

# **Alone with Dhamma**

Pilgrimage in India, October 2005



# Chapter 1

## *Alone with Dhamma*

---

“We live alone in the world”, this was one of the striking points Acharn Sujin explained to us during our pilgrimage in India with hundred and twenty Dhamma-friends from Thailand and elsewhere.

We read in the Kindred Sayings (IV, 144, Kindred Sayings on Sense, §165, Abandoning Wrong View, translated by Ven. Bodhi) that the Buddha said:

*“Bhikkhu, when one knows and sees the eye as impermanent, wrong view is abandoned. When one knows and sees forms as impermanent... eye-consciousness as impermanent... eye-contact as impermanent... whatever feeling arises with mind-contact as condition... as impermanent, wrong view is abandoned. It is when one knows and sees thus that wrong view is abandoned.”*

The Buddha spoke thus with regard to all dhammas appearing through the six doorways.

When a person dies we may think about the impermanence of life, but this is not the realization of the truth of impermanence, the truth that each reality that arises because of its appropriate conditions falls away. The Buddha teaches us what life really is: it is one moment of experiencing an object through one of the six doorways, the doorways of the senses and the mind-door. Visible object, sound, these are dhammas appearing at this moment, but we are ignorant of the truth.

Acharn Sujin said that we live alone in the world, that we believe that there are many people around us, but that this is thinking. It is hard to accept this truth. Citta thinks of relatives and friends who exist. However, in the ultimate sense, a person is citta, cetasika and rūpa. Citta is consciousness, cetasikas are the mental factors arising with the citta, and rūpa are physical phenomena. Seeing is a citta, hearing is another citta and thinking again another citta. Citta and the accompanying cetasikas arise and then fall away immediately and also the rūpas of which the body consists arise and fall away.

Understanding that in the ultimate sense a person is impermanent mental phenomena and bodily phenomena does not mean that there cannot be kindness and compassion for others. On the contrary, the Buddha exhorted us

## 2 • *Alone with Dhamma*

to develop all kinds of kusala and to assist our fellowmen. However, at the same time we can develop understanding of what life really is: the experience of one object through one of the six doors. When there is less clinging to ‘my personality’ we shall be more concerned for other people’s welfare.

Acharn Sujin explained that we are born alone: the rebirth-consciousness is a citta that arises and falls away and is succeeded by a following citta. There cannot be more than one citta at a time. We see alone, we think alone, we sleep alone, we die alone. The citta that falls away never returns; after passing away from this plane there is no return of the same individual.

Whenever citta arises, it experiences one object and then falls away immediately. When visible object appears we take it immediately as this person or my friend, but that is thinking on account of the experience of visible object. The Buddha taught about all dhammas appearing through the six doors, and during our pilgrimage this was a topic of discussion time and again.

During our pilgrimage we visited the holy places where the Buddha was born, attained enlightenment, preached his first sermon, and passed finally away. It was a long and difficult journey, but, as a monk in Kusināra said, it was our confidence in the Buddha’s teachings that brought us to these places with the purpose to pay respect to him.

When we were in Lumbini Acharn Sujin reminded us that the teachings are declining and will eventually disappear. Then nobody will know anymore the meaning of the holy places. Now we still have the opportunity to pay respect to the Buddha at these places, and it is as if we pay respect at his feet. The Buddha fulfilled all the perfections and after dwelling in the Tusita Heaven he became a human being and was born in Lumbini. That was his last life. In Bodhgaya he became a Sammāsambuddha in order to help the world to become free from dukkha.

Khun Sujin helped us to have more understanding of the dhamma appearing at the present moment, because without such understanding we only speculate about the truth. Her energy to speak extensively on the Dhamma was truly amazing and it showed her concern for us. She exhorted us to develop understanding, no matter whether the circumstances were disturbing, no matter whether we were sick or tired. She would repeatedly say: “develop understanding now.”

During our journey we also visited different Thai monasteries where we offered robes and other requisites. The Abbot of the Thai temple in Nalanda expressed his appreciation of Acharn Sujin’s Dhamma talks to which he listened regularly. In the Thai temple of Kusināra the Abbot gave Acharn Sujin a blessing and said that he had listened to her for forty years, since the time he

was a monk in the temple of Mahā-dhātu in Bangkok. During the rainy season he listened for one and a half hour in the morning, and also after the rainy season he listened regularly. He said: “How could we understand the Dhamma without Acharn Sujin, where would we be without her.”

We rejoiced in his appreciation of Acharn Sujin’s efforts to explain the Dhamma. This monastery also has a Dispensary where many people from the province are coming. It is supported by devoted volunteers.

While we were in Sarnath, the place of the Buddha’s first sermon, we were given the opportunity to pay respect to the Buddha’s relics which are kept in a ten meter deep cellar. A monk had to descend into it to fetch them. Since Lodewijk just had his eightieth birthday, Acharn Sujin had asked us to carry the relics in turn towards the altar, and Lodewijk also carried them back to the shrine at the end of the ceremony.

Afterwards we offered Sangha Dāna to the monks. Lodewijk spoke the following words of thanksgiving to them:

*Venerable Monks,*

*On behalf of this group of Thai and foreign pilgrims under the spiritual leadership of Acharn Sujin Boriharnwanaket and the practical leadership of Mr. Suwat Chansuvithyanant, I wish to thank you for giving us this opportunity to perform Sangha Dāna and to pay you our deep respect. Your community of monks reminds us of the vital importance of the Sangha, the third of the Triple Gem, now and in the future.*

*Last week, my wife Nina and I celebrated my eightieth birthday by paying respect to the place Kuru in New Delhi, where the Lord Buddha preached the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta. Nina recited the text to me and I was, again, struck by the power of this Sutta and its significance for our daily life.*

*This morning, I received the most precious birthday present one can wish for: the honour to carry the relics of the Lord Buddha.*

*The two most important and happiest events in my life were marrying Nina and our encounter with Buddhism through the hands of Acharn Sujin who, ever since, has guided us on the Path and who, during this tour, tirelessly explained the Dhamma to us, wherever and whenever possible.*

*Looking back on my life, I feel distressed by the amount of accumulated akusala committed in the past.*

*I feel distressed by dukkha, by the burden of the five Khandhas of grasping, so well explained in the teachings: rūpa khandha, vedanā khandha (feeling), saññā khandha (remembrance), saṅkhāra khandha (mental formations) and viññāṇa khandha.*

*I feel distressed by the destructive power of the five hindrances, so forcefully put forth in the teachings, which are: desire of sense pleasures, aversion,*

#### 4 • *Alone with Dhamma*

*restlessness and worry, sloth and torpor and doubt.*

*And yet, I understand at least in theory, that regret of the past makes no sense, that there is no self in the past, and that it is understanding of the present moment that counts.*

*And, in fact, I have every reason to be grateful.*

*Every day, I am encouraged and inspired by Nina's tireless efforts to understand the Dhamma and to help others to understand it.*

*I was inspired by the courage of Nina's father who recently passed away at the age of hundred and four and who, despite his incapacities of body and mind, never gave up and always looked towards the future.*

*And above all, who should be distressed when he hears the voice of the Lord Buddha: "Abandon evil, O monks. One can abandon evil, O monks. If it were impossible to abandon evil, I would not ask you to do so. But as it can be done, therefore, I say: Abandon evil!", and similarly on cultivating the good.*

*On our long journey towards wisdom, we need the support and the inspiration of the Sangha and therefore, I urge you, venerable monks, to persevere in your task of preserving and propagating the teachings.*

*We thank you for giving us this opportunity to perform Sangha Dāna and as a token of our thanks, I wish to present to you, Venerable Head Monk, Acharn Sujin's book, "A Survey of Paramattha Dhammas", translated from Thai by Nina and recently published in Bangkok. It is a masterful, all encompassing treatise on the Dhamma and I hope that it will be of use to your community.*

\*\*\*\*\*

When we were in Lumbini, the Buddha's birth place, circumambulating Asoka's pillar, I could not find Lodewijk. I was very sad because I thought that this would be the last occasion that we would circumambulate together in this place. After a while he found me and we could continue together, paying respect to the Buddha. I remarked to him that the dosa that arose was a perfect subject of satipaṭṭhāna. We never know what will happen the next moment and I realized that the greatest respect to the Buddha is being mindful of the dhamma that presents itself at the present moment. We may feel lonely, but in the ultimate sense we are alone with Dhamma, the teaching of the truth of life and death.

We notice dosa and feel unpleasant feeling. We believe that we experience dosa, but we do not realize it as a dhamma, arising because of its proper conditions. I realized that noticing dosa is only thinking about it, and at such a moment there is still an idea of "my dosa". Acharn Sujin said that understanding based on listening leads to thinking in the right way of nāma and rūpa; only if right understanding has become more firmly established, it

can condition direct awareness of realities. If there are no conditions for it, it is impossible to be directly aware of dosa and realize it as a dhamma, non-self.

At the first stage of insight, the difference between the characteristic of nāma and of rūpa is clearly realized, not before. One begins to understand nāma as nāma and rūpa as rūpa. This means, we begin to see the nāma that appears as a dhamma and the rūpa that appears as a dhamma.

Before this stage of insight is reached, there is still a notion of “my dosa”, and “my lobha”, even though we have intellectual understanding of the fact that they are cetasikas, non-self. We have not really penetrated the truth of anattā.

The wrong view of self is eradicated by the sotāpanna. He still has lobha and dosa but he does not take them for “self” and this makes a great deal of difference. At this stage paññā can see defilements as dhammas, arisen because of their own conditions. Attachment to sense objects and aversion are eradicated at the third stage of enlightenment, the stage of the non-returner. Paññā has to be developed in the right order, the right order in stages of insight, and stages of enlightenment.

We should begin to develop understanding of what appears now. When our eyes are open seeing appears. Seeing could not arise if there were no eyesense and visible object or colour. Seeing is a dhamma that arises because of its proper conditions. Realities appear one at a time through the six doors. When hardness appears, it seems that it was there already for some time, but in reality it arises and then falls away. There is hardness again, but it cannot be the same. Each dhamma that arises and falls away never returns. So it is with lobha and dosa, they seem to last for a while, but they fall away immediately. However, we think of them for a long time. When we are thinking, there is no realization of their characteristics. We think of what is past instead of attending to the characteristic appearing right now.

All that is experienced is dependent on citta that arises and then falls away immediately. Citta is the chief in knowing an object and it is accompanied by several cetasikas that each perform their own function. Citta and cetasikas experience objects through the five sense-doors and the mind-door. Rūpa, physical phenomena, can be experienced through the sense-doors and the mind-door and nāma, mental phenomena, can be experienced only through the mind-door.

The rūpas of visible object, sound, odour and flavour are experienced through the relevant sense-doors and subsequently through the mind-door. The rūpas that are tactile object are: solidity appearing as hardness or softness, temperature, appearing as heat or cold, and motion, appearing as motion and pressure. These rūpas are experienced through the bodysense and subsequently through the mind-door. Thus, seven rūpas appear all the time in

## 6 • *Alone with Dhamma*

daily life, and without citta and cetasikas they could not appear.

The Buddha taught us to develop understanding of ultimate realities, of rūpa and nāma which includes citta and cetasikas, mental factors arising with the citta. In this way wrong view and all defilements can be eradicated. Ultimate realities or paramattha dhammas are different from concepts such as persons, things or events we may think of. Ultimate realities are the objects right understanding should be developed of.

We may study citta, cetasika and rūpa, but we are still bound to take citta for “my experience” and rūpa for “my body” or “my possessions”. We need to listen again and again and consider what we heard so that understanding can gradually develop.

# Chapter 2

## *Remembrance of the Dhamma*

---

When we were visiting the Thai Temple in Bodhgaya, two neatly dressed boys with neckties entered. Young as they were, they recited for us the beginning of the Dhammasaṅgaṇi, the first Book of the Abhidhamma, enumerating all sobhana cetasikas that accompany kusala citta. They recited the Pāli text without mistakes, helping each other. It was impressive to hear the Pāli text so well recited.

When we asked them about the meaning of kusala citta and akusala citta in daily life they could not answer our questions. Their teacher explained that the application of the Dhamma was a subject dealt with in the higher grades, not in the beginning. This shows that reciting and learning the terms by heart is very different from applying them in daily life. The understanding of the realities of daily life is the purpose of studying Abhidhamma.

Acharn Sujin said to us: “One does not know that studying Abhidhamma is right now. If one does not understand this moment, one does not study Abhidhamma.”

We asked many questions during our pilgrimage, and Acharn Sujin always led us back to the dhamma appearing at the present moment.

Without awareness and understanding of what appears now we shall not know what citta, cetasika and rūpa are. One may wonder what the difference is between thinking of realities and direct awareness of them.

Sati arises with sobhana (beautiful) citta. There is sati of the level of dāna which is non-forgetful of generosity. There is sati of the level of sīla which is non-forgetful with regard to abstinence from akusala. There is sati of the level of samatha which is mindful of the development of calm with a suitable meditation subject. There is sati of the level of satipaṭṭhāna which is mindful of one nāma or rūpa at a time in order to realize their true nature.

We discussed sati of the level of satipaṭṭhāna time and again since it is important to have right understanding of what sati is and what its object is. We know that sati is a sobhana cetasika and not self, but have we really understood this? We learnt that sati is aware of one object at a time as it appears through one doorway at a time, but can we apply this knowledge?

We have to listen again and again and consider in order to have more understanding. Acharn Sujin repeated three times: have more understanding.

The development of satipaṭṭhāna is the development of right understanding that sees visible object, seeing, sound, hearing, whatever appears, as a dhamma that arises because of the appropriate conditions. Acharn Sujin said many times that seeing arises because of eyesense, which is rūpa, and visible object which is also rūpa. Seeing experiences visible object or colour, it is nāma. It has no shape or form.

Acharn Sujin untiringly helps us to understand what is appearing now, such as seeing and visible object. She repeats time and again “Is there seeing now?” and she explains the characteristic of the dhamma that appears at the present moment. It is always new to me to hear again and again about seeing and visible object. Gradually her words become more meaningful so that understanding of realities can grow, although it may be hardly noticeable. Acharn used a simile of a tree with buds. One may not notice that the tree will sprout, but one day it will.

Seeing has a specific characteristic, it is different from thinking about people and things we notice. Visible object has a specific characteristic, it appears through eyesense. People and things do not impinge on the eyesense, they are concepts we think of. We have to be reminded of realities so that understanding of them can grow. Such understanding can condition direct awareness, but we should have no expectations, as she often said. There is seeing now, but do we study it with mindfulness? We are forgetful of seeing, we think rather of persons and things we perceive.

Hardness appears many times a day and usually we are forgetful. Hardness is experienced by body-consciousness, but this is different from awareness of hardness. When hardness appears, anyone, even a child can tell how hard it is. Hardness is experienced by body-consciousness, and this is not awareness.

When there are conditions for the arising of mindfulness the characteristic of hardness or of the experience of hardness can be understood. At such moments one does not cling to concepts such as a hand or a table that is touched.

We may think of “our possessions”, but through which doorway do we experience possessions? Through eyes only colour is experienced and this falls away immediately. Through touch only tangible object is experienced and this falls away immediately. What arises because of the appropriate conditions has no owner. We have to consider this again and again. Awareness and understanding of one object at a time as it appears through one doorway at a time will lead to detachment from the idea of self and “mine”.

Everything is dhamma. We know this by intellectual understanding, but, later on, it can be known more deeply by direct understanding. In this way a higher level of understanding is reached, the level of insight knowledge.

We read in the “Kindred Sayings” (IV, Ch III, §81, a Number of Bhikkhus, translated by Ven. Bodhi) that a number of bhikkhus told the Buddha that sectarians asked them what the purpose of the holy life lived under the ascetic Gotama was. They asked whether they had answered rightly in saying that this was for the full understanding of suffering, dukkha. The Buddha said that this was right, but if they would ask what that suffering was they should answer thus:

*“The eye, friends, is suffering... Forms<sup>1</sup> are suffering... Whatever feeling arises with eye-contact as condition... that too is suffering... the mind is suffering... Whatever feeling arises with mind-contact as condition...that too is suffering: it is for the full understanding of this that the holy life is lived under the Blessed One. This, friends, is that suffering for the full understanding of which the holy is lived under the Blessed One.”*

The Buddha taught the development of right understanding of all dhammas as they appear through the six doors.

At the end of our pilgrimage we spend a few days in Kashmir on houseboats. I was clinging to Dhamma discussions and I asked Acharn Sujin whether we could have a discussion the next day. She answered that we do not know what the next moment will bring and that also hearing Dhamma is anattā.

The truth has to be applied in daily life. Whatever we hear is conditioned, hearing is the result of kamma. Hearing Dhamma is the result of kusala kamma; hearing is vipākacitta which is conditioned and which nobody can cause to arise. It is of no use to wish for the arising of certain vipākas or to have any expectations.

Acharn Sujin said that whenever there is more understanding it indicates that there has been right consideration of realities. When we consider and investigate different dhammas, this is accompanied by a level of sati, sati stemming from listening to the Dhamma. In this way direct awareness of realities will arise naturally, without one trying to be aware. If one tries to make awareness arise it is counteractive; clinging to self obstructs the development of paññā.

She also said that nobody can tell whether there will be sati now. Sati can arise before we are thinking about it. We should know the difference between forgetfulness of dhammas and mindfulness of one dhamma at a time as it appears through one doorway. Otherwise we keep on talking about sati but we are ignorant of its characteristic.

We may be discouraged to realize that very few moments of sati arise in a

---

1 Rūpas, visible objects.

day or none at all. Acharn Sujin said: “Instead of attending to the characteristics of realities there is thinking about them. But we should not have any expectations, otherwise it is me who would like to have progress.” I was grateful for such reminders. Time and again attachment to result arises but we do not notice this. Acharn Sujin said: “The development of understanding has to go along with detachment all the way, and that is against the current of life.” We are inclined to think of a self who has to become proficient.

People wonder whether there are ways to induce the arising of sati such as the development of calm. They doubt whether listening to the Dhamma is a condition for the arising of sati.

We read in the “Gradual Sayings” , Book of the Fours, Ch XXV, §6:

*“Monks, these four states conduce to growth in wisdom.*

*What four?*

*Association with a good man, hearing Saddhamma, thorough work of mind, and behaviour in accordance with Dhamma.*

*These are the four.”*

A good man is the translation of sappurisa, which usually denotes an ariyan who is a good friend in Dhamma. Saddhamma is true dhamma. Thorough work of mind stands for yoniso manasikāra, which is right attention to what one hears.

Behaviour in accordance with Dhamma is dhammānudhammapaṭipatti, practice in accordance with the Dhamma. It is the application of the Dhamma one has heard and thoroughly considered through the development of satipaṭṭhāna.

When we read that listening is an important condition we should remember that also considering the Dhamma and its application are implied.

During our pilgrimage Acharn Sujin emphasized the role of saññā, remembrance, and in particular remembrance of Dhamma as the proximate cause of satipaṭṭhāna.

Saññā arises with each citta and its function is “marking” and remembering the object that citta experiences. At the moment of seeing, saññā marks visible object and when seeing has fallen away saññā arising with the following cittas performs its function of marking and remembering. It accompanies the cittas that define and name what has been seen. On account of visible object we think about persons and things and saññā performs its function while it accompanies thinking. We think time and again of persons, things and events, but without saññā there could not be such thinking. Cittas arise and fall away

very rapidly and it seems, that seeing, defining and thinking all arise at the same time, but only one citta arises at a time. When we recognize or remember things we should know that it is saññā, not self, that is doing so.

Lodewijk remarked that memories of the past can worry us. There are things we do not want to remember, but memories still come back and this shows that saññā is beyond control. Acharn Sujin said: “When there is no paññā it is not known that saññā is anattā. We think about it and do not want to have it, but instead we should understand how it arises because of conditions.”

I said that we are more inclined to think than to be directly aware of realities.

Acharn Sujin answered: “Paññā can see the difference between thinking and the direct experience of the truth. We cling to wholesome thinking and to the importance of self who thinks.”

We usually remember concepts of people and things and we continue thinking of them. Seeing arises and it experiences only visible object. Acharn Sujin said: “No one can change the characteristic of seeing which experiences visible object now. But there is not always remembrance of the Dhamma.”

Saññā which remembers the Dhamma is different from saññā which arises when thinking of concepts. On account of what is seen we think with attachment about events, people and things and are quite taken in by our thoughts. However, gradually saññā can remember what we heard when listening to Dhamma. Saññā arises with intellectual understanding of the Dhamma, it remembers the terms and their meanings and when there is mindfulness saññā can also remember characteristics of realities. Saññā which remembers the Dhamma will be firmer so that it will become a proximate cause of satipaṭṭhāna.

We read in the Expositor (I, Part IV, Chapter 1, 122) about mindfulness:

*... Mindfulness has “not floating away” as its characteristic, unforgetfulness as its function, guarding, or the state of facing the object, as its manifestation, firm remembrance (saññā) or application in mindfulness as regards the body, etc., as proximate cause. It should be regarded as a door-post from being firmly established in the object, and as a door-keeper from guarding the door of the senses.*

I had read this text before but I had not yet considered all implications of saññā's role. Considering the function of saññā helps us to understand why listening to the Dhamma is most important. Saññā performs its function when we listen to the Dhamma or read Suttas. If we are not passive listeners but also understand what we hear or read, we shall not be forgetful. Saññā can

become a firm foundation for the arising of direct awareness of the dhammas that appear. Another word for awareness is non-forgetfulness. We are often forgetful of *nāma* and *rūpa*, but since we have listened and considered the Dhamma there are conditions for remembrance of the Dhamma and this supports *sati*.

It seems to us that dhammas last, at least for some time. We think of our body as a whole that exists because of *saññā* that remembers it. In reality there are *rūpas* arising and falling away all the time. When hardness appears it seems to last, but in reality it falls away immediately and never returns. We keep on remembering the hardness that has fallen away, but very gradually, when *paññā* has been developed, there can be remembrance of impermanence, *anicca saññā* instead of remembrance of permanence, *nicca saññā*. The clinging to the concept of self is so deeply rooted, but when *paññā* has been developed to the stage of enlightenment of the *sotāpanna*, there will be *anattā saññā* instead of *attā saññā*.

We read in the Gradual Sayings, Book of the Tens, Ch VI, §6, Ideas, about ten kinds of *saññā*, here translated as ideas:

*Monks, these ten ideas, if made to grow and made much of, are of great fruit, of great profit for plunging into the deathless, for ending up in the deathless. What ten ideas?*

*The idea of the foul, of death, of the repulsiveness in food, of distaste for all the world, the idea of impermanence, of ill in impermanence, of not-self in Ill, the idea of abandoning, of fading, of ending...*

Plunging into the deathless means the attainment of *nibbāna*. This sutta implies that all these ten kinds of *saññā* are developed together with *satipaṭṭhāna*, otherwise they could not lead to the deathless.

The following Sutta explains the connection of similar kinds of *saññā* with the “thorough comprehension of lust”.

We read in the Gradual Sayings, Book of the Tens, Ch XXII, §8, Lust:

*Monks, for the thorough comprehension of lust ten qualities should be made to grow. What ten?*

*The idea of the foul, of death, of the repulsiveness in food, of non-delight in all the world, of impermanence, of ill, of the not-self, of abandoning, of fading interest, and the idea of ending...*

Thus, it is emphasized here that *paññā* leads to detachment . The arahat has thorough comprehension of *lobha*, so that it can be completely eradicated.

# Chapter 3

## *Samatha and Vipassanā*

---

If one is disturbed by strong defilements it is most difficult to be aware of one's akusala cittas. Defilements prevent the arising of satipaṭṭhāna. Clinging to sense objects may be so strong, it can even motivate akusala kamma patha. Should one not develop calm first, so that insight can be developed afterwards with more ease? This is a question that is often asked, and in India this was also discussed.

People of old saw the disadvantages of sense impressions. They knew that seeing is very often followed by attachment. Therefore they developed calm to the degree of absorption concentration, jhāna, so that they would be temporarily freed from sense impressions and the defilements arising on account of them. However, defilements are not eradicated by samatha. When one emerges from jhāna insight of all nāmas and rūpas is to be developed so that enlightenment can be attained.

In the development of samatha paññā must be very keen so that it discerns precisely the different cetasikas that are jhāna-factors which have to be developed, and, in order to reach the higher stages of jhāna, one has to know which are the coarser jhāna-factors which have to be abandoned. A person must have accumulated great skill in order to attain jhāna. Paññā is necessary so that calm is developed in the right way. One has to know precisely when kusala citta arises and when akusala citta. If there is subtle clinging to calm, one may mislead oneself.

We discussed in India whether there is a certain order of development of sīla, samādhi and paññā. It seems that the texts of the suttas point in this direction.

We read in the Mahāparinibbānasutta (Dialogues of the Buddha, no.16) that the Buddha repeatedly said:

*Such and such is sīla, such and such is concentration, such and such is wisdom.*

*Great becomes the fruit, great is the gain of concentration when it is fully developed by sīla.*

*Great becomes the fruit, great is the gain of wisdom when it is fully developed by concentration. Utterly freed from the intoxicants (āsavas) of Lust,*

*of becoming and of ignorance is the mind that is fully developed in wisdom.*

When one reads this text it seems that there has to be sīla first, then concentration and then paññā. We discussed this with Acharn Sujin who said: “Can sīla and samādhi be fully developed without paññā?”

The sotāpanna has fully developed sīla, he cannot transgress the five precepts nor commit akusala kamma leading to an unhappy rebirth. The anāgāmī has fully developed calm, he has eradicated all clinging to sense pleasures. Sīla and samādhi become fully developed by paññā.

We read in the Commentary to the Mahāparinibbānasutta:

*Such and such is sīla (virtue), meaning, it is indeed sīla, sīla to that extent; here it is sīla which are the four purities of sīla.*

*Samādhi is concentration. Wisdom should be understood as insight wisdom (vipassanā).*

*As to the words, when it is fully developed by sīla, this means, when he has abided in that sīla etc., these produce concentration accompanying the path-consciousness and fruition-consciousness; when this is fully developed by that sīla it is of great fruit and of great benefit.*

*When he has abided in this concentration, they produce wisdom accompanying the path-consciousness and fruition-consciousness, and this, when it is fully developed by this concentration, is of great fruit, of great benefit.*

*When he has abided in this wisdom, they produce the path-consciousness and fruition-consciousness, and thus when it is fully developed by this (wisdom) he is completely freed from the intoxicants.*

Thus, when we read about full development this pertains to lokuttara citta arising at the different stages of enlightenment.

The “Visuddhimagga”, in the Chapter on Virtue, Sīla, gives the following fourfold classification of purity of sīla (pārisuddhi sīla):

*the restraint of “Pāṭimokkha” including 227 rules of discipline for the monk,  
the restraint of the sense faculties (indriya saṁvara sīla),  
the purity of livelihood (ājīva pārisuddhi sīla),  
the use of the four requisites of robe, dwelling, food and medicines, that is purified by reflection (paccaya sannissita sīla).*

As regards restraint of the sense faculties, there are different levels of restraint. We read in the “Middle Length Sayings” (no. 27, Lesser Discourse on

the Simile of the Elephant's Footprint) that the Buddha spoke to the brahman Jāṇussoṇi about the monk who has restraint as to the sense-faculties:

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

The Buddha taught satipaṭṭhāna so that the wrong view of self can be eradicated. Through satipaṭṭhāna right understanding is developed and without satipaṭṭhāna sīla cannot become “well established”. For the sotāpanna who has developed vipassanā, sīla is “well established”. Satipaṭṭhāna includes training in “higher sīla” (adhi-sīla sikkhā), “higher citta” (adhi-citta sikkhā) and “higher wisdom” (adhi-paññā sikkhā).

Instead of thinking of classifications and names or thinking of a specific order as to the development of sīla, concentration and paññā, we can gradually develop understanding of the nāma and rūpa appearing at this moment and this is training in higher sīla, higher citta and higher paññā.

As to higher citta or concentration, this includes all levels of concentration, not merely jhāna. Concentration, samādhi, is the cetasika which is one-pointedness, ekaggatā cetasika. It arises with each citta and has the function of focussing the citta on one object. When satipaṭṭhāna arises, ekaggatā cetasika “concentrates” for that short moment on the nāma or rūpa which appears so that understanding of that reality can develop. In the development of samatha concentration is developed to a high degree so that jhāna can be attained, but this cannot be achieved without paññā which has right understanding of the citta and cetasikas which develop calm. In the “Visuddhimagga” all levels of concentration, jhāna included, are described, but this does not mean that everybody must develop jhāna in order to attain enlightenment.

We read in the Tipiṭaka about jhāna, but we should remember that the Commentaries distinguish between two kinds of jhāna. We read in the Commentary to the Sallekhasutta (M.N. I, sutta 8) about two meanings of the expression: meditate (jhāyathā). The objects of meditation or contemplation, jhāna, can be the thirty-eight objects of samatha or the characteristics beginning with impermanence (anicca) of the khandhas and the āyatana (sense-fields). The Commentary states: “It is said: ‘Develop samatha and vipassanā.’” It repeats that one should not be negligent.

We read in the Subcommentary to this passage: “With mindfulness and clear comprehension (sati-sampajañña), which means: by grasping with

thorough comprehension.”

Acharn Sujin said: “One says that calm is helpful, but why does one not say: all moments of kusala are helpful? If one has more kusala citta in daily life there is also calm. Why does one not develop more kusala in daily life instead of high levels of calm?”

Any kind of kusala through body, speech and mind brings calm, and at such moments one does not think of oneself or one’s problems. Each kusala citta is accompanied by calm (passaddhi).

Different kinds of kusala have been classified as the ten bases of meritorious deeds and these can be developed in daily life. These include three kinds of dāna: giving away useful things to others, appreciating the kusala of others, and extending merit, which means: making known one’s kusala to others, no matter whether they are alive or have passed away to another plane where they are able to rejoice in one’s kusala. Moreover, they include three kinds of sīla: abstaining from akusala, helping others and paying respect to others. Then there is bhāvanā, which includes: studying or explaining the Dhamma, samatha and vipassanā.

Furthermore, the tenth base is rectifying one’s views (diṭṭhujukamma). This is connected with all other kinds of kusala and there are different degrees of it. One degree of rectifying one’s views is knowing the value of kusala and the disadvantage of akusala. Another level is understanding that one can eliminate akusala by means of generosity, sīla and other good deeds. Another degree is knowing that one can subdue defilements by developing calm and another level is understanding that paññā can be developed with the purpose to eradicate defilements. The ten bases of meritorious deeds show us that there are always opportunities for kusala in daily life. When we read in the texts about calm we should not forget that there are many kinds and degrees of calm. Calm does not only pertain to the calm of jhāna, but also to calm that accompanies the different ways of kusala performed in daily life, dāna, sīla and bhāvanā, mental development.

We read in the subcommentary to the Satipaṭṭhānasutta (M.N. 10) about meditation subjects that can condition calm in daily life:

*The words, the meditation subjects on all occasions, mean: recollection of the Buddha, loving-kindness, mindfulness of death, and meditation of foulness.*

*This set of four meditations which is guarded by the yogi (practitioner), he called ‘the meditation subjects on all occasions’.*

*They should be guarded by the power of thorough comprehension, uninterruptedly, with sati that is called samatha, calm, because of its being included in the group of concentration, samādhi.*

The factors of the eightfold Path can be classified as three divisions: as wisdom, *sīla* and *samādhi*, concentration or calm. Right understanding and right thinking constitute the wisdom of the eightfold Path, right speech, action and livelihood the *sīla* of the eightfold Path, and *sati*, right effort and right concentration the calm of the eightfold Path. The factors of the eightfold Path are developed together. When right understanding develops, also calm develops together with it.

The four meditation subjects mentioned above are very suitable for daily life, for all occasions (*sabbatthika*). There may be conditions for their arising, but one should not cling to such moments. When calm arises there can be awareness and right understanding of it as a type of *nāma*. *Kusala*, *akusala*, all types of *dhammas* arise because of their own conditions and nobody can make them arise or prevent them from arising.

When we develop understanding of *nāma* and *rūpa* we can think with gratefulness of the Buddha who taught us the Path leading to the end of defilements. This is a short recollection of the Buddha and at that moment mindfulness can arise of *kusala citta* as a conditioned *nāma* which is non-self.

In addition, loving-kindness is to be developed in daily life. However, we should know that it is very difficult to see the difference between true *mettā* and selfish affection, which is called the near enemy of *mettā*. *Akusala citta* follows upon *kusala citta* very closely and they succeed one another extremely rapidly. We are likely to mislead ourselves time and again and take for *kusala* what is *akusala*.

In India we were time and again disturbed, even molested by beggars, and we were inclined to turn away from them. Acharn Sujin said that if we think of life as a beggar, of *kamma* that conditions such *vipāka*, *kusala citta* with compassion and loving-kindness can arise instead of *akusala citta* with aversion. We can see other people, beggars included, as our children. At such moments we can notice that *kusala citta* has a characteristic different from *akusala citta*. When *kusala citta* arises, we are calm and not disturbed by someone else's contrarious behaviour. Both *samatha* and *vipassanā* can be developed together in daily life.

We read that when *bhikkhus* wanted to leave the order the Buddha advised them to contemplate *asubha*, foulness. When one contemplates foulness one does not indulge in sense pleasures. Some people believe that, before one develops *satipaṭṭhāna*, one should subdue sense desires by focussing the mind on foulness. This, however is not correct. There is no rule that one should perform particular actions before one develops *satipaṭṭhāna*. Through *satipaṭṭhāna* right understanding is developed of whatever *dhamma* appears, be it *kusala* or *akusala*. But also when one thinks of foulness, *sati* can be aware of a reality, for example of the *dhamma* that thinks of foulness.

The contemplation of foulness can lead one to a deeper way of contemplation, the realization of impermanence. This is the development of insight.

We read in the Theragāthā, Canto CXVIII, Kimbila, that the Buddha, in order to stir him, conjured up a beautiful woman in her prime, and showed her to him passing to old age.

Kimbila uttered the verse:

*As bidden by some power age over her falls.  
Her shape is as another, yet the same.  
Now this myself, who never have left myself,  
Seems other than the self I recollect.*

Thus, when a person becomes older his body change although he is still the same individual. The body consists of rūpas that arise and fall away.

What arises and falls away is not beautiful, not attractive. The colour a person sees is only colour, not feminine beauty. That colour falls away, never to return. Where is the beauty?

At the first stage of principal insight the arising and falling away of nāma and rūpa is realized. Kimbila listened to the Buddha and developed understanding.

One may want realities to be different from what they are, but the dhammas that have arisen already cannot be changed. One may unknowingly cling to an idea of a self who must subdue lobha and dosa. One may cling to the idea of wanting to be a good person without defilements. When one fails to suppress lobha and dosa there is frustration and disappointment, even despair.

We may notice that we have aversion, dosa, but we do not realize it as a dhamma, arising because of its proper conditions. At the first stage of insight, the difference between the characteristic of nāma and of rūpa is clearly realized, not before that. One begins to understand nāma as nāma and rūpa as rūpa. This means, we begin to see the nāma that appears as a dhamma and the rūpa that appears as a dhamma.

Before this stage of insight is attained, there is still a notion of “my aversion”, and “my attachment”, even though we have intellectual understanding of the fact that they are cetasikas, non-self. We have not really penetrated the truth of anattā.

Acharn Sujin said: “You have to understand your own life, your accumulated inclinations, otherwise you can never become a sotāpanna. One should be very courageous in order to develop the real Path, not the wrong Path.”

# Chapter 4

## *The Present Moment*

---

Acharn Sujin brought us back to the present moment time and again by asking us: “Is there no seeing now?” I was glad because I am always inclined to think of concepts about people and things I perceive. Concepts are not objects of vipassanā, they are different from visible object, sound, and all the objects that appear through the six doorways. However, thinking itself is a citta and it can be an object of insight.

We discussed seeing and visible object time and again. Visible object is a rūpa that impinges on the eyesense. It is experienced by seeing-consciousness that arises in a process of cittas. Visible object or colour is an extremely small rūpa arising in a group of rūpas, it does not arise alone. It arises together with the four Great Elements of solidity, cohesion, heat, motion, and other rūpas which support it. It falls away immediately and soon afterwards it arises and falls away again. There is not one unit of visible object but countless units arising and falling away. We cannot pinpoint which visible object is experienced at the present moment. There is only an impression or mental image, nimitta, of visible object. This causes us to think that visible object does not fall away.

The following sutta deals with the notion of ‘sign’ or mental image, nimitta.

We read in the Kindred Sayings (IV, Ch II, §80, Ignorance, translated by Ven. Bodhi) that a bhikkhu asked the Buddha whether there is one thing through the abandoning of which ignorance is abandoned and true knowledge arises.

We read that the Buddha answered: “Ignorance, bhikkhu, is that one thing through the abandoning of which ignorance is abandoned by a bhikkhu and true knowledge arises.”

Ven. Bodhi states in a note to this passage: “Though it may sound redundant to say that ignorance must be abandoned in order to abandon ignorance, this statement underscores the fact that ignorance is the most fundamental cause of bondage, which must be eliminated to eliminate all the other bonds.”

We read further on:

*Here, bhikkhu, a bhikkhu has heard, ‘Nothing is worth adhering to’. When a*

*bhikkhu has heard, 'Nothing is worth adhering to', he directly knows everything. Having directly known everything, he fully understands everything. Having fully understood everything, he sees all signs (nimitta) differently. He sees the eye differently, he sees forms differently...whatever feeling arises with mind-contact as condition... that too he sees differently...*

As to the term adhere, this pertains to clinging with wrong view.

The Commentary explains the words, “he sees all signs differently (sabbanimittāni aññato passati)” as follows: “He sees all the signs of formations (saṅkhāranimittāni) in a way different from that of people who have not fully understood the adherences. For such people see all signs as self, but one who has fully understood the adherences sees them as non-self, not as self. Thus in this sutta the characteristic of non-self is discussed.”

In this Commentary the word “saṅkhāra-nimitta”, the nimittas, signs or mental images, of conditioned dhammas, is used. When we were returning from the Bodhi tree walking up the long stairways, a friend asked Acharn Sujin about this term. Nimitta has different meanings in different contexts. The nimitta or mental image in samatha refers to the meditation subject of samatha. We also read in some texts that one should not be taken in by the outward appearance of things (nimitta) and the details. However, the term saṅkhāranimitta has a different meaning as I shall explain further on.

Acharn Sujin emphasized that whatever we read in the texts about nimitta should be applied to our life now. “What we read is not theory” she often explains.

We read in the “Mahāvedallasutta” (Middle Length Sayings, no 43), about freedom of mind that is “signless”, and we read that there are two conditions for attaining this: “non-attention (amanasikāra) to all “signs” and attention to the signless element”. The Commentary states that the signs, nimittas, are the objects such as visible object, etc. and that the signless is nibbāna. The signless liberation of mind is explained in a way that clearly connects it with the fruition of arahantship: lust, hatred and delusion are declared to be “sign-makers” (nimittakarana), which the arahant has totally abandoned.

When we read about object (ārammaṇa) as a sign, we should remember that this is not theory. An object is what citta experiences at this moment. When the rūpa that is the eye-base has not fallen away yet and colour or visible object impinges on it, there are conditions for the arising of seeing. If there were no citta which sees visible object could not appear.

When we asked Acharn Sujin whether the impression or sign (nimitta) of a dhamma is a concept or a reality she answered: “These are only words. If we use the word concept there is something that is experienced by thinking. We

should not just know words, but understand the reality that appears right now. There is not merely one moment of experiencing visible object, but many moments arising and falling away. When right understanding arises we do not have to use any term.”

She repeated that there is the impression of visible object right now. She said: “It is this moment.” Visible object impinges on the eyesense and after it has fallen away, what is left is the impression or sign, nimitta of visible object.

It seems that visible object lasts for a while, but in reality it arises and falls away. Acharn Sujin used the simile of a torch that is swung around. In this way, we have the impression of a whole, of a circle of light.

We know that seeing arises at this moment, but we cannot pinpoint the citta which sees, it arises and falls away very rapidly and another moment of seeing arises. We only experience the “sign” of seeing.

The notion of nimitta can remind us that not just one moment of seeing appears, but many moments that are arising and falling away. Also visible object is not as solid as we would think, there are many moments arising and falling away which leave the sign or impression of visible object.

Visible object that was experienced by cittas of a sense-door process has fallen away; sense-door processes and mind-door processes of cittas alternate very rapidly. Visible object impinges again and again and seeing arises again and again. When their characteristics appear we cannot count the different units of rūpa or the cittas that see, they arise and fall away; the impression of what is seen and of the seeing appears.

Acharn Sujin said: “No matter whether we call it nimitta or not, it is appearing now. Whatever appears is the sign or nimitta of the dhamma that arises and falls away.”

We cling to what appears for a very short moment, but it does not remain. It is the same with saññā, there is not one moment of saññā that marks and remembers, but countless moments, arising and falling away.

Thus, we can speak of the nimitta of each of the five khandhas: of rūpa, of feeling, of saññā, of saṅkhārakkhandha, of consciousness. There are nimittas of all conditioned dhammas that appear at this moment, arising and falling away extremely rapidly.

Seeing arising at this moment sees visible object. We notice visible object and while we notice it, we have a vivid impression of it, but it has just fallen away. Seeing falls away but extremely shortly after it has fallen away another moment of seeing arises that experiences visible object. It arises again and again and in between one notices that there is seeing, or, if there are the right conditions a citta with sati can arise that is mindful of its characteristic. However, mindfulness of seeing arises after seeing has fallen away, not at the same time as seeing.

People are wondering how one can be mindful of anger, dosa. Mindfulness

that accompanies kusala citta cannot arise at the same time as anger that accompanies akusala citta.

Anger, dosa, arises and falls away and other processes of citta with dosa arise again. In between, sati can be aware of its characteristic, just as in the case of seeing that has fallen away. Awareness of dosa is different from thinking of: “I have dosa, there is dosa.” But also such thinking can arise in between. Understanding can develop in considering the characteristics of the dhammas that appear and there is no need to think: “It has fallen away”, or, “This is remembrance”.

We have to face akusala with courage and sincerity, otherwise we shall always cling to an idea of “my dosa”, or “my lobha”. Wrong view has to be eradicated first, before lobha and dosa can be eradicated.

I quote what Acharn Sujin said at an earlier occasion: “When akusala arises it can remind us of the truth about our accumulations and this is the way to develop paññā. Ignorance conditions more akusala and paññā conditions kusala.” People may be distressed when they notice akusala, but at the moment of understanding the citta is kusala, it is free of disturbance.

Some people may believe that they have to apply energy and perform specific actions so that they have less akusala cittas and more moments of mindfulness. Listening and considering are conditions for the arising of insight. But there are other conditions stemming from the past: kusala in the past conditions our interest at this moment to consider and investigate realities. This process has been set in motion already, there is not a person who could regulate this.

Nobody can create conditions for the arising of sati. Acharn Sujin asked several times: “Can you create hardness now?” Nobody can create anything, because dhammas arise because of their own conditions.

Hardness is the rūpa that is solidity or the Element of Earth. This rūpa arises and falls away all the time in split-seconds. If someone says: create hardness now, it is impossible, it has already arisen and fallen away and then there is a new hardness in another group of rūpas. It is present with every group of rūpas, it supports other rūpas in that group. It arises with sound, with visible object, with any other type of rūpa. All of them arise because there are the right conditions. It may seem that one can create sound, but without the right conditions it is impossible. It is the same with sati and paññā, which are sobhana cetasikas. Nobody can create them. We are not a creator, master or owner of any dhamma.

When we were in India, we were sometimes sick, we had a fever or violent pains due to water, food or climate. Acharn Sujin reminded us then to know the characteristic of the present reality, for when there is thinking about tonight or tomorrow or worrying about it obviously there is too much interest

in 'self'. She also felt sick, mostly from a severe cold, and exhausted at times but she did not show it. She never thinks of herself.

When we read the many suttas about dhammas appearing through the six doors we can be reminded of the truth. The Buddha taught all the time about the dhammas appearing through the six doors. There is only the dhamma of this moment, nothing else, this is the truth. Nobody can cause the arising of specific dhammas. When feeling sick, that is the dhamma at this moment. There are only dhammas, not me who feels sick. We cling to our feeling, we are commiserating with ourselves, and also that is a dhamma. We cannot escape *nāma* and *rūpa*, so long as we are living in this world.

Acharn Sujin said that there can be understanding of the dhamma that has already arisen because of conditions. If we understand dhamma as dhamma we know that nobody can interfere with what arises because of the appropriate conditions. We may have intellectual understanding of *anattā*, but we should come to understand the reality that is *anattā*. She said: "There is always an idea of I who is reflecting, but actually, *citta* and *cetasikas* are performing their functions and then they fall away immediately."

Acharn Sujin reminded us that it is not sufficient to think that everything is *anattā*. Precisely at this very moment we must try to understand *anattā*. We are alone, only dhammas appear one at a time through the senses and the mind-door. We think time and again of people we love, we find our thoughts about them very important. But what we take for people are dhammas arising and falling away immediately. What has fallen away never returns.

We have to develop *paññā* at this moment so that we shall understand the truth of *anattā*. There is seeing at this moment and very gradually we can learn that it is a dhamma that sees.

Jonothan remarked that one should be honest with regard to one's defilements. Truthfulness, *sacca*, is one of the perfections that the Bodhisatta developed during countless lives. Lodewijk said that he found the perfection of Truthfulness essential, but very difficult to develop. When he reads in the Sutta that the Buddha said, 'Abandon evil... it can be done...' he feels that he is insincere, since he clings to all the pleasant things of life and does not want to give them up. He said that before one realizes it, one is misleading oneself as to *kusala* and *akusala*.

Jonothan said that there are moments of understanding dhammas, and moments of ignorance. When there is awareness and right understanding of a dhamma one is on the Path the Buddha taught. Actually, being on the Path is momentary, and when understanding does not arise, which happens most of the time, the Path is not developed. However, he said, this is not a cause for concern. Even when the moments of developing the Path are very few, it is a great gain hearing the right Dhamma and listening to it with sincere interest. There can be moments of reflecting, considering, moments of *kusala* and

paññā.

We may reflect on the Path leading to enlightenment, but Acharn Sujin always says: “But what about this moment?”

I find it very helpful to remember that citta and the Path-factors which are cetasikas arise for a moment and then fall away. This is in conformity with real life.

Lodewijk said that it seemed to him that he had more understanding when in India, visiting the holy places. But now it seems that the little understanding he had is lost when he is back in the routine of life in Holland. I reminded him of what Jonothan had said to him in India about the Path being momentary. It is good to be reminded that the moments of sati and paññā arise and fall away and that we cannot keep them. The understanding that arises is never lost, it is accumulated and it can grow.

Acharn Sujin reminded us: “The Buddha explained what is kusala and what akusala, but can he force anyone? He could show the way leading to the end of defilements. Someone may like to have sati, but who can have it if there are no conditions for it? One may want the dhammas that arise to be different, but instead of such clinging there should be detachment. One may try very hard to make sati arise, but if there is no understanding of it as a conditioned reality that arises and falls away it is useless.

And on the other hand, when there are conditions for sati nobody can prevent its arising. This shows us that there is no need to try to have sati.

The entire Tipiṭaka explains the nature of anattā of realities. The arising of direct awareness and understanding depends on the right conditions and they cannot arise even if one is told a hundred times.”

When we were in India we had many opportunities to rejoice in other people’s kusala, their generosity and readiness to help others. Jonothan performed kusala all day long, without interruption, in recording the Dhamma discussions. He applied a great deal of effort to hold the microphone close to Acharn Sujin.

When Lodewijk said that he was distracted by this, I said to him that Jonathan develops all the perfections while doing this. He performs dāna, he gives the great gift of Dhamma. He performs sīla while helping many people by bodily acts, while holding the microphone so that people all over the world can hear our dhamma discussions. He develops renunciation since he renounces his own comfort while he has little time for relaxation. He develops wisdom while listening with understanding, and asking questions that are useful to all. He applies energy since he is not inert to perform wholesome deeds. He has patience and endurance which is needed day after day in order to continue to perform kusala. He develops truthfulness to perform the kusala he has determined to do: acting according to what he has promised he would do. He has determination to perform kusala and continue with it. He has

mettā because he thinks of many people's benefit and welfare. He has equanimity because even when he is tired he continues with equanimity in all circumstances.

This shows that all the perfections can be developed together, at the same time. We do not have to think about the perfections; they are developed while we perform kusala through body, speech and mind without thinking of our own gain or profit. Jonothan and Sarah are always working hard to edit all the recordings of Dhamma discussions just for our benefit. They even listened to them and edited them during our long bus drives.

At the beginning of this pilgrimage Lodewijk stated categorically that this would be his last trip to India. At the end of the trip, however, on the houseboat in Srinagar, he said just as categorically that he would definitely go on the next pilgrimage. Why? The holy places, the discussions and the recollection of the Buddha had inspired him to go back to India in order better to be able to understand the Truth, wherever we go and live. And so it should be for all of us.