



INSIGHT INTO BUDDHIST MEDITATION

by Ven. Phrakhru Siddhiyanvidesh
(Phramaha Somboon Siddhiyano)

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Preface

The book, "Odds and Ends", published in 2008, was a collection of Luangpor Somboon's work. This "Insight into Buddhist Meditation", is a selection and revised booklet which will assist practitioner to gain insight into Buddhist Meditation. The ultimate purpose of Buddhist meditation is to realise things in its ultimate nature and finding ultimate peaceful state. Ven. Luangpor Somboon has illustrated these in a very concise and clear. Therefore, this booklet will help practitioners to gain deeper understanding into Buddhist Meditation.

The most venerable Phramaha Somboon, 89 years, - was honoured by the Thai Sangha and the King as Phrakru Siddhiyanvidesh is the most senior Theravada monks in the UK. Famously known as Luangpor (Venerable Father) Somboon was born 1925 ordained in 1945 and came to the UK in 1968 as a Dhammaduta monk. He served as assistant monk for few years and later acting abbot of the

Buddhapadipa temple since 1970 for almost ten years and moved to Wolverhampton to assist and teach. Luang Por is a well verse in Buddhist teachings -calm, gentle, compassionate, generous and kind Buddhist monk. This booklet is about his understanding of Buddhist meditation, which helps us to deepen our understanding its method and purpose.

I would like to express my gratitude to Venerable Luangpor for kind permission and all the members of Varapunya Meditation Centre in Aberdeen for generous help to publish this booklet.

Ven. S M Sujano

(Varapunya Meditation Centre)

<http://varapunyabuddhistsociety.org>

2014

Contents

1. Buddhism and Buddhists
2. Non Attachment & Voidness
3. Suffering and Happiness
4. Detachment and Reality
5. Realization of Truth
6. How to Meditate?

1. Buddhism and Buddhists

'Buddhism' is a word for forty-five years of teaching that the Buddha, who was born in Nepal sixth century BC, delivered during his life time. The label 'Buddhism', a western term, was attached only afterwards, and it is the same with Christianity, Islam and any other religious institution in the World. None of the great religious teachers ever gave a name to their teachings nor they levelled it; they just went on sharing and teachings throughout their lives about how one should live in peace and mutual understanding. Although we, Buddhists, claim ourselves as Buddhists, mostly have not yet understood the teaching of the Buddha or able to attained the truth. We are too much attached to the word 'Buddhism' and are aware of only tiny aspect of Buddhism. We have realised its outer cover which makes us thinking Buddhism is different from this

or that. Outsiders are not part of our fellowship; they are wrong, only we are right, and so on and so forth.

This kind of view is not only with Buddhists alone but with all followers of major religions in the world. It shows how stupid and foolish we are! We are just like little babies who know only their own belief. When a child told to go and take a bath and to wash with soap to get all the dirt off, the child will scrub only his belly. The child does not know how to wash all over body. He will never think of washing behind his ears or between his toes or anywhere like that. He only scrubs and polishes his stomach vigorously. In just the same way, most of the so-called religious person knows only a outer layer of their religion such as intending to get and intending to take. In this case it will be more accurate to say that those people know nothing at all, for they are acquainted only with how to get and how to take. That is not a religion nor they are religious. If anything at all, it is the religion of

getting, the religion of taking. If they cannot get or cannot take something, they are frustrated and suffered. A true religious person is one who knows how to get without getting, and take without taking so that there is no frustration and no suffering at all.

2. Non Attachment & Voidness

This realization must be illustrated about very often to acquaint one with the heart of religion. In Buddhism, it is known as non-attachment – not to try to grasp or cling on to anything, nor even to the teaching itself, until finally it is realised and seen that there is no so called Buddhism, Christianity or any labelled religion.

If one speaks straight that in ultimate sense, there is no Buddha, no Dhamma, no Sangha! No one will understand. Expressing in such way, Buddhists will be shocked, misunderstood and frightened instead. Similar to any other religion and their

follower's response. If people understood in ultimate sense, they would see that the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha are the same. They would see them as being real nature or something like that. They would not grasp or hang on to it as that particular thing or this particular idea; it is, but is not individualized. As a matter of fact, most people think that there is a happiness and a suffering. However, if it is expressed in the ultimate sense, there is nothing, nothing to get, nothing to have, nothing to be –no happiness, no suffering, nothing at all ! and this state of being is called ‘being void’. Everything still exists, but all awareness of them in terms of ‘I’ or ‘Mine’ is voided. For this reason, we say it is a ‘void’.

In order to understand or to see everything as void is to see it as not being an aspect of oneself, or in any way possessed by one self. There is no sense of being or notion of self. The word ‘void’ in the common language of people means nothing exists,

but in the language of the Buddha, the Enlightened One, and ultimate sense it means everything exists, but there nothing to be thought of as ‘I’ and nothing to feel attached to as ‘Mine’.

3. Suffering and Happiness

Where can suffering take place? Suffering must happen to a person; an ‘I’. So a possessing ‘I and ‘mine’ is the real cause of suffering. Attachment or holding on the object or feeling or emotion that comes through five senses is a root cause of all dissatisfactions. Pull out the root; that is the real cure; do not just be engaged in a futile search for bits and pieces of happiness to smooth it over and cover it.

What is happiness? As for happiness, as soon as you cling to it and have attachment for it, it becomes unhappiness, one more way to suffer. Most people always have attachment in one form or

another to everything that is or is not. As a result, desirable things are all converted into causes of suffering. Good is also transformed into suffering. Praise, fame, honour and the like are all turned into forms of suffering as soon as one tries to seize and hang on to them. All becomes unsatisfactory because of grasping and clinging. When you are wise enough to be detached from any forms of dualism, then you will no longer have to suffer because of those things. Many people's detachment appears to be a negative state, but in fact it is attachment that is negative. Why? Because when you are attached to something, the mind is really in a negative state of not wanting to understand its reality. One wishes to hold on to possessions or qualities. This is not creative, but when you are detached, especially from pleasant or unpleasant feelings and from all active states of mind, you are truly creative because you understand what to do and how to do it. This is a clarity of understanding.

4. Detachment and Reality

A detached mind, born of understanding reality in which there is full capacity to do, is a creative mind. It is a free and can work correctly. The attached mind brings trouble to yourself as well as to others, and is a harmful thing, whereas detachment can harm on one –the mind is liberated and free from all conditions. The Buddha said; ‘of all conditioned a non-conditioned things ‘DETACHMENT’ is the best. Try to do things with a detached, free mind and you will see whether you are creative or not. To work with the acquisitive mind is very different from working with the detached mind. If you do not get what you want, you need not lose your mental balance. You need not become a victim of what you want to get. You can remain calm, peaceful and steady. This inner equilibrium is the most positive state and through it we can live happily. Do not worry about achieving

things. If you have detachment – liberation within – everything can be achieved. It is not a state of laziness, in which nothing can be done, but a profoundly creative state in which everything can be done. So, try to be detached, and work with a detached mind, you will finally come to the real state of awakening.

Suppose we shall speak of Mr. A, we tend to mean the whole of his body; we do not speak of only his eyes, ears, nose, tongue as Mr. A. The eyes, ears, nose, tongue are not Mr. A. It refers to the whole of his body. The word which is called ‘Mr. A’ is only conventional truth. It is not absolute Truth: there is no real self existing in him. He is so-called for the sake of remembering him as Mr. A. Others are also referred to in the same way. In consequence of the conventional truth we can understand the names of everything in the world correctly, such as ‘this is a giraffe, this is a cat, this is Mr. and Mrs. Robinson, and this is a pen and a pencil’ and so on. According

to Buddhism, a person is a combination of five aggregates.

Without conventional truth, however, we cannot recognize the names of anything in the present. It is necessary. But these things mentioned are conditioned to impermanent, suffering and non-self in the Absolute Truth. They are endlessly changeable. Having learnt and understood the five aggregates, one does not cling to them and is able to relinquish wrong understanding, Eternity Belief and Annihilation View. Thus, during meditation time we are taught not to think about and brood over the past and future. This is to direct our minds to what we desire and that is the breathing in and the breathing out via the nostrils and then our minds will go deeper and deeper until the Three Signs of Being, that is to say, Impermanence, Suffering and Soullessness, are clarified.

5. Realization of Truth

In the practice of insight meditation one has to learn ‘Five Aggregates’, which called *Nama-Rupa* as a nature of change, causes suffering and non-self. *Nama*, simply a mind, a Buddhist terminology refers to Feeling, Perception, Volitional Activity and Consciousness, which help to perceive or know whereas *Rupa*, simply matter, refers to a Form, the material substance which has no ability to perceive or to know anything at all and it comprises the Four Primary Elements, namely, the element of earth, water, air and fire. These are elements of which the body (form) is formed.

Nama-Rupa or mind and matter is impermanence. It is a nature to change, suffering and non-self because it is conditioned to arises, stabilizes and passes away. So this is very important for meditators who practice insight meditation to understand the arising, stabilizing and passing away

of it as they are. In the Path of Purity, it has been stated that it is in the form of impermanence, suffering and non-self because of the following conditions:

A. Impermanence because of four conditions:

1. Udayavayanto – arising and disappearing
2. Viparinamato – changing
3. Tavakalikato – being temporary like thing which is lent.

4. Niccapatipakkhato – in opposition to permanence.

B. Suffering because of four conditions:

1. Abhinhasanpilato – frequently making one suffer.

2. Dukkhamato – difficult to maintain.

3. Dukkhatthuto – the source of which suffering is born.

4. Sukhatipakkhato – in opposition to happiness.

C. Non-self because of four conditions:

1. Sunnato – absence of self.
2. Asamikato – cannot be conquered.
3. Akamakariyato – cannot be forced to be this or that.
4. Attapatipakkhato – in opposition to self.

The meditators have to practice diligently and regularly until they can see impermanence, suffering and Non-self of Nama-rupa with clear wisdom. But to see Impermanence of Nama-Rupa is very difficult because it is hidden by *Santati*, the continuity of life. For example, one experiences the growth of physical body from body-hood to childhood, from childhood to adolescence, from adolescence to adult, from adult to old age and decay. Such a process is manifested in the form of continuation and changing. But nevertheless when the arising, stabilizing and passing away of Nama-Rupa are grasped and realized by insight-wisdom. The

Impermanence will spontaneously appear to be seen at once.

Secondly, Suffering is hidden by (*Iriyapatha*) posture of standing, walking, sitting, sleeping, eating, drinking, walking, speaking, thinking and so on. These postures prevent one from seeing the sign of change that causes suffering. But when one attends to the repeated oppression and removes the postures and then suffering appears as it is. Lastly, Non-self is hidden by *Ghana*, massiveness. *Ghanasanna*, the idea of massiveness of the five aggregates which consist of the form, sensation, perception, volitional activity and consciousness one attached to the five aggregates and tends to hold on to them as self. Therefore, as long as the five aggregates cannot be grasped and broken by means of Vipassana practice, the characteristic of non-self will not appear. When the five aggregates are grasped and realized by Vipassana panna, wisdom being born of Vipassana practice, then the

characteristic of Non-self appears as it really is.

During the course of meditation practice, if these three signs of being, Impermanence, Suffering and Non-self appears to the meditators simultaneously, they are said to realize the condition of emptiness, deliverance or ultimate happiness of nibbana. It is described in three *Nibbanas*, namely; *Sunnatavimokkha* signifies *Nibbana* which is characterized by the condition of Emptiness, *Animittavimokkha* by the condition or having no sign and *appanihitavimokkha* by the condition of having no sign and *appanihitavimokkha* by having no foundation.

According to the commentary it is explained that Deliverance is endowed with the condition of Emptiness because it is empty of Greed, Hatred and Delusion. It has no sign because there is no trace of those three passions and no foundation because it does not contain the foundation or support for such those three passion to exist.

6. How to Meditate?

In Buddhism, meditation means 'Bhavana', which is to cultivate or developing wholesome mental states. There are many ways to practice meditation. However, it is divided into concentration and insight meditation. Although practitioner has to begin their meditation with concentration, they should gradually improve their understanding to see into insight as they truly are.

In order to simplify meditation practice, we take into consideration the three following practical methods of meditation:

1. Sitting Meditation:

First of all, find a suitable, comfortable and less distracted place and then sit either on a chair, on a cushion, on a bed or on the floor as one likes. Hands can be placed on the lap or in relaxed position. The eyes should be closed for less distractions. Bodies

must be in a balanced upright position so as to remain steady but not tense or stiff and then the breathing in and the breathing out through the nostrils has to be observed very carefully. When you are ready gently close your eyes and bring your attention on in breath and out breath. Knowing as it goes in and as it comes out. Paying full attention and focus on the breath.

2. Walking Meditation:

Walking Meditation can be sub-divided into six exercises:

1. Right goes thus, left goes thus
2. Lifting and treading
3. Lifting, moving and treading
4. Heel up, lifting, moving and treading.
5. Heel up, lifting, moving, dropping and treading.
6. Heel up, lifting, moving, dropping, touching and pressing.

Exercise 1: it consists of three phases – i.e. ‘Right or Left’ that is the lifting or the corresponding foot; secondly, ‘goes’ which is the moving forward of it and thirdly ‘thus’, the dropping and replacing of the foot on the ground. The distance for each step should be short in length. The acknowledgement should be done mentally throughout the exercises, this one and the following ones, and it should be made simultaneously with the corresponding movement. In this manner we walk, mentally concentrating upon the movements of the walking process and the phases of each step until we reach the end of our allotted walking space. We halt then, having brought both our feet together in the standing posture.

We acknowledge again this posture, say in the mind, ‘standing, standing, standing,’ three times. Now we return. We may return to the left or to the right. The turning movement consists of gyrating the right foot on its heel if we turn towards the right;

gyrating the heel means we turn the foot, leaving the heel on the spot.

After each turning of one foot on its heel we draw the other foot parallel to it by lifting it and replaying it down again beside the foot we turned round. Each movement, i.e. the turning on the heel of the one foot and the lifting and replacing on the ground of the other foot, we acknowledge by saying mentally, 'turning.' When we have completely turned we halt again and acknowledge the standing posture with 'Standing, standing, standing.' Subsequently, we begin to walk again, 'right goes thus, left goes thus,' until we reach the end of our walking distance where we stand, turn, stand and walk again.

We should keep in mind that the exercise should be done as slowly and as mindfully as possible so that the whole process of standing, walking, standing and turning, standing, walking and so on comes gradually to be more and more

conscious. The time for exercise 1 should be about 10 minutes or more.

Exercise 2: This walking consists of two phases, 'lifting and treading'. When we lift the foot until it reaches its highest point, we acknowledge mentally 'lifting' and when we lower the foot until we tread on the ground; we acknowledge mentally 'treading.' The distance between each step should now be three quarters of a foot. Otherwise, the instructions and the practice of acknowledging the intention as given in exercise 1. The time for exercise 2 should be about 20 minutes.

Exercise 3: The walking meditation consists of three phases – 'lifting, moving and treading'. These three words are used for the same phases as outlined in first exercise. When we lift the foot we acknowledge 'treading.' The only difference to exercise 1 is that a different wording is used for the

acknowledgement of the movements and that the length of the step is now reduced to half a foot. The same instructions as given in exercise 1 and 2 apply here too. The time for exercise 3 should be extended to 30 minutes.

For *exercise 4* the walking comprises of four successive phases –‘heel up, lifting, moving and treading’. The walking begins with the lifting up of the heel, the ball of the foot with the toes still remaining on the floor. This movement we acknowledge mentally saying ‘heel up’ then we lift the entire foot; this we acknowledge in the mind as ‘lifting.’ After having lifted the foot we push it forward and acknowledge ‘moving’, then we lower the foot and replace it on the ground, acknowledging ‘treading’. The length of the step is half a foot. Otherwise, we should practice as already stated. The time for exercise 4 should be about 40 minutes.

For *exercise 5* the walking comprises of five phases – ‘heel up, lifting, moving, dropping, and treading.’ At first we lift the heel up as in the foregoing exercise and acknowledge mentally ‘heel up,’ then we lift the whole foot and acknowledge ‘lifting’, we push it forward and acknowledge ‘dropping.’ When we tread on the ground we acknowledge ‘treading’. The length of the step remains the same as in the preceding exercises. The duration for the walking exercise 5 should be extended to 50 minutes.

For *exercise 6* the walking comprises of six phase – ‘heel up, lifting, moving, dropping, touching and pressing’. The new movements introduced are two, namely ‘touching and pressing.’ The other movements and the length of the steps remain the same as in the foregoing exercise. In the foregoing exercise we see that we lift the heel up acknowledging ‘heel up.’ Lift the whole foot

acknowledging ‘lifting,’ move it forward acknowledging ‘moving’ then we lower it and acknowledge ‘dropping’.

The next new movement is the touching of the foot on the ground with the toes and ball of the foot. This we acknowledge mentally saying ‘touching’. The last movement is pressing the whole foot on the ground and acknowledging this with the word ‘pressing.’ The exercise should be practiced as for the former ones with intention. The time for this exercise is one hour altogether.

3. Lying Down Meditation

A person who goes to bed and then must practice the lying down meditation before going to sleep. The practical method is to observe the breathing in and out through the nostrils as given in the sitting meditation. It is mostly conducive for a sick person, particularly for the person who is

mentally sick or for difficult sleeping. It helps to relax and sleeps well.

In the practice of meditation, one should not lose mindfulness when changing one position or postures to another. Continuous mindfulness in every steps is the key to success. Meanwhile, whatever sensation arises one has to be aware and mindful of it as they truly are rather than grasping or holding on to it. The ultimate aim of mindfulness meditation is to realise its true nature; change, incapability to remain and fading away. Everything in our life whether positive or negative experiences, memories or feeling has same characteristics. Once one realises its true nature, there won't be any unhappiness or dissatisfaction but able to let it be and let it go.

Varapunya Meditation Centre

Varapunya Meditation Centre is a centre for study and practice of Mindfulness Meditation in Aberdeen. It is a centre where one can learn to be aware of own self and to become own Therapist. Mindfulness Meditation is a Easy, Costless and Self-Treatment skill that always be with you. It is effective, suitable for dealing with all kinds of physical and mental health issues. Mindfulness Meditation is a special skill that helps how to use your limited time effectively for greater benefit and finding right balance in your daily life. Instructions are given by an authentic Buddhist Theravada Buddhist monk.

‘Helping hands, healing hearts’ is the Centre’s mission, which it realises through activity at the Centre and through collaborative projects in the communities and schools of Aberdeenshire. It is a place for learning, devotional practice and for

sharing direct personal experiences of practicing Buddhist meditation. The guiding principles of the Centre's works are the teachings of the Buddha within the Theravada tradition of Buddhism.

The centre is here to help you. Every little help make huge difference. Come and join with us to share our love and compassion. If you have ever considered learning to meditate and how does it help, or to enquire into Buddhism and what it has to offer in our present world, then you may wish to contact and visit the Centre. For further information, please

see <http://www.varapunyabuddhistsociety.org>

1. Tuesday evening 7-9: (This is a good session for beginners who are willing to learn how to do meditation. It starts with chanting-sitting-sharing)

2. Sunday Meditation Session 10:00 am -
11:15 am (Sitting-Walking Sitting)

Opening Hours:

Morning 9 am - 2 pm

Afternoon 6 pm - 9 pm

The centre operates entirely on generous donation. So, why wait to contribute for good cause. You can be a part to make changes in our society.

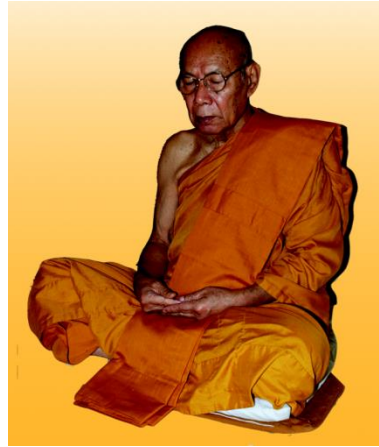
If you want to see positive changes and would like to contribute, please contact to the centre or write a cheque payable to Varapunya SBS and send it to the centre.

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Ordination: 1945 at Wat Phanse Temple under the preceptorship of Phrakhru Banhankabintharakhet.

After WWII moved to Bangkok for Buddhist studies at Wat Tasnarunsuntarikama temple.

- **1968** came to Buddhapadipa temple London, the 1st Thai Buddhist temple in Europe.
- **1975** Co-operate to set up the Buddhist Union of Europe in Paris and a spiritual adviser in 1980.

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Literature:

- 1977 A French Story 'La Fuite' Translated into Thai
- 1982 Romanization of Pali Chanting Book & published in 1995 by Wat Sangathan (Wat Santiwonsaram), Birmingham
- 1995 'Romanization of the Peak of Tipitaka and Gathachiabanchorn' published by The Buddhavihara Temple Aston, Birmingham
- 2009 Article collection 'Odds and Ends' Compiled & Published by Ven. S. M. Sujano

Nimittam sadhurupanam katannukatavedita
A Gratitude or mindfulness of the benefit done by
someone



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