

Ariyavasa-Sutta-2

Preface

INTRODUCTION

This is a new and enlarged translation of the Venerable Mahāsī Sayādaw's discourse on the Ariyāvāsa sutta of Aṅguttara Nikāya. Therefore it differs considerably from the condensed English version which I wrote in 1980 for the Mahāsī Translation Committee. It is far more thorough and comprehensive and it is an indication of this distinctive feature that the book contains nearly five times the number of pages in the original translation.

There is no doubt about the universal appeal of Mahāsī sermons in Buddhist Myanmar. This is no wonder for given the Ven. Sayādaw's saintly life and his extensive knowledge of Buddhist literature, he deservedly earned the deep faith and veneration of the people. He had a flair for effective delivery of his sermons that brought home to us the fundamental teachings of Buddha-dhamma. Moreover, in his talks he often referred to little-known but highly significant Buddhist teachings that give us much food for thought.

For example, in his sermon on the Ariyāvāsa sutta the Ven. Sayādaw described two kinds of bhikkhu, viz ... the vinaya bhikkhu or a member of the Sangha and the sutta-bhikkhu or the disciple (upasaka) who lives up to the Buddha's teaching. In other words, the term bhikkhu is the general designation for any dedicated follower of the Buddha, be he a monk, a hermit or a lay man. This may be surprising to many Buddhists but it is quite in line with the Buddha's teaching. Says the Dhammapada, verse 142: "Whatever the garments a man may wear, he is a brahmaṇa or a samaṇa or a bhikkhu if he has got rid of defilements, disciplined himself, avoids doing evil and cultivates loving-kindness". Again in his dialogue with an ascetic the Buddha said that there were hundreds of his lay disciples, both men and women, who had attained the first three stages on Ariyan holy path. (Mahāvacchagotta sutta, M.N)

These are only a few of the Pāḷi texts that give the lie to some Western writers on Buddhism who would have us believe that the higher teaching of Buddhism is meant exclusively for the monks and that there is no place for the lay followers in its scheme for salvation.

The main topic of the Ven. Sayādaw's talk on Ariyāvāsa sutta is the ten Ariya dhammas or the ten essential attributes of the Ariyas or the Noble Ones. In particular the talk focuses on the practice of right mindfulness based on Satipaṭṭhāna sutta. Of course right mindfulness is the corner-stone of Buddhist mental culture and here it is worthy of note that the Buddhist teaching has much in common with modern

psychology.

The practice of right mindfulness is generally of three kinds. In the first place, the beginner in the practice is told to make himself aware of everything, mental or physical, that occurs within the range of his sensory impressions. He has no difficulty in mentally noting pleasant feelings, desires, perceptions, etc. It is, however, otherwise in the case of unpleasant or unwholesome states of consciousness. For then his ego or deep-seated conceit stands in the way of his recognizing anything that hurts his self-esteem, - So he tends to ignore it unconsciously. Thus the unwholesome desires or emotions such as anger or envy disappear beyond the threshold of consciousness and become potential threats to mental health.

The connection between mental disorders and the unconscious which modern psychology has conclusively established was well known to the Buddha more than 2500 years ago. Hence his emphasis on the need to recognize one's own moral weakness and avoid self-deception in Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna and other suttas. (See my translation of Mahāsī Sayādaw's talk on Sallekha sutta.)

The second kind of mindfulness that we can hardly over-emphasize is what is known in Pāli as ekaggatā or one-pointedness of mind. It consists in focusing one's attention on a single idea or object for a long time to the exclusion of everything else. It forms the basis of the so-called will-power which is not, as many people believe, some mysterious mental force that some great men have acquired without any effort or practice. As the famous American psychologist William James says, "The essential achievement of the will is to attend to a difficult object and hold it fast before the mind Effort of attention is thus the essential phenomenon of the will"

The vital role of one-pointed mindfulness in the making of great men is in no doubt. It is indomitable will or singleness of purpose (English words for ekaggatā) that distinguishes great teachers like the Ven. Mahāsī Sayādaw or great national leaders like Bogyoke Aung San. But from the Buddhist point of view it is indispensable to our welfare since it helps us to cope with the moral problems of life.

Equally essential to our moral well-being is the third kind of mindfulness or yonisomanasikāra which we may translate as right or proper thinking. Another appropriate English word for it is wise reflection whereby we seek to overcome intellectually the moral weaknesses that trouble us in everyday life.

Let us consider, for example, envy which the Buddha described as one of the two sources of human suffering in the Sakkapañhā sutta. (See my translation of the Ven. Sayādaw's talk on the sutta.) Most people do not like any one who surpasses them in wealth education, power and so forth. They are unmindful of the Buddha's repeated saying that we should not consider ourselves superior or equal or inferior to any other person. Then how are we to overcome envy? In the first place, probably we may have

to admit frankly that the man we envy is getting his reward for his special qualifications. If on the other hand, he has employed morally wrong devices for the fulfillment of his wish, we have no reason to envy a man whose conduct outrages our sense of moral values. Again, let us remember that more often than not the life of a successful man is marred by ill-health, unhappy marriage, etc. that overshadow his achievements and make him someone to be pitied rather than envied.

Thus the practice of *yonisomanasikāra* is based on right understanding, intelligence and knowledge. For we need to mobilize all intellectual forces in the struggle against our inner impurities.

Certainly we all owe a deep debt of gratitude to the Ven. Mahāsī Sayādaw for his untiring, selfless effort to promote the knowledge of Buddhism and Buddhist meditation. But speeches and writings in praise of his life and work will not suffice to do full justice to the grandeur of a great holy teacher whose name is immortalized in the history of Theravāda Buddhism. What matters most for those who cherish the memory of the Ven. Sayādaw is to try to live up to his teaching.

That is our sacred duty in keeping with the tradition of the Buddha-dhamma. For as pointed out in the Mahāparinibbāna sutta, just before he passed away the Buddha told Ānandā that the only way for his disciples to adore and honour him was to follow his teaching strictly and diligently. Therefore it is up to all devotees of the Ven. Mahāsī Sayādaw to practise right mindfulness at all times and in every place. For at the very least it is the best insurance against preventable diseases and accidents that take a heavy toll of life worldwide. More important, for those who are disillusioned with *saṃsāric* existence it is the most reliable passport to supreme liberation.

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30 th April, 1993. Yangon.

Chapter 1

DISCOURSE ON ARIYĀVĀSA DHAMMA

Sutta as a guideline

My sermon to-night has its source in the Ariyāvāsa sutta of Aṅguttara Nikāya. It is customary for us to prepare a sermon on the basis of the Buddha's talk in a sutta. It is possible to focus on a teaching of the Buddha without reference to any Pāḷi text in the

Piṭaka. But we believe that a discourse based on an original Pāli text is more significant and profound.

The sermons of the Buddha are called suttas, a Pāli term of wide connotation. One interesting thing which it signifies is a string or a guide-line. When a carpenter is about to divide, cut into pieces or turn into any shape a log of wood, he must first mark a line. This is of course common knowledge. If, due to his over-confidence, he relies on guess-work, he will certainly make a mess of his job. The outcome will be in harmony with his desire only if he works with the help of a guide-line.

This holds true also for the study of the Buddha's teaching. The suttas embodying the Buddha's instructions are guide-lines for those who wish to practise the Dhamma. It is up to every Buddhist to follow these guide-lines in his religious life. For instance, it is the duty of Buddhists to conform to the guide-lines laid down by the Buddha for leading a morally good life. He should not invent a new system of ethics. He should observe the five precepts, viz. abstinence from killing, stealing etc. as taught by the Buddha. It is not his business to reduce or increase the number of precepts. Again, we should bear in mind the Buddha's guide-lines for developing samādhi (tranquility). There are forty Buddhist methods of cultivating samādhi and we need not seek any other technique for mental culture. The Buddha's guide-lines for the development of paññā (wisdom or insight-knowledge) are manifold. He spelled them out in terms of the five khandhās (groups), the āyatanas (the sources on which mental process depends) or dhātu (elements). There are guide-lines for the attainment of wisdom on the basis of the Four Noble Truths, the conditioned origination (Paticca samuppāda) or mind and corporeality (nāmarūpa).

Thus the suttas serve as guide-lines for the study of the Buddha-dhamma. Just as we write on lined paper to make a script neat and tidy, so also we make it a practice to preach on the basis of suttas for the spiritual uplift of the lay people.

Different kinds of Ariyas

The Buddha said, "Monks! There are ten Ariyāvāsadhammas that form the abode of the Ariyas (the Noble ones). The Ariyas lived in these abodes in the past, they are still living there and they will live there in future". Ariya denotes the eight types of Noble Ones or saints and āvāsa means abode or residence and hence Ariya-āvāsa refers to the abode of Noble Ones. There are eight types of Ariyas , the first four in the category of those who have attained the Path (magga) viz, sotāpatti, anāgāmi, sakadāgāmi and arahatta and the other four who have attained the phala or fruition corresponding to each of the four paths.

As to the first four Ariyas who are well established on the path, it is hard to say explicitly what kind of Noble Ones they are. For the duration of their spiritual climax is a single thought-moment. With the attainment of insight-knowledge, the meditating

yogī realizes Nibbāna at the Ariyan level and while having this split-second experience, he is called the magga-ariya. Then there follows immediately the ariyaphala (fruition) consciousness and from that time he is called the phala-ariya. In short, the phala-yogīs are the only saints whom we can definitively point out as the Ariyas or Noble Ones visible in the world. This is known to most of the practising yogīs but I have elucidated it because otherwise my sermon may not be comprehensive.

The Ariyas live in the Ariyāvāsa or the abode of the Noble Ones. In other words, they live in accordance with the ten Ariyāvāsadhammas proclaimed by the Buddha"

" Katama dasa idha bhikkhave suvimutta pañño"

If one understands Pāḷi, it is very pleasant to hear it spoken. Some of the yogī disciples who have a fairly good knowledge of Pāḷi say that they feel ecstatic when they hear Pāḷi recitation in my sermons. We wonder how much ecstasy a disciple would have if he heard the Pāḷi words uttered by the Buddha himself. This feeling is called dhamma-pīti in Pāḷi. It may arise merely on hearing the Dhamma in Pāḷi or when the yogī appreciates the significance of the Dhamma that is in tune with his life experience. But for many laymen Pāḷi is difficult to understand and they tend to become drowsy in the end. So I will express my quotation in Myanmar.

" Bhikkhus ! What are the Ariyāvāsa dhammas? Within the fold of my teaching the Bhikkhu who is well aware of the perils of life-cycle (saṃsāra) seeks to eradicate the defilements (kilesas)"

Two kinds of bhikkhus

There are two kinds of bhikkhus, viz. the Vinaya bhikkhu and the sutta bhikkhu. The Vinaya bhikkhu is of course the monk who leads a good life based on Vinaya rules. In the time of the Buddha the Lord himself ordained some of them by saying, "Come hither, bhikkhu". Most of them, however, were ordained by the Sangha in accordance with the Vinaya rules.

According to the commentaries, the sutta-bhikkhu is any person who practises the Dhamma to get liberated from the cycle of life. He is not necessarily a member of the Sangha for he may be a deva or a lay man. The bhikkhu referred to in Ariyāvāsa-sutta is the sutta-bhikkhu, a term that applies to any human being, deva or brahmā who is committed to the practice of the Dhamma.

Commitment to the Dhamma consists in the practice of morality, tranquility and wisdom (sīla, samādhi and paññā). By virtue of his moral purity the yogī overcomes active defilements (vitakkama kilesā) such as greed, hatred, etc. that leads

to grave moral transgressions like killing, stealing, lying and so forth. The yogī who develops tranquility (samādhi) is able to forestall the eruption of dormant or pariyutthana kilesā (defilements). Finally the yogī develops insight-knowledge and wisdom, thereby overcoming potential defilements that still lie latent in us (anusaya kilesā) and arise under relevant circumstances.

The practice of the Dhamma is somewhat like cutting away a piece of wood with a small axe, each stroke helping to get rid of the unwanted fragments or digging the earth with a spade and making the heaps of earth come out one after another. Likewise, if we constantly make a note of all the psycho-physical phenomena arising from six sense-organs, the defilements become weak and wither away in due course of time. Thus when the yogī develops insight-knowledge (Vipassanā-paññā) he is in effect doing away with defilements. Such a yogī is designated a suttabhikkhu, regardless of his outward appearance as a layman or a monk or a deva.

The Ten Ariyavasa-Dhammas

According to the Piṭaka there are ten Ariyāvāsadharmas and the first of these dharmas is the elimination of five hindrances (Nīvaraṇa). All over the world people live in houses made of bricks, wood, cement etc., buildings that protect them from the heat of the sun, cold or rainy season, robbers, insects, reptiles and other perils of life. But there are many more dangers in the round of births (saṃsāra) if we live in an abode which, unlike the abode of Ariyas is devoid of security. The perils of saṃsāra are more deadly and formidable than those threatening a man who does not live in a well-protected house. The insecurity of a ramshackle house does not matter much when compared with the potential evils of saṃsāra that may follow a man from one existence to another, evils that are really very frightening. One may, for instance, land in one of the four lower worlds, as a denizen of hell, a peta or an animal or he may be reborn as a poor, wretched man who has to suffer much just for bare survival or because of the cruelties of other people. Nor is a wealthy man spared the universal evils of life, viz. sickness, old age and death. Common people cannot escape the evils that will bedevil them throughout their life-cycles. Liberation is attained only by the Buddha and the Arahats who practise the Ariyāvāssa- dharmas. So the Buddha proclaimed the dharmas that would provide the best insurance against the perils of saṃsāra.

So the first Ariyāvāsa- dharma requires the bhikkhu to remove the five hindrances which I will explain later. The second dharma calls for the exercise of self-control in regard to six sense-objects. The third dharma stresses the need for a guard or mindfulness. We may liken the Ariyan abode to the home of a well-to-do man or high official who keeps guards to ensure security of life and property. The fourth dharma points to the need for four supports. The fifth dharma requires the yogī to renounce many religious systems (paccekasacca) other than the doctrine of the Buddha. These non-Buddhist creeds claim monopoly of truth although they do not accord with the

nature of life.

The sixth Ariyāvāsa- dhamma emphasizes the need for giving up all pursuits once and for ever. The Pāli text is hard to understand but it clearly insists on the renunciation of all pursuits. The pursuit of something implies lack of self-sufficiency whereas giving up all pursuits is a sign of non-attachment and self-fulfillment. The seventh dhamma says that the mind of the yogī in Ariyan abode is clear and free from confusion. The eighth dhamma is the possession of quiet bodily function (passaddha kāya saṅkhāra). Here Kāya saṅkhāra means in-and-out breathing. But this shows only that if the yogī can cover the whole range of spiritual experience, so much the better for him. What matters most is the extinction of defilements and the attainment of Arahatsip. For in fact there are many Arahats who reached the supreme goal without attaining the fourth jhāna.

The ninth and tenth Ariyāvāsa-dhammas under-scores the fully liberated mind and the fully liberated knowledge or the awareness of one's freedom from defilements. These two dhammas are linked together. With the full liberation of the mind, there arises simultaneously the intellectual apperception of it through wisdom.

THE GUARD OF MINDFULNESS

Now we will begin with the third Ariyāvāsa- dhamma because from the practical point of view it enables the yogī to understand the Buddha's teaching easily. The third dhamma emphasizes the importance of a guard in the Ariyan abode. This guard is no other than mindfulness, the essential attribute of the Arahats. The Arahats is well fortified with mindfulness (sati) which pervades every state of his consciousness. He is mindful of whatever he does physically, verbally or mentally. There is nothing which he does absentmindedly. Hence he never acts, says or thinks wrongly or foolishly. The Arahats is reputed for his constant mindfulness and the commentaries say that he is mindful even when he is asleep. But this is rather impossible and it may refer to his mindfulness just before he falls asleep and immediately after he wakes up. In any case we should note especially that the Arahats is always on his guard whatever he is doing at any moment in his life.

Mindfulness does not appear suddenly with the attainment of Arahatsip. It develops gradually as a result of previous effort and practice. It is fairly well established at the Anāgāmi stage before the yogī becomes an Arahats and this is due to self-training at the sakadāgāmi level. There too the yogī possesses mindfulness for which the foundation has been laid at the Sotāpanna stage. In fact even at the first stage on the Ariyan path the yogī is quite mindful in comparison with the common people. So the Sotāpan yogī avoids doing evils that lead to the lower worlds. He is not yet free from sensuous desire, ill-will, hatred, conceit and greed but these are not powerful enough to end up in killing and other grave misdeeds. His unwholesome passions have become weak because of his mindfulness and self-restraint.

This is well known to those who practise meditation. Non-meditators need not have any doubt since the Buddha himself said that a sotāpan would never do any evil that would consign him to the lower worlds. We know fairly well from experience that what the Buddha said is quite true. The yogī can find it out for himself if he practises mindfulness seriously. When he has made some progress in his practice, he knows what it means. At the sight of a pleasant object, he craves for it and in the face of an unpleasant object he resents it. For he is not yet free from greed and hatred. But when these emotions become violent, his mindfulness stands him in good stead and helps him restrain them. Thus they lose their momentum and become weak. They are not beyond control as in the case of common people. Although greed and hatred occasionally arise, these defilements are not potent enough to make the yogī capable of killing, stealing or telling a lie harmful to the welfare of other people. Hence the Buddha's emphasis on the moral invulnerability of a sotāpan at the initial stage of the holy path.

The Heresy of a Popular Writer

A well-known Myanmar writer has recently expressed his mistaken view about the sotāpan Ariyas. Some readers might have come across his writings. Probably puffed up with pride for his literary reputation, he has written nonsense to the point of saying that it is possible for a sotāpan to commit homicide. His view is downright degrading to the spiritual status of a sotāpan and we wonder at his senseless audacity. He has aggravated the damage to the Buddha's teaching by writing not only in Myanmar but also in a local English magazine. We are concerned that foreigners might have a low opinion of Myanmar and the responsibility for it rests in part with the editors who accepted the article that is harmful to the interest of our country and our religion. Such an article might express the cherished view of the writer but the editors should not have given publicity to it.

Today we are promoting the study of the Buddha's teaching on a high scale that reached its climax in the convention of the Sixth Buddhist Council. As for the practice of the Dhamma we are giving instructions that stress the need for empirical approach to meditation. Foreigners from all over the world are coming to Myanmar to study and practise the Buddha-dhamma. At first some went to India and Sri Lanka. They did not get any help in India and in Sri Lanka there was no one to guide them thoroughly. Then at last on the advice of some Buddhists in those countries they came to Myanmar and when they practised meditation they found it agreeable and satisfying. There have been many such foreign yogīs at our meditation centre.

At a time when there is the nationwide movement for the renaissance of Buddha-dhamma in Myanmar, the aforementioned view of the writer linking the Sotāpan Ariya with homicide is damaging to the Ariyan Noble Path of the Buddha. The Hindus of India strictly uphold the doctrine of Ahimsa that forbids ill-treating or

killing any living being. In the time of the Buddha they applied the doctrine even to plant life, saying that plants too have sensibilities like human beings. So in order not to alienate them the Buddha prohibited the monks from destroying grass and trees. Give this strict commitment to the doctrine of Ahimsa or non-violence, even among ordinary people it is absurd to say that a Sotāpan Ariya would possibly still take life if necessary.

In fact a true Sotāpan never takes life nor does he violate other precepts such as those against stealing, sexual misconduct, lying or intoxicating drinks under any circumstance. Yet the writer I have referred to insists on the possibility of the sotāpan's moral relapse in regard to five precepts saying that his view is based on his long-time study of human psychology. He apparently regards himself as a sotāpan and has studied his own mind. Moreover, he is said to be an alcoholic. Therefore he seems to have incorporated his moral outlook into his view of the sotāpan Ariya. There is a Myanmar saying that if our attitude to a man is to be correct, we should project our desires, feelings, etc. on him. But this is true only in the case of two men who resemble each other in many respects. It is certainly impossible for an ordinary man to count on his used knowledge of, say, mathematics for comparing himself with a specialist in the subject. Likewise a common man's opinion of a sotāpan will be wide of the mark if it rests entirely on his experience.

The Satipaṭṭhāna Method

Because of his mindfulness the sotāpan can restrain his greed, ill-temper and delusion. He is always on his guard against his latent defilements which cannot therefore overpower him to the extent of ruining his moral character. So he is assured of immunity to gross passions and freedom from fear of the lower worlds. Such are the advantages of mindfulness.

The sotāpan is always mindful because he has regularly practised mindfulness since the time he started meditating as a good worldling (kalyāṇa puthujjana). Indeed he has disciplined his mind fairly well before he attains the first stage on the holy path. He makes it a practice to note all the psycho-physical phenomena that arise from his sensory contact with the external world. This is the Satipaṭṭhāna (applications of attentiveness) method that requires the yogī to be aware of all the mental and physical events that occur to him during his meditation. We have simplified the method so that it may not present any difficulty to the yogīs. For how can we expect the ordinary ill-informed man to be able to contemplate in detail corporeality, consciousness, mental factors (cetasika), etc. His contemplation will not lead to anything worthwhile and meaningful in his religious experience. So we teach the Satipaṭṭhāna method simply and plainly as did the Buddha.

" Gacchanto vā gacchāmīti pajānāti know that you are walking when walking...."

This is the simple instruction of the Buddha in Satipaṭṭhāna sutta. It does not say that the yogī should know the fact of walking only after analysing the inner corporeality, consciousness and so forth. The Key Pāli word in the Buddha's instruction is "gacchāmi" which needs special attention. It literally means "I go or I walk" and should not be translated as "Mind and body go or walk". So says the Ven. Ledī Sayādaw in his "Anattadīpanī". (A treatise on Anatta Doctrine) "In the posture for carriage of body (iriyapatha), one should walk focusing his attention on his feet and noting 'I walk'. Not a single step should be taken unmindfully. "This instruction was criticized by the author of a large book that appeared a year ago. He rejected Ledī Sayādaw's explanation on the ground that it refers to the first person. "I" This is tantamount to repudiating the word of the Buddha for the Sayādaw's statement rests entirely on the translation of the Pāli word gacchāmi and no Pāli scholar will deny that his translation is grammatically correct and precise. So there should be no doubt about the Buddha's explicit instruction in regard to the Satipaṭṭhāna method of meditation.

The use of "I" in different senses

There are three different senses in which people use the pronoun "I". It may be the reflection of the belief in a soul entity, it may be associated with conceit or it may be used simply as a term of conventional usage. The word "I" as the subject of the verb " gacchāmi" in the Buddha's sermon has nothing to do with ego-illusion or conceit. The Buddha and the Arahats too speak of themselves as, for example, "I am doing so-and-so" but there is no reason to misunderstand them. Initially we instruct our yogīs to note all phenomena in conventional terms. But with the development of concentration all these common usages disappear and when the yogī walks, his attention is confined to the mind that desires to walk and physical body that moves. In other words, there eventually remains only the reality of all phenomena rising and passing away. The yogī does not see anything such as form, shape of any other sign except the rising and spontaneous dissolution of elements. This experience is not limited to physical objects of sense impressions. It applies as well to consciousness which the yogī always finds in a state of flux.

Personal Experience

We assure every yogī of this experience if he seriously practises meditation according to our instructions. We do not blame the skeptics who have never tried the Satipaṭṭhāna method. For only seeing is believing and their skepticism is due to lack of experience. To speak the truth, I myself was a non-believer at one time. In 1931 when I had been a member of the Sangha for eight years I heard that Mingun Zetawun Sayādaw was teaching Satipaṭṭhāna method of meditation in Thaton. At first I was not much interested as the method made no mention of nāmarūpa, anicca, anatta and requires the yogī only to be aware of what he is thinking, feeling or doing.

But later on I had second thoughts about this method: "The method is rather odd, but the Sayādaw is a highly learned monk and he claims to have applied it thoroughly for many years before preaching it. So there may be more to it than being attentive to one's actions". So I decided to pass judgment only after giving it a trial.

Meditating under the Sayādaw's guidance, I applied the Satipaṭṭhāna method. In the first month I made no progress in my search for insight-knowledge and this was not surprising because I did not meditate seriously. By contrast some of my disciples developed tranquility to some extent after five or six days' practice and became fairly well familiar with the nature of nāma-rūpa, anicca, anatta, etc. As for me even after a month my understanding was nil because of lack of faith and energetic effort. Lack of faith implies skeptical doubt (vicikicchā) which is a barrier to the Ariyan Noble Path and enlightenment. It is of paramount importance to remove this barrier but at that time I did not take it seriously and in my view attentiveness to movements of physical body was linked with attachment to conventional usages that had little bearing on ultimate reality. Perhaps the Sayādaw's instruction was a prelude to analysis of nāma-rūpa which he would deal with in his later sermons. So thinking and hoping, I failed to practise whole-heartedly and did not have any unusual experience in my meditation.

Later on, however, I reassessed the Sayādaw's method and at last I realized its significance. It is the most effective way since it entails attentiveness to everything that is to be known, leaving no room for mind wandering. I now appreciate the Buddha's saying which describes the Satipaṭṭhāna method as the only way to liberation: Ekayānō maggo.

Development of Tranquility

At the beginning the yogī treats the sense-data as the raw material for meditation and makes a mental note of "walking" "sitting" "lying" "bending" etc. Then as concentration develops, he becomes aware of all psycho-physical events that occur to him. The vanishing of the units of consciousness is as clear as the beads dropping one after another. Some have this experience in two stages, some in three stages. Through constant observation of the dissolution of all phenomena, he finds nothing that is worthwhile and pleasant, nothing that gives ground for ego-belief.

Still, there are some people who talk nonsense about our method, thereby disparaging the Buddha and his teaching. We have been giving instruction since our arrival at this meditation centre and no matter who says what to discredit our method, we are unshaken because our conviction is the outcome of experience. Just after our arrival in Yangon a man started attacking using a newspaper. We do not know his motive and we never refuted his criticism. We went on our way, assuming that beginners in meditation would go to him or come to us according to their inclinations. Thus exercising prudence (yonisomanasikāra), we carried on with our work and

before long his newspaper stopped coming out for some unknown reason. That was good for those who wished to meditate seriously but he continued to attack us by writing a book. We now take no interest in whatever he is doing.

Of course we welcome anybody's effort to promote the Buddha's teaching. If now there were an extraordinary man who could perform miracles to attract other countries to Buddhism, he would surely receive the overwhelming support of our people. It makes little sense, however, for a man without any practice or experience to criticize those who proclaim the Buddha's method on the basis of their thorough practice and experience.

The Empirical Approach

Students at our centre are instructed to focus on every phenomenon arising from the six sense-organs. Before they can note all sense-objects, they concentrate on bodily behaviour. In particular the yogī's first exercise consists in consciously making a note of the rising and falling of the belly. Later on I will explain the rationale for this exercise on the basis of the Buddha's teaching. The yogī's mindfulness should not be restricted to the rising and falling. He should also note his feelings, thinking, imagining, etc. as well as all bodily actions. The yogī who thus practises mindfulness thoroughly and steadfastly is always aware of his six sense-impressions. Then he is in tune with the Ariyāvāsadharmas that stress the need for the guard of mindfulness: "Satarakkhena cetasa sāmāñña gato".

Some people contend that a comprehensive course of lessons on nāmarūpa, anicca etc., in conjunction with meditation will help the yogīs understand the Buddhist concepts more easily. But the ideas which the yogīs would absorb thereby are only perceptions (saññā) and have hardly anything to do with empirical knowledge. Such preconceived notions are misleading in that they often make it difficult to distinguish between truth and falsehood. So there are non-Buddhists who have a low opinion of Buddhist meditation. They say that Buddhists blindly believe in impermanence, suffering and impersonality of life as a result of the preconceptions implanted in them by their religious teachers. But this is not true of our yogī disciples. For although we tell them the meaning of anicca, dukkha and so forth we never elucidate or instruct them how to fix the Pāḷi concepts in their minds. They only note all the phenomena as they really are. They follow our instructions and later on report to us how they become aware of the distinction between mind and body and the ceaseless passing away of the knowing consciousness and the known sense-impressions. Only then do we recognize it as real insight-knowledge (vipassanā-ñāṇa) and help the yogīs understand their experience in terms of Buddhist concepts.

Real Empirical Knowledge

Thus the knowledge which the yogīs acquire at our meditation centre is based

not on preconceived notions but on personal experience. Knowledge gained in this way is not vague and misty but quite clear and distinct. The yogī sees sense objects and consciousness not in terms of shape, size or substance but only as arising and passing away. When he tells us about his experience, we let him know that it is called bhaṅga insight. Experience is followed by explanation on the part of the teacher and not the other way around. We do not tell him in advance what he is to see or experience in the course of meditation. As he keeps on meditating, he becomes more and more mindful until his mindfulness becomes solid and viable at the last stage on the Ariyan Noble Path.

Mindfulness is labelled a security guard in the Buddha's talk in the Ariyāvāsa sutta. It is indispensable to the yogī at every thought-moment. Without it the yogī cannot become a sotāpan, let alone an Arahat. So it is up to the yogī to be mindful of his actions and reactions, emotions, impulses and so forth. Constant practice of mindfulness helps him develop tranquility and sharpen the intellect. It means dwelling in the Ariyan abode that ensures security and protection from the perils of life-cycle.

In order to reside in the Ariyan abode, we must be prepared to pay the price in terms of faith, aspiration and effort. It is impossible to do anything without faith (saddhā). The yogī practises mindfulness only because he is convinced of its being essential to the emergence of insight knowledge. But faith in itself will be to no avail without a strong desire to attain the Ariyan Path and Nibbāna. It is necessary, too, to exert strenuous and unrelenting effort in the practice of the Dhamma. For the man who possesses these three qualities every moment of mindfulness means temporary residence in the Ariyan abode gratis free. At the very least he is protected from the danger of hell as is borne out by the following story.

The Story of Tambadathika

In the life time of the Buddha there was in the city of Rājagaha a public executioner named Tambadathika. It was the official duty of this man to execute thieves and robbers condemned to death by the law courts. He went on doing his duty everyday until his mid-fifties when he retired from state service. On the day of his retirement he made preparations to enjoy certain things such as drinking milk gruel, wearing new brand garments, etc. that were taboo to him when he was in service. This prohibition may seem ridiculous nowadays, but anyway it is human nature to crave for forbidden things and so Tambadathika was bent on fulfilling his long-suppressed desire.

Then by means of his psychic power the Ven. Sāriputtarā knew that death was just around the corner for Tambadathika. The man would die soon after drinking the milk gruel. He had not done any good deed, while on the other hand, in consequence of his overwhelming evil deeds he was very likely to suffer in hell after death. Moved

with compassion, the thera decided to do something for his salvation and stopped at his house while on the round for collection of food. Tambadathika was then about to drink the milk gruel and if he had lacked faith and ignored the thera, it would have spelt disaster for him in his afterlife. But inspired with strong faith, he promptly offered the food to the thera and sat nearby respectfully. As the thera was aware of his intense craving for food, he told Tambadathika to gratify it. After availing himself of this permission, Tambadathika came back to hear the thera's sermon.

The Buddha-dhamma is delicate and it is up to the Ariyan disciple to preach it skillfully, bearing in mind the varying subtlety of each doctrine. The thera's talk began with alms-giving and preceded to morality, i.e. the observance of the five precepts that leads to longevity, prosperity and so forth in future life. Then the thera spoke of the world of devas and talked about insight-meditation involves constant mindfulness that keeps us on guard against unwholesome thoughts.

Tambadathika was upset by the thera's subtle talk that helped revive memories of his unpleasant past. The thera knew what was passing in his mind but still he asked the man why he did not appear to be fussed that remorse and anxiety lay heavy on his conscience and made him unhappy. The thera then asked him whether he had committed the evil deeds of his own free will and the former chief executioner replied that he had carried out the order of the king against his will. "Then how could these evil deeds be yours?" said the thera.

We should here consider the thera's question deeply. It did not deny the moral responsibility of Tambadathika for the execution of the convicts. The question was cleverly designed to ease his conscience and make him attentive to the sermon. In reality an evil deed is always potentially harmful to the doer in the round of rebirth no matter whether it is committed deliberately or at the instigation of someone else. Of course the karmic consequences may be grave or light depending on the strength of volition associated with the deed. But Tamadathika was not intelligent enough to see the point. He concluded that he would not have to suffer for the deeds for which only the king was responsible. This conviction laid his anxiety at rest and helped him follow the sermon.

In connection with this story a man in Shwebo once joked that low intelligence is some times good for us because but for it, there would have been no end to Tambadathika's worry and anxiety. But the example of Tambadathika is not to be emulated by our disciples who should rely on scriptures and well-informed people to improve their intelligence and knowledge.

Having listened to the sermon attentively, Tambadathika eventually attained *anuloma ñāṇa* (adaptive-knowledge) that denotes all kinds of insight-knowledge ranging from *sammāsana-ñāṇa* to advanced *saṅkhārupekkhā-ñāṇa* or the insight knowledge that emerges prior to the attainment of the Path.

It is hard to determine the kind of insight-knowledge that was really gained by Tambadathika. According to the commentary, it seems to be the Saṅkhārupekkhā insight-knowledge preceding the attainment of the first stage (Sotāpatti) on the Path. It is said that the bodhisattas in the holy order meditated till they gained the anulomañāṇa but theirs is not the anulomañāṇa of the path-process (magga-vīthi). The attainment of the anuloma knowledge of the path-process means the outright attainment of the path and its fruition (phala).

The process of enlightenment does not end with the arising of anuloma insight. Moreover, a bodhisatta can achieve the ultimate goal of the Path only when he is about to become a Buddha. He cannot achieve it in his early lives. So we should assume the anuloma insight of Tambadathika to be saṅkhārupekkhā (equanimity insight-knowledge) at the early stage in the round of rebirth. It may be also the ordinary insight knowledge or at the very least sammāsanāñāṇa.

Whatever it is, it means mindfulness which is the real passport to the abode of Ariyas. Having thus provided Tambadathika with protection against rebirth in the lower worlds, the Ven. Thera Sāriputtarā left the house Tambadathika went out to see the therā off but on the way back he was gored to death by a cow that was an ogress in disguise who had a grudge against the man in a previous life. That is what the Dhammapada commentary says but of course skeptics may say that it was just as an ordinary cow.

The death of Tambadathika was the topic of conversation among the monks. They were surprised when the Buddha told them about his rebirth in Tusita heaven, one of the six deva-worlds that was reputed as the abode of bodhisattas. Tambadathika was assured of a bright future which he owed to his having a good friend in the person of Ven. Sāriputrā whose sermon helped him acquire anulomañāṇa. But for his mindfulness at the last moment of his life, he would have landed in one of the lower words. In fact he had a narrow escape from hell.

Rebirth in the deva-world is certain for those who practise the Dhamma wholeheartedly and zealously. Some former yogīs tell us how mindfulness helps alleviate their suffering when they are seriously ill. Through constant practice mindfulness may become spontaneous as in the case of the brahmin lady Dhananjani, a sotāpan disciple of the Buddha. On one occasion her husband warned her not to extol the Buddha while his brahmin teachers were being entertained. Yet when she tripped, she uttered thrice the sacred formula: " Namotassa bhagavato Praise to the Blessed One, etc" Thus through assiduous practice of the Dhamma mindfulness automatically arises in the face of suffering or imminent death. As for those who have had no such experience, they would be well advised to try practising mindfulness. Once they have savoured its benefits, they will find its appeal irresistible just like the veteran yogīs at our meditation centre.

The Four Mainstays

The yogī who cultivates mindfulness should have four requisites viz. clothes, food, medicine and dwelling. These are absolutely essential because they are the basic necessities of life. Indeed they constitute the first mainstay of his Ariyan abode.

He is prudent and intelligent in his reliance on the four requisites, always being in mind that he needs them not for his pleasure but for his well-being. Thus he wears clothes for propriety, lives in an abode for protection from rain, heat and cold, eats food and takes medicine for the maintenance of health. He is intelligent enough to know the right quality and quantity of food he needs and the time to take it.

To deny oneself the basic needs of life means self-mortification which is called *attakilamathanuyogas* in Pāli. In the time of the Buddha there were Nigantha ājīvakas and other heretics who devoted themselves to ascetic practices. Even the Buddha himself practised austerities in the early years of his life as an ascetic in the forest. He adopted such habits as suppressing his in-and-out breathing, eating very little food, etc. Later on he realized the futility of asceticism, gave it up and following the middle way, attained supreme enlightenment. At present the Jains in India are still the devotees of asceticism. But asceticism as well as over-indulgence in sensual pleasure is incompatible with Buddhism which proclaims the middle way between the two extremes. It is therefore up to the yogī to consider and determine the proper thing and the proper time to do for his own welfare and of course this means right thinking based on right mindfulness.

The second mainstay of the Ariyan abode is the fortitude of mind that makes the yogī invulnerable to mental and physical pain. He should be capable of enduring heat, cold, sound, voices and other sensations that trouble him. Some people cannot bear any pain. As soon as they feel uncomfortable, they cease to be mindful and seek to relieve their discomfort, thereby impeding progress in meditation. The yogī should be prepared to practise higher meditation even at the risk of his life. Here some people may think that the Buddhadhamma makes unreasonable demands on them. But this statement is aimed at encouraging the yogī to do his utmost for his spiritual welfare.

As a matter of fact there is no case of illness, not to mention death resulting from strenuous practice of meditation. On the contrary, there are some people who recovered from ill-health through meditation and their number is quite considerable. A woman who came to our centre recently said that she had a troublesome lump in her womb that made it impossible for her to sit for a long time. A doctor had advised her to have the lump removed but she decided to take up meditation before surgical operation. Her meditation teacher told her to take it easy and meditate in a relaxed frame of mind. Under the guidance of the teacher she made some progress in

meditation and at last her illness evaporated surprisingly. She was then able to sit for a long time without feeling any pain. She went to the doctor for another check-up. After examining her the doctor said that she did not need any operation as she had got rid of her lump.

So the yogī should exercise forbearance as far as possible in the face of suffering. He must of course do the needful when the pain is unbearable. "Forbearance leads to Nibbāna " says a Myanmar proverb and indeed it is vital to the successful practice of meditation. If the meditating yogī fidgets and becomes restless whenever he feels uncomfortable, he will not be able to concentrate and without concentration he can never realize Nibbāna.

The Third and Fourth Mainstays

The third mainstay of the Ariyan abode is avoidance. The yogī should give a wide berth to all potential dangers such as vicious animals, cars driven by reckless drivers or places where he runs the risk of meeting with an accident. Even a trivial mishap like being pierced by a thorn may mean a serious setback in meditation. The Buddha himself cautioned the monks against visiting dangerous places unwarily. He told them not to be foolishly overconfident because of their practice of meditation. In particular the yogīs should be on his guard against intimate relationship with the opposite sex. This precaution is especially necessary in the case of monks who may otherwise lie open to the false charge of moral impurity.

The fourth mainstay of the Ariyan abode is the elimination of unwholesome thoughts (vitakka). These unhealthy states of consciousness are of three kinds, viz, sensuous (kāma) thoughts, malicious (vyāpāda) thoughts and aggressive or violent (vihimsa) thoughts. The yogī should dispel unwholesome thoughts about sensual objects, about how to ruin other people or how to inflict suffering on them. It is very difficult to overcome these thoughts because in fact most people enjoy harbouring them. It gives them pleasure to think of the objects of their attachment, the people they would like to see or the plans for the fulfillment of their desires. They fret at what they regard as restrictions of their freedom. This is not surprising because except for the meditating yogīs, most people let their minds wander freely when they have nothing to do. The yogīs usually get accustomed to restrictions in due course and find it beneficial to their mental culture.

In fact it takes only a few day's practice to acquire the habit of watchfulness that keeps a yogī on guard against unwholesome thoughts. Some Westerners at our meditation centre do not know much about our system but they have faith that arouses their interest in it. The trouble is that they are fond of reading and writing. We advised them to give up this habit during their stay at the Centre because it gives rise to discursive thinking that forms an obstacle to concentration and the development of insight knowledge. At first it was difficult for them to follow our advice but they got

used to the restriction in due course and found it conducive to their mind training.

One such foreigner was Mr. Duval, an American who spent several months at the centre, practising mindfulness initially as a lay yogī and later on as a monk. He was much impressed by Satipaṭṭhāna method that helped him to attain insight into the ultimate reality of life. According to him, there is no reliable system of mental culture in Europe and America, a deficiency in the Western way of life that has deprived their people of inner peace despite their material prosperity. He said that on his return he would help them to be happy through Satipaṭṭhāna meditation.

The Five Hindrances

The first evils that the yogī has to contend with in the practice of constant mindfulness are the five hindrances (nīvaraṇas). Owing to his weak concentration, the beginner in meditation cannot firmly control his mind which therefore wanders freely revolving about its cherished sense-objects. It is confined there by the hindrances that block the Ariyan path to Nibbāna. So the yogī should try to remove the five hindrances, viz., sensuous desire, ill-will (vyāpāda), indolence (thina-middha), restlessness and worry (uddhiccakukkuca) and skeptical doubt (vicikicchā).

Sensuous desire is desire for pleasant colours of visible objects, delightful sounds, sweet smell, delicious food and so forth. In a sermon of the Buddha pleasant sensual objects are compared to a piece of meat carried off by a kite that becomes a target of fierce attack by other birds until it drops the meat. Only then does it escape harassment by other birds. Likewise, the object of sensual pleasure allures all living beings and hence its owner is the target of attack by other people who wish to rob him of it. Indeed love of sensual pleasure is the mainspring of conflicts between one individual and another and all over the world it is the chief cause of class, racial, ethnic and international conflicts. Hence it is loathed and renounced by all wise men.

Nevertheless, most people turn a blind eye to the evils of sensual pleasure and modern man is excessively fond of it. To him it is the summum bonum of life, something to be sought by every possible means regardless of all moral considerations. Of the five objects of sensual desire the visible object covers a wide range of corporeality, both animate and inanimate such as men, women, garments and other consumer goods. In the same way sound as sensual object may mean a person who speaks persuasively as well as a musical instrument. Smell is represented by perfumes and the human beings who use it. Tactile impression is born of physical contact with men, women, bed, clothes, etc. Taste is associated with all good food and people who prepare it.

Sensual desire as the crippling debt

In short, all pleasant objects generate sensual desire which is an obstacle to

right mindfulness. The Buddha compared the sensual desire and its human victim to the debt and the debtor and he exhorted his disciples to get rid of it promptly just like the debtor who seeks to repay his debt without delay. If a man cannot settle his debt on time, he has to be abject and obsequious in his relationship with the creditor, not daring to say or do anything offensive to him.

Just as the debtor has to respect his creditor so also every man has to respect the object of his desire. The more he loves it, the more care he must take of it. As for gold, silver, jewels and other precious ornaments that are cherished by so many people, they have to be kept in iron-clad boxes under lock and key. When these ornaments are worn on ceremonial occasions the owner has trouble looking for a secure place.

But such troubles are mild in comparison with those rooted in one's attachment to a living being such as one's spouse or children. One has to pay a high price for his or her attachment in terms of scrupulous regard for the feelings of the other, circumspection in talking and so forth. The more deeply a man is attached to a member of his family, or a friend, the more he is concerned about the welfare of his beloved and the more trouble he has to take for it. Thus respect for the living or the non-living object of attachment is like the debtor's respect for his creditor. Non-attachment to anything or a living being obviates the need for respect as in the case of a person who is free from debt.

Constant Mindfulness

Hence we should note and reject every desire that arises. Of course this advice is not of much avail all the time in everyday life and it is to be applied only when one is meditating. If concentration is too weak to dispel every distraction the yogī should keep noting it until it disappears in the end. Practice of the Dhamma means waging war on defilements. If, inspired with fighting zeal, the yogī relentlessly persists in noting, the desire will vanish eventually. This is a fact vouched for by his experience. Indeed the desire which has withered away does not crop up again even when we mentally review the stream of consciousness leading to it.

This is then the best way to combat defilements effectively. If one cannot conquer them, one cannot hope to earn the privilege of living in the abode of the Noble Ones. If a man dies at the time when he is able to note and reject the sensuous desire, he is protected from the danger of the lower worlds. On the other hand there is no such protection for those who die with the defilements still lingering in them. For like residents of a tumble-down house that is exposed to all kinds of danger, so also the worldling is vulnerable to the risk of landing in the lower worlds.

The story of the Monk Tissa

In the time of Lord Buddha there was a monk called Tissa. One day he took fancy to a robe and became attached to it. Intent on wearing it the next day, he hung it on the clothes-line and went to bed. But on that very night he became suddenly ill and died. Given his moral purity, he should have landed in heaven. Instead, because of his attachment to the robe he became a louse on it. Many people were skeptical about the story. They dismissed it as absurd and one man argued that it was impossible for an elephant to become an insect and vice-versa. His implication was that in view of the disparity in size of the two souls, such a rebirth was unthinkable.

Such an argument is certainly misleading. Nowadays we hear of a materialistic writer who advocates a view which, masquerading as the Buddha's creed, rejects the idea of a future life. He maintains that even if there is future life, man may be reborn only as a human being because having reached the top in the world of living beings, he cannot assume any lower form of life. A tamarind seed can produce only a tamarind tree and gold cannot revert to its former state of earth. Likewise man's foremost position in the world precludes the possibility of his rebirth as an animal. This kind of argument is calculated to win Buddhists over to materialism and it is a downright distortion of the Buddha-dhamma that would make the proponent of such a view the supporter of Mara, the Evil one.

According to Buddhism there is no permanent self or being and so the question of size, magnitude or shape does not arise. The only reality is psycho-physical process in which consciousness is the determining factor. So the doctrine of Dependent Origination (Paticcassamuppāda) says that because of ignorance, there arises karma-formations (saṅkhāra) which in turn lead to rebirth-consciousness. Thus when rebirth takes place, it is not the corporeality of the past life or its potency but only the force of consciousness that passes on.

Moreover, there is no such thing as big or small consciousness. The mind of an ordinary human being does not differ basically from that of an animal. It is not strong or mature enough to resist the atavistic regression. It may revert to a lower state as in the case of a psychotic or a victim of hydrophobia. In short, there is no basis for the view that it is impossible for a man to sink to a lower plane of existence after death, a view in conflict with Buddhism.

Difference between Mind and Matter

We can strengthen and develop the mind by buttressing it up with faith, energy, vigilance and so forth. Therefore the mind of a dying man imbued with wholesome thoughts ensures good rebirth whereas the defiled man is full of greed, hatred, ill-will etc. that lead to the lower worlds. This of course raises the question of how consciousness can reach a far distant place like heaven or hell. The fact is that consciousness has no substance and so distance makes no difference to it. We think of an object which is far or near and at once we mentally gain access to it. For there is

no obstacle to consciousness. But it is otherwise with the physical body which therefore takes a relatively long time to reach the same object. Thus at any rate for the short term the destiny of a dying man depends on the last state of his consciousness which is followed by the rebirth-consciousness of what we designate in conventional sense as a deva, a denizen of hell, an animal or a human being.

Hence there is in fact no barrier to heaven or hell or any other world to which a living being passes on in his afterlife. The death of the monk Tissa means the extinction of his attachment to the robe along with his death-consciousness. There followed immediately his rebirth-consciousness as a louse that was determined not by his physical attributes but solely by his obsession with the robe on his death-bed. His ill-fated rebirth was inevitable despite his moral purity because he had not lived in the Ariyan abode that is the bulwark against sensual desire and its evil consequences.

The Buddha's advice for the conquest of sensual desire

There are the Buddha's instructions to the monks for curbing sensual desires. The key to the Buddha's advice is the Pāli words: "Patisaṅkhā yoniso" or "Wise and proper reflection". It is necessary for monks to wear robes for they have to protect themselves from inclement weather. Men and women wear clothes to make themselves good-looking, an objective that has nothing to do with monks who depend on clothes for protection from heat or cold and to cover the parts of body which we should keep invisible. Thus for the monk the aesthetic value of clothes does not matter and there is no reason for him to be satisfied or dissatisfied with his robe. Moreover, he should reflect on the impurity and impermanence of his body to minimize if not overcome his attachment to it. But the easiest way to eradicate his sensual desire for anything is to note and reject it again and again until it disappears for ever.

Like people who must have money to build a house, so also the yogī needs faith to live in the abode of Noble Ones. He should have no doubt that the practice of Ariyāvāsa-dhamma guarantees salvation from the lower worlds and the other dangers of saṃsāra (round of rebirth). Some people say that they cannot believe anything without experience. But faith rests on sound reasoning that serves as a substitute for experience. For instance, before going to a place which we have never visited, we resort to hearsay evidence for necessary information. A prerequisite for the successful practice of the Ariyāvāsa-dhamma is faith born of sound reasoning and a good knowledge of the Buddha's teaching. Again a man visiting a town or a village for the first time needs to check up on his arrival to see whether he has come to the right place. This is an example of a belief founded on experience and in the same way for the yogī who is seriously engaged in the practice of the Dhamma, there arises extraordinary insight knowledge that helps him verify our teaching and leads to unwavering faith in the Buddha-dhamma.

If a man eats a certain food that we recommend and finds it delicious, he will thank us very much. Similarly if, acting on our advice, a man gives the practice of Dhamma a trial and finds it spiritually beneficial, he will be much grateful to us. In fact the doctrine of the Buddha lends itself to empirical investigation. This is in line with one of the well known attributes of the Dhamma, viz. " Ehipassiko". "Come and see".

The yogīs should have strong will and unflagging energy to realise the higher Ariyan dhamma in this life. He needs perseverance that will sustain strenuous effort. Thus equipped with faith, will and energy, he is in a position to build the Ariyan abode. He notes all sense-objects while walking, standing or eating and every moment of his watchfulness means the moment of his building or living in the Ariyan abode and marks a step toward liberation from the danger of the lower worlds. In this way he develops mindfulness to the highest degree and finally as genuine Ariya, he realizes Nibbāna.

Two Obstacles to Enlightenment

In the life time of the Buddha there were people who could not benefit by the Dhamma even though they heard it direct from the Teacher. There are two reasons for the non-enlightenment of some people even under favourable circumstances like the encounter with the Buddha. One is the failure to do the needful (kiriya-parihani) and the other is evil company (pāpamitta).

On one occasion the Buddha was seated amid the gathering of monks when there came Kandaraka, a wandering ascetic and Pessa, a lay follower. On seeing the monks sitting quietly, still, poised, self-possessed and well-mannered, Kandaraka, became convinced of the benign influence which the Buddhadhamma had exerted on them. He told the Buddha about his impression of the monks whereupon the Buddha said "Well, what you say is true. My admonitions have helped discipline these monks very effectively. Some of them are discipline these monks very effectively. Some of them are already Arahats, some have attained different stages on the Path, depending on the degree of their mindfulness. They are all devoted to the practice of Satipaṭṭhāna. There is no one who does not practise mindfulness".

On hearing these words of the Buddha, the layman Pessa said, "Lord! it is very good of you to admonish the people and make them upright and honest. Animals are not deceptive or cunning. They are artless. Without thinking, they clear themselves of excrement and urine when they want to do so. They have no intention to cheat their masters. If they are forced to do anything against their will, they make a mess of it. Unlike animals, men are crafty and play hypocrite, secretly doing what is harmful to the interests of their master. Lord! we cannot help admiring you for your benevolence because you have reformed the minds of many people who were formerly cunning and hypocritical. I, too, practise Satipaṭṭhāna occasionally although I am a lay man".

True, Satipaṭṭhāna dhamma is very good for the reformation of moral character. Men are dishonest and deceptive because they are unaware of their moral defects. It is contemplation of our states of consciousness (cittānupassanā) that helps us know our inner selves. Full emergence of insight into one's psyche leaves no room for the arising of unwholesome thoughts and desires.

The Buddha was then about to give a talk on the four types of personality when Pessa took leave of the Lord saying that he had some business to attend to. The Buddha knew that Pessa would not like to stay any longer and that it would not much benefit him to listen to the sermon half-heartedly. So the Buddha let him go away. After his departure the Buddha told the monks that Pessa was an intelligent man and that he would attain the first stage on the Ariyan path if he heard the sermon to the end.

In this connection the commentary raises the question of whether a person who had the potential for enlightenment could possibly fail to attain it even in the presence of the Buddha. The commentary insists on the possibility and points out the two causes of non-enlightenment, viz, (1) the failure to do the needful completely and (2) bad company.

Negligence and bad company

Negligence or failure to do the needful is of two kinds: viz, (i) the negligence on the part of the teacher and (ii) negligence on the part of the disciple to do completely what is proper to do.

It is negligence of duty if the teacher does not make his sermons comprehensive and intelligible enough to be understood by his disciples. Some people do wish to practise the Dhamma but there is no teacher to preach or guide them. So they grow old and die without having any opportunity to practise the Dhamma, let alone savour its taste. On the other hand, there are many people who have only themselves to blame for their non-enlightenment. For although they have heard many sermons on the Buddha-dhamma, they do not study or practise it seriously.

The other reason for non-enlightenment is pāpamitta or association with an evil friend. "Evil" is the direct translation of the Pāli term "pāpa" and if this sounds rather unduly pejorative, we can tone it down to "bad". As an example of the evil consequences of bad company the commentaries cite the story of Ajātasattu. This king had the spiritual potential to become a sotāpan, when he heard the Buddha's sermon in Samañña phala sutta. But he kept company with Devadatta, an evil monk whom he regarded as his teacher and at the instigation of Devadatta he killed his father king Bimbisāra. But for this heinous crime of parricide he would have been

well established on the Ariyan Noble Path.

There are many other instances of non-enlightenment due to association with undesirable people. Even in the time of the Buddha some people did not get liberated despite their spiritual potential because they followed false teachers opposed to the Buddha. This holds true also for many misguided people today. Hence there are two obstacles to enlightenment viz. (i) the failure to do the needful and (ii) keeping company with bad people.

Practice of Mindfulness

The Buddha and other Ariyas of yore were committed to Ariyāvāsa dhammas and so are the Ariyas led by Gotama Buddha and the Ariyas of future. Ariyāvāsa-dhamma is the bulwark against all the evils of life-cycle. The first of these dhammas is mindfulness which the yogī develops gradually just as a school boy learns his lessons step by step. He notes everything arising from six sense organs. As he develops the ability to note all sense-impressions, he attains the first three Ariyan stages (magga) one after another until at last he becomes an Arahant and then his mindfulness leaves no loophole for the influx of defilements. In reality although there are ten Ariyāvāsa dhammas, perfect mindfulness suffices to ensure total commitment to them.

True, the Buddha expounded the other nine dhammas for the spiritual uplift of his followers but in fact the key to his overall teaching lies in mindfulness. Hence just before he passed away the Buddha summed up his doctrine in his last saying which may be translated as follows;

" Bhikkhus ! Here is my last advice to you. All compounded things are subject to disintegration. Work out your own salvation with mindfulness".

All compounded things (saṅkhāras) are impermanent. There is nothing eternal or reliable in them. This is a statement of paramount importance although most people do not take it seriously. They believe in personal identity and permanent ego or self. The average man believes that he can live for a long time with his life-force and body. But body, mind and all other conditioned things are ephemeral and in a flux, for ever dissolving and passing away.

Hence there is no substantial, everlasting foundation for our conditioned existence. The only way out of illusory, conditioned existence is Nibbāna and the key to this liberation is right mindfulness, the sine qua non of Buddhist mental culture epitomized in the last words of the Buddha: " Appamādena sampādeṭṭha" --- Practise the Dhamma fully and thoroughly with mindfulness".

Like the death-bed advice of the parents to their children, this last saying of the Buddha should remain fresh forever in the minds of his followers. For it is an

admonition that we should bear in mind and apply to daily life. In fact the commentaries describe it as the quintessence of the entire Buddhist teaching in the Pāli Canon. The Ariyāvāsa-dhamma sutta explains it together with its adjuncts but the key-note of the whole sutta is mindfulness. For the practice of right mindfulness involves the application of all the other dhammas.

I have mentioned the first four Ariyāvāsadharmas essential to the development of mindfulness, viz. access to the four basic necessities of life, forbearance in emotional response to unpleasant sense-impressions, avoidance of dangerous places and elimination of sensual desire, ill-will, etc. Now we will turn to the fifth Ariyāvāsa-dhamma.

The Five Hindrances

This dhamma calls for overcoming the five hindrances to enlightenment and Nibbāna. The yogī need not exert too much effort to achieve this object if his mindfulness is effective enough to cope with them. I have said something about the way to remove the first hindrance of sensual desire. The sooner he overcomes it, the better for otherwise it would be like being a hostage to a debt that plagues us all the time. A good example of its danger is the story of the monk Tissa who was dragged down to the animal world by it. A week later he passed on to Tavatimsā heaven because he was no longer attached to his robe and became mindful of his good deeds in the past. The rebirth of a man as a louse and then as a deva may be baffling to common people but quite understandable. After all it is mental force or energy that determines the quality of a man's future life. There is no impediment to its sudden transfer to a higher or lower plane of existence, depending on the state of his consciousness at the last moment of his life.

This is indeed frightening but it does not matter if we can overcome sensual desire through mindfulness. When the yogī becomes perfectly mindful, he attains sotāpana, the first stage on the Ariyan path that protects him fully from rebirth in the lower worlds while at the anāgāmi stage he eradicates all kinds of sensual desire and when he becomes an Arahat, he is totally liberated fr