erection of a meditation centre. It is on this site that the present (*Thathana* (or *Sāsana*) *Yeiktha*, i.e.: "Buddhist Retreat" is situated, which now, however, covers an area of twenty acres, with a large number of buildings.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

In 1949, the then Prime Minister of *Myanmar*, *U Nu*, and Sir *U Thwin* requested that the Venerable *Mahāsī Sayādaw* come to *Yangon* and give training in meditational practice. On 4 December 1949, the *Sayādaw* introduced the first group of 25 meditators into the methodical practice of *Vipassanā* meditation. Within a few years of the *Sayādaw*'s arrival in *Yangon*, similar meditation centres sprang up all over *Myanmar*, until they numbered over six hundred now. In neighboring *Theravāda* countries like Thailand and Sri Lanka, such centers were also established in which the same method was taught and practised. By end of December 2014 the total number of meditators trained at all these centres (both in *Myanmar* and abroad) had passed the figure of seventeen millions: In the East and in several Western countries as well, *Vipassanā* courses continue to be conducted.

At the historic Sixth Buddhist Council (*Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyanā*) held at *Yangon* for two years, culminating in the year 2500 Buddhist Era (1956), the Venerable *Mahāsī Sayādaw* had an important role. He was one of the Final Editors of the canonical texts, which were recited and thereby approved, in the sessions of the Council. Further, he was the Questioner (*Pucchaka*), that is, he had to ask the questions concerning the respective canonical texts that were to be recited.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

They were then answered by an erudite monk with a phenomenal power of memory, by the name of Venerable *Vicitta sārābhivamsa*. To appreciate fully the importance of these roles, it may be mentioned that at the first Council held one hundred days after the passing away of the *Buddha*, it was the Venerable *Mahākassapa* who put forth those introductory questions which were then answered by the Venerable *Upāli* and the Venerable *Ānanda*.

After the recital of the canonical scriptures, the *Tipiṭaka*, had been completed at the Sixth Council, it was decided to continue with a rehearsal of the ancient commentaries and sub-commentaries, preceded by critical editing and scrutiny. In the large task, too, the *Mahāsī Sayādaw* took a prominent part.

In the midst of all of these tasks, he was also a prolific and scholarly writer. He authored more than 100 writings and translations, mostly in Myanmar, with a few in the *Pāli* language. One of these deserves to be singled out is his Myanmar translation of the Commentary to the *Visuddhi magga* (*visuddhi- magga Mahāṭīkā*), which, in two large volumes of the *Pāli* original, is even more voluminous than the work commented upon and presents explanations on many difficult points, linguistically and in its contents. In 1957 *Mahāsī Sayādaw* was awarded the title of 'Aggamahāpaṇḍita'.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

Yet even all of this did not exhaust the *Mahāsī Sayādaw*'s remarkable capacity for work in the cause of the *Buddha-Dhamma*. He undertook several travels abroad as follows; Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam (1952): India and Sri Lanka (1953-1959): Japan (1957): Indonesia (1959): America, Hawaii, England, Continental Europe (1979): England, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand (1980): Nepal, India (1981).

The first two of his tours were in preparation for the Sixth Council, but were likewise used for preaching and teaching.

In the midst of all these manifold and strenuous activities, he never neglected his own meditative life which had enable him to give wise guidance to those instructed by him. His outstanding vigour of body and mind and his deep dedication to the *Dhamma* sustained him through a life of 78 years.

On 14 August 1982, the Venerable *Mahāsī Sayādaw* succumbed to a sudden and severe cerebral stroke which he had suffered the night before. Yet on the evening of the 13th, he had still given an introductory explanation to a group of new meditators.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

His long career of teaching through the spoken and printed words had a beneficial impact on many hundreds of thousands in the East and the West. His personal stature and his life's work rank him among the great figures of contemporary Buddhism.

(Updated in March 2015)

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

คำนำผู้แปล

แรงบันดาลใจของข้าพเจ้าในการจัดทำและแปลหนังสือเล่มนี้เกิดจากการได้มีโอกาสศึกษาธรรมและปฏิบัติธรรมภายใต้คำแนะนำของ สยาดอ ธัมมิกาลังการาภิวัังสะ อัคคมหาคันทวาจากบิณฑิตะ ท่านเน้นย้ำเสมอว่าโยคีที่เจริญสติปัฏฐานสี่ตามแนวทางที่มักเรียกกันว่าพองยุบ ฟังมีความรู้ในคำสอนของพระมหาสี สยาดอ พระวิปัสสนาจารย์ผู้มีความเชี่ยวชาญทั้งปริยัติธรรมและปฏิบัติ และเป็นพระอาจารย์ผู้ทำให้การปฏิบัติแบบพองยุบเป็นที่รู้จักอย่างกว้างขวางทั่วไปในปัจจุบัน ข้าพเจ้าเองต้องศึกษาคำสอนของพระมหาสี สยาดออยู่เสมอเมื่อเล่าเรียนธรรมและปฏิบัติธรรมภายใต้คำแนะนำของสยาดอ ธัมมิกาลังการาภิวัังสะฯ และค้นพบด้วยตนเองว่าคำสอนดังกล่าวมีประโยชน์อย่างมาก จึงอยากนำมาแบ่งปันกับเพื่อนโยคีผู้รักการปฏิบัติธรรมให้ได้มีโอกาสศึกษาเช่นเดียวกัน

จากประสบการณ์ของข้าพเจ้าเองและจากเพื่อนๆโยคี ทำให้ข้าพเจ้าตระหนักว่า ในบางครั้งการได้ศึกษาธรรมะเป็นภาษาไทยและภาษาอังกฤษควบคู่กันไปก็มีส่วนเกื้อหนุนให้เข้าใจธรรมะได้ชัดเจนมากยิ่งขึ้น แม้เพื่อนโยคีส่วนหนึ่งจะพอเข้าใจภาษาอังกฤษอยู่บ้าง แต่อาจไม่คุ้นเคยกับคำศัพท์ธรรมะภาษาอังกฤษนัก ดังนั้นการแปลในครั้งนี้ จึงยังคงเครื่องหมายหรือสัญลักษณ์ในภาษาอังกฤษไว้บ้าง เพื่อให้ง่ายกับเพื่อน

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

ขอขอบคุณคุณสุภาพร ตังนรินทร์ในการร่วมตรวจทานการ
แปลภาษาไทย ขอขอบคุณคุณสุภาภรณ์ กาญจวิระโยธินสำหรับการแปล
ประวัติพระมหาสี สยาดอเพื่อเปิดโอกาสให้เพื่อนโยคีได้มีโอกาสทราบ
ประวัติท่านมากขึ้น และขอขอบคุณ คุณวีรียา ปรัชญกุลผู้เป็นกำลังในการ
ช่วยจัดวางรูปเล่ม

หากการจัดทำหนังสือเล่มนี้รวมถึงการแปลไทยมีข้อบกพร่อง
ประการใด ข้าพเจ้าขออภัยเป็นอย่างสูงมา ณ ที่นี้ และขอโน้มรับความ
ผิดพลาดทั้งหมดไว้แต่เพียงผู้เดียว

คุณความดีใดที่อาจเกิดจากการแปลนี้ ผู้แปลขอถวายเป็นพุทธ
บูชา ธรรมบูชา สังฆบูชา และขอบูชาพระคุณบุพพการี อมาอันเป็นที่รัก
ยิ่ง ตลอดจนผู้อุปถัมภ์ค้ำจุนข้าพเจ้าทั้งในทางโลกและทางธรรมทุกองค์
ทุกท่าน

แม่ชี มริริญ ฝ่องผุดพันธ์

พ.ศ. 2561

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

A Discourse on *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (I)

(Radio talk on 5th May 1951)

The Discourse that will be preached now is called “Discourse on *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*”. It will not be false if one says that this is an important and complete *Sutta* in Buddhism. The reason is that in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the work of *vipassanā* and the method to practice it, which is also called ‘preliminary path’ (*pubbabhāga maggaṅga*), have been explained completely and accurately. The manner in which special knowledge arises has also been shown clearly. The four aspects of the Four Noble Truths have also been presented clearly and completely, namely ‘should be understood’ (*pariññeyya*), ‘should be abandoned’ (*pahātabba*), ‘should be attained’ (*sacchikātabba*), and ‘should be developed’ (*bhāvetabba*). Strong words of assurance that arouse confidence have also been mentioned in the epilogue. It is thus: By practicing the four *satipaṭṭhānas*, even the person of average wisdom falling in the category of ‘needing training’ (*neyya*) can become *Anāgāmi* or *Arahanta* within six or seven years. One whose wisdom is sharp can become *Anāgāmi* or *Arahanta* within seven days.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

From this assurance, it is clear that it takes shorter time than this to become a *Sotāpanna* or *Sakadāgāmi*. It inspires a lot of confidence. Besides, the benefits of practicing *satipaṭṭhāna* have also been declared at the very beginning of the discourse. Now, listen to the declaration carefully:

*‘Ekāyano ayaṃ, bhikkhave, maggo sattānaṃ
visuddhiyā, sokaparidevānaṃ samatikkamāya
dukkhadomanassānaṃ atthaṅgamāya ñāyassa
adhigamāya nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya,
yadidaṃ cattāro satipaṭṭhānā.’*

“Monks, this is the only way for the purification of beings, for overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for cessation of physical and mental pain, for reaching noble Path, and for attainment of *Nibbāna*, namely the ‘four established mindfulness’.”

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

bhikkhave = monks; *yadidaṃ cattāro satipaṭṭhānā* = there are four *satipaṭṭhānas*; *ayaṃ* = this practice-path of *satipaṭṭhāna* is; *sattānaṃ visuddhiyā* = for purification of beings by cleaning the mental impurities; *ekāyano maggo* = the one way, the only way.

In this passage, ‘becomes pure’ refers to becoming an *Arahant* after dispelling the defilements (*kilesa*). It means that there is only this *satipaṭṭhāna* path for becoming an *Arahant*. Furthermore, this practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* is the path that definitely and unmistakably leads to the attainment of *Arahatship*. Hence, if one wants to dispel all defilements and become an *Arahant*, then one should strive in the work of *satipaṭṭhāna*. In this connection, someone may ask, “Well I do not want to become *Arahanta*. I want to become only *Sotāpanna* and close the doors of woeful realms. Is it possible?” There is no need to worry about it. One becomes *Arahant* at the end after becoming *Sotāpanna*, *Sakadāgāmi*, and *Anāgāmi*. This can happen only if one's meditation practice is complete.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

If one wants to become only a *Sotāpanna*, one can be so by doing the necessary practice. One does not attain higher than that. Hence, it should be noted strongly that even when one wants to become just a *Sotāpanna*, one has to practice the four *satipaṭṭhānas*.

ayaṃ = this practice-path of *satipaṭṭhāna* is;
sokaparidevānaṃ samatikkamāya = for
 overcoming of sorrow and lamentation also;
ekāyano maggo = the one way, the only way.

In the world, sorrow and lamentation due to encountering adversities such as death of parents, spouses, children and loss of one's business are enormous. According to this passage, all kinds of sorrow and lamentation can be overcome through the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*. Hence, if one wishes to be free from sorrow and lamentation at all times and wants to live happily, one should do the complete practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

ayaṃ = this practice-path of *satipaṭṭhāna* is;
dukkha domanassānaṃ atthaṅgamāya = for
 cessation of physical and mental pain; *ekāyano*
maggo = the one way, the only way.

There are different kinds of physical pain which are very difficult to bear; and there are also different kinds of mental pain which are difficult to bear. In the world these two kinds of pain are very fearsome. This passage says that it is possible to completely tranquilize these pains through the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*. Hence, if one wants to be free from all kinds of pain and dwell happily, one has to do the complete practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*.

ayaṃ = this practice-path of *satipaṭṭhāna* is;
ñāyassa adhigamāya = for reaching the noble
 Path also; *ekāyano maggo* = the one way, the
 only way; *nibbānassa sacchikiriya* = for the
 attainment of *Nibbāna* also; *ekāyano maggo* =
 the one way, the only way

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

The Path, Fruition, and *Nibbāna* are the highest stages that are wished for in *Buddha*'s dispensation. In order to obtain the Path, Fruition, and *Nibbāna* also, there is only this practice of *satipaṭṭhāna*. This passage also tells that the way of *satipaṭṭhāna* is the only path that definitely and undoubtedly leads to Path, Fruition, and *Nibbāna*. Hence, if one wants to attain *Magga*, *Phala*, and *Nibbāna* in this very life, one has to just practice *satipaṭṭhāna*, the path which does not mislead. Hence, now *Sayādaw* will expound and give guidelines about the practice of *satipaṭṭhāna* for the benefit of those who want to walk on this path.

“What is the meaning of ‘*satipaṭṭhāna*’?”

“It means ‘arising of continuous mindfulness’ or ‘established mindfulness.’”

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

“What is the object of mindfulness?”

“There should be mindfulness of the material group, the bodily activities whenever they arise, without any gap; then there should be mindfulness of feelings whenever they arise, without any gap; then there should be mindfulness of all kinds of thinking and wandering whenever they arise, without gap; then there should be mindfulness of phenomena (*dhamma*) whenever they arise, without break. One should always strive to become skillful to observe in this way.”

The meaning is that one should exert effort to have continuous mindfulness of the arising materiality or mentality. Such a way of meditation is shown by using names such as observing the body repeatedly (*kāyānupassanā*) and ‘observing the feeling repeatedly’ (*vedanānupassanā*). For example, while going, one should pay attention and observe carefully the material phenomena such as tightness and motion continuously beginning from the lifting of the foot till placing of the foot. There should not be even one gap.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

Should not think about anything. If thinking arises, one should observe that thinking mind too. Besides, while bending or stretching hand or leg also, one should pay attention and observe carefully the material phenomena such as tightness and motion continuously from the beginning of bending and stretching till the end of bending and stretching. Other bodily activities are also same. Should not leave even one. One should exert effort so that one can observe everything continuously.

Furthermore, when painful sensations such as strain, heat, and pain arise, one should pay attention to them and note carefully and continuously as ‘strain, strain’ and so on. If thinking and wandering arise, one should pay attention to them and note as ‘thinking, thinking’, ‘pondering, pondering’ and so on. If phenomena such as like, dislike, frustration, seeing, hearing and so on arise, one should pay attention to those phenomena and note as ‘liking, liking’ and so on.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

Although it is said that one should observe everything that arises, mostly a beginner is able to note only a few; un-noted phenomena are more. However, if one keeps striving seriously with unremitting effort, after four to six days, the strength of mindfulness and concentration becomes very good. Things that cannot be known and cannot be noted almost do not exist. At such times, the mind becomes very calm and concentrated; it seems like the meditating mind falls flatly upon each object that is observed. This kind of concentration and serenity is the ‘*vipassanā momentary concentration*’ (*vipassanā khaṇika samādhi*).

When the strength of this concentration becomes strong, one knows the meditation objects clearly and completely in the following manner. If one observes materiality, one understands clearly that it is a phenomenon that does not have the faculty to know. If one observes feeling, one understands clearly that it is a phenomenon that experiences likeable and dislikable object.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

If one observes consciousness, one understands clearly that it is a phenomenon that bends towards its object. Besides, one also knows clearly the continuous arising of object that is known and the mind that knows and their passing, their arising and their passing. Therefore, one comprehends clearly that they are impermanent, they are suffering, and they are mere phenomena (*sabhāva*). Because of comprehending in this way, one is neither inclined to consider the observed object as pleasant nor as unpleasant. Hence, the covetousness (*abhijjhā*) and ill-will (*domanassa*) do not get chance to arise and thereby remain calm.

Like mentioned above, continuously observing all the physical activities that arise, not letting the covetousness and ill-will to appear, and understanding that materiality is impermanent, suffering, and mere phenomenon is called ‘observing the body repeatedly’ (*kāyānupassanā*). Furthermore, observing the feeling, consciousness, and phenomena continuously, not letting covetousness and ill-will to appear, and understanding that they are impermanent, suffering, and mere phenomena are respectively called

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

‘observing the feeling repeatedly’ (*vedanānupassanā*),
 ‘observing the consciousness repeatedly’
 (*cittānupassanā*), and ‘observing the phenomena
 repeatedly’ (*dhammānupassanā*).

Therefore, Path and Fruition appear in the yogis who cultivate these four types of *satipaṭṭhāna* by observing all material and mental phenomena that arise and will be able to see *Nibbāna*. This point has been mentioned by the *Buddha* in brief as follows:

*“Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu kāyekaṅgānupassī
 viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke
 abhijjhādomanassaṃ, vedanāsu vedanānupassī
 viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā, vineyya loke
 abhijjhādomanassaṃ, citte cittānupassī
 viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke
 abhijjhādomanassaṃ, dhammesu
 dhammānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno
 satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ.”*

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

“Monks, here a monk lives observing body in the body; he is ardent; he is endowed with clear comprehension; he is mindful; he dwells removing covetousness and ill will towards the world. He lives observing feelings in the feelings...consciousness in the consciousness...phenomena in the phenomena; he is ardent; he is endowed with clear comprehension; he is mindful; he dwells restraining covetousness and ill will towards the world.”

The simple meaning of this *Pāli* passage is thus: One should observe any material phenomenon that arises; one should always exert effort to be able to do so; one should observe continuously and understand them as they really are. When one knows in this way, at every moment defilements become calm. Observing and understanding every physical activities and not letting the defilements to arise is ‘established mindfulness upon body’ (*kāyānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*).

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

One should observe all feelings that arise; one should always exert effort to be able to do so; one should observe continuously and understand them as they really are. When one knows in this way, defilements become calm at every moment. Observing and understanding every feeling and not letting the defilements to arise is ‘established mindfulness upon feeling’ (*vedanānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*).

One should observe all consciousnesses that arise; one should always exert effort to be able to do so; one should observe continuously and understand them as they really are. When one knows in this way, defilements become calm at every moment. Observing and understanding all consciousnesses and not letting the defilements to arise is ‘established mindfulness upon feeling’ (*cittānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*).

One should observe all phenomena that arise; one should always exert effort to be able to do so; one should observe continuously and understand them as they really are. When one knows in this way, defilements become calm at every moment.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

Observing and understanding all phenomena and not letting the defilements to arise is ‘established mindfulness upon phenomena’ (*dhammānupassanā satipaṭṭhāna*).

Time is almost up. I would like to tell one very important thing. The *Dhamma* of the Fully-enlightened *Buddha* can be seen and verified by each and every individual. It is not something about which one may become satisfied just by reciting or hearing. If one really practices, one will definitely see for oneself. Do not judge the practical aspects merely through scriptural knowledge. If one really wants to know whether it is true or not, it is necessary to learn the method and try it by oneself. If one really strives, one will be able to see the arising of special concentration and wisdom. Time is up. The first part of *satipaṭṭhāna* talk has to be concluded here. May you be able to listen to the second part next time.

Sādhu Sādhu Sādhu!!!

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

A Discourse on *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (II)

(Radio Talk on 13th May 1951)

The *Dhamma* that will be preached today is the second part of *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna* discourse, continuation from the last week. In the first part I preached the introduction part of the *Sutta*. Today the explanation part of the discourse will be preached. In the detailed part, there are twenty-one sections. Among them, today I will be able to preach only the ‘section on posture’ (*iriyāpathapabba*). I want you to understand that in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* there is no unnecessary part, nor is there any hidden meaning in the *Satipaṭṭhāna* discourse. Besides, it is also essential to know that the work that leads to *Magga*, *Phala*, and *Nibbāna* has been preached very straightforwardly, and the way of practice is easy. It is necessary to listen attentively with the faith that the *Buddha* himself chose and gave the work of cultivation which leads to *Nibbāna*.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

The work of cultivation that leads to *Nibbāna* is the most important in Buddhism. Only when one knows this work of cultivation properly, then one can practice and attain *Nibbāna*. If one does not know, one may remain far from *Nibbāna*.

In this connection, it is essential to know the two things that keep a person far from *Nibbāna*:

1. *Pāpamitta*: It refers to having faith and relying on a teacher who is inferior in mentality and actions. Because of following the advice of Venerable *Devadatta*, king *Ajātasattu* remained far from *Nibbāna*. This is an example of ‘*pāpamitta*’. ‘*Pāpamitta*’ can either be one who encourages to do actions that can obstruct attainment of *Magga* (*magga antarāyo*) or one who discourages meditation practice. It should be borne in mind that one can remain far from *Magga*, *Phala*, and *Nibbāna* if one listens and believes their words.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

2. *Kiriyāparihāni*: It refers to inadequacy with relation to three works: preaching, listening, and practice. Among these three, the first one is the duty of teacher, as per the saying “He teaches *Dhamma*, the teaching that leads to cessation of all suffering.” The second and third are duties of disciple. The teacher has to teach the method to attain *Nibbāna* completely. If he does not then he is not fulfilling his duty, and the student also remains far from *Magga*, *Phala*, and *Nibbāna*. As for the disciple, he has to listen and understand sufficiently, and also do the practice. If one does not listen and practice, one becomes like the *Pessa* during the *Buddha*’s time who left in the middle of an important *Dhamma* talk.

Because of not fulfilling one's duties, the student will be far from *Magga*, *Phala*, and *Nibbāna*. Right now this *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna* discourse is being preached so that the teacher's duty will be fulfilled. It is also necessary on the listener's side to listen carefully and sufficiently, and to do the practice completely.

Well, now it is the time to listen to the *vipassanā* practice related to 'section on postures' (*iriyāpathapabba*) which was preached by the *Buddha* himself. Listen carefully.

Gacchanto = while going; *gacchāmīti* = that (I) am going; *pajānāti* = knows. It means that when there is going, one should know that there is going. Then, *ṭhito vā* = or while standing; *ṭhitomhīti* = that (I) am standing; *pajānāti* = knows. When there is standing, one should know that there is standing. *Nisinno vā* = or while sitting; *nisinnomhīti* = that (I) am sitting; *pajānāti* = knows. When there is sitting, one should know that there is sitting. *Sayāno vā* = or while lying; *sayānomhīti* = that (I) am lying down; *pajānāti* = knows. When there is lying down, one should know that there is lying down.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

Then, *vā pana* = another way is; *yathā yathā* = in whatever way; *assa* = of the yogi; *kāyo* = body; *paṇihito* = placed; *hoti* = is; *tathā tathā* = in such a way; *naṃ* = it, the body; *pajānāti* = knows. In whatever way the body is placed, one knows it accordingly.

This is not a meditation method given by any other teacher. This method of *vipassanā* was taught by the *Buddha* himself. When there is going, isn't it easy to know and note that there is going? Of course it is easy. The *Buddha* has taught a very easy way. This can be practiced by anybody, by old people, young people, children, men, women; this can be practiced by one who is learned in scripture and also by one who is not learned. This is because the *Buddha* has taught a very easy way. This is why during the *Buddha*'s time boys and girls of the age as young as seven became *Arahanta*. Besides, in *Sāvatti* city, 5/7 of people were noble ones. This too is because of the method being easy.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

If there are plenty of things to be learned with relation to method, this cannot happen. If it was true that one should practice only after understanding well the method of Abhidhamma such as classification of consciousness (*citta*) and mental states (*cetasika*), how the mental and material processes (*vīthi*) happen, how the mental and material groups (*kalāpa*) relate to each other, how the causal factors (*paccaya*) connect, and so on then most people on those days will be unable to practice. There were very few who were learned in scripture sufficiently. For people like Venerable *Cūlapanthaka*, who are not so smart, it will be even more difficult. Based upon this, it can be known clearly that during the Buddha's time the method of meditation was easy based upon this *satipaṭṭhāna* method.

In this connection, it should be understood that the method is easy, but it is really not that easy to practice till concentration and wisdom become strong. It is the most difficult task. It can be done only by applying strenuous effort and never giving up. This is not possible through weak and sloppy effort.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

Regarding the point, “While going, one knows that (I) am going,” those who do not have practical experience may look down and ask questions. Therefore, the teacher who wrote commentary has posed questions from the perspective of those people. After that, the answers have been given by showing reference from *Buddha*’s words. For example, they may ask: “Isn’t it true that everybody knows they are going while they are going? Not only humans, even animals such as a dog too know it is going, isn’t it so? Such a knowing of a *yogi* is not different from the knowing of a dog or other ordinary human being, isn’t it?” These are the types of question which are asked by people whose sphere of knowledge is very narrow. The teacher of commentary answers those questions in the following manner: It is true that ordinary humans and dogs can know they are going while they are going. But the manner of knowing is not same; they are in fact almost the opposite. Ordinary humans and dogs know the material (*rūpa*) and mental phenomena (*nāma*) as permanent (*nicca*), pleasant (*sukha*), and self (*atta*). Besides, although it is said they know, they cannot know every time there is going, lifting, moving and so on. They know only sometimes.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

In actuality, instead of knowing that they are going, they are mostly thinking about something else. Even when they know, they cannot distinguish between the mind that wants to go and the body that goes. The mind and body appear to them as just one phenomenon. For them, the mind that wants to go also appears as 'I' and the body that goes also appears as 'I'. They absolutely do not know that mind and body are arising and passing away every moment. They tend to view that there is only the same 'I' throughout the whole life. This type of knowing is unable to remove the wrong views such as the view of 'I' and 'beings'. It instead strengthens them. Hence, the ordinary knowing as mentioned above is not a meditation, nor is it cultivation of *satipaṭṭhāna*. Besides, the *Buddha* does not mean this type of knowing.

Then what type of knowing is intended here? It is the knowing of a *yogi* who is mindful and attentively makes note on each going, moving and so on. Such a *yogi* knows clearly the mind that wants to go, knows that mind is different from the body.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

The answers to the questions such as “Who goes?” and “Is there ‘soul’?” become clear. There are only these two: mind that wants to go and the body that goes. It becomes very clear that there is no other ‘soul’ or ‘being’ who goes. Besides, the answer of the question, “Whose going (*kassa gamanam*) (who is the owner of going)?” also becomes very clear. Apart from the mind that wants to go and the body that goes, there is no ‘soul’ or other substances that create the going. Furthermore, the wisdom is clear as to the answer of the question, “Why is there going (*kiṃ kāraṇā gacchati*)?” It is known that because of the process of mind that wants to go there are physical processes such as tightness and motion; people call the shifting forward of the body that happens due to this as ‘I am going’, ‘he is going’ and so on.

In the commentary, it is said that clarity regarding the answers to these three questions, namely who goes, whose going, and why is there going, is ‘clear comprehension’ (*sampajañña*). The word ‘knows’ (*pajānāti*) refers to this type of knowing. It is not necessary to elaborate more than what is explained in commentary. Well, let’s hear the commentator’s words to support this point:

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

Esa = the yogi who is practicing according to the Buddha's advice, and who knows that there is going while there is going; *evaṃ pajānāti* = knows in the following manner; *gacchāmīti cittaṃ* = the mind that wants to go; *uppajjati* = arises; *taṃ* = that mind; *vāyaṃ janeti* = produces air element, which appears as supporting and motion [supporting is the characteristic of air element (*vitthambhana lakkhaṇa*) and motion is the function (*samudīraṇa rasa*)]; *cittakiriyavāyodhātuvipphārena* = because of spreading of mind-born air element; *sakalakāyassa* = of the whole body; *purato abhinīhāro* = carrying frontward; *gamananti vuccati* = is called 'going'.

The yogi should know in this way. Knowing in this way is meant by the term '*pajānāti*', which is knowledge.

To be clear, the mind that wants to go should be known, and the physical changes and movements created by the mind should also be known.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

Besides, the body being shifted forward because of the commotion created by the mind is called in common terms ‘I am going’, ‘he is going’ and so on. It should also be known that there is no ‘I’ or ‘he’ that goes. Knowing in this way is called ‘understanding that knows without gap of mindfulness’ (*asammoha sampajañña*). It is meditation practice. This is also ‘cultivation of *satipaṭṭhāna*’ because of being mindful. Hence, referring to such a knowing, the *Buddha* preached: “While going, one knows that (I) am going.”

Here, if the *Pāḷi* and commentary are examined carefully, it becomes clear that the *Pāḷi* is showing the way of practice directly as per the ‘clear comprehension of object’ (*gocara sampajañña*). As for the commentary, it shows the arising of strong concentration and wisdom in a yogi who is practicing according to the instructions given in *Pāḷi*; it is the explanation as to how ‘*asammoha sampajañña*’ arises. Hence, *Sayādaw* is depending upon this commentary and giving instructions according to *Pāḷi*. There are many disciples of *Sayādaw* who have practiced in this way and have become endowed well with this type of ‘*asammoha sampajañña*’;

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

among them, there are disciples who are learned in scriptures, who are not learned in scriptures, monks, novices, and lay people. Their number exceed several thousands. Do not have doubt. By knowing and noting as ‘going, going’ and so on, one can definitely attain the knowledge mentioned above. One who keeps doubting resembles a person who is blind by birth. As he himself has never seen, he does not believe that there are other people who can see.

Furthermore, this human life, which is very rare to get, has been obtained because of good *kamma*. This human life will pass away without making any proper use. Thus, if you really have any affection for yourself and if you really wish your welfare, you need to practice *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation, and you need to work according to the instructions given in the discourse. *Sayādaw* will proclaim boldly that if someone practices day and night ardently and continuously according to *Sayādaw*’s instructions, the type of knowledge mentioned above can be obtained within 4-6 days.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

Just as the clarity of wisdom with relation to going, one knows the arising and passing of mind and matter every moment while standing, sitting, and lying down too. The clear knowing of the arising and passing of mind and matter with relation to the four kinds of posture is the arising of ‘*asammoha sampajañña*’ as per the words ‘seeing the arising, seeing the passing’ (*samudaya dhammānupassī, vaya dhammānupassī*).

If the continuity of practice is maintained, this knowledge will gradually mature and at the moment of *Magga and Phala*, one can realize *Nibbāna*. Because of this reason, the Buddha said in the introduction part: “to reach *Magga* and *Phala*; to attain *Nibbāna*” (*ñāyassa adhigamāya, nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya*).

Well, the time is almost finished. I would like to conclude the second part of the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna* discourse. May you be able to hear the third part of the discourse next week.

Sādhu Sādhu Sādhu!!!

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

A Discourse on *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (III)

(Radio talk on 5th May 1951)

The discourse that will be preached today is also *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna*. The previous talk was the second part. Today is the third part. Today is the turn to preach the section on *sampajañña*.

Abhikkante = while going forward; *paṭikkante* = while returning back; *sampajānakārī* = one who does with knowledge; *hoti* = is.

While going forward, yogi should do it with wisdom. While returning back also, yogi should do it with wisdom. According to this text, the *yogi* should not do going forward and coming back without wisdom. Therefore, whether you are sitting or standing, whenever there is bending towards front or back, one should know and note continuously; besides, if there is bending towards right side or left side also, it should be known and noted in the same way. At this place, some people might think that bending sideways is not in the text. Do not increase your doubt (*vicikicchā*) thinking that this is not taught directly and think may be it is not *kāyānupassanā*.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

In the text which is taught (*sāmuḅkaṃsika desanā*) only the method is explained just to make it known. It is not preached in complete. If everything is preached, it will be very extensive. What should be especially noted is that whether it is moving forward, backward, or sideways, bending is material phenomena. One can become attached to materiality thinking it is permanent, pleasurable, and self. If there are these material and mental phenomena which can be clung to, *vipassanā* is practiced to remove those attachments. This is the fundamental point about *vipassanā*. Therefore it should be noted clearly that if the materiality and mentality which can be clung to are correct, then although the method may not be directly mentioned, it is suitable to contemplate according to the method taught in the discourse.

When it is said, “does with knowledge,” there are four types of knowledge which are also called ‘*sampajañña*’. They are:

1. ***Sāthhaka sampajaññā***: According to this, before doing something, one should first reflect whether it is beneficial or not, whether it is fruitful or not. After reflecting in this way, if it is beneficial then it should be done. If it is not beneficial then it should not be done. Thus, reflecting whether there is benefit or not is ‘*sāthhaka sampajañña*’.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

2. ***Sappāya sampajañña***: It means that although it may be beneficial, whether it is suitable or not to oneself and whether it is proper to one's status or not should be reflected. After reflecting in this way, if it is proper then it should be done. If it is not suitable then it should not be done. In this way, reflecting suitability is '*sappāya sampajañña*'.

'*Sātthaka*' and '*sappāya*' can be applied in any area. This is beneficial also in worldly activities. If one is endowed with these two *sampajañña*, one can be successful and prosperous in the world. In the field of '*bhāvanā*' also, they are beneficial because they are very supportive. Therefore, these two types of *sampajañña*, which provide great support to *samatha* and *vipassanā* meditation, are also called '*pārihārika paññā*' (protective wisdom). However, they are not 'meditative wisdom' (*bhāvanāñāṇa*).

3. ***Gocara sampajañña***: This refers to the concentration and wisdom applied continuously to the meditation subject of *yogi*. In the field of *vipassanā*, *gocara sampajañña* means knowing continuously the activities of mind, speech, and action which are also called body, feeling, consciousness and *dhamma*.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

This *gocara sampajañña* is the work of *vipassanā* meditation. It is very important. When this *gocara sampajañña* is fulfilled, the ‘*asammoha sampajañña*’ arises. Therefore in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, this *gocara sampajañña* is given importance. In the commentaries also, they have been elaborated using four types of individual.

The first individual carries meditation subject to alms round but does not carry back. It is shown to check how much respect one has for meditation when one goes far and some things have to be done where one might lose mindfulness. But as a *yogi*, one should practice continuously even when one is within the monastery where one lives.

Then, another individual does not carry meditation subject when going because of other important task but carries when returning. It is said that this type of individual can attain Path and Fruition even while drinking gruel and eating food. It is said that in the Sri-lanka island there were many monks who attained Path and Fruition while drinking gruel and eating rice in the hall for eating alms. There were almost no place where someone had not become a noble person.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

Therefore, it should be believed that even today there are people who have attained Path and Fruition while drinking and eating.

Next one is the individual who does not carry meditation subject while going and coming. This third type of individual is called ‘one who lives with negligence’ (*pamādavihārī*). The meaning is that this individual lives without mindfulness all the time. Such an individual is also called ‘one who has dropped the interest’ (*nikkhattadhura*). The meaning is that such an individual has given up the interest thinking, “I cannot attain Path and Fruition in this life; I will not try to attain.” This kind of individual does not even accept that there is meditation subject. This is a very inferior type of person. There is also another individual who is more inferior: one who hinders others from practicing by saying that in this time it is not possible to attain *Magga*, *Phala*, and *Nibbāna*.

At this point it is essential to remember that just as when there is medicine, then it is possible to cure using that medicine, as long as there is *Buddha*’s teachings, those who have perfections (*pārami*) can strive and attain Path, Fruition, and *Nibbāna*. Besides, according to texts, there is no place where it is mentioned that Path, Fruition, and *Nibbāna* cannot be attained.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

But in the commentaries it is mentioned that it is still possible to attain *Arahatship* with threefold knowledge. In the lowest, it is mentioned in *Vinaya Aṭṭhakathā* that it is possible to become *Anāgāmi*.

The strongest one is the words of the *Buddha*: “Here, *Subhadda*, if monks live properly, the world will not be empty of *Arahants*.” The intended meaning is that “in this world if the *vipassanā* yogis and noble beings live well then this world will not be free from *Arahants*.” In this speech, it is important to understand the meaning of the words ‘living well’ (*sammā viharati*). Can the *sāsana* subsist on if the yogis and noble beings just do their own practice but do not preach and teach? Cannot subsist. *Sāsana* can last long only if they preach and teach. Hence, it is said in the commentary that only when they teach according to what they know, together with the method of practice, and urge others to attain what they have attained, they can be said to ‘live properly’. According to this method, one person who has understood *Dhamma* can propagate to one person, two persons, three persons, ten persons and so on,

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

and sustain the *Dhamma* generation to generation. Here, in the words ‘living well’, the method is teaching and preaching the way to practice as well as urging others. Thus, as per the words ‘live well’, isn’t it true that nowadays there is preaching and teaching *Dhamma*? If there is then it is true that this world is not empty of *Arahants*. Besides, if one practices correctly, although one may not be able to attain Path and Fruition, one will be able to collect *pārami* of *sīla*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*. Therefore, as a Buddhist, it is not suitable to obstruct any practice that is in accordance with the texts. If anyone obstructs, then it amounts to creating danger of Path (*magga antarāya*) and such a person rejects and destroys Buddhism. It is important to think about it seriously.

Finally, the fourth individual carries meditation practice to alms round and also takes it back; never gives up meditation subject during all the waking hours, day or night. This person is the best and superior.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

This type of individual can surely attain Path and Fruition in this very life. If one cannot get during the life, one can attain near the time of death. If one cannot get like this, then one attains in the next life as a deity. If one cannot even attain in this way, one will become *Arahant* during the time of future *Buddha* and will be known as ‘one who attains knowledge quickly’ (*khippābhiññā*). This has been said in commentary. Then there is nothing that a meditator has to be discouraged about. Meditator can expect to get many other benefits too. Therefore, *Sayādaw* asks meditators to be always mindful, not to lose mindfulness even for seconds and minutes. By doing so, the meditators will be endowed with this ‘*gocara sampajañña*’.

4. ***Asammoha sampajañña***: It refers to seeing and understanding clearly the arising and passing as well as impermanence, suffering, and non-self of materiality and mentality. This knowledge arises automatically when *gocara sampajañña* is fulfilled.

It is not necessary to strive separately to attain *asammoha sampajañña*. The manner of its arising is thus. In the yogi who is continuously noting the moving and bending according to *gocara sampajañña*, when *samādhi* and wisdom become mature, the mind that wants to go or wants to bend also becomes clear whenever it arises. Then the *yogi* knows clearly that there is no being who bends or goes; there is only the stream of mind that wants to bend or go and the material phenomena that moves. Knowing in this way is called *asammoha sampajañña*. Therefore, the duty of *yogi* is to continuously observe all the bodily activities carefully, which is also called *gocara sampajañña*. Seeing and understanding clearly the arising and passing of material and mental phenomena as well as impermanent, suffering, and non-self is the duty of *samādhi* and wisdom. Thus, one's duty and the duty of *Dhamma* should be separated. Remembering this, yogis should do their best to fulfill their duty regarding *gocara sampajañña* by knowing and noting the objects. When one's duty is fulfilled in this way, concentration and wisdom will also fulfill their duties and then '*asammoha sampajañña*' will arise.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

The time is very short. I will speak only briefly.

According to the teachings of “*ālokite vilokite sampajānakārī*,” one should note while looking straight and while looking sideways. However you may look, note as ‘looking, looking’, ‘seeing, seeing’ continuously.

According to the teachings of “*samiñjite pasārite sampajānakārī*,” whenever there is bending or stretching of hands or legs, one should note, ‘wanting to bend, bending,’ ‘wanting to stretch, stretching,’ continuously. This has been told referring to bending and stretching when there is proper reason for them. It is not necessary to do bend or stretch just to make note.

According to the teachings of “*saṅghātipattacīvaradhāraṇe sampajānakārī*,” whenever one takes hold or carries, one should note, ‘wanting to hold, holding’ continuously.

According to the teachings of “*asite pīte khāyite sampajānakārī*,” whenever one eats or drinks, one should note continuously. There are many things to note in this place.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

According to the teachings of “*uccārapassāvakkamme sampajānakārī*,” whenever one dumps urine or stool also, bodily activities that are clear should be noted continuously.

According to the teachings of “*gate thite nisinne jāgarite bhāsīte tuṅhibhāve sampajānakārī*,” one should note when one goes, stands, sits, wakes up, talks, keeps silent.

In brief, all the bodily activities, small and big, including movement of the mouth and tongue, opening of eyes, and closing should be noted carefully and continuously.

By practicing continuously in this way, when *samādhi* becomes good, one also knows clearly the mind that wants to adjust or change. When this happens, one knows continuously the stream of minds and the stretching or movements of the materiality arising and passing away one by one. In this way the knowledge becomes purified automatically, “There is no I who does the activities; there is only the stream of mind and matter.” This is ‘*asammoha sampajañña*.’

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

In this way, the two kinds of knowledge, namely noting and knowing at the stage of ‘*gocara sampajañña*’ and clarity at the stage of ‘*asammoha sampajañña*’ progress step by step. And at the end while one is knowing and noting, one attains Path and Fruition and reaches the *Nibbāna* where all conditioned things cease. Right now brief part of practice has been explained in order to encourage the yogis to practice till the attainment of *Nibbāna*.

Well, this is the end of today’s *dhamma* talk. May you be able to hear the next day’s talk that will be on *vipassanā ñāṇa* and the last talk on *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna*.

Sadhu Sadhu Sadhu!!!

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

A Discourse on *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (IV)

(Radio talk given on May 28, 1951)

Today's Dhamma talk will be the summary of the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna* discourse. The talks given on previous three weeks were mainly on 'observing the body repeatedly' (*kāyānupassanā*). Today, there will be exposition on 'observing the feelings repeatedly' (*vedanānupassanā*), 'observing the consciousness repeatedly' (*cittānupassanā*), and 'observing the phenomena repeatedly' (*dhammānupassanā*) together with the gradual development of *vipassanā* knowledge. However, without the scriptural and practical knowledge, it will be very difficult to understand.

Basically, there are two ways of practicing *vipassanā*, namely 'vehicle of *samatha*' (*samathayāna*) and 'vehicle of *vipassanā*' (*vipassanāyāna*). In the first way, *yogi* attains access (*upacāra*) or absorption (*appanā*) *jhāna* and then begins the *vipassanā* practice by observing those *jhānas*.

As for the ‘vehicle of *vipassanā*’, it is a method to practice only *vipassanā* without accomplishing beforehand the two types of concentration (*samādhi*). In order to make it clear that in this way there is no attainment of access or absorption concentration, sometimes the term ‘pure’ (*suddha*) is used in the name of this mode of practice: ‘pure *vipassanā* vehicle’ (*suddhavipassanāyāna*). Moreover, it is said in the commentary thus: “Without developing the aforementioned concentration.” The meaning is that this *yogi* practices *vipassanā* without the two types of concentration. But by observing the materiality and mind too, the *vipassanā* momentary concentration (*vipassanākhaṇikasamādhi*) arises very strongly. The strength of this concentration is equal to access concentration; hence, it can tranquilize hindrances well. Due to this reason, in many commentaries exposition has been written by including this momentary concentration in the access concentration. All this is said to clarify that although one may not cultivate concentration separately, one can still achieve ‘purification of mind’ (*cittavisuddhi*).

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

As per the Pāli, “*pañcupādānakkhandhe vipassati* (understands five-aggregates that are subject to clinging),” *vipassanā* refers to the practice of observing five aggregates, which are materiality and mind, in such a way that they will be not be perceived as ‘permanent’ (*nicca*), ‘pleasant’ (*sukha*), and ‘soul’ (*atta*). Talking about the five aggregates, they arise and exist at the six sense doors of each and every being’s continuum. For example, at the moment of seeing, the eye and visible objects, which belong to aggregate of materiality (*rūpakkhandha*), are arising and existing. The phenomenon of seeing, which belongs to aggregate of mind (*nāmakkhandha*), is also arising and existing. In the same way, the aggregates arise and exist at the moment of hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, bending, stretching, moving, thinking, and so on. However, as per the saying, “When there is no mindfulness, one does not see the cave¹,” an ordinary person who does not know how to be mindful, tends to group the previous and latter phenomenon together and consider the materiality and mind arising and existing at different moments as single phenomenon, and cling to them as ‘I’ or ‘being’, or cling to them as I or a being that experiences the pleasant things.

¹Burmese proverb: "When there is no mindfulness, one does not see a cave; when there is mindfulness one sees a tiny grain of sand."

If one observes and makes note as ‘seeing seeing’, ‘hearing hearing’ and so on while there is seeing, hearing and so on, one can know the momentary arising and passing of mind and matter and understand them as they really are, as impermanent, suffering, and not-self. Hence, whenever materiality and mind arise at the six sense doors during the seeing, hearing, touching, knowing, and so on, observing and noting should be done attentively at the very moment of their arising. However, the ability to observe and note all arising whenever there is seeing, hearing, touching, knowing and so on becomes good only when concentration and wisdom become strong. One who is a beginner cannot observe and note everything. For a beginner, it is not possible to strengthen concentration and wisdom if one attempts to observe everything. Hence, it is said in commentary that ‘one should start the practice by observing distinct objects which can be known easily.’ Moreover, among the twenty-eight kinds of material phenomena also, it is said that one should start by observing the four great elements which are gross in nature. Among these four, the earth element, fire element, and air element are tangible phenomenon that can be known through touching.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

Thus, when one is observing any distinct physical phenomena in the body and noting as ‘touching touching’ and so on, one is knowing one of the four elements, namely the characteristics of earth element which are hard or soft, characteristics of water element which are hot or cold, characteristics of air element which are supporting and motion. As for water element, it is not a material phenomenon that can be touched through body door. However, when one observes the elements that can be touched, one can know the characteristic, function, and manifestation of water element, namely oozing, proliferating other material phenomena, and cohesion of other material phenomena. Hence, it should be understood that whenever one observes and notes the bodily activities or touching sensations, one knows the characteristic, function, or manifestation of one of the four elements.

Among the four elements, I will elaborate on how the air element is known. When one knows the nature of supporting and tightness while noting as ‘going going’ or ‘standing standing’, one is knowing the characteristic of air element (*vitthambhana lakkhaṇa*).

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

When one knows the nature of gradual movement, one is knowing the function of air element (*samudīraṇa rasa*). When one knows the nature of ‘dragging’ or ‘pushing and conveying’, one is knowing the manifestation of air element (*abhinīhāra paccupaṭṭhāna*). The method of knowing the earth element, water element, and fire element is also same. To tell in brief, whatever be the object, one should observe and note them attentively when they arise and exist. By noting in this way, one knows by way of characteristic, function, or manifestation of the object. This way of knowing is in line with what is said in the *Visuddhimagga*: “One should know by way of characteristic, function, and so on.” There is no other special reason for this; it is simply because of the fact that the *Visuddhimagga* has been written by applying the method of *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

Hence, it has to be decided that the complete method of practicing *vipassanā* has been expounded in the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*; then, as shown in the ‘section on posture’ and ‘section on clear comprehension’, one should practice by knowing and making note of the bodily phenomena continuously at the moment of their arising.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

While noting in this way, if any painful sensation such as stiffness, heat, and pain arises, one should attentively observe and make note of it. If neutral (*upekkhā vedanā*) or pleasant feeling (*sukha vedanā*) arises, one should practice in the same way. Being mindful of the feelings that are arising is the practice of ‘observing the feeling repeatedly’ (*vedanānupassanā*). With relation to this, the difference between the knowing of a child, knowing of an ordinary person, and knowing of a *yogi* has been shown in commentary. But the time is not enough; therefore, *Sayādaw* has elaborated only in brief. If you want to know how the knowing of a *yogi* is different, you have to practice seriously; in about four to six days of practice, the knowledge becomes very clear in an unforgettable way.

Furthermore, while one is being mindful of the bodily activities, one will be able to see the wandering mind going here and there. Do not miss such kinds of mind. Whenever they arise, note as ‘going going’, ‘thinking thinking’, ‘knowing knowing’ and so on. This is ‘observing the mind repeatedly’ (*cittānupassanā*).

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

This ‘observing the mind repeatedly’ has been preached with the words ‘knows the mind connected with craving as the mind connected with craving’ (*sarāgaṃ vā cittaṃ sarāgaṃ cittanti pajānāti*) and so on. In the commentary too, it has been shown clearly that one should be mindful of the consciousness when it is arising.

Besides, there are these hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*), namely the wanting and liking related to ‘desire of sensual pleasure’ (*kāmacchanda*), the anger or hatred (*byāpāda*), the sloth and torpor (*thinamiddha*), restlessness (*uddhacca*), remorse (*kukucca*), and doubt or indecision (*vicikicchā*). Whenever they arise, one should be mindful of them and note continuously till they go away. At the beginning of practice, one may have to note them for a very long time. But when concentration and wisdom become strong, the hindrances go away by noting just once. It is like a child becoming quiet when a man scolds once. Becoming mindful of hindrances is one of the sections of the ‘observing phenomena repeatedly’ (*dhammānupassanā*).

There is only very little time remaining. There is no time to preach about aggregate (*khandha*), base (*āyatana*), element (*dhātu*), and truth (*sacca*). I will preach briefly about how knowledge arises. When a *yogi* is being mindful of the mental and physical phenomena as mentioned above, the momentary concentration (*khaṇika samādhi*) arises; then the contemplating mind falls squarely on each object that is contemplated. When this happens, there is no wandering mind; one sees that there is only the contemplating mind. This is ‘purification of mind’ (*cittavisuddhi*).

At this point, as per the saying ‘the mind that observes it as object becomes clear by itself’ (*tadārammaṇā arūpadhammā sayameva pākaṭā honti*), the contemplating mind is very clear. Hence, whenever one is mindful, one sees the materiality that is noted and the mind that notes; or in other words one sees the arising of materiality and mind in pair. The *yogi* understands very well that there are only these two, namely materiality and mind; apart from these there is no ‘I’ or ‘being’. This is ‘knowledge of discerning mind and matter’ (*nāmarūpapariccheda ñāṇa*) and ‘purification of view’ (*diṭṭhi visuddhi*).

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

Furthermore, one sees clearly that when there is mental cause, namely the wanting to bend, there is effect in materiality, namely the bending. One also sees clearly that when there is visible object, which is materiality, and there is eye, which is also materiality, the result is seeing, which is mental phenomenon. Hence, just by being mindful, the *yogi* understands clearly that there are only material and mental phenomena and that there is no ‘I’ who performs the bending, stretching, seeing, hearing and so on. This is ‘knowledge of grasping the cause’ (*paccayapariggaha ñāṇa*) and ‘purification of doubt’ (*kaṅkhāvitarāṇa visuddhi*). If one really strives, these two kinds of purification can be obtained within two to three days.

Moreover, whenever one is mindful, one sees that all objects that arise pass away quickly. One may also see many unpleasant feelings. Hence, thought might arise, “They are impermanent because they pass away instantly after arising.” Or “Suffering because of constant oppression by arising and passing; suffering because they are difficult to bear.” Or “they arise by their own nature, and cannot be owned.” This is ‘knowledge of comprehension’ (*sammasana ñāṇa*).

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

After that, one sees clearly that whenever one is mindful, the objects that are noted pass away instantly after arising. One sees by one's knowledge that the material and mental phenomena do not move to another place. They pass away then and there. This is 'knowledge of arising and passing away' (*udayabbaya ñāṇa*). If one strives diligently, this knowledge too can be obtained within four to six days.

At the beginning part of this knowledge, one has various uncommon experiences such as light, joy, tranquility, happiness and so on. One becomes extremely glad at experiencing uncommon things that one has never experienced before. They are called 'secondary defilements' (*upakkilesa*). They have to be removed by noting. There are many things that should be told concerning the 'secondary defilements'. Refer to second volume of the 'Method of Practicing *Vipassanā*'.

After that one sees only the endless passing away of both the noting mind and noted object. One does not perceive any shape and figure; one sees only the rapid passing away. This is 'knowledge of dissolution' (*bhaṅgañāṇa*).

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

Some people wrongly think that seeing the breaking apart and destruction of things and their shapes and figures is ‘knowledge of dissolution’. This resembles what is seen at the stage of ‘knowledge of comprehension’ (*sammasana ñāṇa*). At the stage of ‘knowledge of dissolution’, shape and figure do not appear. It should be noted properly that only the knowing of the passing away of the noting mind and the noted object one after another, which is free from perception of shape and figure, is ‘knowledge of dissolution’. It is very important to take one’s *vipassanā* practice up to this ‘knowledge of dissolution’. If one reaches this stage, the other higher *vipassanā* knowledges, namely ‘knowledge of fear’ (*bhaya ñāṇa*), ‘knowledge of danger’ (*ādīnava ñāṇa*), ‘knowledge of dispassion’ (*nibbidā ñāṇa*), ‘knowledge of wishing to be free’ (*muñcitukamyatā ñāṇa*), ‘knowledge of re-comprehension’ (*paṭisaṅkhā ñāṇa*), ‘knowledge of equanimity towards formation’ (*saṅkhārupekkhā ñāṇa*) can arise one after another. This is said in brief because there is no time. In actuality, the obstructions and disturbances exist till the attainment of *Magga* knowledge. Hence, it is essential to have a teacher who gives encouragement and provides correct guidelines.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

In any case, if one relies upon the meditation practice and observes continuously whatever material or mental phenomena arise, and never gives up, then the knowledges that are mentioned above arise together with the ‘knowledge that goes to emergence’ (*vuṭṭhānagāmanī*) and ‘knowledge of conformity’ (*anuloma*) arise. These are special knowledges that develop and go towards *Magga* knowledge. When this happens and the ‘knowledge of conformity’ ends, the *Magga* and *Phala* knowledges appear and one attains *Nibbāna* where there is absolute cessation of all suffering related to conditioned things (*saṅkhāra dukkha*). This attaining of peaceful element is actually realization of *Nibbāna* as per the *Pāḷi*: “Eye of *Dhamma* appeared; whatever is subject to arising is subject to cessation (*dharmacakkhuṃ udapādi yaṃ kiñci samudaya dhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodha dhammanti*),” and as per the *Milindapañha*: “One who arrives at the state of nonoccurrence is said to experience *Nibbāna* (*appavattamanuppatto nibbānaṃ sacchikarotīti vuccati*)”. The *Buddha* taught *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* so that the practitioners can attain *Nibbāna* in this way.

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta

In these talks, the initial path has been shown, for those who want to attain *Nibbāna*. If you want to know in detail, go through the ‘Method of Practicing *Vipassanā*’ in detail. I will conclude the discourse here.

May you be able to have faith in the discourse of *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*!!

May you be able to practice the four *satipaṭṭhāna*!!

May you be able to practice completely and attain *Magga*, *Phala* and *Nibbāna* without delay!!

Sādhu Sādhu Sādhu!!

A Discourse on Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta